



**DR. RAJKUMAR ACADEMY
BENGALURU**

AN INITIATIVE BY DR. RAJKUMAR FAMILY

WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

A CRISP AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

JULY WEEK 5

27-07-2026 TO 01-08-2026

**MIRABAI MAKES
IT A
GOLDEN DAY
FOR INDIA.**

**BLUE STRAGGLER
STAR**

**CENTRE DEFENDS
CEC PANEL
WITHOUT CJI**

**CENTRE EXTENDS
PM-KISAN**

**RIPARIAN STATES'
NOD NOT NEEDED
FOR MEKEDATU**

❖ Nilekani to lead high-powered task force on exam reforms: PM

- It will recommend steps to make exam system leak-proof and technology-driven; former ISRO Chairman Somanath, IIT-M Director Kamakoti among members; Pralhad Joshi takes charge as Union Education Minister, chairs review meeting
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced the constitution of a high-powered task force, to be headed by former **UIDAI Chairman Nandan Nilekani, to recommend steps to make the country's examination system leak-proof and technology-driven.**
- The announcement came a day after former Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned following widespread protests over the NEET paper leak and subsequent re-examination.
- Meanwhile, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Sunday officially took charge of the Ministry of Education at Kartavya Bhavan. Mr. Joshi, who also holds the portfolios of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and New and Renewable Energy, chaired a meeting of the Ministry to review the implementation of various schemes and other initiatives.
- "We should ensure that our exam system can be trusted, and is transparent and tech-driven. Under the leadership of renowned technology expert Nandan Nilekani, a high-powered task force will be formed, which will focus on exam reforms," Mr. Modi said in a video posted on Instagram. "The Centre is taking multiple steps to ensure that those who have played with the future of students are punished. We have already announced the formation of fast-track courts. We are bringing a stringent law in Parliament on Monday," he said.

'Compromised image'

- Responding to the announcement, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said the Centre was yet to implement the K. Radhakrishnan Committee's 101 recommendations after the 2024 examination leaks. "This is ultimately only a high-powered attempt to fix the Pradhan Mantri's irretrievably compromised image," he said in a post on X.
- The multidisciplinary panel of domain experts will help revamp the National Testing Agency's examination system, especially from a technology perspective, sources said, **adding the committee under Mr. Nilekani will consist of former ISRO Chairman S. Somanath, former IB Director Tapan Deka, IIT-Madras Director V. Kamakoti, former Education Secretary Anita Karwal, and logistics expert Amrit Lal Meena.**
- **Mr. Nilekani has worked with the Union government in the past to set up the Aadhaar ecosystem and Unified Payments Interface (UPI). He is also the chairperson of the governing body of the economic policy research think tank, the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), and a co-founder of Infosys.**

Joshi takes charge

- After assuming charge of the Education Ministry, Mr. Joshi told the media, “The Prime Minister has entrusted me with this responsibility with full confidence. I was in Karnataka yesterday. I reached here last night and came this morning to take charge. I have assumed charge.”
- “I am reviewing all the details here and the decisions that need to be taken. I have been gathering information and trying to understand the functioning of the Ministry. We had continuous meetings today. This is a new subject for me. I have taken charge today and held detailed discussions with the senior officers. It is a very big department, so I will speak to you in detail after I have understood it completely,” Mr. Joshi stated.
- **Union Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary attended the meeting. Officials said Mr. Joshi reviewed key schemes, including Samagra Shiksha, PM-SHRI Schools and PM POSHAN, and discussed school infrastructure.**
- Higher Education Department Secretary, School Education and Literacy Department Secretary, and other senior officials of the Ministry were present.

❖ Centre warns Indian seafarers about jobs in ‘volatile’ Black Sea

- The External Affairs Ministry on Sunday issued an advisory urging Indian seafarers to “carefully assess security risks” before accepting jobs on commercial ships that operate “in and around the **Black Sea and adjoining maritime areas**”, **citing increasing drone and missile attacks on ships in the region that remains highly volatile due to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.**
- Earlier, the Indian Embassy in Ukraine said it was “closely monitoring” the situation after a projectile hit the MV AGN Ragnar in **Ukraine’s Black Sea port of Odesa** on Saturday. The ship employed four Indian seafarers, of whom two have been found to be safe while information about the other two is still awaited.
- There has been an increase in the number of such incidents since April, resulting in the deaths of five Indian seafarers, the Ministry said. “Indian nationals intending to undertake employment on commercial vessels operating in or transiting the conflict-affected region are advised to carefully assess the prevailing security risks before accepting such assignments,” the Ministry said in its advisory, noting the security situation in the region and around the **Black Sea and adjoining maritime areas**. “Commercial vessels operating in or transiting these waters are facing significant security risks, including missile and drone attacks,” it said.
- The Ministry urged Indians to follow a set of precautions, such as obtaining “comprehensive information from employers/recruitment agencies and ship operators regarding the vessel’s intended route, ports of call, security arrangements, and emergency response procedures”. **The “terms of employment”** should “comply with applicable maritime standards and provide adequate provisions for medical care, evacuation, repatriation, and compensation in the event of an emergency,” it said.
- Indian seafarers were urged to follow all the advisories issued by the Directorate General of Maritime Administration, including one issued on July 23.

Search and rescue under way

- The latest advisory came a day after the MV AGN Ragnar was struck at the port of Odesa. “Four Indian nationals were on board the vessel. As per the latest information, two have been confirmed safe, and information is awaited regarding the other two nationals. Search and rescue operations are under way. **The Embassy is in constant touch with the concerned authorities,” the Indian Embassy in Kyiv said, without specifying who had fired the projectile that hit the ship.**
- Earlier on July 19, the MV Golden Leo, a Guinea Bissau-flagged ship, was also hit by projectiles that led to the deaths of 10 seafarers, of whom four were Indian citizens.
- This incident had prompted the MEA to summon the chargé d’affaires of the Russian Embassy in India. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Manila on July 22, where he expressed “strong concern regarding the safety of Indian seafarers in the region”.
- Subsequently, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that Russia was in touch with India over the matter. However, he said, “Our armed forces are striking and will continue to strike those vessels that are involved in transporting ammunition, weapons and so on, for the purposes of the Kiev regime.”
- Responding to this assertion, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal pointed out that the ship was civilian in nature. “As per the information that was made available to us by the **Directorate General of Maritime Administration, this particular ship, Golden Leo, was Guinea-Bissau-flagged on which we lost four of our nationals.** It loaded grain as cargo prior to leaving the port of Odesa and this happened on 19th July. We once again reiterate that commercial shipping and seafarers should not be attacked under any circumstances,” he said.

❖ Mirabai makes it a golden day for India; Rishikanta clinches a silver

- Weightlifting has always been one of the disciplines that has contributed significantly to India’s tally at the Commonwealth Games. The fact that the country has won as many as 33 medals in the last three editions underlines the vital role of the weightlifters.
- On Sunday, the opening day of the weightlifting competition here, Indians once again made their presence felt by winning two medals — a gold and silver.



Manipuris' day out: It was triple delight for Mirabai while Rishikanta (below) became the first male lifter from the State to win a medal in the Commonwealth Games. PTI

- **Hours after Rishikanta Singh Chanambam finished second in the men's 60kg category, Mirabai Chanu produced a golden moment in the women's 48kg class. For the latter, it was her third successive Commonwealth Games yellow metal after Gold Coast (2018) and Birmingham (2022).**

- Surprisingly, the 31-year-old had a shaky start to her snatch sequence, missing the opening attempt at 82kg. She, however, remained unflustered and returned to successfully lift the weight.

- The lifter from Manipur went on to clear 85kg on her third visit, establishing a new Commonwealth Games record much to the delight of the Indian fans at the venue.

- After failing to clear 105kg in her first clean and jerk attempt, Mirabai managed to overcome the challenge in her second try and finished with a total of 190kg, both new Games marks. Ruth Asuquo Nyong of Nigeria won silver with a total lift of 168kg while Irena Jane Henry of Malaysia clinched bronze with 167kg.



All smiles: Mirabai triumphed with ease while Rishikanta overcame knee pain to finish second. ANI & PTI

Growing tally

- Earlier, Rishikanta won India's second medal at the Games with his silver. The 28-year-old began the snatch series with 116kg, increased it to 119kg and eventually produced a 121kg lift. In clean and jerk, the Manipur lifter passed the 143kg test but failed in his next two attempts at 148kg and 151kg. Rishikanta finished with a combined lift of 264kg.
- Malaysia's Mohamad Aniq Kasdan won the gold with a total lift of 273kg, setting a Games record. Kasdan also registered a new Games high in clean and jerk with 152kg.
- Kenya's Joshua Amunga Moby was the other podium finisher, thanks to his overall effort of 264kg (snatch: 121kg; clean and jerk: 143kg).

❖ Mirabai completes a hat-trick of gold as records tumble

- The Indian weightlifting star rules the roost in women's 48kg; another Manipuri, Rishikanta, bags silver in men's 60kg
- As a glowing Mirabai Chanu walked into the mixed zone to meet the Indian media here on Sunday, she was in high spirits. So much so that when the cameramen bent down on their knees to fix their microphones, she smiled and said: "Mera Aashirwad (My blessings)! Please finish quickly as I have not eaten for the last few days!"
- Mirabai was the darling of the packed gathering at the Scottish Event Campus during the Games.
- Going for her third successive Commonwealth Games gold medal, the 31-year-old Indian weightlifting star broke records in both snatch and clean and jerk with ease.

Huge cheer

- The gathering gave her a rousing reception after she completed her lifts and secured gold in women's 48kg with a record 190kg (85 & 105).
- "I am very happy that I was able to get my third gold for India," she said.
- Mirabai revealed that there was a lot of pressure on her and she was delighted to handle it. "A lot was going on in my mind — whether I would be able to win the medal this time. I am relieved," she said. Mirabai added that maintaining the 48kg category had been a difficult task. "This performance is very important for me because I have been controlling my body weight for a long time. It was very difficult for me to bring it down to 48kg. From now on, I will focus on the Asian Games."
- It was an emotional moment for another Manipuri weightlifter Rishikanta Singh Chanambam, too. Winning a medal was a "dream-come-true" for the 28-year-old as he claimed silver in men's 60kg with a total of 264kg (a Games record 121kg in snatch and 143 in clean and jerk).
- "It's a dream to win my first Commonwealth medal. My family will be very happy," said Rishikanta. He is the first male weightlifter from the State to win a medal at the Games.

Other Indian results:

- Boxing: Women: 54kg: Preeti Panwar bt Deborah Mtenje (Maw) RSC, enters quarterfinals; Men: 55kg: Jadumani Singh bt Sumama Rehman (Pak) 5-0, makes it to last eight.
- Lawn bowls: Women's pairs: Pinki Singh & Rupa Rani Tirkey lost to Amy Pharaoh & Sian Honnor (Eng) in tie-break; Pinki & Rupa lost to Amanda Steenkamp & Diana Viljoen (Nam) in tie-break; Men: Putul Sonowal lost to Shaun James (Mlt) 0.5-1.5.
- Swimming: Men's 4x200m freestyle relay team (Dhakshan Shashikumar, Aneesh Gowda, Aryan Nehra and Srihari Nataraj), qualified for final.

❖ Iran says it is halting 'retaliatory strikes' on U.S.

- Extending the weekend lull in fighting in West Asia, with the United States having halted operations after 13 days of strikes, Iran announced on Sunday that it too was halting its operations.
- Iran's Army spokesperson Mohammad Akraminia was reported as saying: **"Since our strategy has essentially been retaliatory, we have also halted our retaliatory operations."**
- On Sunday, Iran's Tasnim news agency claimed that a tanker exploded after it hit a mine while transiting the Strait of Hormuz through a route Tehran had not approved.
- The news agency had made a similar claim about another tanker on July 23, adding that two other tankers had refrained from crossing the Strait after that incident.
- **While bodies that assess maritime threats, such as the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, did not confirm these explosions, they have nevertheless warned of heightened risks from mines in the Strait.**

❖ Andhra Pradesh govt. unveils AI platform to forecast floods

- The Andhra Pradesh government has launched City Flood Alert, an AI-powered technology platform developed by the **Real Time Governance Society (RTGS) with the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA) and IIT-Gandhinagar.**
- The platform is designed to predict urban flooding before it occurs, enabling authorities to take preventive measures well in advance. The platform will initially be deployed in Vijayawada.

❖ India scaling new heights in defence production: PM

- India is continuously strengthening its technological capabilities, says Modi in Mann Ki Baat address; he lauds Indian sportspersons, students for their achievements in respective fields
- **India is continuously scaling new heights in defence production, defence exports, and political cooperation with friendly nations,** Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday in the latest episode of Mann Ki Baat, his monthly radio address.
- Mr. Modi also paid tributes to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives during the Kargil War in 1999.
- **India was continuously strengthening its technological capabilities, he said. Citing the induction of INS Mahendragiri into the Indian Navy, he said the modern warship had been designed and built in India. More than 75% of the materials used in it are indigenous. "It is a symbol of the growing strength of an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. This very month, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) also successfully tested the Pinaka Long-Range Guided Rocket. Behind this success lies the collective perseverance of our scientists and engineers. The DRDO also successfully tested the Kusha missile,"** he said.
- "Whether it is defence production, defence exports, or political cooperation with friendly nations, India is continuously scaling new heights. Earlier this month, I was in Indonesia, where a major agreement regarding BrahMos and Astra missiles was concluded. Global confidence in India's defence equipment and technology is growing," Mr. Modi said.

Remarkable feats

- **Wishing the Indian contingent the very best for the Commonwealth Games, which began in Glasgow a few days ago, the Prime Minister said people across the country hoped that the players and athletes would perform exceptionally well and make the nation proud.** "Our youth have achieved remarkable feats in sports recently. P.V. Sindhu has become the first Indian to win the Japan Open title in badminton; the entire nation is proud of this achievement of hers," he said.
- He said the Indian women's cricket team had won the first-ever women's Test match at Lord's in London. "This is a historic victory. But that is not all. In the long history of Lord's, this was the first Test match played by a women's team. It was on this very ground that India won her first Cricket World Cup in 1983. Now, our 'Nari Shakti' has brought glory to the nation there," he said.

- Mr. Modi said “our young friends” were also bringing glory to India in the field of science. “Olympiads in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Mathematics were held just this month. The Indian contingent delivered a spectacular performance in these competitions. In the Physics Olympiad, all five of our students won gold medals, and India secured the top rank,” he said.
- “In the Chemistry Olympiad, too, all our students won gold medals. All our students also won medals in the Biology Olympiad, including a gold medal. In the Mathematics Olympiad, our students secured two gold and four silver medals. I am immensely proud of the nation’s youth power. It is heartening to see the culture of Olympiads and Hackathons steadily growing in India. I am confident that more and more young people across the country will show interest in such forums and keep the flag of India flying high,” he said.

❖ 3 Great Indian Bustard chicks placed in rewilding tunnel

- **In a first, three chicks of the endangered Great Indian Bustard have been moved into a custom-built rewilding tunnel at the Godawan Conservation Centre in Ramdevra, Jaisalmer.**
- The ₹9.25-crore facility prepares captive-bred birds for life in the wild by minimising human contact and copying their natural habitat. **The Great Indian Bustard is the State bird of Rajasthan.**
- The chicks will remain in the tunnel for about four months under CCTV surveillance. The food will be provided without direct human contact. Following the rewilding phase, the chicks will be released into Desert National Park.

❖ Dialogue with Pakistan will only be on PoK, says Defence Minister

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said the success of Operation Sindoor demonstrated India’s capability to respond to every “misadventure” by Pakistan with overwhelming force, while reiterating that there would be no dialogue with Islamabad except on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- Addressing the 27th Kargil Vijay Divas commemorations at the Kargil War Memorial in Dras, Mr. Singh asserted that PoK is an integral part of India under Pakistan’s illegal occupation and warned that any attempt to undermine India’s sovereignty would invite a decisive response from the armed forces.
- “The success of Operation Sindoor is proof that India possesses the capability to respond to Pakistan’s every misadventure with a severity far beyond its imagination,” he said, adding that India no longer distinguishes between terrorists and the governments that support them.
- Accusing Pakistan of making terrorism a part of its state policy, Mr. Singh said the country’s military works in tandem with terrorist organisations.
- He contrasted the trajectories of the two neighbours, saying India is focused on innovation, semiconductors, space technology and digital payments, while Pakistan continues to promote terrorism, infiltration, radicalisation and proxy warfare.

Free hand to forces

- Mr. Singh said the Indian government has given the armed forces a free hand to respond decisively to threats and expressed confidence that no adversary would dare cast a hostile eye on India while its soldiers guard the borders.
- Paying tribute to the soldiers who laid down their lives during the 1999 Kargil War, including Param Vir Chakra awardees Captain Vikram Batra and Captain Manoj Kumar Pandey, Mr. Singh described Kargil Vijay Divas as a symbol of sacrifice, service and national unity. He urged every citizen to imbibe a soldier-like spirit of discipline, patriotism and readiness to serve the nation.
- Highlighting progress in defence indigenisation, Mr. Singh said India now manufactures nearly 65% of its defence equipment domestically, compared to importing 65%-70% when the present government assumed office.
- Earlier, he laid a wreath at the Kargil War Memorial and flagged in the Shaurya Vijay Yatra motorcycle rally as part of the commemorations.

❖ Iran slams Ukrainian attack on its vessel in Caspian Sea

- Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Sunday warned that his country would respond to a deadly attack by Ukraine on an Iranian ship in the Caspian Sea.
- **It came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Kyiv had carried out long-range strikes in the Caspian Sea against vessels transporting military cargo involving Iran, underscoring the increasingly international dimensions of Russia's war in Ukraine.**

Sailor killed

- "Mr. Zelenskyy has attacked an Iranian commercial vessel, killing a sailor," Mr. Araghchi said on social media platform X, describing it as **"a blatant UN Charter violation done at Israel's behest to drag Europe into its war"**.
- He added that, during calls with the European Union's Kaja Kallas and Russian top diplomat Sergei Lavrov, he "made clear that what the freeloader in Kyiv did CANNOT GO UNANSWERED".
- Iran's Foreign Ministry said the attack caused the ship "to explode, killing one sailor and injuring several others". The Islamic republic "has never intervened in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine", the Ministry said in a statement.
- On Saturday, the **Ukrainian President said on social media that armed forces had achieved "very strong results with long-range strikes in the Caspian Sea"**.
- Ukraine's intelligence services reported on Telegram that drone attacks had been carried out against "cargo vessels under international sanctions that were used to transport military cargo between Iran and Russia".
- According to Iranian state television, the Foreign Ministry summoned the Ukrainian charge d'affaires in Tehran on Saturday to protest this "hostile and criminal act".

❖ **Riparian States' nod not needed for Mekedatu**

- The Union Ministry of **Jal Shakti** has clarified that the Supreme Court judgment dated February 16, 2018, does not mention that **Karnataka must obtain the consent of other riparian State to construct any structure across the Cauvery.**
- SC didn't say Karnataka needs nod of riparian States: Centre
- State contends that the proposed Mekedatu project will not affect the stipulated release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu
- In what could bolster **Karnataka's stand on the proposed Mekedatu balancing reservoir across the Cauvery river, the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti has clarified that the Supreme Court judgment dated February 16, 2018, on the Cauvery water dispute does not mention that Karnataka must obtain the consent of other riparian States, including Tamil Nadu, to construct any structure across the river.**
- The statement came on Monday in response to an unstarred question in the Rajya Sabha by Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) member Anbumani Ramdoss.
- He sought to know whether the Centre was aware of the February 2018 Supreme Court judgment relating to the **Cauvery water dispute, which, according to the query, required the upper riparian State of Karnataka to obtain the consent of the lower riparian States, including Tamil Nadu, before constructing any structure across the river.**
- In a written reply, Minister of State for Jal Shakti Raj Bhushan Choudhary said, "As per the Supreme Court judgment dated February 16, 2018, regarding the Cauvery water dispute, there is no mention that the **State of Karnataka has to obtain the consent of other riparian States, namely Tamil Nadu, Kerala and the Union Territory of Puducherry, to construct any kind of structure across the river Cauvery.**"
- Throwing light on the legal position, he further said the Supreme Court, in its order, had found Clause XVIII of the **Cauvery Water Dispute Tribunal (CWDT) Award of 2007** to be appropriate.
- The Supreme Court had reiterated in its order that **"nothing in the order of this tribunal shall impair the right or power or authority of any State to regulate, within its boundaries, the use of water or to enjoy the benefit of waters within that State in a manner not inconsistent with the order of this tribunal,"** the Union Minister said.

Present status

- On the present status of the Mekedatu proposal before the Centre, Mr. Choudhary said, **"The Detailed Project Report (DPR) of the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir-cum-Drinking Water Project submitted by Karnataka in 2019 has been returned to the project authority with a request to submit a revised DPR in compliance with the CWDT Award and the extant CWC guidelines."**
- Karnataka has been contending that the proposed balancing reservoir-cum-drinking water project at **Mekedatu in Kanakapura taluk of Bengaluru South district (erstwhile Ramanagara district) will not come in the way of the State releasing the stipulated quantum of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu.**

- The State has been arguing that the balancing reservoir would, in fact, help it regulate the flow of water to Tamil Nadu more effectively. Karnataka has also maintained that the actual flows to Tamil Nadu during several years of bountiful monsoon were more than double the stipulated **177.25 tmcft** annually, as it has no facility to impound water downstream of the KRS reservoir and upstream of the **Biligundlu** measuring gauging on the inter-State border.

❖ **Govt. tables Bill in LS to toughen penalties on leaks**

- The Union government on Monday **introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha providing for harsher penalties for exam paper leaks, amid a huge uproar by Opposition members demanding a discussion on police action against protesting students first.**
- **Govt. introduces paper leak Bill in Lok Sabha; debate likely today**
- Six hours allocated for discussion; 91 amendments moved by members, says Speaker as he brokers truce between govt. and Opposition, which demanded a discussion on police action on protesting students; Ram Temple, E20 issues may be raised
- The Union government on Monday **introduced in the Lok Sabha a Bill providing for harsher penalties and time-bound investigations into examination paper leaks amid a huge uproar by the Opposition members, who demanded a discussion on the police action on protesting students in the country.**
- The stalemate is likely to end on Tuesday, with Speaker Om Birla brokering a truce between the **Treasury and the Opposition benches on Monday afternoon, sources said. The floor leaders of both National Democratic Alliance and Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) had been in touch since the morning.**
- Six hours have been allocated for the **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026**, and 91 amendments have been moved by Lok Sabha members cutting across party lines, Mr. Birla announced in the House earlier.
- The Bill seeks to amend the anti-paper leak law with stricter punishment of up to 10 years in jail and ₹50 lakh fine.
- The proposed legislation, which seeks to amend an existing law, was first promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a midnight Instagram post last week in a bid to quell the students' protest at Jantar Mantar.
- The Bill was introduced by Union Minister of State for PMO and Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh even as the Opposition protested and sloganeered over the police crackdown on students during the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led July 20 protest march to Parliament as well as in some States like West Bengal and Bihar.

No let-up in protests

- The Opposition, which had been protesting since 11 a.m., when the House was convened, was unrelenting and did not let the Bill be taken up for discussion and passage despite repeated appeals from Mr. Birla as well as Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju. He said several members, including those from the Opposition, were prepared to participate in the debate but the Congress and “some of its friends” were causing disruptions and not allowing a debate. At 2 p.m., however, the Speaker said both ruling and Opposition sides should try and arrive at a decision by 5 p.m. till when the House was adjourned.
- Senior Congress leaders are understood to have met the Speaker after this and agreed to the discussion being taken up on Tuesday.
- **“All political parties have agreed to discuss the anti-paper leak Bill on Tuesday. Following Om Birla’s initiative and sustained dialogue, floor leaders of political parties have agreed to commence discussion on the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill 2026,”** sources said.
- Opposition sources said they were now looking to widen the offensive by targeting the government over the alleged Ram Temple donation embezzlement case and ethanol-blended fuel.
- With the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election due in early 2027, the Samajwadi Party is seeking to use the Ram Temple issue to make inroads among the BJP’s core support base of Ram devotees, while the Congress has held over 50 press conferences demanding Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s statement on the alleged donation theft.
- “We shouldn’t allow the BJP to hijack our religion. We are all very proud Hindus and not political Hindus like them,” a senior Congress leader.
- The Opposition plans to highlight concerns over ethanol-blended fuel, which it believes resonate with the middle class, another key BJP constituency.
- And with the CJP taking limelight for spearheading the **Gen-Z protests and the government appearing** intent on sidelining Opposition parties, these parties do not want to give much elbow room to the government.

❖ Comet which makes appearance once in 5.5 years now visible in Bengaluru sky

- The comet has been becoming brighter during June and July, and it will continue to be observable through late July and the first half of August, with peak visibility on August 2 and 3
- **Comet 10P/Tempel 2, which was last visible from earth five-and-a-half years ago, can now once again be spotted in Bengaluru in the wee hours till early August.**
- **The comet, which was discovered in 1873, completes one orbit around the sun every 5.5 years. Its last sighting was in 2021.**
- “The comet has already been brightening during June and July. It will continue to be observable through late July, and the first half of August, with peak visibility occurring around August 2 and 3. After that, it will gradually fade as it moves away from both the sun and earth,” said Deepak Choudhary, a Bengaluru-based astronomy enthusiast.
- Mr. Choudhary captured the image of the comet in the wee hours of Sunday using a Seestar S50 smart telescope.

- **“Comet 10P/Tempel 2 is a periodic comet. Although it returns every 5.5 years, it is not always easily visible from earth. Its visibility depends on how close it comes to earth during that return, and its position relative to the sun in our sky. Depending on how bright it becomes during that apparition, some returns are excellent, while others are much less favourable,”** Mr. Choudhary said.
- He added that the period between late July through early August offers the best opportunity to observe the comet as it is expected to brighten to around magnitude eight to nine, making it accessible to binoculars under dark skies.
- “It is unlikely to be visible to the naked eye, as the comet is expected to remain too faint for most people without optical aid. It is also visible in binoculars and small telescopes with an aperture of 80mm to 150 mm,” the astronomy enthusiast added.
- Mr. Choudhary said that it is best to observe the comet from a dark location away from city lights on a clear, moonless night.

Closest to the sun

- “On August 2, the comet is closest to the sun. The sun’s heat causes more ice to vaporise. This creates the comet’s coma (the fuzzy cloud around the nucleus) and tail, making it brighter and easier to observe. On August 3, it will be closest to the earth,” he said.

❖ BJP to mark Guru Ravidas’ 650th birth anniversary

- The BJP on Monday said it would launch a nationwide **“Samrasta Sankalp Abhiyan” (campaign for social harmony and resolve) from July 29, 2026, to February 20, 2027, to mark the 650th birth anniversary of the mystic poet-saint Guru Ravidas.**
- At a press conference held by BJP national general secretaries Tarun Chugh and Dushyant Kumar Gautam, it said 131 sacred urns would be sent across the country from Varanasi, the birthplace of Ravidas.
- **Initiatives for social harmony would be organised at 21,000 locations and processions, including a month-long yatra from Jalandhar to Varanasi, would be taken out,** they said.
- The government had undertaken several initiatives to preserve the saint’s legacy, including the development of airports, special trains, his birthplace, pilgrim routes, and the restoration of sites linked to Ravidas, they said.

❖ HC allows Gadkari to sue Meta, Google, X over ethanol posts

- The Bombay High Court on Monday allowed Union Minister Nitin Gadkari to initiate legal proceedings against Meta, Google, X, and other unnamed entities over social media content that he alleged falsely links him to the **Centre’s Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP).**
- Justice Abhay Ahuja, presiding over a single-judge Bench, granted Mr. Gadkari leave to file a substantive civil suit, seeking relief that includes the removal of the content in question from the Internet.

- The petition was moved under Clause XII of the Letters Patent. This procedural requirement necessitates the High Court's permission when a part of the cause of action arises outside the High Court's territorial jurisdiction. Mr. Gadkari also indicated his intention to approach the Supreme Court in the matter. A detailed order is awaited.
- In the proposed suit, Mr. Gadkari outlined the background of the Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP), introduced by the Centre in 2003 as a national policy initiative for blending ethanol with petrol in phases. The implementation of 20% ethanol blending with petrol (E20) was achieved during the 2025-26 period.
- Mr. Gadkari stated that though he had served as the Union Minister for Road Transport since 2014, he had no role in the E20 policy decisions. However, the Minister alleged that several social media posts, created, and circulated by unknown users, falsely portray him as responsible for the EBP's implementation.
- Mr. Gadkari identified at least 24 posts that he claims are defamatory and has sought directions for their removal. The suit which seeks damages of ₹11 crore, is likely to be listed before Justice Arif Doctor.

❖ **BoB's 'critical data' leaks on dark web, bank initiates probe**

- **Bank of Baroda (BoB) has initiated a forensic investigation into breach of critical data that has reportedly leaked one TB (terabyte) worth of data.**
- "A comprehensive forensic investigation has been initiated, and the bank is working closely with the relevant authorities in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements," the bank said in its statement, a day after the data leak was informed by people through social media posts.
- Going by the posts, the critical data of the banks was leaked into darkweb, a private internet network where users' location information cannot be tracked and is not indexed in the World Wide Web.
- **"The bank has robust information security protocols in place. The incident involved compromise of an employee's email account, resulting in unauthorised access to certain data. The matter was promptly identified, and immediate containment measures were implemented,"** BoB said.

'Core banking secure'

- The bank's core banking systems were not accessed and "continue to remain secure", it communicated through a post on its official social media handle X.
- **The post seems to be in response to media reports and social media discussions claiming that over 1 TB of data, including personal Aadhaar details of customers, has been accessed in an unauthorised manner and posted on the dark web for free.**
- It was not immediately clear how many customers were affected.
- The leak comes amid growing concerns over cybersecurity risks facing large companies and financial institutions that store vast amounts of customer and business data.

❖ **BoB's 'critical data' leaks on dark web, bank initiates probe**

- Bank of Baroda (BoB) has initiated a forensic investigation into breach of critical data that has reportedly leaked one TB (terabyte) worth of data.
- “A comprehensive forensic investigation has been initiated, and the bank is working closely with the relevant authorities in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements,” the bank said in its statement, a day after the data leak was informed by people through social media posts.
- Going by the posts, the critical data of the banks was leaked into darkweb, a private internet network where users' location information cannot be tracked and is not indexed in the World Wide Web.
- “The bank has robust information security protocols in place. The incident involved compromise of an employee's email account, resulting in unauthorised access to certain data. The matter was promptly identified, and immediate containment measures were implemented,” BoB said.

'Core banking secure'

- The bank's core banking systems were not accessed and “continue to remain secure”, it communicated through a post on its official social media handle X.
- The post seems to be in response to media reports and social media discussions claiming that over 1 TB of data, including personal Aadhaar details of customers, has been accessed in an unauthorised manner and posted on the dark web for free.
- It was not immediately clear how many customers were affected.
- The leak comes amid growing concerns over cybersecurity risks facing large companies and financial institutions that store vast amounts of customer and business data.

❖ **Thai FDA approves new treatment for gonorrhoea**

- Thailand's Food and Drug Administration has approved Nuzolvence (zofludacin), a first-in-class oral antibiotic for the treatment of uncomplicated urogenital gonorrhoea for which Dr. Reddy's Laboratories with support from The GARDP Foundation had led the priority review submission.
- Thailand is the second country to approve the new chemical entity. Six months ago the U.S. Food and Drug Administration had approved the drug.

❖ **Policybazaar to sell insurers' dollar term cover via GIFT City**

- Digital insurance platform Policybazaar said it started offering U.S. dollar-denominated term insurance plans of partner insurers for non-resident Indians (NRIs) through the International Financial Services Centre, GIFT City, Gujarat.
- This allows NRIs to pay premia and receive claim payouts in U.S. dollars, addressing one of the biggest but least discussed financial risks faced by Indians living overseas — currency depreciation, it said.
- The launch reflects the growing role of GIFT City in bringing global financial products closer to the Indian diaspora. Over the last few years, the IFSC enabled several banking, investment and insurance solutions traditionally available only via overseas financial centres. Global Indians can now access internationally-aligned financial products within India's regulatory framework, Policybazaar added.

- Chief business officer-Life Insurance, Policybazaar Vivek Jain said “GIFT City has created the foundation for a new generation of financial products for global Indians. Our role at Policybazaar is to ensure the opportunities reach customers in a simple and accessible manner.”

❖ **Red Sea shipping slows after Houthi hits on Saudi Arabia**

- Ship traffic through Bab el-Mandeb fell on Sunday after Yemeni Houthis attacked Saudi oil installations along the Red Sea coast, while transit through the Strait of Hormuz stayed low over the weekend, shipping data from Kpler showed on Monday.
- Eleven commodity vessels passed through the Bab el-Mandeb strait on Sunday, the lowest level in months, the data showed.
- Red Sea traffic has been disrupted off the coast of Yemen since last week by the Iran-aligned Houthis, who want to blockade Saudi exports, expanding the U.S.-Iran conflict that has already choked oil supply through the Strait of Hormuz.
- Seven of the vessels that passed through strait were oil tankers with three of them entering the Red Sea. Two of them are very large crude carriers (VLCCs) heading to the port of Yanbu to load Saudi crude while the third is a Russian-linked ship, the data showed.
- Four vessels exited the Red Sea on Sunday. Another ship is exiting the waterway through the Bab el-Mandeb strait.

Lull in Hormuz

- Fewer than 10 commodity vessels passed through the Strait of Hormuz daily over the weekend even though the U.S. and Iran have paused strikes in West Asia, shipping data from Kpler showed.
- Seven vessels transited on Sunday including three Iranian-linked oil products tankers that exited the strait, the data showed.
- On Saturday, there were only three vessels that passed through with their transponders switched off.
- On Friday, seven vessels passed, mostly exiting the Gulf, including two VLCCs carrying crude from Iraq and the UAE and a tanker carrying fuel oil.

❖ Release all minors held over student protests: SC

- Top court mulls independent probe into allegations of police excesses during the protests; States permitted to proceed with probes, police restrained from taking 'coercive action' against students
- The Supreme Court on Tuesday indicated that it would consider constituting a high-powered investigation team to conduct a "thorough, fair, and independent" inquiry into allegations of police excesses during the recent student protests in Delhi and several States. While permitting the State authorities to proceed with the investigation of the FIRs registered in relation to the protests, the court ordered the immediate release of all minors arrested in connection with the demonstrations and restrained the police from taking coercive action against "protesting students" unless they had criminal antecedents.
- The interim order permitting the authorities to proceed with the investigation of the existing FIRs raised concerns among the protesters on Tuesday, with the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which led the demonstrations, contending that the direction was contrary to the Centre's assurance that no punitive action would be taken against protesters. Saurav Das, the CJP's spokesperson, said in a post on X that the order "raises extremely serious concerns" and is in "direct contradiction" to the Centre's assurance to the "youth of this nation".
- **Underlining that the Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful protest, a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant, while hearing a batch of petitions alleging disproportionate force by the police during the protests, observed that an independent probe was necessary to examine the allegations of police violence through a "scientific" and "evidence-based" inquiry.**
- "Whosoever has committed excess, committed atrocities on innocent people, the law will take care of them. For that, there needs to be a completely independent and fair investigation... Probe is meaningless if no responsibility is fixed," CJI Kant said.
- The Bench, including Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana, issued notices to the Union government, the Delhi government and the Chief Secretaries of Maharashtra, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Kerala, directing them to place their responses on record. It indicated that it would decide whether to order an independent probe after considering the responses filed by the authorities.
- "The allegations made by the petitioners, prima facie, establish a compelling case for an independent and impartial investigation into the incidents of violence," the Bench observed, adding that the proposed probe would also examine complaints by the families of police personnel who were allegedly injured during the protests.
- The interim directions came while the top court was hearing a batch of petitions alleging the use of disproportionate force by the police against protesters during demonstrations over the NEET examination paper leaks.

- Taking note of petitions alleging that student protesters had been illegally arrested and detained by the police, the top court directed the authorities to forthwith release all minors detained in connection with the demonstrations. It clarified that, where required, they may be released on the “execution of a simple bond by themselves or their family members”, if such a requirement was insisted upon for furnishing surety. While permitting the police to continue investigating the FIRs registered in relation to the protests, it restrained the authorities from taking any coercive action against students unless they had criminal antecedents.
- As an interim measure, the Bench directed the police authorities to preserve all CCTV footage, drone recordings, body-worn camera footage, wireless communication records and PCR call records relating to the protests.

❖ **CWRC orders State to release 3,500 cusecs of water daily for 15 days to Tamil Nadu**

- The **Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC)**, which met in Delhi on Tuesday to review the situation in the drought-hit Cauvery basin, has directed Karnataka to release 4 tmcft of water to Tamil Nadu at a rate of 3,500 cusecs a day for 15 days.
- **After examining the live storage in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu reservoirs and the anticipated worsening El Niño conditions, the CWRC directed Karnataka to ensure a flow of 3,500 cusecs at Biligundlu** measuring gauge on the interstate border, commencing from 8 a.m. of Wednesday (July 29) for 15 days, which adds up to 4 tmcft.

Appeal before CWMA

- When contacted by The Hindu, Karnataka Water Resources Minister K. Ramalinga Reddy said the **State would examine the possibility of filing an appeal against the CWRC order before the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA), which is the apex body that monitors implementation of Cauvery water release.**
- Mr. Reddy said he would hold a meeting with officials concerned in this regard on Wednesday in Bengaluru and later consult Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar to arrive at a decision.
- He maintained that whatever storage is there in the four reservoirs of Karnataka’s Cauvery basin was sufficient to take care of only drinking water requirements of the State.
- **Earlier, Karnataka submitted before the CWRC that the cumulative inflows into the four Cauvery reservoirs in the State were 65.86% below the 30-year average in the present water year. Existing reservoir storage is barely sufficient to meet upcoming domestic drinking water needs, it said, while expressing inability to release water.**

- On its part, Tamil Nadu said the net inflow into Karnataka's Cauvery basin reservoirs stood at 36.690 tmcft as against the 30-year average of 99.018 tmcft, accounting for 37.05% of the average figures. But till July 26, Tamil Nadu had received only 3.543 tmcft of water as against the prescribed 35.391 tmcft, which accounted for only 10.01% of the stipulated quantum, it said. Tamil Nadu contended that it had not received its pro-rata share in accordance with the inflows into Karnataka's reservoirs and there was a backlog of 9.46 tmcft.
- In the light of drought gripping Karnataka, Mr. Shivakumar had convened a meeting of the State MPs on Monday in Delhi to seek their cooperation in getting drought assistance from the Centre.
- Earlier, the CWMA that had met on July 22 had directed both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to strictly confine the use of their storage to drinking water purposes in the wake of prevailing dry conditions. **The CWMA had observed that the Cauvery basin is gripped by distress and warned against using water for non-drinking purposes.**
- Karnataka has already told farmers in the command areas of Cauvery basin that it would not release water for irrigation purpose.
- The CWRC order, when Karnataka is facing drought, has evoked angry response from farmers as well as political parties with farmers' organisations gearing to stage a protest on Wednesday in Mysuru.

❖ **India's industrial growth hits 23-month high of 7.3% in June 2026**

- India's industrial growth hit a near two-year peak of 7.3% in June 2026, fuelled by strong performance in manufacturing, electricity, and capital goods, official data released on Tuesday showed.
- Analysts, however, caution that this strong performance might not continue in the face of a lower-than-expected monsoon and continued uncertainty due to the war in West Asia.
- The data on the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which was released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, showed that the index's growth in June was the fastest since July 2024, a 23-month high.**
- The index had grown 5.1% in May 2026.
- Within the index, the manufacturing sector grew at a 23-month high of 7.8% in June 2026, compared with 5.5% in May, and 2.4% in June of last year.
- "The sharp uptick reflects broad-based strength in industrial activity, supported by improving manufacturing output, resilient domestic demand, and sustained momentum in investment-led sectors," Shashwat Singh, Fundamental Analyst at Bajaj Broking said.
- **The heatwave in several parts of the country in June drove growth in the electricity and gas supply sector to a 25-month high of 10.6%, up from 9.9% in May. Some part of this strong growth could also have been due to a base effect since the sector had contracted 2% in June last year.**
- The capital goods sector also saw growth accelerating to a relatively robust 14.2% in June 2026, up from 3.45% in June last year. However, analysts say that despite this strong growth, the outlook for the months ahead is not as positive.

- “While this reflects steady capital expenditure execution, our forward-looking credit outlook adopts a cautious stance,” Vikrant Chaturvedi, Associate Director at Brickwork Ratings said. “The 9.3% growth in intermediate goods supports near-term supply chain stability, yet the broader macroeconomic landscape is clouded by significant risks.”
- The data also showed that consumer demand seems to be recovering, with growth in both consumer durables and non-durables accelerating in June. The consumer durables category grew 7.7% in June 2026, the fastest since November 2025, while the consumer non-durables sector grew 4.9%, the fastest in the same period of time.

❖ **Bescom launches PM-E DRIVE portal for private Charge Point Operators**

- With a view to expanding Karnataka’s electric vehicle (EV) charging network, Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) has initiated the implementation of the PM E-DRIVE Scheme by laying out the framework for establishing public EV charging stations under Category-C.
- Category-C enables participation by private Charge Point Operators (CPOs).
- While Category-A includes State and Central government offices, hospitals and government residential complexes, Category-B comprises government-owned or government-managed public locations such as railway stations, Airports Authority of India (AAI)-operated airports, metro stations, public-sector fuel retail outlets, KSRTC/STU bus stations, among others.
- Bescom is the State nodal agency for implementing the PM E-DRIVE scheme. A release stated that the scheme, launched by the Ministry of Heavy Industries with a total outlay of ₹10,900 crore, has earmarked ₹2,000 crore for establishing public EV charging stations across the country till March 2028.
- Under the scheme, Bescom will implement charging stations at government-owned locations, while private CPOs will develop charging infrastructure under Category-C.

Apply via portal

- As part of the framework, Bescom has introduced the PM E-DRIVE portal and a two-stage Expression of Interest (EoI) process. The first stage involves verifying the technical capability and operational experience of CPOs, while the second stage enables eligible operators to submit proposals for EV charging stations through Bescom’s dedicated online portal.
- A Bescom official said, “The utility will aggregate eligible proposals and submit them to the Ministry of Heavy Industries for approval, with up to 800 Category-C charging station locations to be processed on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to fulfilment of the scheme guidelines.”
- “We have also standardised charging station configurations for both urban and highway locations to simplify implementation and subsidy assessment,” the official added.

❖ State may have to actually release nearly double the stipulated quantum of water

- A significant percentage of water released from either KRS or Kabini will be lost by the time it reaches Biligundlu measuring gauge since the riverbed is dry; Karnataka also has to account for groundwater levels and channel losses
- Though the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) that reviewed the storage and rainfall situation in the Cauvery basin on Tuesday has directed Karnataka to release 3,500 cusecs of water a day to Tamil Nadu for 15 days, experts say that Karnataka may have to actually release one-and-half to two times more than this quantum.
- “This is because the CWRC has said Karnataka has to ensure flow of 3,500 cusecs a day at the Biligundlu measuring gauge located on the inter-State border. But the riverbed and banks enroute Biligundlu are dry now. Besides, the State also has to account for groundwater levels and channel losses, riverbed and bank storages. A significant percentage of water released from either KRS or Kabini reservoirs will be lost by the time it reaches Biligundlu measuring gauge,” observed an hydrology expert.
- Hence, to realise the stipulated flow of 3,500 cusecs at Biligundlu, Karnataka may have to release approximately 6,000 to 7,000 cusecs a day (one-and-half to two times of the required flow) from KRS and Kabini reservoirs, observed an official.
- The official data on storage situation, as on July 28, shows that 1,745 cusecs of water are being released from the KRS as against the inflow of 2,552 cusecs; while 300 cusecs of water are being released from Kabini as against the inflows of 3,594 cusecs. A total of 2,045 cusecs of water are being released to Tamil Nadu as of now from these two reservoirs although the quantum may deplete by the time it reaches Biligundlu.
- As per the official data, the cumulative storage in all four reservoirs of Karnataka’s Cauvery basin accounts for only 55% of their full capacity. As against the full capacity of 114.57 tmcft, the present storage accounted for only 63.23 tmcft. The storage stood at 108.68 tmcft during the corresponding period last year. The storage in KRS is particularly a cause of concern as it stands at 34% of its capacity.
- Karnataka relies heavily on the southwest monsoon as it accounts for 73% to 75% of the State’s annual rainfall. But this time, the monsoon is weak and the State is facing a rainfall deficit of about 35%.
- On Water Resources Minister K. Ramalinga Reddy’s statement that the State would consider filing an appeal against the CWRC order before the Cauvery Water Management Authority, an expert said that Karnataka may place before this authority the prevailing hydrological facts including severe rainfall deficit across the Cauvery basin, poor inflow to reservoirs as well as critically low storage levels. The State is also likely to highlight the declining groundwater levels and unsaturated riverbeds besides the overriding priority of handling drinking water requirements, said the expert.

❖ JanAI presents report to rethink higher education

- Head Held High Foundation, through its people-first Artificial Intelligence initiative “JanAI”, released a draft report on “Transforming Indian higher education for an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled future” with R. Balasubramaniam, full-time member, NITI Aayog, during a closed-door leadership dialogue held at the Bangalore International Centre here.

- **The report examines the intersection of two major transitions under way in India: the rapid expansion of higher education and the widespread adoption of generative AI by students. It argues that AI is not merely introducing new challenges into higher education, but is exposing long-standing gaps in assessment, faculty support, problem-solving, industry relevance and equitable access.**
- The report proposes seven strategic shifts for Indian higher education from content coverage to problem-centred learning, completion-based assessment to demonstrable capability, faculty training to sustained faculty enablement and others.
- Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Balasubramaniam highlighted the importance of bringing together government, educational institutions, industry and civil society to prepare India's young people for a rapidly changing world of work.
- Madan Padaki, Founder of JanAI and Managing Trustee, Head Held High Foundation, said, "AI has already entered our classrooms, often without the guidance, institutional support or safeguards that students and faculty need."

❖ **Mekedatu row: Vijay writes to PM, seeks his intervention**

- 'Walk back Minister's statement on lower riparian States' consent for building a structure'
- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on Tuesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his intervention to ensure that no statutory or administrative approval is granted to the proposed Mekedatu project unless it is demonstrably consistent with the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's award and the judgment of the Supreme Court.
- Mr. Vijay also called for the withdrawal of the reply given by Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti Raj Bhushan Choudhary in the Rajya Sabha on July 27 with regard to the project. The Minister had said the Supreme Court's judgment of February 16, 2018, did not stipulate that Karnataka should obtain the consent of the lower riparian States before constructing a structure across the Cauvery. Mr. Vijay said the Minister had made the reply without referring to the settled law and legal principles in inter-State water issues.
- "This disappointing reply from the Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti seems to have been made without taking into consideration the prevailing legal position and settled law with regard to the consent of the lower riparian States," the Chief Minister said.
- He said the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court had, in the Alamatti case between Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, ruled that the consent of the lower riparian State was absolutely necessary.
- Mr. Vijay also quoted the relevant paragraph from the judgment, which said: "Nor can Karnataka State be permitted to construct up to that height without the consent of all other riparian States as well as without the approval of the Central Government."

Tribunal's award

- As for the Tribunal's award, the Supreme Court expressly affirmed Clause XVIII of the award, which preserves the power of each State to regulate water within its territory only "in a manner not inconsistent with the order of the Tribunal".
- Thus, any project with the potential to affect the regulated flow regime established under the award required scrutiny for consistency with the award, Mr. Vijay said.

❖ Paper leak Bill a milestone, says govt.; Opposition calls it 'cosmetic exercise'

- Minister says amendment shows PM's resolve not to compromise the future of children; Congress leader asks why the government is amending a law it had hailed as 'historic' just two years ago; SP member slams the govt. over police action
- **The Treasury and Opposition benches sparred in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday as the House took up the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, with the Opposition describing it as an "admission of failure".**
- **The Bill seeks to strengthen the 2024 anti-paper leak law with stricter punishment of up to 10-year imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹50 lakh.**
- Initiating the discussion on the Bill, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said the amendment showed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve not to compromise the future of children. The government described it as a "milestone" legislation in the history of Parliament.
- "Incidents of paper leaks have taken place in various States ruled by different parties. The anti-paper leak Bill is a reaffirmation of the government's commitment to safeguard the welfare of students and youth. The amendment... (is being) brought to make the law more stringent," Mr. Singh said.

Speedy justice

- Mr. Singh said the Bill provided for the establishment of Special Fast Track Courts to deal with offences relating to public examinations.
- He said it envisaged completion of investigations within two months and trials within three months from the date of filing of chargesheet. The Bill also empowers the Centre to refer investigation of offences under the Act to a Special Task Force constituted for the purpose.
- The Minister also informed the House that the government had already initiated steps for the establishment of the fast-track courts.
- The proposed amendments would reinforce deterrence against organised examination-related crimes and ensure speedy justice, he added.
- Initiating the debate for the Opposition, Congress deputy leader Gaurav Gogoi questioned why the government was amending a law it had hailed as "historic" just two years ago.
- "If that law was so effective, why has the government been forced to bring such major amendments within two years?" Mr. Gogoi asked, calling the Bill a "cosmetic exercise" that reflected the failure of the 2024 law enacted after the earlier NEET-UG controversy.

'Inability exposed'

- He argued that the latest paper leak had exposed the government's inability to protect the integrity of public examinations and said harsher punishments alone would not end the menace without structural reforms in the education system.
- He also questioned the fate of recommendations by a 2024 committee headed by former ISRO Chairman K. Radhakrishnan and sought details of the 47 officials the government claimed to have removed or transferred from the National Testing Agency (NTA).
- "Who are these 47 people, when the sanctioned strength of the NTA is 34?" Mr. Gogoi asked. He also questioned why the government had so much faith in the NTA chairman. "Is it because he is associated with a particular Sangh?" he asked.
- The Congress leader also alleged that 44 of the 45 accused in the 2024 NEET-UG paper leak case had secured bail.
- Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Dimple Yadav lashed out at the government for the police action against protesting students.
- Responding to the Opposition, BJP MP Anurag Thakur hit out at Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi for sitting on a dharna outside the Prime Minister's residence, saying Mr. Gandhi did so because students did not ask him to lead the protests.
- Calling the amendment "transformative", BJP member Bansuri Swaraj accused the Opposition of "selective outrage", contending that paper leaks had also occurred under the UPA government's tenure.

❖ Centre reissues draft on Western Ghats eco-zone

- Move comes amid the continuing differences with six States over the areas to be included in the ecologically sensitive area; States worried about notification's impact on farming, infrastructure
- The Union Environment Ministry has reissued, for the seventh time in over a decade, its draft notification proposing an ecologically sensitive area (ESA) across the Western Ghats, after the previous draft lapsed on July 27 without being finalised.
- The latest draft, issued on July 27, 2026, will remain open for public objections for 60 days before the Centre considers issuing a final notification. The notification reiterates that once finalised, it would prohibit mining, quarrying, sand mining, new thermal power plants, certain industries and large construction projects within the ESA, while regulating activities such as hydel power generation.
- The fresh notification underscores the Centre's inability to resolve long-standing differences with the six Western Ghats States — Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu — over the precise villages and regions that should be included within the eco-sensitive zone. The States had raised concerns over the impact of the ESA declaration on agriculture, plantations, infrastructure, and development.
- The notification itself notes that an expert committee constituted in 2022 is continuing to examine objections from the States regarding "the correct names and area of villages to be included in the ecologically sensitive area" as well as other suggestions submitted by the State governments.

- The latest notification retains the proposed ESA at 56,825.7 sq. km, spread across the six States, with Karnataka accounting for 20,668 sq. km, Maharashtra 17,340 sq. km, Kerala 9,993.7 sq. km, Tamil Nadu 6,914 sq. km, Goa 1,461 sq. km and Gujarat 449 sq. km.

No changes

- A comparison of the latest draft with the previous notification issued in July 2024 shows no substantive changes in the notified area, State-wise extent or regulatory provisions. The list of villages proposed for inclusion also remains unchanged in places highlighted during earlier consultations. For instance, the 13 villages in Kerala's Wayanad district across Mananthavady, Sulthan Bathery and Vythiri taluks that figured in the previous draft continue to be included in the 2026 notification.
- The dispute over protecting the Western Ghats dates back to 2011, when a panel chaired by late ecologist Madhav Gadgil recommended that the entire 1,29,000 sq. km mountain chain be treated as ecologically sensitive, with graded levels of protection. Following objections from the States, a high-level working group chaired by K. Kasturirangan reviewed the proposal and recommended that about 37% of the Western Ghats, covering 59,940 sq. km of natural landscape, be designated an ESA. The notification records that Kerala subsequently carried out its own field verification exercise, reducing the proposed ESA within the State from 13,108 sq. km recommended by the high-level working group to 9,993.7 sq. km.

❖ Study finds multiple dengue virus strains circulating together in India

- India may be entering a more perilous phase in its dengue epidemic, with multiple strains of the virus now circulating simultaneously across much of the country, raising concerns over an increased risk of severe disease, and posing fresh challenges for the rollout of future dengue vaccination programmes.
- **A two-year nationwide surveillance study by the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) Virus Research and Diagnostic Laboratory (VRDL) network found that all four dengue virus serotypes are circulating together in several parts of the country, with nearly one in 14 patients infected with more than one serotype at the same time.**
- The study, titled "Pan-India Molecular Surveillance of Dengue Serotypes, 2023-2025", analysed 6,889 laboratory-confirmed dengue samples from 45 laboratories across 25 States and Union Territories and found that DENV-2 remained the predominant serotype, accounting for over half of all infections. However, researchers said the broader concern was the widespread co-circulation of multiple serotypes, indicating dengue hyper-endemicity.
- Eight States and Union Territories reported the presence of all four serotypes, while 15 reported three circulating simultaneously. Around 7% of patients were infected with two or more dengue serotypes concurrently.

- The study also found that patients with concurrent infections were more likely to develop severe manifestations of dengue, including dangerously low platelet counts, bleeding complications and severe joint pain. While the findings need confirmation through long-term clinical studies, they suggest that simultaneous infection with multiple strains could worsen disease severity.
- The emergence of hyperendemic transmission has implications beyond clinical care, the report notes. India currently has no dengue vaccine in its Universal Immunisation Programme, although indigenous vaccine candidates are in advanced stages of clinical development, and an internationally approved vaccine recently received regulatory clearance for import and sale in India.
- Continuous surveillance of serotypes would be critical because vaccine effectiveness varies against different dengue strains, and shifts in the dominant serotype could influence both outbreak intensity and vaccine performance, researchers said.
- “Apart from routine steps taken to prevent mosquito breeding, there is certainly a need to incorporate the dengue vaccine into public health programmes, initially targeting endemic areas,” Gautam Menon, Professor of Physics and Biology, Ashoka University, said, speaking of the need for continuous surveillance.

❖ **India curtailed 8,133 GWh solar power to maintain grid security**

- As on June 30, India’s installed solar power capacity stood at 162.15 GW, which included 30.11 GW of rooftop projects, 6.43 GW of off-grid project
- India curtailed 8,133 gigawatt-hour (GWh) of solar power during the April–June quarter this year, according to Minister of State for New and Renewable Energy Shripad Yesso Naik.
- The curtailment and restriction were instituted to “maintain grid security” and “due to mismatch between commissioning of transmission lines and renewable energy projects, he informed Parliament, quoting figures from the Grid Controller of India.
- Curtailment is when power-grid operators limit the power output from generating sources to maintain grid stability.
- A total of 2,417 GWh of solar energy curtailment was carried out in April this year, 3,235 GWh in May and 2,481 GWh in June. As on June 30, India has installed solar capacity of up to 162.15 GW, which is inclusive of 125.6 GW of utility scale projects, 30.11 GW of rooftop projects and 6.43 GW of off-grid projects.

PM Surya Ghar

- Separately, Mr. Naik also told the upper house that since its implementation in February 2024, the PM Surya Ghar scheme has received more than 75 lakh applications, as on July 22.
- More than 39.7 lakh rooftop solar (RTS) systems with a cumulative installed capacity of 14,180.90 MW have been installed, he added. Mr. Naik also said the scheme has reached out to more than 48 lakh households having released ₹27,343.9 crore as Central Financial Assistance (CFA) until June 27.

❖ **India, strongest growth market for Germany**

- With India emerging as one of its strongest growth markets, the German National Tourist Office (GNTTO) has unveiled its four campaign themes for this year, while Germany's national carrier Lufthansa confirmed a €3 billion investment to lift its India-bound fleet, including doubling the capacity in its Mumbai-Munich route by upgrading it with an **Airbus A380**.
- The Lufthansa group is also expanding its India network through Swiss International Air Lines, which will begin flying Zurich to Bangalore, its newest India route.
- These announcements came as GNTTO unveiled four campaign themes for 2026 — culture, city life, cuisine and nature, and as Lufthansa marked its 100th year of operations.
- Kevin Markette, Senior Director, Sales, South Asia, Lufthansa Group, said "The clearest demonstration of Lufthansa's commitment to India is that we are bringing our newest technology and product to the market." Fuel efficiency is a priority as sustainability concerns shape airline investment decisions industry-wide, he added.

❖ **'Indian space technology firms raised \$200 mn in 2025 led by Bengaluru'**

- As India's space tech funding reached a record \$200 million in 2025 with Bengaluru emerging as the ecosystem leader attracting more than half of the money, as per market research firm Tracxn.
- Tracxn said in a report the sector raised about \$871 million as of July. The top 10 most-funded firms alone account for over 60% of this total, led by India's space tech unicorn, Skyroot Aerospace at \$150 million. Skyroot built Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital-class rocket, which successfully reached low Earth orbit on July 18.

Upward trend

- The report titled 'Space Tech in India' maps 285 firms in India with 274 being active. Out of these 72 received equity funding.
- From \$43 million in 2021 to \$200 million in 2025, the sector has seen a steady rise in funding in the last five years. In 2026 till date, the startups raised \$113 million in 24 rounds.
- Seed-stage funding increased from \$7 million in 2022 to \$62 million in 2025 while late-stage funding emerged for the first time, reaching \$17 million in 2025 and \$53 million in 2026 YTD signalling a subset of firms transitioning from development to pre-commercial operations.
- The investor base also expanded from domestic venture capital firms and angel investors to sovereign wealth funds and global institutional investors.
- However, the increase in funding during 2025-26 has been driven by a small number of large rounds rather than a broad-based rise in deal activity.

❖ SC restricts 'retrospective' environmental clearances

- Top court quashes 2021 Office Memorandum on the matter with prospective effect; it upholds power for 'amnesty schemes', but through proper notifications instead of administrative orders
- The Supreme Court on Wednesday quashed, with prospective effect, a 2021 Office Memorandum (OM) granting ex post facto environmental clearances to infrastructure projects, holding that the Union government cannot substantially alter protective environmental checks by issuing mere administrative instructions.
- "The 2021 OM is an administrative order, and envisages a perpetual regime for grant of environmental clearance to projects undertaken without prior environmental clearance. It substantially alters the nature of enquiry and criteria for grant of environmental clearance under the 2006 notification. It supplants an earlier delegated legislation [2006 notification] through an administrative instruction, which is impermissible in law," the court noted in an 80-page judgment.

'No parallel route'

- An 'amnesty' measure cannot become a permanent, parallel route which circumvents the prior environmental clearance (EC) regime under the 2006 notification of the Environment Ministry. A valid amnesty measure should be used as a rare exception, must be finite in duration and confined to its class, a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant observed.
- The court said the prior EC regime of the 2006 notification, spanning across various sectors such as highways, airports, real estate and township developments, and mining and resource extraction, was mandatory in nature.
- The 2006 notification's mandate could have only been amended through a subsequent and appropriate amnesty notification for select, deserving projects whose continuation was of "supervening public interest", Justice Joymalya Bagchi, who authored the judgment, held.
- The court barred the Centre from passing administrative orders to grant ex post facto clearances in the future. Justice Bagchi added that the present judgment would not, however, stand in the way of the top court granting ex post facto clearances in exercise of its plenary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution.
- The court said that the 2021-OM had indiscriminately allowed every permissible industry to be regularised for a meagre compensation. It had yielded to a principle of 'pollute and then pay', rather than to sustainable development.
- The top court quashed the 2021 OM prospectively to not upset ongoing projects, including the AIIMS Medical College and Hospital building in Odisha, the Centre of Excellence for Cancer Diseases in Tamil Nadu, Vijayapura Airport in Karnataka, medical colleges, slum rehabilitation and irrigation projects intended for drought-prone areas.
- It said retrospective clearances given under 2017 notification, which provided a 'one-time amnesty' for undertakings started without prior clearance, and the 2021 OM would remain valid unless individually assailed in accordance with law.

- The case has had a roller coaster ride with a Division Bench declaring such retrospective clearances a gross illegality in a May 2025 judgment.
- In November last year, a larger Bench had diluted the judgment, reasoning that doing away with the retrospective clearance regime would have a “devastating effect” on ongoing public projects worth “thousands of crores of rupees”.

❖ **U.S. fast-tracks Act for 100% tariffs on trade partners of Russia**

- The U.S. Senate has voted to fast-track the passage of a legislation that could see a tariff of 100% being imposed on India for its import of Russian oil.
- The Senate on Tuesday exhibited a rare display of bipartisan agreement by voting 86-12 to invoke a cloture motion to advance the ‘Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026’.
- The original version of the Act, introduced in 2025, proposed 500% tariff on those importing Russian oil. However, the Act was revised downwards early this month.
- As per Senate documents, the bipartisan Act “is designed to deprive [Russian President] Vladimir Putin of the revenue financing Russia’s war against Ukraine” by limiting political leadership, financial institutions, energy sector, and sanctions-evasion networks. The sanctions are to be implemented using “targeted tariffs to pressure the world’s largest purchasers of Russian energy to reduce their dependence on Moscow”.
- A cloture is basically a Senate procedure that sets a time limit for the debate and related actions on an issue before it is put to a vote. That is, it is a procedure meant to hasten the vote on a particular issue. The original version of the Act, introduced in 2025, proposed a blanket 500% tariff on those importing Russian oil. However, the Act was revised in early July 2026.
- Under the latest version of the Act, a tariff of “up to 100%” would be levied on the top five purchasers of Russian crude oil and natural gas. Currently, China accounts for about 47-50% of Russian crude oil exports, while India accounts for another 36-38%.
- As per the latest Indian government data, Russian oil made up a little more than 40% of Indian oil imports in May 2026, and the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has told The Hindu that this rose to “more than half” in June.
- “The stakes for India are substantial,” Ajay Srivastava, founder of the think tank Global Trade Research Initiative said. “Access to discounted Russian crude has significantly lowered India’s import bill, supported energy security, and helped contain inflation.”
- “Washington is steadily expanding its use of trade and economic measures to pursue strategic objectives,” he added. “Reciprocal tariffs, Section 301 investigations, forced-labour measures, sector-specific duties, and now Russia-related sanctions reflect an increasingly broad toolkit of economic pressure.”

❖ **Cauvery row: CWMA meeting today**

- While farmers took to the streets in the Cauvery basin area on Wednesday to oppose any move to release Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu as per the directions of the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC), Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar announced that Karnataka will file an appeal before the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) against the direction to release 3,500 cusecs of water daily for 15 days to Tamil Nadu.

- The Cauvery Water Management Authority, which is the apex body that monitors the Cauvery water releases by upper riparian States as decided by the Supreme Court, is meeting on Thursday, and Karnataka's appeal is expected to come up before it.
- CWRC order: State to file an appeal before CWMA
- Authority's meeting, scheduled in Delhi on Thursday, is now being keenly watched as Karnataka's appeal is expected to come up before it
- Karnataka has decided to file an appeal before the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) against the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's (CWRC) order, issued on Tuesday, to release 3,500 cusecs of water daily for 15 days to Tamil Nadu.
- The CWMA's meeting, scheduled in Delhi on Thursday, is now being keenly watched as Karnataka's appeal is expected to come up before it. The CWMA, which is the apex body that monitors the Cauvery water releases by upper riparian States as decided by the Supreme Court, may take a call on the appeal on Thursday, considering the urgency of the matter, according to sources in the government.
- As per the original agenda, the CWMA will review the status of hydro-meteorological conditions in the Cauvery basin and take stock of deficit in inflow realised at Biligundlu (Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border) and Karaikal of Union Territory of Puducherry in the present water year.
- Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar stated in New Delhi on Wednesday that preparations to file an appeal were going on. Already, consultations had been held in this regard with the State Advocate-General and legal experts as well as officials concerned, he noted.
- "The rain gods have not been kind to us this time. Earlier, the CWRC had rejected Tamil Nadu's request for the release of Cauvery water on two occasions. However, this time it has directed Karnataka to release water. We have discussed the legal options with Water Resources Minister Ramalinga Reddy and the officials concerned," he said.

All-party meeting

- The Chief Minister, who is presently camping in Delhi to hold consultations with the party high command on Cabinet expansion, said he would hold a meeting with Opposition leaders on the Cauvery water issue after his return to Bengaluru.
- Meanwhile, Mr. Reddy held a meeting with legal experts and officials in Bengaluru to discuss about the implications of the CWRC's order and the decision to file an appeal against it.
- The legal experts expressed concern that Karnataka may have to release much more water than that stipulated by the CWRC to meet the target at the Biligundlu inter-State measuring gauge, considering the dry hydrological conditions, it is learnt.

❖ CWRC head seeks Cauvery water distress-sharing plan

- Panel chief asks T.N. and Karnataka to come up with a formula; says calculation to release 3,500 cusecs to Tamil Nadu for the next 15 days had been done taking into account all relevant data
- Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) chairperson Vineet Gupta on Wednesday asked Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to come up with a distress-sharing formula.

- When asked by The Hindu over phone for his reaction to Tamil Nadu's complaint that the CWRC and the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) — which together form the implementation mechanism for the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's (CWDT) final award in 2007, as modified by the Supreme Court in 2018 — had not been following a “permanent, scientific formula”, Mr. Gupta said, “Why don't they work it out on their own and present it to us?”
- Rejecting the criticism against the CWRC and the CWMA, Mr. Gupta recalled that during the water year of 2023-24, the two bodies had worked out a distress-sharing mechanism.
- With regards the CWRC's calculation of 3,500 cubic feet per second (cusecs) to be released by Karnataka to Tamil Nadu for the next 15 days, he said it had been done taking into account the rainfall pattern, net inflow into four reservoirs of Karnataka in the river basin, comparison of the current situation with the long-term average, and inputs from the Meteorological Department.
- For Biligundlu — the gauge and discharge (G&D) site being used by the Central Water Commission (CWC) for the measurement of the river flow on the boundary of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu — to realise the prescribed quantity, Karnataka had to release 6,000-6,500 cusecs from its four reservoirs in the Cauvery basin.

‘Very dry’

- In view of the intermediate catchment (between the Krishnaraja Sagar and Kabini dams in Karnataka and Biligundlu) being “very dry”, the upper riparian State had to release a much higher quantity than the one prescribed to enable Biligundlu to realise 3,500 cusecs. On an average, the yield from the intermediate catchment would be 80 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) annually. “But this year, in July, it is completely dry,” the CWRC chief said.
- Pointing out that the long-term average had been calculated on the basis of 30-year data, Mr. Gupta said there had been a 60% deficit for Karnataka's reservoirs with regard to net inflow, and a 90% deficit at Biligundlu, “where the flow has been around 150 cusecs to 200 cusecs only”. Besides, this month, the cumulative realisation had not even touched the one-tmcft mark, he said.
- As of July 27, the realisation at Biligundlu was 0.6 tmcft as against 27.2 tmcft, as prescribed by the CWDT in the final award, which was, in turn, modified by the Supreme Court in 2018. The cumulative shortfall in realisation since June 1 was around 33 tmc ft. What was received at Biligundlu from June 1 to July 27 was about 3.6 tmc ft, when compared to the stipulated quantity of 36.4 tmcft.
- However, the CWRC, which took into account the current condition, had assessed that the net deficit was 9.8 tmcft, of which 50% could be offset by Karnataka, he said.

❖ BS-III vehicles may need some tweaks for E20 fuel: Centre

- Some rubber parts and gaskets in BS-III vehicles may require replacement when using E20 fuel, a blend of 20% ethanol and 80% petrol, the Union government informed Parliament on Tuesday.

- “In case of testing done on BS-III vehicles introduced from 1st April, 2005 and manufactured prior to 2016, some rubber parts and gaskets may require replacement, which can be easily managed during routine servicing regime of the vehicle,” Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said in the Rajya Sabha, citing findings of a study.
- He was responding to a question from the Communist Party of India MP A.A. Rahim on the impact of E20 on vehicle performance, fuel efficiency, engine durability, and maintenance costs. The study is yet to be made public.
- The study was carried out by Indian Oil Corporation Limited; the Indian Institute of Petroleum, Dehradun; the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, and the Automotive Research Association of India.
- Other than BS-III vehicles, the study showed there was no need to modify car and two-wheeler engines, the Minister said.
- There have been widespread anecdotal complaints of vehicles misfiring or breaking down, with some users attributing the problems to E20 fuel or contaminated E20 fuel.
- Fuel efficiency and mileage is influenced by “a host of factors beyond just fuel type”, Mr. Gadkari said, including, he added, driving habits, maintenance practices such as oil changes and air filter cleanliness, tyre pressure and alignment, and even air conditioning load.

❖ **AI, robotics-led water management pilot project in South Zone**

- The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has launched an Artificial Intelligence (AI)- and robotics-led water management pilot project in the city’s South Zone for the next one-and-a-half years.
- “The project will deploy AI and robotic systems to monitor water supply infrastructure in the city. It will help detect water leakages and defects in pipelines using robotics and send real-time alerts to officials,” said BWSSB Chairperson Manjula N.
- “In addition, the project aims to reduce non-revenue water and improve efficiency,” she added.
- The project will be implemented by SmartTerra, Solinas, Villgro Innovations Foundation and Titan Company Ltd.’s Design Impact Award Programme.
- BWSSB and the companies signed an MoU for the pilot project on Wednesday.

❖ **JanAI opens first ‘AI cafe’ at H.D. Kote in Mysuru district**

- JanAI, an initiative by Head Held High Foundation to take Artificial Intelligence (AI) to people in rural areas, has launched a JanAI Cafe at H.D. Kote in Mysuru district. It has been set up in a Millet Cafe run by women from the Jenukuraba community, in partnership with Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement.
- The AI cafe will serve as a community AI adoption centre where people from the region can discover and build AI solutions for their daily lives with the help of community members trained by JanAI.

- The foundation has been looking at how communities could be empowered to own AI and use it to solve their problems. On top of building basic AI awareness among communities, to identify local problems and leverage the youth to solve them using AI, the initiative has been training 'AI Ambassadors' from local communities. So far, 18 ambassadors have been trained in H.D. Kote who have identified several local problems and will start working on the solutions.
- "When local solutions are needed, you can't expect people to find them on the web. They need a trusted place to come to. That's why we came up with a cafe," said Madan Padaki, founder of JanAI, at the launch of the AI cafe.
- "Communities can come here, learn AI, use it, and if they face any problem, they can come back here to address it," he added. According to Mr. Padaki, the first AI Cafe would focus largely on solutions for women, by women.

Tracking progress

- To measure how communities are using AI, the initiative has partnered with Wipro to create an AI index. Metrics on how many people are using the solutions, what are they being used for and how, the economic value it generates across sectors, such as farming, healthcare, tourism, education, and women entrepreneurship, will be tracked and displayed at the cafes.
- The initiative plans to test-run five AI cafés in Mysuru district. According to Mr. Padaki, the next centre in T. Narsipur is slated to open in August.

❖ Guidelines issued for planned re-entry of space objects

- The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre, the single-window agency for all space-sector activities undertaken by private entities, has issued guidelines for the planned re-entry of space objects into the Earth's atmosphere. A document titled 'Norms, Guidelines and Procedures for Implementation of Indian Space Policy-2023 in Respect of Authorisation for Undertaking Planned Re-entry of Space Objects', released on July 23, states that any planned re-entry of a space object by an Indian entity, whether within or outside Indian territory, requires authorisation from IN-SPACe. Similarly, non-Indian entities intending to undertake the planned re-entry of their space objects must obtain IN-SPACe authorisation through their India-incorporated entities.
- Re-entry refers to the planned or unplanned return of a launched space object into the Earth's atmosphere, with or without recovery. The new rules state that only space objects designed to survive re-entry or those planned for re-entry will require authorisation from IN-SPACe, while objects that naturally re-enter the Earth's atmosphere will not require such authorisation.
- "It is clarified that re-entry as part of a post-mission disposal plan, typically due to the natural decay of an orbit, wherein space objects are expected to burn up, melt, fragment, or otherwise be destroyed during atmospheric re-entry to the extent that surviving debris on the ground is minimised in mass, size, and number, shall not require a separate re-entry authorisation. Thus, such re-entry will not warrant authorisation from IN-SPACe," the guidelines add.

- It also states that re-entry must be undertaken in a manner that minimises risk to people, property and the environment on the ground, at sea and in airspace. “The re-entry shall be conducted in such a manner that the risk of expected casualties due to re-entry activity remains below 1 in 10,000 (threshold risk),” it says.
- Before undertaking a planned re-entry, entities must also obtain a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) from the relevant authorities at least 45 days before the scheduled start of the re-entry.
- The new guidelines have been issued days after India achieved a major milestone in its space journey, with Vikram-1, the country’s first privately developed orbital rocket, being successfully launched into low Earth orbit.

❖ **India getting ready for Xi, Putin visits in September**

- Both leaders expected to attend BRICS summit in Delhi on Sept. 12, 13; Foreign Secretary holds wide-ranging talks in Beijing as Chinese officials arrive in Delhi to oversee security preparations
- India is getting ready for visits by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, with both leaders planning to attend the BRICS summit to be held in Delhi on September 12 and 13, sources here said on Wednesday. Consultations are continuing with regard to these upcoming high-level visits.
- On Monday and Tuesday, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri held a series of talks in Beijing, during which both sides discussed “strengthening high-level interactions”. In recent weeks, Chinese officials have also visited India to oversee the arrangements and security preparations for a possible high-level visit.
- During Mr. Misri’s talks in Beijing with a senior Communist Party of China official Sun Haiyan, who is Vice Minister in the party’s International Department, both sides “expressed commitment to working together to follow through on the common understandings reached by the leaders, strengthen high-level interactions, properly manage differences, and make sustained efforts to foster the improvement and development of bilateral relations,” according to a readout from the Chinese side.
- The Ministry of External Affairs said both sides had “discussed ways to deepen implementation of the guidance of the leaders for bilateral relations, including addressing issues of priority to both sides and by promoting political, people-to-people, academic and think-tank exchanges.”
- Other preparations for a possible visit by Mr. Xi are also under way.
- Mr. Xi did not attend the BRICS summit in Brazil last year, again deputing Mr. Li to represent China in his stead. He did, however, attend the summits in 2023 in South Africa and in 2024 in Russia, where his talks with Mr. Modi paved the way for the subsequent gradual normalisation in relations.

India intensifies contact

- Mr. Putin’s attendance at the summit was earlier indicated by the Russian side when Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited New Delhi for the BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting in May and discussed “highest level” contacts with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

- India has intensified contact with BRICS member countries both bilaterally and under the multilateral BRICS umbrella.
- Official sources here indicated that they expect top leaders of the member countries to attend the summit meeting, though the final details of the visits will be known closer to the date of the summit.
- Russia has extended support to India's chairmanship of BRICS and China reiterated its support earlier this week during Mr. Misri's visit.

❖ **LS passes paper leak Bill amid Opposition protests**

- No shots were fired at students during the July 20 protest and 'utmost restraint was exercised' by the police, says Minister; 'I brought before you a boy who suffered pellet gun injury', says Rahul
- Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday insisted that "no shots were fired" at students during the July 20 protest in Delhi, rejecting Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi's allegation that Home Minister Amit Shah had ordered security forces to open fire on the protesters. He was replying to the debate on the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026.
- The Bill, which proposes tightening penalties and introducing time-bound investigations and trials for paper leak cases, was passed amid Opposition protests over the alleged police excesses against students during the NEET-UG agitation. Soon after its passage, Mr. Shah hailed the legislation in a post on X, congratulating students across the country and describing the amendment as a measure that would "shield the dreams and aspirations" of the youth.
- "The Modi govt. will spare no one who attempts to imperil the future of our students and will leave no stone unturned to ensure that they face the full wrath of the law," the Minister said. However, he did not respond to the charges that Mr. Gandhi sought to raise inside the Lok Sabha in his speech.
- Dr. Singh, who is the Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office and handles the Department of Personnel and Training, responded to the charge while replying to the debate on the paper leak Bill.

'Utmost restraint'

- He said "utmost restraint was exercised" during the police action and "it was made sure that casualties do not happen". Mr. Singh accused the Congress of attempting to politicise a legislation aimed at safeguarding the integrity of public examinations.
- The Minister said the amendments reflected an willingness to "learn from experience" after the implementation of the 2024 anti-paper leak law. So far, 52 FIRs had been registered since the original law came into force and suicides linked to paper leaks had declined, he informed the Lok Sabha.
- Responding to the government's assertion that no shots had been fired, Mr. Gandhi stood by his charge.
- "I brought before you a boy who suffered pellet gun injury. He could lose an eye and the pellet gun is a lethal weapon. And the government is saying I am lying. What do you want me to do? Bring the gun?" he said.

- The amendments significantly strengthen the 2024 law. They mandate that investigations be completed within two months and empower States and Union Territories to designate sessions courts as fast-track special courts to conduct day-to-day trials.

❖ **RS passes Bill to criminalise disrespect to Vande Mataram**

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026 on Wednesday, in the absence of members from Opposition parties.
- After raising slogans demanding an apology from Union Home Minister Amit Shah for last week's police action against protesting students, the Opposition walked out as Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale started speaking about the Bill.
- The Bill proposes to amend the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, and extend the punishment for acts of disrespect towards national symbols such as the National Flag, the Constitution, and the National Anthem, to acts causing obstruction in the singing of the National Song, Vande Mataram.
- The Bill will now go to the Lok Sabha for its consideration and passage.
- Replying to the brief discussion on the Bill, which largely saw the participation of NDA members, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said the Congress was engaging in appeasement politics by insulting Vande Mataram for many years.
- "The Vande Mataram Bill is not merely an ordinary Bill, but represents India's soul, national awareness, and cultural heritage, and reminds us of the freedom struggle," Mr. Rai said, asking why the Congress opposed the Bill.
- Vande Mataram was penned by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1875, but only two stanzas were adopted as the National Song, with Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru making that decision in 1937, years before he became the country's first Prime Minister.

Penal provisions

- "Don't know why a few people are opposed to Vande Mataram, or why Congress is particularly opposed to Vande Mataram," Mr. Rai said. "There has been a discussion about making penal provisions for disrespecting the national song through this Bill. Opposing Vande Mataram means the Congress has been always working to disrespect the pride of this country by adopting a policy of appeasement."
- The Aam Aadmi Party's Sanjay Singh said that his party believed that Vande Mataram and the National Anthem should not be insulted. The Bill was passed by voice vote. The House was adjourned after Mr. Harivansh allowed some members to place special mentions in the House.

❖ **Private R&D spends cross govt.'s in FY24**

- A level last seen in 2009-10, official data reveal a structural shift: private industry accounted for 45.5% of national R&D spending in 2021-22, rising further to 51.8% in 2023-24, the first time businesses have contributed more to India's research effort than all levels of government combined

- India's spending on research and development (R&D) surged to 0.83% of GDP in 2021-22, the first time that the country crossed the 0.8% threshold — a level last seen in 2009-10, according to newly disclosed government data.
- The figures also reveal a structural shift in India's innovation landscape: private industry accounted for 45.5% of national R&D spending in 2021-22, rising further to 51.8% in 2023-24, the first time businesses have contributed more to India's research effort than all levels of government combined.
- The figures were disclosed by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in response to a Lok Sabha question on Wednesday. They form part of the latest Research & Development Statistics 2025-26, although the full statistical report itself has not yet been publicly released.
- The numbers are significant because India, despite possessing one of the world's largest scientific workforces and ranking among the top countries in scientific publications, has long spent a much smaller share of its economy on research than major scientific powers. The share of R&D in GDP – long considered a bellwether of progress – has, in the case of India, steadily fallen every year till it reached its nadir of 0.64% in 2020-21.
- That year China spent 2.4% of GDP, Japan 3.3%, South Korea 4.8%, United States 3.5% and around 5% in Israel. Successive governments have also repeatedly argued that India's innovation ecosystem is constrained because industry contributes a much smaller share of national R&D spending than in advanced economies, where business routinely accounts for over 70% of research expenditure.
- DST compiles India's official R&D statistics through its National Science and Technology Management Information System (NSTMIS), which has conducted national science surveys since 1973 using UNESCO and OECD definitions. The surveys gather expenditure data from central and state government agencies, universities, public sector enterprises and private industry.
- The 2022-23 edition explicitly stated that its coverage had been expanded to include multinational companies and enterprises outside the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research's recognition scheme. There were 2,397 DSIR-recognised in-house R&D centres as of December 2022.
- Until Wednesday's parliamentary reply, the latest publicly available DST publication was the 2022-23 edition, released in 2023, which contained data only up to 2020-21. The parliamentary reply is therefore the first official disclosure of India's R&D expenditure for 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24, even though the corresponding statistical reports have yet to be published.
- The fresh data point to an abrupt discontinuity. Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) fell from ₹1.33 lakh crore in 2019-20 to ₹1.27 lakh crore in 2020-21 (a COVID-year slump), before jumping 53% to ₹1.95 lakh crore in 2021-22. It subsequently rose to ₹2.13 lakh crore in 2022-23 and ₹2.45 lakh crore in 2023-24.
- However, budget documents from the period do not suggest a commensurate surge in government science spending. Union allocations to the Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology, Department of Atomic Energy, ISRO and other major science agencies rose only incrementally across these years, making it unlikely that the increase was driven solely by public expenditure.

- The sharp rise in GERD coincided with a dramatic increase in the private sector industry's contribution to India's research spending. Private industry accounted for 38.5% of GERD in 2017-18, 37.7% in 2018-19, 33.8% in 2019-20 and 36.4% in 2020-21, before jumping to 45.5% in 2021-22, 48.0% in 2022-23 and 51.8% in 2023-24 — the first time private industry has contributed more than half of India's total R&D expenditure. In absolute terms, Industry R&D spending increased from about ₹43,800 crore in 2017-18 and ₹46,700 crore in 2018-19 to ₹44,800 crore in 2019-20 and ₹46,400 crore in 2020-21, before almost doubling to ₹88,600 crore in 2021-22 and rising further to ₹126,800 crore in 2023-24.

❖ **Houthis, under IRGC guidance, planning to impose fees for Red Sea transit: Yemen**

- A Minister in Yemen's internationally recognised government on Wednesday accused Houthi rebels of working under Iranian guidance to establish a system to impose fees for ships transiting the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait.
- The narrow maritime artery has been a critical waterway for delivering vast quantities of Saudi crude to the international market, after energy exports were largely choked off by fighting in the Strait of Hormuz.
- Information Minister Moammar al-Eryani described "the move as a dangerous escalation aimed at transforming one of the world's most strategic maritime corridors into a permanent source of funding for the militia's military and terrorist activities".
- Mr. Eryani said the assessment was provided by recently obtained "confirmed intelligence" indicating that Iran's Revolutionary Guards were helping manage the effort.
- "The intelligence indicates that IRGC experts and advisers are directly involved in designing the technical and administrative framework of the project," the Minister added in comments exclusive to AFP. He added that this would include "the establishment of a dedicated entity responsible for collecting payments from shipping companies and commercial vessels".
- Anxieties are growing across the Gulf that the Houthis are hoping to copy Iran's playbook in the Strait of Hormuz.

❖ **CWMA upholds order directing release of Cauvery water to T.N.**

- In a setback to **Karnataka**, the **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)**, which met in Delhi on Thursday, upheld the **Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's (CWRC) order directing Karnataka to release water to Tamil Nadu at a rate of 3,500 cusecs a day for 15 days.**
- The **CWMA, which is the apex body that monitors implementation of water release as per the Supreme Court's verdict, asked Karnataka to release water to Tamil Nadu in accordance with the CWRC's order.** The CWRC had on Tuesday ordered Karnataka to commence release of water to Tamil Nadu with effect from Wednesday. However, Karnataka had filed an appeal against the CWRC's order before the CWMA. At Thursday's meeting, Karnataka appealed to the CWMA to keep the CWRC's order in abeyance for another fortnight and take a call after reviewing the evolving hydrological situation. But the CWMA, which looked into the issue besides taking stock of the hydrological conditions, endorsed the CWRC order.
- Meanwhile, Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar convened an all-party meeting on Sunday to deliberate on the CWMA's decision.
- In its submission before the **CWMA, Karnataka said that it was facing an acute hydrological distress, and the cumulative inflows into all the four reservoirs in the Cauvery basin were 65.65% below the 30-year average due to the super El Nino effect.**
- Karnataka argued that while the southwest monsoon is the mainstay for the State, the forthcoming northeast monsoon would benefit Tamil Nadu.
- It argued that Tamil Nadu, therefore, had the "dual advantage" of benefiting from the southwest monsoon in Karnataka in the form of water release and also from the forthcoming northeast monsoon.
- Historical trend had shown that in distress years, northeast monsoon had significantly augmented Tamil Nadu's storages, Karnataka argued. Karnataka also contended that Tamil Nadu already had a substantial quantum of carryover storage from its earlier releases.
- **It expressed concern that though the CWRC had ordered it to release water at a rate of 3,500 cusecs a day, in reality, it may have to step this up to 7,000 cusecs considering the transmission losses due to dry hydrological conditions on the river bed till the Biligundlu measuring gauge, located on the inter-State border. The stipulated quantum of water has to be realised at the gauge, it pointed out.**
- Tamil Nadu, on its part, stepped up its demand and urged the CWMA to direct Karnataka to increase the rate of daily releases beyond 3,500 cusecs while highlighting the prevailing hydrological distress in its basin and sought a release of 9.45 tmcft under the distress formula in the next 15 days at a rate of 7,000 cusecs a day.

❖ **PM KUSUM-B: Over 1 lakh apply for installing pumpsets**

- More than one lakh farmers have applied for installation of standalone solar-powered agricultural pumpsets under the **PM KUSUM-B scheme, giving a significant boost to Karnataka's power sector, said the Energy Department.**
- More than 27,700 solar agricultural pumpsets have already been installed across the State, reducing the demand from the power grid by **nearly 144 MW and also saving around ₹200 crore annually by reducing the electricity subsidy paid for agricultural pumpsets.**
- These pumpsets are also expected to prevent the purchase of 240 million units of electricity every year, resulting in annual power purchase savings of about ₹146 crore for Escoms.
- It further stated that the **receipt of over one lakh applications reflects the growing confidence of farmers in adopting solar-powered irrigation. After installation of more than 27,700 standalone solar-powered pumpsets, the State is moving towards the target installation of 40,000 pumpsets.**

❖ **Karnataka govt. to upgrade Aadhaar authentication security infrastructure**

- The **Karnataka government has initiated the upgradation of the Hardware Security Module (HSM)** that powers Aadhaar authentication services across government departments, with the aim of strengthening digital governance, cybersecurity, and uninterrupted citizen services.
- Home, Information Technology & Biotechnology and e-Governance Minister Priyank Kharge said the upgrade is a preventive technology enhancement.
- **Under the Aadhaar Act, Aadhaar numbers are not meant to be stored in local databases. Instead, they are to be stored in a secure Aadhaar Data Vault in encrypted form. The encryption keys that protect the data are housed in a Hardware Security Module, a specialised tamper-resistant device designed to prevent unauthorised access.**
- **In Karnataka, nearly 10 to 12 lakh Aadhaar authentication requests are processed across various government departments.**
- The existing HSM setup, which supports these authentication services, has reportedly encountered a few issues, necessitating the upgrade. The scheduled software upgrade will incorporate the latest security patches, bug fixes and OEM-supported enhancements to improve overall system performance.
- “The government is continuously investing in strengthening critical digital systems to ensure that essential public services remain secure, reliable and resilient,” he said.
- The Minister clarified that the maintenance activity will be carried out after office hours between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. on July 31, August 1 and 2, to minimise inconvenience to citizens and government departments. Appropriate arrangements have been made to ensure that the impact on public services remains minimal.

❖ **Mekedatu: CWC asks Karnataka to submit revised DPR**

- The Central Water Commission (CWC) has returned the Detailed Project Report (DPR) of Karnataka's proposed Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir-cum-Drinking Water Project, which was modified on April 21, 2026, asking the State to submit a revised DPR in compliance with **Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) Award** and certain observations made by it.
- In a letter dated June 29 to Karnataka, the CWC has observed that the "proposed consumptive use of water is more than allocation" and asked the State to revise the DPR accordingly.
- **The DPR for the project had been submitted to the CWC for the first time by Karnataka in January 2019. As per the DPR, the project aims for additional 4.75 tmcft of consumptive use of water to provide drinking water to Bengaluru Metropolitan Region and its adjoining area.**
- "The DPR had then proposed only the construction of Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir. However, in the revised Scheme submitted on April 21 apart from the construction of Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir, additional components like Shivanasamudra Run-of-River Power Project with the construction of a diversion weir across the Cauvery River have also been proposed.
- Further, proposed consumptive use has also been increased to 6.95 tmcft from earlier 4.75 tmcft," observed the letter by the CWC. The CWC has noted that a total consumptive use of 6.5 tmcft has been finalised and allocated by the Supreme Court in its order dated February 16, 2018, to Karnataka for its urban and rural population. **This quantum includes present consumptive use, it points out.**
- "It is to mention that present consumptive use may be more than the 36-year-old consumptive use of 2.9 tmcft. If even 36-year-old consumptive use of 2.9 tmcft is considered, the balance quantum of only 3.6 tmcft or less than that can be proposed to be utilised instead of 6.95 tmcft as proposed in the revised scheme." the CWC stated in the letter.
- The CWC observed that the basis for determining the Live Storage Capacity of 59.46 tcmft for the Mekedatu reservoir does not seem to be appropriate.
- "It is requested to submit the revised DPR in compliance with the CWDT Award and above mentioned observations, incorporating all the necessary updated details/drawings, etc. as per the CWC guidelines for Submission, Appraisal & Acceptance of Irrigation and Multipurpose Projects, 2017," the letter stated.
- Meanwhile, highly placed sources in the Karnataka government said, "This is just a procedural thing. We have already made appropriate revisions as suggested by the CWC and there should be no reason for worry."

❖ **Kerala's UDF backs PM-SHRI citing need for federal funds**

- Government in power cannot undo some decisions of its predecessors due to fiscal commitments, UDF convener says, adding that govt. could ill afford to lose Central funding for school education

- The ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) on Thursday revised its vehement opposition to the allegedly pro-Hindutva New Education Policy (NEP)-linked Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI), citing Kerala's "desperate need" for federal funding for school education.
- UDF convener Adoor Prakash told a press conference that the Congress-led government could ill-afford to lose the significant Central funding, which has remained in limbo since the previous Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)]-led government signed an MoU with the Central government, somewhat "furtively", and allegedly without "consultations" in the Left Democratic Front (LDF) or the Cabinet.
- He denied that the UDF had executed a political U-turn after accusing the CPI(M) of having a covert, mutually symbiotic understanding with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Central government, and that the LDF's vocal opposition to saffronisation of education was merely to mislead the public.
- Mr. Prakash said a government in power could not undo some decisions taken by its predecessors because of the fiscal commitments involved.
- He attempted to lay the blame on the CPI(M) for creating the political quagmire for the UDF government. He said the CPI(M) had clandestinely dispatched the then General Education Secretary to the Centre to sign the **PM SHRI agreement, without consultations.**
- He said CPI(M) walked the extra mile to keep the politically touchy decision secret from the UDF, then in the Opposition, given its potential impact in the run-up to the 2026 polls.

❖ Centre defends CEC panel without CJI

- Union govt. says if the decision of the Prime Minister cannot be trusted, then an 'outsider' or a former judge must sit in to advise on the appointment of Cabinet Ministers too; Supreme Court says that it is not about 'lack of faith' in the PM, but about 'justice not only being done, but shown to be done'
- **The Union government questioned in the Supreme Court on Thursday the insistence on having the Chief Justice of India (CJI) on the Prime Minister's panel which selects the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), saying if the decision of the Prime Minister cannot be trusted then an "outsider" or a former judge must sit in to advise on the appointment of Cabinet Ministers too.**
- **The Centre's submission came while hearing petitions challenging the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act of 2023.**
- The petitions have contended that the Act "defeated" a Constitution Bench judgment in the Anoop Baranwal case, which had constituted a CEC selection panel chaired by the Prime Minister and including the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the CJI. The 2023 Act, passed within months of the judgment, had replaced the Chief Justice with a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

'Lack of neutral person'

- A Bench headed by Justice Dipankar Datta had, in past hearings, questioned the lack of even “one absolutely neutral person” on the Prime Minister’s committee. The court had remarked that a Cabinet Minister would hardly defy the Prime Minister. The court had said the “dominant” presence of the Executive in the selection panel would send wrong signals to the public.
- “If the Prime Minister’s decision is not to be trusted, why not have someone from outside or a former judge to select the Ministers also,” Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the government, asked on Thursday.
- Mr. Mehta, quoting from a 2014 apex court judgment in the Manoj Narula case, said the Prime Minister’s office held constitutional trust and high sanctity.
- The law officer asked if a constitutional court, while deciding the composition of a committee in a statute, could presume abuse of power, bad faith and mala fide intention on part of the constitutional functionaries.
- Justice Datta said the question was not about “lack of faith” in the Prime Minister, but about the principle of “justice not only being done, but shown to be done”.
- “The appointment procedure should be shown to be fair... The issue is that the composition of this committee tilts in favour of one side. There is a two versus one here, two of the Executive and one of the Opposition. Should there not be a show of fairness in the appointment to one of the most important offices of this country?” Justice Datta asked the Union government.

Baranwal judgment

- Mr. Mehta queried whether the Anoop Baranwal judgment could really restrict the wisdom of Parliament to replace the CJI with a Cabinet Minister on the CEC selection panel. Like independence of the judiciary, the Constitution has also envisaged independence for the Legislative and Executive, the Solicitor-General said.
- Justice Datta referred to the government’s oft-repeated complaint about the Collegium system of “judges selecting judges”.
- “We wonder whether judges are really selecting judges nowadays,” Justice Datta said in a veiled comment about Executive interference in judicial appointments to the highest courts.
- The court reserved judgment on the point whether the case should be referred to a five-judge Constitution Bench. Advocate Kaleeswaram Raj, on the petitioners’ side, said a reference was uncalled for as no novel question relating to constitutional interpretation has been identified or framed, other than the ones already dealt with in the Anoop Baranwal judgment.
- The judgment by a Constitution Bench in March 2023 had declared that the CEC should be a person of “fierce independence, neutrality and honesty”. It had called for an end to government monopoly and “exclusive control” over appointments to the highest poll body.

❖ **Parliament passes paper leak Bill as Opposition walks out of Rajya Sabha**

- Jitendra Singh says the govt. has made efforts to free medical education from management quota malice; during debate in Upper House, Kharge demands SC-monitored high-powered panel to probe NEET leaks, police action against protesters
- The Rajya Sabha on Thursday passed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026. The Lok Sabha had passed the Bill on Wednesday.
- The Opposition members belonging to the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) walked out of the House before the reply by Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension Jitendra Singh to the seven-hour debate. The Upper House considered the Bill after the government listed it as supplementary agenda.
- Replying to the debate, Mr. Singh questioned the Opposition's contention that there had been 152 examination paper leaks under the Narendra Modi government. "They could not authenticate it," he said, adding that the government has made efforts to free medical education from management quota malice.
- He said the government increased the number of All India Institutes of Medical Sciences and both undergraduate and post-graduate seats in medical education.
- He said the government's approach laid emphasis on democratisation of education.
- Earlier, moving the Bill, Mr. Singh said the Bill reflected the Centre's commitment to safeguarding the interests of students and youth while ensuring merit, consistency, transparency and credibility in the public examination system.
- Initiating the debate, Opposition leader Mallikarjun Kharge demanded a Supreme Court-monitored high-powered committee probe into the NEET paper leaks and the police action on protesters. He demanded the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and warned that people's power would drag him "out of his forts" and make him answerable.
- "You are the Home Minister, and despite so much unrest, you are not opening your mouth. Has someone stitched it? He should have spoken openly. In the interest of the nation, he should have borne that insult," he said. Criticising the Centre's intention, he said the Bill was much-delayed and failed to address how to prevent paper leaks.
- The DMK did not walk out with the INDIA bloc members, but moved amendments to the Bill, which were defeated.

❖ **Amid uproar, Parliament passes Bill making insult to National Song punishable**

- **The Lok Sabha on Thursday passed amid din the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, making intentional insult to Vande Mataram a punishable offence. With the Rajya Sabha having cleared the legislation earlier, both Houses have now passed the Bill amid continuing Opposition protests that have repeatedly disrupted the Monsoon Session.**
- The legislation was cleared after a symbolic debate lasting barely 15 minutes. **The Bill was passed by voice vote after the Opposition's amendments were rejected, with only two members participating in the brief debate.**
- DMK member A. Raja, who had moved an amendment to the Bill, protested against the legislation and later tore a document and threw it towards the Well of the House as Opposition members continued to raise slogans after the Bill was passed.

- “Today is a very dangerous day for the Parliament of this country,” he said.
- DMK member Kanimozhi opposed the Bill, calling it a “Hindutva agenda” being brought in under the guise of nationalism. She said the legislation was “against federalism”.
- “You cannot impose nationalism by bringing a law, the song goes against the secularism of the country. The founding fathers had the wisdom to stop only with two stanzas, but today you are trying to polarise the country by making it compulsory and making it a criminal offence if we do not sing all the six stanzas,” Ms. Kanimozhi said.
- Replying to the debate, Minister of State for Home Nityananda Rai said the legislation would accord Vande Mataram a status on a par with the national anthem, Jana Gana Mana.
- The existing **Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act prohibits intentionally preventing the singing of the national anthem or causing disturbance to an assembly engaged in such singing. Such offences are punishable with imprisonment of up to three years, a fine, or both.**
- A second and subsequent conviction attracts **a minimum one-year jail term. The amendment extends these provisions to Vande Mataram.**

❖ **E20 can reduce fuel economy by 2%-6%, says Nitin Gadkari**

- **Petrol blended with 20% ethanol (E20)** can reduce fuel economy by 2% to 6% depending on the vehicle category and vintage, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari informed Parliament on Thursday, citing a study commissioned by the Centre.
- In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Mr. Gadkari said that “tests for engine durability on dynamometer and vehicle tests on road have not shown any failures due to E20”.
- The study for evaluation of the effect of **E20 on BS-III, BS-IV, and BS-VI E10 (Gasoline) two-wheelers and four-wheelers was carried out jointly by the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI), Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL).**
- This study also found that E20 fuel provides better acceleration, improved ride quality, and approximately 30% lower carbon emissions compared with E10 fuel. “Higher ethanol blends also enable cleaner and more complete combustion,” Mr. Gadkari’s reply stated.
- The replies were given in response to questions raised by Lok Sabha member Chandra Sekhar. However, the Minister did not answer queries on why the study has not been placed in the public domain.

❖ **States must set up prison oversight boards: SC**

- The Supreme Court on Thursday directed all States and Union Territories to constitute a board of visitors for prisons in every district, as required under the Model Prison Manual, 2016, within four weeks. The oversight body, comprising official and non-official members, conducts regular inspections of prisons, monitors the welfare of inmates and reviews living conditions.

- A Bench headed by Justice J.B. Pardiwala passed the direction while hearing a suo motu case initiated to address discrimination inside prisons following the apex court's judgment in October last year directing the removal of provisions and practices in prison manuals that perpetuated caste discrimination.
- Senior advocate S. Muralidhar, who is assisting the court as amicus curiae, pointed out that despite the mandate under the manual, none of the States had constituted district-wise boards of visitors. He submitted that these bodies were essential for ensuring accountability and effective monitoring of prison administration.
- Activists raise concerns as **PM CARES withholds audit statements for 3 years**
- The **Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund has not made public any audited financial statements for the past three financial years even as activists raise concerns about its transparency.**
- The **Fund, a public charitable Trust established in March 2020 amid the COVID-19 crisis to support relief efforts during public health emergencies and other disasters, is chaired by the Prime Minister and funded entirely through voluntary contributions, according to information released by the Union government.**
- The last publicly available audited financial statements, for the financial year 2022-23, show an opening balance of ₹5,415.65 crore, voluntary contributions of ₹909.64 crore, total receipts of ₹6,723.07 crore, total payments of ₹439.38 crore, and a closing balance of ₹6,283.68 crore as on March 31, 2023. Audited financial statements for 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 are available on the PM CARES website.
- The **absence of publicly available audit statements after 2022-23 is "extremely concerning", Anjali Bhardwaj, co-convenor of the National Campaign for People's Right to Information, told The Hindu.**
- "The fund was presented as having been set up by the Union government, making it appear to be a public authority. Government employees also contributed from their salaries," Ms. Bhardwaj said.
- "However, when information regarding the funds collected and spent was sought, the government maintained that the Trust is not a public authority under the RTI Act... At present, PM CARES remains outside the ambit of the RTI Act, parliamentary scrutiny, and audit by the Comptroller and Auditor-General," she said.
- Information relating to the PM CARES Fund should be made available to the public, former Central Information Commissioner and RTI activist Shailesh Gandhi said.

'Falls in ambit of RTI'

"Legally speaking, the PM CARES Fund falls within the ambit of the RTI Act... In fact, anything associated with the Prime Minister, except matters affecting national security, should be open to public scrutiny. The trustees of the PM CARES Fund are Union Ministers. They are public servants and should be accountable," he said.

❖ State cracks down on sale of junk food

- The FSDA has issued an advisory prohibiting the sale of food products high in fat, sugar and salt within school and college campuses.
- State cracks down on sale of junk food near schools, colleges
- Foods high in fat, sugar, and salt have been banned on educational campuses and within a 50-metre-radius of them
- To promote healthy eating habits among children, the Karnataka Food Safety and Drug Administration (FSDA) has issued an advisory prohibiting the sale, free distribution, advertisement and promotion of food products high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) within school and college campuses and a 50-metre radius around them.
- The advisory, issued on July 24 under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and the Food Safety and Standards (Safe Food and Balanced Diets for Children in School) Regulations, 2020, is binding on school managements, food business operators (FBOs) and Food Safety Officers.
- Addressing presspersons here on Friday, Health Minister U.T. Khader said inspections had revealed that meals served in some schools relied heavily on refined carbohydrates such as white bread, pasta and processed snack foods, which could lead to rapid spikes in blood sugar levels. Schools had therefore been advised to provide balanced meals containing lean proteins and healthy fats to ensure sustained energy and improve students' concentration, he said.
- Under the advisory, schools and colleges have been directed to ensure that HFSS food products are not sold on their premises and to display warning signboards at prominent locations. Authorities have also been instructed to prevent the sale of such products within a 50-metre radius of educational institutions.
- All food establishments located near schools, including hotels, bakeries, canteens and food stalls, have been directed to obtain the mandatory licence or registration under the Food Safety and Standards Act and comply with hygiene and food safety standards. Food Safety Officers have been asked to conduct regular inspections, and violations will attract action under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and the Rules and Regulations, 2011, the Minister said.
- School managements have also been instructed to promote healthy eating habits, create awareness about nutritious food and organise programmes discouraging the consumption of junk food, he said.
- "Schools have been advised to serve balanced meals comprising cereals, millets, pulses, milk and milk products, eggs, fruits, vegetables and freshly prepared foods made from locally available seasonal produce. The guidelines also recommend moderation in the use of cooking oil and ghee, avoidance of reheated oils and the use of fortified staples in accordance with the Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2018," Mr. Khader said.
- The advisory follows a State-wide inspection drive carried out by the department in July, during which 134 schools, colleges and food establishments in and around educational institutions were inspected.

- As many as 53 food samples were collected during the inspections and sent to the State Food Laboratory in Bengaluru for analysis. The Minister said legal action would be initiated against the food business operators concerned based on the laboratory findings.

❖ **Scientists discover how Blue Straggler Star is formed**

- In an international collaboration, astronomers from Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), along with their counterparts from India, Italy, France and the U.S., have discovered the formation of a Blue Straggler Star (BSS) whose origin and evolution has long puzzled astronomers.
- The BSS is a peculiar class of stars found in star clusters that appear hotter, brighter and more massive than their peers, and in a study published in the Astrophysical Journal Letters astronomers have provided direct evidence of how such stars are created. “The most widely accepted explanation is that these stars gain mass from a companion or through stellar mergers, effectively rejuvenating themselves. Yet, direct observational evidence of such formation processes has remained extremely rare,” said the Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- The IIA astronomers studied a binary star system TIC 327546480 in the old open star cluster Collinder 261, located about 9,500 light-years away. The system was identified as a promising candidate for further investigation since its properties suggested ongoing interaction between the two stars.
- The DST said the study combined high-precision light curves from NASA’s TESS space mission with radial velocity measurements obtained using the Very Large Telescope operated by the European Southern Observatory. “We discovered that the Blue Straggler Star is actively gaining material from its companion star, providing a rare glimpse of a BSS caught in the act of formation. Our finding offers direct observational evidence for one of the leading theories proposed to explain the origin of the BSS,” said Annapurni Subramaniam, faculty member at the IIA and a co-author of the study.
- The DST added that the team also found the binary system to be semi-detached, causing the less massive companion star to transfer matter to the BSS.

❖ **SC moots protocol to access court’s livestream archives**

- SC favours access through court archives to prevent ‘commercial exploitation’ of judicial hearings; activists say July 24 order barring circulation of court livestreams reverses open justice principle
- The Supreme Court on Friday said it intends to lay down a protocol by which online users who want to post or circulate livestreamed judicial proceedings in the top court and the State High Courts can only access the audio-visual content through the courts’ archives.
- Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said livestreamed visuals of court proceedings cannot be subject to “misuse” or “commercial exploitation”. He was responding to an application filed by two activists, Anjali Bhardwaj and Amrita Johri, seeking a modification of a July 24 interim order barring the circulation of livestreamed proceedings on social media and digital platforms.

Open justice principle

- The applicants, represented by advocates Prashant Bhushan and Cheryl D'Souza, said the July 24 order amounted to a reversal of the 'principle of open justice' upheld by the Supreme Court itself in a plethora of judgments.
- Objecting to a complete ban on dissemination of court proceedings on digital platforms, the activists said that open access to justice ensured that the judicial process remained answerable to the public and guarded against arbitrariness.
- Mr. Bhushan said the July 24 order ought to be modified to direct the preservation of livestreamed content in courts' archives so that users could access the authorised version from this source.
- "That is precisely the protocol we want to lay down... We only want to prevent the misuse [of the livestreamed content]," Chief Justice Kant said, reacting orally.
- The court allowed the application and asked Mr. Bhushan's clients to come forward with suggestions to frame the protocol. The CJI said the exercise was not adversarial in nature. Digital platforms Meta and WhatsApp have also agreed to pitch in with suggestions. State High Courts have filed their affidavits along with Bar bodies from across the country.
- The July 24 order, which came in a petition filed by Harshita Grover, had prohibited the extraction, modification, dissemination, posting, reposting, uploading, recording, or monetisation of audio-video recordings of judicial proceedings on any social media or digital platform without prior permission of the Secretary General of the Supreme Court and Registrar General of the State High Courts.

Vulnerable to trolling

- The top court had reasoned that the unregulated circulation of livestreamed court proceedings made judges, advocates, and litigants vulnerable to trolling and reputational harm while eroding public confidence in the judicial system.
- The activists, however, had said the concern of intentional misuse could be addressed by defining the terms and conditions of re-use, sharing, and dissemination of the recordings and livestream, rather than restricting these activities based on the nature of the user. "The safeguards should be such that they protect fair and accurate representation, including sharing and dissemination of proceedings that are already open to public view," their application said.

❖ SC asks Centre to facilitate DNA testing of Indians killed in Russia-Ukraine war

- The Supreme Court on Friday directed the External Affairs Ministry to appoint a nodal officer and facilitate the DNA testing of the mortal remains of Indian nationals killed in the frontlines of the Russia-Ukraine war so that their families can claim them and conduct the last rites.
- A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant asked the Ministry to forward the details of the nodal officer, once appointed, to the family members of the deceased Indian nationals.

- The court was hearing a petition filed by the families saying that their loved ones were victims of illegal overseas recruitment, trafficking and exploitation. The youth were lured by recruiters with promises of high-paying jobs, only to have their passports seized and be pushed into the war zone, the petitioners said.
- The petitioners sought the whereabouts of the Indian nationals, believed to be either dead or missing. They urged the court to intervene to bring back the bodies of those killed in the frontlines, along with a suitable monetary compensation from the Russian authorities.
- The court on Friday said that the complete records for filing compensation claims with the Russian authorities must be supplied to the families.
- The government reported in the Supreme Court on Friday that nearly 220 Indians had joined the Russian Armed Forces, of which 139 have been released from their contracts while 51 have died.

❖ **LS passes Births and Deaths Bill amid protests over police crackdown**

- The Lok Sabha on Friday passed the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026 without debate amid loud protests by the Opposition against the police crackdown on student protesters at Jantar Mantar on July 20. The Opposition protests began as soon as the House convened at 11 a.m., forcing Speaker Om Birla to adjourn it till noon. The ruckus continued when the House reassembled.
- BJP MP Dilip Saikia, who was in the chair, asked for listed papers to be laid on the table. These included grant of deadline extension to the Joint Parliamentary Committee examining the Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill, 2025 for submission of report. The Constitution Amendment Bill proposes the automatic removal of Ministers, Chief Minister, or Prime Minister if they are arrested and held in custody for 30 days on serious criminal charges carrying a jail term of five years or more.
- Following this, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai put up the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill for discussion. It seeks to make delayed registration of births and deaths more stringent by requiring an order from a judicial magistrate (first class) for registrations done after two years.
- The Opposition MPs then trooped into the Well of the House demanding the presence of Home Minister Amit Shah even as Mr. Saikia called out the names of MPs listed to speak during the debate. The Bill was passed by voice vote amid sloganeering. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the passage of the Bill in this manner was unfortunate.

❖ **India likely to receive below-normal rainfall this month, says IMD**

- It is predicted to be less than 94% of long period average; the maximum temperatures are expected to stay above normal across most of country
- India is likely to receive below-normal rainfall during August, with precipitation expected to be less than 94% of the long period average, the India Meteorological Department said on Friday.
- The forecast also projects below-normal rainfall during the second half of the southwest monsoon season (August–September), although some parts of peninsular India,

central, eastern, and northeastern India, and the northern parts of the northwest could receive normal to above-normal rainfall.

- Below-normal rainfall in August is likely in many parts of the country, except over much of eastern peninsular India, some parts of northwest and central India, and isolated areas of eastern and northeastern India, where normal to above-normal rainfall is possible.
- Maximum temperatures during the month are expected to remain above normal across most of the country, while minimum temperatures are likely to be normal to above normal.

July rain near normal

- The IMD also said moderate El Niño conditions over the equatorial Pacific are expected to strengthen through the remainder of the monsoon season, while neutral Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions are likely to persist before a positive IOD develops during September. The latter can help monsoon rain.
- For the August-September period as well, the IMD forecast rainfall at below 94% of the long period average, indicating a weaker-than-normal monsoon.
- The outlook follows a near-normal July at the all-India level, despite forecasts issued earlier in the season that had anticipated subdued rainfall because of the developing El Niño. On June 30, the IMD had forecast a minimum 6% deficit in July rainfall but India has so far got 101% of the usual amount of rainfall. July is the rainiest of the four monsoon months and critical to agriculture. According to the IMD, while July's rainfall helped erase much of the deficit that had built up during June, the distribution of rainfall remained uneven across regions.

❖ Cabinet approves scheme to promote 'floating' solar plants

- The Union Cabinet on Friday approved the Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana, a ₹5,070-crore scheme aimed at accelerating floating solar power by providing central financial assistance of up to ₹1 crore per MW for projects installed on reservoirs and other water bodies.
- The programme targets 5,000 MW of floating solar capacity by 2030-31.
- The scheme, to be implemented by the Solar Energy Corporation of India, comes at a time when India has about 0.7 GW of installed floating solar capacity despite an estimated potential of 102 GW.
- Projects receiving support under the scheme will have to include battery energy storage equivalent to at least two hours, amounting to 10,000 MWh across the programme, to help States meet peak demand and reduce the curtailment of renewable power during periods of excess generation.
- India's flagship project, the Omkareshwar floating solar park, located on the Narmada in Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa district is the country's largest at 278 MW, with plans to scale to 600 MW output. However, it doesn't have onsite battery storage.
- Officials said the financial support was intended to "nudge" the industry to develop an alternative stream of solar capacity. Solar development in India has remained concentrated in Rajasthan and Gujarat because of their vast tracts of inexpensive land and high solar radiation.

- Reservoir-based projects are expected to “diversify” installations, particularly in States with large water bodies but limited land availability.
- The policy is also designed to address two of the biggest constraints facing ground-mounted solar projects: acquiring large contiguous parcels of land and the rising costs associated with rehabilitation and resettlement.

❖ **Centre extends PM-Kisan for four more years, allocates ₹3.15 lakh cr.**

- The Union Cabinet on Friday approved continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme from 2026–27 to 2030–31, with a total financial outlay of ₹3.15 lakh crore.
- The scheme provides a financial assistance of ₹6,000 per year for farmers. The government said it had transferred more than ₹4.47 lakh crore directly to farmers’ bank accounts in 23 instalments under the scheme which was launched in February 2019. “Under the 23rd instalment, more than 9.49 crore farmers benefited, with over ₹18,984 crore released,” the Union Agriculture Ministry said in a release.

Women beneficiaries

- The government added that women farmers had received more than ₹1.06 lakh crore under PM-KISAN, and nearly one out of every four beneficiary was a woman farmer.
- “The assistance provided under PM-KISAN has enabled farmers to make timely investments in seeds, fertilizers, irrigation, agricultural machinery and other agricultural requirements. This has enhanced farmers’ productive capacity, reduced their dependence on informal credit and strengthened the financial stability of rural households,” the Ministry added.

❖ **SC upholds NCLAT order setting aside CCI’s ₹301.6-cr. Grasim fine**

- The Supreme Court upheld a NCLAT order that set aside a ₹301.6 crore penalty imposed on Grasim Industries by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) and directed the fair trade regulator to hear the Aditya Birla Group firm again over alleged dominance in the viscose staple fibre market.
- A bench comprising Justices J. B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran dismissed the Competition Commission of India’s (CCI) appeal challenging the May 5 NCLAT order.
- The tribunal had observedt the CCI did not provide a chance to Grasim Industries to present its arguments after it differed from the findings of the Director General (DG), the regulator’s probe unit.
- The CCI had imposed the penalty on Grasim Industries in March 2020 for allegedly abusing its dominant position with respect to the supply of viscose staple fibre (VSF) to spinners.
- Grasim challenged the order before NCLAT which “set aside the impugned order and remanded it back to the Commission.”

❖ **Bengaluru gets first tariff-free Scottish salmon via U.K.FTA**

- Bengaluru received the first tariff-free shipment of Scottish salmon to India under the U.K.–India Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), marking one of the earliest commercial outcomes of the trade pact.
- Owen Richards, Deputy Head of Mission at the British Deputy High Commission here, formally received the shipment at the premises of Sashimi Foods Pvt. Ltd. on Friday
- The consignment comprised freshly farmed Scottish salmon produced by Bakkafrøst Scotland.
- The CETA eliminated India's earlier 33% import tariff on Scottish salmon. Industry estimates the CETA could generate up to £130 million in additional export opportunities for Scotland's salmon sector over the next decade.

❖ **Cabinet okays ₹84,084-cr. Samudra Manthan for offshore exploration**

- To boost India's offshore exploration efforts, the Union Cabinet approved an outlay of ₹84,084 crore to the Union Petroleum Ministry's National Offshore Exploration Scheme Samudra Manthan.
- The corpus is to be utilised until FY2030-31. The overall outlay is categorised into four key components the most important of which relate to drilling 60 deepwater exploration wells for which the Cabinet has allocated ₹43,200 crore.
- This is inclusive of the government of up to 50% of eligible drilling cost or ₹675 crore per well.
- The other component relates to offshore data acquisition which carries an outlay of ₹28,534 crore.
- Development of common offshore infrastructure hubs to facilitate commercialisation of discoveries, which would be accounting for an outlay of ₹10,000 crore.
- Finally, the establishment of oil and gas manufacturing and services zones – seeking to promote domestic manufacturing and localisation of critical equipment and services – tabulate an outlay of ₹2,000 crore.
- Overall, the Union government's flagship scheme for offshore exploration aims at catalysing reserves of more than 600 million metric tonnes of oil equivalent (MMTOE).

Stimulating investments

- It envisages to “stimulate significant investments across the exploration and production value chain, creating long-term opportunities for industry, innovation and economic growth.”
- Essentially, with hydrocarbon exploration being a capital-intensive activity with long gestation period but essential for a country's domestic energy security, the scheme seeks to reorient growth into this sector (via offshore exploration) to overcome difficulties from ageing oil and gas fields.
- Reflecting on the announcement, Rajnish Gupta, partner for tax and economic policy, EY India held, “Investments in large-scale seismic data acquisition and drilling of exploratory well in deep and ultra deep waters will reduce geological uncertainty and de-risk exploration and lay the foundation for future discoveries. Good results can catalyse greater private investments in the sector.”

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