



HERITAGE CONSERVATIONIST
Tara Murali passes away in Chennai
NEWS » PAGE 5

CRITICAL VULNERABILITY
CERT fixes flaw exposing data of organ donors
NEWS » PAGE 4





INDEPENDENCE DAY
President's invitations get east Indian touch
NEWS » PAGE 5

REGIONAL OVERTURES
Russia's Taliban gauntlet
Rationale behind the choice to legitimise the regime in Kabul
EDITORIAL » PAGE 8



GREAT ESCAPE
Washington-Jadeja duo thwarts England
SPORT » PAGE 16

INSIDE



Those behind the J&K attack yet to be found: Cong.

NEW DELHI
With the Lok Sabha scheduled to start a 16-hour debate on Monday on the Pahalgam attack, Congress on Sunday said the terrorists involved in the attack had not yet been apprehended. » PAGE 5

TCS planning to lay off 12,000 staffers this year

NEW DELHI
India's largest IT services firm, Tata Consultancy Services, is set to lay off about 12,261 employees this year, with the majority of those impacted belonging to middle and senior grades. As of June 30, TCS's workforce stood at 6,13,069. » PAGE 4

Textile sector is emerging as the strength of India

NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that the textile industry now has more than 3,000 active start-ups. And, as the country progresses towards becoming a developed nation, the textile sector is emerging as a strength for India. » PAGE 6

Flooding wreaks havoc in Odisha; 11,000 impacted

BHUBANESWAR
More than 11,000 people in six districts of Odisha have been affected by the floods, an official said on Sunday. Over 1,000 people have been rescued from the affected areas and provided shelter at cyclone centres. » PAGE

Eight people die in stampede at mountain shrine in Haridwar

30 injured in the incident; rumour about a snapped electric line led to panic among devotees gathered along a stairway with many carrying children; rescue efforts continued for hours; Haridwar District Magistrate orders magisterial inquiry

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Eight people were killed and 30 injured in a stampede at the Mansa Devi temple in Haridwar of Uttarakhand on Sunday morning. Officials said the stampede occurred around 9 a.m. after a rumour of a snapped electric line spread panic among the massive crowd that had gathered along the stairway route of the temple, located 1,770 feet above sea level on the Sivalik Hills, the southernmost mountain chain of the Himalayas.

People from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Uttarakhand, aged between 12 and 60, were among those who killed.

A video from the spot showed a massive crowd stranded between barricades at a point on the stairway, with many carrying children and gasping for breath, with no space



Tragic steps: Police and SDRF personnel at the site of the stampede in Haridwar on Sunday. PTI

to move at all. The devotees were seen frantically asking for help as the crowd swelled from all directions. While some managed to climb the wall along the stairway, many ran over others while making way for themselves.

Slippers, puja items, and clothes were seen

strewn on the temple premises after the administration cleared the way.

Rescue and relief
Pramendra Singh Dobal, Senior Superintendent of Police, said that teams from the police and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) were rushed

to the spot immediately, and the rescue efforts continued for hours.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, who expressed grief, announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased and ₹50,000 each to the injured. He met those admitted to a hospi-

tal and assured them of all possible help from the government. "The news of a stampede at Haridwar's Mansa Devi temple is extremely saddening. SDRF, local police and other rescue teams are on-site and engaged in relief and rescue operations," he wrote on X.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed condolences. "Condolences to those who lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon," he said.

Haridwar District Magistrate Mayur Dixit ordered a magisterial inquiry. The investigation team will be headed by a Sub-Divisional Magistrate who has been asked to submit a detailed report on the stampede in 15 days.

Ravindra Puri, president of the Mansa Devi temple trust, announced a compensation of ₹5 lakh each to the families of the deceased and ₹1 lakh each to the injured.

SIR has become a process to rule on citizenship: INDIA



I humbly urge the Election Commission... it is not a matter of political obstinacy or institutional arrogance. Please reconsider it... everyone is urging you
A.M. SINGHVI
Congress leader

They [EC] are making all kinds of self-congratulatory and misleading claims... basically corroborating our apprehension
DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA
CPI (ML) Liberation leader



The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) on Sunday urged the Election Commission (EC) to refrain from "institutional arrogance", and stop the special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral roll in Bihar, saying it has effectively become a process of establishing citizenship.

Speaking at a joint press conference, along with Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, Rashtriya Janata Dal MP Manoj Jha, and Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Nilotpal Basu, Congress Rajya Sabha member A.M. Singhvi said it was not an issue of "political obstinacy" or "institutional arrogance". "I humbly urge the Election Commission... Please reconsider it," Mr. Singhvi said.

Stating that the SIR had become a process of establishing citizenship, he asked if the EC was authorised to do so. The Congress leader cited a 1995 Supreme Court judgment to say that detailed legal provisions should be followed to take away anyone's citizenship.

About 10 elections had been held after 2003 and till then, all the ID cards had been valid throughout. "In that case, what was the

urgency in initiating the process in June-July, link it to an election," he said, adding that the exercise could have been undertaken after yet another election (Bihar). The attempt to squeeze the entire process within two-three months was resulting in several errors, Mr. Singhvi said.

Mr. Bhattacharya said the EC's "self-congratulatory" statements were confirming the INDIA bloc party's apprehensions. After the process started, the number of possible deletions from the voters' list kept increasing, he said. The Opposition parties had flagged concerns over about two crore alleged deletions.

"The EC has made one very misleading and false claim that it has shared this with the political parties. We have received block-level data about pending enumeration forms, which were not submitted... had the details been shared with us, we could have cross-checked them before the draft was prepared..." Mr. Bhattacharya said, stating that no door-to-door visits had been made during the EC's exercise.

Describing it as the biggest exercise of "disenfranchisement since Independence", Mr. Jha said the EC had not consulted political parties on the SIR.

'91.96% SUBMITTED FORMS'
» PAGE 4

A clear path



Vantage point: A glass bridge built over the Napne waterfall which was recently inaugurated by Maharashtra Minister Nitesh Rane at Vaibhavwadi in Sindhudurg District of Maharashtra. EMMANUEL YOGINI

Thailand, Cambodia agree to truce negotiations

Associated Press
SURIN

Thailand and Cambodia on Sunday signalled their readiness to negotiate an end to a deadly border dispute following mediation efforts by the U.S. President Donald Trump.

The fighting has killed at least 33 people.

Mr. Trump posted on Truth Social on Saturday that he spoke to the leaders of Thailand and Cambodia.

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 14

Maharashtra govt. halts Ladki Bahin aid payments for 26.34 lakh people

Snehal Mutha
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government said on Sunday that it had temporarily suspended monthly payments under the Ladki Bahin Scheme to 26.34 lakh beneficiaries whose eligibility for the payment will have to be verified.

"The benefits for 26.34 lakh applicants were temporarily suspended starting June 2025 while 2.25 crore eligible beneficiaries received the payments," State Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkar said on X, adding that the suspended beneficiaries' eligibility would be



Aditi Tatkar

verified by the respective District Collectors.

She said even men had applied for the scheme, which is intended to provide financial support of ₹1,500 a month to women from low-income groups. "Payments will resume for

those found eligible after the verification while action will be taken against fraudulent beneficiaries who misled the government and availed themselves of benefits through improper means," Ms. Tatkar said.

Launched in 2024
Many ineligible applicants were getting benefits of multiple schemes, while some families had more than two beneficiaries, she said, adding that the action was based on data shared by the Information Technology Department.

The Ladki Bahin scheme was launched in August 2024 ahead of the

Maharashtra Assembly election held in November. The scheme was considered one of the reasons for the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance's victory in the election. However, after the election, the government had started scrutiny of the beneficiaries and ineligible beneficiaries were suspended regularly.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Saturday had warned of stern action against men who took advantage of the scheme. "Money will be recovered. Action will be taken for non-cooperation," he said, responding to reports of 14,000 men being beneficiaries of the scheme.

Reuters
JERUSALEM/GAZA

Israel said on Sunday it would halt military operations each day for 10 hours in parts of Gaza and allow new aid corridors in the shattered enclave, where images of hungry Palestinians have alarmed the world.

Military activity will stop from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. until further notice in Al-Mawasi, a designated humanitarian area which stretches along the coast, in central Deir al-Balah and in Gaza City, to the north.

The military said designated secure routes for convoys delivering food



Walk of hope: Palestinians carry sacks of flour delivered after trucks carrying aid entered northern Gaza on Sunday. AFP

and medicine will also be in place between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. starting from Sunday.

Dozens of Gazans have died of malnutrition in recent weeks, according to the Gaza Health Ministry in

the Hamas-run enclave.

The Egyptian Red Crescent said it was sending on Sunday more than 100 trucks carrying over 1,200 metric tons of food aid to southern Gaza.

Hours earlier, Israel be-

gan aid airdrops in what it said was an effort to ease the humanitarian conditions in the enclave.

Aid groups said last week there was mass hunger among Gaza's 2.2 million people and international alarm over the humanitarian situation in Gaza has increased, driving French President Emmanuel Macron's decision to recognise a Palestinian state in September.

Israel says it has let enough food into Gaza during the war and blames Hamas for the suffering of Gaza's people.

CHILD STARVES TO DEATH
» PAGE 15

INBRIEF



Fringe elements trying to derail progress in J&K: Rijju

Asserting that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are extremely positive and want progress, Union Minister Kiren Rijju on Sunday said some fringe elements from outside the country are trying to derail peace and development in the Union Territory. He said a strong India is incomplete without a strong Jammu and Kashmir and assured the local youths that “we will make you proud by giving you full space to echo your voice”. The Minister, who was addressing the alumni meet at Kashmir University, stressed that politicians must forget differences in the interest of the country. PTI

Odisha schoolteacher held for ‘molesting’ girl students

A teacher of a government-run high school in Odisha’s Kendrapara district was arrested on Sunday for allegedly molesting five girl students on campus, the police said, adding that the incident took place recently. The headmaster of the school lodged an FIR in this connection on Saturday and the accused teacher was arrested on Sunday, a police officer said. The accused, who has been booked under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, was sent to judicial custody after a court in Kendrapara rejected his bail application, the officer said. PTI

Bhubaneswar corporator held for rape, suspended from BJD

Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation’s BJD corporator Amaresh Jena was arrested from Odisha’s Balasore district on Sunday in connection with a rape case registered against him and remanded to 14-day judicial custody, police said. The BJD suspended him from the party soon after. Jena was booked under sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including charges of rape, committing miscarriage without a woman’s permission, obscene act and criminal intimidation, and the POCSO Act. PTI

Three killed in blast in tanker at asphalt plant near Vadodara

Three persons were killed when a tanker exploded while being heated to empty asphalt from the vehicle at a plant near Vadodara in Gujarat on Sunday evening, police said. The incident occurred at Mokshi village in Savli taluka of Vadodara district, an official from Bhadarwa police station said. A tanker was being heated to transfer stuck asphalt from the vehicle into barrels when it blew up, killing three persons standing nearby, the official said. Among the deceased were the driver and cleaner of the vehicle, as well as a labourer, he said. “The bodies of the victims were shifted to a hospital in Vadodara for post-mortem, he said. PTI

Over 8,400 pilgrims offer prayers at Amarnath shrine

Over 8,400 pilgrims on Sunday paid obeisance to Lord Shiva at the holy cave shrine of Amarnath in south Kashmir Himalayas, taking the total number of *yatris* to 3.77 lakh, the official said. They said the *yatris* included 6,198 men, 1,483 women, 90 children, 66 *sadhus*, three *sadhvis*, and 565 security forces personnel. So far, 3,77,080 *yatris* have visited the cave shrine since the *yatra* started on July 3, the official said. PTI

Jammu ‘shoot-out’: suspended policeman’s rifle seized by SIT

Peerzada Ashiq
JAMMU

Facing an uproar over the killing of a 21-year-old civilian in police firing, the J&K Police’s Special Investigation Team (SIT) on Sunday seized the service rifle of one of the two suspended policemen.

The victim, Mohammad Parvez, 21, a resident of Javed Nagar, Nikki Tawi, suffered bullet injuries and died at Surey Chak area in Jammu’s Satwari amid con-

flicting reports on July 24. The police said the policemen were chasing drug peddlers in the area and the victim died in a “shoot-out”.

‘Fake encounter’

The family of the victim accused the police of “fake encounter”. The SIT visited the site on Sunday and questioned local residents and their statements were recorded. The area was also searched for clues.

Head Constable Baljin-

der Singh and Constable Pawan Singh, who were placed under suspension pending inquiry, were also taken to the site. The police said one service rifle was also seized as part of the investigation.

The two-wheeler, carrying the victim and his relative, was also taken into custody. The police also tried to piece together the sequence of events to establish the circumstances under which the youth got killed, officers said.

Chirag’s remarks on crimes in Bihar show his weakness: Tejashwi

Press Trust of India
PATNA

A day after Union Minister Chirag Paswan slammed the Nitish Kumar government over the law and order situation in Bihar, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday claimed that the Hajipur MP’s comment showed his “weakness” as a ruling NDA partner, and alleged that he has “no real concerns” for the State.

Mr. Yadav was reacting to the remarks of Mr. Paswan, the chief of Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), which drew a sharp reaction from Chief Minister Nitish Kumar’s JD(U), exposing cracks in the NDA. Mr. Paswan had on Saturday said, “I regret having to support a government which is unable to prevent crimes. The situation of Bihar has, indeed, become scary.”

Mahadayi row: now, Bommai condemns Goa CM’s statement

The Hindu Bureau
HUBBALLI

BJP MP and former Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday said efforts are being made to obtain the required clearance for the Mahadayi project from the National Board for Wildlife after meeting Bhupender Yadav, the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

He was addressing members of Malaprabha-Mahadayi Kalasa Banduri Raita

Stalin presses for release of funds as PM arrives in T.N.

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Funds under the Samagra Shiksha scheme, ensuring the safety of Tamil Nadu’s fishermen, implementation of railway projects, and allotment of land for the defence industrial corridor were among the demands that the Tamil Nadu government raised in a memorandum to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a social media post, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said the memorandum had been handed over to the Prime Minister, who was on an official visit to Tiruchi and Ariyalur districts on Sunday. “I hope that the PM will respect the sentiments of the people and the State’s development and will provide appropriate solutions,” he said. Mr. Stalin, who had been hospitalised in Chennai since last week, finalised the demands on Saturday.

In the memorandum, Mr. Stalin requested the immediate release of ₹2,151.59 crore under the Samagra Shiksha for 2024-25 and the first tranche for 2025-26. “The CM has requested the release of funds without the Centre insisting on the State signing the MoU on PM SHRI,” the State government said in a press release.

He has demanded the implementation of railway projects, including Tindivanam-Gingee-Tiruvannamalai, Erode-Palani, Madurai-Thoothukudi via Aruppukottai, Athipattu Puthur, and Chennai-Cuddalore through Mamallapuram. He has also demanded that the track-doubling between Thiruvananthapuram and Kanniyakumari



Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin

and the laying of a new line from Tirupattur to Hosur through Krishnagiri be expedited.

He also demanded detailed project reports for Coimbatore-Palladam-Karur, Coimbatore-Gobichettipalayam-Bhavani-Salem, and Madurai-Melur-Thuvankurichi-Viralimalai-Inamkulathur lines, and for a mofussil rail service around Madurai.

Additional EMUs

Mr. Stalin sought more Electric Multiple Units (EMUs) to handle the peak-hour rush in Chennai, and a fourth line between Tambaram and Chengalpattu.

The Chief Minister requested Mr. Modi for approval and funds for the Coimbatore and Madurai Metro Rail projects.

According to the detailed project reports, the 34.8-km Coimbatore Metro Rail project requires ₹10,740.49 crore and the 32-km Madurai Metro Rail project needs ₹11,368.35 crore. Citing the 2017 policy for Metro Rail projects, he sought grants for the projects to be implemented with 50:50 contribution from the Union and Tamil Nadu governments.

Mr. Stalin called for steps to release the fishermen in Sri Lankan custody and their boats.

Flood warning issued to 11 districts in T.N. as inflow to Mettur reservoir increases

The Hindu Bureau
SALEM

Inflow to the Stanley Reservoir in Salem in Tamil Nadu increased to 1,00,400 cusecs on Sunday evening. A flood warning was issued to 11 districts for the second consecutive day.

Following rain in the catchment areas, the Mettur dam reached its capacity of 120 feet on Friday for the fourth time this year. Due to heavy rain for the last two days, inflow to the dam started to increase, and on Saturday, it touched 45,000 cusecs. Following this, the Water Resources Department (WRD) issued a flood warning on Saturday evening.

The TNSDMA has begun sending geo-targeted SMS alerts to people along the river

On Sunday noon, inflow to the dam increased to 75,400 cusecs, and at 6 p.m., the inflow touched 1,00,400 cusecs. The dam’s water level and storage level stood at 120 feet and 93.47 tmcft, respectively. The amount of water discharged from the dam was increased from 45,000 cusecs to 1,00,000 cusecs.

In its warning, the WRD said as the water level was at 120 feet, the inflow to the dam would be released

as surplus in the Cauvery. People living along the banks of the river and in low-lying areas nearby should move to higher places and all precautionary measures should be taken for the safety of their lives and property, the WRD added in the release.

The Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority (TNSDMA) has begun sending geo-targeted SMS alerts to mobile phones of people residing near vulnerable locations along the river.

Teams from the Tamil Nadu and National Disaster Response Forces have arrived in Tiruchi and are on standby for emergency response.

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday condemned the “targeting” of migrant workers in BJP-ruled States, claiming that members of a migrant family were beaten up by the police in Delhi.

“Atrocious!! Terrible!! See how the Delhi police brutally beat up a kid and his mother, members of a migrant family from Malda’s Chanchal. See how even a child is not spared from the cruelty of violence in the regime of linguistic terror unleashed by BJP in the country against Bengalis!” the Chief Minister said on social media.



Trinamool workers hold placards of Bengali alphabets during a protest in Kolkata. PTI

On Sunday, protest marches were organised across the State in line with plans announced by the Trinamool Congress. Ms. Banerjee had on July 21, at a Martyrs’ Day rally, announced the start of a “language movement” against

the targeting of migrants in the BJP-ruled States. The Chief Minister had called for protests every weekend until next year’s Assembly poll.

From the streets of Kolkata to districts across the State, hundreds of people participated in the protests which the Trinamool has described as a “language movement”. Some also held posters highlighting the Bengali alphabet, implying that BJP-ruled States are targeting migrants for speaking in Bengali.

Migrants from West Bengal have been detained in different States like Odisha, Haryana and Delhi on suspicion of being Bangladeshi nationals.

Naidu invites foreign firms to invest in ports, renewables

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

In a major step toward deepening international partnerships and boosting foreign investments, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu met Indian High Commissioner to Singapore Shilpak Ambule on Sunday, the first day of his official visit.

The discussions centered on transformative opportunities across sectors such as defence, electronics, aerospace, green energy, and quantum technologies.

During the high-level meeting, Mr. Shilpak Ambule referred to the “CBN Brand” in Singapore’s diplomatic and industrial circles, underscoring the respect and recognition it commanded.

He noted the alignment between Andhra Pradesh’s development goals and Singapore’s strategic strengths, expressing optimism about the potential for robust bilateral cooperation.

Mr. Naidu emphasised that Andhra Pradesh was rapidly emerging as a premier investment destination, backed by forward-looking policies and sector-specific incentives. He highlighted that the State was implementing a range of investor-friendly reforms aimed at attracting companies from Singapore and beyond, particularly in the areas of ports, renewable energy, and industrial corridors.

Referring to past collaboration on the Amaravati



N. Chandrababu Naidu

capital city project, Mr. Naidu acknowledged the setback experienced during 2019-2024, but reiterated his commitment to re-viving and strengthening the ties.

Re-establish trust

“This visit is an opportunity to clear misunderstandings, re-establish trust, and forge a renewed vision for development,” Mr. Naidu said.

The Chief Minister outlined Andhra Pradesh’s ambitious goal to generate 160 gigawatts of green energy. He revealed that green hydrogen projects had already commenced in Visakhapatnam in collaboration with the NTPC, and another was under way in Kakinada. He shared plans for India’s first Quantum Valley in Amaravati under the India Quantum Mission, reinforcing the State’s commitment to futuristic innovation.

Highlighting the strategic importance of regions such as Rayalaseema, he invited Singaporean firms to invest in high-potential sectors such as defence manufacturing, aerospace, electronics, and automobiles.

Liquor ‘scam’: SIT searches properties in Hyderabad

Police teams visit offices, industrial units, and other properties in and around the city; the SIT, which is investigating the alleged multi-crore scam, has so far arrested 12 accused in the case

Rajulapudi Srinivas
VIJAYAWADA

A special investigation team (SIT) has searched the properties in Hyderabad of the accused who have been arrested in the alleged liquor scam. The SIT, which is investigating the alleged multi-crore scam in Andhra Pradesh, has so far arrested 12 accused in the case.

Multiple police teams searched the offices, industrial units and other properties of the accused in and around Hyderabad on Saturday night. The investigating officers seized documents and other technical evidence related to the crime.

“Searches were under way on the properties of Kessireddy Rajashekar



On trial: Kessireddy Rajashekar Reddy, one of the 12 accused in the scam, being produced in court in Vijayawada in June. K.V.S.GIRI

Reddy, Buneti Chaniky and Balaji Govindappa, who are in judicial custody,” a senior police officer told *The Hindu* on Sunday on condition of anonymity.

It was alleged that the accused framed a new liqu-

or policy during the YSR Congress Party regime, encouraged manual sales, collected commissions from the distillery companies, routed the ill-gotten money into shell companies. and allegedly caused

about ₹3,500 crore loss to the government.

The Crime Investigation Department (CID), which filed the preliminary chargesheet in the ACB Special Court, said around 48 people were involved in the scam.

The police said the accused purchased villas, luxury cars, land, and jewellery and transferred the money to shell companies and benami accounts.

“The role of some other officers of A.P. State Beverages Corporation Limited [APBCL], Excise, Revenue and other department officers is being probed,” the police said. A senior police official on condition of anonymity said they were questioning public representatives and bureaucrats in the case.

LDF, UDF condemn arrest of 2 Kerala nuns over forced conversion charges

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The arrest of two Keralite nuns on charges of human trafficking and kidnapping for forced religious conversion at the Durg railway station in Chhattisgarh on Friday has drawn sharp criticism from Church leaders, the ruling Left Democratic Front and the Op-

position in Kerala.

Fr. Robin Rodrigues, a spokesperson of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), told presspersons in Raipur on Sunday that the nuns were travelling with three other women, from Durg to Agra when persons, suspected to be Bajrang Dal workers, accosted them angrily.

He said they accused the

nuns, Sister Vandana Francis and Sister Preeta Mary, of taking women to Agra to convert them to Christianity. CBCI Women’s Council secretary Asha Paul said the women were travelling with the sisters on their own volition.

All India Congress Committee general secretary (organisation) and MP K.C. Venugopal said the arrest

of the nuns on “trumped-up” charges was the latest incident in the long series of persecution of minorities in BJP-ruled States in North India.

LDF leader Jose K. Mani, MP, posted on social media that he hds sought the urgent intervention of Prime Minister to stop mob attacks against Christians in BJP-ruled States.



Rain fury: The Baitarani river flowing above the danger mark at Akhuapada in Bhadrak district of Odisha on Sunday. ANI

Swollen rivers wreak havoc in Odisha; over 11,000 affected

Press Trust of India
BHUBANESWAR/BHADRAK

More than 11,000 people in six districts of Odisha have been affected by the floods, an official said on Sunday.

Over 1,000 people have been rescued from the affected areas in Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Sundargarh, and Keonjhar districts to safer places, he said.

Addressing a press conference, Special Relief Commissioner D.K. Singh said the flood was caused by the overflowing waters of the Subarnarekha, Baitarani and Jalka rivers following heavy rainfall.

“The rescued people have been provided shelter at different cyclone centres and other buildings. The government is providing dry food items and cooked food to them,” he said.

Teams from the Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force, the National Disaster Response Force, and the fire service department have been deployed in the affected districts.

A total of 106 rescue boats have also been deployed.

Mr. Singh said the water levels of all major rivers, except the Subarnarekha, are declining.

“Night patrolling has been tightened in the flood-affected areas. Arrangements have been made to provide safe drinking water to people. Sufficient anti-venom has been kept in stock,” he said.

The water level of the Subarnarekha at Rajghat was 11.17 metre and against the danger level of 10.36 metre, an evening flood bulletin said.

Farmlands submerged

Several villages in Bhandaripokhari and Dhamnagar blocks in Bhadrak district remain waterlogged, with farmlands, roads and houses submerged.

A landslide was reported from Sundargarh district, blocking the Koida-Chunaghati stretch of the National Highway-520. The debris was cleared from the road immediately, officials said.

In full flow



Flood alert: Water gushes out of the Tungabhadra dam in Hosapete in Karnataka as authorities begin controlled release following a sharp rise in the inflow on Sunday. People residing in low-lying areas and near riverbanks have been asked to exercise caution. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Farmer on night watch killed in attack by wild elephants in Chittoor district

The Hindu Bureau
CHITTOOR

A farmer, Ramakrishna Raju, 55, was killed on the spot when a 16-strong herd of wild elephants attacked him in a field at Kothuru village of Somala mandal in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh late on Saturday night.

The incident triggered panic in several villages in the vicinity, as the herd was reportedly camping at a waterbody nearby.

As per information, the herd emerged from the nearby thickets, strayed into the field, and attacked the unsuspecting victim who was on night watch. The sudden charge left the farmer helpless.



Tragic demise: Ramakrishna Raju, the farmer who was trampled to death by elephants.

The villagers informed the forest officials that the herd had been resorting to crop raids after dusk for the past three days.

Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan condoled

the farmer’s death and expressed solidarity with the family members. He announced that ex gratia would be given, and directed the forest officials to initiate corrective measures to prevent wild elephants from venturing into human habitations.

Meanwhile, the incident led to angry protests on Sunday, with the villagers staging a blockade on the Tirupati-Punganur Road along with the body of the farmer, blaming the Forest Department for its “gross negligence”.

No tangible action

Raising slogans such as “Where are the Kumki elephants”, the villagers urged Chief Minister N.

Chandrababu Naidu and Mr. Kalyan to immediately intervene and do justice to the bereaved family. They demanded that a scientific action plan be worked out to put an end to the vexed man-animal conflict in the western mandals of the district.

The villagers alleged that despite their repeated alerts about the movement of the wild elephants, there was no tangible action from the Forest Department.

Senior forest officials rushed to Kothuru and pacified the agitators by assuring them compensation and corrective measures. The farmer’s body was later shifted to the area hospital for autopsy.

Congress, BJP engage in a war of words in Telangana over shortage of urea for farming

R. Ravikanth Reddy
HYDERABAD

Urea politics in Telangana touched a peak on Sunday with the ruling Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) engaging in a war of words to pin the blame on each other, as a challenge for an open debate was thrown by both political parties.

BJP State president N. Ramchander Rao went on the offensive, rejecting the government’s claims of shortage of urea and challenging Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao for a debate on the supply and availability in



The State government says Centre has not supplied allocated urea on time.

the State. Speaking in Mahabubnagar, he accused the Congress of misleading farmers, alleging that the ruling party in the State was spreading misinforma-

tion to tarnish the Union government’s image.

However, Agriculture Minister hit back with specific figures, stating that the Centre had not supplied the allocated quantity of urea on time. The Minister claimed that shortfalls in Central supply have created bottlenecks at the distribution level, despite the State’s preparedness.

In a letter addressed to Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers J.P. Nadada on Saturday, Mr. Rao said there was a 36% deficit in supply to Telangana. The deficit supply was seen in all the months, he said.

Activists demand Devadasi survey in Karnataka without condition of age limit

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As preparations are under way for the third survey of Devadasis in Karnataka, members of the community have urged the State government to conduct the door-to-door survey without fixing any age limit to identify the Devadasis.

The Bengaluru-based National Law School of India University (NLSIU), which is spearheading efforts to bring new legislation for Devadasis, has also petitioned Chief Minister Siddaramaiah against any age limit.

While the fresh survey – a long-pending demand of the community – had been announced in the 2024-



Rights discourse: Members of the Vimukta Devadasi Mahila Mathu Makkala Vedike at a press meet in Bengaluru. SUDHAKARA JAIN

2025 Budget, the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission recently directed the government to complete the survey and come out with recommendations before this October.

It is learnt that the survey is being planned to be

conducted through the offices of taluk-level child development officers, where Devadasis are expected to go and provide their details.

While circulars so far have been silent on the age, community members have been pointing to past

surveys which were conducted similarly from offices and had kept out women aged below 45.

The centuries-old practice of dedication of women to temples as Devadasis has been banned in the State since 1982 when the Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act was enacted. Subsequently, the government conducted surveys in 1993-94 and 2007-08, when 22,873 and 46,660 Devadasis, respectively, were identified.

However, Yamunurappa, coordinator of Vimukta Devadasi Mahila Mathu Makkala Vedike, claimed that a similar number of Devadasis have remained outside the list owing to several issues.

Jail escape: prison officer suspended over remark

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Amid mounting criticism over systemic failures in the prison system following the sensational escape of rape and murder convict Govindachamy from the Kannur Central Prison, the Kerala government on Sunday suspended a prison official for publicly commenting on the case.

Deputy Inspector General of Prisons (South Zone) Dinesh B. ordered the suspension of Abdul Sattar A., Deputy Prison Officer of Kottarakara Special Sub-Jail, pending inquiry, over the remarks he made on a news channel.

New co-op policy violates Constitution, says SKM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha alleged on Sunday that the National Cooperation Policy, unveiled by Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Friday, violates the Constitution, centralises power, and snatches rights of State governments.

It said the policy lacks the perspective to protect the rights of farmers and workers on livelihood, minimum support price, minimum wage and sharing of surplus. It urged the political parties and State governments to fight against the attack on cooperative federalism.

“The Union Cooperative Ministry is applicable only to the Union Territories and the Multi-State Cooperative Societies. In the true spirit, the Multi-State Cooperative Societies also violate the Constitutional provisions regarding cooperative societies. Such efforts are aimed at seizure of people’s resources by the ruling class parties, especially the BJP-RSS. The trend of centralisation of power needs to be vehemently resisted,” it said.

‘CAPF troops with severe injuries to get full benefits’

Personnel who undergo amputation shall remain in service; the Centre will ensure the best tech and medical facilities for ‘limb replacement surgery’ for the injured, Union Home Secretary says

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel who get severely injured during operations and have to undergo amputation will be allowed to continue in service till their retirement with all benefits, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan said on Sunday.

Mr. Mohan said the government will ensure the best medical facilities and technology available in the world for “limb replacement surgery” for the CAPF officials and jawans, and it will be ensured that loss of limbs is corrected as far as possible.

“Government will also ensure a minimum financial package for such personnel and they will be accommodated in the organisation,” Mr. Mohan said, while addressing the 87th Raising Day of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Delhi.

The CAPF personnel have to adhere to certain



Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan and CRPF D-G G.P. Singh (left) at the CRPF Raising Day in Delhi on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

physical standards for timely promotion and services.

On the forefront

At least five CRPF personnel were grievously injured during a 21-day anti-Maoist operations on the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border that concluded on May 11. Named ‘Operation Black Forest’, the combing operations were carried out in the Karegutta Hills (KGH).

The Home Secretary ad-

ded that a large number of CRPF personnel, including women, have been deployed for law and order duty in Manipur after an ethnic conflict erupted in the State in May 2023. He said that during his recent visit to the State, he noticed that the personnel have to move from one location to another and face various hardships due to lack of adequate facilities.

“CRPF Director-General has been asked to submit a

report on the facilities required for the jawans, particularly women.

Home Ministry will ensure best facilities,” Mr. Mohan said.

Left-wing extremism

He added that efforts are also under way to improve the living conditions at the camps in left-wing extremism (LWE) affected areas.

“CRPF is playing a key role in ending LWE menace before March 2026,” he said, adding that 149 forward operating bases have been operationalised in the LWE areas, forcing the Maoists to retreat.

The official said that left-wing extremism is on the verge of its end in Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal.

He said Home Minister Amit Shah mentioned at the National Security Strategies Conference on Sunday that India’s rising stature would lead to security challenges and the CAPFs would play an important role in thwarting those challenges.

Centre rejects Cong. claims about organic cotton scam in M.P.

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday termed the allegations by the Congress that normal cotton was being sold as organic cotton in Madhya Pradesh as being “unfounded, unsubstantiated and misleading”, saying that the Agriculture & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority takes concrete steps whenever wilful violations of organic cotton standards are found.

Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Saturday called for a court-monitored CBI probe into an alleged ₹2.1 lakh crore scam in the sale of normal cotton as organic cotton in Madhya Pradesh.

“It may be mentioned that in a press briefing by an Opposition leader yesterday, unfounded, unsubstantiated and misleading aspersions are being cast against the Organic Certification programme, the National Programme of Organic Production,” the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a statement.

“Generalised allegations

against a robust regulatory system of the country for a particular crop/region/group of operators only serve to undermine the credibility of legitimate regulatory institutions and the broader organic movement in India,” it added.

“It is clarified that APEDA or the Department of Commerce does not extend any subsidy to farmers taking up organic cultivation under the NPOP,” the statement said.

While the government did admit that, despite its checks and balances, “there have been reported incidences of malpractices and misuse of grower group certification”, APEDA has taken strict and concrete action against violators.

It said that new procedures have been devised for additional checks for certification of organic cotton production.

“Wherever credible evidence of non-compliance/wilful violation of organic standards has been brought to light, APEDA has undertaken extensive investigation and taken concrete measures,” the government clarified.

ED searches conclude at firms linked to Anil Ambani

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Reliance Group firms Reliance Infrastructure (RInfra) and Reliance Power (RPower) on Sunday said the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had concluded searches on their premises and that the companies would continue to cooperate with the agency.

Both the Anil Ambani-led group’s companies said they, including their officials, would continue to fully cooperate with the ED.

RInfra said: “Action by ED has no impact on the business operations, financial performance, shareholders, employees, or any other stakeholders of the company. The same appears to pertain to allegations concerning transactions of Reliance Communications Limited (RCOM) or Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL) which are over 10 years old.”

The ED began searching multiple premises linked to the group on Thursday over alleged money laundering and financial irregularities.

‘External Affairs Ministry nearly lost the plot during Indus Waters Treaty talks’

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

The External Affairs Ministry nearly “lost the plot” over the Indus Waters Treaty talks with Pakistan in 2016, as senior Ministry officials entered into a tussle with the World Bank, before the issue was retrieved. The claim has been made by former Finance Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg, India-appointed Executive Director at the World Bank (2014-2017), in his latest book, which recounts for the first time the tensions between the Narendra Modi government and World Bank President Jim Kim over the Kishenganga hydropower project.

The point of contention was whether the World Bank, which has a limited role in guiding any disputes or differences between India and Pakistan, would decide to appoint the “court of arbitration”



Subhash Chandra Garg

Pakistan had asked for, or a “neutral expert”, as India wanted.

In his new book, *No, Minister: Navigating Power, Politics and Bureaucracy with a Steely Resolve*, Mr. Garg says he was sidelined during the initial stages of the Indus Water Treaty negotiations in 2016. He also claims that he was told to only attend meetings to be led by India’s Deputy Chief of Mission Taranjit Sandhu.

“[However], by the middle of November, the MEA team was getting nervous.

It was not able to nudge the World Bank team in the direction it wanted, i.e., to appoint a neutral expert and began to sense that the Bank was tilting towards Pakistan,” Mr. Garg wrote. The book claims that Mr. Jaishankar asked Mr. Garg to take charge of matters.

According to Mr. Garg, it was his own intervention, in a one-on-one meeting with Mr. Kim, that eventually helped ensure a neutral expert, Ian Solomon, was appointed, after the World Bank accepted Pakistan’s demand for a court of arbitration at The Hague.

The World Bank had first ruled that having a neutral expert and court together could lead to “contradictory outcomes”.

The External Affairs Ministry did not respond to a request for comments on Mr. Garg’s claims.

(With inputs from Jacob Koshy and T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan)

Private varsity didn’t file FIR on suicide of student, SC informed

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has been informed that the Sharda University in Greater Noida, where a girl student allegedly died by suicide, did not file a police complaint in the incident but her parents did and that security guards recovered her body from the university’s hostel.

The information was given in a status report filed by senior advocate Aparna Bhatt, who has been appointed amicus curiae in the matter by the apex court to assist it.

A Bench headed by Justice J. B. Pardiwala is likely to hear the case on Monday.

In her 30-page report, Ms. Bhatt said that the FIR was registered after the deceased parents’ complaint, and two persons allegedly named in the suicide note have been arrested.

The university officials admitted that the warden

Two individuals allegedly named in the suicide note have been arrested

did not call anyone - neither university authorities nor the police or a hospital for an ambulance. The warden eventually called the parents to tell them their daughter was in a serious condition, but did not mention suicide, the report stated.

A 20-year-old dental student of the university was found dead in her hostel room on July 19. A police officer said in a note recovered, she had alleged “mental duress” she had been put through by two of her teachers.

The report the probe is under way and will be completed soon.

(Those in distress may contact Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health suicide prevention helpline 011-40769002.)

CERT fixes website flaw that exposed sensitive data of voluntary organ donors

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

A critical vulnerability in the Organ Retrieval Banking Organisation (ORBO) website of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, that exposed sensitive data of voluntary organ donors across India along with their identity, health profile and contact details was detected and resolved, thanks to an independent security researcher who flagged the flaw.

ORBO is the nodal facility for cadaver organ and tissue donation-related activities of the AIIMS.

In mid-May, the researcher, Aniket Tomar, came across the vulnerability and alerted the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT).

In an email about the critical data exposure, he said the vulnerability disclosed personally identifiable and medical informa-



The data leak provided access to all organ and tissue donors registered with the AIIMS.

tion of registered organ and tissue donors without any authentication mechanism for accessing it.

The data leak provided unrestricted access to the complete list of organ and tissue donors registered with the AIIMS.

The information included full name, residential address, date of birth, blood group, mobile number and emergency contact details of the donor putting hundreds of individuals at significant risks of

identity theft, phishing attacks, and social engineering exploitation.

“Such a data breach from a reputed medical institution not only undermines public trust in digital health systems but also violates data protection principles under the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023,” Mr. Tomar said in his alert to the CERT.

“I was able to view several lakh donor entries... The data was not limited to Delhi, the entries appeared to include donors from various regions across India, indicating a nationwide scope,” Mr. Tomar told *The Hindu*.

On June 18, 2025, the CERT wrote to Mr. Tomar appreciating him for detecting the critical vulnerability.

The vulnerability was successfully mitigated and the exposed data were no longer publicly accessible, the researcher said.

91.69% voters submitted forms for revision of electoral rolls in Bihar: EC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Sunday said 91.69% of electors on the 2025 voter list in Bihar had submitted enumeration forms as part of the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and these voters will be included on the draft list to be published on August 1.

Of the 7.89 crore registered electors as on June 24, over 7.24 crore had submitted enumeration forms indicating overwhelming participation, the poll body said in a statement.

This, in effect, means the names of 65 lakh voters registered in the July 2025 list would not make it to the draft list which is scheduled to be published on August 1. Of these voters,



Congress members stage a protest against Bihar SIR in Kolkata on Sunday. PTI

22 lakh were deceased, 36 lakh had permanently shifted or were not found, and 7 lakh were enrolled at multiple places, the poll body said.

In the 10-point statement, the EC listed the various aims of the SIR, such as inclusion of every eligible voter, participation of all political parties, inclu-

sion of young and urban voters, and scrutiny of draft rolls and redressal of all grievances during the claims and objections period.

The exact status of these electors will be known after scrutiny of forms by the Electoral Registration Officers (ERO) or Assistant Electoral Registration Officers by August 1. However, genuine electors can still be added back in the electoral rolls during the Claims and Objection period from August 1 to September 1. The names of the electors found enrolled at multiple places will be retained only at one place, the EC said.

The poll body said young electors who have attained 18 years of age on July 1, 2025, or would be attaining 18 years on or before October 1, 2025 are be-

ing encouraged to file their application in Form 6, along with the prescribed Declaration Form.

The commission said it would conduct special campaigns across Bihar from August 1 to September 1 to enrol such young electors, so that all eligible electors can be enrolled and no one is left out.

It said that SMSs explaining the SIR process were sent to 5.7 crore registered mobile numbers of all those electors who had registered their mobile numbers. During the enumeration period, the Chief Electoral Officer, District Election Officers and EROs conducted numerous campaigns for spreading awareness among electors about the SIR and also conducted several meetings with political parties to explain the process.

TCS to lay off over 12,000 employees this year; mid, senior-level staff to be hit

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India’s largest IT services firm, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), is set to lay off about 2%, or 12,261 employees, of its global workforce this year, with the majority of those impacted belonging to middle and senior grades.

As of June 30, TCS’s workforce stood at 6,13,069. It increased its workforce by 5,000 employees in the April-June quarter.

AI deployment

“TCS is on a journey to become a future-ready organisation. This includes strategic initiatives on multiple fronts, including investing in new-tech areas, entering



As of June 30, 2025, workforce of TCS stood at 6,13,069.

new markets, deploying AI at scale for our clients and ourselves, deepening our partnerships, creating next-gen infrastructure, and realigning our workforce model,” the company said in a statement.

“As part of the journey, we will also be releasing associates from the organisation whose deployment may not be feasible. This will impact about 2% of our

global workforce, primarily in the middle and senior grades, over the course of the year,” it said.

TCS will provide appropriate benefits, outplacement, counselling, and support to the impacted employees, it added.

The move comes at a time when India’s top IT services companies have delivered single-digit revenue growth in Q1FY26, capping off a somewhat-sobering June quarter as macroeconomic instability and geopolitical tensions weighed on global tech demand and delayed client decision-making.

For TCS, the revenue rose 1.3% year-on-year to ₹63,437 crore, bottomline improved 5.9% to ₹12,760 crore in Q1FY26.

Inter-State synthetic drug syndicate busted, 3 held

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), along with the police in Rajasthan and Maharashtra, has busted an inter-State drug syndicate allegedly involved in the clandestine manufacture of synthetic drugs.

On July 22, several precursor chemicals, including chloroform, ammonium chloride, propylene chloride, toluene and bromine used to manufacture Mephedrone were recovered from a laboratory located in a secluded village in Rajasthan’s Barmer district, the NCB said.

Interrogation of two members held in the raid led to the arrest of one more person by the Raigad police in Maharashtra.

Heritage conservationist Tara Murali, 75, passes away

"Imagine, how would you feel if the roof over the head of your parents, children or siblings is suddenly taken away – if your entire family is rendered homeless in a single moment? Hundreds of poor families living in the jhuggis of Delhi are going through this pain today," Mr. Gandhi said in his post in Hindi on social media platform X.

The Congress on Sunday slammed the Centre over vacant reserved posts for SCs, STs, and OBCs in central universities and alleged that the “not found suitable” clause was being “weaponised” against these categories to deny fair employment opportunities. Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh cited a written reply by Minister of State for Education, Sukanta Majumdar, to attack the government. In a post on X, Mr. Ramesh said the Modi government has revealed the staggering level of vacancies among SC, ST, and OBC reserved faculty positions in central universities. PTI

The arrest of Pranjali Khewalkar, the son-in-law of NCP-SP leader Eknath Khadse, and six others at a party in Pune over alleged possession of narcotic substances has stirred up a political storm in Maharashtra. The Opposition criticised the arrest, calling it a “message” to those speaking against the government, while Mr. Khadse termed it “a politically motivated conspiracy”. The police said cocaine-like drugs, 70 gm of marijuana, 10 mobile phones, two four-wheelers, a hookah, and liquor were seized.

cedures or high-risk cases. "Patients can be enrolled in insurance coverage to safeguard against any unforeseen incidents. However, patients should be informed about the availability and limitations of this insurance. Any surgery/procedure-related complications should be managed free of cost," it said. It added that during surgery or procedures, the operating doctor can broadcast but should not interact with the audience to maintain focus on the patient's safety. "Relevant step-wise live commentary by an operating surgeon can be permitted without any two-way communication with the audience in special situations," the directive stated.

Growing up, Andal expressed her devotion to Lord Vapatastrasayi by adorning herself with the garland meant for the deity, before it was offered to Him. When Periyazhwar found out, he admonished Andal and did not offer any garland to the deity on that day. However, that very night, Perumal appeared in Periyazhwar's dream and demanded to know why He was not offered the garland. When Periyazhwar explained that it was desecrated because his daughter wore it, Vadapatrasiyi said, "It is consecration, not desecration," and sought the Andal-worn garland as a daily offering. When Andal insisted on marrying Ranganamannar, the archa murti at Srirangam asked Periyazhwar to bring her to His sanctum, wherein She attained eternal service at His lotus feet.

New microscope reveals molecular jostling faster than ever before

Conventional microscopes are invasive and have limited fields of view. Other microscopes still can't distinguish individual molecules, which are around tens of angstroms in size. A team from Caltech has now found a way to indirectly detect molecules by observing their interactions with light and tapping into Brownian motion

Unnati Ashar

More than a century ago, a 26-year-old Albert Einstein explained Brownian motion in one of four papers he published in his *annus mirabilis*, the miraculous year, called because these papers shot him to fame. Brownian motion is the random jittering of small particles in a fluid, caused because they're constantly colliding with molecules around them.

Now, scientists at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) have developed a breakthrough imaging technique that enables real-time filming of these molecular motions. Their findings were published in *Nature Communications*.

'Surreal experience'

Conventional microscopes are invasive and have limited fields of view. Other microscopes still can't distinguish individual molecules, which are around tens of angstroms in size (1 angstrom = 0.0000000001 m). To compare, one human hair is about a million angstrom thick. The Caltech team has now found a way to indirectly detect molecules by observing their interactions with light. Their technique also taps into the Brownian motion of particles.

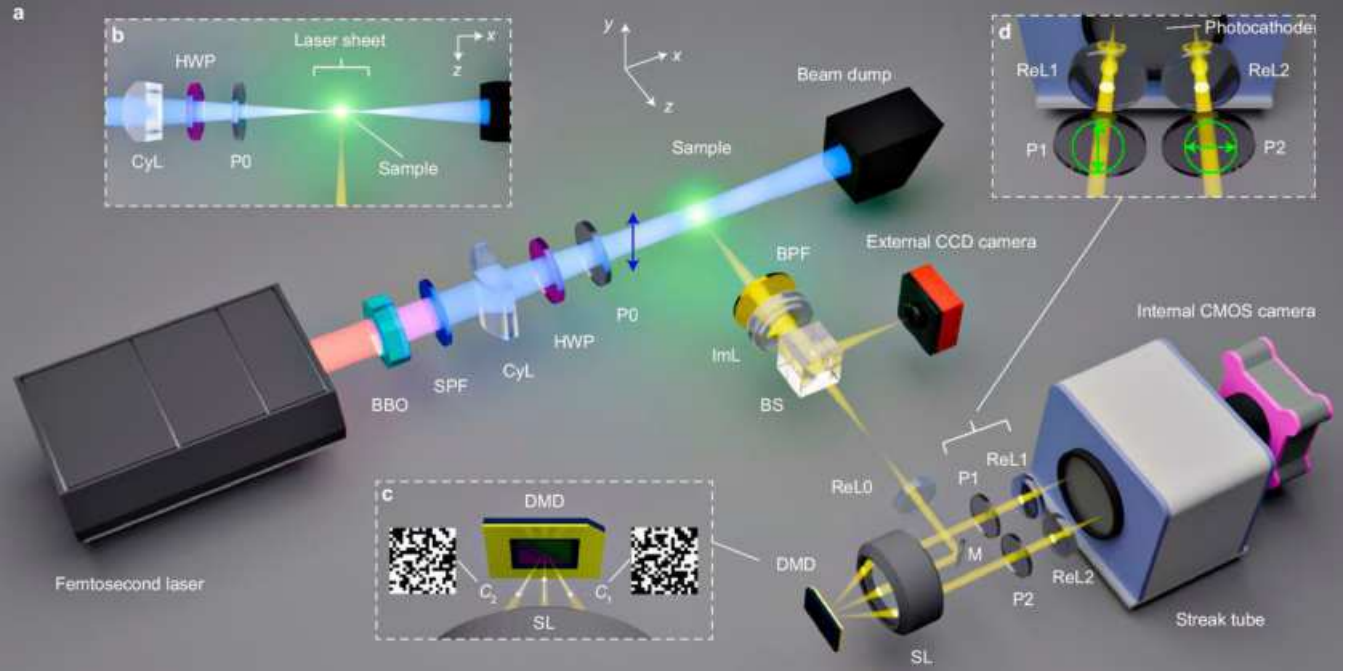
Using the device they have reported that they can see down to tens of angstroms. "It was a surreal experience to visualise molecular sizes in real-time at the angstrom scale," Yogeshwar Nath Mishra, who co-led the study when at Caltech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and who is now an assistant professor at IIT-Jodhpur, said.

"Even more remarkable was the realisation that no existing technique can achieve this level of detail."

Need for speed

The more massive a particle, the slower its Brownian motion. "[It] is like watching how much a spinning object twists after being nudged by light. Small molecules spin fast and scramble the light more. Big molecules spin slowly and keep it aligned," Lihong Wang, director of the Caltech Optical Imaging Laboratory and who supervised the study, said. So by measuring how fast a molecule changes the properties of light, they could determine its size.

The Egyptian-American chemist Ahmed Zewail from Caltech was the first to measure particle motion at super-short time scales. This work allowed his team to observe chemical reactions as they happened for the first time. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1999.



A schematic view of the imaging technique developed at Caltech that enables real-time filming of molecular motions. The three insets show the top view of the laser sheet (b), the DMD as it operates (c), and the system in front of the stream camera's photocathode (d). NAT COMMUN 16, 5019 (2025)

"While traditional techniques often rely on time-consuming point-by-point scanning, our approach captures the scene in a single shot," Wang said. "We also achieved imaging speeds of hundreds of billions of frames per second, making it possible to observe molecular interactions in unprecedented slow motion." The device is thus the world's fastest single-shot microscope.

"Finally, unlike [traditional methods] which require extensive sample preparation and often damage the specimen, our method is non-intrusive, enabling direct, *in-situ* measurements," Wang added.

"Some of the most exciting features of this microscope include its wide-field imaging capability, offering an image area of a few square centimetres, an order of magnitude larger than conventional microscopes," per Mishra. "To the best of our knowledge, our work is the first ever to achieve the feat of single-shot 2D molecular sizing."

Playing jigsaw

They tested their microscope using a molecule called fluorescein-dextran. Fluorescein is a food colouring dye. Fluorescein-dextran is used to monitor blood flow, drug delivery, and tissue and cell labelling. These fluorescent molecules come in the form of powders. The scientists blended them with water and used clean pipettes to pour drops of these samples into cuvettes (clear, short, rectangular tubes for holding liquid samples). Then they turned to ultrashort pulses from a laser. These lasers aren't unlike those used in LASIK and cataract surgeries. The laser sheet slices through

The key is the use of the streak camera to detect dynamics in nanoseconds. This is within the actual lifetimes of the molecules and wouldn't be possible with slow detectors or photodetectors

BASUDEV ROY
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT IIT MADRAS

the sample in the cuvette. As it does, the sample emits light that falls on an array of small square mirrors making up a digital micromirror device (DMD).

The DMD's job is to shape the light beam. Researchers use software code to tilt each individual mirror in this light-crafter depending on the corresponding pixel in the input image.

"Imagine you're trying to solve a jigsaw puzzle, but instead of having all the pieces, you only have a few of them – and surprisingly, you can still figure out what the full picture looks like," Wang said.

This idea underpins the team's technique, which can reconstruct the full picture from very few measurements provided the structure is repetitive.

The DMD converts the transient scene into a random jigsaw pattern from which researchers can extract information about the full picture.

The light finally passes through a streak tube that converts the photons in light to electrons.

A phosphor screen collects these electrons as they sweep across it and creates a pattern of streaks. The streak pattern reveals the pulse duration from

which scientists can infer the sizes of the molecules.

Ensemble of molecules

"It is an interesting piece of work. The key in this work is the use of the streak camera to detect dynamics in nanoseconds. This is within the actual lifetimes of the molecules and wouldn't be possible with slow detectors or photodetectors," Basudev Roy, an associate professor at IIT Madras who works on super-resolution microscopy and wasn't involved in the recent study, said.

The size of molecules measured using their technique concurred with previous estimates.

"It still sees an ensemble of molecules inside a detection region – it still doesn't see a single molecule yet. But the dynamics indicate chemical compositions and also chemical reactions," Roy said.

"Surprisingly, we found out that the technique also works in gas phases. ... Initially, we assumed it would be challenging to apply [it] in turbulent environments, such as within a flame," said study co-lead Peng Wang of Caltech.

The team observed black carbon nanoparticles in flames through the microscope. "Our data in the gas phase turned out to work excellently and the molecule size matches ... experimental observation well," Peng said.

This new imaging technique could help better visualise processes and transform biomedical research, disease detection, drug design, and nanomaterial fabrication, among others.

(Unnati Ashar is a freelance science journalist. unnati_a@gmail.com)

THE GIST

The more massive a particle, the slower its Brownian motion. Small molecules spin fast and scramble the light more. Big molecules spin slowly and keep it aligned. So by measuring how fast a molecule changes the properties of light, researchers could determine its size

The new approach captures the scene in a single shot. Researchers achieved speeds of hundreds of billions of frames per second, making it possible to observe molecular interactions in slow motion. The device is thus the world's fastest single-shot microscope

This new imaging technique could help better visualise processes and transform biomedical research, disease detection, drug design, and nanomaterial fabrication

BIG SHOT



Humboldt penguins at the Punta San Juan reserve in Peru, where a decline in the population of guano birds, sea lions, and penguins is currently alarming scientists. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

Deep-brain stimulation: nudging neurons

Vasudevan Mukunth

Deep-brain stimulation (DBS) is a medical technique where doctors implant electrodes deep inside specific areas of the brain to treat certain disorders. These electrodes are connected by wires to a small device, similar to a heart's pacemaker, which is usually placed under the skin in the upper chest. The device sends controlled, mild electrical impulses to targeted brain regions, helping adjust abnormal brain activity or chemical imbalances.

DBS is most commonly used for movement disorders, especially in people with Parkinson's disease, essential tremor, and dystonia, whose symptoms no longer respond well to medication. It has also been approved for some psychiatric conditions like obsessive-compulsive disorder, and is being studied for severe depression and epilepsy.

Technically, DBS works by modifying how groups of neurons talk to each other. Many of these disorders involve faulty electrical signals in the brain. Delivering electrical pulses through DBS can interrupt these erratic signals, helping reduce symptoms such as tremors or muscle stiffness. The amount and pattern of stimulation can be precisely adjusted by doctors or, to some extent, by patients themselves using external programmers.

One advantage of DBS is that, unlike brain surgery that destroys tissue, its



The vagus nerve can be stimulated to manage epilepsy. MANUS (CC BY-SA)

effects are reversible: if you turn off the device, the stimulation stops. While the exact ways DBS works are still not fully understood, it is believed to help normalise disrupted brain circuits at both the cellular and network levels. More than 1.6 lakh people worldwide have received DBS.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'



Not the way

Criminalising adolescent sex will undermine the aim of the POCSO Act

The key objective of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 is the protection of children, but over the past few years, courts around the country and rights activists have called for some exemptions. Noticing a trend that adolescents, above 15 years but under 18, in voluntary relationships and having consensual sex were often being persecuted, the courts sought a review. In that backdrop, senior advocate Indira Jaising’s written submission to the Supreme Court that consensual sex between teenagers aged 16-18 years must not be criminalised is a welcome move. She was appointed *amicus curiae* and her submissions are part of a petition filed by advocate Nipun Saxena. Her brief challenged the designation of 18 years as the age of consent. She said the only solution lies in declaring that sex between consenting adolescents between the age of 16, an almost universal age of sexual maturity, and 18, is not a form of ‘abuse’. Ms. Jaising called for this exception to be read into the POCSO Act and Section 63 (sexual offences), of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). “Such an exception would preserve the protective intent of the statute while preventing its misuse against adolescent relationships that are not exploitative in nature,” she said.

In a 2023 report, the Law Commission had said that it was against changing the age of consent. It advised “guided judicial discretion” instead, while sentencing in cases that involve children between 16 and 18 years in a voluntary, consensual relationship. Under the POCSO Act and under several provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the BNS, whoever commits a penetrative sexual assault on a child – who is anyone below 18 years – can face stringent punishment under Section 6 of the POCSO Act, Section 9 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, and provisions of the IPC and BNS. A 16-year-old is considered a “child” under Section 2(d) of the POCSO Act and hence her consent does not matter. But caveats have to be put in place so that the broad intent of the law is adhered to, as the Madras High Court suggested in 2021, in *Vijayalakshmi vs State Rep.* The High Court said the age difference in consensual relationships should not be more than five years to ensure that a girl of an impressionable age is not taken advantage of by an older person. Educating adolescents about the law on sexual offences and its consequences is a must too. Criminalising normal adolescent behaviour is not the way to protect against non-consensual, exploitative sexual offences.

State for the stateless

The West must follow France in recognising Palestinian statehood

France’s decision to recognise Palestinian statehood, in September, reflects President Emmanuel Macron’s deep frustration with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the ongoing war on Gaza, as well as his willingness to adopt a more pro-active and constructive approach towards finding a durable solution. Of the 193 members of the UN, 147, including India, China and Russia, have already recognised the Palestinian state. But powerful western nations, with close ties to Israel, have always stopped short of granting official recognition even if professing support for a two-state solution. But this position began to shift after the Gaza war in October 2023, with more European countries taking formal steps towards its recognition. Last year, Spain, Ireland, Norway and Slovenia recognised Palestine’s independence. If Mr. Macron follows through, France will be the first G-7 member nation to do so. Such a move may not have an immediate, direct impact on the peace process. That more western European countries are now ready to take irreversible measures in favour of Palestinian statehood, ignoring strong opposition from Tel Aviv and Washington, marks a clear change in sentiment towards one of the modern world’s most contentious conflicts.

Mr. Macron’s announcement comes at a critical juncture for the Palestinians. The war has devastated the enclave with confirmed deaths reaching 60,000 in 21 months – roughly 2.5% of its total population. In the West Bank, settler violence has displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians. Israeli Ministers have openly threatened to ethnically cleanse Gaza and annex the West Bank. Images of starving and malnourished children, which came out of Gaza last week, have jolted global conscience. Even Israel’s closest allies, including Britain, Canada and France, issued a rare joint statement, urging Mr. Netanyahu to “immediately end the humanitarian catastrophe”. Under mounting pressure, Israel has announced ‘tactical pauses’ in its attacks. But this is far from sufficient. What Gaza urgently needs is a complete end to the bombings and shelling, and the full opening of its borders to humanitarian aid. Given that pressure is the only language Israel appears to understand, and with the Donald Trump presidency showing no willingness to apply it, Europe must do more. Efforts to end the war, which in terms of mass killings, devastation and displacement is comparable to the 1948-49 Nakba, must be accompanied by initiatives to ensure that such a catastrophe is never repeated. There should be concrete measures from the international community to pursue a durable political solution, which is the two-state solution. The first step in that direction is the recognition of Palestinian independence and statehood. France has promised to join, though belatedly, most member-countries of the UN in the statehood push. Other nations in the West must follow.

It is fundamental that unless a person is a citizen of India he cannot be an elector. Consequently, he cannot become a legislator also. Therefore, it is very surprising that some seasoned politicians have raised objections to the Election Commission of India (ECI)’s Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar (where Assembly elections are expected shortly) that citizenship should not be verified. It only demonstrates that they have absolutely no knowledge of the Constitution and the working of the system. Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the “superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of Electoral roll and the conduct of all elections ... shall vest” in the Election Commission. The preparation of electoral rolls is a continuous process, and is revised from time to time irrespective of there being elections or no elections (*Lakshmi Charan Sen and Ors Etc vs A.K.M. Hassan Uzzaman and Ors. Etc., AIR 1985 SC 1233*).

Clarity on being a citizen

Article 326 of the Constitution of India provides that “the Elections to the House of People and the Legislature of every State shall be on the basis of adult suffrage, that is to say, every person who is a citizen of India and who is not less than 18 years of age in such State, as may be fixed in that behalf, by or under any law made by the appropriate legislature and is not otherwise disqualified under this Constitution or any Law made by the appropriate Legislature” on certain grounds. Therefore, it is clear that unless a person is a citizen of India, he is not entitled to be registered as a voter in any election.

Pursuant to the enabling provisions, Parliament enacted The Representation of The People Act, 1950, which deals with the preparation of electoral rolls and delimitation. The Preamble to the 1950 Act reads as follows: “An Act to provide the allocation of seats in, and the delimitation of constituencies for the purpose of election to, the House of the People and the Legislatures of States, the qualifications of voters at such elections, the preparation of electoral rolls, the manner of filling seats in the Council of States to be filled by representatives of Union territories, and matters connected therewith.”

Part-IIA of the 1950 Act deals with the Officers of the Commission which includes Electoral Registration Officers and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers. Part-IIB deals with Electoral Rolls for Parliamentary Constituencies and Part-III deals with Electoral Rolls for Assembly constituencies.

Section 15 of the 1950 Act deals with preparation of Electoral Rolls for every Constituency under the superintendence,



G. Rajagopalan

is a senior advocate and, formerly, Additional Solicitor General

The political objections being raised on the issue of citizenship reveal a lack of knowledge of the Constitution, legislation and the working of the electoral system

direction and control of the Election Commission. Section 16 of the 1950 Act deals with disqualifications for registration in an Electoral Roll, and in specific, Section 16(1)(a) provides that if a person is not a Citizen of India, he shall be disqualified for being registered as a voter. Further, Section 16(2) provides that the name of the person who is so disqualified, even if registered, shall be struck off from the electoral rolls. Besides this, Section 20 of the 1950 Act also provides who is “ordinarily resident” in a constituency. Section 21 deals with preparation and revision of electoral rolls, while Section 22 deals with correction of entries in electoral rolls. Section 23 deals with the inclusion of names in electoral rolls, and Section 24 provides that if anybody is aggrieved by an order of inclusion or exclusion, they can prefer an appeal to the authority referred to in the Section.

The only period during which no amendment, transposition or deletion is permitted, is referred to under Section 23(3) of the 1950 Act, which provides that no amendment, transposition, deletion or inclusion, shall be made after the last date for making the nominations for an election in that constituency.

Therefore, it is fundamental that unless a person is a citizen of India, their name cannot be included in the electoral roll. And if it is erroneously included, it can be deleted under the provisions, as stated above.

Under the duties of the Election Commission

In fact, it is the duty of the ECI to verify whether the name of any non-citizen has been included in an electoral roll, if a complaint or doubt in this regard has been raised. In fact, to put it otherwise, the ECI or its officers, have no jurisdiction to include a non-citizen’s name in the electoral roll; if it is so, it is null and void. Therefore, if an application is made for inclusion or a complaint is received that a non-citizen’s name is included in the electoral roll, it is the duty of the ECI to conduct an inquiry as necessary to ensure that non-citizens’ names are rejected and deleted from the list. If the ECI fails to do so, it would be failing in its constitutional duty and the purpose for which the power has been granted under Articles 324 and 326 would be defeated.

In the same line, if you probe further, to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly or a Member of Parliament, one has to be a voter in a constituency; if he is not a citizen of India, he cannot be a member of Parliament or a State Legislature. In fact, Article 102 of the Constitution provides for disqualification of membership of either House of Parliament, while Article 191 provides the same for a State Legislature. It is very clear under Article 102(1)(d) that a person

Understanding Russia’s Taliban gauntlet



Harsh V. Pant

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Questions still remain about the rationale behind Moscow’s choice to legitimise the Taliban regime

in Afghanistan reached an impasse and the U.S. began to consider withdrawal, Moscow established unofficial contacts with the Taliban through its closer engagement with Pakistan in the early 2010s. This enabled Russia to protect its security interests in Afghanistan (with a focus on ensuring the safety of Russian citizens), collaborating against the Islamic State Khorasan Province (IS-K) and combating drug trafficking.

Additionally, in a balance act between the Afghan government and the Taliban, Russia stepped up its diplomatic efforts to position itself as a venue for resolving the Afghan crisis. Despite being blacklisted by the UN and outlawed in Russia, the Taliban representatives were invited to participate in the Moscow Format and intra-Afghan conferences, as Russia attempted to increase its own regional influence and edge the U.S. out from Afghanistan.

With the Taliban’s takeover of Kabul in August 2021, even as many other countries evacuated diplomatic personnel amid the lingering turmoil, the Russian Embassy in Kabul remained in operation – Moscow remained confident that the Taliban are capable of putting things in good order. Despite Russia’s good rapport with the Taliban’s dispensation, the persistent instability in Afghanistan has severely compromised its security interests, with terrorist attacks against the Russian Embassy in Kabul in September 2022 and the Crocus City Hall in Moscow in March 2024, purportedly carried out by the IS-K. There has been no meaningful progress in the economic projects either, though the Russian authorities continue to harbour hopes that Afghanistan will emerge as a conduit for Russian exports to South and Southeast Asia.

The basis

Russia’s official recognition of the IEA government reflects Moscow’s conviction that the Taliban are “an objective reality” and the only political force capable of controlling power in Afghanistan. This is further reinforced by the perception of the Taliban as Russia’s “allies in

“shall be disqualified for being chosen as and for being a member of either House of Parliament, if he is not a citizen of India, or has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign State or if he is under acknowledgment of allegiance or adherence to a foreign State”. Article 191, which applies to the State Legislature, also provides the same. If someone contends that a non-citizen would be a voter, they are also contending that a non-citizen can be a member of Legislature, which is nothing but absurd.

Therefore, if questioned, one has to prove to the satisfaction of the authority, that he is a citizen of India, and that he satisfies the provisions of The Citizenship Act, 1955. Though Section 7A of the 1955 Act provides for the registration of overseas citizens in India, Section 7B(2) of the said Act clearly provides that an Overseas citizen of India Cardholder shall not be entitled to the rights conferred on the citizens of India with regard to the registration of a voter.

Therefore, the constitutional and statutory scheme clearly provides that unless a person is a citizen of India, his name cannot be included in the electoral roll. And even if he is included, the authority of the ECI can order deletion of their name under Section 16(2) of the 1950 Act.

It is relevant to note the decision of the Supreme Court of India (reported in *Dr. Yogesh Bhardwaj vs State Of U.P. And Ors, 1990 3 SCC 355*), which dealt with admission in a medical college. In the said judgment, it has been observed in paragraph 20 that it is only lawful residence that can be taken into account, and if a man stays in a country in breach of immigration laws, his presence there does not constitute ordinary residence.

The Aadhaar card and citizenship

One more issue which has to be dealt with is whether any person who has an Aadhaar card can be a citizen of India. A reading of the provisions of The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, in particular, Section 9, clearly provides that the “Aadhaar Number or the Authentication thereof, shall not, by itself, confer any right of, or be proof of, citizenship or domicile in respect of the Aadhaar number holder”. Section 3 of the Act, which deals with enrolment, only provides that “every resident shall be entitled to obtain an Aadhaar number by submitting his demographic and biometric information by undergoing the process of enrolment”. Therefore, mere possession of an Aadhaar card is not proof of citizenship, and despite the constitutional requirements, if the names of foreigners are retained in the electoral roll, the rolls to that extent would be void *ab initio*.

countering terrorism”, which seemingly laid the foundation for their de-listing in April 2025. It should be noted though that the Russian Supreme Court only suspended the ban on the Taliban activities, and the grouping is still on the Russian unified federal list of terrorist organisations. This suggests that the Russian security apparatus is not fully convinced by the Taliban’s track record in combating terrorism, leaving scope to reverse the decision if the alliance with the Taliban proves to be a false dawn.

The IEA’s recognition is a symbolic gesture that does not bring Russia any immediate benefits and does not guarantee any upgrade to Moscow’s position in Afghanistan or the wider region. While some Russian officials are insisting on supporting the Taliban, including “arming them”, it remains to be seen how far Moscow is willing to go and whether the joint fight against the IS-K will yield tangible results.

As Russia has set a precedent by recognising the IEA, some Central Asian states and even China may well follow suit, especially given that the Taliban’s expectations of their partners will certainly increase. Moscow’s free pass to the Taliban regarding the inclusivity of their government, as well as women’s and minority rights, may become a new template for other regional players who will prioritise pragmatism over value-based approach.

Ties with India

India will unlikely be seriously affected by the Russian move. New Delhi has fostered its own incremental improvement in diplomatic ties with the Taliban, having recently found common ground with them on the issue of terrorism in Kashmir. It is likely that New Delhi will keep up diplomatic communications, trade and humanitarian cooperation with the IEA, without deviating from its stance on the legitimacy issue. Engagement without formal recognition still seems to be the likely trajectory of India’s Afghanistan policy.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The world and Gaza

It is unfortunate that the world does not seem to be moved by the fact that people of Gaza are facing acute starvation as a result of a genocidal war. Words such as ‘humanity’, ‘conscience’, ‘empathy’ and ‘altruism’ ring hollow in the context of collective global inaction. Aid airdrops without lifting the ground

blockade of aid deliveries are only an eyewash and do not reverse the deepening crisis. The lack of disquiet is a reflection of the times we live in.

G. David Milton,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

Donald Trump’s record

Donald Trump’s yearning for the Nobel Peace Prize is no secret. Yet, his record

speaks more of ambition than achievement. In Ukraine, he hints at ending the war “in 24 hours”, but neither Kyiv nor Moscow trusts his intentions. In Gaza, his stance is even less persuasive – offering little beyond hollow statements, while giving Israel a carte blanche. His ‘credit’ for an India-Pakistan détente lacks

conviction, repeated more out of habit than belief. Frustrated, Mr. Trump turns to Africa and Southeast Asia to tout his role in conflict de-escalation, but even these claims lack depth. And no less is his singular pursuit to be reckoned as a pioneer in dismantling the global economic order.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

Sharp contrast

The narrative in the article, “On a tight leash in Mumbai” (Magazine – ‘Openpage’, July 27), evoked no surprise, as the stray dog menace exists across India. Last year I had been to Tennessee, in the U.S. to visit my son. There are no street dogs there but only pet dogs. When they are taken out for a walk there is

a proper leash. The owner has to pick up waste with a scoop, which is then transferred to a cover and placed in a waste bin that is marked for such waste. A lot is to be learnt from foreign countries.

D. Sethuraman,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Decoding the Jan Suraaj Party hype

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Mobile towers to be installed in certain areas of Chhattisgarh

4,000 State-run BSNL is working on a plan to install 4,000 new mobile towers in Naxalite-affected areas of Chhattisgarh, the Minister of State for Telecom and Rural Development Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar said on Sunday. PTI

Number of polio cases in Pakistan this year despite global efforts

17 Three more cases of polio were detected in Pakistan, raising the countrywide tally to 17. Pakistan is one of the last two countries in the world, alongside Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic. Despite efforts to eradicate the virus, challenges such as security issues have slowed progress. PTI

Losses suffered by Himachal Pradesh since monsoon started

1,500 In ₹ crore. Since the onset of monsoon in the State on June 20 till date, Himachal Pradesh has suffered losses of over ₹1,500 crore, officials said on Sunday. So far, 88 people have died and 35 have gone missing in rain-related incidents. PTI

Number of persons evacuated in Turkey due to wildfires

3,604 A wildfire broke out in a forested area between the Gursu and Kestel districts of Bursa, home to much of Turkey's auto industry. Some 1,765 people in Bursa's Kestel district were evacuated, Agriculture and Forestry Minister Yumaklı said. PTI

Number of employees to be laid off by TCS this year

12,261 India's largest IT services firm, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), is set to lay off about 2% of its global workforce this year, with the majority of those impacted belonging to middle and senior grades. PTI

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How is India preparing against GLOF events?

How many Glacial Lake Outburst Flood events has Nepal witnessed in recent times? What are the two most prominent types of glacial lakes found in the Indian Himalayan Region? How is the National Disaster Management Authority mitigating risks associated with GLOF events?

EXPLAINER

Safi Ahsan Rizvi

The story so far:

In July 8, Nepal experienced a catastrophic Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF) event which caused a flash flood along the Lende river, flowing from Tibet to Nepal, and washed away a China-built friendship bridge. The bridge had serviced the 10-year old inland container port at Rasuwagadhi in Rasuwa (north of Kathmandu). The catastrophe is also reported to have made four Nepalese hydro-power plants along the Bhote Koshi river unusable, obliterating 8% of the country's power supply. With rising temperatures and subsequent glacial melt, the increased risk of GLOFs is threatening life and property in the higher Himalayas.

Do trans-boundary watersheds diminish possibilities of early warning?

While Chinese authorities have as yet refrained from confirming the cause, most Nepalese scientists and officials confirmed a GLOF event in Tibet, where a supra-glacial lake had burst, diminishing its surface area to 43 hectares from 63 hectares a day before. Nepalese officials were quoted lamenting in local media that neither did the Chinese authorities provide an early warning, nor was there an established system of doing so, despite a recent increase in supra-glacial lakes on the Tibetan side.

Hours later, on the same day, another GLOF event occurred at a moraine-dammed lake in the northern part of the Mustang district in Nepal (north-west of Kathmandu). Two months before, two glacial lakes in the Humla district (far-north corner of Nepal) had witnessed significant GLOF events, while in 2024, a GLOF in the Solukhumbu district had destroyed the Thame village in Nepal, the base camp for Mount Everest climbers. The need for trans-boundary collaborations in setting up early warning protocols seems paramount, given that Nepal has lost many lives and much infrastructure in successive GLOF events.

Similar events have impacted Nepal regularly, including the GLOF in Cirenma Co, a glacial lake, in Tibet in 1981, which released 20 mcm of water raising the Bhote Koshi river by 30 metres. Several decades later the same lake was reported to have rejuvenated and was rated high-risk. Other significant events include the Digi Tsho GLOF event in 1985, and the Tama Pokhari GLOF event in 1998. In response, Nepal has conducted risk mitigation works on the Imja Tsho and Tsho Rolpa lakes by drawing down water levels through artificial channels, a challenging task at heights above 5,000 m, and has further plans to target half a dozen more at-risk glacial lakes.

What is the nature of GLOF risk for India?

As per India's National Remote Sensing Centre, the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) is home to 11 river basins and 28,000 glacial lakes. There are two prominent types of glacial lakes found in the IHR. The first are supraglacial lakes, formed in depressions on glaciers from meltwater, highly prone to melting in the summer months. The second are moraine-dammed lakes, formed by meltwater at the toe/snout of a glacier, dammed by loose debris or ice-cores, making them prone to sudden failure.



Definite risk: The south-end of the Shako Cho lake (5,200 m) in north Sikkim. The south-end shows the weak debris that forms its moraine-dam. NDMA

Almost two-thirds of GLOF events are triggered by ice avalanches or landslides, and the remaining due to excessive meltwater pressure on weak moraine dams and earthquakes.

With 2023 and 2024 being the hottest years on Earth, extreme temperatures in smaller geographies have been higher, thereby causing more glacial melt in certain pockets, making some glacial lakes highly risky.

In addition to rising heat, is the problem of scale. 7,500 glacial lakes are situated in India, with most above 4,500 metres in height, hence approachable for surveys only during a short window in the summer season. There are almost no weather and water monitoring stations in these regions due to inaccessibility, lack of sustainability and cost, leaving this growing risk largely unmapped.

The only credible means is measuring growth in surface area via remote sensing over periods of time, a measure which is post-facto and provides little by way of risk assessment or early warning of any sort.

Additionally, vulnerability of the immediate geography is critical to determining the exact nature of risk. This includes damage to homesteads, livelihoods, biodiversity, bridges and hydro-power projects along rivers that relay GLOFs downstream. The South Lhonak GLOF in 2023 in Sikkim wiped out the \$2 billion and 1250 MW generating Chungthang dam and also intensified the flash flood causing massive silting downstream. Since then, the Central Water Commission has found that the Teesta riverbed has risen several metres, significantly reducing its carrying capacity and increasing the chances of its banks overflowing.

Besides the Sikkim GLOF, one of the most damaging events in recent times was the Chorabari GLOF in 2013, which turned into a cascading disaster accompanied by cloudbursts and landslides, known as the Kedarnath catastrophe – causing hundreds of

casualties and billions in infrastructure damage.

How can India reduce GLOF risk?

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has markedly accelerated its efforts to manage these increasing risks. With respect to mitigation, it has initiated a proactive shift from mere post-disaster response to risk reduction through its Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction (CoDRR). This national coordination effort brought together related central scientific agencies, academic and research institutions, and States/UTs to study, monitor, warn, and mitigate GLOF risk in India. As a result, the central government finalised its first national programme of \$20 million, prioritising 56 at-risk glacial lakes. The list has now been expanded to 195, categorised into four risk levels. Following the expected award of the 16th Finance Commission for the period FY2027 to FY2031, there are plans to scale up this programme, significantly.

Objectives of this programme are five-fold – hazard assessment of each at-risk lake; installing Automated Weather and Water Stations (AWWS); establishing Early Warning Systems (EWS) downstream; mitigating risk by drawing down water levels or building flow through retention structures; and community engagement, an essential element of risk reduction. Under the programme, States where glacial lakes are resident were encouraged to take the lead in sending scientific expeditions to 40 of the highest at-risk lakes in the summer of 2024.

One of the critical parameters in the exercise was to encourage Indian technology, systems and scientific expertise, one of which is the science of SAR interferometry – the art of analysing micro-changes in slope stability (upto a centimetre) using remote sensing satellite imagery as high as 10-metre resolution. The near-absence of usage of this scientific method to predict GLOFs and

landslides is an identified gap that needs to be plugged through this programme. Another significant gap is the absence of well-resourced Indian foundations and innovative technology providers in the business of risk reduction in the Himalayan cryosphere.

What is status of mitigation efforts?

Several multi-institutional expeditions returned with success stories, across J&K, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh with a couple of light-hearted tales for their archives. One such expedition lost its way in bad weather, and another had to leave behind an expedition member in the village as security so that the rest of the expedition did not pollute the sacred lake by entering its holy waters. These episodes were evidence of the critical need for community engagement, to integrate the local community in expeditions and the need to convince residents of the credibility and sincerity of the exercise.

The successful expeditions conducted bathymetry to assess the volume of water in the lakes; used Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) to understand the existence of ice-cores under moraine-dams, a key reason for dam breaks; and performed UAV and slope surveys of surrounding land/ice forms. Monitoring stations were installed at two lakes in Sikkim, which relay weather and water data every 10 minutes, with a daily dose of pictures of both ends of the lake and its shoreline. In subsequent summers, States will be installing more such systems, thereby overcoming an oft-repeated data-gap in the IHR cryosphere. In the absence of automated early warning mechanisms, Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) deployments in high reaches have been oriented towards the role of manual early warning. After the monsoon this year, States/UTs are gearing up for another round of expeditions.

Safi Ahsan Rizvi is an IPS officer and adviser to the NDMA.

THE GIST

As per India's National Remote Sensing Centre, the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) is home to 11 river basins and 28,000 glacial lakes.

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One of the critical parameters in the exercise was to encourage Indian technology, systems and scientific expertise, one of which is the science of SAR interferometry.

CACHE



REUTERS

Was there a security breach at the crypto exchange CoinDCX?

CoinDCX is a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) registered Indian cryptocurrency exchange founded in 2018. On July 19, CoinDCX reported financial exposure of about \$44 million but stressed that the incident was contained by isolating the affected account

Sahana Venugopal

The story so far:
On July 19, the crypto exchange CoinDCX updated users that one of its internal accounts had been “compromised.” The company’s executives reassured panicked investors and traders that their assets were safe and that access to their crypto would not be cut off. Despite assurances, many CoinDCX customers moved to withdraw their assets, perceiving the event could turn into something like the WazirX hack last year.

What happened to CoinDCX?
CoinDCX is a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) registered Indian cryptocurrency exchange founded in 2018 by Neeraj Khandelwal and Sumit Gupta, now counting over 1.6 crore registered users. On July 19, the exchange shared that one of its “internal operational accounts, used solely for liquidity provisioning on a partner exchange, was compromised due to a sophisticated server breach.” Mr. Khandelwal clarified this involved unauthorised access to an operational hot (virtually connected) wallet on a partner exchange.
CoinDCX reported financial exposure of about \$44 million but stressed that the incident was contained by isolating the affected account, which was segregated from the company’s customer wallets. The exchange further added that the exposure was limited to that amount alone and that it would be fully absorbed by CoinDCX through its own reserves.
“The incident has been formally reported to CERT-In, and we are actively working with leading blockchain forensics firms and ecosystem partners to trace the attacker and recover assets,” said CoinDCX in its Incident Report, and provided information about the

cross-chain movement of the stolen assets.
The company also announced a recovery bounty programme.
How were CoinDCX users impacted by the hack?
CoinDCX repeatedly stressed that customers’ funds were secure and unaffected by the hack, as they were placed in segregated, cold wallets that are challenging for attackers to breach. The company also stated that trading, rupee deposits, and rupee withdrawals remained fully functional throughout the period. However, some customers complained that their withdrawal requests took time to be processed, sparking fears that their funds had been frozen. CoinDCX’s founding partner Mridul Gupta said that “operational challenges caused by high withdrawal volumes during non-banking hours” had led to some delays but denied allegations of a freeze. The company later confirmed that all withdrawal requests had been successfully processed.
While crypto withdrawals are not possible for everyone using CoinDCX, this is a pre-existing situation that is part of the company’s risk policy and was not caused by the hack itself.
Furthermore, the exchange faced accusations of a 17-hour-long delay when it came to updating customers about the hack. CoinDCX defended its actions and said it needed to have all the information before issuing a statement to customers but said investigating agencies were immediately informed and onboarded.
“Our first priority is always to act, not just to speak. Before making a public statement, we had to ensure the threat was fully contained, our platform was secure, and all customer funds were safe. Communicating with incomplete or unverified information would have been

irresponsible and could have caused unnecessary panic,” said co-founder Sumit Gupta.
Other CoinDCX users raised complaints about temporary price drops for certain assets, as well as some tokens being under maintenance, which the company also addressed.
How are the CoinDCX and WazirX hacks different?
Just a little over a year ago, on July 18, 2024, WazirX was targeted by North Korean cyber-thieves. That day, a multi-signature wallet that the WazirX exchange was managing with the company Liminal was exploited, leading to the loss of assets worth over \$230 million. This was far greater than the losses reported by CoinDCX; WazirX customers’ assets were directly affected by this breach.
After much delay and confusion, WazirX blocked users’ access to their crypto for an indefinite period of time and acknowledged significant losses. By contrast, CoinDCX has stressed that it is business as usual for the exchange, noting on X that its annual revenue exceeds ₹1,100 crore.
WazirX customers demanded that the company use its own profits or funds to cover losses, but the company said this was not possible, citing an ownership dispute with the international crypto exchange Binance. WazirX further decided to carry out its legal restructuring exercise in Singapore. WazirX users have not been able to access their locked up crypto for over a year and are set to vote for a second time on the amended Scheme of Arrangement. This comes after the first proposed restructuring plan was rejected by the Singapore High Court.
Both WazirX and CoinDCX were criticised for delays in informing their customers about their respective hacks.

What is the lesson for crypto investors in India?
Investors in India should remember that crypto trading is a largely unregulated activity in the country; even users of centralised, FIU-registered exchanges can expect little to no support from the Indian authorities in case of a crisis such as a security breach.
Satnam Narang, Senior Staff Research Engineer at Tenable, explained that if users want full control of their coins, they should consider self-custody options like an offline, hardware cold wallet they directly control. Even here, due diligence is required in order to buy only trusted hardware wallets from legitimate sellers, according to him.
“As more and more exchanges have been set up across the world, we have seen reports of attacks targeting smart contract flaws or other ways to steal funds from these exchanges including but not limited to social engineering, theft of credentials or private keys or targeting a third-party company that works with the targeted organisation,” said Mr. Narang, noting that the CoinDCX hack was one of the largest cryptocurrency breaches since the attack against WazirX last year.
He highlighted that when crypto prices go up, there is also a rise in attacks against both exchanges and customers. Mr. Narang said that traders storing coins on crypto exchanges should use multi-factor authentication and strong passwords, or store their coins securely offline, if possible.
“There is an old adage in the cryptocurrency space that says: ‘not your keys, not your crypto/coins’”. As long as users store their cryptocurrency on an exchange, those coins don’t necessarily belong to them because the exchange could ban their account or an exchange hack could lead to the loss of coins,” explained Mr. Narang.

THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz on the 112th edition of the Tour De France cycle race that concluded on Sunday

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
By winning on Sunday, Slovenia’s Tadej Pogacar has joined five other riders with four or more titles. Who was the last rider to win four titles?
QUESTION 2
This year’s stage winners came from nine different nationalities. Riders from which non-European country claimed Stage wins prior to the last Stage on July 27?
QUESTION 3
What unfortunate distinction is common to Stage winners Philipsen (Stage 1), Mathieu van der

Poel (Stage 2), and Remco Evenepoel (Stage 5)?
QUESTION 4
Apart from getting the yellow jersey, which other jersey did Pogacar win for topping the mountains classification?
QUESTION 5
In a rare change after the start of the event, Stage 19 was cut from 130km to 95km, with two planned categorised climbs dropped, because of what specific reason?
QUESTION 6
What was common to Stages 4, 7, 12, and 13 before the ceremonial finish with Stage 21 on Sunday?



Visual question:
Name this champion who consigned Pogacar to the runner-up spots in 2022 and 2023. AP

Questions and Answers to the July 25 edition of the daily quiz:
1. On July 25, 2007, this woman was sworn-in to the top post in the country. **Ans: Pratibha Patil**
2. The reason why World Embryologist Day is celebrated every year on July 25. **Ans: To mark the birth of the world’s first test tube baby**
3. This woman astronaut became the first woman to perform this activity in space. **Ans: Svetlana Yevgenyevna Savitskaya and space walk**
4. Air France flight 4590 crashed in 2000 here. **Ans: Paris**
5. The painting which is not one of Thomas Eakins’. **Ans: Blue Dancers**
Visual: Identify this iconic movie and its director. **Ans: Sleepless in Seattle; Nora Ephron**
Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan| Piyali Tulji| Tamal Biswas| Tito Shiladitya| G. Pavithra



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

I flirted with the idea of moving away

He hurled the bag at his friend for not doing chores around the house while he was away

S. Upendran

Is it okay to say ‘flirt with an idea’? (J. Preethi, Kanpur)
When you flirt with another person, you are making it clear that you are attracted to the individual – at least, temporarily. In other words, you are not being very serious about the matter.
It is also possible to flirt with an idea. When you do this, you are merely toying with an idea. For example, you could flirt with the idea of buying an expensive car. When you do this, you consider buying one, but do not really put your heart and soul into it. You do not surf the Net about the types of cars available, the price, etc. You are not very serious about it; so much so, the very idea of buying a new car disappears after a short time.
When my uncle was young, he flirted with the idea of starting a school.
My daughter flirted with the idea of moving to Bengaluru. After driving in the city, she decided against it.

Which is correct? Sense of belonging or sense of belongingness? (A. Ishaq)
Both expressions are acceptable, and both have, more or less, the same meaning. Native speakers of English, however, employ ‘sense of belonging’ much more frequently than ‘sense of belongingness’. When we settle in a new place – perhaps, within our own country or somewhere abroad – what is it that we all wish for? We would like the members of the community to welcome us and accept us with open arms. This feeling of inclusion that we have, makes us feel that we are part of the community. The relationships we build over time make us happy, and give us a sense of belonging.
Playing cricket with my friends, gives me a strong sense of belongingness.

What is the difference between ‘throw’ and ‘hurl’? (S. Mayank)
In both cases, you have something in your hand, swing your arm back, and release the object into the air. The difference between ‘throw’ and ‘hurl’ (rhymes with ‘curl’ and ‘pearl’) is the manner in which you release the object. ‘Throw’, which is the general term, can be used to suggest that the object is being released gently or with force. For example, when we throw a ball to a child, we do so gently, for we do not want the child to get hurt. When we are playing cricket, and the batsman sets off for a quick single, we throw the ball with some heat on it – in other words, we throw it with tremendous force. The act of throwing doesn’t always imply emotion. This is not the case with ‘hurl’; you usually hurl something at someone because you are angry with the individual; and because you are angry, you throw whatever it is in your hand with a great deal of force. The intent in this case is to hurt the individual.
upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Logy:
stunned or confused and slow to react (as from blows or drunkenness or exhaustion)
Synonyms: dazed, foggy, groggy, stuporous
Usage: After only a few hours of sleep, she woke up logy.
Pronunciation: newsth.live/logypro
International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈloʊɡi/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject ‘Text & Context’

Mangaluru airport awaits PoC status



Booster dose: The PoC status can help unlock coastal Karnataka's full potential in many sectors. FILE PHOTO

AJ Vinayak

Stakeholders in coastal Karnataka want the State government to grant a point-of-call (PoC) status to Mangaluru International Airport – enabling foreign airlines to fly to and from the city – for improved connectivity to the rest of the world. They point out that the PoC status would help unlock the region's full potential in several sectors, including technology, tourism, education and healthcare to name a few.

Rajesh Acharya, a native of Udupi district who currently works in Singapore, rues that Mangaluru airport has been operating below its full potential. He wants the government to push Indian carriers to launch new routes and offer support for two years to assess the viability of these routes. Alternatively, he suggests granting a PoC to authorise foreign airlines to service destinations that Indian low-cost carriers avoid due to commercial reasons.

Mangaluru's connectivity to Southeast Asian destinations, particularly Singapore's Changi airport, needs to be developed urgently, he says. Airlines like Air Asia and Scoot may be convinced to explore the route, he adds, especially given that they have onward connectivity to several destinations in South Asia, the Far East and Australia, and can benefit from the addition of fliers to and from Mangaluru airport.

Long-pending demand

Trade and investments worth \$2 billion are long pending between Singapore and coastal Karnataka due to the lack of direct connectivity, Mr. Acharya says. Capt Brijesh Chowta, Member of Parliament representing Dakshina Kannada district, says that Mangaluru airport, despite its modern infrastructure and rising passenger and cargo traffic, remains underdeveloped due to the paucity of direct international air connectivity.

A PoC status for Mangaluru will open up new routes and offer significant economic benefits, given the region's strategic proximity to international markets. Flights from Southeast and South Asia can use Mangaluru as a transit point for efficient connectivity to West Asia, creating a seamless travel network, he adds.

As a regional hub for international travel and trade, the airport will also boost tourism and industrial growth in Karnataka.

This, in turn, would bring in foreign exchange, facilitate job creation, promote skill development and infrastructure development, and strengthen India's position in global aviation networks, he says. Chowta recently approached the Union Civil Aviation Ministry, seeking a PoC status for Mangaluru.

Karnataka Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader, too, has approached the Civil Aviation Ministry with a similar request, while pointing out that Mangaluru holds strategic importance due to its geographic proximity and strong connectivity with countries in West Asia and the Far East.

Despite its size and economic significance, Karnataka has only one international airport, in Bengaluru, with PoC status.

Given this lacuna, Mangaluru should be designated as the second PoC in Karnataka, Mr. Khader says.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

Spicing up the spices market

ZOFF, a young D2C brand set up by two brothers Akash and Ashish Agrawalla from the steel hub of Raipur, is spicing up the category with innovative products and packaging; , the brothers have discovered the sweet spot in the spice segment, that is in 'khada masala' or whole spices

NEWS ANALYSIS

Chitra Narayanan

If there is one thing in the kitchen that Indians are very particular about, it's the spices they use. And the choice of spice brand is most often dictated by regional preferences, with each state having its own entrenched local leader.

There are only a handful of national brands and it has taken decades for an Everest or MDH or Catch to become a national brand.

The around ₹87,000 crore spices market has over 1,460 registered spice companies (Traxcn data) and thousands of unorganised players. Most consumers are fiercely loyal to the spice brand they use. The category has seen aggressive activity with 54 acquisitions, 17 IPOs and attracted venture capital and private equity funding of over \$6.4 billion.

And yet here comes a young D2C player from the steel belt of Raipur, set up by two brothers Akash and Ashish Agrawalla, with a burning ambition of becoming a big national spice brand "In five years time, our goal is that at least one of our products should be in every Indian kitchen," declares Akash Agrawalla, co-founder ZOFF. The name ZOFF is an acronym for Zone of Fresh Foods.

Already, the two brothers have discovered the sweet spot in the spice seg-



Best bet: The brothers' entry into the spices segment was a well-calculated one. BY ARRANGEMENT

ment. That is in 'khada masala' or whole spices. Most brands, they say, play in the powders and blended spices space, where the margins are higher.

"We saw the big gap in the market in whole spices. We don't want to compete with Everest or MDH in their niche, instead we want to be identified as the best brand for whole spices," declares Mr. Akash.

To strengthen that positioning, ZOFF has launched a series of rib-tickling campaigns starring Shilpa Shetty that ends with the tag line "Khadey masala matlab ZOFF".

Aroma of opportunity

Ashish says that once ZOFF gets its foot in the door of



We don't want to compete with Everest or MDH in their niche, instead we want to be identified as the best brand for whole spices

AKASH AGRAWALLA,
co-founder ZOFF

an Indian home through whole spices, the bet is the customer will then try out their other products.

And with that eventuality in mind, ZOFF has spread itself wide through the category. Spices are of four types - powders (turmeric, coriander, cumin, chilli being the most essential), blended spices (ga-

ram masala, pav bhaji masala, sabzi masala, et al), whole spices and seasonings (oregano, parsley, etc), explains Mr. Akash. "We are in all four."

Within blends, the brothers say, there is no limit, and this is where regional brands score - you might choose a northern brand for rajma masala, a southern one for sambar masala, and there are region specific ones like vang-i bhaat masala, rasam powder, and so on.

A tour through ZOFF's sprawling factory shows the use of modern technology such as cool grinding, processes to retain more oils in the spices, fascinating product extensions and packaging innovation. For

instance, there is a 'hal-damrit', a turmeric powder with spices to be mixed with warm milk, an age old traditional remedy.

Disruptive ziplock pouches for the spices have been introduced so that there is no need to transfer to bottles.

But most interesting of all is very small sachets, a useful offering since some blends you use only occasionally.

The brothers have also extended into dry fruits, nuts, seeds, marinades and ready to cook mixes.

Set up in 2018, though the serious journey began only in 2021, ZOFF is already touching a revenue of ₹200 crore and eyeing a turnover of ₹300 crore by next year – the aggressive hundred % growth coming through more products, big distribution ramp up and marketing.

Calculated entry

The Agrawalla brothers entry into the spices segment was a well calculated one. Hailing from a well-off family that was in a steel-related business and agri trading, the brothers who did their MBA from Australia were very clear they wanted to do something else. According to Ashish, what tempted them into spices was the margins, the gap they spotted and the fact that there were very few big national brands.

Born online – Flipkart Grocery was their first distribution channel – today over 80% of ZOFF's turnover is from digital platforms.

"While we got huge learnings and insights from Flipkart Grocery, it was CRED store that helped us achieve entry into 5 lakh homes," says Mr. Ashish.

The brand is present in all six quick commerce platforms. But now, ZOFF is ramping up its offline play. Partnerships with D-Mart and Reliance Smart Bazaar have been sewn.

Why operate from Raipur, which has no connection with spices?

The brothers insist that Raipur actually works wonderfully to their advantage. The cost of setting up the office and factory (with a lot of space and capacity to expand) was much lower, and being in central India, and a well-connected industrial town, the transportation – both for sourcing and despatch – also much lower and efficient. Their dad, incidentally, does all the sourcing of spices, having experience in agri trading.

The brothers who came into the limelight after a Shark Tank appearance which won them funding are very marketing savvy.

So far the major spends have been on performance marketing, with the brand building journey beginning now.

Since spice was a completely new business, did they have any mentors? "Time has been the biggest mentor," responds Mr. Akash, describing how the COVID years were spent in learning and strategising.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

India's first PPP airport bets on a future-ready plan

V. Sajeew Kumar

Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL), the first Indian airport set up under a public-private partnership model, is embarking on a major expansion drive focused on green energy, smart tech and integrated growth.

The plans include a dedicated IT park, a green hydrogen production facility and airport-wide digital upgrades, all of which are expected to usher CIAL into a new era of sustainable and tech-driven growth.

More than 150 projects have been envisaged. According to S. Suhas, Managing Director of CIAL, the exercise goes beyond mere expansion of the airport's infrastructure.

"We are redefining the role of an airport in today's



Going green: Cochin International Airport is collaborating with BPCL to build a green hydrogen plant. THULASI KAKKAT

world. From green hydrogen production to advanced digital systems and the creation of a vibrant commercial ecosystem, each step is part of a larger vision: to integrate sustainability, technology and regional development into the core of airport operations. Our aim is to ensure

that CIAL remains future-ready, efficient and deeply aligned with the evolving needs of passengers and partners alike," he said.

The ₹200-crore digital infrastructure programme will harness smart technology to create a safer and seamless airport experience, he said. Moreover,

CIAL is now part of an exclusive group of seven Indian airports that offer the Fast Track Immigration – Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP).

CIAL is collaborating with BPCL to build a green hydrogen plant. Slated to be inaugurated by August, it will be the first ever hydrogen production facility at an airport globally. With an installed capacity of 1 MW and production capacity of 220 kg per day, the project is primarily targeted for green mobility solutions within and around the airport.

The initiative complements CIAL's legacy as a solar-powered airport and aligns with global carbon neutrality goals by promoting cleaner alternatives to conventional fuels, Suhas said. To position Kochi as a

leading destination for maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services in South Asia, catering to both domestic and foreign airlines, Cochin International Aviation Services, a subsidiary of CIAL, is constructing its third MRO hangar at an investment of ₹50 crore.

The expansion at Kochi aims to offer a competitive, high-quality alternative for MRO services within India, Suhas said.

This initiative supports the broader goals of the 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' programmes by enhancing domestic capabilities, reducing dependence on overseas service providers and attracting overseas business to Indian soil, he added.

On the infrastructure

front, CIAL is executing a diverse array of projects to strengthen aviation and allied sectors. The projects are designed to enhance capacity, improve efficiency, and generate long-term revenue.

The key works include an import cargo terminal (1 lakh sq. ft.), airport emergency services modernisation with the induction of the latest safety systems, perimeter intrusion detection system (PIDS), India's largest aero lounge – O484 Aero Lounge, golf resorts, and the ongoing phase one of the international terminal (T3) expansion project. CIAL aims to follow an aerotropolis model by integrating commercial and lifestyle zones around the airport.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

Why marketers should ditch the car and take a metro or a bus

Harish Bhat

When I visit Mumbai, I often take the local train from Churchgate station to Borivali. The main objective of this travel is to observe people on the train. In my home-town of Bangalore as well, I have begun travelling by metro quite often. However, this has been mostly born of necessity, because the metro takes me to my destination far quicker than an Uber cab can - particularly given the many choked roads of this otherwise lovely garden city. But having got onto the metro, here too I keep looking at people.

In the past two months, these occasional travels by local train and metro have thrown up several interesting insights. I have jotted

down over 25 observations during this period. Here are five of them.

90% of the people are on their mobiles constantly. A vast majority of them are watching reels on Instagram or some similar social media platform; 60% of the people wear wrist watches.

These are primarily metal analog watches. I see far fewer wearables on wrists now, than I used to see two years ago; many more young and middle-aged men are wearing colourful shirts, compared to earlier years. (And by the way, that includes me); on my last local train ride in Mumbai, virtually no one was smiling, perhaps after a long and tiring day at work. On the metro in Bangalore, on the other hand, I



Living laboratory: Public transport, whether a local train, metro or bus, is today one of the best platforms for observing consumers and their real-time, in-situ behaviour. NAGARA GOPAL

inevitably see many more smiles; lots of people in the Mumbai local trains were carrying their lunchboxes with them. In contrast, very few people in Bangalore were carrying their lunch

with them. Each of these "public transport" observations, if pursued further, can potentially lead to very good marketing insights. For instance, marketers may

wish to probe why fewer people are wearing wearables now, and what this tells us about changing attitudes towards digital, health and wellness. Or why middle-aged men are

suddenly wearing floral shirts, and what this tells us about ageing and urban masculinity.

This leads me to an interesting point. Public transport - whether local train, metro or bus - is today one of the best platforms for observing consumers and their real-time, in-situ behaviour.

Yet, many marketers who choose to travel exclusively by their own vehicles or Uber cabs or auto-rickshaws miss out on this living laboratory that pulses with consumer trends every single day.

If you are a marketer or a student of the consumer universe, here are a few reasons why you should ditch your private vehicle and consider travelling by public transport at least oc-

casionaly. Local trains, metros and buses bring together so many segments of our society. Affluent office goers, young students, retail employees, working women, middle-class families - you will find people from virtually every large consumer segment using local transport, particularly in large cities.

This helps you break away from the ivory towers of your offices or apartment complexes, where you are likely to interact primarily with people from your own demographic segment.

With very little effort, you can observe what all these people are wearing or viewing, and often also overhear snatches of conversation.

If you are a little more

adventurous, you can strike up engaging and relevant conversations with a couple of co-travellers.

While it is important not to generalise or reach firm conclusions from these assorted observations or conversations, what I have realised is that they can spark new thoughts, questions or initial hypotheses which can, in turn, lead to meaningful and actionable ideas. For all these reasons, I would urge marketers to hop on to your city's metro or buses every now and then. This is one of the best and easiest ways of keeping consumers in your sight.

(Harish Bhat is an avid marketer and bestselling author. He was earlier the Brand Custodian at Tata Sons)

MOSCOW

Russia restarts Moscow-Pyongyang passenger flights after decades



Russia launched direct passenger flights from Moscow to Pyongyang, North Korea, for the first time since the mid-1990s, starting on Sunday. Operated by Nordwind Airlines, initial flights will run monthly, using a Boeing 777-200ER. Tickets sold out quickly, boosting Russia-North Korea ties. REUTERS

DHARAMSALA

China detained activist-singer without charge: Tibetan exile govt.



A young Tibetan singer and activist, Tzuke, popularly known as Asang, was detained by Chinese authorities in early July 2025 after singing a song praising the exiled Dalai Lama, the India-based Central Tibetan Administration said on Saturday. It condemned the arrest as part of Beijing's campaign to suppress Tibetan voices. AFP

MANILA

Philippine troops kill 7 guerrillas in latest flare-up of insurgency



Philippine troops killed seven communist guerrillas on Sunday in Uson, Masbate, following an earlier clash that killed another two New People's Army guerillas. They seized rifles and launchers while eight rebels fled and are being pursued. Fewer than 900 NPA insurgents remain, with the rebellion said to be collapsing. AP

PORT SUDAN

Sudan's RSF names a civilian PM, presidential council in rival govt.



A coalition led by Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on Saturday named Mohamed Hassan al-Ta'yshi, a civilian, Prime Minister and formed a presidential council with RSF leader Dagalo as President, challenging the army-backed government. This deepens Sudan's division amid ongoing war, and stalled peace efforts. AFP

Trump confirms deal with EU, sets 15% export tariffs

The EU agrees to purchase \$750 billion worth of energy from the U.S. and pledges an additional \$600 billion in investments; both leaders say the deal restores stability to the trading relationship

Agence France-Presse
TURNBERRY

U.S. President Donald Trump and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Sunday announced they had reached a deal to end a transatlantic tariffs stand-off and avert a full-blown trade war. The agreement came as the clock ticked down on an August 1 deadline for the European Union to strike a deal with Washington – or face an across-the-board U.S. levy of 30%. “We have reached a deal. It’s a good deal for everybody,” Mr. Trump told reporters following a high-stakes meeting with Ms. von der Leyen at his golf resort in Turnberry, Scotland. Mr. Trump told reporters the deal involved a baseline levy of 15% on EU exports to the United States, – the same level secured



Atlantic accord: Donald Trump shakes hands with Ursula von der Leyen following their meeting in Turnberry on Sunday. AFP

by Japan – including for the bloc’s crucial auto sector, which is currently being taxed at 25%. “We are agreeing that the tariff straight across, for automobiles and everything else, will be a straight across tariff of 15%,” Mr. Trump said. He also said the bloc had agreed to purchase “\$750 billion worth of energy” from the United States, as

well as \$600 billion more in additional investments in the country. Negotiating on behalf of the EU’s 27 countries, Ms. von der Leyen’s European Commission had been pushing hard to salvage a trading relationship worth an annual \$1.9 trillion in goods and services. “It’s a good deal,” the EU chief told reporters, sitting alongside Mr. Trump

following their talks. “It will bring stability. It will bring predictability. That’s very important for our businesses on both sides of the Atlantic,” she said. While 15% would be much higher than pre-existing U.S. tariffs on European goods, which average around 4.8%, it would mirror the status quo, with companies currently facing an additional flat rate of 10%. Had the talks failed, EU states had greenlit counter-tariffs on \$109 billion of U.S. goods including aircraft and cars to take effect in stages from August 7. Brussels was also drawing up a list of U.S. services to potentially target. Separately, U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick had said the August 1 deadline was firm and there will be “no extensions, no more grace periods”.

UN to try to use ‘pauses’ to reach Gaza’s starving

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

The United Nations said it would try to reach as many starving people as possible in Gaza after Israel announced it would establish secure land routes in for humanitarian convoys. The UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) said it had enough food in, or on its way to, the region to feed the 2.1 million people in the Gaza Strip for almost three months. ‘Move welcomed’ UN emergency relief coordinator Tom Fletcher said on X he welcomed the announcement of “humanitarian pauses”. “In contact with our teams on the ground who will do all we can to reach as many starving people as we can in this window.” WFP said more than 62,000 tonnes of food assistance was needed monthly to cover the entire Gaza population of two million.

Thailand, Cambodia agree to ceasefire negotiations

Associated Press
SURIN

Thailand and Cambodia on Sunday signalled their readiness to negotiate an end to a deadly border dispute following mediation efforts by U.S. President Donald Trump. The fighting, now in its fourth day, has killed at least 33 people and displaced over 1,68,000. Mr. Trump posted on Truth Social on Saturday that he spoke to the leaders of Thailand and Cambodia and suggested he would not move forward with trade agreements with either country if the hostilities continued. He later said both sides agreed to meet to negotiate a ceasefire. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said on Sunday his country agreed to pursue an “immediate and unconditional ceasefire”. He said Mr. Trump told him that Thailand had also agreed to halt attacks following Mr. Trump’s conversation with Acting Thai



Daily bread: People who fled their homes gather to receive food in Cambodia’s Oddar Meanchey province on Sunday. AFP

Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai. “This is positive news for the soldiers and people of both countries,” Mr. Hun Manet said. He said he tasked his deputy, Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn, to coordinate next steps with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and to engage directly with Thailand’s Foreign Minister to implement the ceasefire. Mr. Phumtham thanked Mr. Trump and said that Thailand agreed in principle to a ceasefire but stressed the need for “sincere intention” from Cam-

bodia, the Thai Foreign Ministry said. Mr. Phumtam called for swift bilateral talks to discuss concrete steps toward a peaceful resolution, it said. The fighting first flared on Thursday after a land mine explosion along the border wounded five Thai soldiers. Both sides blamed each other for starting the clashes. Both countries recalled their ambassadors and Thailand closed its border crossings with Cambodia. Despite the diplomatic efforts, fighting continued on Sunday along parts of the contested border.

SNP wants to bring Palestine statehood Bill, opposes Starmer

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

A minor Opposition party in the British Parliament on Sunday threatened to bring forward legislation on recognising Palestinian statehood and “force a vote” if Prime Minister Keir Starmer continues to oppose the move. The Scottish National Party (SNP), which pushes for the independence of Scotland, said it would table a “Palestine Recognition Bill” when Parliament returns after its summer recess if Mr. Starmer did not change his position. The Prime Minister has committed to recognising

PM has committed to recognising State of Palestine but says it must be part of a peace process

Palestinian statehood but said it must be part of a peace process in the West Asia. The SNP threat comes after more than 220 British MPs, including dozens from Mr. Starmer’s ruling Labour party, demanded on Friday that the U.K. follow France and recognise a Palestinian state. The SNP holds nine seats in the 650-seat U.K. Parliament.

Spoils of war



War machines: People visit an exhibition of military hardware and equipment captured by Russian armed forces in the course of a conflict against Ukraine, during celebrations of Russia’s Navy Day in Kronstadt outside Saint Petersburg on Sunday. REUTERS

34 killed in attack on east Congo church by IS-backed rebels

Associated Press
GOMA

The death toll from an attack on a Catholic church in eastern Congo by Islamic State-backed rebels has risen to 34, according to a civil society leader. “The bodies of the victims are still at the scene of the tragedy, and volunteers are preparing how to bury them in a mass grave that we are preparing in a compound of the Catholic church,” said Dieudonne Duranthabo, a civil society coordinator in Komanda, in the Ituri province. At least five other people were killed in an earlier attack on the nearby vil-

lage of Machongani, from where a search is ongoing. Both attacks are believed to have been carried out by members of the Allied Democratic Force (ADF) armed with guns and machetes. Eastern Congo has suffered deadly attacks in recent years by armed groups, including the ADF and Rwanda-backed rebels. The ADF, which has ties to the Islamic State, operates in the borderland between Uganda and Congo and often targets civilians. The group killed dozens of people in Ituri earlier this month in what a UN spokesperson described as a bloodbath.

World urgently needs a ‘global approach’ on AI regulation, insists UN top tech chief

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

The world urgently needs to find a global approach on regulating artificial intelligence, the United Nations’ top tech chief said this week, warning that fragmentation could deepen risks and inequalities. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, head of the UN’s International Telecommunications Union (ITU) agency, said she hoped that AI “can actually benefit humanity”. But as concerns mount

over the risks posed by the fast-moving technology – including fears of mass job losses, the spread of deep-fakes and disinformation, and society’s fabric fraying – she insisted that regulation was key. “There’s an urgency to try to get... the right framework in place,” she said, stressing the need for “a global approach”. Her comments came after U.S. President Donald Trump this week unveiled an aggressive, low-regulation strategy aimed at en-



Doreen Bogdan-Martin

suring the United States stays ahead of China on AI. Among more than 90 proposals, Mr. Trump’s plan calls for sweeping de-

regulation, with the administration promising to “remove red tape and onerous regulation” that could hinder private sector AI development. Asked if she had concerns about an approach that urges less, not more, regulation of AI technologies, Ms. Bogdan-Martin refrained from commenting, saying she was “still trying to digest” the U.S. plan. At the same time, she highlighted that “85% of countries don’t yet have AI policies or strategies”.

Police sustain injuries, dozens arrested at Berlin pro-Palestinian demonstration

Agence France-Presse
FRANKFURT

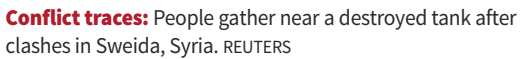
Berlin police on Sunday said they arrested 57 people during a pro-Palestinian demonstration on the fringes of the city’s yearly Pride march a day earlier, adding that 17 police officers sustained injuries. According to police, about 10,000 demonstrators participated in the rally on Saturday in support of Palestinians, but authorities moved in to disperse the crowd as organisers

The demonstrations reflect heightened concerns as the Israel-Hamas conflict grinds on for the third year

struggled to restore order. The arrests were related to public order disturbances, including resisting police and throwing bottles or physical altercation, but also the use of anti-Semitic slogans as well as “symbols of anti-constitutional and

terrorist organisations”, police said on social media. The “Internationalist Queer Pride for Liberation” movement, which on its website says there is “no queer liberation without anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and anti-Zionist struggle”, called the rally. The pro-Palestinian demonstration took place as Berlin’s annual Pride parade was being held in another city district, where 64 arrests were also made, for insults, assault

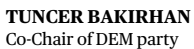
and also the alleged use of symbols deemed linked to “terrorist organisations”. Another demonstration, this one by far-right militants opposed to the Pride march, also took place, with police saying that 20 people there were arrested. The demonstrations reflect heightened concerns as the Israel-Hamas conflict grinds on, with Israel pursuing a devastating military operation in Gaza following Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack.



Reuters
SWEIDA

One of the most gruesome was the Al-Radwan guesthouse. A video posted online and verified by Reuters as being in the Al-Radwan guest house showed more than a dozen bodies, several with gunshot wounds to the chest, slumped over one another.

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI



"There are no losers in peace. If the people of Turkey win, the people of West Asia and the world will win. It is also important to recall the historical and cultural ties between the Kurds and the Indian people. Both peoples share common roots as part of the Indo-European language family," said Mr. Bakirhan, explaining that the peace deal between PKK

“Therefore, the support we hope to receive from In-

The latest ceasefire, however, is far from perfect,

"Turkey has turned into an economic and political structure that constantly generates crises. Therefore, regional dynamics are changing, and Turkey's internal dynamics have been showing strong signs that the conflicts cannot continue," said Mr. Bakirhan.

Ms. Tate fears that the crackdown on illegal workers, far from addressing the problems of this vital agricultural region north of Los Angeles, could "dis-mantle the whole economy" and put the country's food security at risk. "I began to get really concerned when we saw a group of border control agents come up to the Central Valley and start going onto farms, trying to chase people down, evading the property owner," the 46-year-old farmer said. "That's

The agricultural sector has for years been trying to find solutions for its perennial labour shortage beyond issuing temporary permits for migrant workers. The number of government certified positions for temporary agricultural workers practically tripled between 2014 and 2024, Department of Labor statistics show, underlining just how much American agriculture depends on foreign workers. On top of that, some 42% of farm workers are not authorised

Not only will it harm farms and ranches but will also send food prices soaring, and even endanger U.S. food security, possibly requiring the country to start importing provisions that may previously have been grown at home, Ms. Tate said. "What we need is a legislation that has the type of programme that we need, and that works for both the workers, that ensures their safety, it ensures a fair playing field when it comes to international trade, as well as domestic needs," Tate said.

But analysts see these deadlines as short and it will be tough to meet them in the absence of “sufficiently strong American diplomatic pressure”, says Congolese political analyst Christian Moleka. He said it could take “six to eight months, or even a year to see the M23 withdraw” completely from areas which it controls.

Associated Press
KHAN YOUNIS

One of 85 children
She was wrapped in a white sheet for burial and placed on the sandy ground for prayers. The bundle was barely wider



“She needed a special baby formula which did not exist in Gaza,” Zainab’s

He said she hadn't suffered from any diseases, but the lack of the formula led to chronic diarrhoea and vomiting. She wasn't able to swallow as her wea-

The child's family, like many of Gaza's Palestinians, lives in a tent, displaced. Her mother, who also has suffered from malnutrition, said she breastfed the girl for only six weeks before trying to feed her formula. "With my daughter's death, many will follow," she said. "Their names are on a list that no one looks at. They are just names and num-

Israel's aid restriction

The arrival of children suffering from malnutrition has surged in recent weeks, al-Farah said. His department, with a capacity of eight beds, has been treating about 60 cases of acute malnutrition.

Another malnutrition clinic, affiliated with the hospital, receives an aver-

After ending the latest ceasefire in March, Israel cut off the entry of food, medicine, fuel and other supplies completely to Gaza for 2 ½ months, saying it aimed to pressure Hamas to release hostages. Under international pressure, Israel eased the blockade in May. Since then, it has allowed in around 4,500 trucks for the U.N. and other aid groups to distribute, including 2,500 tons of baby food and high-calorie special food for children, Israel's Foreign Ministry said last week.

The average of 69 trucks a day, however, is far below the 500 to 600 trucks a day the U.N. says are needed for Gaza. The U.N. says it has been unable to distribute much of the aid because hungry crowds.

Late Saturday, Israel's Foreign Ministry announced said that: "Israel rejects the false accusations of 'starvation' propaganda initiated by Hamas which manipulates pictures of children suffering from terminal diseases. It is shameful."

RARE FEAT
Gill first to score four Test tons in debut series as skipper



Shubman Gill became the only player to register four hundreds in his first Test series as captain. He also joined Don Bradman and Sunil Gavaskar as the only skippers to score four centuries in a series. Bradman did it at home against India in 1947-48, while Gavaskar lit up the 1978-79 home series against the West Indies.

ON A ROLL
Gill joins Gavaskar in 700-run club in a series as India captain



Shubman Gill is the second India captain after Sunil Gavaskar to notch up 700-plus runs in a Test series. Gavaskar leads the tally with 732 runs against the West Indies in the six-match series in 1978-79 while Gill has 722. Gill is also third behind Gavaskar (774 and 732) among Indians with most number of runs in a series.

CENTURIES GALORE
Washington's hundred takes India's tally to 11 in the England series



Washington Sundar's hundred in the fourth Test against England was the 11th by an Indian batter, matching the record for most centuries in a Test series (versus West Indies at home in 1978-79). Shubman Gill has scored four, K.L. Rahul and Rishabh Pant two each while Ravindra Jadeja and Yashasvi Jaiswal have one each.

STANDING HIS GROUND
Stokes justifies offer to call off play before the start of final hour



As soon as they got to a point where a draw was inevitable, I was not going to risk any of our bowlers. We just wanted to get through the period without risking proper bowling options — England captain Ben Stokes justifying his offer to call off play before the start of the final hour.

Steely Washington, Jadeja help India snatch a draw

The two add 203 for the unbroken fifth wicket; Root dropping the latter off the first ball proves to be the turning point; record-breaking Gill registers his fourth hundred of the series

INDIA IN ENGLAND
Shavan Acharya
MANCHESTER

It turned out to be a battle between Bazball and India's grit. In the end, demonstrating an indomitable spirit, India escaped England's Bazball domination with a draw, riding on centuries by Shubman Gill, Washington Sundar and Ravindra Jadeja.

With England enjoying a 311-run first-innings lead and openers Yashasvi Jaiswal and B. Sai Sudharsan falling for ducks, not many fancied India's chances. But against an England bowling attack that had very little to offer – barring a fiery opening spell by captain Ben Stokes – the middle-order showed steel.

After Jofra Archer pegged India back with the wicket of Gill (103, 238b, 12x4) at the stroke of lunch, Washington (101 n.o. 206b, 9x4, 1x6) and Jadeja (107 n.o. 185b, 13x4, 1x6) batted with conviction to add 203 runs for the unbroken fifth wicket. India defined its character by saving the Test and keeping the series alive. The teams head into The Oval for the final Test, with the home side leading 2-1.

Buried under a mountain of runs, it was an uphill task, but with Jadeja making the most of a first-ball reprieve, and taking control of the proceedings, the England bowlers struggled.

In two wicket-less ses-



The saviours: Gill led the Indian fightback, while Washington and Jadeja mixed caution with aggression to take the team to safety. PTI, GETTY IMAGES & AP



SCOREBOARD

INDIA — 1ST INNINGS
358 in 114.1 overs

ENGLAND — 1ST INNINGS
669 in 157.1 overs

INDIA — 2ND INNINGS
Yashasvi Jaiswal c Root b Woakes 0 (4b), K.L. Rahul lbw b Stokes 90 (230b, 8x4), B. Sai Sudharsan c Brook b Woakes 0 (1b), Shubman Gill c Smith b Archer 103 (238b, 12x4), Washington Sundar (not out) 101 (206b, 9x4, 1x6), Ravindra Jadeja (not out) 107 (185b, 13x4, 1x6); Extras (b-14, lb-2, nb-6, w-2): 24; Total (for four wkts. in 143 overs): 425.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-0 (Jaiswal, 0.4 overs), 2-0 (Sai Sudharsan, 0.5), 3-188 (Rahul, 70.2), 4-222 (Gill, 87.4).

ENGLAND BOWLING
Woakes 23-4-67-2, Archer 23-3-78-1, Carse 17-3-44-0, Dawson 47-11-95-0, Root 19-2-68-0, Stokes 11-2-33-1, Brook 3-0-24-0.

PoM: Ben Stokes.
Match drawn. England leads five-match series 2-1.

Fifth and final Test: July 31 to August 4, The Oval.
Match starts at 3.30 p.m. IST.

sions, India capitalised on England's sloppy fielding as Washington and Jadeja forged the team's 10th century partnership in four Tests – the second-most for the side in a series, after 11 against the West Indies in 1978-79.

Starting the second session, Archer extracted un-

even bounce on a few occasions, but both Jadeja and Washington remained unfazed.

After Gill and K.L. Rahul started the Indian fightback, with a 188-run stand for the third wicket, Washington and Jadeja kept the momentum going. England, on the other hand,

failed to convert the half-chances.

There was no dearth of drama at Old Trafford, a venue where England had drawn a Test only once in Bazball era in 2023. Midway into the third session, Stokes walked up to Jadeja and Washington hoping to shake hands. But with both

inching closer to the three-figure mark, the two decided to bat on. Eventually, the teams settled for a draw after Washington got his maiden ton.

While Washington and Jadeja dominated the last two sessions, the morning belonged to Gill. After their dogged stand helped India

overcome a crisis, Gill and Rahul extended their cautious approach, as Liam Dawson started the day from one end and Stokes, despite writhing in pain, bowled from the other.

Overcoming early disappointments, Stokes exploited the uneven nature of the surface and trapped

Rahul in front to break the stand. The Indian think tank promoted Washington to No. 5 and it proved to be a masterstroke.

Gill showed resolve despite being hit on the forefinger of the bottom hand by a Stokes delivery that rose sharply. Playing each ball on its merit, Gill ticked

along and seemed to be in no hurry as he brought up his ninth Test century and fourth of the series. On the way, he became the first player to hit four hundreds in a debut Test series as captain, going past Warwick Armstrong, Don Bradman, Greg Chappell, Virat Kohli and Steven Smith, who scored three each.

Gill looked set to extend his tally before being caught off Archer. And as Root put down a catch at first slip off the very next delivery, Jadeja survived to script India's comeback story with Washington.

Guys showed a lot of character: Gambhir



Bravehearts: Pant and Jadeja produced gutsy performances in the drawn game. GETTY IMAGES

Shavan Acharya
MANCHESTER

Head coach Gautam Gambhir stated that past records don't matter for the Indian team.

"They are making their own history. A lot of people wrote us off in this Test, but this is the foundation of this team. These are characters who are sitting in this dressing room, wanting to fight for the country," Gambhir said.

"I don't believe that the team is in transition, because it's still an Indian

team. And this is the best 18 that is going to represent, and more importantly, it's not a transition, it's just a little bit of inexperience," Gambhir said.

"It's only about experience and inexperience. But the most important thing is that these boys are going to learn a lot from what they did, because being under pressure and then batting for five sessions is never easy, especially on a fifth day pitch," Gambhir said. "We've to give it to the guys for the character they showed".

SNAPSHOTS

Pogacar wins fourth Tour de France title
PARIS: Slovenian Tadej Pogacar won his fourth Tour de France title after finishing safe in the final stage won by Belgian Wout van Aert on Sunday. Two-time champion Jonas Vingegaard of Denmark took second place overall with German Florian Lipowitz finishing third.

Tilak to lead South in Duleep Trophy
CHENNAI: Tilak Varma will lead South Zone in the Duleep Trophy tournament that starts on August 28 at Bengaluru. The South Zone selectors have picked a 16-member squad along with six standby players.

The squad: Tilak Varma (Capt.), Mohd. Azharuddeen (Vice-Capt.), Tanmay Agarwal, Devdutt Padikkal, Mohit Kale, Salman Nizar, N. Jagadeesan, T. Vijay, R. Sai Kishore, Tanay Thyagarajan, V. Vyshak, M.D. Nidheesh, Ricky Bhui, N.P. Basil, Gurjapneet Singh, Snehal Kauthankar.

Standbys: Mohit Redkar, R. Smaran, Ankit Sharma, Eden Apple Tom, Andre Siddarth, Shaikh Rasheed.



Ready for shootout: Divya and Humpy have all to play for. FIDE

Divya and Humpy head to a tiebreaker

CHESS
Press Trust of India
BATUMI

International Master Divya Deshmukh held the higher-ranked Grandmaster Koneru Humpy to a draw in the second game on Sunday, taking the FIDE women's World Cup final to a tie-breaker where games of shorter duration will be played to determine the winner.

The tie-breaker, which will be a series of shorter-duration games, will be played on Monday to determine the winner.

Divya, who did not make utmost use of her promising opening in the first game of the match, was far more composed against a Queen pawn opening and faced little trouble playing with black.

During the post-game interaction with the broadcaster, Divya seemed upset with the mistakes she made in game one, where she said she invariably kept making the wrong choices.

China's Tan Zhongyi clinched the second game against Lei Tingjie to win the match 1.5-0.5, claim the bronze medal and secure a spot in the Candidates tournament.

Piastrì wins Belgian GP

FORMULA ONE
Agence France-Presse
SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS

Oscar Piastrì held off McLaren teammate Lando Norris to win the Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday and stretch his lead over the latter to 16 points.

The results: 1. Piastrì (McLaren) 1h:25m:22.601s, 2. Norris (McLaren) +3.415s, 3. Leclerc (Ferrari) 20.185, 4. Verstappen (Red Bull) 21.731, 5. Russell (Mercedes) 34.863, 6. Albon (Williams) 39.926, 7. Hamilton (Ferrari) 40.679, 8. Lawson (Racing Bulls) 52.033, 9. Bortoletto (Kick Sauber) 56.434.

10. Gasly (Alpine) 72.714, 11. Bearman (Haas) 73.145, 12. Hulkenberg (Kick Sauber) 73.628, 13. Tsunoda (Red Bull) 75.395, 14. Stroll (Aston Martin) 79.831, 15. Ocon (Alpine) 86.063, 16. Antonelli (Mercedes) 86.721, 17. Alonso (Aston Martin) 87.924, 18. Sainz (Williams) 92.024, 19. Colapinto (Alpine) 95.250; **+1 lap:** 20. Hadjar (Racing Bulls).

Standings: Drivers: 1. Piastrì 266, 2. Norris 250, 3. Verstappen 185. **Constructors:** 1. McLaren 516, 2. Ferrari 248, 3. Mercedes 220.

Lights to flag

The journey in numbers after the 44-lap race around Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps

6 McLaren records six 1-2 finishes in a single year after 1988

8 Piastrì, in 58 starts, has the same number of wins as countryman Ricciardo (257 starts)

14 Hamilton goes level with Vettel for the most finishes at Spa-Francorchamps

20 Alonso is the first driver to make 20 appearances at the Belgian GP

PIASTRÌ
37 Norris overtakes Raikkonen for sixth on the list of most podium finishes with McLaren

COMPILED BY ANIRUDH VELAMURI

INBRIEF



Australia wins another high-scoring match

Cameron Green hit an unbeaten 55 and Josh Inglis smashed 51 to lift Australia to a three-wicket win over the West Indies in the fourth T20I at Basseterre on Saturday. Glenn Maxwell, *in pic*, scored 47 runs off 18 balls. The Aussies have a 4-0 lead in the five-match series.

The scores: West Indies 205/9 in 20 overs (Sherfane Rutherford 31, Adam Zampa 3/54) lost to Australia 206/7 in 19.2 overs (Glenn Maxwell 47, Josh Inglis 51, Cameron Green 55 n.o., Jediah Blades 3/29). **Toss:** Australia; **PoM:** Maxwell.

Bhavani Devi bows out of individual sabre event

C.A. Bhavani Devi's campaign in the women's individual sabre at the World fencing championships in Tbilisi (Georgia) ended on Sunday in the round-of-64, when the 31-year-old lost to Japan's Misaki Emura 15-10.

Singles titles for Shi and Wang at China Open badminton

Shi Yuqi surged to victory in the China Open men's singles final on Sunday, bouncing back from a game down to beat Wang Zhengxing 14-21, 21-14, 21-15. The women's singles title decider, which also featured two Chinese players, saw second-ranked China's Wang Zhiyi defeat No. 4 Han Yue 21-8, 21-13. "The impact, speed and strength of younger players are definitely better than mine," said 29-year-old Shi after beating the 23-year-old Wang. "So I can only say that I tried my best to withstand some of his speed." It was Shi's second such win in the prestigious competition.

India loses to Italy in the Rod Laver Junior Challenge

The Indian team was beaten 2-4 by Italy in the opening match of the IC Rod Laver Junior Challenge tennis event in Barcelona. Aradhya Kshitij and Samarth Sahita won their matches while Saanvi Mishra and Rishitha Basireddy lost in straight sets. The Indian boys' and girls' combinations, too, suffered a reverse.

Nehra and Likhith fail to progress at swimming Worlds

India's Aryan Nehra fell short of qualifying for the final while S.P. Likhith failed to make the semifinals at the World aquatics championships in Singapore on Sunday. In 400m freestyle, Nehra finished seventh in his heat and 37th overall in 4:00.39. Likhith clocked 1:01.99 to finish 40th overall in 100m breaststroke event.

Youngsters Dipanshu and Deepika impress amid a slew of absentees

More than 900 athletes had sent in their entries, but the number of participants who actually turned up was much less

ATHLETICS

Sports Bureau

Dipanshu Sharma returned to winning ways at the site of his best performance this year, improving his personal best to win the men's javelin throw on day one of the Indian Open athletics championships in Sangrur on Sunday.

Junior National record holder Deepika improved her own mark and set a new junior record with a 56.41m throw in women's javelin.

The 19-year-old Dipanshu's 76.03m throw bettered his previous best – set at the previous iteration of Indian Open at the same venue in April this year – by a metre. The result also helped Dipanshu return to the Under-20 top-three in



Dipanshu. RF MEDIA

the world for the year. It was one of the few highlights of the day, as several prominent names failed to turn up.



Flinging it far: Deepika improved her own mark and set a new junior record with a 56.41m throw in javelin. FILE PHOTO: M. VEDHAN

Shivam Lokhare, the newest entrant to the 80m club, and Kishore Kumar Jena both did not participate although, interesting-

ly, Jena's former coach Samarjeet Singh Malhi was among the participants.

More than 900 athletes had sent in their entries,

Ankita clinches women's 3000m steeplechase silver



Final burst: Ankita's push at the end saw her finish a few milliseconds behind Finland's Ilona Maaria. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Press Trust of India

ESSEN (GERMANY)

Steeplechaser Ankita Dhyani came up with a blistering run to clinch silver in the gruelling 3000m event with a personal-best time of 9:31.99 seconds, as Indian athletes ended their campaign in the World University Games on Sunday. The men's 4x100m relay quartet bagged a bronze while the trio of Munita Prajapati, Mansi Negi, and Sejal Singh finished third in the women's 20km team racewalk.

India ended its cam-

paign with two gold, five silver and five bronze in the showpiece event.

Ankita shaved nearly seven seconds from her personal best 9:39.00s to finish behind Finland's Ilona Maaria Mononen (9:31.86). Adia Budde of Germany took bronze in 9:33.34s.

On Friday, Ankita topped Heat 1 in 9:54.79s to secure her place in the final. A massive 22-second improvement, then propelled Ankita to silver.

The men's 4x100m relay team of Lalu Prasad Bhoi, Animesh Kujur, Manikanta Hoblidhar and Mrutyam



Praveen Chitravel.

Jayaram won bronze in 38.89s behind South Korea (38.50s) and South Africa (38.80s).

Earlier on Saturday, Praveen Chithravel secured a silver medal in the men's triple jump. His best effort of 16.66m on his second attempt saw him finish behind Australia's Olympian Connor Murphy (16.77m).

India's medal winners:

Silver: Praveen Chithravel (men's triple jump), Ankita Dhyani (women's 3000m steeplechase). **Bronze:** Sejal Singh, Munita Prajapati, Mansi Negi (women's 20km racewalk team), men's 4x100m relay.

Aryan loses in semifinals

Sports Bureau

Aryan Shah lost 5-7, 6-2, 3-6 to Nicolas Varona of Spain in the semifinals of the €91,250 Challenger tennis in Segovia, Spain. The 19-year-old Aryan won 22 ATP points and €4,550.

Other results: \$30,000 ITF women, Monastir: Doubles: Final: Tenika McGiffin (Aus) & Elza Tomase (Lat) bt Dayeon Back (Kor) & Vaidehi Chaudhari 3-6, 6-3, [10-8]. **\$15,000 ITF women, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain: Doubles: Final:** Victoria Allen (GBR) & Angelina Wirges (Ger) bt Emma Kamper (Den) & Sravya Shivani 6-1, 2-6, [10-6].

Arsenal signs Gyokeres

Agence France-Presse

LONDON

Arsenal on Saturday announced the signing of Swedish international striker Viktor Gyokeres from Sporting Lisbon. He is reported to have signed a five-year deal.



Rich haul: The Indian paddlers won 11 medals — two gold, two silver and seven bronze — in Almaty. x@ULTTABLETENNIS

Gold for Divyanshi and Priyanuj in WTT Youth Contender

TABLE TENNIS

Sports Bureau

Fresh from her U-15 gold medal at the Asian youth table tennis championships at Tashkent recently, Divyanshi Bhowmick claimed the U-19 girls' title at the WTT Youth Contender in Almaty (Kazakhstan) on Saturday.

She overcame Zlata Te-rekhova of the Russian

Federation 11-4, 8-11, 11-7, 11-2 in the final.

In an all-Indian U-17 boys' final, Priyanuj Bhat-tacharyya rallied to beat P. B. Abhinandh 8-11, 11-9, 11-3, 11-6.

In the U-15 girls' final, Ananya Muralidharan lost 8-11, 8-11, 8-11 to Lu Yu-En of Taiwan.

India wrapped up the Almaty event with a total of 11 medals – two gold, two silver, and seven bronze.

Junior women shuttlers hope to build on Asian success

Uthra Ganesan

NEW DELHI

Tanvi Sharma continued her recent impressive run, winning bronze at the Badminton Asia Junior Championships on Saturday, along with Vennala Kala-gotla, as India returned with two individual medals for women in the event for the first time.

These were also the first medals for Indian women in the event since P.V. Sindhu in 2012.

The 16-year old Tanvi, who idolises former World No. 1 Tai Tzu Ying, had recently become only the fourth Indian woman to reach a BWF Super 300 final at the US Open.

"There were a lot of unforced errors which was disappointing but I am still happy to get a medal for India after 13 years. "I have to get stronger and I was not well also through the week so overall it was ok," she said. Switching between senior and junior events isn't



Tanvi and Vennala. x@BAI_MEDIA

easy either, she admitted.

"Out there I go all out and play freely, the level of players is very different and I know I have to improve to match them.

"In juniors, there is a little more pressure because there is more expectation. Add studies and the balance is not easy to manage.

"The big target now is the World Junior Championships later this year," she said, adding that competing on home base – she trains at the NCOE, Guwahati, venue for the event – would not matter. Vennala, on the other

hand, was the surprise element, the current World No. 103 in juniors overcoming higher-ranked opponents before falling short in the semifinals.

"What I realised is that I have to work on playing slower opponents and keep the rallies going, get faster and not allow the other player to control the pace," the 17-year old trainee with Pullela Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad since 2019 admitted.

"This is my first international medal so I am really happy with the result but I know I can do better.

"More than myself, my coaches – Rahul Yadav and Jayant Rana – would be happier today.

"They have been instrumental in pushing me to work hard in singles even when everyone else, including myself, thought I was not good enough and should stick to doubles.

"This medal will push me to focus more now but I won't give up doubles completely," Vennala insisted.

Thulashi and Nithya claim gold



Victorious: Thulasi and Nithya with their big prize. INSTAGRAM/BADMINTONWALE

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Thulashi Murugesan and Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan clinched gold medals in the British & Irish Para Badminton International, a Level 1 tournament on the BWF circuit, held in Cardiff.

Thulashi rallied to beat compatriot Manisha Ramadass 18-21, 21-17, 21-16 in the women's singles SU5 category, while Nithya overcame Peru's Giuliana Poveda 21-11, 21-23, 21-11 in the SH6 final.

World No. 2 Sukant Kadam, who defeated compatriot Naveen Sivakumar 21-14, 21-19 in the semifinals, went down 6-21, 14-21 to Paralympic champion Lucas Mazur of France in the men's singles SL4 title clash.

Other Indian medalists:

Krishna Nagar (bronze, men's singles, SH6); (Prem Kumar Ale & Abu Hubaida (bronze, men's doubles WH1-WH2); Krishna Nagar & Nithya (bronze, mixed doubles SH6); Mandeep Kaur (bronze, women's singles SL3); Mandeep Kaur & Chirag Baretha (bronze, mixed doubles SL3-SU5).

Daniel's hat-trick in vain as IAF FT holds South United

DURAND CUP

Amitabha Das Sharma

KOLKATA

Indian Air Force Football Team produced an equaliser in the final minute of added time to hold tournament debutant South United FC 3-3 in a Group-A league match of the 134th Durand Cup at the Kishore Bharati Stadium here on Sunday.

Young striker Makamayum Daniel completed a fine hat-trick giving South United the lead twice in the match but IAF mounted a great fightback to snatch a point in the end.

The 18-year-old Daniel found the target in the ninth and 23rd minutes before Mohammad Aqib (26th minute) and Akish Cyril (48th) got IAF back in the mix.

Daniel completed his hat-trick in the 84th minute with a spectacular volley but IAF defender Sankit nodded home the



Fight for possession: South United players try to thwart an Indian Air Force move. DEBASISH BHADURI

equaliser to spoil South United's party.

Earlier, debutant Indo Tibetan Border Police Football Team (ITBP FT) edged past a 10-man local side Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC 2-1 in the Group-D league opener at the SAI Stadium, Kokrajhar.

Lunminlen Haokip gave Morning Star the lead but ITBP FT fought back well

and scored twice through Pulung Diamary and Hemraj Bhujel to secure the win.

The results: Group-A: South United FC 3 (Makamayum Daniel 9, 23, 84) drew with Indian Air Force FT 3 (Md. Aqib 26, Akish Cyril 48, Sankit 90+6).

At Kokrajhar: Group-D: ITBP FT 2 (Pulung Daimary 45, Hemraj Bhujel 60) bt Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC 1 (Lunminlen Haokip 30).

After emerging from a life-threatening car accident, the wicketkeeper-batter certainly is more mature; he picks his battles with greater thought than previously, but hasn't gone against his natural grain

A IN-X

GUJARAT



After over a decade of wandering and uncertainty, the Kodarvi tribe returned to their village this July following a truce with the Dabhi tribe that had pushed them out of their lands in a tradition called *chadotaru*. **Abhinay Deshpande** reports from Gujarat's Banaskantha district on how the police played a role in the agreement between communities and the rebuilding of their lives

The return of the native

Alka Kodarvi smiles shyly when asked about her wedding plans. Sitting on a rusted iron cot in a newly built house at Mota Pipodara, a quiet village tucked away in Gujarat's Banaskantha district near the Rajasthan border, she hides her face behind her palms. "Maybe in a month or two," she says blushing, glancing towards her partner, Bhojabhai. "If he agrees."

For the 27-year-old mother of a 2-year-old boy and her partner, both from a tribal community, marriage is not the beginning of their story – it's just another chapter in a life shaped by survival and exile. Since 2019, the couple has lived together, raising a son without registering their bond as a marriage. "For us, marriage is just a ritual," Alka says matter-of-factly. "We liked each other and decided to live together."

Both are from the Kodarvi tribe, which had been exiled in 2014 after another tribe, following a tradition called *chadotaru*, had forced them out from their traditional lands. After over a decade of wandering and uncertainty, the Kodarvis returned to their native village earlier this month, following a hard-earned truce between communities and crucial support from the district police.

Among the Kodarvis – and in many tribal groups – ancestral villages are more than just a place to live. They are central to rites of passage like marriage and death. Couples marry only in their native village where houses lie scattered across agricultural fields. People are buried there too. So, when Bhojabhai lost his home in the village, he also lost the ground on which a wedding could take place. Now, he has regained it.

Chadotaru and its implications

In much of urban India, living together without marriage remains a taboo, and finding rental housing or even a hotel room while travelling as an unmarried couple is almost impossible. But for Alka, Bhojabhai, and many belonging to the Kodarvi and other tribal communities rooted in the remote stretches of the Aravali mountain range, life has always followed different rules – some liberating, others oppressive.

Back in 2014, nearly 300 people from 29 Kodarvi families fled their homes in Mota Pipodara in the dead of night. Taking only what they could carry, they left their houses, livestock, and fields behind after the Dabhi tribe from the same village had declared *chadotaru* against them.

In Gujarat, *chadotaru* is a tribal tradition of informal justice that carries the weight of vengeance, often targeting entire families or communities when one of their members is accused of a grave offence, such as murder, sexual assault or an extramarital affair.

The declaration followed the killing of a Dabhi man, allegedly by someone from the Kodarvi community. "The victim, Naranbhai, was stoned to death, and the villagers said it was Rajubhai Kodarvi who did it following a drunken brawl in the middle of the night on April 6, 2014. He was arrested and *chadotaru* took place for days," the police say.

In Gujarat's tribal belts and in Rajasthan, *chadotaru* still influences the way disputes are resolved. Traditionally, it involved community elders or *panches* (elected members) coming together to mediate and reconcile differences through mutual agreement. But over time, this custom has morphed into a harsh practice: imposing hefty monetary penalties, forcing exiles, and threatening violence.

Once a *chadotaru* is declared, the clan prepares for confrontation – women and children lead the procession while the others follow, armed with swords, sticks, and whatever weapons they can gather. The beating of *dhol-nagara* (traditional drums) signals their advance as they move toward the rival clan's homes to strike.

"When *chadotaru* is declared, the entire community of the accused is often forced to pay the

My ASP (Nala) and her team began identifying the displaced families, reaching out to them. They held several rounds of discussions with the *panch*

AKSHAY RAJ MAKWANA
Superintendent of Police, Banaskantha district



amount awarded by the *panch*, or flee," Assistant Superintendent of Police (Danta division) Suman Nala explains. "Their homes are vandalised, crops torched, and cattle either looted or left to stray." In cases of murder, blood money is demanded. If unpaid, violence may follow.

A casual conversation

Alka is Nala's cook. In a casual conversation, Nala remembers asking how often Alka visited her *sasural* (in-laws' home). What followed left Nala stunned. "I've never seen my *sasural*," Alka had told her. She went on to explain that her partner's clan had been ostracised after *chadotaru* was declared against them. It not only forced the community into exile, but also shattered their social and economic fabric.

Since then, the families had been scattered. Many ended up as daily wage labourers in Danta, Palanpur, Surat, and other places in Gujarat, earning barely ₹200-₹300 a day. Meeting each other became rare; survival became routine.

Bhojabhai was married to Niluben over two decades ago in that same village. The couple has four children. "*Haan, unke do hain, aur hum khushi se rehte hain* (Yes, he has two partners, and we live happily together)," Alka says.

Bigamy or polygamy remains a practice in several tribal communities in India. Multiple spouses are sometimes officially recorded in government documents. Sometimes, those in such relationships include public servants and elected representatives.

Nala brought it up with her superior, Banaskantha Superintendent of Police Akshay Raj Makwana. Just days before Alka's conversation with

Nala, a man called Jagabhai Kodarvi and his wife Ambaben had submitted an application to the police seeking assistance in returning to Mota Pipodara. Both these factors came together for police action. "My ASP (Nala) and her team began identifying the displaced families and reaching out to them. They held several rounds of discussions with the *panch*," Makwana says.

Rebuilding homes and relationships

Now, amid crumbling ruins, new homes are beginning to rise. Elderly members of the tribe sigh in relief as a long-held dream takes shape. "We never thought we'd return," many say. "All these years, one thought haunted us: where will we be buried when we die? We must be laid to rest in the land of our ancestors," says one of the tribe members.

Before the police brokered peace between the two warring tribes, the Kodarvi clan had made several failed attempts to return to their village. One such effort came four years ago, after the death of Jagabhai's father, whose final wish was to be buried in their ancestral land. Fearing violence, Jagabhai and a few others quietly entered the village and performed the last rites. But once the Dabhi tribe got word of their presence, they charged at them in anger. The Kodarvis fled into the nearby hills to escape the attack and scattered once again.

The man once accused by the Dabhi tribe of killing a member of their clan had been acquitted by a local court in 2017, says Makwana. "He has been living in the same village since. But the rest of his clan remained scattered."

Makwana explains that traditionally, if an exiled clan wishes to return, they are expected to pay a hefty sum of money – usually between ₹30 to ₹40 lakh – determined by the *panch*. A significant portion of this goes to the *panch* and the members of the clan, while the remainder is paid to the victim's family as compensation.

"The *panch* decides the amount after the offence. If the opposing clan cannot afford to pay, the *panch* declares a *chadotaru*, effectively banishing them again. These decisions, while illegal in the eyes of the law, continue to be followed in tribal communities," the SP adds.

In this case, however, no money changed hands on their return. Instead, both tribes agree it was the police who took the lead – clearing 8.5 hectares of land that belonged to the Kodarvis and facilitating their rehabilitation under a government housing scheme, supported by funds

Banaskantha police officer Jayshriben Desai shows a Kodarvi tribal house ransacked in 2015 by the Dabhi tribe in Mota Pipodara village, Banaskantha district in Gujarat. VIJAY SONEJI

from private companies.

The feud finally ended as the Dabhis agreed to the Kodarvis' return. The *panches* of both sides followed the tradition of eating coriander seeds and jaggery, a gesture symbolising the end of enmity and the beginning of peace, says Makwana.

Resettling into home

To reach the tribal village, an hour's journey from Palanpur, the car heaves and lurches through the narrow, rain-slicked track, its wheels slipping in the mud that now bear the criss-crossed imprints of police jeeps and tractors that have rolled in and out over the past few weeks. It hasn't stopped raining – a light drizzle comes and goes, carried by the breeze, settling gently on the skin and soil. Petrichor is mixed with the scent of crushed leaves and the faint smoke of damp wood burning somewhere in the distance.

As the four-wheeler slows to a crawl, ruins of stone and mud walls covered in stones, mark where homes once stood before they were torn down in 2014. When the vehicle finally stops, the Kodarvis emerge from under makeshift tarpaulins, from behind tree trunks, from the open field and a newly built house.

Among them is Prakash, 22, son of Jagabhai and a final-year diploma student. He was just 10 when his family fled the village, never imagining they'd return. "It was a moment of joy and excitement, a reunion I had dreamt of since the day we left," he says, recalling the grand ceremony on July 17, when the Minister of State for Home, Harsh Sanghavi, formally welcomed them back. "Every one had tears in their eyes." Over the years, Prakash's family moved across Surat, Mehsana, Vadgam and other towns as his parents worked as daily wagers. The constant movement made schooling difficult but he remained committed and never dropped out, he says.

"We were all dressed up. There were so many relatives I didn't even recognise. They were asking whose son I was and where we had been all these years," says Prakash, his eyes lit with the excitement of return as the rain continues to soak him. "During the exile, we lost touch with most of them. I was thrilled to meet some of my cousins I hadn't seen since we left, and their children who were born after 2014. They were just as happy to see my eight-month-old son and my partner, Kailash, too."

Prakash says he had vowed to marry only in his native village. Now, that moment has finally arrived. "I've always seen my parents longing to return. It consumed them for years. They pleaded with the panchayat, the State administration, even the police. Finally, our prayers were heard and we're back home," he says.

As the drizzle continues, Lukabhai Bumbadia – one of the *panch* members involved in the alleged murder case – arrives. For him, like many tribals, Hindi remains a distant language, one he neither understood well nor spoke. Lukabhai now says it was the joint effort of the *samaj* (community) and *sarkar* (government) that made the return of the Kodarvis possible. "*Chadotaru* should have no place in today's time. This practice must be abolished," he says.

SP Makwana says such age-old practices impose severe social and economic restrictions, often tearing communities apart. "These families usually marry within the village and sustain themselves through farming. Forcing them to leave uproots their entire way of life. It impacts them in ways that are hard to imagine," he says.

He adds that efforts are under way to engage with community leaders and raise awareness about the long-term damage caused by *chadotaru*. "If one clan declares *chadotaru* today, tomorrow it could be declared against them. It's a cycle that will never break unless we make a conscious effort to end it," the SP says.

However, the police also say that just a few months ago, another *chadotaru* incident occurred in the district's Amirgadh area. By the time they arrived, everything had already been destroyed.

"It was related to an alleged illicit relationship. Reaching such remote areas is difficult due to the absence of proper roads, and even when we do get there, the tribe gathers in large numbers, making it hard for us to control the situation," a police officer says.

Nala says, "Law, love, and compassion came together to resolve the issue."

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Alka Kodarvi, her partner Bhojabhai, and their child, at their village Mota Pipodara near Palanpur in Banaskantha district in Gujarat; Prakash Kodarvi with his parents at their house that was torn down a decade ago. VIJAY SONEJI



