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WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

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JULY WEEK 4

20-07-2026 TO 25-07-2026

**STABLE INDIA-
CHINA TIES
WILL HELP
BUILD MULTI-
POLAR ASIA**

**GLOBAL WARS
DELAYING FTA
NEGOTIATIONS**

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DELAYING FTA
NEGOTIATIONS**

**FAST-TRACK PM-
KUSUM
COMPONENT-C
ROLLOUT**

**GOVT. CONSIDERING
HIKING INCOME
LIMIT**

❖ 11 killed in J&K as heavy rain triggers flash floods

- Nine deaths were reported from Poonch and two from Rajouri; initial assessment suggests that more than 100 houses and around two dozen school structures were damaged in the floods
- Eleven people were killed and 10 went missing in flash floods triggered by heavy rain in Poonch and Rajouri districts of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, officials said.
- Nine deaths were reported from Poonch and two from Rajouri. Initial assessment suggested that more than 100 houses and around two dozen school structures were damaged in the floods.
- Chief Minister Omar Abdullah chaired a high-level review meeting at the Civil Secretariat in Jammu in the evening. He instructed all Deputy Commissioners and field agencies to closely monitor vulnerable areas, particularly those prone to landslides, flash floods, and inundation, and ensure that rescue teams, machinery and essential services remain fully prepared to respond at short notice.
- "Every possible effort should be made to trace and retrieve missing persons so that affected families receive timely support... Besides, there should be expeditious restoration of roads, power supply, drinking water supply and communication links disrupted by heavy rain," said Mr. Abdullah.
- According to officials, Poonch district in the Pir Panjal valley was the worst affected. Heavy rain since Sunday morning also triggered flash floods in Rajouri and Kishtwar districts, damaging public property and washing away scores of vehicles. Landslides disrupted traffic in several areas.
- Authorities in several districts of the Kashmir Valley issued fresh advisories for those living near streams, rivers and hilly areas prone to landslides and flash floods. "People in these areas are advised not to venture out till the weather improves. Tourists, travellers and transporters have been asked to check road conditions before travelling to hilly areas," said an official advisory.
- J&K Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha said personnel from the civil administration, the police, the Army, and the State Disaster Response Force were working on the ground. "Affected families have already been moved to safer locations. All departments are on high alert and are prioritising immediate relief and restoration work," he said.

❖ U.S. launches more air strikes on Iran

- The United States launched more air strikes at Iran on Sunday in response to the killing of U.S. troops, and Iran fired missiles toward Jordan that risked widening the conflict into neighbouring Israel.
- Step by step, the U.S. and Iran have returned closer to all-out war as last month's interim deal meant to permanently end the fighting has crumbled and shipping traffic in the Strait of Hormuz has largely stalled.
- The U.S. military said the latest strikes targeted Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard to retaliate for Friday's killing of troops in Jordan.

- The campaign, now in its second week, has seen the U.S. target bridges, water desalination plants and electrical facilities in Iran. Tehran has hit U.S.-allied countries throughout West Asia.
- Kuwait, Jordan and Bahrain again activated their air defences for incoming Iranian drones and missiles. Kuwait said one of its power and water desalination plants was attacked for the second time in two days, causing fires.
- Jordan's military said it shot down several Iranian missiles. The country hosts major U.S. bases and relies on U.S. air-defence systems. The missiles did not cause casualties or damage, according to Jordan's military.
- Israel warned that missiles launched toward neighbouring Jordan could cause fire to spill over into Israeli territory for the first time in weeks.
- Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said that his country would respond powerfully to any attack by Iran, after Israeli and Jordanian forces intercepted an Iranian missile launched towards the Jordanian city of Aqaba. "If Iran fires missiles at Israel, we will attack them with full force."
- The United States military's Central Command said it hit "Iranian military coastal surveillance and air defence facilities, maritime capabilities and missile and drone storage sites". It said the attack was designed to degrade Iran's ability to control the strait and "swiftly punish Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps forces".
- Iran's atomic energy agency said U.S. strikes targeted the construction site of a planned nuclear power plant in the southwest, state television reported.
- Footage released by the U.S. military appeared to show strikes carried out by fighter jets and by Tomahawk cruise missiles launched from the sea.

❖ 'Drought report to Centre in 15 days'

- We have asked for a comprehensive field survey in all 178 taluks, of which 158 taluks have received very average rainfall, the Chief Minister says
- Karnataka, which has faced an overall rain deficit of about 68%, will submit a report to the Centre in about 15 days, but only after a comprehensive ground situation survey by the district officials across the State, Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said on Sunday.
- "We have asked for a comprehensive field survey in all 178 taluks, of which 158 taluks have received very average rainfall, and 20 taluks have not received rainfall at all. The drought situation in the Vijayanagar district is grim. I have asked for a field survey because I do not believe just reports. They will also videograph the field surveys," the Chief Minister said in his post-Cabinet briefing.
- "We have requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to send a Central team for assessment. Last year, we had submitted the report to the Centre in August/September. The teams were sent much later," he added.
- He said that the water storage is about 40% of what was there last year and is sufficient for drinking water needs, and that an average of 40% of the water is available for hydel electricity.
- The State Cabinet met here after the Chief Minister reviewed the drought conditions, fodder and water availability with the Deputy Commissioners and the Chief Executive Officers of the zilla panchayats.

- He said that in about 3,235 tanks of the total 3,817 tanks under the Minor Irrigation Department, the water storage is less than 50%, and of the 32,504 tanks under zilla panchayats, 27,450 tanks have less than 50% storage.
- “The drought reports should be based on field visits. When the Central team visits the State, they should be given proper reports,” he said.
- Earlier, issuing a stern warning to the Deputy Commissioners and Chief Executive Officers against slacking or negligence in handling the drought situation, the Chief Minister said that drinking water, fodder for animals, insurance for crop losses, and the sinking of borewells to mitigate water problems in rural areas should be the top priorities.
- He asked officials to undertake field visits rather than being dependent on paperwork and data. Farmers should not suffer because of official apathy, he added. “We are not here to see paperwork. All the data and statistics will be cross-checked with the ground reality. So don’t just give numbers without verification.”
- He said: “Sowing is at 32%, and except for about six districts (of the total 31 districts in the State), all other districts are facing deficit rainfall. Water levels in reservoirs are staring at dead storage. The priority remains drinking water. Duplicate billing of borewells or raising fresh bills for already sunk borewells will not be tolerated.”
- Revenue Minister G. Parameshwara said that 75 taluks have experienced dry weather for four consecutive weeks and has directed officials to undertake ground-truthing, which would help the State government take timely and appropriate action.

Migration in State

- Revenue Minister and Deputy Chief Minister Parameshwara, who expressed concern over migration in several North Karnataka districts, said that works under the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Grameen (VB-G RAM G) have started across the State.
- According to him, people from Ballari, Kalaburagi, Raichur, Yadgir and Vijayanagara districts are migrating in search of work.
- “Only 20 gram panchayats in the Vijayapura district have started its implementation. Except in four or five districts, work under the scheme has not commenced in most parts of the State. Of the nearly 5,000 gram panchayats, 2,443 of them have not yet started work under the programme,” he said.

❖ Give police station video footage to appellant: Information Commission

- In an interesting case, the Karnataka Information Commission has ordered that video footage from the CCTV cameras installed at a police station be furnished to an appellant.
- Nagaraju M.R. of Malavalli had filed an application under the Right to Information Act before the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) concerned on August 4, 2022, seeking CCTV footage of Malavalli Town and Rural police stations from October 10, 2021, to March 31, 2022, in connection with the investigation of a case involving him.

- However, the station officers of both stations had refused to hand over the CCTV footage to him. Although the DySP was required by law to transfer the application to the appropriate public authority, as the matter did not fall under his jurisdiction, he had failed to do so.
- Instead, he had just written reminder letters to the station heads, said a release by the Karnataka Information Commission. The station heads had issued an endorsement that such video footage cannot be furnished. During the inquiry, they admitted that they had issued such an endorsement following oral instructions from senior officials, stated the release.
- When the matter came up for hearing before him, Information Commissioner Rudranna Harthikote ordered the police to submit the hard disks containing the video recordings to the FSL for verification. He directed that the CCTV footage showing the appellant's visits to the police stations for inquiry be provided to him, while the remaining footage be masked.
- As per the direction, the video footage was provided to the appellant after all instructions were followed, the release said. The commission has warned the heads of the two police stations against violating RTI norms. It has also directed that disciplinary action be initiated against the then DySP, Naveen Kumar, who is currently serving as Additional SP in Ballari.
- A notice has been issued to him in this regard, and he has replied, claiming that he did not violate any norms. Further proceedings are under way, the release said.

❖ **Cabinet approves ₹12-crore AI Centre of Excellence at IIIT Raichur**

- The Karnataka Cabinet has approved the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (CoE-AI) at the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Raichur, with an outlay of ₹12 crore over five years, Minister for Home, Information Technology & Biotechnology, and e-Governance Priyank Kharge said on Sunday.

Cabinet meeting

- The approval was granted at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar under the Karnataka Government Transaction of Business Rules, 1977.
- The project will be funded through ₹5 crore earmarked in the 2026-27 State Budget and ₹7 crore under the LEAP programme.
- The AI Centre of Excellence will function as a regional hub for the 13 districts of North Karnataka, aiming to decentralise Karnataka's technology ecosystem beyond Bengaluru by promoting AI education, research, innovation and entrepreneurship in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.
- The centre will develop AI-based solutions for key sectors, including agriculture, healthcare, education, MSMEs and governance.
- It will also establish AI development laboratories, advanced computing infrastructure, prototype development facilities, skill-development programmes, start-up incubation, innovation support and regional outreach initiatives.

- To oversee the project, the government will set up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) named IIIT Raichur ARIA (AI Research and Innovation Arena). The initiative will be implemented in three phases, beginning with infrastructure creation and progressing towards innovation, entrepreneurship and long-term self-sustainability.
- Mr. Kharge said the project would position Raichur and North Karnataka as a major hub for Artificial Intelligence, creating world-class opportunities for students, researchers, start-ups and industry.

❖ **Curbing talent exodus: it's deja vu for Indian Space Research Organisation**

- As the Indian Space Research Organisation is in the news for issuing a memorandum aimed at deterring scientists and engineers attached to important missions from quitting, the space agency, in fact, is reliving a nightmare from the 1990s.
- This is perhaps the second time in its history that ISRO is faced with the task of containing mass exits. The first instance was in the early 1990s, when the information technology boom and campus recruitments dealt a blow to ISRO which was then on an expansion mode.
- "Nobody could anticipate it. It was a big crisis back then. Many senior hands left ISRO for the IT sector," recalls E.K. Kutty, who retired in 2005 as Director (Programme Planning and Personnel Policy) from the ISRO headquarters in Bengaluru.
- It was the time when Bengaluru was fast metamorphosing into India's IT hub. At ISRO, the 1990s were also the time when the space agency also was expanding, with work on the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) and satellites at critical junctures.
- Centralised recruitment to science/technology branches was a major change introduced by ISRO back then to handle this crisis. Such measures eventually led to the establishment of the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology in Thiruvananthapuram.
- Resignations and voluntary retirements in ISRO are in the news now with the space agency asking its centre directors and unit heads not to accept requests, especially from hands involved in missions such as Gaganyaan, "as a matter of routine."

❖ **Govt. to move Bill in RS to make insult to the National Song a criminal offence**

- The Centre will begin the Monsoon Session of Parliament on Monday with a move to grant statutory protection to the National Song Vande Mataram, listing the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026.
- This legislation seeks to amend the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
- The statement of objects and reasons of the Bill by Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the 1971 Act provides that any act of intentionally preventing the singing of the National Anthem or causing disturbance to any assembly engaged in such singing constitutes a punishable offence. The proposed amendment seeks to extend similar protection to Vande Mataram.
- According to the Bill, any act causing obstruction in the singing of the National Song or insulting it in any form would become punishable.

- “Presently, there is no specific legal provision to prevent insults to the singing of Vande Mataram... in order to prohibit any person from intentionally preventing the singing of the National Song or causing disturbance to any assembly engaged in such singing, it is proposed to amend Section 3 of the said Act to include the National Song also within its ambit, so as to make such acts punishable,” the Bill circulated among Rajya Sabha members said.
- The government’s move comes amid year-long celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram.
- Earlier, the Union Home Ministry had written to the States directing that the song be played or sung at official functions where the National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana, is rendered.

❖ Ahead of Monsoon Session, MPs seek debate on NEET, delimitation

- Opposition parties stage a brief walkout from all-party meet in protest against invitation to breakaway Trinamool faction; seek talks on police action at Jantar Mantar, E20; Rijiju tells parties to participate constructively in parliamentary debates
- An invitation extended by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju to a breakaway Trinamool Congress group prompted Opposition parties to stage a walkout from the all-party meeting held on Saturday, ahead of the Monsoon Session of Parliament.
- The protest brought together parties that have often been at odds, including the DMK; the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which skipped the INDIA bloc meeting on June 8; and the Left parties, which are ideologically opposed to the Trinamool. They objected to the government’s decision to invite the rebel Trinamool MPs, stating that Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla had not yet recognised the group’s claim that it had merged with the Tripura-based Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI).
- The Opposition’s walkout lasted for a brief while before leaders returned to the meeting and pressed for discussions on a range of issues, including the alleged theft of Ram temple donations, the NEET paper leak controversy, ethanol-blended petrol (E20), the Delhi Police’s action at Jantar Mantar to shift activist Sonam Wangchuk, the continuing hunger strike by students, and the situation in Manipur.
- Mr. Rijiju later said that the walkout “should not be viewed as a boycott of the entire day’s proceedings; it was symbolic”.
- In his opening remarks, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who chaired the meeting, lauded the BJP government for its handling of the ongoing crisis triggered by the U.S.-Iran stand-off.

Delimitation Bill

- Several Opposition leaders sought clarity on reports that the government could revive the Delimitation Bill in view of changes in the Lok Sabha’s composition following split in the Trinamool and Shiv Sena (UBT).
- DMK leader Tiruchi Siva said that his party favoured implementing the 33% reservation for women within the existing strength of the Lok Sabha, and maintained that any delimitation exercise should not adversely affect southern States.

- Mr. Rijiju did not clearly say if the government would bring back the Delimitation Bill during the session, but said the matter would be discussed at the Business Advisory Committee meeting. He urged all parties to participate constructively in parliamentary discussions and support legislative business. Smooth functioning of Parliament, he said, was in the national interest, while disruptions and sloganeering ultimately harmed both Parliament and the Opposition.
- Trinamool MP Mahua Moitra questioned the basis for inviting the 20 rebel MPs. Stating that the disqualification petitions were pending, she said there was no constitutional basis for a separate bloc. Defending the invite, Mr. Rijiju said the breakaway group had sought recognition from the Speaker and could not be ignored by the government.
- Among other demands, Samajwadi Party MP Dharmendra Yadav sought discussion on the alleged theft of Ram temple donations. CPI(M) leader John Brittas criticised the “BJP-engineered split” in Opposition parties, arguing that they weakened democratic representation. CPI leader P. Sandosh Kumar sought a discussion on “large-scale deletions” of voters’ names during the SIR.
- A total of 58 leaders from 40 political parties attended the meeting. The Monsoon Session begins on Monday and will conclude on August 13.

❖ Centre has to align what it says on delimitation with what is written in the Bill

- Though there is no official word on it yet, the Centre appears eager to initiate the delimitation exercise by amending the Constitution and passing a Delimitation Bill. In April, the Centre moved the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill and the Delimitation Bill, which in combination proposed the following:
- Increase the strength of the Lok Sabha to a maximum of 850 seats.
- Allot those seats among States based on the population figures of the “latest Census” (which happens to be that of 2011) and delimit individual constituencies within each State immediately. As per the existing provisions of the Constitution, a fresh allocation among States and delimitation can happen only after the Census of 2027.
- Reserve one-third of the Lok Sabha seats for women, which would otherwise happen along with the fresh delimitation after the 2027 Census.
- The Bills moved by the government did not align with the oral promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah on the floor of Parliament and in interactions with representatives of political parties. The government has publicly maintained that its delimitation plans would not affect the existing proportion of individual States in the Lok Sabha, and that the proposed 50% increase in the size of the Lok Sabha would translate into a 50% increase in the number of seats in each State. Since that promise was in conflict with the text of the proposed amendments in April, no consensus could be reached for the passage of the Constitution amendment, which requires a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha. The amendment Bill was defeated in the Lok Sabha, and the Delimitation Bill was not put to vote.
- The question, therefore, as Parliament convenes for a new session, is how the text of the Constitution can incorporate the promise of maintaining the current proportional distribution of Lok Sabha seats.

- The existing proportion of seats for each State is a constitutional guarantee written into Articles 81 and 82 of the Constitution. That guarantee has a sunset clause — the existing arrangement comes to an automatic end once the data of the first Census after 2026 is published.
- **In Articles 81 and 82, there are references to three Censuses: the first Census after 2026; the Census of 1971; and the Census of 2001. The next delimitation is tied to the first Census after 2026; the existing proportion of Lok Sabha seats among States is tied to the 1971 Census; and the population of individual constituencies within the States is tied to the 2001 Census. The April amendments and the Delimitation Bill, in combination, proposed to remove all these separate references and tie the allotment of seats to the States and the delimitation of constituencies to the “latest Census”.**
- If the Centre wants to make good on its verbal assurance of maintaining the existing proportional share of each State in the Lok Sabha, it must extend the freeze that ends in 2026 into the future. The last two times, the freeze was imposed for 25 years each — in 1976 until 2001, and in 2001 until 2026. If the Centre plans to freeze the current arrangement for another 25 years, the references to the first Census after 2026 in Articles 81 and 82 can be amended to read “after 2051”. Or it can be any other date into the future, as the case may be.
- To ensure that each State gets a 50% increase in seats, the reference to the 1971 Census in Articles 81 and 82 would also need to be retained, unless the government has another formulation to achieve that objective. If the Centre wants to propose a fresh delimitation while retaining the existing proportion of seats and only redrawing constituency boundaries within each State, it can retain the references to the 1971 Census where they exist now in Articles 81 and 82 and amend the references to the 2001 Census to the 2011 Census. This way, the constitutional guarantee of the proportional strength of States can be extended while paving the way for a fresh delimitation of constituencies within State boundaries, and kicking off women’s reservation.

❖ **M.P. Cabinet approves draft UCC Bill; tribes get exemption**

- The draft Bill proposes ban on polygamy, nikah halala, makes registration of live-in relationships mandatory; CM claims that the proposed law has received support from all religious communities
- The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet on Sunday approved the draft Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, proposing a prohibition on practices like polygamy and nikah halala, while introducing strict provisions for live-in relationships. The Bill, however, exempts the State’s large tribal population.
- The Bill, drafted by a six-member committee and scheduled to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly during the Monsoon Session starting Monday, was approved at a special Cabinet meeting near Bhopal.
- Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, who has stepped up his push for the UCC over the past week, claimed that the proposed law had received support from all religious communities and that over 80% of Muslim women and 40% of Muslim men backed the proposal.

- Mr. Yadav also slammed the Congress, saying while Opposition parties like the Left and the Aam Aadmi Party attended the consultations on the government's invitations, the principal Opposition party did not.
- "I don't know what the Congress sees in the Hindu-Muslim votes. They always have a dilemma over one nation, one symbol and one law," he said, addressing the media after the Cabinet meeting.
- The draft Bill excludes the ST communities to protect their "unique cultural heritage and traditional lifestyle".
- "Respecting constitutional safeguards, this law will not apply to Scheduled Tribes (such as Bhil, Gond, Korku, Baiga, Sahariya, and Bharia) covered under Articles 342 and 366 (Clause 25) of the Constitution. Furthermore, communities whose traditional rights are protected under Part XXI of the Constitution have also been specifically exempted," a government official said.
- The Bill seeks to prohibit polygamy across all communities and declares practices like triple talaq and nikah halala as illegal and punishable. "Verbal divorce or decisions made by informal panchayats have been declared completely illegal. Now, a marriage can be dissolved only on clear and statutory grounds prescribed by law," the official said.

Mandatory registration

- As per the draft Bill, it will be mandatory to register marriages and divorces across all communities through government portals, to ensure marital rights, alimony and other legal protections.
- "The Code has removed the term "illegitimate" from the legal framework. Children of married or unmarried parents — whether biological, adopted, or born through surrogacy or Assisted Reproductive Technology — will enjoy equal legal status," he said.
- The Bill also seeks to make it mandatory for live-in couples to submit an affidavit to the local registrar within a month of entering such a relationship, failing which could attract legal action.
- While the minimum age for entering a live-in relationship remains 18, the proposed legislation provides that if either partner is below 21 years of age, information regarding the commencement and termination of the live-in relationship will be sent to their parents or guardians, and that the registrar will also share the record with the local police.
- "Children born out of live-in relationships will be considered legitimate and entitled to full inheritance rights. If the male partner abandons the woman, she can claim maintenance—just like a legal wife—through a competent court," the official said.

❖ **Shah unveils India's first immersive language museum**

- Highlighting that a country's language carries its heritage and offers a window into its culture, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday inaugurated the Museum of Word at the National Library campus here and called it a step to preserve the virasat of India.
- Developed by the National Library under the aegis of the Union Culture Ministry, the first immersive language museum in the country, also known as Shabdlok, celebrates India's rich linguistic heritage and showcases the evolution of its oral and written traditions through interactive and technology-driven exhibits.
- "Our Prime Minister [Narendra Modi] has prioritised both Vikas (development) and virasat (heritage). This museum is a step to preserve India's rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Our language carries our heritage, and through languages you can understand a country's culture," Mr. Shah said addressing the inauguration event.
- The museum features nine galleries exploring different facets of the history of languages and their influence on India's civilisation and culture. It seeks to present language as a living entity that has continuously shaped society while also being shaped by it.

Linguistic diversity

- The first phase of the museum chronicles the diversity of Indian languages, scripts, and literature.
- Rather than a conventional repository, it has been designed as an immersive cultural experience using digital displays, holograms, and motion-sensor technology to engage visitors.
- Shabdlok celebrates India's 22 official languages and traces their journey from oral traditions and ancient manuscripts to printed works and modern electronic texts, highlighting the country's enduring linguistic diversity.

❖ AI to replace third language in select schools

- The State government has taken steps to implement AI in Skill Education instead of a third language in 1,652 government high schools in the State from the 2026-27 academic year.
- The Hindi language teachers' association, in a letter to the Chief Minister, says that the order will plunge their future into darkness
- The State government has taken steps to implement Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Skill Education instead of a third language in 1,652 government high schools in the State under the **National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) from the 2026-27** academic year.
- The '**Samagra Shikshana-Karnataka**' (SSK) has issued a circular for the appointment of guest teachers to teach AI and for necessary preparations to be made at the school level.
- However, the Karnataka High School Hindi Language Teachers' Association has expressed objection to the government move and has written to Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Monday, urging the withdrawal of the circular.

AI teaching in schools

- As per the direction of the State government and the approval of the Project Approval Board of the Union government for 2026-27, AI skill education is being implemented in a total of 1,642 government high schools, including 1,180 newly approved schools, 381 NSQF schools approved in 2024-25 and 2025-26, and 81 existing single-sector schools.
- In the 81 single-sector schools, the beauty and wellness, retail, and apparel sectors currently operating have been replaced by Artificial Intelligence.
- The Block Education Officer concerned has been instructed to appoint one 'AI guest teacher' per school to teach AI.
- In line with the National Education Policy and with the aim of developing employability skills and professional competence among students, it has been suggested that AI in skill education be chosen as a subject in government high schools instead of a third language subject.
- In addition, it has been asked to take necessary steps to deploy the third language teachers in schools implementing AI in skill education instead of a third language subject, to nearby government schools where there is a shortage of teachers.

Teachers oppose

- However, the Karnataka High School Hindi Language Teachers' Association, in its letter to the Chief Minister, said that the order will plunge their future into darkness.
- "Implementing an AI course along with a third language will help children learn AI along with languages. The three-language formula should be continued in Karnataka, and the order issued by the SSK should be withdrawn immediately," urged D. Manjunath, president of the association.

❖ Core sectors grow at five-month high of 5%

- India's core industrial sectors grew at 5% in June 2026, the fastest in five months, as per the inaugural release of the new and updated series of the **Index of Core Industries (ICI)**.
- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Monday released the new series of the ICI, with an updated base year of 2022-23 from the earlier 2011-12. Further, the updated index has an additional sector of iron ore added to it, taking the total number of sectors it covers to nine. The sectoral weights and methods of estimation have also been updated.
- **Within the index, the fastest growth was recorded by iron ore, which grew 43.9% in June 2026 against 19% in May.**
- This growth, however, was likely due to a statistical base effect, since the sector contracted 16.4% in June last year. Electricity, cement, steel, and coal grew 9.8%, 9.8%, 4.6% and 1.4% respectively.
- **The Index of Core Industries last grew faster in January 2026 when it hit a growth of 5.2%, as per the new series. "Owing to intensive use of iron ore in the production process, and its contribution to industrial development, it has been included in the list of core industries as a new item in the revised series of ICI (base year 2022-23)," the Ministry said in a statement.**
- Nearly all the sectors relating to hydrocarbon energy and its products, such as crude oil (-4.2%), natural gas (-7.4%), refinery products (-4.7%), and fertilisers (-3.3%) contracted in June 2026.
- **"The entire crude oil related sectors —** crude oil, gas, refinery products and fertilizers — witnessed negative growth in June which can be attributed to higher imports with global crude prices cooling off," Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at the Bank of Baroda said. "The export of refinery products had slowed down this month. In case of fertilizers, imports tended to increase."

❖ Four Indian seafarers killed near Ukrainian port Odessa

- Four Indian citizens were killed and one was critically injured in an attack on a merchant vessel near the Ukrainian port of Odessa on Sunday. India condemned the incident and called such attacks impeding freedom of navigation "deplorable".
- The Ministry of External Affairs on Monday reiterated India's opposition to attacks on merchant vessels as such incidents violate the freedom of navigation.
- The incident near Ukraine's largest sea port in the **Black Sea** is the first instance of Indian seafarers being killed in the Russia-Ukraine war that started in February 2022. Ukraine's Acting Foreign Minister, Andrii Sybiha, has blamed Russia for the attack and said five crew members of the ship remain missing.
- "On the evening of 19 July 2026, the vessel MV Golden Leo was attacked while departing the port of Odessa. At the time of the incident, there were 17 crew members on board, including five Indian nationals. As per information available, four Indian nationals have tragically lost their lives, while one is hospitalised in a critical condition," said the Ministry of External Affairs in its statement.

'Deplorable incident'

- "India condemns such attacks and reiterates that targeting commercial shipping and endangering innocent civilian crew members, or otherwise impeding freedom of navigation and commerce is deplorable and should be avoided," said the MEA in its statement.

❖ New U.K. PM Burnham vows to bring social reform

- Former Manchester Mayor, Andrew Burnham, was appointed Prime Minister of the U.K. on Monday, its seventh in a decade. Mr. Burnham described the moment as a "circuit breaker", as he promised to usher in a new political and social model for the country, taking power out of London and spreading it across the regions of the U.K.
- The outgoing Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who had made history two years ago, when he led the Labour Party in one of the largest victories in modern times, made history again on Monday, but this time for becoming the U.K.'s shortest serving Labour Prime Minister in modern history. "I go with good grace, I go with a smile, and I go proud of everything that we have achieved," Mr. Starmer said in brief remarks outside on Downing Street, as he wished his successor "every success".
- "We will make this moment a circuit breaker for Britain, bringing forward the biggest changes in the last 40 years: a new political model and a new economic model," Mr. Burnham said outside No.10 Downing Street, minutes after he was ceremonially invited to form a government by Britain's Monarch King Charles III.

❖ Iran in a 'full-scale war', says Pezeshkian as U.S. strikes city housing nuclear plant

- Iran is fighting a "full-scale war" with the U.S., President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Monday, as Washington expanded its strikes across the Islamic republic including a city hosting a nuclear power plant.
- Iran kept up its own attacks across the region in response, with its Revolutionary Guards announcing they had hit targets in Bahrain, Jordan, and Syria, while Bahrain said its air navigation systems were targeted. "The reality is that today the Islamic Republic of Iran is engaged in a full-scale war," said Mr. Pezeshkian, according to a presidency statement. "We must be realistic and accept the natural consequences of this resistance."
- His comments came after state media and local authorities reported U.S. strikes on Monday in the north and centre of the country, areas away from the blockaded Strait of Hormuz waterway. The new fighting came after a weekend in which the U.S. announced three new U.S. military fatalities and one service member missing in action. U.S. President Donald Trump warned Iran late on Monday that it would pay "many times over" for every U.S. soldier it killed.
- In Bushehr, home to the country's only operational civilian nuclear power plant, Governor Mohammad Mozaffari told state news agency IRNA: "A few minutes ago, several locations in Bushehr city were hit by American enemy's projectiles." In East Azerbaijan province in the north, the head of the local crisis management unit Majid Farshi told IRNA that "one person was martyred and several others injured" in an attack there.

- Despite the attacks, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said diplomatic exchanges with the U.S. via mediators were ongoing. “Ideas have been conveyed to us by certain mediators,” he said in Tehran.

❖ **SIR: State introduces doorstep delivery of caste certificate, PRCs**

- Amid the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Monday launched a door-to-door initiative to issue Permanent Residence Certificates (PRCs), one of the 11 documents accepted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) for voter verification under the exercise.
- While Tahsildars are the competent authority to issue PRCs, the State government has also authorised Deputy Tahsildars to issue the certificates to speed up the process.
- The government also rolled out a programme to deliver caste certificates free of cost to beneficiaries across the State.
- Addressing the media at Vidhana Soudha after launching the initiatives, Mr. Shivakumar said they were aimed at reducing the need for citizens to visit multiple government offices.
- Terming the move as a “new concept” by Karnataka, Mr. Shivakumar said that no other State government had provided such a service. “Karnataka has always supported people who have come to the State to build their lives. Your vote, your right, has been the government’s ideology. This initiative is to ensure eligible voters do not lose their voting rights during the SIR,” he said.
- Around 4.85 crore digital caste certificates have already been shared with Deputy Commissioners for printing and doorstep distribution. A mobile application has been developed to record beneficiaries’ Aadhaar numbers, mobile numbers, and acknowledgements after the certificates are delivered, he added.
- “Citizens will also be able to download caste certificates free of cost through the government’s portal using the certificate’s RD number, ration card number or Aadhaar number. The service will also be available at government assistance centres, including newly established centres at the hobli level,” Mr. Shivakumar said, adding that nearly 57 lakh caste certificates have already been linked to beneficiaries’ mobile numbers, with download links sent through WhatsApp and SMS.

❖ **State police to introduce e-zero FIR to report cybercrimes**

- It will help banks freeze accounts that are laundering money in real time; work to roll out the feature in final stages
- Karnataka State Police will soon introduce a feature where you can file e-zero FIRs in cases of cybercrimes, which will help banks freeze accounts that are laundering money in real time.
- However, a complainant will have to present themselves before the jurisdictional police within three days to register an FIR following all due procedures, failing which the complaint will be closed.

- Bengaluru City Police introduced the Cybercrime Incidence Report (CIR), a model that has now been adapted across the country with 1930 helpline to report cybercrimes. However, freezing accounts based on these tipline reports has been a problem at both ends of the spectrum.
- While many banks demand FIRs, which a CIR is not, the cybercrime police across the country have been getting accounts held beyond their jurisdictions frozen as well, leading to many genuine business accounts also being frozen, increasing the number of litigations.
- For instance, a senior cybercrime police official said that in cases of investment fraud, victims are initially paid large profits to convince them to invest more, but these payments come from the accounts of other victims. The police from various jurisdictions end up freezing these victim accounts as well. Justice Suraj Govindaraj of the High Court of Karnataka, while recently passing two judgments in such cases, flagged these issues and made Pronab Mohanty, Director-General of Police (Cyber Command), as the nodal officer to resolve these issues.

Recommendation

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has recently recommended the e-zero FIR, which sources in the Karnataka Police said would be implemented very soon. Work on the infrastructure to roll out this feature is in its final stages, sources said.
- As per this scheme, when a victim calls the 1930 cybercrime tipline, the person attending the call enters the data in the Karnataka Police IT portal and the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP). The entry in the Karnataka Police IT portal will generate an e-zero FIR.
- If the amount lost is below a threshold, which is yet to be decided, it will lead to a report on the e-lost platform and not an FIR. But if the amount lost is above the threshold, it will lead to a zero FIR.

Jurisdiction

- Again, if the jurisdiction of the crime is outside the State, the case will be referred to the respective State. This will prevent police from freezing accounts held beyond their jurisdictions, sources said. If the crime is within the State's jurisdiction, it will be referred to the respective police station, where the victims will have to present themselves within three days to register a regular FIR.

❖ 5L man-days created under VB-G RAM G since July 1: Khandre

The Hindu Bureau BengaluruThe Union government on Monday introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha to replace an ordinance that raised the sanctioned strength of judges in the Supreme Court from 34 to 38, amid concerns over mounting backlog of cases.

It seeks to replace the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, promulgated in May, to increase the sanctioned strength of the court from 33 to 37, excluding the Chief Justice of India.

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal introduced the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill amid protests by Opposition members, who raised slogans over alleged NEET examination paper leak and claims of 'theft' of donations made to the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

The statement of objects and reasons attached to the Bill states that the court had 92,101 pending cases as of January 1, underscoring the need to expand its strength of judges. It adds that the court has been functioning with nearly its full sanctioned strength of 34 judges since 2019.

Rising pendency

- However, the number of fresh cases filed has continued to be higher than that of disposals. In 2025, the court registered 75,410 new cases while disposing of 65,615 matters, adding to the pendency.
- The Bill states that the persistent gap between the institution and the disposal of cases has made docket management increasingly difficult, particularly in relation to older pending matters and cases requiring adjudication by larger Benches.
- It said augmenting the court's strength was among the most effective measures to reduce the backlog of cases. It added that the increase in strength would enable the Chief Justice of India to constitute Constitution Benches more regularly to hear cases involving substantial questions of law.

Cost estimates

- A Financial Memorandum accompanying the Bill estimates that creating four additional posts of judges, along with the required supporting staff, will entail an annual recurring expenditure of approximately ₹10.56 crore. Also, a sum of ₹3.47 crore is expected to be incurred as one-time expenditure on official vehicles, furnishing official residences, and other related expenses, taking the total initial cost to about ₹14.04 crore.
- In May, the Union Cabinet approved the proposal to increase the top court's sanctioned strength, following which the President promulgated an ordinance.
- After the ordinance came into effect, four judges were appointed to the Supreme Court against the enhanced sanctioned strength.
- Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Eshwar Khandre on Monday said officials had been instructed to provide employment to people in their villages under the VB-G RAM G scheme to prevent migration.

❖ India approves first dengue vaccine for persons aged 4-60

- The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has granted market authorisation to Takeda Biopharmaceuticals India's QDENG A (TAK-003), making it the first dengue vaccine to be approved in the country, according to a press release from the company.
- The vaccine has been approved for the prevention of dengue in individuals aged four to 60. QDENG A is a live-attenuated tetravalent vaccine designed to provide protection against all four dengue virus serotypes and is administered as a two-dose regimen, with doses given three months apart.

- According to the company, the vaccine can be administered irrespective of whether an individual has had a previous dengue infection, and does not require pre-vaccination screening.
- The approval comes as dengue continues to pose a significant public health challenge in India, where reported cases have increased nearly 11-fold over the past two decades. India accounts for nearly one-third of the global dengue burden, although modelling studies suggest the actual number of infections is substantially higher than reported.

Clinical trials

- The approval is based on Takeda's global clinical development programme comprising 19 Phase I, II and III clinical trials involving over 28,000 participants in dengue-endemic and non-endemic regions.
- The company's pivotal Phase III trial enrolled more than 20,000 participants across eight dengue-endemic countries.
- According to Takeda, the vaccine demonstrated an efficacy of 80.2% against virologically confirmed dengue 12 months after the second dose, and 90.4% efficacy against dengue-related hospitalisation at 18 months.
- The approval in India was also supported by a Phase III clinical trial conducted among participants aged 4 to 60 years. The company said the study found the vaccine to be safe, well tolerated and immunogenic in children, adolescents and adults.
- Takeda said QDENGRA has been approved in 43 countries across Asia, Latin America and Europe, with more than 32 million doses distributed through public and private immunisation programmes.

❖ NC stages protest in Delhi for J&K Statehood

- Escalating the political showdown over Jammu and Kashmir's political status, National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Ministers, MLAs and party workers staged a protest in the national capital on Monday, demanding the immediate restoration of Statehood to the Union Territory.
- The demonstration, held on the opening day of Parliament's Monsoon Session, was, however, overshadowed by the Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) protest march to Parliament. A group of around 100 NC protesters gathered with placards reading "Apna wada pura karo (fulfil your promise)" and "Restore full Statehood", targeting the Union government over the delay in restoring Statehood.

❖ No decision on ethanol blending with petrol beyond 20%: MoS

- Notwithstanding a series of measures taken in the recent past to popularise bio-fuel blending, the Centre informed on Monday that no decision had been taken to increase the blending quantum with petrol beyond the present 20%.
- The government further added that no decision had been taken to blend ethanol with diesel for commercial usage.
- "At present, no decision has been taken by the government to increase ethanol blending in petrol beyond 20% or to introduce ethanol blending in diesel for commercial use," Suresh Gopi, Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, told Rajya Sabha while responding to a query.

- “Any future decision, if considered, will be based on comprehensive scientific evaluation, vehicle compatibility studies, stakeholder consultations and the availability of adequate domestic production capacity,” he added.
- However, the government, had in June this year, exempted petrol blended with higher quantum of ethanol, that is, 22-30%, from the levy of central excise duties in an effort to boost biofuel blending.
- Further, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) had notified the technical standards to be adhered to if it was to be rolled out commercially.

❖ **India joins WTO’s agreement on fisheries subsidies**

- India on Monday announced it had joined the WTO’s agreement on fisheries subsidies, which prohibits government support to illegal fishing activities and over-exploitation of stocks.
- The agreement focuses on subsidies related to marine wild capture fishing and fishing-related activities at sea. It was adopted by consensus at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva in 2022 and the first multilateral WTO agreement with an environmental sustainability objective.pti

❖ **RBI special swap sees over \$20 bn inflow**

- The Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) foreign currency swap facility operationalised through Foreign Currency Non-Resident-Bank (FCNR(B)) deposits, external commercial borrowings (ECBs) and overseas foreign currency borrowings (OFCBs) to mobilise foreign exchange has generated more than \$20 billion, according to data released by the RBI.
- “The swap facility has seen avid interest and attracted steady forex inflows since June 8, 2026,” the RBI said.
- Based on the data received from authorised dealer banks of forex inflows mobilised till July 17, was \$20.72 billion in all.
- This includes \$17.4 billion via FCNR (B), \$1.97 billion via OFCBs and \$1.34 via ECBs.
- To strengthen India’s balance of payments and incentivise capital inflows, the central bank had on June 5 announced a series of measures, including a facility for offering concessional swaps for fresh FCNR(B) deposits, OFCB and ECB inflows.
- “Of the 178 taluks in the State that have received deficit rainfall, 60 are facing severe deficit. Instructions have been given to prioritise drinking water needs and provide employment in villages to prevent migration,” he told presspersons here. He said that since July 1, when the new employment and livelihood scheme came into force, five lakh man-days of employment had been generated, and employment had been provided to all those who sought it.
- “By the end of July, 10 lakh man-days of employment will be created. A target of meeting 1.25 crore man-days every month has been set, and ₹2,900 crore for the first quarter has already been released. Everyone in rural areas with a job card will get 125 man-days of employment. There is scope to take up 318 types of works under the scheme, and there are opportunities to further expand its scope,” he said.

❖ Govt. introduces Bill in Lok Sabha to raise strength of judges in SC to 38

- The Union government on Monday introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha to replace an ordinance that raised the sanctioned strength of judges in the Supreme Court from 34 to 38, amid concerns over mounting backlog of cases.
- It seeks to replace the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, promulgated in May, to increase the sanctioned strength of the court from 33 to 37, excluding the Chief Justice of India.
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- In May, the Union Cabinet approved the proposal to increase the top court's sanctioned strength, following which the President promulgated an ordinance.
- After the ordinance came into effect, four judges were appointed to the Supreme Court against the enhanced sanctioned strength.

❖ Toxic gas kills 20 in Sikkim tunnel, efforts on to save 5 workers

- A sudden release of suspected methane gas killed at least 20 workers inside an under-construction tunnel of the **National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC)'s Teesta State-VI Hydroelectric Project** in Namchi district of Sikkim. Efforts were under way to rescue five others trapped inside the structure.
- The incident occurred inside the head race tunnel under construction at Samardung on Monday afternoon “due to sudden explosive release of suspected methane gas trapped/embedded in the rocks, resulting in the generation of dense smoke and toxic gases”, the NHPC said in a statement.
- Twenty-five personnel were inside the tunnel during the incident, the NHPC said, citing information received from officials at the project site. Seven of the dead workers have been identified so far.
- **Three of them were from West Bengal, one each from Sikkim and Uttarakhand, and the rest from Assam, Namchi's Superintendent of Police, Sonam Dolma Bhutia, told journalists.** A few bouts of rainfall since Monday have affected the rescue operations to some extent, she said.
- “Our site engineering teams are working round-the-clock alongside the authorities to assist in stabilising the tunnel environment and ensuring rescue. A detailed investigation will be conducted to ascertain the cause of the incident,” the NHPC said.
- Apart from top officials of the NHPC, a special rescue team from the Director-General of Mines Safety has reached the site, closely coordinating with the rescue teams and local authorities.

High-level inquiry

- On Tuesday morning, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called **Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang to enquire about the situation.**
- Later in the day, the Chief Minister inspected the project site. He announced that the State government would constitute a high-level inquiry committee to ascertain the cause of the incident, adding that the government would provide ex gratia assistance to the families of the deceased workers.

❖ EV tech incubation centre to beset up in Mysuru

- With the aim of providing engineering students planning to start electric vehicle (EV) technology start-ups with the necessary technological and financial support, Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) has decided to establish an **Electric Vehicle (EV) Tech Incubation Centre** at Choranahalli in Mysuru.
- The **State government has provided financial assistance of about ₹12 crore for the project.**

MoU

- VTU Vice-Chancellor S. Vidyashankar said that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the State government will be signed soon.
- **“EV technology is advancing rapidly across the globe. Many of our students have innovative ideas related to EV technology, but they lack the necessary funding and technological support to implement them.** Therefore, seed funding and space will be provided for the implementation of new EV-related ideas and the establishment of start-ups at our incubation centre,” he said.
- He added that engineering students aspiring to become EV entrepreneurs would be provided the necessary support.
- “All required training, including hands-on experience, marketing strategies, and product development and presentation, will be provided,” he said.

❖ **‘Fast-track PM-KUSUM Component-C rollout’**

- Additional Chief Secretary, Energy Department, Gaurav Gupta, directed officials to expedite the implementation of the **KUSUM-C scheme, an initiative aimed at ensuring quality daytime power supply to farmers across Karnataka.**
- The **State has planned to solarise agricultural feeders under the PM-KUSUM Component-C scheme.**

Progress

- **Of the total target, 439 projects with a combined capacity of 2,767 MW have already been awarded and agreements executed.**
- **Works covering 540 MW have been completed, while implementation of the remaining 2,227 MW is under way.**

❖ **‘Make plans to develop tourism in CRZ-notified beaches’**

- Minister for Energy and Tourism K.J. George has directed officials to undertake a comprehensive assessment of all beaches in Karnataka where tourism activities are permitted under the **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)** regulations and prepare a separate Tourism Development Master Plan for each beach.
- **Karnataka has a 320-km long coastline with immense potential for beach tourism, marine adventure tourism, wellness tourism, eco-tourism, and hospitality investments.** While CRZ regulations already permit tourism development in several coastal stretches, no comprehensive study has so far been undertaken to assess their tourism potential and plan their development in a systematic manner, the Minister said.
- He instructed officials to evaluate the unique potential of each beach individually by studying road connectivity, existing infrastructure, and the potential for generating local employmen.
- Clean energy push is the India’s answer to transition challenges: UN climate chief

- **India's main response to the technical and financial challenges of its energy transition lies in decarbonisation and electrification — steps that serve the country's own self-interest and are being backed by both public and private finance, the UN's top climate official said here on Tuesday.**
- Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change, was responding to questions from journalists after two days of talks with Indian Ministers and business leaders. The challenges India faces, he said, run “across a spectrum”, from technical hurdles at one end to finance at the other.
- On the technical side, Mr. Stiell pointed to (electric) “grids and storage”. These were problems, he noted, that most major economies advancing their energy transitions are grappling with. International cooperation could deliver common solutions, he said, adding that grids and storage sit at the heart of the electrification agenda that **Turkiye and Australia, holding the COP31** presidency, have made a priority this year.
- The intermittent nature of solar and wind energy means that relying on coal power, which could be harnessed night or day, is crucial for India. On the other hand, this also means that the vast amount of solar power available during the day had to be intentionally wasted to keep the electric grid stable. **The electrification agenda refers to a plan to ensure at least 35% of the total energy used globally is sourced from electricity, by 2035.**
- Finance marks the other end of that spectrum. Decarbonisation and electrification fall squarely within India's self-interest, and efforts are under way to mobilise both public and private money to support them, Mr. Stiell said. “India, like many developing countries, struggles in terms of finance for areas such as adaptation... So, the areas of climate finance are key and have been highlighted in our discussions,” he added.

❖ **Global wars delaying FTA negotiations**

- The deals facing various degrees of delays include separate free trade agreements with the **Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Israel, and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union**, cumulatively accounting for about \$243 billion worth of trade for India, or about 20% of its total trade.
- The ongoing wars in the world have led to varying degrees of delays in the negotiations of at least three separate trade deals that India is working on, sources in the government have confirmed.
- These deals involve countries that cumulatively account for about 20% of India's total trade.
- These negotiations are on separate **FTAs with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Israel, and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union.**
- “The **GCC team had come to Delhi for the signing of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the deal and so it is our turn to go there for the round of negotiation,**” a senior official in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry told The Hindu. “But with all this happening [the ongoing war in West Asia], that visit is pending.”
- Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and the Secretary General of the **GCC, Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, on February 24, 2026, formally launched negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the GCC countries — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.**

- However, later that month, the U.S. launched its attack on Iran.
 - As a result, the first round of negotiations is yet to take place.
 - **“This FTA is of particular importance for India not just as a strategic one, but also because of access,” the official said. “It will mean that any one of the ports of the GCC countries will give Indian exporters access to all the other countries.”**
 - The negotiations regarding the **India-Israel FTA**, too, are facing similar delays. The ToR for the deal was signed in Tel Aviv in November 2025 by Mr. Goyal and Israel’s Economy Minister Nir Barkat. The first round of negotiations took place in February 2026 in New Delhi and the second round was to be in May in Tel Aviv.
 - However, the war in the region delayed these talks as well and changed the location. Talks have only now resumed, with the Israeli negotiating team currently in New Delhi until July 23 to discuss the deal.
 - “Our team was to go there, but safety was obviously an issue,” the official explained.
 - He added that similar concerns are leading to delays in India’s in-person negotiations with the **Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) as well. The EAEU comprises Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia.**
 - **“The first round of the EAEU FTA was held in November 2025 and the second round in Moscow was held all the way in June 2026,”** he explained. “The back-end talks are progressing well, but actual visits are becoming difficult to coordinate especially now that Ukraine has intensified its counteroffensive.”
- **India conducts \$60.7 billion worth of annual trade with the EAEU nations, predominantly with Russia. It has a total annual trade of about \$178.7 billion with the GCC countries and \$3.9 billion with Israel.**

- In total, therefore, the wars are delaying negotiations on trade deals involving about \$243 billion worth of trade for India, or about 20% of India’s total trade.

❖ **Indian Oil Corp said to cancel Iraq oil lifting amid attacks**

- Indian Oil Corp has cancelled the lifting of Iraqi oil from Basrah Oil Terminal due to increased risk and attacks on some vessels transiting through the Strait of Hormuz, three sources familiar with the matter said.
- State-run IOC was preparing to lift 2 million barrels of Iraqi oil in the very large crude carrier Lila Jamnagar around July 23.

Another cancellation

- Another state refiner, Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd., also cancelled plans to lift oil from Iraq in the Indian-flagged Aframax tanker Desh Gaurav, they said.
- The two Indian refiners did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.
- India has advised shipowners, ship managers and recruitment companies not to deploy the country’s seafarers on vessels undertaking trips through the Strait of Hormuz following the resumption of fighting in the region.
- The shipping regulator has also directed masters of vessels to ensure that they are sufficiently vigilant about the security situation in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and adjoining waters, and called for continuous monitoring of navigational warnings.

- The **Strait of Hormuz between Iran and Oman** was the main transit route before the conflict for around a fifth of global energy supplies.
- Tensions have escalated since a fragile truce between Washington and Tehran collapsed in early July, reviving heavy exchanges of strikes and further disrupting shipping through the waterway.

❖ 'India-U.K. FTA gives predictability for firms on both sides'

- The **India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)** creates “a predictable and attractive environment” for businesses in both the countries, according to Chris Hayward who is the policy chief of the City of London Corporation, London’s financial and commercial hub. Mr Hayward was responding to questions in a written interview with.

War risk

India's trade deals facing delays because of global wars

In \$ billion, unless specified

	Exports	Imports	Total Trade	Share in India's Total Trade
GCC	55.7	122.9	178.7	14.70%
EAEU	5.1	55.6	60.7	5%
Israel	2.2	1.7	3.9	0.30%
Total	63	180.3	243.3	20%

Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry • Note: GCC - Gulf Cooperation Council; EAEU - Eurasian Economic Union

- “For British companies already operating in India, it gives them greater confidence to expand their presence, invest for the long term, and participate in India’s growth story,” he said.
- On a recent visit to India, Mr Hayward said he saw companies eager to expand in the U.K., noting that India was already one of the largest sources of investment in the U.K.
- Regarding the relatively frequent change in Prime Ministers and potential policy instability, in the UK, Mr. Hayward said investors should look beyond day-to-day politics and instead focus on long- term fundamentals.
- “The U.K. has one of the world’s most established legal systems, respected independent institutions, deep capital markets and a long track record as a stable destination for international investment. Governments change, but those foundations remain consistent,” he said.

❖ State steps up drive to reduce trans fats in food supply chain

- From roadside eateries to large food manufacturers, Karnataka is stepping up efforts **to reduce the use of industrially-produced trans fats — a major contributor to heart disease and other non-communicable illnesses.**
- At a State-level sensitisation programme on eliminating industrially produced trans fats, held here on Tuesday, the **Food Safety and Drug Administration (FSDA) Commissioner** said Karnataka would intensify surveillance, inspection, and enforcement to ensure compliance with food safety regulations aimed at reducing trans fats in the food supply chain.
- The programme brought together Food Safety Department officials, food business operators, edible oil manufacturers, industry representatives, and public health experts to discuss ways to strengthen implementation of the regulations.

Why trans fats matter

- Officials pointed out that **industrially produced trans fats, commonly found in partially hydrogenated oils used in some processed and fried foods, are among the most harmful dietary risk factors. Excess consumption has been linked to cardiovascular diseases, coronary heart disease, obesity, metabolic disorders, and adverse reproductive health outcomes.**
- According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, industrial trans fats are responsible for more than 278,000 deaths globally every year, including nearly 5 lakh premature deaths from coronary heart disease. The WHO has called for their complete elimination from the global food supply chain.
- **India has adopted regulations limiting industrially produced trans fats to less than 2% in fats and oils.**
- The State has expanded awareness and capacity-building initiatives. More than 52,000 food business operators and professionals have been trained on safe food practices and trans-fat regulations.
- Officials said the **Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO)** initiative has gained momentum, with 45.87 lakh litres of used cooking oil collected across Karnataka between 2024 and 2026. The initiative seeks to prevent repeated use of cooking oil by diverting used oil for industrial purposes, such as biodiesel production, instead of allowing it to re-enter the food chain.
- Enforcement drives during the period resulted in penalties amounting to ₹28.91 lakh for violation of food safety norms. Awareness campaigns have been carried out through print, electronic and digital media.

❖ **CWMA asks Karnataka and T.N. to use storage only for drinking water**

- Cauvery Water Management Authority directs both States to maintain a status quo with respect to water release and utilisation; it also refers to IMD forecast that indicates a tough time ahead
- Taking a serious note of poor rainfall in the Cauvery basin, the **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)** that met in Delhi on Wednesday has directed both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to strictly confine use of their storage to drinking water purposes.
- **The CWMA, which is the apex body that monitors implementation of Cauvery water release to lower riparian States as per the Supreme Court's verdict, directed both the States to maintain status quo with respect to water release and utilisation.**
- According to sources, the CWMA referred to the IMD forecast that indicates further tough time in terms of rainfall in the coming days, and observed that it is going to be a distress year for the Cauvery basin.
- The present storage in reservoirs of the Cauvery basin in both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu could only take care of their drinking water requirements, the authority reportedly observed.
- **Warning both the States against using the water storage for other purposes including irrigation, the authority expressed confidence that it would be possible to prevent any drinking water shortage if the storage in reservoirs is judiciously used, sources said. The authority recalled that it had cautioned the States about possible distress in April and May itself.**
- At Wednesday's meeting, it was also noted that Karnataka had released only 2.5 tmcft of water in June and 0.54 tmcft during July so far to Tamil Nadu, which is lower than that prescribed.

Review on June 28

- Meanwhile, the situation will be reviewed on July 28 by the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee, which assists the CWMA in monitoring the storage, releases and other issues.
- **Karnataka is gripped by a serious drought marked by a rainfall deficit of about 35%. What has caused concern is that the Kodagu region that forms the biggest catchment area for the Cauvery besides being the point of origin for the river, is facing a huge rainfall shortage of 45%.**
- As of July 22, the cumulative storage from all the four reservoirs in Karnataka's Cauvery basin accounts for 52% of their full storage capacity. Already, the Karnataka government has told farmers in command areas that water would not be released for irrigation purposes and the storage would be protected for drinking water requirements.

❖ **KPCL steps up thermal power generation**

- It has set a target of increasing daily thermal power output to 100 million units in the coming days.
- The **Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL)** has stepped up thermal power generation to ensure adequate and reliable electricity supply across the State amid declining reservoir levels and hydropower generation due to deficient rainfall.
- As part of its efforts to meet the State's power requirements, the KPCL has been generating an average of 84.34 million units of thermal power every day in July. It is maintaining its thermal power plants in optimal operating condition and taking measures to further augment generation, with a target of increasing daily thermal power output to 100 million units in the coming days, said a release.
- Energy and Tourism Minister K.J. George has already reviewed KPCL's power generation activities and directed officials to take measures to ensure that power generation is in line with demand.
- During this monsoon, particularly in July, there has been a significant increase in both coal supplies and power generation at the three thermal power plants in the State. During July last year, the average daily generation stood at 54.47 million units as against the average of 84.34 million units of thermal power this year.
- At the **Raichur Thermal Power Station, an average of 24.45 million units of electricity is being generated per day in July this year, compared to an average of 13.12 million units per day during July last year.**
- At the Ballari Thermal Power Station, an average of 33.64 million units of electricity is being generated per day, compared to 25.35 million units per day during July last year.
- At Yermarus Thermal Power Station, an average of 26.25 million units is being generated per day, compared to 16 million units per day during July last year, the release said.
- Measures have already been taken to increase coal stocks to facilitate higher power generation at thermal power plants. During the corresponding period last year, coal stocks were sufficient for 12 days of generation. This year, stocks sufficient for 15 days have been maintained. Steps are also being taken to increase coal stocks to a level sufficient for 20 days of operation. To achieve this, arrangements have been made to receive 17–18 coal rakes per day, said the release.

❖ **Anti-ragging law gets Kerala Cabinet nod**

- The Kerala Cabinet on Wednesday gave its nod for framing an anti-ragging law and launching an app in memory of veterinary sciences student J.S. Sidharthan, whose death in 2024, allegedly following brutal ragging, had triggered a public outcry.
- Briefing presspersons, Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan said the app could be used to tip off authorities about ragging incidents.
- Both proposals were part of the Revised Budget for 2026-27 presented by the UDF government on June 19. In his Budget speech, Mr. Satheesan had announced that the 'Sidharthan Student Distress App' would be introduced, and the 'Sidharthan Anti-Ragging and Student Welfare Act' would be enacted to prevent ragging incidents.

❖ 'Stable India-China ties will help build multi-polar Asia'

- Peace and tranquillity in the border areas is pre-requisite for normal ties, says Jaishankar during talks with Wang Yi; Minister raises safety of Indian seafarers during discussion with Sergey Lavrov
- Stable India-China relations will help foster a “multi-polar Asia” and a “multi-polar world”, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said during a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Manila.
- The meeting took place before the Foreign Ministers of the Quad countries, Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S., met on the sidelines of the 59th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in the Philippine capital and reiterated their support for stability in the Indo-Pacific region.
- In a separate meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, held days after four Indian seafarers were killed in a Russian projectile strike in the Black Sea, Mr. Jaishankar expressed “strong concern” regarding the safety of Indian seafarers.
- “We believe that a stable and cooperative relationship can best be developed on the basis of mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity. Such a relationship can make a valuable contribution to a multi-polar Asia and a multi-polar world,” Mr. Jaishankar said in his remarks, highlighting that “peace and tranquillity in the border areas is obviously the pre-requisite for normal ties”.
- The comments came against the backdrop of renewed India-China engagement, including the resumption of direct flights, updates to the visa regime, the restart of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, and the resumption of border trade. In this context, Mr. Jaishankar said, “... the steps in normalisation taken over the last few months must be welcomed.” He referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping's meeting in Kazan in October 2024 and recalled that the two leaders had “agreed that differences should not become disputes”. He also raised the importance of “predictability of supply chains” and “fair market access”, which need to be addressed.
- The India-China ministerial discussion was followed by the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Quad countries that reiterated their support for stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The External Affairs Ministry issued a joint press release on cooperation between the Quad members and the **ASEAN countries, stating, “As ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partners we, the Secretary of State of the United States and the Foreign Ministers of Australia, India and Japan met today in Manila to reaffirm our commitment to strengthening a free and open Indo-Pacific and our unwavering support for ASEAN unity and centrality.”**
- Mr. Jaishankar held an “in-depth review” of India-Russia bilateral relations with Mr. Lavrov and expressed “strong concern regarding the safety of Indian seafarers in the region”.
- “Discussed various aspects of our partnership including trade and investment, energy and connectivity, science and technology and mobility,” said Mr. Jaishankar about his meeting with Mr. Lavrov.

❖ **NHPC's own paper detailed gas fires in Teesta-VI tunnels before fatal blast**

- Flammable gas had been encountered repeatedly, and had caught fire more than once inside the headrace tunnels of the Teesta Stage-VI hydroelectric project in the years before the explosion, suspected to be from release of methane, which killed at least 15 workers on Monday, according to a technical paper written by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited's (NHPC) own engineers in 2024.
- **The paper, authored by five NHPC engineers and presented at EUROENGEO 2024, the 4th European Regional Conference of the International Association for Engineering Geology, at Dubrovnik, Croatia, sets out the geological difficulties faced in completing the 500 MW project's two headrace tunnels, each about 13.7 km long.** The paper was written well before the accident and does not describe the recent blast. A headrace tunnel is the component that purveys water from a source to an electric plant's turbines.
- According to the paper, "flammable gas" was first detected in November 2009, during excavation by the project's original developer, at a tunnel face where it "burst into flame". After the NHPC resumed work, gas was again reported seeping from the tunnel roof at a separate face, where a detector recorded readings of up to 30% of the minimum concentration at which methane in the air can combust. Both 'faces' (the working end of a tunnel) named in the paper — designated 4A and 4B — were reached through Adit-3, the same access tunnel in which the July 20 blast occurred.
- The paper attributes the gas to the rock itself, noting that it was detected at the contact between hard quartzite and softer phyllite. The project's tunnels pass through young, fractured Himalayan rock in Seismic Zone IV, including carbon-rich phyllite of the kind associated with trapped gas.
- The NHPC has said the July 20 explosion followed a "sudden burst of suspected methane gas" struck during work about 1.5 km inside the tunnel at the Samardung site in Sikkim's Namchi district, and has announced a detailed investigation. About 25 workers were inside when the blast triggered a landslide that sealed the tunnel, and rescue operations are continuing this week.
- The paper also catalogues extensive instability along the tunnels. When the NHPC restarted excavation in 2021, after the project had stood idle for roughly nine years, it found many stretches built by the previous developer had collapsed, with cave-ins in places reaching the surface, and the access adits flooded. The paper, available online, is titled 'Planning and Methodology Adopted to Deal with Adverse Geological Problems Encountered During HRTS Excavation of Teesta VI Hydroelectric Project (500MW), Sikkim, India'.

❖ Govt. clarifies on FCRA Bill's designated authority clause

- Amid concerns raised by minority institutions, particularly the Christian bodies, against the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 (FCRA), the Press Information Bureau (PIB) said on Wednesday that the designated authority would retain the religious character of places of worship.
- One key provision in the FCRA Bill, 2026, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on March 25 but could not be passed following an uproar by the Opposition parties, is the appointment of a 'designated authority' to take over, manage, or dispose of assets created from foreign funds when an NGO's FCRA registration is suspended, cancelled, or not renewed. This authority will have the powers of a civil court and can order the transfer or sale of assets owned by NGOs to the government or any other body.
- The Bill is listed for passage in the ongoing monsoon session of the Parliament.
- "The designated authority manages only assets created from foreign contributions, and only once an organisation's registration has lawfully ceased. Vesting is initially provisional, with full restoration if registration is renewed, and places of worship retain their religious character by law in all cases. The orders of the authority are subject to revision and to appeal before the court of the District Judge," the PIB said, while responding to a "myth" that the government can seize an NGO's assets under the 2026 amendments.

Power of courts

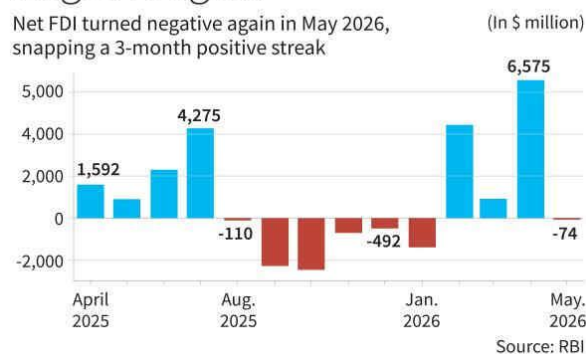
- Responding to another "myth" that cancellation of FCRA registration always means the organisation has done something wrong, the PIB said, "Not necessarily. Many cancellations and non-renewals are administrative, arising from non-filing of annual returns, non-renewal before expiry, or failure to maintain designated accounts. The courts remain fully empowered to review any cancellation."
- It added that in 2024-25, approximately 16,200 associations were actively registered and received around ₹22,963 crore in foreign contribution, "hardly the footprint of a prohibition".
- Answering a question about whether the "FCRA is aimed only at NGOs and religious organisations", the statement said that "comparable global laws cover lobbyists, public relations firms, think tanks, universities and companies, anyone acting at a foreign principal's direction, regardless of sector".
- On July 10, Home Minister Amit Shah assured the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), the apex body of the Catholic church in India, that the FCRA Bill is not against the Christian NGOs, which receive a little under 15% of the total foreign donations.

❖ Economy navigated external uncertainties well: RBI bulletin

- Indian economy has navigated well the external uncertainties and supply chain pressures, underpinned by healthy demand conditions and resilient performance of industrial and services sectors, according to a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bulletin.

Negative again

Net FDI turned negative again in May 2026, snapping a 3-month positive streak



- “The global economy is dealing with uncertain economic environment, supply chain disruptions and fragmented trading relationships. Amid these uncertainties, India remains among the fastest growing major economies across the globe and has been able to sustain the momentum in economic activities through June,” senior officials said in RBI Bulletin July edition, which was released on Wednesday.
- Highlighting that both industrial and services sector indicators remained firm; they however said the farm sector was witnessing “uneven” southwest monsoon but the impact on food inflation may be mitigated by comfortable foodgrain stocks.

❖ Net FDI negative in May on \$74 million excess outflow

- Net foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows turned negative once again in May with outflows exceeding inflows by \$74 million, according to the latest Reserve Bank of India data.
- This snapped a three-month streak of positive net inflows and was driven by a sharp drop in direct investment entering India.
- That is, even though outflows fell, inflows fell by a larger amount.
- As per the data, the total direct investment entering the country, or gross inflows, stood at about \$6.07 billion in May 2026. This was 60% lower than in April and nearly 23% lower than in May last year.
- The RBI’s commentary did not speak about May on a standalone basis but instead focused on the April-May 2026 period.
- During this period, it said Japan, Singapore, and Mauritius accounted for about 74% of the total equity inflows with financial services receiving the highest share, followed by manufacturing, retail and wholesale trade and computer services. It added these sectors together accounted for about 80% of total inflows.

Total outflows

- Total outflows stood at \$6.14 billion in May 2026, lower than in April 2026 and May of last year. But total outflows exceeded total inflows by \$74 million.
- Within the outflows, outward investment by Indian firms stood at \$2.4 billion in May this year, 49% lower than in April and 9.6% lower than May 2025.
- “Of the outward FDI, around 74% of the flows were directed towards the U.S., Cayman Islands and the Netherlands; the major sectors included financial, insurance and business services and manufacturing, accounting for more than 85% of the outward flows during April-May 2026,” the RBI said.

- The other component of outflows, repatriation and disinvestment by foreign companies operating in India, stood at \$3.7 billion in May 2026. This was 5.1% lower than in April and 13.3% lower than in May of last year.

❖ U.S. to announce nuclear agreement with Saudi Arabia

- The United States plans to announce a landmark deal with Saudi Arabia on Wednesday that would help establish a civilian nuclear programme in the kingdom, according to media reports.
- The move comes as Washington fights a war with Iran that began in part over U.S. concerns with Tehran's own nuclear program — an issue that remains a key point of contention during now-stalled talks between the two foes.
- The New York Times, citing two unidentified U.S. officials, reported on Tuesday that the Trump administration planned to formally sign and announce the deal with the Saudis on Wednesday.
- President Donald Trump's administration said the agreement would provide billions of dollars for the U.S. nuclear industry.
- A provision in the 30-year deal would potentially see U.S. companies build a uranium enrichment facility in Saudi Arabia, the Wall Street Journal reported.
- However, U.S. lawmakers from both parties and Israeli officials have voiced opposition to a civilian nuclear project for Saudi Arabia over fears it could be converted to eventually develop nuclear weapons.

❖ Houthi attacks drive Brent price past \$100

- In an escalation of the conflict in West Asia, the Houthis, Iran's allies in Yemen, said they attacked two Saudi Arabia-flagged tankers in the Red Sea on Thursday, as part of a blockade on Saudi shipping.
- According to Al Masirah, the Houthis' official television channel, the attacks on the Encelia and the Layla took place early on July 23. Saudi Arabia's official Saudi Press Agency has confirmed the projectile attack on the Encelia, adding that the crew is safe and the vessel secured. The attack on the Layla, a three lakh-tonne Saudi-flagged **Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC)**, remains unconfirmed.
- Soon after the attacks were reported, Brent crude rates surged past \$100 a barrel, a 7% jump over the previous day's close of around \$94.
- **The escalation off the Bab el-Mandeb Strait — the Red Sea's exit to the Arabian Sea — comes with attacks erupting in regions crucial to India's oil imports. After constraints on the Strait of Hormuz, Saudi Arabia had been piping some 4 million barrels of crude across the country to be shipped out through Yanbu — port city on the Red Sea coast — largely to Asian markets, including India.**
- Thursday's attacks comes close on the heels of Ukraine targeting Russian merchant ships, including oil tankers, off the port of Novorossiysk, a Russian city on the Black Sea coast. Ukraine has claimed more than 180 hits on Russian ships in the Black Sea in July. On July 17 and 19, Russia attacked two ships off Odesa, a Ukrainian port on the Black Sea, killing four Indian seafarers.
- Saudi Arabia currently supplies around 0.4 million barrels per day (mbpd) to India, via Yanbu and Bab al-Mandab. India's crude oil imports are a little less than 5 mbpd. "A disruption may mean cargoes may need to be rerouted via the Suez Canal, into the Mediterranean and around Africa, but that will take much longer and come with higher freight costs," says Pankaj Srivastava, a senior vice president at Rystad Energy.
- Mr. Srivastava says India imported 2.25 mbpd of Russian crude in June, with nearly 0.7 mbpd originating from Novorossiysk. "If the disruption persists or infrastructure damage is more extensive, India could face additional pressure in securing replacement crude volumes," he says, adding that the immediate impact is likely to remain manageable.
- Since the Houthi hijacking of the car carrier Galaxy Leader in November 2023, ship traffic across the Suez Canal had plummeted. It picked up in January this year, however, and surged in March, as Yanbu became an alternative to the Strait of Hormuz. The Houthis have cited Saudi Arabia's "blockade of supplies" and the attack on Sanaa international airport in Yemen on July 13 as reasons for their blockade. Reuters has, however, reported that Iran is inspiring the Houthi blockade of Saudi oil-carrying ships.
- Shipping industry sources say insurance rates climbed 10 to 15 times as soon as the Houthis announced their blockade on July 20, nearly matching rates for the Strait of Hormuz. Meanwhile, the U.S.-based think tank, Institute for the Study of War, said that at least seven vessels have already diverted their routes to avoid the Bab al-Mandab Strait as a consequence of the tanker attacks.

- Erik Grundt, Rystad Energy's senior market analyst, says: "In sailing-time terms, the detour through the Suez Canal and around Africa stretches the Yanbu-to-India (west coast) voyage from about eight days to nearly 39 days." Compounding this, VLCCs are too large to transit the Suez Canal fully loaded, so they must partially offload at Ain Sukhna and reload at Sidi Kerir on the Mediterranean side, adding time and complexity.

❖ **IISc decodes viral hijack of host protein machinery**

- Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru have decoded how the **encephalomyocarditis virus (EMCV)** hijacks a host's protein synthesis machinery.
- **EMCV is a rodent-borne animal virus that causes heart and brain inflammation, reproductive problems, and neurological disorders in many mammals.**
- According to the researchers, viruses lack their own molecular machinery required for protein synthesis. Instead, they hijack the host's protein-making machinery, specifically ribosomes and translational factors.

Viral multiplication

- "This process is essential for viral multiplication and infection. **Viruses have RNA genomes or mRNAs containing structured regions called Internal Ribosomal Entry Sites (IRES), which help capture the host ribosome to translate viral genes while the translation of host genes is blocked,**" it said.
- In a new study published in eLife, the researchers used cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) to decode how the EMCV IRES hijacks the host's protein synthesis machinery.
- IISc said that targeting the IRES could open up new therapeutic strategies against this virus and similar viruses – like the poliovirus – that employ the same mechanism.
- IRES were initially discovered more than a decade ago in EMCV and the poliovirus. But so far, their structure and specific mechanisms by which they act remained elusive.
- "Nothing was known in terms of the details of how the virus captures the host ribosome — other than the translational factors involved — and exactly how it does so biochemically," said Tanweer Hussain, associate professor in the Department of Developmental Biology and Genetics (DBG), IISc, and the corresponding author.

Pulldown strategy

- To address this gap, Deepakash Das, PhD student in Prof. Hussain's lab and the first author, devised a pulldown strategy using an EMCV IRES-containing mRNA to isolate the EMCV IRES pre-initiation complex from the cell lysate of rabbit reticulocytes (immature red blood cells). This pre-initiation complex is the assembly that the viral RNA forms with the host ribosome to hijack it, marking the first step in making viral proteins.

- **Using a specially designed bait protein, the team fished out and captured the entire IRES complex intact, including various key components of translation initiation — the 40S ribosomal subunit, the initiator tRNA, and the eIF2 (eukaryotic initiation factor 2) complex – from the cell lysate, and then examined it using cryo-EM**
- “Early purification attempts went well — something of a beginner’s luck — but many subsequent rounds failed to produce usable results. Cryo-EM grids frequently failed to yield enough particles for a reliable structure, but we persisted,” Prof. Hussain said.
- IISc said eventually, cryo-EM images showed that the EMCV IRES directly interacts with the 40S ribosomal unit and initiator tRNA of the host — a mechanism that hasn’t been used by other viruses before — to hijack the host translational machinery.

❖ **Western Ganga dynasty chosen as theme for I-Day flower show**

- For the upcoming flower show to mark the **79th Independence Day on August 15, the Horticulture Department has chosen the rule of the Western Ganga dynasty as the theme for the show at Lalbagh.**
- Speaking to The Hindu, M. Jagadeesh, Joint Director, Horticulture Department (Parks and Gardens), said, “We had sent around 20 options to the officials concerned and the Chief Minister’s Office. Among them, we have been directed to showcase the history of the Western Ganga dynasty. They ruled the region from 350 CE to 1000 CE and are credited with establishing a strong, unified kingdom in Karnataka, especially in southern Karnataka.”
- Mr. Jagadeesh further added, “To gather information on the Western Gangas, our team has contacted various historians, academics, and the Karnataka Sahitya Akademi.”
- **“The world-famous statue of Bahubali and other monuments at Shravanabelagola were carved during the Ganga era. These are examples of the remarkable architecture patronised by the Gangas. As per our research, they also gave special priority to irrigation. Various embankments on the Cauvery River were built by them, and they arranged for water to be channelled through canals to agricultural fields,”** he said.
- The flower show will be held from August 6 to 17. Like every year, it will run for 12 days.

❖ **‘Semiconductor park will become operational in Dec.’**

- Minister for Large and Medium Industries M.B. Patil on Thursday said that a **200-acre semiconductor park in Phase I of Knowledge, Wellbeing and Innovation (KWIN) City is expected to become operational** by December this year.
- Speaking at the inaugural session of the 15th Strategic Electronics Summit-2026, Mr. Patil said that Karnataka’s upcoming Aerospace and Defence Policy 2026–2031 would place strong emphasis on developing integrated clusters for advanced electronic warfare systems, embedded software, electric **Vertical Take-Off and Landing (e-VTOL)** technologies and payloads for the space sector.

- “Two years ago, the State government had approved investments worth ₹23,000 crore in the semiconductor and advanced **Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM)** sectors. These investments are expected to generate more than 3,500 high-skilled engineering jobs. **Applied Materials India is investing ₹4,851 crore, Lam Research ₹15,901 crore and Bharat Semi Systems ₹2,342 crore in Karnataka. To complement these investments, the government will integrate the State’s micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) into the global semiconductor supply chain,”** he said.
- He said Karnataka’s vision extends well beyond manufacturing. “Companies should be able to undertake the entire value chain within the State — from design and development to prototyping, testing, certification and exports. The State government is fully prepared to partner with industry in achieving this objective,” he said.
- Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said that Karnataka is a hub for producing talented human resources and that the climate and culture here are unmatched by any other city in the country.
- **“More than one lakh engineers pass out every year from 250 engineering colleges in Karnataka, which is a manufacturing hub for human resources. The State is emerging as a global hub of competence, with more than 900 Global Capability Centers (GCC) centres. Google has the largest campus outside the U.S. in Bengaluru,”** he said.

❖ **Sringeri is refuge for endemic and threatened bird species, finds Andhra Pradesh researcher**

- A researcher from Sri Krishnadevaraya University (SKU) at Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh has identified the forest areas around Sringeri as a major refuge for endemic and threatened bird species of the Western Ghats, while cautioning that unchecked development activities pose a growing threat to their survival.
- V.V. Bala Subramanyam, assistant professor of zoology at SKU, has studied the birds of Sringeri and documented his findings in **The Avian Aura of Sringeri Western Ghats**, a comprehensive volume on the region’s bird life, co-authored with professor M. Jagadish Naik.
- During his research, Mr. Subramanyam recorded several Western Ghats endemics, including the Malabar grey hornbill, the Malabar trogon, the white-cheeked barbet, the Malabar parakeet, the rufous babbler, and the yellow-browed bulbul. **He also sighted the Nilgiri wood pigeon, the Nilgiri flycatcher, and the black-and-orange flycatcher — species classified as “vulnerable” or “near threatened” on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.**
- He attributed the region’s rich birdlife to its heavy rainfall, undisturbed canopy cover, and pristine riverine ecosystems, which together create ideal conditions for these habitat-sensitive species.
- **Beyond their ecological value, he noted, these birds play a vital role in seed dispersal, insect population control, and natural forest regeneration — all essential to maintaining the health of the Western Ghats.**

- However, Mr. Subramanyam expressed concern that recent development pressures, particularly illegal tree felling and unregulated tourism, are beginning to disturb critical habitats. He recommended strict protection of existing natural forests, active habitat restoration, and continuous scientific monitoring of bird populations to safeguard the region's exceptional biodiversity.
- Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Subramanyam, a native of Andhra Pradesh, said he had done an extensive study of birds found in and around Sringeri for about six years. He, along with his team, documented the birds as part of his research. He expressed worry about the birds' habitats following the recent developments. "Many trees are being cut in the name of road widening. Similarly, there have been unregulated tourist activities in the region. Such activities might disturb the birds' habitats," he stated.

❖ **Women's quota should be implemented without delimitation: ex-HC judge**

- The freeze on delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies should continue and women's reservation should be implemented immediately after being delinked from delimitation and the Census, the former Madras High Court judge D. Hariparanthaman (retd) said on Thursday.
- Releasing the book The Delimitation Debate: The Union and its Units, published by The Hindu Group here, the former judge cautioned that an increase in the number of Lok Sabha seats would hamper meaningful deliberations in the House. "The problem of raising the numbers is that deliberations cannot take place," he said.
- Besides, if the increase is based on population, southern States will stand to lose adequate representation in the Lok Sabha, he said. This will amount to penalising the southern States for having implemented the national population policy well. "Taking into consideration other democracies, 543 [the current strength of the Lok Sabha] itself is a good number," he said.
- The former judge batted for equitable representation of all States in the Rajya Sabha, much like the U.S. Senate model.
- K. Ashok Vardhan Shetty, retired IAS officer and member of the High-level Committee on Centre-State Relations constituted by the Tamil Nadu government, said Article 329(a) of the Constitution placed the Delimitation Commission's proposals inside a constitutional "black box", insulating it from executive, parliamentary, and judicial scrutiny.
- **The commission comprises a retired Supreme Court judge as chairperson, the Chief Election Commissioner or a nominee, and the State Election Commissioner of the State concerned. "This is dangerous and has to be corrected. In Japan and Germany, the delimitation commission advises but the legislatures pass the delimitation legislation,"** he said.
- Mr. Shetty suggested the introduction of the "dialogue model" implemented in Canada where the delimitation commission's proposals are deliberated by a parliamentary sub-committee and the remarks are sent back to the commission for clarification. To improve representation in both Houses, the Rajya Sabha, or the House of States, may be recast on the lines of the U.S. Senate, while for the Lok Sabha, a digressive proportionality system, as in practice in Brazil, may be implemented to reduce the gap

between the more populous States and the smaller ones. Delimitation should be frozen until all States fell within a narrow band of the **National Total Fertility Rate**, he said.

- N. Ram, Director, The Hindu Group Publishing Pvt. Ltd., suggested that the ideas discussed in the book be distilled to make them accessible for all, which then may be translated to other languages.
- Nirmala Lakshman, Publisher, The Hindu Group, and Suresh Nambath, Editor, The Hindu, were present. R. Srinivasan, head, Magazines and Special Publications, THG Publishing, said the title was the Group's 219th publication since the formation of a Special Publications vertical in 2017.
- The book is a collection of 17 essays — preceded by an introduction — on delimitation, federalism, representation, and Census.

❖ **Global waterways should be safe, unimpeded: Jaishankar**

- Attacks on seafarers, civilian shipping or infrastructure cannot be countenanced, says External Affairs Minister at East Asia Summit; Ministry hits back at Pakistan Deputy PM's comments
- Participating in the **21st East Asia Summit (EAS) in Manila**, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Thursday that the global maritime channels "must remain safe and unimpeded".
- At the meeting, Mr. Jaishankar also called for dialogue and diplomacy in dealing with the crisis in the Persian Gulf region and a "political solution" to the civil conflict in Myanmar, where Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) have been challenging the authority of the military junta that took power in February 2021.
- "Calling for dialogue and diplomacy to end the **West Asia/Gulf conflict, India stresses that international waterways must remain safe and unimpeded, fully in consonance with international law. Under no circumstances can attacks on seafarers, civilian shipping or infrastructure be countenanced,**" said Mr. Jaishankar. He described the evolving condition of the global order as "uncertain and volatile".
- He said India will be hosting **two specific EAS activities in the current year — the seventh EAS conference on maritime security cooperation in Kochi and an EAS Maritime Heritage Festival in the ancient port city of Lothal.**

South China Sea

- He informed the EAS of the Indian position on South China Sea and said that India supports the "conclusion of a substantive, effective and legally binding Code of Conduct (CoC), fully compliant with UNCLOS 1982 that does not prejudice the legitimate rights of all users". Continuing with the theme, he called for "ASEAN centrality, regional stability, and the realisation of a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific".
- Regarding the ongoing civil conflict in Myanmar, he expressed India's support for ASEAN efforts to resolving the situation. "India stands for finding a political solution to the Myanmar issue," said Mr. Jaishankar, who also spoke at the **33rd ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).**

- He reiterated India's policy on "zero tolerance for terrorism", and said there should not "be any doubt that acts of terrorism will have consequences". He said that "collective action against cyberscam centres" should be prioritised. On the Israel-Palestine crisis, he reiterated India's position, and said "a two-state solution can lead to a lasting and durable peace".

Indus Waters Treaty

- The External Affairs Ministry separately responded to Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's remarks on Kashmir and the Indus Waters Treaty at the ARF.
- "It is no surprise that a multilateral forum has once again been cynically exploited by Pakistan to amplify falsehoods, peddle state-sponsored disinformation, and divert attention from its own well-documented record of sponsoring cross-border terrorism," said the Ministry's official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.
- Mr. Dar, in his remarks, had said, "... lasting peace in South Asia lies in the just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with UN Security Council".
- He further said that upholding the treaty is a "cornerstone of regional peace and stability".

❖ Govt. eases FDI rules for e-com firms, first big relaxation in years

- In a significant relaxation in its long-held stance, the government has proposed allowing foreign direct investment (FDI) in e-commerce companies that hold inventory and don't just act as marketplaces as long as this inventory is used for exports.
- **India has for nearly a decade allowed FDI only in business to business (B2B) e-commerce and where the company only serves as a marketplace but does not hold inventory of its own. This was aimed at protecting small traders in India and to uphold the government's ban on FDI in multi-brand retails as well.**
- "In order to facilitate greater exports through easier and increased access of global markets by Indian sellers, the extant FDI policy has been reviewed and it is decided that the restrictions on inventory-based model of e-commerce shall not apply in case of exports of domestically manufactured and/or produced goods/products," the commerce ministry said on Thursday.

❖ Bank credit-deposit ratio at a 62-year high of 82.6% in Q1

- Indian banks' credit deposit (CD) ratio stood at a 62-year high of 82.6% in the first quarter of fiscal 2027 as loans grew faster than deposits, as per Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data.
- Loans grew at 18.6% year-on-year (YoY) to ₹219.3 lakh crore while deposits rose 13.3% to ₹265.4 lakh crore in Q1.
- The variance between the loan and deposit growth was at 5 percentage points - the widest since June quarter of fiscal 2024.
- Since Q1FY22, the least growth in loans was 8.5% whereas deposits did not grow faster than 16%. Analysts say the ratio had more to do with change in liabilities' composition.

Excess investments

- “Over the last five years, banks had excess investments on their balance sheet, which they had redeployed in loans. So, optically, the loan book was growing faster and the investment book growing slower.
- Therefore CD ratio looked higher. Second, banks’ capital is at life-time high and this gets lent out,” said Piran Engineer, senior research analyst at CLSA.

❖ U.S. announces civilian nuclear agreement with Saudi Arabia

- Trump says the deal is contingent on Riyadh normalising relations with Israel; critics warn it could set off an arms race in the Gulf; while reports suggest U.S. companies could build a uranium enrichment facility in the kingdom, Trump says ‘no’
- The United States and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday announced a landmark deal that would establish a civilian nuclear programme in the kingdom, which U.S. President Donald Trump said was contingent on Riyadh normalising relations with Israel.
- The move comes as the U.S. fights a war with Iran that began in large part over concerns about Tehran’s nuclear programme — still a key point of contention in now-stalled peace talks.
- The deal is set to generate billions of dollars for American companies and is seen as a major win for Iran’s long-time regional rival, but critics fear it also carries risks.
- Washington has sought in recent years to tie any nuclear agreement and defence pact to Saudi normalisation with Israel, and just hours after the deal was announced, Mr. Trump took to social media to say Riyadh must first meet that condition.
- **The nuclear deal “will be approved, but is totally subject to Saudi Arabia joining the very respected and successful Abraham Accords”,** he wrote.

Concern of enrichment

- Critics have insisted the deal — the text of which was not immediately made public — could precipitate a nuclear race in a region already battered by war.
- One provision would potentially see U.S. companies build a uranium enrichment facility in Saudi Arabia, the Wall Street Journal reported.
- The U.S. Energy Department made no mention of such a provision and did not offer comment when asked about it by AFP, while Mr. Trump added in his Truth Social post that: “There will be no enrichment of material!”
- The deal will be submitted to Congress for review, but the Republican-controlled legislature is unlikely to block its implementation.
- U.S. lawmakers from both parties and Israeli officials have previously voiced opposition to such a project over fears Saudi Arabia could eventually convert it to develop nuclear weapons.
- “Trump claims his war on Iran is about stopping an authoritarian country from enriching nuclear fuel,” left-wing U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders wrote on X.
- “Now he’s letting his best friends in Saudi Arabia — one of the most brutal dictatorships in the world — do exactly that. This is absurd.”

'Pact with safeguards'

- U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that “any agreement that we’re going to make with any country in the world on civil nuclear energy is going to be one that will have safeguards in place to ensure that it can’t be turned into a weapons programme”.
- Riyadh, like Tehran, has long been adamant about its right to pursue a civilian nuclear programme. Last year it signed a mutual defence pact with nuclear-armed Pakistan.
- **Policymakers have long feared that if Iran produced a nuclear weapon, the move would set off an arms race across the Gulf.**
- **The United States has agreements governing nuclear cooperation with more than 50 countries.**

Dr. Rajkumar IAS/KAS Academy

❖ High Court moots law for the elderly

- **On the lines of protection available for children under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**, the Karnataka High Court on Friday directed the State government to examine the feasibility of framing a comprehensive statutory framework for identifying and protecting “senior citizens in need of care and protection.” The court was hearing a case of an elderly woman not adequately taken care of by her children.
- Vulnerable elderly need State-led care, protection mechanism: HC
- The Karnataka High Court asks the government to examine the feasibility of creating a comprehensive policy or legislative framework for ‘senior citizens in need of care and protection’ on the lines of the JJ Act
- Taking note of increasing litigations related to the violation of the rights of senior citizens, the High Court of Karnataka has directed the State government to examine the feasibility of creating a comprehensive policy or legislative framework for “senior citizens in need of care and protection”, broadly modelled on the lines of protection given to minors through the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Mysuru incident

- The court also directed the Mysuru district administration to admit a 74-year-old woman, suffering from gangrene and other age-related ailments, and who was not adequately taken care of by her children, to a government hospital and to provide her with all necessary treatment and care entirely at the cost of the government.
- Justice Suraj Govindaraj passed the order while hearing a petition filed by the woman’s 38-year-old son, who had challenged an order passed by the Assistant Commissioner, Mysuru, in favour of his mother on issues related to her maintenance.
- **The court noticed that Section 20 of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Seniors Act, 2007**, requires the State government to ensure that government hospitals or hospitals funded fully or partially by the government provide beds for all senior citizens as far as possible, facilitate the treatment of chronic ailments, and make available the earmarked facilities for geriatric patients in every district hospital, duly headed by a medical officer with experience in geriatric care.
- Following this, the court directed the government to submit a statement to place on record whether a comprehensive action plan has been formulated in terms of **Section 20 of the Act and Rules 20 and 21 of the Karnataka Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Rules, 2009**, for providing effective medical support, welfare measures, and protection to senior citizens.
- During the hearing, the court noted that many petitions involving neglect, abandonment, abuse, exploitation, deprivation of maintenance, denial of residence, unlawful deprivation of property, lack of medical care, absence of institutional support and other circumstances affecting their dignity, safety and well-being have been filed.

- Following this, the court directed **the State government to examine whether the existing statutory framework under the 2007 Act adequately addresses all such situations or whether additional executive, policy or legislative measures are required to identify and extend to the senior citizens appropriate measures relating to rescue, protection, shelter, healthcare, institutional care, community-based care, and continuous monitoring, on the lines of the provisions in the JJ Act, 2015.**

❖ **Govt. considering hiking income limit for BPL tag**

- The government is considering raising the annual income ceiling for eligibility under the BPL category from ₹1.20 lakh to ₹3 lakh.
- Proposal on raising BPL income ceiling to ₹3 lakh will be placed before Cabinet: Minister
- **The Karnataka government is considering raising the annual income ceiling for eligibility under the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category from ₹1.20 lakh to ₹3 lakh, based on the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission, K.H. Muniyappa, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister, said on Friday.**
- Speaking to reporters after a review meeting of the State's guarantee schemes, chaired jointly with H.M. Revanna, Chairman of the Karnataka State Guarantee Schemes Implementation Committee, Mr. Muniyappa said the proposal was aimed at expanding access to welfare benefits for eligible families. "I am planning to place it before the Cabinet soon," he said.

Indira kit distribution

- Pointing out that the department was also implementing the '**Anna Suvidha**' **scheme to deliver ration to the doorsteps of elderly and vulnerable beneficiaries, he said the work on rolling out the proposed Indira food kit under the Anna Bhagya scheme in the next two to three months was also under way.**
- He said the tender process was in its final stage for the scheme, estimated to cost around ₹6,000 crore. "The process has taken time because of the scale of the project and the need for scrutiny," he said.
- The objective of the scheme, he said, **was to encourage consumption of nutritious food.**
- The Minister said **the distribution pattern of 10 kg foodgrains to 4.42 crore beneficiaries under the Anna Bhagya scheme had been revised. Beneficiaries now receive 7 kg of rice and 3 kg of ragi. Of this, 5 kg of rice is provided by the State government and the remaining allocation is under the Centre's share comprising 2 kg of rice and 3 kg of ragi.**
- The State has procured 5.60 lakh tonnes of ragi under the Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme, which is being processed for distribution.
- In North Karnataka, where ragi consumption is relatively low, beneficiaries would receive 2 kg of jowar and 8 kg of rice instead of 3 kg of ragi and 7 kg of rice, as adequate quantities of jowar were not available under MSP procurement, he said.

Fair price shops

- Mr. Muniyappa said officials had been instructed to keep all 20,259 fair price shops in the State open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. to facilitate ration distribution.
- Beneficiaries facing problems can lodge complaints through the department's toll-free **Anna Helpline (1967)**, he said. He added that the government had also discussed displaying photographs and contact details of the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, Ministers, and the Chairman of the Guarantee Schemes Implementation Committee at all fair price shops.

❖ SC proposes special courts for Manipur violence cases

- The Supreme Court on Friday proposed the **establishment of special courts to conduct day-to-day trials in cases arising out of the 2023 Manipur violence and directed the investigating agencies to expedite the pending probes to ensure that there is no further "inordinate delay"**.
- A Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana was hearing a batch of petitions relating to the ethnic violence in the State. Referring to status reports filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Special Investigation Team (SIT), the Bench noted that the prevailing law and order situation had made the examination of witnesses difficult, with many having been displaced or relocated.
- The court also pointed out that the prolonged suspension of Internet services had impeded the collection of digital evidence, while restrictions on the movement of investigating officers had hampered field investigations, contributing to delays in the probe.
- "We tentatively propose to constitute special courts, with the concurrence of the State of Manipur and the High Courts of Manipur and Gauhati, for trials to be taken up on a day-to-day basis, especially in light of the inordinate delay that has already taken place in the ongoing investigation," the Bench said.

❖ U.S. announces permanent tariffs; India remains at 10%

- Even as the U.S.'s temporary 10% tariffs come to an end, it has announced permanent tariffs related to its investigation into forced labour on 60 of its trading partners, including India. India's tariff rate, however, remains at 10% instead of the proposed 12.5% after it banned the import of forced labour goods earlier this month.
- The U.S. had in February imposed a temporary 150-day 10% tariff on all of its trade partners, which expired on Friday. In March, the office of the U.S. Trade Representative had also launched two separate investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act, 1974.
- The new tariffs announced late Thursday night (India time) are a result of the findings of one of these investigations — the one on whether the U.S.'s trade partners were doing enough to prevent the import of goods made using forced labour.
- The second investigation, into whether other economies were using excess manufacturing capacity to export to the U.S. in a manner that was hurting the U.S. economy, is still pending and could result in further tariffs.

- “President Donald Trump recognises that decades of moral suasion have not eradicated forced labour from global supply chains,” U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement. “The U.S. has had a forced labour import ban for nearly a century, and rigorously enforces it; it’s well past time for our trading partners to do the same.”
- “Today’s action will begin to correct what is both a human rights abuse and a distortive trade practice to improve the welfare of workers everywhere,” he added.
- “I am encouraged by the trading partners who have moved quickly to adopt forced labour import prohibitions, and look forward to ensuring their effective enforcement,” Mr. Greer said in his statement.
- **As a result of India’s actions, it has now been included among the countries that will face a 10% tariff instead of 12.5%. These 10% tariffs will apply to countries that impose a forced labour import prohibition, have committed to impose and enforce such a prohibition through a trade agreement with the U.S., or have imposed a partial regime with the effect of preventing the import of certain forced labour goods.**

• **These economies include India, Argentina, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Kingdom.**

- The U.S. will impose a 12.5% tariff on all other countries that it has investigated.
- **About 70% of India’s exports** — including engineering goods, textiles and garments, chemicals, machinery, plastics, leather products, gems and jewellery, furniture and most other manufactured goods — will be subject to these 10% tariffs under Section 301 over and above the item-wise most-favoured nation (MFN) tariffs the U.S. levies on all its trading partners. The Section 301 could potentially increase depending on the findings of the excess capacity investigation.

❖ **IIT Roorkee professor proposes bio-bitumen road trial in State**

- An associate professor from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee has written to the Karnataka government to construct a trial road section using bio-bitumen technology, claiming that the innovation could reduce road construction costs by up to 20% while offering environmental benefits.
- **The proposed bio-binder is produced by blending 25% Class C sugarcane molasses with 75% virgin bitumen through a controlled chemical reaction process. This will reduce the use of bitumen and also over-reliance on it.**
- According to Nikhil Saboo, associate professor in the Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Roorkee, The field implementation has also yielded positive results in other states, according to him.
- The proposal has come at a time when the cost of bitumen has increased multifold following the West Asia crisis. The rate of bitumen is yet to stabilise, as it is still fluctuating around ₹60,000 per tonne, while the cost was ₹45,000 before the crisis began.
- In addition, civic agencies in Bengaluru have been experimenting and adopting new technologies related to road construction. **Recently, the B-SMILE announced that for the first time in Karnataka, Ultra High-Performance Fiber Reinforced Concrete (UHPFRC) technology would be used to construct elevated corridors.**

- In a letter addressed to the Public Works Department (PWD) and the Chief Minister's Office, Mr. Saboo sought the State government's approval for a pilot project to demonstrate the viability of the technology. Highlighting the economic advantages of the technology, Mr. Saboo said the use of sugarcane molasses, a by-product of the sugar industry, could reduce binder costs significantly. While virgin bitumen currently costs around ₹85 per kg, the price of molasses typically ranges between ₹10 and ₹15 per kg. Since no specialised infrastructure is required, the capital cost of adopting the technology would be none, he noted.
- "The technology can be readily adopted using existing drum mix plant facilities without requiring any additional infrastructure," the letter stated, adding that the key operational requirement is maintaining appropriate production temperatures during the mixing process.
- The letter also pointed out that **India is the world's second-largest producer of sugarcane molasses, ensuring adequate availability of the raw material.**
- Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Sahoo said the technology has already been tested in three field trials.
- "The road section, which used bio-bitumen in the surface layer, has performed satisfactorily and remained maintenance-free for more than three years despite carrying traffic loads of nearly 200 million standard axles," he said.
- A government source close to the development told The Hindu that the PWD department was interested in the project and would discuss further about piloting the technology.

❖ **Study finds that more than half of the world's migratory bird species are declining**

- A new study led by researchers from Georgetown University and a collaboration of ornithologists from many global organisations, including the State of India's Birds (SoIB) partnership, has revealed that more than half of the world's migratory bird species are declining.
- The authors of the study published in **Nature Reviews Biodiversity** estimate that approximately 51% of migratory bird species are declining globally across every major flyway on Earth.
- While nearly 300 migratory species are already considered globally threatened, many once-common and widespread birds are also experiencing substantial population losses.
- In India, this paper found that long-distance migratory birds like those that visit India from the Arctic were declining more rapidly than resident birds or shorter-distance migrants.
- "The scale of the migratory bird decline is both alarming and sobering. What we're seeing is the predictable consequence of decades of environmental degradation. Yet these declines are not inevitable. This review goes beyond documenting the crisis by identifying the major threats, highlighting the critical knowledge gaps, and providing a science-based framework for reversing declines before more species are pushed toward extinction," said Peter P. Marra, Dean of Georgetown University's Earth Commons Institute and co-lead author of the study.

Most visible

- According to the SoIB Partnership, migratory birds are among the most visible and widespread components of global biodiversity. It said that they help regulate insect populations, disperse seeds and pollinate plants, and support food webs across ecosystems and continents.
- They are also one of the primary ways people connect with nature, with millions of birdwatchers and community scientists around the world contributing observations to global databases that have become essential for understanding bird populations and informing conservation action.
- **“Yet understanding exactly where and why populations are declining, and which of the world’s 11,000 bird species should be considered migratory, remains a challenge,”** it said.

Use of technology

- It added that scientists are increasingly using advances in tracking technology, community science initiatives such as **eBird, AI-enabled acoustic monitoring, and population modelling to identify migration routes, understand how populations are connected across seasons, and uncover the drivers of decline.**
- The authors of the study further argued that reversing declines would require conservation strategies that address these threats across migratory lifecycles and international flyways rather than in isolation.

❖ Centre returns State’s request for wildlife clearance for Mahadayi basin projects

- The Union government has returned Karnataka’s proposal for wildlife clearance for the proposed Kalasa-Bhanduri drinking water project in the Mahadayi river basin, saying the matter was sub-judice.

Supreme Court

- Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, has written a letter to Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, saying “the matter shall be considered afresh in accordance with the directions of the Supreme Court in future.”
- “In reference to your letter dated December 23, 2025, regarding wildlife clearance for the **Kalasa-Bhanduri Drinking Water Supply Scheme proposed to be implemented near Khanapur taluk in Belagavi district,** I would like to inform that the Government of Karnataka had filed I.A. No. 219672/2023 in C.A. No. 4505/2023 arising out of SLP(C) No. 19312/2019 before the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India on 18.10.2023, challenging the order dated 29.03.2023 of the Chief Wildlife Warden, Goa. The matter is presently pending adjudication before the Hon’ble Supreme Court,” the letter read.
- It further said that in view of the pendency of the matter before the apex court and the issues requiring resolution between the concerned States, the wildlife clearance proposal has been returned to the State government at this juncture.

Clarification

- Responding to this, Mohan Katarki, a senior advocate who represents Karnataka in the Supreme Court, said Karnataka would move the Supreme Court for clarification soon.
- “It is surprising that the Union government is taking cognisance of an extra-territorial order issued by Goa which is plainly contrary to its own published Award of the Tribunal. We will move the Supreme Court for clarifications. The said letter was issued by Goa purportedly under the **Wildlife Protection Act of 1972**. But it was beyond the jurisdiction of the officer,” Mr. Kataraki said.

❖ Mines and Geology Department sets ₹11,000-crore annual revenue target

- With an annual revenue target of ₹11,000 crore for the current financial year, the Department of Mines and Geology will assign district-wise revenue and operational targets to geologists, Secretary of the MSME and Mines and Geology Department Rohini Sindhuri has said.
- Chairing a review meeting of the department on Friday, Ms. Sindhuri directed officials to adopt a target-based approach to revenue collection, field inspections and enforcement activities. She said district-wise monthly review meetings would be held from next month to monitor progress.
- **The department has also set a target of mobilising ₹2,000 crore through the One-Time Settlement (OTS) scheme over the next six months, and officers have been asked to work towards achieving the goal.** Ms. Sindhuri directed officials to conduct regular inspections of mines under their jurisdiction and ensure strict compliance with safety norms.
- Referring to the recent quarry accident in Bengaluru Rural district, she said officials should maintain continuous vigilance to prevent similar incidents. There should be no compromise on worker safety, she said, directing geologists to periodically review safety measures and mining operations.

Monitoring

- The Secretary said every district geologist would be assigned specific targets relating to revenue collection, inspections and overall departmental performance.
- Officials have also been asked to continuously monitor mining activities in their jurisdictions and review the progress as against the assigned targets.

❖ Union Cabinet clears ₹1,264-cr. rail project

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday approved the third and fourth lines of the Ballari-Guntakal rail section across Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The project is estimated to cost ₹1,264 crore.
- **The multi-tracking project covering three districts across the two States will increase the network of Indian Railways by about 46 km and will be completed by 2028-29. It will enhance connectivity to approximately 99 villages with a combined population of about seven lakh,** the Railway Ministry stated.
- The project will improve rail connectivity to several tourist destinations. It is planned under the **PM GatiShakti National Master Plan.**

❖ All women judges in seven Benches: one historic day at Dharwad Bench on August 1

- In a first for the High Court of Karnataka, all the judicial Benches in the Dharwad Bench will function exclusively with 10 women judges of the High Court on August 1.
- The one-day special Saturday sitting will see seven Benches at the Dharwad Bench presided over by women judges.
- The roster of sitting officially notified by court's administration wing comprises three Division Benches and four Single-Judge Benches, making it one of the few instances in the country where an entire High Court Bench will conduct judicial proceedings only by women judges.
- As per the High Court's sitting notification, the three Division Benches will comprise Justices Anu Sivaraman and K.G. Shanthi, Justices Jyoti M and P. Sree Sudha, and Justices Lalitha Kanneganti and K.S. Hemalekha. The four single-judge Benches will be presided over by Justices Chillakur Sumalatha, Tara Vitasta Ganju, Geetha K.B., and Rajeshwari N. Hegde.

Women's day

- It is learnt that the Dharwad Bar Association had earlier requested the Chief Justice to organise all-women judicial Benches at Dharwad Bench to mark International Women's Day but it could not be fructified then.
- Also, a conference of women judges of the High Court and the district judiciary of Southern states is likely to be held in the city during August.

❖ Amid ruckus, Ministry tables Bill in RS to punish insult to National Song

- Amid disruptions over the police action on student protesters, the Home Ministry introduced the **Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, in the Rajya Sabha on Friday, to punish any insult to National Song Vande Mataram. The objections raised by Left MPs against the introduction of the Bill were defeated by a voice vote.
- **The Bill, which proposes to amend the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, extends the punishment for acts of disrespect towards national symbols such as the National Flag, the Constitution, and the National Anthem, to the National Song too.**

Left objections

- Union Minister of State for Home Nityananda Rai introduced the Bill. Deputy Chairman Harivansh, who was on the chair, invited CPI(M) MP John Brittas and CPI MP Sandosh Kumar P. to speak for one minute as they had given notices to oppose the Bill on the grounds of legislative competence or its constitutionality. Mr. Brittas said Parliament cannot re-write a constitutional settlement through an ordinary legislation. “The Constituent Assembly, after nearly three years of exhaustive deliberation, consciously refrained from placing the National Song and the National Anthem on the same constitutional footing,” he said, adding that the government cannot manufacture patriotism and nationalism through a piece of legislation.
- Mr. Kumar’s reference to the ruling establishment’s role in freedom struggle was deleted by the Chair. He said the core point is that Vande Mataram should unite Indians, not divide them. “The leaders of India’s freedom movement, including Rabindranath Tagore, had understood this. That is why it was confined to two stanzas only,” he said.
- Mr. Rai said the Left MPs were trying to mislead the House. He said that on January 24, 1950, Rajendra Prasad said both National Song and National Anthem should have equal status and the government respects it. He sought permission to introduce the Bill. It was put to vote amid slogans by the Opposition and Mr. Harivansh announced that the Bill was introduced. He then adjourned the House for the day.

❖ Delhi High Court declines interim injunction against OpenAI in ANI copyright suit

- The Delhi High Court on Friday refused to grant interim relief to news agency Asian News International (ANI) in its copyright infringement suit against OpenAI, holding that it had failed to establish a prima facie case that ChatGPT infringed its copyright.
- Justice Amit Bansal held that **OpenAI’s ChatGPT use of ANI’s literary works for training the Large Language Models (LLMs) was covered by the fair dealing exception under Section 52(1)(a) of the Copyright Act.**
- The court also remarked, “There is no averment in the plaint nor has any material been placed on record to show that the activities of OpenAI have resulted in ANI losing subscribers or suffering a loss from its news syndication business.”
- “ANI itself has offered a licence to OpenAI for its content for a fee of USD 7.5 million vide its communication dated October 2, 2024. Therefore, the claim of ANI is quantifiable and ANI can be compensated in monetary terms, if ANI succeeds in the present case,” the court said.
- ANI had, as an interim relief, sought for deletion of the “plaintiff’s (ANI) works held and stored in whatever form” by OpenAI. This was contested by OpenAI’s counsel noting that it would be inconsistent with the company’s obligation under the U.S. laws to preserve such training data.
- Refusing interim relief, the court observed that an injunction at this stage would cause irreparable prejudice not only to OpenAI but also to the public at large.

- “AI and its applications are being used beneficially in several sectors, such as education, healthcare, financial support sector, agriculture and for providing other skill development resources...**The development of LLMs and their success depends on availability of data. It would be economically unviable to develop an LLM if training of an LLM would require licenses from multiple sources,**” the court said.

❖ **SC prohibits unauthorised recording, monetisation of court videos on social media**

- Observing that the misuse of video clips from livestreamed court proceedings was “trivialising” the administration of justice, the Supreme Court on Friday barred the extraction, editing, dissemination, reposting, uploading and monetisation of audio and video recordings of judicial proceedings on social media and other digital platforms without prior permission from the court registrars concerned.
- A Bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana passed the interim order while issuing notice on a public interest litigation (PIL) petition seeking safeguards against the misuse of livestreamed court proceedings through selective clipping and “commercial exploitation”.
- The petition, filed by journalist Harshita Grover, contended that “isolated excerpts” of judicial proceedings were being clipped, circulated and monetised in a manner that undermined the sanctity and dignity of the judicial process.
- It argued that while livestreaming has advanced transparency and public access to the justice system, the absence of adequate safeguards has enabled courtroom exchanges to be taken out of context and disseminated for “sensationalism” and “commercial gain”.
- “As an interim measure, it is directed that there shall be no extraction, modification, dissemination, monetisation, posting, reposting or uploading of audio-video recordings of judicial proceedings on social media or other digital platforms without permission of the Secretary General of the Supreme Court or the Registrar General of the jurisdictional High Courts,” the Bench directed.

‘Not a gag order’

- The Bench, however, clarified that the embargo would not extend to news reporting of court proceedings. It also directed the Supreme Court and all High Courts to upload the order on their official websites.
- Justice Mohana also remarked that the court was not attempting to pass a “gag order” on the press, but was merely giving effect to the Supreme Court’s 2022 ‘Model Rules for Live Streaming and Recording of Court Proceedings’, which prohibit the recording, sharing or dissemination of livestreamed court proceedings by unauthorised persons.

❖ **10% U.S. tariff elicits mixed reaction from Indian exporters**

- While some exporters say the levy will make Indian goods expensive, others opine India will not lose edge as goods are competitively taxed
- For the Indian exporters to the U.S., the 10% tariff is likely to have a mixed impact, varying for each sector.

- While some exporters are of the view this will make Indian goods expensive, others say that Indian goods are still competitively taxed and so, India will not lose its edge.
- **“The fact that India has been placed in the lower 10% tariff category, while several competing exporting nations, including China, Vietnam, Thailand, Türkiye, UAE, Brazil, South Africa and others, face a higher tariff of 12.5%, reflects the recognition by the U.S. of the policy measures taken by the Government of India to strengthen its framework relating to forced labour,”** S.C. Ralhan, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations said.
- “This has helped India secure a relatively favourable position compared with many of its global competitors,” he added.
- Rajesh Rokde, chairman of the All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council is not as optimistic.
- “The U.S. government’s decision... will undoubtedly create challenges for our gem and jewellery exporters, making Indian products less price competitive in one of our largest markets,” Mr. Rokde said.

Margin pressure

- “While the rate is lower than that imposed on some other countries, this measure still places significant pressure on margins and could dent the growth trajectory of our industry,” added the chairman of the All-India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council

Reputational risks

- The Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) said, “The tariff imposition on the issue of forced labour is deeply unfortunate as it does not indicate an expiry date and causes reputational risks.
- The CITI looks forward to the Indian government taking up this issue with the U.S. given the detrimental impact it can have on textile and apparel exports from India,” said chairman Ashwin Chandran.
- “What can raise a serious challenge for Indian textile and apparel exporters is the fact that although many key competitors of ours have also been subject to the same tariff rate, a window has been opened for textile and apparel exports from these countries to enter the U.S. free of the Section 301 tariffs. This differential treatment risks diverting sourcing orders for textile and apparel items away from India,” he said.
- The U.S. continues to be the single-largest market for India’s textile and apparel items. Annual export of textile and apparel products from India to the U.S. are usually close to \$11 billion. The industry maintains a zero-tolerance approach, backed by active enforcement measures and compliance mechanisms. On July 13, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) issued a notification inserting new paragraphs into the Foreign Trade Policy regarding the prohibition on import of goods produced using forced labour.
- **India has also implemented four Labour Codes to protect workers’ rights,** he added.

- An executive from an automotive components manufacturers body said, on condition of anonymity, that while any additional tariff is a concern, the 10% levy is lower than what the industry had anticipated. With competing countries such as China, the EU and others also facing U.S. tariffs, Indian auto component exporters can emerge relatively more competitive in the U.S. market.
- The Trump administration had slapped 10% and 12.5% levies on goods from 60 trading partners, alleging inadequate enforcement of forced-labour import prohibitions.

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

Dr. Rajkumar IAS/KAS Academy