

Daily Current Affairs





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The Hindu



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Jansatta



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GOVERNANCE'S DAY OUT
India makes short
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INSIDE

IndiGo and AI are
opposed to entry
of 'Adani airline'
NEW DELHI
IndiGo and Air India have opposed Adani Group's reported interest in entering the airline business. The companies are keen to have approached the government to remove cross-shareholding restrictions that currently limit airline ownership in airports and vice versa. PAGE 12

Disputed shoal
China 'drives off'
Philippine vessels
BEIJING
China said on Thursday it tracked and drove away two Philippine vessels it accused of having "encroached upon" waters near the disputed Scarborough Shoal despite warnings. The week's second incident in the South China Sea to involve both nations. A Scarborough Shoal is claimed by both the Philippines and China, which calls it " Huangyan Island." PAGE 14

R&TDB chief held
in Sabarimala
missing gold case
KOLLAM
An SIT probing the Sabarimala gold theft case arrested former Travancore Devaswam Board (R&TDB) president P.S. Praveenth and former board member A. Ajith Kumar on Thursday. Officers took Mr. Praveenth away from his residence, while Mr. Ajith Kumar was intercepted en route to the capital. PAGE 3

PM reaches out to students; Wangchuk ends fast

Activist, on hunger strike demanding Pradhan's resignation, ends fast in presence of 2 Ministers

Modi in a late-night video message on X, says his Cabinet will discuss NEET paper leak issue today

Centre transfers Higher Education Secretary Vineet Joshi to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a late-night video message posted on his X and Instagram accounts, promised that the government would discuss NEET paper leaks in Friday's Cabinet meeting and will bring a Bill in Parliament next week. "More strict action will be taken if the case comes in tomorrow's Cabinet meeting," Mr. Modi said in his post.
Mr. Wangchuk broke his fast in the presence of two Union Ministers, said Chief Minister Dorela Laksh, co-convenor, Leh Apex Body. He broke the fast on certain conditions with the government giving written assurance that cases against students will be taken back, if they are not violent, said Mr. Dorela. The government also said that it would consider compensation for families of suicide victims, he said.
The developments came shortly after the Centre shifted Higher Education Secretary, Vineet Joshi to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. The government sources told The



Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a video message on Thursday.

No debate while Pradhan stays in office: Opposition
NEW DELHI
The Opposition on Thursday refused the government's offer of a debate in Parliament on the NEET paper leaks and other irregularities, saying that any discussion must be preceded by the resignation of Union Education Minister Pradhan. PAGE 8

which was held by Mr. Joshi.
Earlier in the day, in his first outreach to the protesters, three days after the CP-led march to Parliament, Mr. Modi announced the setting up of fast-track courts to swiftly handle cases of paper leaks. He said the welfare of the youth was the top priority of his government and assured anyone trying to harm their future will not be spared. But the CP said the proposal did not address the issue of accountability or the resignation of Mr. Pradhan.
Following the PM's announcement, the Delhi High Court notified a designation of the secretary to the court to deal with criminal cases arising from

Seeking shelter



Seeking shelter from the rain, people are seen in flood-hit Sivasagar in Assam on Thursday. More than 1 lakh people have been affected by floods of an unmanageable scale. Chief Minister Sarbananda Borra said. PHOTO: ANI

Houthi attacks on shipping drive Brent crude past \$100

Attacks on shipping
The Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea have driven Brent crude prices to a five-month high. The attacks have disrupted oil supplies from Saudi Arabia, which is a major oil exporter. The Houthi group, which controls parts of Yemen, has threatened to expand its attacks to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. The attacks have also led to a ban on shipping in the Red Sea, which has caused a major disruption to global oil supplies. The price of Brent crude has risen to over \$100 per barrel, its highest level in five months. The attacks have also led to a ban on shipping in the Red Sea, which has caused a major disruption to global oil supplies.

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U.S. announces civilian nuclear deal with Saudi

Agence France-Presse
Riyadh
The United States and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday announced a landmark deal that would establish a civilian nuclear programme in the kingdom, which U.S. President Donald Trump said was a "historic" agreement. The deal would establish a civilian nuclear programme in the kingdom, which U.S. President Donald Trump said was a "historic" agreement. The deal would establish a civilian nuclear programme in the kingdom, which U.S. President Donald Trump said was a "historic" agreement.

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President Trump with Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Washington, in November last year. AP

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U.S. announces civilian nuclear deal with Saudi

Agence France-Presse

RIYADH

The United States and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday announced a landmark deal that would establish a civilian nuclear programme in the kingdom, which U.S. President Donald Trump said was contingent on Riyadh normalising relations with Israel.

The move comes as the U.S. fights a war with Iran that began in large part over concerns about Tehran's nuclear programme – still a key point of contention in now-stalled peace talks.

The deal is set to generate billions of dollars for American companies and is seen as a major win for Iran's long-time regional rival, but critics fear it also carries risks.

Washington has sought in recent years to tie any nuclear agreement and defence pact to Saudi normalisation with Israel, and just hours after the deal was announced, Mr. Trump took to social media to say Riyadh must first meet that

condition. The nuclear deal “will be approved, but is totally subject to Saudi Arabia joining the very respected and successful Abraham Accords”, he wrote.

Concern of enrichment

Critics have insisted the deal – the text of which was not immediately made public – could precipitate a nuclear race in a region already battered by war.

One provision would potentially see U.S. companies build a uranium enrichment facility in Saudi Arabia, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The U.S. Energy Department made no mention of such a provision and did not offer comment when asked about it by *AFP*, while Mr. Trump added in his Truth Social post that:

“There will be no enrichment of material!”

The deal will be submitted to Congress for review, but the Republican-controlled legislature is unlikely to block its implementation.



Close allies: President Trump with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Washington, in November last year. AP

U.S. lawmakers from both parties and Israeli officials have previously voiced opposition to such a project over fears Saudi Arabia could eventually convert it to develop nuclear weapons.

“Trump claims his war on Iran is about stopping an authoritarian country from enriching nuclear fuel,” left-wing U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders wrote on X.

“Now he's letting his best friends in Saudi Arabia – one of the most brutal dictatorships in the world – do exactly that.

This is absurd.”

‘Pact with safeguards’

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that “any agreement that we're going to make with any country in the world on civil nuclear energy is going to be one that will have safeguards in place to ensure that it can't be turned into a weapons programme”.

Riyadh, like Tehran, has long been adamant about its right to pursue a civilian nuclear programme. Last year it signed a mutual defence pact with nuclear-

armed Pakistan.

Policymakers have long feared that if Iran produced a nuclear weapon, the move would set off an arms race across the Gulf.

U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright dismissed concerns about proliferation, insisting the deal was in Washington's economic and strategic interest.

The U.S. has agreements governing nuclear cooperation with more than 50 countries.

Experts said such a deal had been in the works for a while, but some raised concerns about the potential for uranium enrichment on Saudi soil.

“It would be a mistake to allow Saudi Arabia the capability for enrichment,” said Matthew Kroenig of the Atlantic Council in comments made before the deal was formally announced. “Washington is right to strengthen its relationship with Riyadh, but it should not do so at the expense of its effective nuclear weapons nonproliferation standards.”

Aspect	Details
What happened?	The United States and Saudi Arabia announced a landmark agreement to establish a civilian nuclear energy programme in Saudi Arabia.
Objective	Help Saudi Arabia develop nuclear power for electricity generation, economic diversification, and energy security.
Strategic significance	Strengthens U.S.–Saudi strategic ties, creates business opportunities for U.S. companies, and reduces Chinese/Russian influence in the Gulf nuclear sector.
Political condition	U.S. President Donald Trump stated that the agreement would ultimately require Saudi Arabia to join the Abraham Accords (normalisation with Israel).
Congressional approval	The agreement will be reviewed by the U.S. Congress, where approval is expected due to Republican support.

Issue	Explanation
Uranium enrichment	Reports suggested Saudi Arabia may eventually obtain uranium enrichment capability, which can produce fuel for reactors but also has weapons implications.
Nuclear proliferation	Critics fear enrichment technology could eventually be diverted toward nuclear weapons.
Regional arms race	If Saudi Arabia acquires enrichment capability, countries like Iran, UAE, Turkey or Egypt could seek similar capabilities.
Israel's concerns	Israeli officials have long opposed any Saudi enrichment programme due to regional security risks.

Item	Details
Legal framework	Section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act (1954)
Current coverage	More than 50 countries and entities have U.S. civilian nuclear cooperation agreements.
Purpose	Enables the export of U.S. nuclear reactors, fuel, equipment, technology and services under strict non-proliferation conditions.

Region	Countries/Entities
Asia	India, Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan
Europe	Euratom (covers EU members), UK, Switzerland, Norway
Middle East	UAE, Saudi Arabia (new agreement)
Americas	Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico
Oceania	Australia

2. Why is the U.S. helping Saudi Arabia build a civilian nuclear programme?

It is driven by **economic, strategic, geopolitical, and energy-security interests**, not just electricity generation.

Reason	Explanation
Energy diversification	Saudi Arabia wants to reduce domestic oil consumption for electricity and use nuclear power instead.
Vision 2030	Nuclear energy supports Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's economic diversification programme.
Commercial opportunity	U.S. companies (such as Westinghouse) could win multi-billion-dollar reactor contracts.  The Dep... +1
Counter China & Russia	The U.S. wants Saudi Arabia to buy American nuclear technology rather than Russian (Rosatom) or Chinese reactors.  The Department ...
Strategic alliance	Strengthens one of America's most important Middle East security partnerships.
Regional influence	Keeps Saudi Arabia within the U.S.-led security architecture.

Major U.S. exports to Saudi Arabia

Sector	Examples
Aircraft	Boeing aircraft and parts
Defence	Military equipment and weapons systems
Machinery	Industrial machinery
Vehicles	Cars and heavy equipment
Medical equipment	Healthcare devices
Nuclear technology	Reactors, fuel-cycle services, engineering (under the new agreement)

Major Saudi exports to the U.S.

Sector	Examples
Petroleum	Crude oil and refined petroleum products
Petrochemicals	Chemicals and plastics
Fertilisers	Industrial chemicals
Aluminium	Metal products

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Death toll in Sikkim hydropower tunnel disaster

25 The death toll in the Sikkim hydropower tunnel disaster has risen to 25 after authorities recovered the bodies of the remaining trapped workers, bringing the four-day rescue operation to an end. Officials said a methane gas explosion triggered the tunnel collapse. —

Amount sanctioned by Punjab govt. for various schemes

2,150 crore The Punjab government has released over ₹2,150 crore under various social security schemes during the current financial year up to June. Women and Child Development Minister Jagjit Kaur said on Thursday. —

Estimated cost of Phase-II strategic oil reserves to be built

14,527 crore India plans to develop the second phase of its strategic petroleum reserve programme under a public-private partnership (PPP) model, with government viability gap funding, capped at 60% of the total project cost, the government said. —

Number of road accident deaths in India in 2025

1.83 lakh A total of 1.83 lakh people lost their lives in road accidents in India in 2020, when 5.13 lakh road accidents were reported across the country. Parliament was informed. On average, 59 road accidents took place every hour, resulting in 21 deaths every hour. —

Amount sanctioned by Kerala govt. for social security pensions

1,095 crore The Kerala government has sanctioned over ₹1,095 crore for the distribution of social security and welfare bond pensions for July, benefiting more than 50 lakh people across the state. —

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How should cities reclaim footpaths?

Why was the Street Vendors Act enacted? What does the Act require before vendors can be removed? What is the role of the Town Vending Committee? Can street vendors be evicted before a survey is completed? Why has Bengaluru's footpath drive come under scrutiny?

EXPLAINER

Rishita Khanna

The story so far: Following the Supreme Court's recognition of the right to walk on safe, obstruction-free footpaths as a fundamental right, Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byr Gowda directed the five city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority to launch a 10-day 'Safe Footpath' drive. The drive removed thousands of street vendors from pavements and cleared encroachments. While many welcomed the initiative, it also raised questions over whether the removals complied with the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2020, which seeks to balance pedestrians' right to walk with street vendors' right to livelihood.

Why was the Street Vendors Act enacted? The Supreme Court's recognition of the right to walk does not mean street vending has no place on public streets. Long before the latest ruling, the court had repeatedly held that street vending is a 'legitimate' occupation protected under Article 19 of the Constitution, while making it clear that it can be regulated in the public interest.

These judgments were born out of a recurring pattern — municipal bodies and police evicting vendors, mostly without notice, reducing years of livelihoods to rubble overnight.

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2020 was enacted to end such arbitrary removals by laying down the process for regulating street vending.

Contrary to popular perception, the Act is neither an anti-encroachment law nor one that gives vendors an unrestricted right over public spaces.



In Bengaluru, corporations started removing vendors before putting in place the mechanism through which the Act is meant to work. *ANAND KUMAR*

Instead, it seeks to balance two competing rights — the public's right to safe, obstruction-free footpaths and a street vendor's right to earn a livelihood. The survey is meant to identify existing vendors before the authorities decide who can continue vending and under what conditions.

Moreover, the Act protects existing vendors during this process. It states that no street vendor should be evicted or relocated until the survey has been completed and Certificates of Vending have been issued. The protection was built into the law to prevent exactly the kind of arbitrary removals that had prompted its enactment.

Once the survey is completed, eligible vendors are issued a Certificate of Vending. It is an official permission to vend at a specified location and under specified conditions. The certificate does not give a vendor ownership over public land. It only recognises the right to vend in accordance with the Act.

The Act does not prohibit the removal

of street vendors. It only requires that such action follow the process laid down under the law.

Why has Bengaluru's footpath drive come under scrutiny? In Bengaluru, corporations started removing vendors before putting in place the mechanism through which the Act is meant to work.

Although Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar later promised relocation, the Act requires a TVC to identify vending and no vending zones. Bengaluru does not have one.

While the Karnataka government acted on the Supreme Court's recognition of pedestrians' right to safe footpaths, the Street Vendors Act makes it equally clear that reclaiming those footpaths cannot become a justification for bypassing the safeguards enacted to protect street vendors' livelihoods. That balance, not the primacy of one right over the other, is the very foundation of the law.

THE GIST

The Street Vendors Act, 2020, was enacted to regulate street vending by balancing pedestrians' right to safe, obstruction-free footpaths with street vendors' right to livelihood, while preventing arbitrary evictions.

The Act requires authorities to constitute a Town Vending Committee, conduct surveys, issue Certificates of vending and identify vending and no-vending zones before vendors are removed or relocated.

The right to protest and the limits of police power

What the Constitution, the BNSS and court rulings say about regulating demonstrations and the use of force

Alexandria Bhandari

The story so far: Protests from across the country gathered at Jantar Mantar in central Delhi on July 20 for the 'Chalo Samosa' march, carrying placards demanding reform in the National Testing Agency (NTA) and the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Within hours, the march turned into a demonstration descended into clashes. Police used tear gas and lathi charges to disperse protesters attempting to march towards Parliament. Tear gas enveloped parts of the protest route as demonstrators ran to escape the crackdown. Several nearby Metro stations were temporarily closed and many demonstrators reported losing mobile connectivity during the march, making communication and coordination difficult.

The incident has again brought an old question into focus: how should a democracy police public protest?

Is the right to protest absolute?

The Constitution guarantees citizens the right to assemble peacefully under Article 19(1)(b). But that right is subject to "reasonable restrictions" under Article 19(3) in the interests of public order, the sovereignty and integrity of India and other constitutionally recognised grounds. In practice, these restrictions are implemented through laws governing public order and policing.

The legal authority to regulate protests, however, comes from a range of statutes.

Was the BJP march unlawful? Whether a protest is 'unlawful' is a legal question that depends on the facts and circumstances of each case. Under the Bharatya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), an assembly of five or more persons becomes an unlawful assembly only if its common object falls within specific categories, such as using criminal force, resisting the execution of law, committing an offence or compelling another person by force or threat. A gathering that begins lawful may also become unlawful if its

conduct changes over the course of the event.

Ahead of the march, Delhi Police said the BJP had not sought permission for a procession to Parliament. It also pointed to prohibitory orders issued under Section 143 of the Bharatya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which barred protests, marches and demonstrations in the New Delhi district, except at the designated Jantar Mantar protest site with prior permission.

The legal authority to regulate protests, however, comes from a range of statutes.

What standards govern police action? The National Human Rights Commission's Manual on Human Rights for Police Officers emphasises that effective policing and respect for human rights are

complementary rather than conflicting objectives.

It states that "A democratic country like India needs democratic policing, which is based on the idea of the police as protectors of the rights of citizens and the rule of law, while ensuring the safety and security of all equally." The manual also notes that human rights violations by police can have "a multi-directional impact" by eroding public confidence, bringing institutions into disrepute and "even escalating civil unrest at times."

The principles are consistent with the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms, which require force to be lawful, necessary and proportionate.

When can police use force? Under the BNS, an Executive Magistrate or an authorised police officer may order an unlawful assembly, or an assembly likely to disturb public peace, to disperse. If the assembly does not disperse, the law permits it to be dispersed by force. The Code of Conduct for the Police in India states that police should, as far as practicable, "use the methods of persuasion, advice and warning. When the application of force becomes inevitable, only the irreducible minimum force required in the circumstances should be used." Beyond the use of force itself, the protests also raised questions about police accountability after videos appeared to show some police personnel using batons or other weapons on their faces covered. While the BNS requires every police officer arresting to bear an

accurate, visible and clear identification of his or her name, it contains no corresponding requirement for police personnel engaged in crowd control or the dispersal of assemblies.

How has the Supreme Court viewed protesters?

A day after the clashes, a lawyer urged the Supreme Court to take "no action" by evoking public confidence, citing videos circulating online. Chief Justice of India Hima Kaul orally declined the request, saying, "We are not interested in videos... Don't waste our (court's) time, and don't waste your time."

Over the years, however, the Supreme Court has repeatedly laid down principles governing both the right to protest and the limits of police action.

In *Anirudh Thakur v. State of Jammu & Kashmir* (2016), the court held that the use of excessive force violates fundamental rights and awarded compensation to the injured protesters, emphasising that police action must remain reasonable and accountable.

More recently, in *Manohar Kishan Shakti Sanghatana v. Union of India* (2020), arising from the Shakti Sanghatana, the court reiterated that while authorities may regulate demonstrations to maintain public order, they cannot extinguish the right to protest altogether. In *Anirudh Thakur v. State of Jammu & Kashmir* (2016), the court held that the use of excessive force violates fundamental rights and awarded compensation to the injured protesters, emphasising that police action must remain reasonable and accountable.

How should cities reclaim footpaths?

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EXPLAINER

Rishita Khanna

The story so far:

Following the Supreme Court's recognition of the right to walk on safe, obstruction-free footpaths as a fundamental right, Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda directed the five city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority to launch a 10-day 'Safe Footpath' drive. The drive removed thousands of street vendors from pavements and cleared encroachments. While many welcomed the initiative, it also raised questions over whether the removals complied with the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, which seeks to balance pedestrians' right to walk with street vendors' right to livelihood.

Why was the Street Vendors Act enacted?

The Supreme Court's recognition of the right to walk does not mean street vending has no place on public streets. Long before the latest ruling, the court had repeatedly held that street vending is a 'legitimate' occupation protected under Article 19 of the Constitution, while making it clear that it can be regulated in the public interest.

Those judgments were born out of a recurring pattern – municipal bodies and police evicting vendors, mostly without notice, reducing years of livelihoods to rubble overnight.

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, was enacted to end such arbitrary removals by laying down the process for regulating street vending.

Contrary to popular perception, the Act is neither an anti-encroachment law nor one that gives vendors an unrestricted right over public spaces.



In Bengaluru, corporations started removing vendors before putting in place the mechanism through which the Act is meant to work. K. HURALI KUMAR

Instead, it seeks to balance two competing rights – the public's right to safe, obstruction-free footpaths and a street vendor's right to earn a livelihood. It lays down a step-by-step process that every city is expected to follow before deciding who can vend, where they can vend and when they can be removed or relocated.

What process does the Act prescribe before vendors can be removed?

The first step is the constitution of a Town Vending Committee (TVC), the backbone of the law.

The committee includes officials, police, planning authorities, resident representatives and street vendors themselves, who must make up at least 40% of its members, with representation for women and other marginalised communities. The idea is that decisions affecting vendors should not be taken without vendors having a seat at the table. Every subsequent step is expected to flow

through this committee.

Once the committee is constituted, the Act requires it to survey all street vendors. The survey is meant to identify existing vendors before the authorities decide who can continue vending and under what conditions.

Moreover, the Act protects existing vendors during this process. It states that no street vendor should be evicted or relocated until the survey has been completed and Certificates of Vending have been issued. The protection was built into the law to prevent exactly the kind of arbitrary removals that had prompted its enactment.

Once the survey is completed, eligible vendors are issued a Certificate of Vending. It is official permission to vend at a specified location and under specified conditions. The certificate does not give a vendor ownership over public land. It only recognises the right to vend in accordance with the Act.

The Act does not prohibit the removal

of street vendors. It only requires that such action follow the process laid down under the law.

Why has Bengaluru's footpath drive come under scrutiny?

In Bengaluru, corporations started removing vendors before putting in place the mechanism through which the Act is meant to work.

Although Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar later promised relocation, the Act requires a TVC to identify vending and no-vending zones. Bengaluru does not have one.

While the Karnataka government acted on the Supreme Court's recognition of pedestrians' right to safe footpaths, the Street Vendors Act makes it equally clear that reclaiming those footpaths cannot become a justification for bypassing the safeguards enacted to protect street vendors' livelihoods. That balance, not the primacy of one right over the other, is the very foundation of the law.

THE GIST

The Street Vendors Act, 2014, was enacted to regulate street vending by balancing pedestrians' right to safe, obstruction-free footpaths with street vendors' right to livelihood, while preventing arbitrary evictions.

The Act requires authorities to constitute a Town Vending Committee, conduct surveys, issue Certificates of Vending and identify vending and no-vending zones before vendors are removed or relocated.

Following the Supreme Court's recognition of **safe, obstruction-free footpaths as part of the Right to Life (Article 21)**, the Bengaluru Development Minister directed civic bodies to launch a **10-day "Safe Footpath" drive** to remove encroachments.

However, the drive attracted criticism because **street vendors were removed before following the legal process under the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014.**

Why was the Street Vendors Act enacted?

Aspect	Details
Problem	Street vendors were frequently evicted without notice by municipal authorities.
Supreme Court view	Street vending is a legitimate occupation protected under Article 19(1)(g) (Right to practice any profession), subject to reasonable restrictions.
Objective	Balance pedestrians' right to obstruction-free footpaths with vendors' right to livelihood.
Nature of Act	It is not an anti-encroachment law , nor does it give vendors unlimited rights over public spaces.

Objectives of the Act

- Protect livelihood of street vendors.
- Regulate street vending.
- Prevent arbitrary eviction.
- Ensure free movement of pedestrians.
- Establish transparent vending zones.

Town Vending Committee (TVC)

The TVC is the backbone of the Act.

Composition

Members

Municipal officials

Police representatives

Urban planning authorities

Resident Welfare Associations

Street vendor representatives

At least **40% women**

Representatives of SC/ST/OBC and other vulnerable communities

Functions of TVC

- Conduct survey of all street vendors.
- Identify eligible vendors.
- Issue Certificates of Vending.
- Identify vending and no-vending zones.
- Recommend relocation where necessary.
- Resolve disputes.

Procedure before vendors can be removed

The Act prescribes a clear sequence.

Step	Requirement
1	Constitute Town Vending Committee
2	Conduct survey of all vendors
3	Identify eligible vendors
4	Issue Certificate of Vending
5	Notify vending/no-vending zones
6	Remove or relocate vendors only after due process

Certificate of Vending

A Certificate of Vending:

- Allows vending at specified locations.
- Specifies conditions for vending.
- Does **not** confer ownership over public land.
- Can be modified or cancelled according to law.

Protection provided by the Act

The Act specifically states:

- No vendor should be evicted **before completion of the survey**.
- Vendors cannot be removed arbitrarily.
- Authorities must follow due process.

Why Bengaluru's drive came under scrutiny

The criticism is based on legal procedure.

Issue	Reason
Vendors removed first	Surveys were incomplete.
TVC absent	Bengaluru reportedly had not constituted the required TVC.
No vending zones	Had not been formally identified.
Due process	Authorities bypassed the safeguards under the Act.

IN BRIEF



Wipro Consumer to buy TTK Healthcare brands for ₹256 cr.

Wipro Consumer Care & Lighting on Thursday signed definitive agreements to acquire TTK Healthcare Ltd's Good Home and Eva brands. The combined purchase value for these two brands is ₹256 crore, according to industry sources. The two brands together reported revenues of ₹148 crore in FY20. The acquisition boosts Wipro Consumer Care's ITD acquisitions and expands its portfolio across home care, air care and fragrance categories.

IndiGo flies into ₹238 cr. Q1 loss on war, fuel turbulence

IndiGo on Thursday reported a ₹238 crore net loss for the three months ended June as higher fuel prices and the West Asia conflict resulted in turbulence for the country's largest airline. The airline had a profit of ₹2,176.3 crore in the year-ago period. In the first quarter of the current fiscal, IndiGo Aviation saw its total income rise to ₹38,614.1 crore from ₹21,542.6 crore a year ago. However, overall expenses surged during the same period, said a release.

Cipla June quarter net profit declines 39% to ₹785.55 crore

Drugmaker Cipla's consolidated net profit for the quarter ended June declined 39% to ₹785.55 crore compared with the ₹1,280.61 crore in the year earlier on the back of lower sales in the key North America market. The net profit came on a more than 2% increase in total revenue from operations to ₹7,620.28 crore (vs. ₹6,957.47 crore). Contributing to the revenue growth was a 12% rise in India business to ₹3,452 crore (vs. ₹3,070 cr.).

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

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

Indian banks' credit deposit ratio stood at a 62-year high of 82.6% in the first quarter of fiscal 2021 as loans grew faster than deposits, as per Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data.

Loans grew at 18.6% year-on-year (YoY) to ₹20.3 lakh crore while deposits rose 13.3% to ₹26.5 lakh crore in Q1.

The variance between the loan and deposit growth was at 5.3 percentage points - the widest since June quarter of fiscal 2024.

Since Q1FY22, the least variance in loans was 8.8% whereas deposits did not



Widening gap: Variance between loan and deposit growth was 5 percentage points - the widest since June quarter of fiscal 2024.

grow faster than 16%. Analysts say the ratio had more to do with change in liabilities' composition.

Excess investments
"Over the last five years, banks had excess investments on their balance sheet, which they had re-

HPCL, BPCL have secured supplies until Aug.

Both refiners working on procurement for crude for September, post net loss in the first quarter of the current financial year — their first since the onset of the Russia-Ukraine conflict; amid supply disruptions on the West Asian route, the refiners say they tapped spot purchases from elsewhere

Santosh Kumar Ghosh
NEW DELHI

Sole-owned oil marketing companies, Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum, have secured supplies until the end of August and are working on procuring supplies for September onwards, executives of the two oil-marketing companies told analysts in their respective post-results call on Thursday.

Speaking to analysts, Hindustan Petroleum CMD Vikas Kaul informed the refiner had supplies

stocked until the end of August. "We are very well covered for our crude till the end of August fully. In fact, yesterday we have started to buy for September," informed Mr. Kaul.

Separately, Vena Ramakrishna Gupta, Director (Finance) at Bharat Petroleum informed that their stocks too were tied until August and had begun sourcing for September onwards.

The first tranche of the conflict in West Asia has spanned for more than hundred days disrupted shipping and energy trade through the essential ener-



Katra miter BPCL had diversified crude sourcing from outside the Strait of Hormuz, including from Russia and Venezuela, officials say.

gy route, that is, the Strait of Hormuz. Consequently, the shipping disruptions caused price of benchmark Brent

crude staying elevated beyond the \$100 per barrel mark for sustained periods. Amid the supply disruptions from the West

Asian route, the refiners informed they increasingly tapped spot purchases from elsewhere.

Mr. Gupta told analysts that Bharat Petroleum sourced their spot purchases to about 65% of the overall basket in the first quarter compared with 44% in the comparable period last year.

He also informed analysts that Bharat Petroleum diversified its crude sourcing from outside the Strait of Hormuz, including from Russia, Venezuela and Angola.

This is including increasing the Russian crude

grades to 38% of the total procurement during the quarter," he stated.

Specifically on Russian crude, Mr. Gupta informed that it was reviewing offers coming for September procurement.

About potential discounts on crude from Russia, he said, "Although based on recent developments in the crude market, no one [presently] is offering any discount for Russian crude."

The Mumbai-based refiners posted a net loss in the June-end quarter - their first since the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war.

IndiGo, AI oppose Adani's airline entry

Saarth Chandra
NEW DELHI

IndiGo and Air India have opposed Adani Group's reported interest in entering the airline business, raising concerns over conflicts of interest and the potential erosion of competition.

The conglomerate is learnt to have approached the government to seek a waiver on cross-ownership restrictions that currently limit airline ownership in airports and vice versa.

"No global precedent" In an analysts' call Wednesday, to discuss the quarterly results, IndiGo Managing Director Rajat Bhatia said in a request to a query that there was "no

The restrictions are embedded in airport cross-ownership agreements. While the India International Airport (IIA) and Mumbai airport agreements prohibit entities with more than 20% stake in an airline from owning airport, the Delhi and Mumbai airport agreements impose a stricter 10% cap.

The same provisions can also be applied to the reverse, effectively preventing airport operators from acquiring stakes in airlines.

A senior Air India executive told The Hindu "vertical consolidation in the airline industry is a move that media reports have linked to a request from the Adani Group.

In flying training, aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), retail, food and beverage concessions at airports, and air cargo.

"Recipe for conflict" "It is a recipe for conflict of interest as well as squeezing other players. Such a consolidation across value chain not only kills competition but also results in a monopoly," the Air India official said.

The remarks from the two airlines, which together account for nearly 90% of India's airline traffic, come as the government seeks to open up the aviation market, including in case of exports of domestic airlines to business (B2B) e-commerce and where the company may produce a marketplace but does not hold inventory of its

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

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In a significant relaxation in its long-held stance, the government has proposed allowing foreign direct investment (FDI) in e-commerce companies that hold inventory and don't just act as marketplaces as long as this inventory is used for exports.

India has for nearly a decade decided FDI only in case of exports of domestically manufactured and/or produced goods as a marketplace but does not hold inventory of its

own. This was aimed at protecting small traders in India and to uphold the government's ban on FDI in multi-brand retail as well.

"In order to facilitate greater exports through e-commerce and increase the competitiveness of domestic FDI policy has been reviewed and it is decided that the restrictions on inventory-based model of e-commerce shall not apply in case of exports of domestically manufactured and/or produced goods," the commerce ministry said on Thursday.

Infosys Q1 net climbs 12%, trims FY27 revenue guidance to 1.5%-3%

Abhishek Mishra
BENGALURU

Infosys posted a net profit of ₹7,765 crore during the June-ended quarter, a 12.3% year-on-year growth. Revenue from operations rose 14% to ₹48,211 crore. In Q1, it reported large order bookings worth \$3.6 billion versus \$3.2 billion sequentially and \$3.8 billion a year ago. Of these, the net new deals accounted for 61% indicating post-merger deal momentum. AI-driven services contributed 8.2% of total revenue.

Infosys trimmed its FY27 revenue growth guidance to 1.5% to 3% from 3.5%, in constant currency terms. Margin guidance was revised at 20%-22%.

Abhishek Mishra
BENGALURU

Infosys named Ashwini Kumar Dash as CEO-designate, effective April 2021. Following the completion of Mr. Dash's second term on March 31, 2021, Mr. Dash, now EVP & Global Head - Services, Utilities, Resources, Energy & Sustainability, will succeed him as MD and chief executive officer.

ing AI momentum into revenue with AI services now at 8.2% of its total revenue. "Despite navigating a challenging macroeconomic environment and cautious client spending, Infosys's strategic investments in its Topas platform

Dash is Infosys' CEO-designate

firm position it strongly for digital transformation, he commented. CFO Jayash Sanghvi said, "We are accelerating investments in AI, talent, and platforms to drive future growth and return commitment to improving productivity, operational leverage and maintaining the financial flexibility needed to capitalise on emerging opportunities while delivering sustainable shareholder value."

Infosys said it would roll out annual salaries hikes across the company in January next year. As on June 30, staff strength stood at 3,38,062, a net increase of 4,274. However, it reported a net decline of 832 people in the sequential quarter.

SEBI mulls revamp of portfolio manager rules

Prem Jais of India
NEW DELHI

Markets regulator SEBI proposed expanding its portfolio manager rules by allowing them to invest in 'to-be-listed' securities and overseas listed equity and debt.

The move is aimed at broadening the investment universe and providing investors access to wider market opportunities. It proposed portfolio managers to invest up to 10% of client's assets under management in investment-grade unlisted debt.

Indian rice export rates hit 10-month high amid adverse weather concerns

Raunika
NEW DELHI

Indian rice export prices rose to a near 10-month high this week, driven by tight supply and concerns over the new-season crop after patchy monsoon rainfall, with adverse weather keeping traders on edge in major Asian hubs.

India's 8% broken parcella variety of Paddy (P) was quoted at \$356-\$361 per tonne, up from last week's \$352-\$357. The 5% broken white rice was offered at \$355 to \$360 per tonne.

"Paddy prices have risen as market supplies remain tight. Exporters are raising their offers to re-



Exporters are raising their offers to reflect higher procurement costs, said a trader.

fect higher procurement costs," a Kolkata-based trader said over the past week, rice prices have risen over the past week, especially for white varieties. The 5% broken rice was quoted at \$355 to \$360 per tonne.

"Paddy prices have risen as market supplies remain tight. Exporters are raising their offers to re-

ters," a Bangkok-based trader said.

"Only regular customers were making purchases with no large lots coming in yet, while spot or casual buyers are purchasing less," the trader said, adding that there were also concerns about the upcoming crop yields.

Another trader said that demand has been quiet while the supply situation would be more clear next month. In Bangladesh, rice prices have risen over the past week, especially for white varieties. The 5% broken rice was quoted at \$355 to \$360 per tonne.

"Paddy prices have risen as market supplies remain tight. Exporters are raising their offers to re-

flood damage, which affected crops across at least 28,610 hectares in 12 districts, including paddy fields and rice seed beds.

Earlier this year, heavy pre-monsoon rains and upstream inflows damaged the country's summer crop in the northeastern states, leaving it with an estimated rice production shortfall of more than 100,000 metric tons.

Meanwhile, in Vietnam, 5% broken rice - 5% broken rice was offered at \$430 on Thursday, down from a range of \$445-\$450 last week. "Supplies are building up from the ongoing summer autumn harvest," a trader based in Ho Chi Minh City said.

Maruti Brezza receives 5-star Bharat NCAP safety rating

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. said it had received 5-star safety rating in both Adult Occupant Protection (AOP) and Child Occupant Protection (COP) categories, as per the new vehicle safety rating system (VARS) by the New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP).

The model is slated to launch on Friday. It is equipped with several safety features including blind spot monitoring, lane change alert, rear cross traffic alert, front parking sensors, tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS), emergency stop signal, safe exit warning, amongst others.

SBI Foundation announces ₹100 cr. scholarship for 25,000 students

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

SBI Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of the State Bank of India (SBI), has announced the launch of the SBI Platinum Jubilee Aashu Scholarship 2020 - one of India's largest corporate programmes aimed at uplifting students from economically disadvantaged families across the country.

The scholarship is for students from economically disadvantaged families across the country. The scholarship is for students from economically disadvantaged families across the country. The scholarship is for students from economically disadvantaged families across the country.

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Students, students enrolled at IITs and IIMs and students pursuing master's programmes abroad at universities ranked among the Top 200 in the QS World University Rankings.

Applications for the Scholarship 2020 will remain open from July 24, 2020, to September 4, 2020. Eligible students can apply through the official scholarship portal at www.sbiashushashu.com. The scholarship is for students from economically disadvantaged families across the country. The scholarship is for students from economically disadvantaged families across the country. The scholarship is for students from economically disadvantaged families across the country.

Challa Greenwells, Secretary, Chairman, SBI, said, "We believe every deserving student should get an equal opportunity to pursue quality education and realise their aspirations, irrespective of financial circumstances. By expanding access to quality education across diverse academic pathways, we are nurturing the next generation of leaders, innovators and professionals who will drive India's growth and global competitiveness."

"Through this initiative, we aim to empower over 25,000 students to become the torchbearers of progress for India," he added.

This programme is co-funded by other SBI Group entities: SBI Central Finance, SBI Life, SBI Securities, SBI Pension Fund, SBI Ventures, SBI Training, and SBI Operations Support.

SBI Foundation announces ₹100 cr. scholarship for 25,000 students

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

SBI Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of the State Bank of India (SBI), has announced the launch of the SBI Platinum Jubilee Asha Scholarship 2026 – one of India's largest corporate scholarship programmes under which 25,707 meritorious students from economically disadvantaged families across the country will receive annual scholarships ranging from ₹15,000 to ₹15,00,000, depending on the category.

The scholarship is for students across multiple academic pathways, including school students (Classes 9-12), undergraduate and postgraduate students studying at NIRF Top 300 or NAAC A-rated institutions, Medical (MBBS)

The scholarship is for students across multiple academic pathways, including school students

students, students enrolled at IITs and IIMs and students pursuing master's programmes abroad at universities ranked among the Top 200 in the QS World University Rankings.

Applications for the Scholarship 2026 will remain open from July 22, 2026, to September 4, 2026. Eligible students can apply through the official scholarship portal at www.sbiashascholarship.co.in, where detailed eligibility criteria, scholarship categories, benefits and application guidelines are available.

Challa Sreenivasulu Setty, Chairman, SBI, said, "We believe every deserving student should get an equal opportunity to pursue quality education and realise their aspirations, irrespective of financial circumstances. By expanding access to quality education across diverse academic pathways, we are nurturing the next generation of leaders, innovators and professionals who will drive India's growth and global competitiveness."

"Through this initiative, we aim to empower over 25000 scholars to become the torchbearers of progress," he added.

This programme is co-funded by other SBI Group entities - SBI General Insurance, SBI Life, SBI Securities, SBI Pension Fund, SBI Ventures, SBI Trustee, and SBI Operations Support.

Item	Details
Programme	SBI Platinum Jubilee Asha Scholarship 2026
Implemented by	SBI Foundation (CSR arm of SBI)
Total corpus	₹100 crore
Beneficiaries	25,707 students
Scholarship amount	₹15,000–₹15,00,000 annually

Eligible Categories

The scholarship covers multiple educational stages.

Category	Eligibility
School	Classes 9–12
Undergraduate	Students in NIRF Top 300 / NAAC A institutions
Postgraduate	Eligible institutions
Medical	MBBS students
IITs	Students enrolled in IITs
IIMs	Students enrolled in IIMs
Overseas Masters	Top 200 QS-ranked universities

Application Timeline

Item	Date
Opens	22 July 2026
Closes	4 September 2026

Applications are submitted through the official SBI Asha Scholarship portal.

Objective

- Promote access to quality education.
- Support economically disadvantaged meritorious students.
- Encourage higher education in India and abroad.
- Build future leaders and professionals.

Funding Partners

The programme is co-funded by:

- SBI General Insurance
- SBI Life
- SBI Securities
- SBI Pension Fund
- SBI Ventures
- SBI Trustee
- SBI Operations Support

Alongside Centre, states' education expenditure too declined over past 12 years



THE ONGOING youth protests at Jantar Mantar in Delhi and in several other cities, demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and seeking education reforms, have brought attention to the state of education in India.

The *Indian Express* had recently explained how the Education Ministry's share of the Union Budget had sharply declined over the past 12 years — from 4.6% in 2013-14 (the last year that the Congress-led UPA government was in power) to 2.5% in 2025-26. The fall suggests that the BJP-led NDA government reduced emphasis on education.

As a subject of policymaking, however,

education is not the sole preserve of the Union government.

Common subject

Education falls under the Concurrent list in the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The schedule essentially divides powers and responsibilities between the Union and state governments through three lists — Union, State and Concurrent. Both the Centre and state governments can legislate on subjects under the Concurrent list.

So, how do states act on the subject of education and what policy significance do they attach to it? A broad marker of priority is to examine the share of a state's total expenditure on education. The table and chart alongside provide a glimpse of where things stand.

Apart from providing an average for all states and Union Territories, the table also looks at a selection of states to provide a geographically and politically diverse sample for the country.

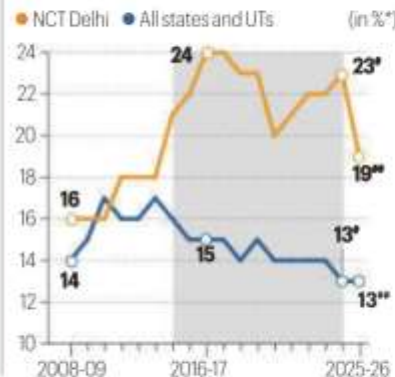
• State of education expenditure

State/Union Territory	Expenditure on education (2025-26)*	State-wise gross enrolment ratio (2024-25)**
Bihar	20	45
Gujarat	13	61
Kerala	12	94
Tamil Nadu	12	89
West Bengal	14	75
NCT Delhi	19	92
All states and UTs	13	69

*AS PERCENTAGE OF AGGREGATE EXPENDITURE **FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION *2024-25 (RE) **2025-26 (BE) SOURCE: RBI
NOTE: INCLUDES EXPENDITURE ON SPORTS, ART AND CULTURE UNDER REVENUE EXPENDITURE AND CAPITAL OUTLAY

For some context about the status of education, while many variables could be

• AAP effect on education spend



chosen, the table shows data on gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the secondary edu-

cation level (Classes 9 to 12). The GER is the total number of students enrolled in a specific level of education — regardless of their age — divided by the total population of the official age group for that level, multiplied by 100. A look at the GER in the second column confirms the long-held notions of which states are better educated and which are laggards.

For instance, Bihar's GER is 45 while that of Kerala is 94. A low GER also reveals the distance any state has to cover to achieve a better level of education. This is especially relevant given the population difference in states such as Bihar and Kerala. In essence, it gives a sense of the need for the state government to spend on education.

The first column in the table shows states' expenditure on education as a percentage of total expenditure. Bihar and Delhi stand out.

To be sure, both states were spending even higher than this in the years preceding 2025-26. In the same period, states such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu have shares

below the national average. Longer-term data — going back to 2008-09 — shows that Tamil Nadu has largely tracked and then fallen just behind the national level. Kerala used to allocate a higher share than the national average until the Covid-19 year of 2020, and has lagged since then. Gujarat, too, has lagged behind the national average more often than not.

What is concerning is that the national average of all states and UTs itself has been trending down, as the chart alongside shows. After staying at around 17% in 2013-14, the average share of expenditure on education has gradually fallen. This fall is crucial, since it mirrors the fall in the share of money spent by the Union government as well.

There are exceptions to this trend, though. Take the Union Territory of Delhi under the Aam Aadmi Party government, which initially made health and education the key pillars of its pitch to voters. Between 2014-15 and 2024-25, education's share went up sharply, in contrast to the falling trend of the national average.

Education is a **Concurrent List** subject (Seventh Schedule).

Both:

- Union Government
- State Governments

can legislate and spend on education.

Decline in Union Government Spending

Year	Share of Union Budget spent on Education
2013–14	4.6%
2025–26	2.5%

The article argues this reflects a reduced fiscal priority for education.

State-wise Education Expenditure (2025–26)

State/UT	Education expenditure (% of total expenditure)	Gross Enrolment Ratio (Secondary)
Bihar	20%	45
Delhi (NCT)	19%	92
West Bengal	14%	75
Gujarat	13%	61
Kerala	12%	94
Tamil Nadu	12%	89
All States & UTs	13%	69

Major Observations

Bihar

- Highest education spending share (20%).
- Yet lowest GER (45).
- Indicates higher investment is still needed.

Kerala

- Lower expenditure share (12%).
 - Highest GER (94).
 - Reflects long-term investment and strong educational outcomes.
-

Tamil Nadu

- High GER (89).
 - Historically strong investment in education.
-

Delhi

- Education spending increased significantly under the AAP government.
 - Education became one of its flagship policy areas.
-

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

GER measures:

| Total enrolment at a particular education level ÷ Population of the official age group × 100.

Higher GER generally indicates better access to education.

Trend

Observation

Union Government

Education spending share has fallen.

States (average)

Education expenditure share has also declined over time.

Exceptions

Delhi, Kerala and some states have maintained relatively higher emphasis on education.

The U.S. trade partners were not alone in recognizing the impact of goods made using forced labour.

The second investigation, into whether other economies were using a "cheap manufacturing capacity" to export to the U.S. in a manner that was hurting the U.S. economy, is still pending and could result in further tariffs.

"Correct rights abuses"

President Donald Trump recognizes that decades of moral suasion have not persuaded foreign governments from global supply chains.

U.S. Trade Representative James G. Carpinelli said in a statement.

The U.S. has had to force labour impacts for nearly a century, and grossly enforces it.

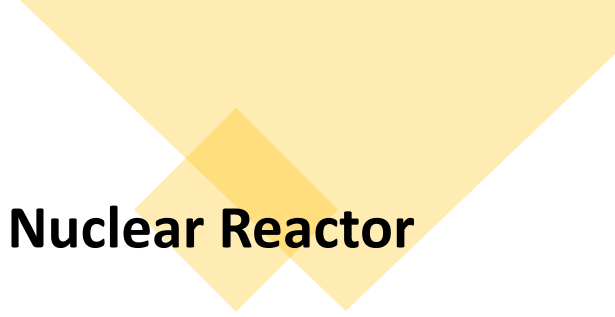
India Plans Five
Indigenous Small
Modular Reactors (SMRs)
by 2033



Feature

Small Modular Reactor (SMR)

Conventional Nuclear Reactor



Capacity

Up to 300 MW(e) (typically
50–300 MW)

700–1600 MW+

Construction

Factory-built modules

Entire plant built on-site

Installation

Faster and modular

Longer construction period

Land Requirement

Smaller

Larger

Initial Investment

Lower

Very High

Safety

Advanced passive safety
systems

Conventional safety systems

Flexibility

Can be added module by
module

Large single-unit investment



India's Three Indigenous SMR Designs

1. Bharat Small Modular Reactor (BSMR)

Feature	Details
Capacity	220 MWe
Reactor Type	Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR)-based
Fuel	Natural Uranium
Moderator	Heavy Water
Cooling	Heavy Water
Developed by	BARC

Features

- Based on India's proven **220 MW PHWR technology**
- Existing technology reduces technical risk
- Suitable for industrial power generation
- Can replace coal-fired captive plants
- High safety standards

2. SMR-55

Feature	Details
Capacity	55 MWe
Reactor Type	Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR)
Cooling	Light Water
Fuel	Enriched Uranium
Developed by	BARC

Advantages

- Ideal for remote regions
- Suitable for islands
- Can power defence installations
- Useful where electricity demand is small
- Lower capital cost

3. High Temperature Gas-Cooled Reactor (HTGR)

Feature	Details
Thermal Capacity	Up to 5 MWth
Cooling Medium	Helium Gas
Operating Temperature	700–900°C
Electricity	Mainly research & industrial applications

Uses

Unlike ordinary reactors, HTGRs can produce:

- Hydrogen
- Industrial heat
- High-temperature steam
- Process heat for steel plants
- Chemical industries
- Fertiliser plants

What is a Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR)?

A Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR) uses ordinary water as both:

- Coolant
- Moderator

The water is kept under **very high pressure** so that it **does not boil**, even at temperatures around **300°C**.

Advantages

- Proven technology
- High safety
- Reliable
- Widely used worldwide

DRDO Successfully Tests Long-Range Kusha Missile



India achieved a major milestone in its air defence capability when the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully conducted the **maiden flight test** of the indigenous **Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM) – Kusha** on **23 July 2026** from **APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha**. During the trial, the missile successfully intercepted an electronic target simulating a **high-speed, high-altitude aerial threat**.

The Kusha programme is India's indigenous answer to advanced long-range air defence systems like the **Russian S-400**.

Overview

Particular	Details
Missile Name	Kusha
Full Form	Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM)
Test Date	23 July 2026
Test Site	APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha
Developed By	DRDO
Type	Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM)
Target Destroyed	High-speed, high-altitude electronic target
Purpose	Long-range air and missile defence

What is a Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM)?

A **Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM)** is launched from the ground to destroy airborne threats before they reach their targets.

It can intercept

- Fighter aircraft
 - Bombers
 - Helicopters
 - Cruise missiles
 - Drones (UAVs)
 - Ballistic missiles (depending on the system)
-

What is a Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM)?

Long-range SAMs are designed to:

- Detect enemy aircraft hundreds of kilometres away.
- Track multiple targets simultaneously.
- Destroy targets at long distances and high altitudes.
- Protect cities, military bases, ports, and strategic infrastructure.

Major Components of Kusha

Component	Function
Long-range Radar	Detects aerial threats
Command & Control Centre	Analyses and assigns targets
Missile Launchers	Launch interceptor missiles
Interceptor Missiles	Destroy incoming threats
Communication Network	Connects all system elements

Types of Threats Kusha Can Neutralise

Threat	Capability
Fighter aircraft	✓
Cruise missiles	✓
UAVs/Drones	✓
Helicopters	✓
Airborne early warning aircraft	✓
Stand-off weapons	✓
Some ballistic missile threats*	Potential capability in future variants

Missile Variants (Planned)

The Kusha programme is expected to include multiple interceptor variants.

Variant	Approximate Range	Purpose
Shorter-range interceptor	~150 km	Aircraft, UAVs, cruise missiles
Medium-range interceptor	~250 km	Long-range air defence
Long-range interceptor	~350 km	Strategic air defence

Guidance System

The missile uses multiple guidance methods:

- 1. **Inertial Navigation System (INS)** – Guides the missile after launch.
- 2. **Data Link** – Receives updates from the ground radar.
- 3. **Active Radar Seeker** – Locks onto the target during the terminal phase.

This combination improves interception accuracy.

Feature	Kusha	S-400 (Russia)
Country	India	Russia
Developer	DRDO	Almaz-Antey
Status	Under development/testing	Operational
Maximum Planned Range	Up to ~350 km	Up to 400 km
Indigenous	✓	✗
Role	Long-range air defence	Long-range air defence

Feature	Kusha	Akash
Type	Long-range SAM	Medium-range SAM
Maximum Range	Up to ~350 km (planned)	~25–70 km (variant dependent)
Role	Strategic air defence	Tactical air defence
Target	Long-range aerial threats	Aircraft, drones, cruise missiles
Developer	DRDO	DRDO

Bhargavastra Counter-Drone System

The image shows a detailed view of an electronic assembly on a white breadboard. In the lower-left foreground, a black integrated circuit (IC) with multiple pins is visible. Several small, cylindrical resistors with color-coded bands are scattered across the board. A network of thin, colored jumper wires (blue, yellow, black, and white) connects various points on the breadboard. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the breadboard and additional wiring. The overall scene suggests a custom-built electronic system, specifically a counter-drone system as indicated by the text.

Particular	Details
System Name	Bhargavastra
Type	Counter-Swarm Drone System (C-UAS)
Developer	Solar Defence and Aerospace Ltd. (SDAL)
Country	India
User	Indian Army
Demonstration	24 July 2026
Location	Nagpur
Programme	Make-II (Defence Acquisition Procedure)
Platform	Vehicle-mounted
Kill Type	Hard-kill

- **What is a Drone Swarm?**

- A **drone swarm** is a coordinated group of drones that communicate and operate together.

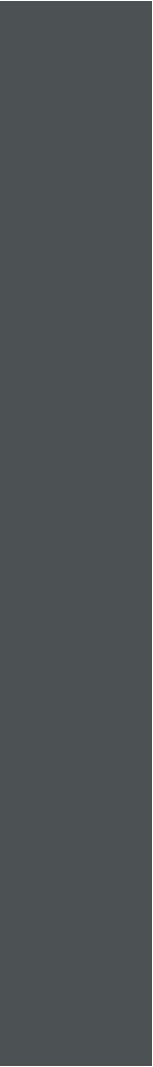
- **Characteristics**

- Multiple drones attack at once.
- Difficult to intercept individually.
- Can overwhelm conventional air defence systems.
- Often guided by AI or coordinated communication.
- Bhargavastra is specifically designed to defeat such swarm attacks.
-



- 
- Enemy Drone
 - ↓
 - Radar Detection
 - ↓
 - EO/IR Sensors
 - ↓
 - Target Tracking
 - ↓
 - Threat Identification
 - ↓
 - Fire Control System
 - ↓
 - Layer-1 Rockets
 - ↓
 - Layer-2 Guided Missiles
 - ↓
 - Target Destroyed





Target

Detection Range

Large UAVs

Up to **10 km**

Small drones

Up to **6 km**

Missile interception

Up to **2.5 km** (guided layer)

Importance of Bhargavastra

1. Countering Drone Warfare

Recent conflicts have demonstrated that inexpensive drones can inflict significant damage on military assets.

Bhargavastra offers a dedicated solution against this emerging threat.

2. Indigenous Defence Technology

- Designed and developed in India.
 - Supports **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.
 - Reduces dependence on imported counter-drone systems.
-

3. Multi-Layer Defence

Instead of relying on a single interceptor, Bhargavastra combines:

- Area-effect rockets for swarm attacks.
- Precision-guided missiles for individual targets.

This improves the probability of successful interception.

4. Cost Effectiveness

Using relatively inexpensive micro-rockets against low-cost drones avoids the need to fire expensive long-range missiles at small UAVs.

Possible Applications

Sector	Use
Indian Army	Battlefield air defence
Air Force	Airbase protection
Navy	Naval ship defence
Border Security	Counter cross-border drone threats
Strategic Installations	Nuclear plants, refineries, ammunition depots
Airports	Protection from rogue drones

Comparison with Other Counter-Drone Systems

Feature	Bhargavastra	Conventional Air Defence
Target	Small drones & swarms	Aircraft & larger missiles
Cost per engagement	Lower	Higher
Swarm capability	✓ Designed for swarms	Limited
Mobility	Vehicle-mounted	Varies
Indigenous	✓ Yes	Many systems are imported

HARD TO STOMACH What urban food habits do to Indians

Study finds link between urban diets and gut microbiomes that could be reason behind rising diabetes and other lifestyle diseases in the country

NEWS PAGE 5



Bill in U.S. Senate seeks three-year pause on H-1B visas

WORLD PAGE 11



What is the Saudi Arabia-U.S. nuclear deal about?

FAQ PAGE 6



Para powerlifter Jhandu wins India's first medal at Glasgow

SPORT PAGE 15

INSIDE



Nikoobar project 'commercial, not strategic', Jairam

NEW DELHI Congress MP Jairam Ramesh has reiterated that the Great Nicobar Island Project is "a commercial enterprise" and rejected inference Minister Rajnath Singh's contention that it is a strategically vital national initiative. ■ PAGE 3

Goyal files police complaint over deepfake video

NEW DELHI Union Minister Piyush Goyal has alleged that an AI-generated deepfake video had altered his remarks to the media outside Parliament, and said he had lodged a police complaint, following which an FIR was registered. ■ PAGE 3

Toll rises to ₹5 in Gujarat floods as water recedes

AHMEDABAD The death toll from rain-related incidents in Gujarat has risen to 35 over the past two days, with authorities recovering bodies after floodwaters receded and rescue operations concluded. ■ PAGE 5

Dharmendra Pradhan quits; BJP calls off stir

We have done it, says Abhijeet Dipke, President appoints Pralhad Joshi as Education Minister

This is a signal to farmers, labourers, poor people to stand up to the oppressive govt., says Rahul Gandhi

Kharge seeks stringent action against those who 'unleashed lathi and pellet guns' on students

Sandeep Phukan
Nandana Hebbar
NEW DELHI

As the student protest adds more papers to the list of demands, the government has decided to appoint a new Education Minister. Dharmendra Pradhan resigned as the Education Minister on Saturday, prompting the Congress-led Janata Party (JP) to call off the protests at Jantar Mantar, which had become the epicentre of the agitation for the past 36 days.

President Droupadi Murmu accepted Mr. Pradhan's resignation and appointed Pralhad Joshi as the new Education Minister. In his resignation letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, posted on X, Mr. Pradhan said he was resigning on his own account, so that "anti-national elements do not exploit the situation created by the protests."

Wangchuk's message As seen in the news of the resignation broke in the afternoon, protesters at Jantar Mantar erupted in joy. "We have done it," BJP president Abhijeet Dipke told the jubilant crowd. Activist Romann Wangchuk, whose hunger strike gave momentum to the



One video: CJP supporters celebrate at Jantar Mantar after Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation, inside central custody

protests, termed it a victory of democracy, peace, justice, and perseverance. "Congratulations to the students who died by suicide because of NEET paper leaks and action against any of the student protesters," he posted on X. The resignation came moments before Union Ministers J.P. Nadda and Dharmendra Singh met CJP spokespersons Ashwini Bhatnagar and Kanwar that for talks to end the protests. At a joint press conference with the Ministers, the CJP spokes-

persons said they are calling for broader education reforms in the country. They will deliberate upon and engage with them, he said. "It should apologise" Congratulating the students on their victory, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said exit of Mr. Pradhan is a "symbolic" but historic step in rebuilding the education system.

He, however, said there are still two more demands: anyone who beat up the students should be held accountable and that the Prime Minister should apologise to the students. "It is a signal to all parts of society, farmers, labourers, poor people, anybody whom this regime is attacking and oppressing, there is wisdom and courage in standing up. Dare not (don't fear). Let's get rid of this regime," Mr. Gandhi said.

In a post on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "The Prime Minister should apologise to youth. There should be strict action against those who unleashed lathi and pellet guns."

With the first week of the Monsoon Session of Parliament washed out over the Opposition's insistence on Mr. Pradhan's resignation, the government is now expecting both houses to function. Amid the jubilation at Jantar Mantar, there were also tense moments, as three senior police officers were injured in stone-throwing near the protest site. Police personnel quickly restored order by

Centre proposes Bill to strengthen anti-cheating law

NEW DELHI Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh is set to introduce the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2020, which seeks to strengthen the anti-cheating law, in the Lok Sabha on Monday. The proposed legislation, a copy of which was circulated among MPs on Saturday, significantly toughens the penalties established under the 2024 Act, introduces mandatory two-month investigation, disqualification, and imposes penalties reaching up to ₹10 crore for organised crime networks. ■ PAGE 2

Three protesters injured as police open fire in Bihar

PATNA At least three protesters sustained bullet wounds and several police officers reported injuries from stone pelting in Siwan district of Bihar on Saturday as a State-wide bandh called by the All India Students' Association over the NEET issue turned violent. While police fired 10 rounds in Siwan, incidents of stone pelting were reported in several districts including capital Patna. Though a heavy deployment of the police force was made in the state capital, the large number of students managed to lodge their protest. ■ PAGE 4

Maharashtra TET paper leak accused, aide held from Bihar

Amir Bhaskar
Vinita Dabhande-Panda
PATNA/AHMEDABAD

The Maharashtra Police on Saturday arrested Bhendra Kumar Gupta, the prime accused in the Maharashtra Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) paper leak case, from Bihar along with his associate Indrajit Singh. Mr. Gupta was picked up from Ramnagar, his home district, and arrested in Patna at around 1 a.m.

Later in the day, two were flown from Patna to Pune and taken to Bhiwandi by road. A court in Bhiwandi remanded them to police custody till July 30.

False identity "Bhendra Kumar is the mastermind in this case. He has several offences registered against him in different parts of the country. He used to handle the media and the other accused, who used to sell the leaked papers. He was also an accused in two more cases in Odisha. To evade arrest in this case, Bhendra used the



Police bring Bhendra Kumar Gupta and Indrajit Singh, accused in the Maharashtra TET paper leak, to Thane on Saturday am

false identity of 'Abhishekh Mahato'. He created a forged Aadhaar card and a driving licence in that name. He used these documents to buy SIM cards," a senior Maharashtra Police official told The Hindu. Mr. Singh, alias Piku, is accused of harboring Mr. Gupta in Bihar. Police also alleged that he was involved in Mr. Gupta's activities in Delhi, and was aware of the TET paper leak. The TET 2020 was postponed on June 27, a day before it was scheduled to be

held, after the police in Thane district found that a portion of the question paper had been leaked and arrested three people. The SIT found that the racket was spread across Delhi, Agra, Bihar, and Haryana. The TET paper leak, which followed the nationwide controversy over the NEET-UG paper leak, affected nearly 35 lakh candidates. With the latest arrests, the total number of accused held in the case has increased to 14.

Tensions rise as Houthis, Saudi Arabia trade strikes

Associated Press
CAIRO

Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis rebelled on Saturday that they fired missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia in response to Saudi airstrikes on the city of Hodeida, in another escalation over vital shipping routes in West Asia while the U.S. and Iran vie for control of the Strait of Hormuz.

Houthi's military spokesman said that the attack targeted facilities in the cities of Yanbu and Jazan belonging to Aramco, the world's largest oil company. Saudi Arabia's civil defence said it shot down multiple times on Saturday in both cities. The rising tension in the Red Sea threatens to further choke global commerce because the rebels have said they would close the Bab el Mandeb Strait to Saudi-linked shipping.

FULL STORY ON
PAGE 12

Around 45% of India's U.S. exports exempt from new 10% tariff: Centre

T.C.A. Sharad Rachavan
NEW DELHI

A day after the U.S. announced permanent tariffs on imports from 60 trading partners over forced labour goods, the Centre on Saturday said that about 45% of India's exports to the U.S. are not subject to the new 10% tariff. The government also said that it remained engaged with the U.S. regarding a quota-based system regarding India's textile exports to the U.S.

The statement by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Saturday highlighted that the new 10% tariff is lower than the industry's demand, and auto parts, are not subject to the additional 10% duty. Further, it pointed out that the tariffs under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Expansion Act, such as steel, pharmaceuticals, smart phones, and certain other specified products, attract zero additional duties and are exempt from the scope of the additional 10% duty.



T.C.A. Sharad Rachavan

Apart from these, the Ministry said that products already covered under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Expansion Act, such as steel, pharmaceuticals, smart phones, and certain other specified products, attract zero additional duties and are exempt from the scope of the additional 10% duty.



T.C.A. Sharad Rachavan

estimated 45% of India's exports to the U.S. remain outside the purview of the additional 10% Section 301 duty," the statement said. It also acknowledged that the remaining 55% of exports will attract the additional 10% duty, but added that India's "tariff inclusion is comparatively lower than that for most other economies". The office of the U.S. Trade Representative commented on Thursday, "On account of its investigation on whether

or the U.S.'s trade partners were doing enough to prevent the import of goods made using forced labour. "The Government of India remained closely engaged with the USTR throughout the investigation," the Ministry statement said, adding "as a result of these sustained efforts, India has been placed in the lowest tier of additional tariffs under the final measures."

That 16, out of the 60 countries that were investigated, India's tariff is lower than 36 other countries. Textile exports In its report, the USTR also provided for the establishment of a "textile mechanism" in the form of tariff-rate quotas for Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia, to encourage these countries to import U.S. cotton and textile goods. India was not included in this mechanism, but India said it is committed to working with the U.S. government regarding India's textile exports.

Dharmendra Pradhan quits; CJP calls off stir

We have done it, says Abhijeet Dipke; President appoints Pralhad Joshi as Education Minister

This is a signal to farmers, labourers, poor people to stand up to the oppressive govt., says Rahul Gandhi

Kharge seeks stringent action against those who 'unleashed lathis and pellet guns' on students

Sandeep Phukan
Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

As the student protests over paper leaks spread across different States and snowballed into a major political crisis for the Narendra Modi government, Dharmendra Pradhan resigned as the Education Minister on Saturday, prompting the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) to call off the protests at Jantar Mantar, which had become the epicentre of the agitation for the past 36 days.

President Droupadi Murmu accepted Mr. Pradhan's resignation and appointed Pralhad Joshi as the new Education Minister. In his resignation letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, posted on X, Mr. Pradhan said he was resigning on his own account, so that "anti-national" elements do not exploit the situation created by the protests.

Wangchuk's message

As soon as the news of the resignation broke in the afternoon, protesters at Jantar Mantar erupted in joy. "We have done it," CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke told the jubilant crowd.

Activist Sonam Wangchuk, whose hunger strike gave momentum to the



One voice: CJP supporters celebrate at Jantar Mantar after Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

protests, termed it a victory of democracy, peace, patience, and perseverance. "Congratulations CJP, Gen Z of the nation, and thank you all citizens for shedding fear and the fear of fear, and rising up from every corner of the nation," he posted on X.

The resignation came moments before Union Ministers J.P. Nadda and Jitendra Singh met CJP spokespersons Ashutosh Ranka and Saurav Das for talks to end the protests. At a joint press conference with the Ministers, the CJP spokes-

persons said they are calling the protest off in "good faith" as the government had agreed to their two demands: ₹1 crore to the families of all students who died by suicide because of NEET paper leaks and no action against any of the student protesters.

Mr. Nadda said the government will give "honourable compensation" within rules to the families of the students who died by suicide after the NEET test was cancelled and ensure withdrawal of all FIRs registered against the prot-

esters. "As far as their [CJP] charter for broader education reforms is concerned, we will deliberate upon and engage with them," he said.

'PM should apologise'

Congratulating the students on their victory, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said exit of Mr. Pradhan is a "symbolic" but huge step in rebuilding the education system.

He, however, said there are still two more demands: anyone who beat

up the students should be held accountable and that the Prime Minister should apologise to the students.

"It is also a signal to other parts of society, farmers, labourers, poor people, anybody whom this regime is attacking and oppressing, there is wisdom and courage in standing up. *Daro mat* (don't fear). Let's get rid of this regime," Mr. Gandhi said.

In a post on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said: "The Prime Minister should apologise to youth. There should be

Centre proposes Bill to strengthen anti-cheating law

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh is set to introduce the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, which seeks to strengthen the anti-cheating law, in the Lok Sabha on Monday. The proposed legislation, a copy of which was circulated among MPs on Saturday, significantly toughens the penalties established under the 2024 Act, introduces mandatory two-month investigation deadlines, and imposes penalties reaching up to ₹10 crore for organised crime networks. » PAGE 3

Three protesters injured as police open fire in Bihar

PATNA

At least three protesters sustained bullet wounds and several police officers reported injuries from stone pelting in Siwan district of Bihar on Saturday as a State-wide bandh called by the All India Students' Association over the NEET issue turned violent. While police fired 10 rounds in Siwan, incidents of stone pelting were reported in several districts including capital Patna. Though a heavy deployment of the police force was made in the State capital, the large number of students managed to lodge their protest. » PAGE 4

strict action against those who unleashed lathis and pellet guns."

With the first week of the Monsoon Session of Parliament washed out over the Opposition's insistence on Mr. Pradhan's resignation, the government is now expecting both Houses to function.

Amid the jubilation at Jantar Mantar, there were also tense moments, as three senior police officials were injured in stone-throwing near the protest site. Police personnel quickly restored order by

using tear gas and resorting to a mild lathi-charge.

Sources said the government had come around to the view on Friday evening that it would be necessary for Mr. Pradhan to resign in order to end the protests, which appeared to be spreading across the country. With Delhi University set to open soon and protests spreading to tier-II cities, discretion was considered the better part of valour, the sources added.

DETAILED COVERAGE

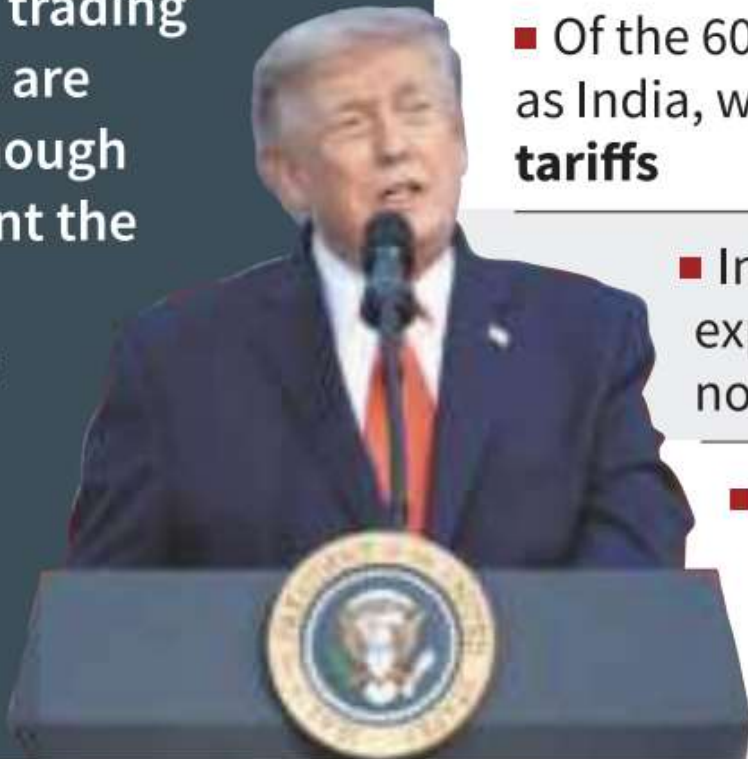
» PAGES 3 & 4

Section	Details
Main Headline	Dharmendra Pradhan quits; CJP calls off stir
Reason for Resignation	Following widespread student protests over examination paper leaks, Dharmendra Pradhan resigned as India's Education Minister after 36 days of nationwide agitation.
New Education Minister	President Droupadi Murmu accepted the resignation and appointed Prahlad Joshi as the new Education Minister.
Protest Outcome	The Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) announced that it was ending its protest after the government accepted its two key demands.

Provision	Details
Bill Name	Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026
Purpose	Strengthen anti-cheating laws.
Investigation Deadline	Mandatory completion within 2 months .
Maximum Penalty	Up to ₹10 crore for organised examination cheating networks.
Parliament	Proposed to be introduced in Lok Sabha.

Tariff matters

The new tariffs follow a U.S. investigation into whether trading partners are doing enough to prevent the import of goods made using forced labour



- U.S.'s **10%** tariffs are lower than the **12.5%** it initially proposed

- Tariffs are on **60 countries** that U.S. says have failed to stop the import of goods made using forced labour

- Of the 60, 16 have the same rate as India, while **38 face higher tariffs**

- India says **45%** of exports to the U.S. will not face these tariffs

- India-U.S. trade deal is **still in the works** that could alter the tariff arrangement further

Item	Details
Investigating Authority	U.S. Trade Representative (USTR)
Reason	Countries allegedly failed to adequately prevent imports produced using forced labour.
Countries Covered	60 countries
India's Tariff	10%
Initially Proposed	12.5%
Final Decision	Reduced to 10% after discussions with India

Why did the U.S. impose these tariffs?

The U.S. conducted an investigation into whether its trading partners were taking sufficient action to stop goods made through:

- Forced labour
- Modern slavery
- Labour exploitation
- Human rights violations

Countries judged to have inadequate safeguards were placed into different tariff categories.

India's Position

The Indian government stated that:

- Around **45% of India's exports to the U.S. will NOT be affected** by the new tariff.
- Only about **55%** of exports will face the additional **10% duty**.

Which Indian exports are exempt?

The Ministry of Commerce identified several major export categories that remain outside the tariff.

Product Category	Tariff Status	Reason
Generic pharmaceuticals	Exempt	Strategic healthcare products
Smartphones	Exempt	Already covered under different trade provisions
Certain electronic products	Exempt	Existing trade arrangements
Other specified products	Exempt	Zero additional duty

Products already under Section 232

Certain products are **already covered under Section 232** of U.S. trade law.

These include:

Product	Existing Tariff
Steel	25–50%
Aluminium	25–50%
Auto parts	Existing Section 232 duties

The new 10% tariff **does not apply additionally** to these products because they are already subject to Section 232 tariffs.

How much of India's exports are affected?

Category	Share
Exempt exports	45%
Exports attracting new 10% tariff	55%

Comparison with other countries

One of the most important points in the article:

Comparison	Details
Countries investigated	60
Countries with same tariff as India	16
Countries facing higher tariffs than India	38
India's position	Lower tariff tier

This means India received a **relatively favourable treatment** compared with many competitors.

Why did India receive a lower tariff?

According to the Commerce Ministry:

- India remained in continuous negotiations with the USTR.
- India demonstrated efforts to prevent forced-labour imports.
- These diplomatic efforts resulted in India being placed in a lower tariff category.

USTR's Textile Mechanism

The U.S. introduced a new tariff-rate quota mechanism for:

Country

Bangladesh

Cambodia

Indonesia

Malaysia

Purpose:

- Encourage these countries to import **U.S. cotton and textile products**.
- Offer preferential treatment under the new mechanism.

India's Textile Industry

India **was not included** in this textile mechanism.

However:

- India continues discussions with the U.S.
- Negotiations are ongoing regarding textile exports.

Impact on India

Positive

Benefit	Explanation
45% exports remain duty-free	Nearly half of exports are unaffected.
Lower tariff than many competitors	India is in a more favourable position than 38 of the 60 countries.
Tariff reduced from proposed 12.5% to 10%	Reflects successful negotiations.
Strategic sectors protected	Pharmaceuticals and smartphones remain exempt.
Ongoing trade talks	Future agreement may further improve market access.

Challenges

Challenge	Explanation
55% exports now face 10% tariff	Could reduce competitiveness in affected sectors.
Textile sector uncertainty	India is outside the new textile mechanism.
Higher costs for U.S. buyers	May reduce demand for some Indian exports.

Former PSC chief of Chhattisgarh held in paper leak case

Probe Trust of India
RAIPUR

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday arrested former Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission (PSC) chairman Taran Singh Sarwan from Raipur on money laundering charges in an alleged examination paper leak case, officials said.

The probe pertains to the leak of question papers and "manipulation" of the State service examinations conducted in 2020 and 2021 by the Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission.

Officials said Mr. Sarwan was taken into custody under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). He is being produced before a special PMLA court in Raipur, where the ED will seek his custodial remand, an official said.

CBI probe
The money laundering investigation stems from a 2024 Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) case. The CBI case was booked based on a police complaint that was filed after the BJP came to

Probe pertains to 'leak' of question papers as well as manipulation of state exams held in 2020 and 2021

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power in Chhattisgarh. He was arrested in 2024. The ED accused Mr. Sarwan of leaking question papers and rigging sections in exchange for illegal gratification favouring his own relatives and constituents who paid bribes. The central agency claimed that the recruitment rules of the PSC were amended in 2021 to remove the word "nepotism" from the definition of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

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Union govt. circulates Bill to strengthen anti-cheating law

Centre to introduce the Bill in Parliament on Monday; it proposes to introduce mandatory two-month investigation deadlines, designated Special Fast Track Courts, steep financial penalties

Minister Purnima
NEW DELHI

It is a move to strengthen the anti-cheating law, the Union government has proposed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Malpractice) Bill, 2025, a copy of which was circulated among members of Parliament on Saturday.

Union Minister Dr. Jyoti Prakash Singh will introduce the bill in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

The proposed legislation significantly toughens the penalties established under the 2024 Act, introducing a mandatory two-month investigation deadline, along with designated Special Fast Track Courts, and steep financial penalties reaching up to 100 crore for organised crime networks.

Maximum imprisonment sentences for individuals and institutional offenders have been increased, along with a provision for forfeiture of assets. The agency alleged that about 443 lakh were routed through a family-controlled "umbrella" in the guise of CSR donations.

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Tougher rules, bigger fines

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Malpractice) Bill, 2025 significantly expands the list of prohibited conduct, including the use of technology to facilitate cheating.

Under Section 4(1)
(General offences): Jail 5 to 10 years, fine up to 100 crore (from 10 to 50 crore).
Under Section 4(2)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).
Under Section 4(3)
(Service providers): Jail 1 to 3 years, fine up to 10 crore (from 5 to 10 crore).
Under Section 4(4)
(Service providers/contractors): Jail 1 to 3 years, fine up to 10 crore (from 5 to 10 crore).

Under Section 4(5)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).
Under Section 4(6)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).

Under Section 4(7)
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Under Section 4(8)
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Under Section 4(9)
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Under Section 4(10)
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Under Section 4(11)
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Under Section 4(12)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).

Under Section 4(13)
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Under Section 4(16)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).

Under Section 4(17)
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Under Section 4(18)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).

Under Section 4(19)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).
Under Section 4(20)
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Under Section 4(21)
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Under Section 4(31)
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Under Section 4(32)
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Under Section 4(33)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).
Under Section 4(34)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).

Tougher rules, bigger fines

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Malpractice) Bill, 2025 significantly expands the list of prohibited conduct, including the use of technology to facilitate cheating.

Under Section 4(1)
(General offences): Jail 5 to 10 years, fine up to 100 crore (from 10 to 50 crore).
Under Section 4(2)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).
Under Section 4(3)
(Service providers): Jail 1 to 3 years, fine up to 10 crore (from 5 to 10 crore).
Under Section 4(4)
(Service providers/contractors): Jail 1 to 3 years, fine up to 10 crore (from 5 to 10 crore).

Under Section 4(5)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).
Under Section 4(6)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).

Under Section 4(7)
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Under Section 4(8)
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Under Section 4(9)
(Organised crime): Jail 10 to 20 years, fine up to 200 crore (from 100 to 50 crore).
Under Section 4(10)
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Under Section 4(11)
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FIR registered on Goyal's complaint over deepfake video

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday alleged that an AI-generated deepfake video had "maliciously" altered his remarks in the media outside Parliament to spread misinformation, and said he had lodged a police complaint, following which an FIR was registered at the Chhannarayana police station.

In a post on X, Mr. Goyal said the manipulated clip was being circulated on social media with the intent to mislead the public and warned that "strict legal action" would be taken against those involved in creating, disseminating or promoting it.

He also asserted that irresponsible misuse of artificial intelligence to mislead the public cannot and will not be tolerated.

Government sources said many social media influencers had shared the video had since been taken down.

The PM's fact-check unit had on Friday said Pakistani propaganda accounts were circulating the fabricated video, which falsely



Piyush Goyal

portrayed Mr. Goyal as making threatening remarks against students protesting over alleged irregularities in NEET. Mr. Goyal urged the public to rely only on verified sources of information. "I have complete faith that India's aware and tech-savvy citizens, especially our youth, will not fall for such misinformation," he said.

The manipulated video surfaced against the backdrop of the recently cancelled student protests or gathered by the Congress-led Janata Party at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi. Social media has witnessed a surge in content related to the demonstrations, and authorities have repeatedly cautioned users against relying on unverified videos and posts circulating online.

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Great Nicobar project 'most fundamentally a commercial enterprise': Jairam Ramesh

Jairam Ramesh
NEW DELHI

In his latest letter, Congress MP Jairam Ramesh has rejected the Union Minister Jagan Singh's contention that the Great Nicobar Island Project is a strategically vital national initiative. He reiterated that the scheme is "most fundamentally a commercial enterprise" for which a strategic rationale is being "invented".

Mr. Ramesh was responding to Mr. Singh's reply of July 17, which had itself answered two of the MP's earlier letters.

Over the last two years, Mr. Ramesh has written repeatedly on the project to the four Union Ministers — Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Tribal Affairs, Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and Defence — three of whom, he said,



Jairam Ramesh

have replied. In the recent letter, Mr. Ramesh argued that the trans-shipment port at Galathea Bay lay at the project's heart and accounted for about half its budget, making it commercial "by definition". The dual purpose airport, the only one to be built with a defence focus, required just 5% of the 100 sq. km sought and would be built on the island, he said, calling claims of the project's overall strategic importance an "imagined."

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generation." He added that the Draft Master Plan for 2047 envisaged cruise tourism, casinos, theme parks and a finance hub, reading "like an ambitious real estate project."

Mr. Ramesh also reiterated that expanding the existing 105 Bha at Campbell Bay to 1,000 Bha would be an environmental and social cost than the greenfield Export, citing seven concerns — among them the falling of two forested hills, destruction of Shompen tribal land and impact on international flight ways — that he said remained unaddressed. He questioned the confidentiality of the National Green Tribunal (NGT)-appointed High-Powered Committee report and said the Ministry of Defence retired naval officers who have questioned the defence reasoning.

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Union govt. circulates Bill to strengthen anti-cheating law

Centre to introduce the Bill in Parliament on Monday; it proposes to introduce mandatory two-month investigation deadlines, designated Special Fast Track Courts, steep financial penalties

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

In a move to strengthen the anti-cheating law, the Union government has proposed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, a copy of which was circulated among members of Parliament on Saturday.

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh will introduce the Bill in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

The proposed legislation significantly toughens the penalties established under the 2024 Act, introduces mandatory two-month investigation deadlines, along with designated Special Fast Track Courts, and steep financial penalties reaching up to ₹10 crore for organised crime networks.

Maximum imprisonment sentences for individual and institutional offenders have been increased, alongside a steep hike in financial penalties, according to the proposed Bill.

Specialised Enforcement Units enable the Un-

Tougher rules, bigger fines

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 significantly escalates the cost of committing or facilitating exam malpractices

■ Under Section 10(1) (General offences): **Jail:** 5-10 years (from 3-5 years); **Fine:** up to ₹50 lakh (from ₹10 lakh)

■ Under Section 10(2) (Service provider fines): **Fine:** up to ₹5 crore (from ₹1 crore)

■ Under Section 10(2) (Service provider directors/management): **Jail:** 3-10 years;

Fine: ₹5 crore (from ₹1 crore)

■ Under Section 10(3) (In-charge personnel): **Jail:** 5-10 years (from 3-10 years); **Fine:** ₹5 crore (from ₹1 crore)

■ Under Section 11(1) (Organised crime): **Minimum jail:** 7 years (from 5 years); **Fine:** up to ₹10 crore (from ₹1 crore)



ion government to constitute dedicated Special Task Forces (STF) to take exclusive charge of investigation efforts.

All investigations – whether conducted by local police, Central Investigating Agencies, or an STF – must be concluded within 60 days.

State governments and Union Territory administrations will designate Sessions Courts to conduct trials on a continuous, day-to-day basis. Trials must wrap up within three months of the chargesheet being filed. High Court appeals will be heard by a Di-

vision Bench (two judges) and must also be resolved within a three-month period.

To address prolonged legal delays, the Bill introduces Sections 12A and 12B, establishing an uninterrupted procedural pipeline.

Courts cannot grant adjournments beyond the following day without writing explicit, exceptional reasons.

Transfer of cases

All ongoing cases under the 2024 Act will immediately transfer to the newly designated Special Fast

Track Courts and must be completed within three months of transfer.

States and Union Territories are mandated to appoint Special Public Prosecutors under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 to handle these trials exclusively.

Appeals against bail orders, judgments, or sentences must be filed within 30 days (with a strict absolute ceiling of 90 days for special delays) and will be adjudicated by a two-judge High Court Bench.

Recent incidents of paper leaks and malpractices have necessitated urgent structural overhauls to safeguard transparent and merit-based selections.

“The objective of the Act is to bring greater transparency, fairness, and credibility, and to inspire confidence in the public examination system, Dr. Jitendra Singh noted.

“The amendments ensure time-bound investigations, speedy trials, and enhanced deterrence against organised crime groups and institutions,” he said.

Tougher rules, bigger fines

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The Union Government has proposed the **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026** to significantly strengthen India's anti-cheating framework following several major paper leaks and examination irregularities. The Bill amends the **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024**.

Why was this Bill introduced?

Issue	Explanation
Frequent paper leaks	Multiple national and state-level exams experienced leaks.
Organised cheating rackets	Criminal networks increasingly involved in exam fraud.
Delayed investigations	Cases often took years to conclude.
Low conviction rate	Slow trials reduced deterrence.
Loss of public trust	Students lost confidence in competitive examinations.

Objectives

- Ensure fair examinations.
- Complete investigations quickly.
- Speed up trials.
- Increase punishments.
- Break organised cheating syndicates.
- Restore confidence among students.

Provision	Earlier (2024 Act)	Amendment Bill 2026
Investigation deadline	No strict timeline	Mandatory completion within 60 days (2 months)
Trial courts	Regular courts	Dedicated Special Fast Track Courts
Appeals	Normal process	Strict timeline with High Court Division Bench
Penalties	Lower	Significantly increased
Special investigation	Not mandatory	Special Task Forces (STFs)
Prosecutors	Normal prosecutors	Dedicated Special Public Prosecutors

Investigation Timeline

The biggest reform is **time-bound investigations**.

Stage	Timeline
FIR registered	Day 0
Investigation completed	Within 60 days
Chargesheet filed	Immediately after investigation
Trial starts	Fast Track Court
Trial completed	Within 3 months of chargesheet
Appeal	Filed within 30 days (maximum 90 days in exceptional cases)

This means many cases could potentially be concluded within **5–7 months**, compared to years under the earlier system.

Special Task Forces (STFs)

The Bill directs governments to create **dedicated Special Task Forces**.

Their responsibilities include:

- Investigating paper leaks.
- Tracking organised crime.
- Identifying digital evidence.
- Coordinating with cybercrime units.
- Working with central and state agencies.

Restrictions on Adjournments

To prevent delays:

- Courts **cannot grant adjournments** beyond the next day unless exceptional reasons are recorded in writing.

This aims to stop prolonged litigation.

Special Public Prosecutors

Each State and Union Territory must appoint **Special Public Prosecutors** under the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023**.

Their role:

- Conduct prosecution exclusively for examination fraud cases.
- Improve conviction rates.
- Ensure specialised handling of evidence.

Appeals Process

Provision	New Rule
Appeal filing	Within 30 days
Exceptional extension	Maximum 90 days
Hearing	Two-judge High Court Division Bench

This creates a faster appellate process.

Category	Earlier	Amendment
General offence	3–5 yrs	5–10 yrs
General fine	₹10 lakh	₹50 lakh
Service provider fine	₹1 crore	₹5 crore
In-charge fine	₹1 crore	₹5 crore
Organised crime fine	₹1 crore	₹10 crore
Minimum organised crime jail	5 yrs	7 yrs

Institutions Covered

The Act applies to public examinations conducted by authorities such as:

- UPSC
- SSC
- NTA (NEET, CUET, UGC NET, etc.)
- Railway Recruitment Boards
- Banking recruitment agencies
- State Public Service Commissions
- State recruitment boards
- Other notified public examination authorities

Impact on Students

Positive Impact	Explanation
Faster justice	Cases resolved in months instead of years.
Reduced paper leaks	Stronger deterrence through higher penalties.
Fairer recruitment	Better protection of merit-based selection.
Improved transparency	Dedicated investigation and prosecution mechanisms.
Greater accountability	Organisers, service providers, and officials face stricter liability.



A view of the ancient Buddhist site of Sarnath; this is India's 45th site to join the list. AP

UNESCO lists Sarnath as World Heritage Site

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

India's ancient Buddhist site of Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh was on Saturday inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The decision was taken during the ongoing meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee's 48th session in Busan, South Korea.

"New inscription on the @UNESCO #WorldHeritage List: Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath, #India,"

UNESCO posted on X. This is India's 45th site to join the list.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the inscription, stating that the site has a deep connection with Lord Buddha.

In 2025, Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said that India had submitted a dossier titled 'Ancient Buddhist Site, Sarnath' to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre for the 2025-26 nomination cycle.





India's ancient Buddhist site **Sarnath** in Uttar Pradesh has been inscribed on the **UNESCO World Heritage List**, becoming **India's 45th UNESCO World Heritage Site**. The decision was taken during the **48th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee** held in **Busan, South Korea**.

What is Sarnath?

Item	Details
Location	Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh
Distance from Varanasi	About 10 km
Religion	Buddhism
Importance	One of the four holiest Buddhist pilgrimage sites
UNESCO Status	India's 45th World Heritage Site
Type	Cultural Heritage Site

Why is Sarnath Important?

Sarnath is regarded as the **birthplace of Buddhism as an organized religion** because it is where **Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon** after attaining enlightenment.

Event	Details
Buddha attained enlightenment	Bodh Gaya
First sermon	Sarnath
Sermon name	Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta ("Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dharma")
Audience	Five former disciples
Buddhist Sangha established	Yes, at Sarnath

This event is known as the **Turning of the Wheel of Dharma (Dharmachakra Pravartana)**.

Historical Timeline

Year/Period	Event
6th century BCE	Buddha gave first sermon
3rd century BCE	Emperor Ashoka visited and built monuments
Gupta period	Flourished as a Buddhist learning centre
12th century CE	Declined after invasions
19th century	Archaeological excavations began
2025–26	India submitted UNESCO nomination dossier
2026	UNESCO inscription approved

Why UNESCO Selected Sarnath

UNESCO recognised Sarnath because it has:

Criterion	Explanation
Outstanding Universal Value	Exceptional importance to humanity
Historical significance	Birthplace of Buddhist teaching
Archaeological remains	Monasteries, stupas and temples
Global religious importance	Pilgrimage destination for millions
Cultural continuity	Over 2,500 years of history

Major Attractions in Sarnath

Monument	Importance
Dhamek Stupa	Marks the place where Buddha delivered his first sermon
Ashoka Pillar	Built by Emperor Ashoka around 250 BCE
Lion Capital of Ashoka	India's National Emblem originated here
Mulagandha Kuti Vihara	Modern Buddhist temple
Archaeological Museum	Houses original Lion Capital and Buddhist sculptures
Ancient Monasteries	Ruins of Buddhist educational institutions

Ashoka's Contribution

Emperor Ashoka played a major role in developing Sarnath.

Contribution	Details
Pillar	Erected Ashoka Pillar
Stupas	Constructed several stupas
Monasteries	Established Buddhist monasteries
Spread of Buddhism	Made Sarnath an international pilgrimage centre

Lion Capital of Ashoka

Feature	Details
Found at	Sarnath
Material	Polished sandstone
Animals	Four Asiatic lions back-to-back
Adopted by India	26 January 1950
National Motto	Satyameva Jayate (from Mundaka Upanishad)

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India

Category	Number
Total UNESCO World Heritage Sites	45
Cultural Sites	37
Natural Sites	7
Mixed Sites	1

Four Most Sacred Buddhist Pilgrimage Sites

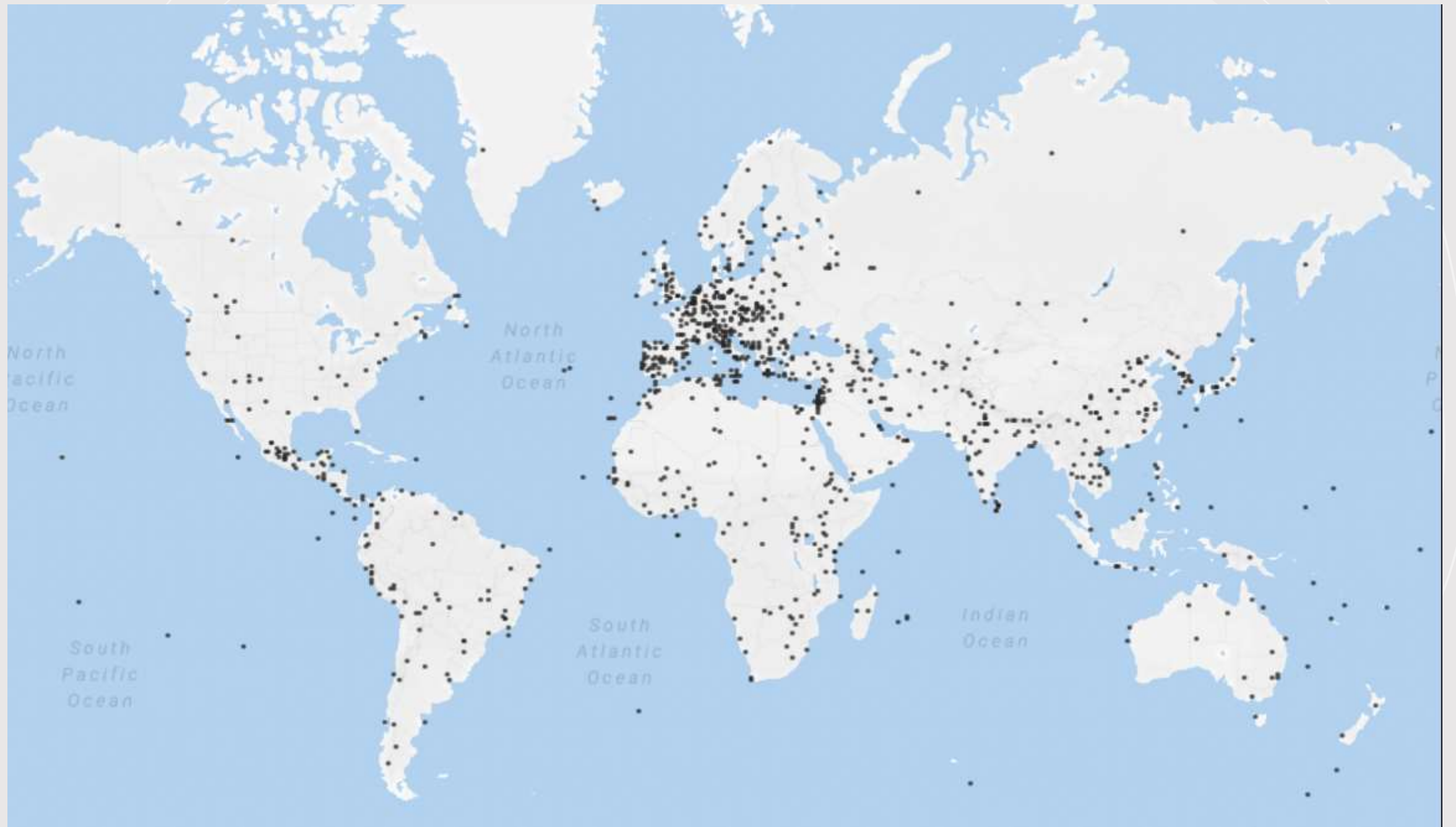
Site	Importance	State
Lumbini	Birth of Buddha	Nepal
Bodh Gaya	Enlightenment	Bihar
Sarnath	First Sermon	Uttar Pradesh
Kushinagar	Mahaparinirvana	Uttar Pradesh

Benefits of UNESCO Recognition

Benefit	Impact
International recognition	Global heritage status
Tourism growth	Increase in domestic and foreign visitors
Conservation funding	Better preservation of monuments
Employment	Growth in hospitality and tourism sectors
Local economy	Higher income for local businesses
Cultural diplomacy	Enhances India's soft power

UNESCO World Heritage Selection Process

Step	Description
1	Country prepares a nomination dossier
2	Evaluation by advisory bodies (ICOMOS/IUCN, depending on the site)
3	Review by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee
4	Committee votes on inscription
5	Site added to the World Heritage List



What caused the tunnel disaster in Sikkim's Namchi?

How did 25 people die? Why is methane trapped in mountain rocks? Why are the Himalayas fracturing?

Rahul Karmakar

The story so far:

Two gas, generated by a sudden explosive release of suspected methane trapped or embedded in rocks on July 20, claimed the lives of 25 workers in an under-construction Head Race Tunnel (HRT) of the NHPC's 800 MW Teesta Stage VI Hydropower Project at Ramdang in Sikkim's Namchi district.

How did the tragedy happen?

The NHPC has said a thorough investigation will be conducted to ascertain the cause of the incident. The Sikkim government has also announced the constitution of a high-level committee for the same purpose. Preliminary reports indicate the formation of rock mass in the HRT owing to the sudden release of suspected methane trapped in the rocks, resulting in an explosion and partial damage to the tunnel. This indicates that the workers hit such rock while drilling concerning the HRT, a critical component of a hydropower plant for transporting massive volumes of water from the primary intake to a reservoir to the power generation turbine.

NHPC officials said that surveys for tunnel projects in India, especially in the fragile Himalayan belt, are conducted across planning, construction, and maintenance phases to ensure structural stability, worker safety, and environmental

Methane deposits are found in the Himalayan belt or other mountainous regions with active or historical coal-bearing strata, where ancient organic matter has decomposed over millions of years

test can detect the presence of the odorless and colorless methane, an extremely flammable gas, which can explode after mixing with air in a specific ratio and encountering an ignition source, possibly sparks resulting from drilling in the case of the Teesta-VI tunnel.

How is methane trapped in hills terrain? Methane deposits usually occur either as natural gas trapped in porous rock or localized gas pockets in young, fragile geological formations. These are frequently encountered in the Himalayan belt or other mountainous regions with active or historical coal-bearing strata, where ancient organic matter has decomposed over millions of years. Hilly depressions or valleys frequently trap moisture, creating oxygen-depleted (anaerobic) waterlogged soils where microcosmic organisms digest organic matter and emit methane. Improperly managed or open waste dumps in hilly terrain also decompose in anaerobic layers, producing large amounts of landfill gas.

Moreover, hilly and mountainous regions are often located near fault lines or areas with underlying coal, gas, or geothermal reserves, with natural fissures allowing the migration of underground methane upwards. There are no coalfields in Sikkim, the Bhadracharya, Karthikeya, and Nandakini river valleys. Geological surveys of India studies have identified coal reserves of approximately 1,40 lakh tonnes in Sikkim, primarily the Namchi area where the NHPC tunnel incident occurred.

According to the State's Mines and Geology Department, a regional-level coal exploration project commenced in December 2025 under a Government of India programme. The coal in Namchi was analysed to contain 53.40% fixed carbon, 20.50% ash, 3.4% volatile matter, and 3.7% moisture.

Have other projects in Sikkim been similarly affected? A young geological age, active tectonic instability, and steep, erosion-prone terrain make the Himalayan fragile. The mountains are constantly rising and shifting due to the collision of the Indian and Eurasian plates, making the region highly prone to earthquakes. Heavy blasting and tunnelling for highways, dams, and railways add to the geological instability, leading to frequent landslides and mudslides. Heavy tourism, unregulated urban expansion, poor waste management, and deforestation have compounded the problems.

Sikkim has also suffered from extreme weather events such as flash floods, rapidly melting glaciers, and expanding glacial lakes attributed to climate change. Hydropower projects in the State have suffered owing to several of these factors. A Glacial Lake Chutarna Flood in October 2023 killed more than 90 people and destroyed Sikkim Liza Limited's 1,200 MW dam at Chutarnah in Mangen district. The disaster also damaged NHPC's 310 MW Teesta-V Hydropower Project, which was restored three years later. A landslide damaged some houses and a building of this project in August 2024. The Teesta-VI tunnel disaster is the first recorded incident in the State involving an explosion due to suspected methane gas release.

What is the Saudi-U.S. nuclear deal about?

What does the agreement say? Why does Saudi Arabia want a nuclear programme? Why has President Trump linked the deal to the Abraham Accords? How does the agreement impact Iran's nuclear programme?

Stanley John

The story so far:

On July 22, U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement and a bilateral nuclear safeguards agreement. The U.S. Department of Energy, the deal will lay the foundation for a 30-year multi-billion nuclear partnership between the U.S. and the Persian Gulf kingdom. U.S. companies will help Riyadh build its own nuclear sector.

However, on July 23, U.S. President Donald Trump said the deal was contingent upon Saudi Arabia joining the Abraham Accords (renaming, establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel). The White House later said the "deal is off" if the Saudis do not join the accords.

What does the deal say?

The deal enables the transfer of civil nuclear materials, technology, and equipment from the U.S. to Saudi Arabia. U.S. nuclear companies will get preferred treatment when Saudi Arabia starts building its nuclear infrastructure.

The bilateral safeguards agreement will apply national verification measures to detect proliferation-sensitive areas such as enrichment, conversion, fuel fabrication, and reprocessing.

In 2009, when the U.S. and the UAE announced a civil nuclear cooperation agreement, Abu Dhabi agreed not to enrich uranium or reprocess spent fuel before exporting it to Barakah plant. Non-proliferation experts held this deal up as the "gold standard" for preventing nuclear power. However, the U.S.-Saudi agreement doesn't have any such requirement.

According to reports, Saudi Arabia will not build a full test of the deal is yet to be made public.

Initially, nuclear fuel will be imported to Saudi Arabia, but the deal proposes a joint two-year study examining the value and commercial

If the U.S. helps Saudi Arabia build its own nuclear facilities and allows the country to enrich fuel on its soil, Iran's position on its enrichment is likely to get hardened

viability of enrichment for the kingdom. If the Saudis conclude that local enrichment is warranted, U.S. companies will build and operate a uranium enrichment facility in the kingdom under an arrangement that will prevent transfer of sensitive enrichment technology to the Saudis.

The agreement also doesn't require Saudi Arabia to adopt the International Atomic Energy Agency's Additional Protocol, which allows inspectors to conduct short-notice inspections to verify the peaceful use of nuclear material.

Why does Saudi Arabia want a nuclear programme?

A decade ago, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) had said the kingdom had to end its addiction to oil. MBS has promoted a vision document to diversify the economy and reduce its reliance on oil and gas. Vision 2030 involves promoting tourism, building mega projects, developing a top-class financial sector, and constructing power-hungry Artificial Intelligence data centres.

Right now, Saudi Arabia is highly reliant on oil and gas to produce electricity. Saudi officials have long argued that the kingdom, which is rich in uranium ore deposits, should switch nuclear fuel and generate nuclear power to meet the country's growing demand and help its economic diversification plans. The war on Iran by the U.S. and Israel and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which made it challenging for Saudi Arabia to export its oil products, have further reinforced the belief in Riyadh that it should reduce its reliance on oil.

MBS has been pushing for a civilian nuclear deal with the U.S. for years. He has also said that Iran makes a nuclear deal with the U.S. and Saudi Arabia's regional rival, would also have to make a deal. As the war between the U.S. and Iran is now dragging on, with hopes for a negotiated settlement of Iran's nuclear programme remaining remote, the kingdom is facing pressure to fast-track their plans for setting up their own nuclear programme.

On the other side, the U.S. nuclear industry is poised to gain from the agreement. Mr. Trump would also want to reassure the Saudis about a partnership with the U.S. through the agreement at a time when the kingdom is being hit by Iranian and Houthi missiles and drones.

Will a Saudi-U.S. deal have any impact on Iran's nuclear programme? Compared to any country in the Persian Gulf, Iran has an advanced and sophisticated nuclear programme. The country has built advanced centrifuges and developed the technology to enrich uranium to near weapons-grade purity. One of the reasons for the Iran war is the

country's nuclear programme, which Iran says is for peaceful purposes. However, the U.S. and Israel have accused Tehran of having a secret weapons programme.

Before the war, the U.S., while in talks with Iran, had made two major demands for a settlement: Iran should export or dispose of its highly enriched uranium and stop enriching nuclear fuel. Iran rejected both demands. Iran says it has no plans to make a bomb, but as a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it has the right to maintain enrichment capabilities. Iran has also opposed taking its highly enriched uranium out of the country.

As the U.S. and Iran continue to exchange fire, with the war spreading across the region, there are no talks between the two sides about the nuclear issue. If the U.S. helps Saudi Arabia build its own nuclear facilities and allows the country to enrich fuel on its soil, Iran's position on its enrichment is likely to get hardened.

When the U.S. Energy Department announced the deal, it did not mention the Abraham Accords, under which the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco normalised relations with Israel in 2020 through mediation by the first Trump administration. Since then, both Mr. Trump and his predecessor, President Joe Biden, have sought to expand the accords by facilitating talks between Riyadh and Tel Aviv. In 2023, under the Biden administration, Saudi Arabia and Israel came close to establishing formal diplomatic ties. In the same month, the U.S. announced the India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor, linking India's western coast to southern Europe through West Asia. Saudi Arabia and Israel were expected to play key roles in this corridor.

But later, Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, and in retaliation, Israel unleashed a genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza. Since then, Saudi Arabia's position on normalising ties with Israel has changed. The kingdom now says that it will not establish formal diplomatic ties with Israel unless there is a credible pathway towards an "independent, sovereign Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital".

The prospects for the Palestine state today are at historic lows with Israeli settlers grabbing more and more Palestinian territory in the West Bank, more than 100 of Gaza remaining under Israel's direct military control, and East Jerusalem remaining firmly under occupation.

Mr. Trump has said the nuclear deal is contingent on Saudi Arabia joining the Abraham Accords. The kingdom has not responded to Mr. Trump's demand, which was not mentioned when the deal was announced. It is unclear whether Mr. Trump added the Abraham Accords after the deal was signed or whether the kingdom had reached some understanding with Washington that it would move towards normalising ties with Israel. Either way, the Palestine issue and the Iran crisis will continue to cast a long shadow over U.S.-Saudi relations.



File photo of U.S. President Donald Trump and Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman, in Washington, Apr

Why are there protests over the Ken-Betwa project?

Why does the project aim to do? How many villages and families are likely to be affected by it? What are the concerns of the tribal people regarding rehabilitation and compensation? Why has the project raised concerns among conservationists?

Manoj Manoj

The story so far:

Madhya Pradesh police personnel went to the banks of the Barana river stream in Rajnagar village of Chhatrapur district on July 19 and cleared a protest site where hundreds of villagers, mostly tribal people, had been demonstrating for two weeks against the Union government's ₹44,000 crore Ken-Betwa Link Project, India's first river-linking project, and two irrigation projects of the State government.

The police took local activist Amar Nath Singh, founder of the Jal Risan Sangathan, who had served as an indigenous leader, to the court, and identified him as a government employee. They also picked up nearly 100 protesters, most of them from neighbouring Panna district, in buses and dropped them off at their villages.

On July 23, he suspended his 18-day fast after the government's assurance that people left out of the rehabilitation process will be included.

What is the Ken-Betwa river linking project? The Ken-Betwa River Linking Project is the first of 30 proposed river-linking projects in the National Perspective Plan (NPP). Formulated in

Protesters have alleged irregularities in the gram sabha proceedings in tribal villages. Development Agency claiming that the process of the project was flawed

1980 by the then Union Ministry of Irrigation and the Central Water Commission, the NPP aims to transfer surplus water from the river perceived surplus to those facing water deficits. The NPP is divided into two components - Himalayan Rivers Development that proposes 14 links and Peninsular Rivers Development that plans 16 links, as identified by the National Development Agency.

The foundation stone for the project was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in G-Dhara, Madhya Pradesh, where he also laid the foundation stone for the construction of the Daudhara Dam during a public event. The project aims to transfer the declared surplus water of the Ken River to the Betwa River by constructing the Daudhara Dam on the Ken and a 221-kilometre canal, including a 2 km tunnel. In addition, the project is expected to generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power. It also aims to address water scarcity in the drought-prone Bundelkhand region by providing drinking water to about 4.4 million people across 12 districts of Madhya Pradesh and more than 2 million people across 10 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

Why are tribal people protesting and what are their key demands? According to the Union government, 7,193 families of 14 villages in Chhatrapur and eight villages in Panna districts are affected by the project. According to Divya Ahirwar of Jal Risan Sangathan, the key demands regarding the Ken-Betwa project are that each adult be treated as an individual beneficiary - rather than as part of a family - for the ₹2.5 lakh rehabilitation package, and that the eligibility cut-off date be revised from February 2024, to the present date.

The protests also oppose the State government's Malghagon and Raurh irrigation projects. For these projects, the protesters are demanding rehabilitation and compensation in line with the package offered under the Ken-Betwa project. In both cases, they have also alleged serious irregularities in the survey and

selection process and claim that several people who have no connection with the villages or have moved years ago have been included in the rehabilitation plan, while many genuine residents have been left out.

Speaking from the hospital, Mr. Bhargava claimed that the police action came on the day he was planning to "reveal the details of an alleged ₹400 crore corruption scheme" involving the inclusion of fake beneficiaries in the compensation process.

Protesters have also alleged irregularities in the gram sabha proceedings in tribal villages, claiming that the process of securing consent for the Ken-Betwa project was flawed.

How did the government respond? The State government has approved an additional ₹300 crore for the rehabilitation packages of the Malghagon and Raurh irrigation projects, increasing compensation from ₹5 lakh to ₹2.5 lakh per eligible beneficiary.

Chhatrapur Collector Parth Jaiswal said that a new survey had identified around 750 additional families, who have now been included in the rehabilitation plan for the Malghagon and Raurh projects. He described the protesters' remaining demands as "irrational" and alleged that some people were "misleading" the villagers.

What are the environmental concerns surrounding the project? Several environmental concerns have also been flagged, especially as a large part of the project falls inside the Panna Tiger Reserve. Apart from displacement, the primary concern revolves around the proposed felling of trees. As per the Jal Risan Sangathan, approximately 17,000 trees had been identified for felling to facilitate the execution of the Daudhara Dam and allied infrastructure until July 2028. Of these, 15,404 trees have been felled within the Reserve Forest.

There is worry that the project may hurt the tiger rehabilitation programme in the reserve, which received the feline population after it had locally gone extinct from 2005. Apart from tiger species such as endangered vultures, musk deer, fish, and gharials in the Ken Gharial Sanctuary are also feared to be impacted. The Central government is yet to release hydrological data of the two basins claiming that they are sensitive by virtue of being adjuncts of the International Ganga basin.



The protest against the Ken-Betwa River Linking Project and other development projects, in Chhatrapur district, Madhya Pradesh, Apr

Why are there protests over the Ken-Betwa project?

Why does the project aim to do? How many villages and families are likely to be affected by it? What are the concerns of the tribal people regarding rehabilitation and compensation? Why has the project raised concerns among conservationists?

Mehul Malpani

The story so far:

Madhya Pradesh police personnel went to the banks of the Barana river stream in Kupa village of Chhatarpur district on July 19 and cleared a protest site where hundreds of villagers, mostly tribal people, had been demonstrating for two weeks against the Union government's ₹44,000 crore Ken-Betwa Link Project, India's first river-linking project, and two irrigation projects of the State government.

The police took local activist Amit Bhatnagar, founder of the Jai Kisan Sangathan, who had been on an indefinite hunger strike for 14 days, and admitted him to a government hospital. They also picked up nearly 150 protestors, most of them from neighbouring Panna district, in buses and dropped them off at their villages.

On July 23, he suspended his 18-day fast after the government's assurance that people left out of the rehabilitation process will be included.

What is the Ken-Betwa river linking project?

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Protesters have alleged irregularities in the gram sabha proceedings in tribal villages, claiming that the process of securing consent for the Ken-Betwa project was flawed

1980 by the then Union Ministry of Irrigation and the Central Water Commission, the NPP aims to transfer water from rivers with a perceived surplus to those facing water deficits. The NPP is divided into two components – Himalayan Rivers Development that proposes 14 links and Peninsular Rivers Development that plans 16 links, as identified by the National Water Development Agency.

The foundation stone for the project was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December 2024, in Khajuraho, where he also laid the foundation stone for the construction of the Daudhan Dam during a public event.

The project aims to transfer the declared surplus water of the Ken River to the Betwa River by constructing the Daudhan Dam on the Ken and a 221-kilometre canal, including a 2-km tunnel. In addition, the project is expected to generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power. It also aims to address water scarcity in the drought-prone Bundelkhand region by providing drinking water to about 4.4 million people across 12 districts of Madhya Pradesh and more than 2 million people across 10 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

Why are tribal people protesting and what are their key demands?

According to the Union government, 7,193 families of 14 villages in Chhatarpur and eight villages in Panna district are facing displacement under the project. According to Divya Ahirwar of Jai Kisan Sangathan, the key demands regarding the Ken-Betwa project are that each adult be treated as an individual beneficiary – rather than as part of a family – for the ₹12.5 lakh rehabilitation package, and that the eligibility cut-off date be revised from February 16, 2024, to the present date.

The protests also oppose the State government's Majhgaon and Runjh irrigation projects. For these projects, the protesters are demanding rehabilitation and compensation on par with the package offered under the Ken-Betwa project. In both cases, they have also alleged serious irregularities in the survey and

selection process and claim that several people who have no connection with the villages or have moved years ago have been included in the rehabilitation plan, while many genuine residents have been left out.

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What are the environmental concerns surrounding the project?

Several environmental concerns have also been flagged, especially as a large part of the project falls inside the Panna Tiger Reserve. Apart from displacement, the primary concern revolves around the proposed felling of trees. As per the Jal Shakti Ministry, approximately 17,101 trees had been identified for felling to facilitate the execution of the Daudhan Dam and allied infrastructure until July, 2025. Of these, 12,404 trees have been felled within the Reserve Forest.

There is worry that the project may hurt the tiger reintroduction programme in the reserve which revived the feline population after it had locally gone extinct in 2009. Apart from tigers, species such as endangered vultures, mahseer fish, and gharials in the Ken Gharial Sanctuary are also feared to be impacted.

The Central government is yet to release hydrological data of the two basins claiming that they are sensitive by virtue of being subsets of the international Ganga basin.



The protest against the Ken-Betwa River Linking Project and other development projects, in Chhatarpur district, Madhya Pradesh. P11

The Ken-Betwa River Linking Project





किसानों का रोना
श्री गुरुदेव

भारत के बदले हुए
किसानों के रोना
अन्याचार

किसानों के रोना
अन्याचार

किसानों के रोना

शासन करता अन्याचार
हमें चाहिये न्याय
अधिकार

पहले न्याय
बाद में

न्याय नहीं तो
बोय नहीं...

जागो
किसान
जागो

किसानों का रोना
नहीं सहेंगे

The **Ken–Betwa River Linking Project (KBLP)** is India's **first interlinking of rivers project** under the **National Perspective Plan (NPP)**. While the government views it as a major water security and development initiative, tribal communities, environmentalists, and social activists have raised concerns about **displacement, rehabilitation, environmental damage, and the process of obtaining consent**.

Project Overview

Item	Details
Project Name	Ken–Betwa River Linking Project (KBLP)
States Covered	Madhya Pradesh & Uttar Pradesh
Estimated Cost	₹44,000 crore (approx.)
River Basin	Ken River → Betwa River
National Programme	National Perspective Plan (NPP)
Type	Inter-basin water transfer project
Foundation Stone	December 2024 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

What is the National Perspective Plan (NPP)?

The NPP was formulated in **1980** by the Ministry of Irrigation and the Central Water Commission to transfer water from **water-surplus river basins** to **water-deficit regions**.

Component	Number of Links
Himalayan Rivers Development	14
Peninsular Rivers Development	16
Total Proposed Links	30

The Ken–Betwa project is the **first project being implemented** under this programme.

What Does the Project Include?

Component	Details
Main Dam	Daudhan Dam on the Ken River
Canal	221-km canal
Tunnel	2-km tunnel
Water Transfer	Ken River to Betwa River
Hydropower	103 MW
Solar Power	27 MW

Objectives of the Project

Objective	Expected Benefit
Irrigation	Expand irrigation in Bundelkhand
Drinking Water	Supply water to water-scarce areas
Hydropower	Generate renewable electricity
Drought Mitigation	Reduce chronic water shortages
Agricultural Growth	Improve crop productivity

Expected Benefits

Benefit	Details
Drinking water	Around 4.4 million people in 12 districts of Madhya Pradesh
Drinking water	More than 2 million people across 10 districts of Uttar Pradesh
Irrigation	Large increase in irrigated agricultural land (government estimate)
Power	103 MW hydropower + 27 MW solar

Why Are People Protesting?

1. Displacement of Villages

According to the government:

Item	Number
Families affected	7,193
Villages affected	14
Districts	Chhatarpur and Panna (Madhya Pradesh)

Many affected residents are from tribal communities.

2. Rehabilitation and Compensation Issues

Protesters claim rehabilitation is inadequate.

Main Demands

Demand	Details
Individual compensation	Every adult should receive compensation separately instead of one payment per family.
Compensation amount	₹12.5 lakh per eligible adult beneficiary.
Cut-off date	Extend eligibility beyond 16 February 2024 .
Equal rehabilitation	Compensation for other linked irrigation projects should match Ken–Betwa benefits.

3. Alleged Irregularities

Protesters allege:

Allegation	Explanation
Fake beneficiaries	Non-residents allegedly included in compensation lists.
Genuine residents excluded	Some affected families reportedly left out.
Survey errors	Mistakes in identifying beneficiaries.
Gram Sabha consent	Consent process was allegedly flawed.

One protest leader also alleged a **₹400-crore compensation scam**, though this remains an allegation.

Government's Response

The Madhya Pradesh government has responded by revising rehabilitation measures.

Government Action	Details
Additional rehabilitation package	₹300 crore approved
Compensation	Increased from ₹5 lakh to ₹12.5 lakh per eligible beneficiary
Fresh survey	Identified around 750 additional families
Rehabilitation	Newly identified families added to the plan

Officials have stated that many protest demands have already been addressed.

Environmental Concerns

The project affects areas within the **Panna Tiger Reserve**.

Tree Felling

Item	Number
Trees approved for felling	17,101
Trees already felled	12,404

Wildlife Concerns

Conservationists warn that the project could affect:

Species	Concern
Bengal Tiger	Habitat fragmentation
Vultures	Nesting and habitat loss
Gharial	River ecosystem changes
Mahseer fish	Altered river flow and breeding habitat

Word of the day

Zeitgeist:

the spirit of the time; the spirit characteristic of an age or generation

Synonyms: climate, outlook, spirit, trend

Usage: *In a very significant way, the protests captured the zeitgeist of the generation.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/zeitgeist

International Phonetic Alphabet: /'tsaɪtgaɪst/

Word of the day

Platitude:

a trite or obvious remark

Synonyms: cliché, stereotype, truism

Usage: *Instead of offering solutions, he repeated platitudes.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/platitude

International Phonetic Alphabet: /plætɪtʃuːd/





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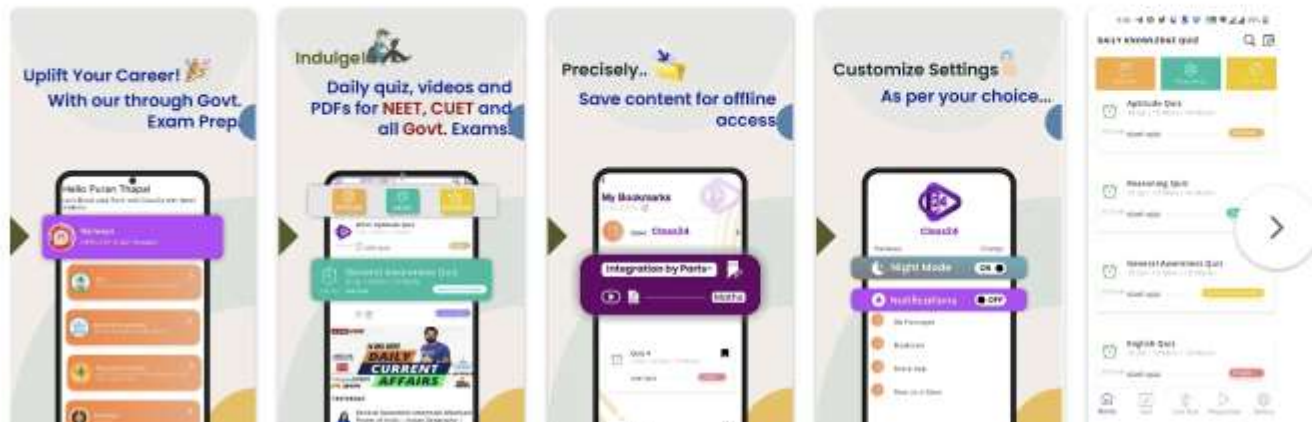
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