

Daily Current Affairs





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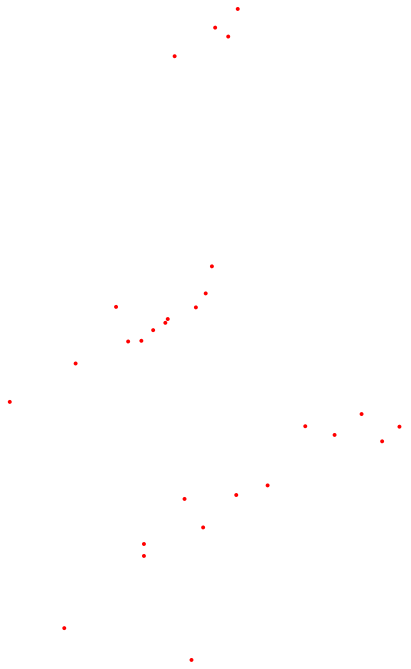


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PDF



10 MCQ QUIZ

-
- “Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment.” — Jim Rohn





NATO ON EDGE
Russia, Belarus
start joint
military drills

STRIFE-TORN STATE
Manipur all set for
PM's visit today
NEWS • PAGE 2



FARMERS' PROTEST TWEET
SC denies relief to
Kangana Ranaut
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STATE OF DESPAIR
India's grain
bowl, after
the deluge
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stares at grim reality
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DAVIS CUP
Dhakhshinewar, Nagal
put India 2-0 ahead
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Sushila Karki sworn in as Nepal's first woman PM

73-year-old former Chief Justice, who backed the protesters, has to appoint Cabinet, oversee polls

President Ram Chandra Poudel dissolves Nepal's Parliament, accepting an important Gen Z demand

PM's priorities will include investigating the Sept. 8 violence, addressing attacks on state infrastructure

Rajesh Rajgopal

ANTHONY

Nepal President Ram Chandra Poudel appointed former Chief Justice Sushila Karki as the country's new Prime Minister and dissolved Parliament on Friday, at a time of political turmoil showed signs of abating in the Himalayan nation. He also announced fresh elections on March 5, 2026.

Mr. Poudel administered the oath of office and secrecy to Ms. Karki at a brief ceremony. According to the Office of the President, Mr. Poudel dissolved the House and set the election date at the recommendation of the newly appointed Prime Minister.

Ms. Karki, 73, the first woman Chief Justice of Nepal, is now the country's first woman Prime Minister.

Following hectic meetings that began late on Thursday, Mr. Poudel on Friday evening agreed to dissolve Parliament, a key demand of Gen Z protesters who brought down the government of K. P. Sharma Oli on September 9. Ms. Karki's appointment is not that will oversee the elections.

Even after Gen Z campaigners agreed on Ms. Karki's name as the leader of the next government, a dispute over the dissolution of Parliament had delayed the process of her appointment.

Revel consultations Mr. Poudel has held several rounds of consultations with Ms. Karki and other legal experts, facilitated by the Army, since Thursday night.

According to sources and experts he consulted, the President was extremely concerned that dissolving Parliament before appointing the head of government could give a net, with nobody to hold it accountable. Ms. Karki, however, backed the protesters' demand that the House be dissolved. Protesters argued that if Parli-



Regime change Nepal President Ram Chandra Poudel administers the oath of office to Sushila Karki at the President House in Kathmandu on Friday. *AP*

ment was not dissolved, the same old parties would retain their control and influence.

Sudon Gurung, a prominent Gen Z campaigner, said on Thursday that House dissolution was non-negotiable, echoing Kathmandu Mayor Balendra Shah, a leading figure in the movement. Protesters had agreed on the choice of Ms. Karki only after Mr. Shah endorsed her.

As young campaigners wanted in front of the President's Office throughout Friday, party insiders said Mr. Poudel had also consulted major political leaders, who told him that any action he took should remain within constitutional limits. The Army, the key facilitator whose presence on the streets has ensured a

semblance of calm, was waiting for the process to move ahead as soon as possible and was getting exasperated as the hours passed, sources said. Though some expressed concerns that the process of appointing Ms. Karki fell outside constitutional bounds, constitutional expert Biju Adhikari said it was "unlikely to be challenged in court."

"Given that her appointment is a remedial measure taken at a time of crisis, its legitimacy is not likely to be questioned," Mr. Adhikari said.

Even after Gen Z, frustrated with the political class for their years of misrule and flashy, luxurious lifestyles, but the protests on Monday. At least 19 people were killed in a brutal response by the Oli government, which triggered further protests and a sweeping social media ban. On Tuesday, the protests turned violent, as demonstrators stormed politicians' homes, set them on fire, and mobbed the leaders. They also burned down key government infrastructure in a symbolic takeover of the state.

As the protests escalated, Mr. Oli stepped down and has been under Army coercion that the process of appointing Ms. Karki fall outside constitutional bounds, constitutional expert Biju Adhikari said it was "unlikely to be challenged in court."

Ms. Karki is widely regarded as clean and upright, with many even calling her an anti-corruption crusader. She holds a master's degree in political science from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, and a law degree from Tribhuvan University. After serving as Acting Chief Justice from April 13 to July 10, 2016, she was appointed Chief Justice on July 11, 2016. She retired on June 7, 2021.

Lok Raj Baral, a professor and former Ambassador of Nepal to India, says that in the current context, the selection of Ms. Karki is wholly justified. "The immediate challenges for her would be to maintain law and order, restore confidence among all organs of the state, and

oversee elections," said Mr. Baral, author of *Nepal: From Monarchy to Republic*, in an interview with *The Hindu*. "I believe she will be able to carry out the task of peacefully handing over power."

Top priorities After assuming office, Ms. Karki will need to form a Cabinet by appointing Ministers to carry out essential functions of government while leading the country toward elections.

Mr. Adhikari says the first two priorities of the interim government should be an independent investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the September 8 carnage, and attacks and arson against state infrastructure. "The interim head also needs to pave the way for constitutional reforms to strengthen democracy and accountability," he added.

Correspondent in Kathmandu

INSIDE

Modi pushes for digitising manuscripts

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday pushed for digitisation of India's ancient manuscripts and creation of a database to share the knowledge is them. He said the exercise would be an extension of the country's resolve to forge ahead with the concept of *satyameva jayate* (truth alone triumphs) (made in India) and *atmanirbhar* (self-reliance) (Baral) • PAGE 6

Man accused of killing Charlie Kirk arrested

OREM

U.S. authorities said on Friday they had captured the man accused of killing prominent right-wing activist Charlie Kirk after a family member helped to turn him in after a frantic manhunt. The 31-year-old was killed after being hit by a single bullet in his neck while addressing a crowd at Utah Valley University. Kirk was an electrifying presence at the U.S. far right. • PAGE 13

Railways issue alert after several signal failures

CHENNAI

The ongoing infrastructure development work by the Indian Railways is causing frequent signal failures owing to cable cuts, posing a serious threat to safety of operations. Amidst the increasing number of cable cuts, the Ministry has sent out an alert to general managers of several Railways to take precautionary measures. • PAGE 6

Stepping forward



Duty begins Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan after taking oath at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Friday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and other dignitaries were present on the occasion. *AP* (from top row)

Firecracker ban should not be only in Delhi: CJI

Krishnadeva Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The ban on firecrackers should not be confined to the national capital, the Supreme Court said in observations on Friday, noting that people across the country have a right to pollution-free air. "A policy should be crafted for the entire country. If firecrackers have to be banned, it has to be done for the entire country... Also, the poor who are dependent on this industry have to be looked into," the Court said.



U.S. KARKI Chief Justice of India

He asked why citizens living in other cities and other parts of the country should not be accorded the same relief from air pollution as the "elite" of Delhi. "Just because this is the national capital city or the apex Court is situated in this area, it should have pollution-free air and not the other parts of India," the Chief Justice asked.

Senior advocate Apurva Singh, an amicus curiae in the air pollution case, replied that the "elite" has their own ways to counter air pollution. "There is a misconception that air pollution is only a problem for the elite. It is actually the people on the streets who suffer," Ms. Singh said, adding that people in Delhi literally choke from the pollution. "Winters are impossible," she said.

Chief Justice Gaur said the problem was national. "I was in Amritsar last winter on Guru Purnima day. I was told the pollution in Amritsar was worse than in Delhi... Whatever policy there is to counter air pollution, it should be on a pan-India basis," he said.

Senior advocate K. Paras Mehta, appearing for the firecracker industry, said their licences are being revoked due to the top court's confirmation of a complete ban on the sale, production and manufacture of firecrackers in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) in April 2025. Some of these licences were valid till 2026.

"Only if it is shown that burden of green crackers causes the bare minimum pollution is there a possibility of rethinking the ban imposed through earlier versions of the court," the court had observed in April. On Friday, the court sought a report from the Central Pollution Control Board Management and listed the case after two weeks.

'Ending India's Russian oil imports is top priority'

Suhashini Haldar

NEW DELHI

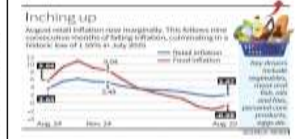
Urging India to stop buying Russian oil is a "top priority", U.S. President Donald Trump's Ambassador-designate to India Sergio Gue told U.S. Senators at his confirmation hearing on Thursday, indicating that despite a recent U.S. outreach to India to restart trade ties, Russian imports will continue to be an issue. He said that Mr. Trump had made it "crystal clear" that India would have to cease all imports of Russian oil.

FULL REPORT

PAGE 5

Retail inflation climbs to 2.1% in August after a nine-month decline

Creeping up



NEW DELHI

Retail inflation broke a nine-month declining streak in August, quickening to 2.1% from 1.5% in July 2023, according to official data. The inflation in August was marginally higher than the lower bound of the Reserve Bank of India's 600 comfort band of 2-6% for retail inflation. The rate of retail inflation had been declining every month since November 2024.

Food and beverages The data released by the Ministry of statistics and Programme Implementation on Friday showed that the inflation in the food and beverages category remained flat in August at 0.00%, compared to 8.8% in August last year. Inflation in the clothing and footwear category remained flat in August at 0.00%, compared to 2.67% in August 2022 compared with 2.67% in July. Inflation in the housing segment was 0.00% in August, compared with 0.00% in July.

The fuel and light category saw a relatively faster increase in inflation, which quickened to 2.9% in August 2025 from 1.4% in July. "While food products, the main drivers of low inflation, are vegetables and pulses which recorded 45.9% and 44.5% respectively," according to a note by the Bank of Baroda's economics research wing. "Oil continues to exert upward pressure, with 21.2% inflation due to higher global prices as well as low base effect."

According to Upasna Bhattacharya, Chief Economist at Kotak Mahindra Bank, the GST rate cut impact is likely to play out in the year ahead, partly offsetting the impact of an adverse base effect in 2020-27. "While we see a pause by the RBI in the upcoming policy, we do see some respite for rate cuts worth 28-30 basis points opening up from December policy in July. However, inflation in the housing segment and the Fed move ahead with aggressive rate cuts," Ms. Bhattacharya said.

Sushila Karki sworn in as Nepal's first woman PM

73-year-old former Chief Justice, who backed the protesters, has to appoint Cabinet, oversee polls

President Ram Chandra Poudel dissolves Nepal's Parliament, accepting an important Gen Z demand

PM's priorities will include investigating the Sept. 8 violence, addressing attacks on state infrastructure

Sanjeev Satgainya
KATHMANDU

Nepal President Ram Chandra Poudel appointed former Chief Justice Sushila Karki as the country's new Prime Minister and dissolved Parliament on Friday, as days of political turmoil showed signs of abating in the Himalayan nation. He also announced fresh elections on March 5, 2026.

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Following hectic meetings that began late on Thursday, Mr. Poudel on Friday evening agreed to dissolve Parliament, a key demand of Gen Z protes-

ters who brought down the government of K.P. Sharma Oli on September 9. Ms. Karki will soon form a Cabinet that will oversee the elections.

Even after Gen Z campaigners agreed on Ms. Karki's name as the leader of the next government, a dispute over the dissolution of Parliament had delayed the process of her appointment.

Several consultations

Mr. Poudel has held several rounds of consultations with Ms. Karki and other legal experts, facilitated by the Army, since Thursday night.

According to sources and experts he consulted, the President was extremely concerned that dissolving Parliament before appointing the head of government could give a free rein to the new Cabinet, with nobody to hold it accountable. Ms. Karki, however, backed the protesters' demand that the House be dissolved. Protesters argued that if Parlia-



Regime change: Nepal President Ram Chandra Poudel administers the oath of office to Sushila Karki at the President House in Kathmandu on Friday. AFP

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semblance of calm, was waiting for the process to move ahead as soon as possible and was getting exasperated as the hours passed, sources said.

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"Given that her appointment is a remedial measure taken at a time of crisis, its legitimacy is not likely to be questioned," Mr. Adhikari said.

Nepal's tech-savvy Gen Z, frustrated with the political class for their years of misrule and flashy, luxurious lifestyles, hit the streets on Monday. At least 19 people were killed in a brutal response by the Oli government, which triggered further protests and a sweeping social media ban. On Tuesday, the protests turned violent, as demonstrators stormed politicians' homes, set them on fire, and manhandled the leaders. They also burned down key government infrastructure in a symbolic takeover of the state.

As the protests escalated, Mr. Oli stepped down and has been under Army protection since. The campaigners locked in Ms. Karki's name to lead a civilian government to clean up the mess created by political parties and lead the country. Now that Ms. Kar-

ki has been given the helm of the country, a daunting task rests on her shoulders – staying true to the demands of Gen Z and overseeing elections to hand over power to a newly elected democratic government.

Ms. Karki is widely regarded as clean and upright, with many even calling her an anti-corruption crusader. She holds a master's degree in political science from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, and a law degree from Tribhuvan University. After serving as Acting Chief Justice from April 13 to July 10, 2016, she was appointed Chief Justice on July 11, 2016. She retired on June 7, 2017.

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"The immediate challenges for her would be to maintain law and order, boost confidence among all organs of the state, and

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Top priorities

After assuming office, Ms. Karki will need to form a Cabinet by appointing Ministers to carry out essential functions of government while leading the country toward elections.

Mr. Adhikari says the first two priorities of the interim government should be an independent investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the September 8 carnage, and a criminal investigation into those who carried out attacks and arson against state infrastructure. "The interim head also needs to pave the way for constitutional reforms to strengthen democracy and accountability," he added. (Sanjeev Satgainya is a journalist based in Kathmandu.)

- **Event:** Nepal's President **Ram Chandra Poudel** appointed **Sushila Karki**, former Chief Justice, as the new Prime Minister.
 - **Action:** Parliament dissolved at protesters' demand; fresh elections announced for **March 5, 2026**.
 - **Reason:** After days of violent **Gen Z-led protests** that toppled PM **K.P. Sharma Oli's** govt.
-

2. About Sushila Karki

- **Age:** 73 years.
 - **Background:**
 - First **woman Chief Justice of Nepal** (2016–2017).
 - Academic: Master's in Political Science (Banaras Hindu University), Law degree (Tribhuvan University).
 - Known for **anti-corruption stance**, uprightness, and integrity.
 - **Role Now:** Nepal's **first woman PM**.
-

3. Key Decisions

- **Dissolution of Parliament:**
 - Accepted an important **Gen Z demand**.
 - Ensures transfer of power to a newly elected govt.
 - **Cabinet Formation:**
 - Karki to appoint ministers → oversee elections, run interim govt.
-

4. Challenges & Priorities

- **Immediate Challenges:**
 - Maintain **law and order**, stabilize state institutions.
 - Handle **youth demands**, restore public trust.
- **Top Priorities:**
 1. **Independent probe** into **Sept 8 violence** (19 killed, attacks on infrastructure).
 2. Criminal investigation of **attacks/arson** against state property.
 3. Prepare ground for **constitutional reforms** to ensure accountability.

About Nepal's Political Instability

- Since 1990: **30 governments in 35 years**.
- No PM has completed a full term.
- Transition:
 - 1990 → Constitutional Monarchy.
 - 2008 → Republic (after Maoist insurgency).
 - 2015 → New Constitution adopted.

Sushila Karki's Judicial Legacy

- First woman to head Nepal's judiciary.
- Known for **landmark rulings on corruption cases**.
- Faced impeachment attempt in 2017 (later withdrawn).

India–Nepal Angle

- India has stakes in Nepal's **political stability** due to:
 - Open border (1,751 km).
 - Trade, security, migration.
 - Counterbalance to **China's growing influence**.

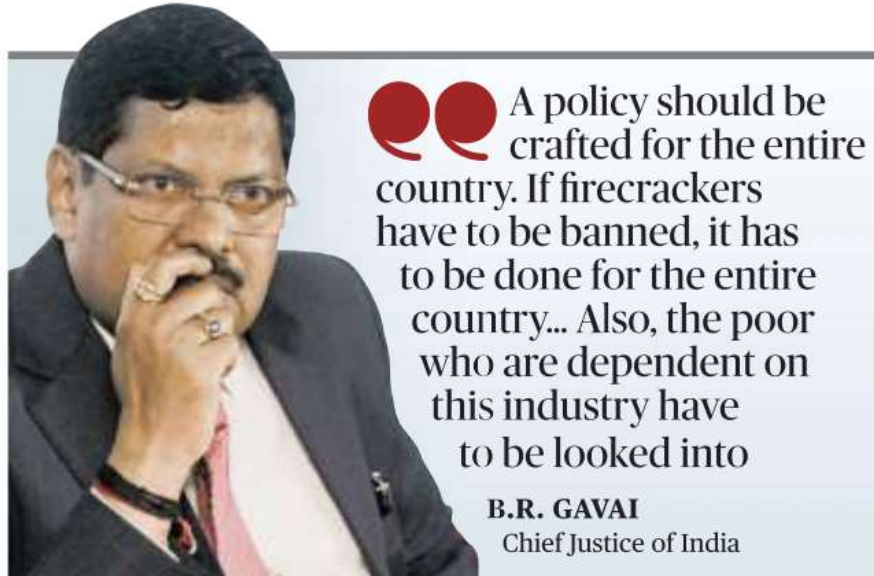
Firecracker ban should not be only in Delhi: CJI

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The ban on firecrackers should not be confined to the national capital, the Supreme Court said in oral observations on Friday, noting that people across the country have a right to pollution-free air.

"Therefore, a policy should be crafted for the entire country. If firecrackers have to be banned, it has to be done for the entire country... Also, the poor who are dependent on this industry have to be looked into," Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai observed in a hearing ahead of Deepavali and the approach of winter.



He asked why citizens living in other cities and other parts of the country should not be accorded the same relief from air pollution as the "elite" of Delhi. "Just because this is the national capital city or the Supreme Court is situated in

this area, it should have pollution-free air and not the other parts of India?" the Chief Justice asked.

Senior advocate Aparajita Singh, an *amicus curiae* in the air pollution cases, replied that the 'elite' have their own ways to counter

air pollution. "There is a misconception that air pollution is only a problem for the elite. It is actually the people on the streets who suffer," Ms. Singh said, adding that people in Delhi literally choke from the pollution.

"Winters are impossible," she said.

Chief Justice Gavai said the problem was national. "I was in Amritsar last winter on Guru Purab day. I was told the pollution in Amritsar was worse than in Delhi... Whatever policy there is [to counter air pollution], it should be on a pan-India basis," he said.

Senior advocate K. Parameshwar, appearing for the firecracker industry,

said their licences are being revoked due to the top court's confirmation of a complete ban on the sale, production and manufacture of firecrackers in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) in April 2025. Some of these licences were valid till 2028.

"Only if it is shown that bursting of green crackers causes the bare minimum pollution is there a possibility of rethinking the ban imposed through earlier orders of this court," the court had observed in April.

On Friday, the court sought a report from the Commission for Air Quality Management and listed the case after two weeks.

-
- **Observation by Supreme Court:** Ban on firecrackers should not be confined to **Delhi & NCR**.
 - **Chief Justice B.R. Gavai:**
 - People across India have a **right to pollution-free air**.
 - If ban is necessary, it should apply to the **entire country**.
 - Also emphasised the need to protect **livelihoods of poor workers** dependent on firecracker industry.

Why only Delhi?

- Citizens outside Delhi also suffer from air pollution (e.g., Amritsar worse than Delhi on Guru Purab).
- Court questioned selective application of relief.

Livelihood Concerns

- Many poor families depend on firecracker manufacturing.
- Policy must balance **environmental protection** with **social justice**.

Report Considered

- Commission for Air Quality Management submitted a report; case to be reviewed in **two weeks**.

- **Issues Highlighted**

- **Public Health**

- Air pollution is not just an “elite” problem; ordinary people on streets suffer more.
- Winters worsen the crisis; Delhiites “literally choke” in smog.

- **Licences Cancelled**

- Ban on sale, production, manufacture of firecrackers in Delhi & NCR (April 2025).
- Some licences (valid till 2028) revoked.

- **Green Crackers Debate**

- Court earlier: Only if “green crackers” shown to cause **minimum pollution**, ban may be reconsidered.

-
- **Legal Background**
 - **Article 21:** Right to life includes right to a clean environment.
 - **Previous Orders:**
 - *Arjun Gopal vs Union of India (2018)* → allowed only “green crackers” with reduced emissions.
 - Multiple interim bans before every Diwali season.
 - **Firecracker Industry**
 - **Major Hub:** Sivakasi (Tamil Nadu) → ~90% of India’s firecracker production.
 - Employs ~4-5 lakh workers (direct + indirect).
 - **Health Impact**
 - Firecrackers release **PM2.5, SO2, NO2, heavy metals** → respiratory, cardiac risks.
 - Winter + stubble burning + firecrackers = severe smog episodes.

IN BRIEF



Withdrawal of monsoon likely to begin around Sept. 15: IMD

The southwest monsoon is likely to start withdrawing from northwest India around September 15, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday. The primary rain-bearing system usually makes its onset over Kerala by June 1 and covers the entire country by July 8. It starts retreating from northwest India around September 17 and withdraws completely by October 15. "Conditions are becoming favourable for the withdrawal of the Southwest Monsoon from some parts of west Rajasthan around September 15," said IMD. This year, the monsoon covered the entire country nine days before the usual date of July 8.

SC to hear petition alleging custodial torture of minor

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear on September 15 a plea alleging sexual assault and custodial torture of a 17-year-old boy by the Gujarat Police. The petition, mentioned before a Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) R.K. Gavai and Justice K. Vinod Chandran, sought the constitution of a special investigation team excluding Gujarat police officers. Alternatively, it requested a court-monitored probe by the CBI. "This is an Article 32 petition and we are praying for the urgent constitution of a medical board by AFMS, Delhi," advocate Robin Bhatt, representing the sister of the alleged victim, submitted.

SC Bench to hear if judicial officers can avail Bar quota

A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of India R.K. Gavai on Friday decided to hear whether judicial officers with seven years' legal experience can avail bar quota for District Judge appointment. In a short hearing, the Bench scheduled the hearing to begin from September 23. The reference to the Constitution Bench by a Division Bench of the court was based on the interpretation of Article 233(2) of the Constitution. The question was whether a judicial officer with seven years' past experience in the bar could also be considered for appointment as District Judge under the constitutional provision.

Navy's latest base INS Aravali commissioned in Gurugram

The Indian Navy commissioned its latest Naval Base, INS Aravali, at Gurugram on Friday, marking a major boost to its information and communication infrastructure. Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff, presided over the ceremony, which included a 50-men guard of honour, the reading of the commissioning warrant by Captain Sachin Kumar Singh, and the unveiling of the commissioning plaque by Mrs. Shashi Tripathi, President PNMWA. Admiral Tripathi said that the new base would serve as a hub of technology, linking platforms and partners across oceans. INS Aravali is expected to boost the Navy readiness and maritime security.

India's manuscripts reflect the journey of humanity, says Modi

PM says digitisation will curb intellectual piracy; he bats for creation of database and highlights collaboration with Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday battled for digitisation of India's ancient manuscripts and creation of a database to share the knowledge in them.

Mr. Modi, who was addressing an International Conference on "Reclaiming India's Knowledge Legacy through Manuscript Heritage" as part of the launch of the Gyan Bharat Mission, said digitisation would help in curbing intellectual piracy, as the information sourced from the country's traditional knowledge system had been copied and patented many a time by others.

He said the exercise would be an extension of the country's resolve to forge ahead with the concept of *swadeshi* (made in India) and *atmanirbhar* (self-reliant) Bharat.

The Prime Minister said India had the world's largest collection of about one crore manuscripts, of



Highlighting legacy: PM Narendra Modi visits an exhibition during the international conference on manuscripts in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

which over 10 lakh had been digitised so far. He commended private organisations for working with the government to achieve this goal.

"Presenting heritage" India is now proudly presenting before the world its heritage of ancient knowledge preserved in its manuscripts for centuries, he said, adding that India was also working with other countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Mongolia, with whom it has joyed cultural ties and which are home to such

manuscripts. "Throughout history, erosion of manuscript was witnessed, but the ones that remain show how devoted our ancestors were to knowledge, science, and learning," Mr. Modi said.

He launched the "Gyan Bharat" portal, a dedicated digital repository platform to digitise and preserve ancient Indian manuscripts, and enhance sharing traditional knowledge embedded in them.

Denying upward mobility to candidates with disabilities defeats purpose of quota: SC

Rajshubha Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in a judgment on Friday asked the Centre to clarify whether talented candidates with disabilities whose performance allows them to qualify for the unreserved category are pushed up to make room for more people with disabilities to avail reservation benefits.

The top court asked the Union government to detail the steps taken so far to ensure the "upward movement" of such candidates.

"We consider it appropriate to require the Union of India to explain whether appropriate measures have been taken to provide the upward movement of meritorious candidates applying against the posts reserved for persons with disabilities. In case such candidates secure more than the cut-off for the unreserved category, the same people must also be applied to promotions," a Bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Mheeta said, directing the Union government to respond by October 14.

The judgment, authored by Justice Mheeta, said that candidates with disabilities



continue to be restricted to seats or jobs allotted for the disabled category, instead of allowing them upward mobility.

The direct consequence of not providing upward movement to meritorious candidates applying under the category of persons with disabilities would be that even when a candidate with disability scores higher than the cut-off for the unreserved category, such a candidate would inevitably occupy the reserved seat, thereby denying the opportunity to a lower scoring candidate with disability to make a claim on the seat/post.

Such stagnation of a candidate with disabilities defeats the very purpose of reservation under Section 34 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act and "constituted a glaring example of hostile discrimination against persons with disabilities", the court said.

Justice Mheeta pointed out that meritorious candidates who belong to backward classes are automatically moved up to the unreserved category, leaving reserved seats vacant for the less advantaged among them. However, the same measures are not taken in the case of persons with disabilities, who have been deprived by providence as against persons who face societal discrimination, he said.

The court said the government ought to see the larger objective of reservation, which is to open a window for people with disabilities to join the mainstream and equally share opportunities.

"Rather than viewing disability as a deficit requiring correction, the law must recognise it as a lens that reveals the true nature of legal, social, and institutional frameworks, illustrating whether they embrace human diversity or create barriers that exclude certain members of society. I.e., those who have been discriminated against by providence or who have suffered the disability factor in their lifetime," Justice Mheeta noted.

SC denies relief to Kangana Ranaut in defamation case

Aarathi Ramesh

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday declined to grant relief to actor and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut's petition seeking to quash a defamation complaint filed against her over a tweet linked to the 2020-21 farmers' protest against the Centre's new, repealed farm laws.

A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Justice Mheeta expressed its disinclination to hear the plea and permitted Kangana Ranaut's counsel to withdraw it, after suggesting that she could pursue alternative remedies before the trial court.

The BJP leader had moved the top court after filing the plea. Justice Mheeta responded that she had failed to establish that her allegedly defamatory post

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Railways issue alert after cable cuts trigger signal failures, safety concerns

S. Vijay Kumar

CHENNAI

The ongoing infrastructure development work by the Indian Railways is causing frequent signal failures owing to cable cuts, posing a threat to the safety of train operations.

Amidst the increasing number of cable cuts being reported across the railway network, the Ministry of Railways has sent out an alert to general managers of all zones. The ministry has also issued precautionary measures during the ongoing works.

The Railways is undertaking large-scale development works on mission mode, especially implementation of safety enhancement projects, automatic signalling, and introduction of double line, construction of bound-

ary wall or fence to facilitate operation of high-speed trains, and installation of cable cut-damage detectors.

The Railways said it is continuously working to ensure safety of signalling systems.

Asked for his comments on the issue of cable cuts, senior Railway officer said heavy penalty was being levied on contractors responsible for such damage.

The fine amount can go up to ₹1 lakh for each cut-cable cut-damage, will not happen if the work is executed strictly as per the drawing and under close monitoring of supervisory officials," he said.

While undertaking development works, "However, cases of cable cut-damage continue to be reported frequently," Minister said.

He said the Railways is continuously working to ensure safety of signalling systems.

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SpiceJet plane wheel falls off during take-off

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

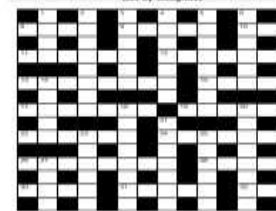
One of the wheels of a SpiceJet aircraft fell off at the time of take-off from the Kandla airport in Gujarat on Friday, resulting in full emergency being declared at the Mumbai airport in preparation for its landing.

A video captured the moment when the wheel of SpiceJet's Bombardier CRJ-900 aircraft fell off as the plane took off from the airport. SpiceJet said in a statement that the landing gear was normal, and all onboard were safe.

The airport said normal operations resumed shortly afterwards. The missing wheel was later found at the Kandla airport.

The Bombardier CRJ-900 has a set of wheels under the nose and two wheels on each side of the engines on the wings.

THE CROSSWORD



- Across
1. Confidant dead in part of hospital (4)
 2. In the beginning, someone disobeys using our email (3)
 3. One's photo evicting host from Islamabad (11)
 4. Poles around, causing India's city (10)
 5. A cold shockman? That's right! (8)
 6. 10 cover revealed host in long-winded TV show to raise money (8)

To solve this puzzle online, go to www.hindu.com and click on the crossword link.

- Down
1. Torment travels for festival (8)
 2. Energy is concentrated beams of light spots out before (7)
 3. Support European husband or wife (7)
 4. A couple of extra see (3)
 5. Admits on board, "Honey crashed after long death" (8)
 6. Underground take-away (10)
 7. Week ahead, carrying a military policeman, and walked with disability (8)
 8. Girl with energy performs strong wind (4)
 9. Says in an epitaph, "Serves" (3)
 10. Teen reports slightly exam in India (4)
 11. Between beginning of Jan, and end of Dec., a king gives a card (10)
 12. Pairs sat awkwardly, connecting devices (8)
 13. Mary's husband and Juliet dashed hopes (5)
 14. Drug produced by bees and murders bee (9)
 15. Goes for romance (9)
 16. Crazy governors start shooting in Chennai of year (8)
 17. Enquire pale model (4)
 18. European men return Yankee's foe (5)
 19. Stand in support of painter? (5)
 20. Once again performs at Screen Awards (8)
 21. Huron hugged by mother may give a tribute (8)
 22. Commemorate record for bureaucratic rigour (14)
 23. Headlining host found in Indian territory (8)
 24. It may be French in North European (5)
 25. State "Unusually repeated headache" (8)
 26. First lady gets new hat (4)

SUDOKU

1	4		3					
7	6	8						
6		1		9				
5	1	3		9	4	8		
	9			4		5		
7	9							
				9	6	7		
			7			1	3	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7	4	1	9	8	3	4	6	5
6	4	2	8	5	9	1	3	7
3	9	8	4	7	2	6	5	1
1	6	7	2	8	9	5	4	3
9	7	3	6	5	4	8	2	1
8	5	1	3	6	7	2	9	4
2	8	4	3	9	1	7	6	5

FAITH

Dual nature of Kaikeyi

In the epic Ramayana, poet Kambar distinguishes between bright and dark characters. Brightness represents knowledge, righteousness, and noble, challenging while darkness symbolises ignorance and the failure to follow dharma. Sri Rama, Lakshmana, and Vibhishana are bright figures, while Surpanakha, Tataka, and Ravana embody darkness. Kaikeyi stands apart, reflecting both light and shadow.

Lanka's Sri Jayaraj said in a discourse that Kaikeyi initially revealed her bright side. She was deeply affectionate towards Rama, son of Kaushalya, raising him without discrimination. When King Dasaratha announced Rama's coronation, Kaikeyi was delighted. This reveals the bright side of her character. But Kaikeyi's mind, like many others, became vulnerable to the evil influence of Manthara. Persuaded by her maid, Kaikeyi demanded that her son Bharata be crowned king and Rama be sent to the forest. This turn exposed her darker side, born out of misguided influence. Yet even in this, she could not bring herself to reject Rama forever. She asked only that he spend 14 years in exile, showing hesitation and inner conflict.

Kambar also highlights a symbolic moment. When Rama and Sita returned from Ashoka after their marriage, Rama instructed Sita to bow first to Kaikeyi before Kaushalya, despite custom favouring the eldest. This subtle act was Rama's way of preparing Sita for future trials that would arise through Kaikeyi.

Thus, Kaikeyi is not portrayed as totally evil. Kambar presents her as a bright soul temporarily overshadowed by ignorance.

India's manuscripts reflect the journey of humanity, says Modi

PM says digitisation will curb intellectual piracy; he bats for creation of database and highlights collaboration with Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday batted for digitisation of India's ancient manuscripts and creation of a database to share the knowledge in them.

Mr. Modi, who was addressing an International Conference on "Reclaiming India's Knowledge Legacy through Manuscript Heritage" as part of the launch of the Gyan Bharatam Mission, said digitisation would help in curbing "intellectual piracy", as the information sourced from the country's traditional knowledge system had been copied and patented many a time by others.

He said the exercise would be an extension of the country's resolve to forge ahead with the concept of swadeshi (made in India) and *atmanirbhar* (self-reliant) Bharat.

The Prime Minister said India had the world's largest collection of about one crore manuscripts, of



Digitising legacy: PM Narendra Modi visits an exhibition during the international conference on manuscripts in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

which over 10 lakh had been digitised so far. He commended private organisations for working with the government to achieve this goal.

'Presenting heritage'

India is now proudly presenting before the world its heritage of ancient knowledge preserved in its manuscripts for centuries, he said, adding that India was also working with other countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Mongolia, with whom it has enjoyed cultural ties and which are home to such

manuscripts. "Throughout history, crores of manuscripts were destroyed, but the ones that remain show how devoted our ancestors were to knowledge, science, and learning," Mr. Modi said. "India's manuscripts contain footprints of the development journey of the entire humanity."

He launched the "Gyan Bharatam" portal, a dedicated digital repository platform to digitalise and preserve ancient Indian manuscripts, and enhance sharing traditional knowledge embedded in them.



Aspect

Definition

Details

A manuscript is a handwritten or typed document, often ancient or historical, containing texts, scriptures, or literary works. In India, it primarily refers to traditional texts written before the advent of printing.

Materials Used

Palm leaves, birch bark, parchment, handmade paper, cloth.

Languages

Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil, Telugu, Persian, Arabic, and many regional Indian languages.

Scripts

Devanagari, Grantha, Sharada, Modi, Nandinagari, Tamil-Brahmi, Persian, etc.

Content

Religious texts (Vedas, Upanishads, Quran, Bible translations), literature, philosophy, Ayurveda, astronomy, mathematics, law, history.

Preservation


National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM), libraries, museums, temples, monasteries, and private collections.

Significance

Vital for understanding India's cultural, scientific, and philosophical heritage. Manuscripts are primary sources for reconstructing ancient knowledge.

Modern Efforts

Digitization projects, conservation labs, and online archives under NMM and state cultural departments.



PM Narendra Modi addressed the **International Conference on “Reclaiming India’s Knowledge Legacy through Manuscript Heritage”**.

Occasion: Launch of the **Gyan Bharattam Mission**.

Focus: Digitisation of manuscripts to **preserve knowledge & curb intellectual piracy**.

- **Digitisation Drive:**

- India has **one crore manuscripts** (world's largest collection).
- Over **10 lakh already digitised**.
- Aim: Creation of a **national database** for manuscripts.

- **Gyan Bharattam Portal:**

- A dedicated digital platform for **preservation & sharing**.
- Objective: Prevent copying/patenting of India's traditional knowledge by outsiders.

- **Collaboration:**

- India working with **Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia** (nations with shared cultural ties).

-
- **Significance**
 - **Knowledge Legacy:**
 - Manuscripts reflect **footprints of humanity's development journey**.
 - Cover subjects like science, learning, philosophy, and culture.
 - **Swadeshi & Atmanirbhar:**
 - Extension of India's vision of **self-reliance & cultural pride**.
 - **Preventing Intellectual Piracy:**
 - Traditional knowledge (e.g., Ayurveda, yoga, herbal medicine) often copied & patented abroad.
 - Digitisation ensures **legal & historical protection**.

- **Manuscript Heritage in India**
 - **National Mission for Manuscripts (2003):** Established to survey, conserve & digitise.
 - Languages: Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Persian, Arabic, Tamil, etc.
-

- Famous Repositories: **Sarasvati Mahal Library (Tanjore), Bhandarkar Institute (Pune), JNU Manuscript Library.**
- **Global Context**
- **UNESCO Memory of the World Programme:** Promotes preservation of documentary heritage.
- Other countries digitising heritage: China (Dunhuang manuscripts), Greece (Byzantine texts).
- **Intellectual Property Angle**
- India has fought **biopiracy cases**:
 - **Turmeric patent case (1997).**
 - **Neem patent case (2000).**
- Digitisation can prevent future misuse.

Doublespeak India is finding the Trump administration increasingly unreliable.

Veeks after calling off the visit of trade negotiators to Delhi, the U.S. administration says it has invited Commerce Minister Pyush Goyal and India's trade envoy to Washington to resume talks for the India-U.S. PTA. The announcement came days after U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi signalled, through public comments and state media posts, a halt to tensions of the last four months. On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Mr. Trump's Ambassador-designate to India Sergio Goro also said they expect this to be smooth, a trade deal to be announced shortly, and a Quad Summit later this year. Despite the U.S.'s positive actions against India on trade, visas, deportations, and Mr. Trump's comments on Operation Sindoor, the secretary and his dealings with Pakistan, New Delhi has appeared prepared to move forward as well, with Mr. Goyal and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar confirming India's active engagement with the U.S. However, other comments by the Trump administration on India's import of Russian oil could throw a spanner in the works. Mr. Goro has said that supporting the imports by India remains the U.S.'s "top priority," while Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick has said that India has "got to stop" buying Russian oil for a U.S. trade deal. Meanwhile, reports suggest that Mr. Trump has personally asked the European Union to slap "100% sanctions" on India and China to make Russia stop the Ukraine conflict.

The U.S.'s doublespeak will disorient many in government and industry circles who had expressed relief over the Modi-Trump detente, and the resumption of trade talks. At 50%, India and Brazil face the highest U.S. tariffs, and Indian textile exporters have begged the U.S. to suspend them. According to the Chief Economic Adviser, V. Anurag Kashyap, the tariffs could mean a loss of half a per cent from India's GDP, and jobs issues will be a concern as well. In theory, the government could consider the U.S.'s demands on reducing Russian oil if they had not been served as an ultimatum. However, even if New Delhi was so inclined, Washington is unlikely to be so much harder with its crudely worded ultimatums. While the Modi government did accept the U.S. demands to stop the imports of Iranian and Venezuelan oil earlier, reporting that in 2025 with Russia in more economic isolation, the U.S. sanctions and high tariffs can be absorbed, the costs of carving in time and the resultant reputational damage may seem greater in the balance.

Scam space

Social media platforms should proactively remove fraudulent content

Policing the digital economy requires what might seem disproportionate resources, and a recent case in Hyderabad illustrates why. A retired doctor was persuaded to invest more than ₹20 lakh after viewing a video on Instagram, in which Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman appeared to endorse an investment scheme. The video was a deepfake. Similar videos have been in circulation, featuring other public figures, to lend credibility to fraudulent cryptocurrency platforms. Such videos exploit the limited technical literacy of the wider population, regulatory gaps in cryptocurrency trading, the new use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated deepfakes, and the limited response of social media platforms. Despite the increased scrutiny, many users are still unable to identify online manipulation, and are further motivated by the promise of rapid profits and fabricated evidence of gains. Complainers often act only after attempts to withdraw investments fail. Public awareness campaigns remain uneven and often general, leaving many people vulnerable to scams that use increasingly sophisticated forms of deception. Most countries, including India, do so not yet classify them with the same clarity as conventional securities, creating an environment where fraudsters operate with impunity. Many are hosted abroad, operate through complex chains of wallets, and can disappear overnight. While police units have developed capacity, their reach stops at national borders.

Social media platforms, which serve as the principal channel for such content, must act more proactively. While companies such as Instagram publish advisories on avoiding scams and offer reporting mechanisms, they often lack the resources to remove scam content proactively. The policies of platforms are often reactive, and some border cooperation to limit the space in which fraudulent schemes operate. Second, increased vigilance must be shown as a public policy priority. Awareness efforts should be continuous and supported by educational institutions, rather than limited to periodic campaigns by police units. Third, social media platforms should be required to remove fraudulent content proactively. Without these, such scams will entail huge human and material costs.

The Right to Information (RTI) Act is founded on the principle that in a democracy, which is people for the people, by the people, for the people, all information held by the government inherently belongs to the citizens. The government acts as a custodian of this information on behalf of the populace. Citizens legitimise their representatives by electing them, who in turn legitimise the bureaucracy. Therefore, the default mode under the RTI is that all information must be shared with citizens. However, the Act always included specific exemptions to protect certain interests, such as national sovereignty. One crucial exemption is the Act's Section 8(1)(j), which is on "personal information".

The original Section 8(1)(j) was a detailed provision designed to balance the right to information with individual privacy. It stipulated that personal information could be denied if it had no connection to public activity or constituted an "unwarranted invasion on the privacy of an individual", unless there was a larger public interest in its disclosure.

A key aspect of this original provision was a proviso which is an acid test. It said: "provided that the information which varies as to whether it is in the possession of a Minister or a Member of Parliament or a State Legislature shall not be denied to any person." This meant that if information could not be denied to Parliament or a State Legislature it could also not be denied to an ordinary citizen.

The intent was to guide public information officers (PIOs) in discerning what constituted public activity, private activity, or an invasion of privacy, especially given the difficulty in definitively defining "privacy" even Justice R.S. Pathankar (Retd) of the Union of India acknowledged that it would evolve on a case-to-case basis. The government routinely collects information from an individual in the normal course of its duties, and such information is generally not considered to be an invasion of privacy and should, therefore, be shared. However, if it invades his privacy, it must not be taken routinely. Restrictions on the fundamental right to information should be within the limits set by Article 19(2) of the Constitution. Here, there are only two words relating to privacy: "decency" or "morality". If disclosure violates decency or morality, it should be denied to Parliament and citizens.

The ambiguity of 'personal information'
The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDPA) Act amends Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act – a drastic alteration of Section 8(1)(j) that reduces its length to six words. This significant abbreviation makes it easy for most information to be denied. The core concern revolves around the interpretation of "personal information" itself.



Shashil Saxena
is a former Central Information Commission member

One of the most pressing issues is the lack of a clear and consistent definition of "personal information" under the amended RTI Act, especially in its relationship with the new Data Protection Law. There are two conflicting views: the first is Natural Person Interpretation. One employee or corruption charges falls under its general sense, referring to a "normal person" or natural person. The second is the DPDPA Bill Definition. The other, equally valid view, interprets "person" as defined in the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDPA) Bill. The DPDPA Bill definition is expansive, including a "Hindu undivided family, a firm, a company, [and] any association of individuals and the State". If the latter definition is adopted, "almost everything is personal information". A significant amount of information can be shown to be related to some person. Thus the law gives a hurdle to deny most information. The RTI is transformed into a Right to Deny information. It becomes an "RTD". This broad interpretation poses a fundamental threat to the spirit of transparency. Adding to the complexity, the DPDPA Bill contains a provision that overrides all other laws in cases of conflict. This is alarming because the DPDPA Bill specifies strong penalties for violations which can be as high as ₹200 crore.

This creates an untenable situation for PIOs. As much of the government information is now digital, PIOs are apprehensive that a mistake in disclosing information could lead to severe criminal penalties. This will incentivise PIOs to err on the side of information denial rather than disclosure, effectively creating a "right to information" that is a "right to deny information". The RTI Act, though it might be acceptable for it to override other Acts.

Facilitating corruption
The practical implications of these amendments are dire for public accountability and the fight against corruption. Transparency is a crucial tool in this battle, especially when it comes to anti-corruption mechanisms have proven to be ineffective. The first is the loss of public monitoring. Citizens are the best monitors against corruption. If information is denied, this vital monitoring mechanism is severely hampered. India's multilayered government agencies such as vigilance departments, anti-corruption bureaus and the Lokpal, have already failed to curb corruption.

The second is denial of essential information. The broadened scope of "personal information" means that even minute yet crucial documents could be withheld – a citizen's own corrected passport can be denied as "personal". The example of Rajasthan sharing details of pension beneficiaries to combat "ghost employees" and "ghost cards" will cease. Even a simple order



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Chhattisgarh High Court. In so far as the argument of the appellant plaintiff that they had adopted Hindu traditions, and as so granted such right to the Hindu Succession Act, it was held that since there was no evidence on record, the Trial Court's judgment was affirmed. The High Court had rejected this contention. However, it granted Dalvi's legal heirs an equal share in the property, stating that denying the legal heirs right to property under the gift of customs only discriminated on a discriminatory basis, which the law should avoid.

In *Madhu Kishore and Ors. v. State of Bihar and Ors.* (2020), a petition was filed by the issue of parity between female and male tribal members in the matter of inheritance succession. This was affirmed to customary laws excluding women from inheritance of land or property. The majority judgment of the Supreme Court refused to strike down the provisions as violative of the right to equality, stating that this would cause chaos in the existing law.

Laws in Scheduled Five Area States
In matters of marriage, succession and adoption, tribes in Scheduled Areas are governed by their customary laws. These women constitute more in farms than the men, none of the tribal customary laws prevalent in the Scheduled Five Area States (which also includes Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha) give land inheritance rights to females in matters of title and land. The 10th Report on Agriculture Census 2015-16 shows that 16.7% of ST women possess land when compared to 27.8% of men (SC 23.8%).

It is also argued that in tribal society, land is a community property, where the community as an individual or caste, but it rarely happens that

signed by an official could be denied as "personal information", a consistent definition of "personal information" being denied.

The third is undetected corruption. The amendment "makes it the easy thing to be corrupt" – information relating to ghost employees or corruption charges falls under "personal information". It will be hidden, allowing corruption to flourish and continue unchecked.

While the "larger public interest" clause still exists in the RTI Act (in Section 8(1)(j)), its practical application is extremely rare and difficult. Citizens should not have to demonstrate "larger public interest" to access information as it is their fundamental right. This requirement only applies if information is already exempt.

There will be less than 1% orders where an exemption is accepted, but disclosure is based on larger public interest. This is because it is an incredibly challenging decision for any officer to make, weighing potential harm to an individual against the broader public benefit of disclosure. Therefore, relying on this clause to ensure transparency after the amendment is largely futile.

Apathy and a call to action
Despite the gravity of these amendments, there has been a notable lack of public and media outcry when compared to previous RTI changes, such as those concerning communication's salaries and tenure. This apathy may be due to the amendment being "under the guise of data protection", making it seem less threatening to the average citizen. There is also a common sentiment that an individual's own information should not be shared, regardless of its relevance, leading to an "eye takes over" mentality. Sections 8(2) and 44(3) of the DPDPA Bill constitute a "very fundamental regression on our democracy" and a "very fundamental attack on our fundamental rights".

There needs to be a focus on four issues. First, media and citizen engagement – there must be widespread public discussion across the country. Second, political accountability – citizens should demand assurances from political parties in their manifestos that these amendments will be reversed. Third, public opinion – it is crucial to build strong public opinion with the support of the media. Fourth, recognition of gravity – this issue deserves as much attention as any other constitutional debate, as the fundamental right to information is being compromised.

If citizens continue to remain silent, they will inspire their freedom and democracy. Collective action can lead to these changes being reversed. The future of transparency and accountability in India hinges on whether citizens and media can push back and protect the integrity of the RTI Act.

Property rights, tribals and the gender parity gap

In over a month since International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples was observed on August 9, but it is still not late to ponder over the rights of India's indigenous population. The proposition becomes all the more topical following a judgment of the Supreme Court of India on July 17, 2025, in *Ram Charan and Ors. v. Saktham and Ors.*, the Bench of Justices Sanjay Kardar and Justice Jayashree Jagtap decided the exclusion of daughters in ancestral property to be a negation of their fundamental right to equality. Thus, looking at the issue of a tribal woman's property rights through the lens of gender equality becomes significant. It is a matter of deep gender injustice that most tribal women except in the north-east where there is matrilineal inheritance do not have pieces of legislation giving them statutory rights in ancestral property.

Age of equal share
In this case, the appellant-plaintiffs were the legal heirs of Bhavai, a Scheduled Tribe (ST) woman in Bargua district, Chhattisgarh, who sought partition of a property that belonged to their maternal grandfather, Bhagji alias Bhajan Gond. Their mother (one of five children – four sons and a daughter), they claimed, was entitled to an equal share. The cause of action arose in October 1992 when the defendant refused to make a partition. The appellant-plaintiffs approached the district court seeking a declaration of their equal partition of the suit property, which was dismissed on the ground that no such custom existed in the Gond tribe where village heirs are given rights in ancestral property. The district court was reversed by the first Appellate court and Trial court. The plea then came before the

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In Nepal
Nepal is facing possibly its most serious political turmoil in decades. Following the youth-led protests, curfews and disrupted services reflect the fragile situation. India must act with care and diplomacy by supporting peace, democracy and early elections, taking care to avoid any perception of interference. Stability in Nepal is vital for the region's peace and security. **Hemant Koiri, Member**
India must be wary of the

developments in Nepal – in fact, the neighbourhood. India must not overlook all the aid it possibly can. Nepal must be represented by a democratic government. The Army is no entity to settle the issues in the current scenario. **Manas Agarwal, Shillong, Meghalaya Pradesh**
The protests, led by 'Gen Z', signal a restless and demanding accountability. While it is uncertain whether it will see success, the movement is not insignificant. It has shown the power of youth in demanding accountability and which they can have faith. It is crucial that this type of protest is nurtured. **Valishah Kachar, Ludhiana, Punjab**
The protests were led by 'Gen Z', the generation of 'digital natives' who have grown up with the Internet, smartphones and social media. A disruptive, complacent and even authoritarian regime will get its wake-up call sooner rather than later. When avenues of protest are denied, the anger of the populace will let off steam – only in an explosion. **Dr. Anshu Khatun, Bengaluru**
Break this link
It is ironic that Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who promptly nominated Israel's strong backer U.S. President Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize, should claim that Mr. Trump's "Noah's ark" may be dashed following Israel's attack on Qatar. This could create a new breach for Arab-Israeli relations by fueling yet another crisis of confidence among Arab states. The U.S.'s ability to play a meaningful role in the West Asia. It is clear that deteriorating tensions that have erupted into democracies have domestic political exigencies to foreign policy actions. This needs to end. **Dr. Ramesh Chandra, Chennai**
'Made of Chennai'
I have been following the

money received against the sale or acquisition of tribal lands goes to the gram sabha of villages. The fear of tribal women marrying non-tribal men, leading to land alienation, is another reason for denying women land inheritance rights. The fact that the nature of land remains indigenous despite its transfer to non-tribal as it happens in forest land is to be understood before any such denial.

Any custom must pass the test of parameters such as antiquity, certainty, continuity, reasonableness and conformity with public policy in order to be transformed into a law. A custom of law can verify the legality of a custom based on these. A similar situation arose in *Marthe Alina Daughter of Late Saran Linda v. Al Marthe Alina Wife of Late Ajit Kumar* (2022), where the Jharkhand High Court historically decided in favour of property rights of women of the Oraon tribe in the State as the defendant failed to prove that there was any custom in the Oraon community of Jharkhand where daughters have been continually deprived of inheritance rights in paternal property.

A case for a separate act
The Supreme Court took an affirmative stand on tribal women's property rights, in *Kumari Nandini Devi v. Laxmi v. Special Land Acquisition Officer*, on December 5, 2022, which was one of the first steps towards celebrating the beginning of gender parity in property rights among the tribal women. If Section 2(2) of the Hindu Succession Act, 2005 excludes tribal women from its purview, why not have a separate Tribal Succession Act made for tribes? Codification of tribal laws and the Hindu Succession and Christians can also help resolve the issue suitably.

'Made of Chennai' column – on the nostalgic memories of celebrities and achievers in different fields. But one of the most important pillars of the Hindu since its founding is its readers, who have been steadfast in their support. Perhaps the daily can be more reader and their memories about the evolution of Madras. **A.V. Narayanan, Chennai**
Letters emailed to editor@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

The RTI's shift to a 'right to deny information'

The Right to Information (RTI) Act is founded on the principle that in a democracy, which is defined as "rule of the people, by the people, for the people", all information held by the government inherently belongs to the citizens. The government acts as a custodian of this information on behalf of the populace. Citizens legitimise their representatives by electing them, who in turn legitimise the bureaucracy. Therefore, the default mode under the RTI is that all information must be shared with citizens.

However, the Act always included specific exemptions to protect certain interests, such as national sovereignty. One crucial exemption is the Act's Section 8(1)(j), which is on "personal information".

The original Section 8(1)(j) was a detailed provision designed to balance the right to information with individual privacy. It stipulated that personal information could be denied if it had no connection to public activity or constituted an "unwarranted invasion on the privacy of an individual", unless there was a larger public interest in its disclosure.

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Shailesh Gandhi
is a former Central
Information
Commissioner

One of the most pressing issues is the lack of a clear and consistent definition of "personal information" under the amended RTI Act, especially in its relationship with the new Data Protection Law. There are two conflicting views: the first is Natural Person Interpretation: One view holds that "person" should be understood in its general sense, referring to a "normal person" or natural person. The second is the DPDP Bill Definition. The other, equally valid view, interprets "person" as defined in the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill. The DPDP Bill's definition is expansive, including a "Hindu undivided family, a firm, a company, [and] any association of individuals and the State".

If the latter definition is adopted, "almost everything is personal information". A significant amount of information can be shown to be related to some person. Thus the law gives a handle to deny most information. The RTI is transformed into a Right to Deny information. It becomes an 'RDI'. This broad interpretation poses a fundamental threat to the spirit of transparency. Adding to the complexity, the DPDP Bill contains a provision that overrides all other laws in cases of conflict. This is alarming because the DPDP Bill specifies strong penalties for violations which can be as high as ₹250 crore.

This creates an untenable situation for PIOs. As much of the government information is now digital, PIOs are apprehensive that a mistake in disclosing information could lead to severe financial penalties. This fear will incentivise PIOs to err on the side of information denial rather than disclosure, effectively creating a "right to deny information". The DPDP Act must not override the RTI Act, though it might be acceptable for it to override other Acts.

Facilitating corruption

The practical implications of these amendments are dire for public accountability and the fight against corruption. Transparency is a crucial tool in this battle, especially when other anti-corruption mechanisms have proven to be ineffective.

The first is the loss of public monitoring. Citizens are the best monitors against corruption. If information is denied, this vital monitoring mechanism is severely hampered. India's multilayered government agencies such as vigilance departments, anti-corruption bureaus and the Lokpal, have abjectly failed to curb corruption.

The second is denial of essential information. The broadened scope of "personal information" means that even mundane yet crucial documents could be withheld – a citizen's own corrected marksheets could be denied as "personal". The example of Rajasthan sharing details of pension beneficiaries to combat "ghost employees" and "ghost cards" will cease. Even a simple order

signed by an official could be denied as "personal information". It can result in over 90% of information being denied.

The third is unfettered corruption. The amendment "makes it the easy thing to be corrupt". Information relating to ghost employees or corruption charges falls under "personal information". It will be hidden, allowing corruption to 'flourish and continue unhindered'.

While the "larger public interest" clause still exists in the RTI Act (in Section 8(2)), its practical application is extremely rare and difficult. Citizens should not have to demonstrate "larger public interest" to access information as it is their fundamental right. This requirement only applies if information is already exempt.

There will be less than 1% orders where an exemption is accepted, but disclosure is based on larger public interest. This is because it is an incredibly challenging decision for any officer to make, weighing potential harm to an individual against the broader public benefit of disclosure. Therefore, relying on this clause to ensure transparency after the amendment is largely futile.

Apathy and a call to action

Despite the gravity of these amendments, there has been a notable lack of public and media outcry when compared to previous RTI changes, such as those concerning Commissioner's salaries and tenures. This apathy may be due to the amendment being "under the guise of data protection", making it seem less threatening to the average citizen. There is also a common sentiment that an individual's own information should not be shared, regardless of its relevance, leading to an 'ego takes over' mentality.

Sections 8(2) and 44(3) of the DPDP Bill constitute a "very fundamental regression on our democracy" and a "very fundamental attack on our fundamental rights".

There needs to be a focus on four issues. First, media and citizen engagement – there must be widespread public discussion across the country. Second, political accountability – citizens should demand assurances from political parties in their election manifestos that these amendments will be reversed. Third, public opinion – it is crucial to build strong public opinion with the support of the media. Fourth, recognition of gravity – this issue deserves as much attention as any other critical national debate, as the fundamental right to information is being compromised.

If citizens continue to remain silent, they will imperil their freedom and democracy. Collective action can lead to these changes being reversed. The future of transparency and accountability in India hinges on whether citizens and media can push back and protect the integrity of the RTI Act.

Citizens and the media need to challenge the Digital Personal Data Protection Act's amendment of Section 8(1)(j) of the Right to Information (RTI) Act

- **RTI Act (2005)**: Based on the principle that govt. is custodian of information → citizens have right to access it.
- **Issue**: Section **8(1)(j)** of RTI Act exempts “personal information” from disclosure.
- **Concern**: With the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act**, definition of personal information expands → risk of converting RTI into *Right to Deny Information (RDI)*.

- **2. Original Provision (RTI Act, Section 8(1)(j))**

- Allowed denial only if:
 - Information had no link with public interest/authority.
 - Disclosure caused *unwarranted invasion of privacy*.
- Safeguard: If info can't be denied to Parliament/state legislature → cannot be denied to citizen.
- Aim: Balance privacy with transparency.

- **Ambiguity of “personal information”:**

- DPDP Act widens scope → includes almost anything related to a person (even job records, financial details).
- Risk of overuse by Public Information Officers (PIOs) → default denial.
- **Conflict of Laws:** DPDP Act overrides other laws, including RTI.
- **Fear Factor:** Heavy penalties (up to ₹250 crore) for data disclosure mistakes → PIOs may prefer denial.

-
- **Key Risks**
 - **Transparency Undermined:**
 - Govt. officers may cite “privacy” to block routine info like travel bills, recruitment details.
 - **Public Interest at Stake:**
 - Citizens must prove “larger public interest” for disclosure → difficult.
 - **Fewer Disclosures:** Experts estimate less than 1% of RTI requests may be honoured.
 - **Accountability Loss:** Restricting info shields corruption, inefficiency.

Broader Implications

Democratic Deficit:

- RTI ensures citizens' oversight on govt. functioning. Weakening it reduces democratic checks.

Judicial Precedent:

- *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (2017)* upheld privacy as fundamental right but allowed proportional balancing with transparency.

Civil Society Concerns:

- Activists warn of “return to secrecy” culture.

- **About RTI Act (2005)**

- Inspired by **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS)** movement in Rajasthan.
- Replaced **Freedom of Information Act (2002)**.
- Brought transparency in govt. functioning.

- **Landmark RTI Uses**

- Unearthed scams (e.g., Commonwealth Games, Adarsh housing scam).
- Exposed irregularities in PDS, MGNREGA, etc.

- **Global Context**

- Over 100 countries have Right to Information laws.
- India ranked low in **Global RTI Rating** due to weak enforcement & misuse of exemptions.

BRIEF



Maharashtra allots 100 acres to chip firm RRP Electronics

The Maharashtra government has allotted 100 acres to semiconductor firm RRP Electronics. A Letter of Comfort has been issued to the firm for relocating a semiconductor fab from a semiconductor company in Sherman, Texas. The company is planning to set up a fab facility with a capacity of 1.25 lakh wafers per month. "This allotment of land firmly positions Maharashtra at the heart of India's semiconductor mission roadmap," said CM Devendra Fadnis.

ESIB picks Ravi Ranjan for SBI Managing Director position

The Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB), the headhunter for directors of state-owned banks and financial institutions, has recommended Ravi Ranjan for the position of managing director of State Bank of India (SBI). Mr. Ranjan, currently Deputy MD, would replace MD Vinay M. Thakre, who would complete his term on November 30, 2025. (FSIB interviewed nine candidates on September 11, 2025, for the position of MD to SBI, the Bureau said.)

Centre unveils licensing policy for opium poppy cultivation

The government on Friday announced the annual licensing policy for the 2025-26 crop year for opium poppy cultivation in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Nearly 1.21 lakh farmers are eligible to receive licences, a 23.8% rise in farmer licences. This includes 15,000 additional farmers, above the previous crop year in these states. A release said, the Centre would ensure adequate supply of alkaloids to meet medical and palliative care needs.

Will meet Dec. FTA deadline, assures EU trade commissioner

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

European Union's Trade Commissioner on Friday expressed confidence that the free trade agreement between India and the EU, which is currently being negotiated, would meet its December-end deadline. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, expressed shared commitment towards an "early conclusion" to the negotiations. The negotiating team from the EU has been in India since Monday for a week-long round of negotiations.

Marcel Felföld, Council member for Trade and Economic Security, International Relations and Transparency for Euro-



Marcel Felföld

pean Union arrived on Friday to continue negotiations with Mr. Goyal. "I am very happy to be able to address you in the middle of the EU busy season and negotiations of what I believe would be a ground-breaking FTA between the EU and India," he said at an event organised by the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association on Friday.

Kerala capital to host two-day blue economy conclave

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Representatives from 29 European countries are expected to attend a two-day blue economy conclave in the State capital on September 18 and 19. Minister for Fisheries Saji Cheriyan has said.

The conclave "Blue Economy" will be organised by EU Ambassador to the State's Pritish Buttan, German partner in collaboration with the Union government and the European Union (EU).

Representatives from 17 European countries have confirmed participation in



Saji Cheriyan

the event, which will be attended by EU Ambassador to the State's Pritish Buttan, German partner in collaboration with the Union government and the European Union (EU). The event, to be held at the The Kerala Kalamandalam, will see experts and stakeholders from India and Europe share their thoughts

Vessel ban at Adani port may hit crude supplies from Russia

The ban on accepting sanctioned ships by Adani is a direct response to international pressure. Global real-time data and analytics provider Kpler

Rishi Ranjan Kato

The ban on sanctioned shipping vessels by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ), India's largest private port operator, may affect crude oil cargoes from Russia, which accounts for over one-third of country's imports of this geopolitically sensitive commodity.

APSEZ's decision to not allow shipping vessels sanctioned by the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), European Union (EU) and the U.K.

This comes as Indian refiners are grappling with effects of sanctions. Indian crude oil imports, registered a 10-month low in August (2025) amid seasonal maintenance peaks, particularly at Nayara Energy's Vadinar Refinery, which was sanctioned by the EU in late July. Kpler data shows that Nayara's August (2025) supply was limited to arrivals from Russia for the first time on record, Kato explained.

Adani's decision adds a new layer of complexity in India's crude sourcing, he warned, pointing out that this creates potential compliance pressures for Russian flows into HMEI, and

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Apollo Hospitals to acquire IFC's stake in AHLL

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd (AHLE) on Friday announced its intent to acquire 31% stake held by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in Apollo Health and Lifestyle Limited (AHLL), a subsidiary of AHLE, for a consideration of ₹1,254 crore.

Following the transaction, AHLL will become a 100% subsidiary of AHLE, with 99.5% held by AHLE, and the balance in the IFC's pool. The acquisition of the shares is expected to be completed by the end of November 2025.

Apollo Hospitals also announced plans to set up a 100-bed Comprehensive Oncology Centre at Gurugram.

Putting best foot forward



Women's status for sale in Anandpur, MD. Prices of leather goods are expected to increase sharply for U.S. households in the coming months because the country relies heavily on imports from nations targeting President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs.

Hit by U.S. tariffs, shrimp ecosystem in troubled waters; farmers hit hard

K.V. Kurumanch
K. SURESH KUMAR
HYDRABAD/UDUPI

After six weeks of 28% tariffs and a fortnight into the 60% levy imposed by the U.S., the shrimp ecosystem is in a state of panic, sending shockwaves across the value chain.

"Hatcheries take the hit first with farmers not buying the shrimp seed stock, leading to an estimated loss of ₹150 crore," said K. Suresh Kumar, President, All India Shrimp Hatcheries Association, told *the Hindu*.

porting to the U.S. farmers are reluctant to buy seed stocks. "Due to the current 60% tariff, the price of shrimp seed stocks, which have a short shelf life of 3-4 days, could not be sold and were consequently discarded," he said.

SEBI asks govt. to relax minimum public shareholding norms for large IPOs

Lalendu Mishra
MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has recommended to the Centre to relax minimum public shareholding (MPS) norms for large IPOs.

These scale-based thresholds for large IPOs are aimed at facilitating good quality stocks to get listed in the primary market so that retail investors benefit from investing in them.

As per existing regulations, issuers with a post-issue market capitalisation of above ₹1,00,000 crore are required to offer to public ₹5,000 crore and above 5% of the post-issue market cap.

For large issuers, diluting a substantial stake through an IPO can pose challenges, as the market may not be able to absorb such a large supply of shares, which, in turn, may discourage such issuers from pursuing listings in India," SEBI chairman Tuhin Kantia Pandey said.

SEBI has recommended minimum public offer of ₹2,000 crore and at least 5% of the post issue market cap.

An MPS of 25% if all 97 lakh units are achieved within five years from date of listing.

Further, under the proposed MPS requirements,



Tuhin Kantia Pandey

issuers are recommended to be permitted to list with a lower initial public float, hence, an extended period is required to allow them to achieve MPS of 25% in a gradual manner. Extended period for large issuers also do not pose risk of low liquidity in large size IPOs.

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Further, under the proposed MPS requirements,

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	INDEX	% CHG
Sensex	60,901	0.44
Nifty 50	22,100	0.22
Nifty Mid	1,13,800	0.01
Nifty 100	61,000	0.00

RITCHES

Asian Paints	2032.00	
Polysar India	1338.45	
Polysar India Ltd	2078.00	
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Vessel ban at Adani port may hit crude supplies from Russia

The ban on accepting sanctioned ships by Adani is a direct response to international pressure: Global real-time data and analytics provider Kpler

Rishi Ranjan Kala

The ban on sanctioned shipping vessels by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ), India's largest private port operator, may affect crude oil cargoes from Russia, which accounts for over one-third of country's imports of this geopolitically sensitive commodity.

APSEZ's decision to not allow shipping vessels sanctioned by the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), European Union (EU) and the U.K. to dock at its ports also includes Mundra, which handles close to 10% of India's total crude oil imports. For perspective, APSEZ operates 15 domestic ports and terminals, accounting for 27.8% market share, with six ports scattered on the west coast, five on south and four ports on the east coast.

Global real-time data and analytics provider Kpler said the move, which impacts key crude oil terminals like Mundra, is a direct response to "international pressure".

It will likely present a significant challenge to the import of Russian crude oil that accounts for more than 50% of Mundra's crude arrivals, the agency anticipated. The Mundra



No entry: The ports where the vessels will not be docked includes Mundra, which handles 10% of India's total crude oil imports. PTI

port has two single point mooring capacity to evacuate imported crude oil and is capable of handling Very Large Crude Carriers and Ultra Large Crude Carriers. It supplies crude oil to refineries in North India.

Kpler said that the Adani Group's decision "is a major development in the global oil market and is expected to have a significant impact on Russian crude oil flows to India."

Russian cargoes

It is particularly significant due to Adani Group's scale, emphasises Sumit Ritolia, Kpler's Lead Research Analyst for Refining & Modeling, adding that Mundra received nearly 4,00,000 barrels per day (b/d) crude oil in recent years.

"Russian crude oil accounts for more than 50% of crude oil arrivals at Mundra during the same period. This makes Mundra a critical gateway for Russian barrels into India, as it

serves major refiners like HPCL-Mittal Energy (HMEI) and state-owned Indian Oil, and accounts for close to 10% of India's total crude oil imports," he told *businessline*.

This comes as Indian refiners are grappling with effects of sanctions. Indian crude oil imports registered a 10-month low in August (2025) amid seasonal maintenance peaks, particularly at Nayara Energy's Vadinar Refinery, which was sanctioned by the EU in late July. Kpler data shows that Nayara's August (2025) supply was limited to arrivals from Russia for the first time on record, Ritolia explained.

Adani's decision adds a new layer of complexity to India's crude sourcing, he warned, pointing out that this creates potential compliance pressures for Russian flows into HMEI and other refineries.

(The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)

- **Decision:** Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone (APSEZ), India's largest private port operator, banned docking of **sanctioned vessels** (by U.S. OFAC, EU, U.K.).
 - **Impact:** Could affect **Russian crude oil shipments**, which account for **>1/3 of India's crude imports**.
-

2. Scale of APSEZ Operations

- Operates **15 domestic ports & terminals** → ~27.8% of India's port market.
- Key port: **Mundra (Gujarat)** → handles **10% of India's crude imports**.
 - Capacity: Very Large & Ultra Large Crude Carriers.
 - Supplies crude to **refineries in North India** (HPCL-Mittal, Indian Oil, etc.).

3. Russian Cargoes

- **Mundra Port's Significance:**
 - Receives ~4,00,000 barrels/day of crude in recent years.
 - Over 50% of Mundra's crude arrivals are from Russia.
 - **Result:** Ban = Major disruption for Russian oil inflows into India.
-

4. Global & Domestic Implications

- **International Angle:**
 - Move seen as a **direct response to international pressure** (U.S., EU sanctions).
 - Reflects India's balancing act: energy security vs. global compliance.
- **Domestic Impact:**
 - Likely to hit refineries like **HPCL-Mittal Energy, Indian Oil, Nayara Energy**.
 - Indian crude imports fell to **10-month low (Aug 2025)** amid seasonal refinery maintenance + sanctions.
- **Nayara Energy (Rosneft-linked refinery):**
 - August 2025: supply constrained due to EU sanctions.
 - For first time, limited only to Russian arrivals.

India's Oil Imports

- India imports **~85% of its crude needs**.
- Post-2022 Ukraine war, Russia became **India's largest crude supplier**, displacing Iraq & Saudi Arabia.
- Russian crude attractive due to **deep discounts**.

Ports & Trade

- Mundra = India's largest commercial port (Adani Group).
- Other major crude terminals: **Vadinar, Vizag, Mumbai, Paradip**.

Sanctions Context

- **U.S. OFAC sanctions**: Target shipping firms/vessels linked to Russian crude.
- **EU ban**: Prohibits EU-based firms from providing shipping, insurance for Russian oil.
- India not part of sanctions but faces **indirect compliance pressure**.

Kerala capital to host two-day blue economy conclave

The Hindu Bureau

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Representatives from 29 European countries are expected to attend a two-day blue economy conclave in the State capital on September 18 and 19, Minister for Fisheries Saji Cherian has said.

The conclave 'Blue Tides-Two Shores One Vision' is being organised by the State's Fisheries department in collaboration with the Union government and the European Union (EU).

Representatives from 17 European countries have confirmed participation in



Saji Cherian

the event, which will be attended by EU Ambassador to India and Bhutan, Hervé Delphin, Mr. Cherian said on Friday.

The event, to be held at The Leela Kovalam, will see experts and stakeholders from India and Europe share their thoughts

on a range of blue economy themes and forge partnerships.

Sustainable model

The event will come out with a road map for developing Kerala as a sustainable and resilient blue economy model, leveraging the EU's expertise and the strategic advantages of the State's blue economy.

The countries that have confirmed participation in the event are Finland, France, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Denmark, Bulgaria, Austria, Malta, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Romania and Germany.

- **Event:** A **two-day blue economy conclave** on *September 18–19* in Thiruvananthapuram.
 - **Theme:** *“Blue Tides – Two Shores, One Vision”*.
 - **Organisers:** Kerala Fisheries Department, Union Government, and **European Union (EU)**.
-

2. Participation

- **Countries:** Representatives from **29 European countries**, confirmed from 17.
 - **Key Delegates:** EU Ambassador to India & Bhutan, **Hervé Delphin**, among other experts.
 - **European Countries Confirmed:**
 - Finland, France, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Denmark, Bulgaria, Austria, Malta, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Romania, Germany.
-

3. Objectives

- **Knowledge Sharing:** Exchange of ideas on blue economy themes.
 - **Partnerships:** Forge **India–EU collaborations**.
 - **Roadmap:** Develop Kerala as a **sustainable & resilient blue economy model**, using EU expertise + Kerala’s strategic coastal advantage.
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- **India's Blue Economy Context**
 - **Coastline:** 7,500 km + 1,200 islands.
 - **Contribution:** Marine economy ~4% of India's GDP.
 - **Policy:** Draft *India's Blue Economy Policy* (2021) – focuses on fisheries, deep-sea mining, renewable energy, tourism.
 - **Kerala's Role**
 - Known for fisheries & seafood exports.
 - Potential in **sustainable aquaculture, ecotourism, offshore wind, marine biotech.**
 - **Global Context**
 - **EU's Blue Economy Strategy:** Strong focus on marine biodiversity, offshore renewables, sustainable fisheries.
 - **UN SDG 14:** “Life Below Water” – conserve & sustainably use oceans.

MOSCOW

Peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine paused, says Kremlin



The Kremlin announced on Friday that peace talks between Russia and Ukraine have been paused, blaming European countries for obstructing the process while maintaining that Moscow remains open to talks. Negotiators of both countries have held three rounds of direct talks this year in Istanbul, most recently on July 23, sources said.

PARIS

France seeks immediate release of three citizens held in Iran



France reiterated its demands on Friday for the immediate release of three French citizens held in Iran, demanding the Iranian Foreign Minister to release them. The three citizens were arrested in Iran last month, and their families are demanding their release.

DENPANAR

Toll from Indonesia flooding rises to 23; five people missing



The death toll from the flooding that struck two Indonesian islands, including tourist hotspot Bali, rose to 23 on Friday, officials said, with five other people still missing. Torrential rain late Tuesday triggered floods and landslides across Bali, the National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) said.

TIRANA

Albania PM appoints AI-generated 'minister' to tackle corruption



Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama on Friday tapped an Artificial Intelligence-generated 'minister' for his cabinet to take on corruption. "The new State Minister is called Irbila," Rama said in a Facebook post. He said the bot would help ensure that "public leaders will be 100% free of corruption."

Russia, Belarus start military drills as West watches warily

NATO's eastern members are on high alert over the exercises, Poland, which holds joint drills with NATO allies, said it would have 40,000 troops at the border; Moscow has downplayed the concerns, saying the drills are not aimed against anyone

Agence France-Presse

MOSCOW

Russia and its key ally Belarus began major joint military drills early on Friday, putting NATO on edge days after Poland accused Moscow of escalating tensions by firing attack drones through its airspace.

The "Zapad" exercises come as Russian forces guard across the sprawling front line in Ukraine and escalate aerial attacks on Ukrainian cities.

The Russian Defense Ministry posted a video showing heavy military equipment, including armoured vehicles, helicopters and navy ships, deployed part in the drills.

It said aerial reconnaissance and missile strikes on ground targets would be among the manoeuvres rehearsed.



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Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Warsaw was closer to "open conflict" than at any point since the Second World War after Poland and its NATO allies accused Russia of violating its airspace early Wednesday.

Poland, which holds its own joint drills with NATO allies coinciding with Zapad, said it would have around 40,000 troops at the border when Russia and Belarus hold their exercises.

Both EU countries have ramped up security. Poland closed its border with Belarus overnight until further notice.

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France sends jets to Poland as U.K. ramps up sanctions

Associated Press

WARSAW

France said on Friday it's deploying fighter jets to Poland and the U.K. announced fresh sanctions targeting Russia's oil revenue and war machine as Europe's first, measured steps to Russia's drone incursion into Poland aimed to send a signal to Moscow that any further aggression won't go unchecked.

French President Emmanuel Macron said he would deploy three advanced Rafale fighter jets to help protect Poland's airspace and NATO's eastern flank. He said the deployment was discussed with both NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Suspect arrested in Charlie Kirk killing

Agence France-Presse

IRIDIUM

U.S. authorities said on Friday they had captured the man accused of killing prominent right-wing activist Charlie Kirk after a family member helped to turn him in after a frantic manhunt.

"We got him," Utah Governor Spencer Cox told a press conference.

Mr. Cox identified the suspect as Tyler Robinson and said the arrest was made after one of Robinson's relatives contacted a friend, who then contacted the police. The arrest raised a bitterly divided country's hopes of finding answers to the shocking political murder on Wednesday.

The 31-year-old was killed after being hit by a single bullet in his neck while addressing a large crowd at Utah Valley University. Kirk was an electrifying presence on the U.S. far-right, with a talent for debate and a huge following that helped Trump build the youth vote in his election victory last November.

From the moment of the shooting, Mr. Trump has treated the event as a matter of top national importance, breaking through in a nanosecond.

Authorities quickly found the alleged murder weapon, a high-powered hunting rifle and released photos of a young man dressed in a baseball cap and casual clothing. However, after detaining, then releasing, two people who turned out to be unconnected to the case, the FBI appeared to struggle. Late on Thursday, officials in Oregon released more details about the suspect's clothing and initial movements.

The U.S. does not officially recognise the government in Taiwan, but it provides arms and other support to the island, the post by the Taiwanese government said.

The Fujian, which is doing sea trials ahead of its commissioning, was heading south to conduct training and scientific experiments, the navy said in a short post on social media.

The Navy said the carrier's activities were not targeting anyone else.

"Most reasonable route" A social media account affiliated with state media quoted an expert saying the Taiwan Strait was the normal and most reasonable and efficient route for the carrier to reach the South China Sea.

It was the first time the Fujian had passed through the strait, the post by the Taiwanese government said.

The U.S. does not officially recognise the government in Taiwan, but it provides arms and other support to the island, the post by the Taiwanese government said.

Palestinian stabbing attack: two injured

Agence France-Presse

JERUSALEM

Two people were wounded in a stabbing attack at a hotel in Tzuba, an Israeli kibbutz less than 10 km west of Jerusalem, sources said, with police reporting that the Palestinian assailant had been arrested.

Victims being treated "EMT (emergency medical technician) and paramedics are treating two stabbing victims and evacuating them to a hospital, including a 60-year-old male in serious condition and a 23-year-old male in moderate condition," according to a statement by Israel's Magen David Adom

An individual from Shufat area carried out a stabbing attack against guests at the hotel in Tzuba.

emergency service. Israeli police said an individual "from the Shufat area carried out a stabbing attack against guests at the hotel in Kibbutz Tzuba, in Jorjot."

The Shufat neighbourhood and nearby refugee camp are in east Jerusalem, which has been occupied by Israel since 1967. An officer at the scene "subdued the terrorist, placing him under arrest," the police added.

Behind bars



Students display a doll of Brazil's former President, Jair Bolsonaro, wearing prisoner garb in Brazil on Friday. Supreme Court has convicted and sentenced him to prison for attempting a coup to remain in office despite his 2022 electoral defeat. AP

India votes in favour of UNGA resolution on Palestine state

Press Trust of India

UNITED NATIONS

India on Friday voted in favour of a resolution in the UN General Assembly that endorses the "New York Declaration" on peaceful settlement of the Palestine issue and implementation of the two-state solution.

The resolution, introduced by France, was adopted with an overwhelming 142 nations voting in favour, 10 against and 12 abstentions. Those voting against included Argentina, Hungary, Israel and the U.S.

India was among the 142 nations that voted in favour of the resolution titled "Endorsement of the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine".

The resolution was adopted with an overwhelming 142 nations voting in favour, 10 against and 12 abstentions.

The declaration was adopted at a high-level international conference held in July at the UN headquarters in New York, co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia. In the declaration, the leaders "agreed to take collective action to end the Palestinian conflict based on the effective implementation of the two-state solution, and to build a better future for Palestinians, Israelis

and all peoples of the region". The declaration called on the Israeli leadership to issue a clear public commitment to the two-state solution, including a sovereign, viable Palestinian State.

It also called on Israel to "immediately end violence and incitement against Palestinians, to immediately halt all settlement, land grabs and annexation activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, publicly renounce any annexation project or settlement policy, and put an end to settlers' violence".

China's newest aircraft carrier Fujian sails through Taiwan Strait for the first time

Associated Press

BEIJING

China's newest aircraft carrier has sailed through the Taiwan Strait, the Navy said on Friday. The body of water separates China from Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing says must come under its control.

The sailing could serve as a warning to the U.S. and others against support for Taiwan, though China played down any such motive.

The Fujian, which is doing sea trials ahead of its commissioning, was heading south to conduct training and scientific experiments, the navy said in a short post on social media.

The Navy said the carrier's activities were not targeting anyone else.

"Most reasonable route" A social media account affiliated with state media quoted an expert saying the Taiwan Strait was the normal and most reasonable and efficient route for the carrier to reach the South China Sea.

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Before all else: China's third conventionally powered aircraft carrier, the Fujian, conducts a maiden sea trial on May 7. AP

in the civil war that brought the communists to power in 1949. The defeated Nationalist government fled to Taiwan and set up its own government on the island.

The U.S. does not officially recognise the government in Taiwan, but it provides arms and other support to the island, the post by the Taiwanese government said.

After the Canadian freighter Quebec and the Australian destroyer Brisbane sailed through the strait. It accused the two warships of provocative actions that it said heightened security risks.

Japan's spots carrier Japan's military said it had spotted the China's latest carrier for the first time on Thursday afternoon. The Fujian together with two guided-missile destroyers, was sailing southwest about 200 km from the disputed Senkaku islands, or the Diaoyu islands in Chinese. Both countries claim the remote and uninhabited territory.

The carrier's heading at the time was on a course for the Taiwan Strait.

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TIRANA

Albania PM appoints AI-generated 'minister' to tackle corruption



AFP

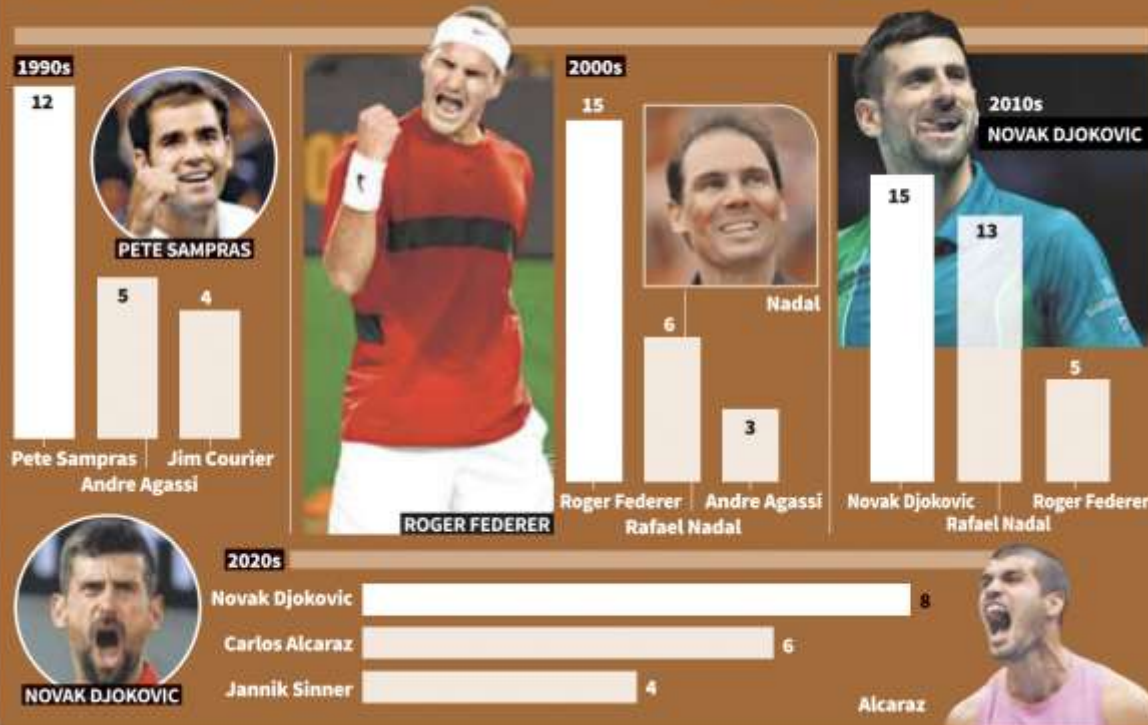
Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama on Friday tapped an Artificial Intelligence-generated 'minister' for his cabinet to take on corruption. "The new State Minister is called Diella," Rama said in a Facebook post. He said the bot would help ensure that "public tenders will be 100% free of corruption". AP

GAME THEORY

Charting decadal dominance: men's tennis

Carlos Alcaraz won his sixth Major title at the US Open. Only Novak Djokovic has won more this decade. With four years of the 2020s still remaining, it will be interesting to see where Alcaraz and runner-up Jannik Sinner (third this decade) finish. This week, we look at the standard-bearers every decade in the Open Era:

MOST GRAND SLAM TITLES BY DECADE



SOURCE: ITF, ATP



• China Border

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is contemplating a plan to raise **Border Wing Home Guards (BWHG)** along the border with China, similar to the guards on the India-Pakistan border.

- **About**

- BWHGs are **recruited from the civilian population** living in border areas. They act as ancillaries to the Army and border guarding forces during emergencies.

- They are **voluntary** in nature, enlisted typically for **3–4 years**.

- **25%** of training and financial support is borne by the Government of India.

- **Fifteen Border Wing Home Guards (BWHG) Battalions** have been raised in the border States viz. **Punjab** (6 Bns.), **Rajasthan** (4 Bns.), **Gujarat** (2 Bns.) and one each for **Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal**.

-

Need of BWHG along China border

The China border has **difficult terrain, sparse population, and remote regions**. Local civilians could help supplement manpower.

There are concerns about **incursions, transgressions, or infiltration**, especially in **less accessible border areas**. A civilian guard force can help augment surveillance and reduce response times.

India Shows Rise in Deaths From Non-communicable Diseases: Lancet Study

-
- India experienced an increase in mortality risk from **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** from 2010–2019.

- **Key Findings**

- In India, overall **NCD mortality between 2010 and 2019** increased by 2.1% for females and 0.1% for males compared to 2000–2010.
- The percentage of newborns dying from a chronic disease before they turn 80 years old was 46.7 per cent in females in 2001, 46.6 per cent in 2010 and in 2019 it was 48.7 per cent.
- Among men in 2001 it was 56 per cent, in 2010- it was 57.8 per cent and in 2019 it was 57.9 per cent.

What are Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)?

About: They are chronic diseases that are not transmissible from person to person.

Types: Heart attacks, stroke, cancers and diabetes.

Causes of NCDs in India:

- **Lifestyle Factors:** Poor diet, lack of physical activity, tobacco and substance abuse drive up NCD rates.
- **Environmental Factors:** Urbanization, ageing population, poverty, and changing food habits play a major role.
- **Other contributors:** Pollution (ambient and indoor), chronic stress.

- **Major National Initiatives to Combat NCDs**

- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD):** Launched in 2010, expanded in 2023, and focuses on early detection, management, and referral for NCDs like diabetes, heart disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease, kidney disease, and more.

- **75/25 Initiative:** Launched in 2023, aims to provide standardized care to 75 million people with hypertension and diabetes by 2025.

- **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY):** Provides coverage for tertiary NCD treatment and supports upgrading PHCs/Sub-Centres as Ayushman Arogya Mandirs.

- **Eat Right India Movement:** Led by FSSAI, this campaign promotes healthy eating to reduce NCD risk, focusing on food quality, balanced nutrition, and curbing trans fats.




- **Fit India Movement:** National campaign to promote physical fitness and active living, encouraging regular exercise for NCD prevention.

Udaipur Earns Prestigious Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation



-
- Udaipur was awarded the Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation in 2025. This recognition honours cities excelling in wetland conservation and sustainable management.
 - The award was presented during the Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan Awards and Wetland Cities Recognition Ceremony organised by Environment Ministry.

Most common mosquito-borne diseases

Mosquito	Type of Mosquito	Disease caused
	Aedes	Chikungunya Dengue Lymphatic filariasis Rift Valley fever Yellow Fever Zika
	Anopheles	Lymphatic filariasis Malaria
	Culex	Japanese encephalitis Lymphatic filariasis West Nile fever



Thank you 😊

