

# Daily Current Affairs





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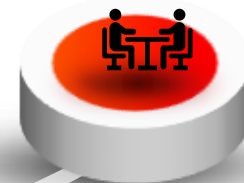
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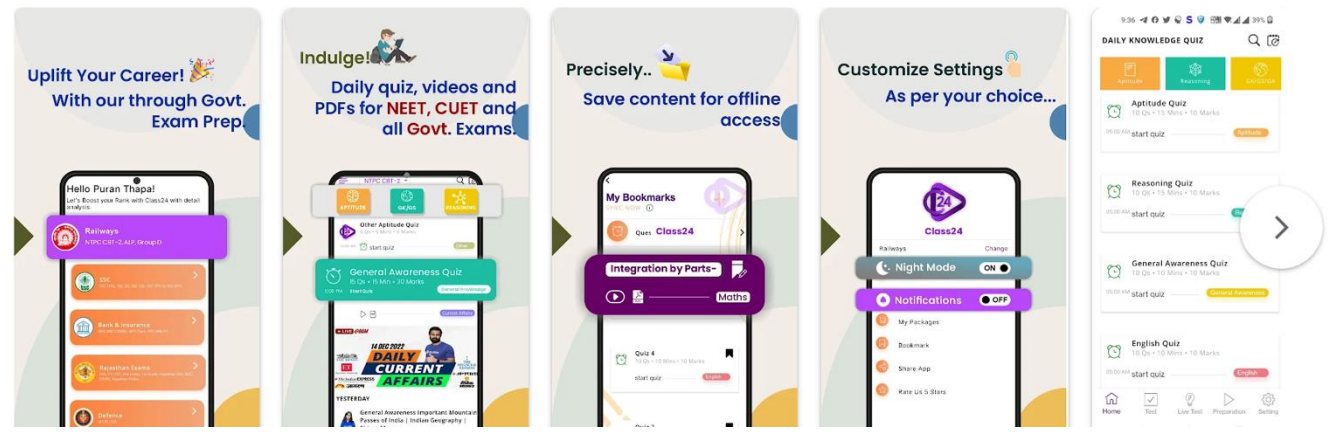
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## IN BRIEF



### Bittu appears before panel, apologises for 'casteist' remarks

Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu on Wednesday appeared before the Punjab State Election Commission and submitted a written apology for making alleged casteist remarks during a heated exchange with police in Dhuri town in Sangur district in May. The commission had asked the Union Minister to appear before it to present his side of the matter. He had failed to appear on two previous occasions. Appearing before the panel on Wednesday, Mr. Bittu gave a detailed account of the May 26 incident and stated that being a Minister, he should not have uttered such words.

### Speaker Narwekar apologises for 'incoherent spoken Marathi'

Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar on Wednesday expressed regret for incorrectly uttering certain words while reading obituary references in the House on the first day of the Monsoon Session. Mr. Narwekar said the inadvertent error was caused by technical issues and an unclear printed copy of the speech, and that he had no intention of hurting anyone's sentiments. Maharashtra Navnirman Sena president Raj Thackeray on Tuesday lambasted Narwekar for "botching" Marathi while reading out a condolence motion for singing icon Asha Bhosle in the House.

## Will launch fast from July 5 if amendments to RTI rules not revoked, Anna warns govt.

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit  
MUMBAI

Activist Anna Hazare on Wednesday gave the Maharashtra government until July 5 to withdraw the Maharashtra Right to Information (Amendment) Rules, 2026, warning that he would launch a hunger strike and a nationwide agitation if the changes are not scrapped.

Mr. Hazare described as "unsatisfactory" a meeting with a delegation led by Maharashtra Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) Rahul Pande at Ralegan siddhi. "If they do not withdraw the amendments, if people's interests are jeopardised, I will again hit the field," he told reporters.

Calling for a fight against the amendments, Mr. Hazare expressed dissatisfaction with the State government's stand. "I did not get any satisfactory answers from the government dur-



Anna Hazare

ing this meeting. If the soul of the RTI Act has to be kept alive, a new committee needs to be formed immediately. This committee should consist of experts and officials who have in-depth knowledge of the RTI Act and who are pro-people," he said after the meeting.

The noted activist said Mr. Hazare's office said Mr. Pande has assured him that the discussion will be conveyed to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who will take a call on the matter. Mr. Pande described the meeting as "satisfactory", claiming that Mr. Ha-

### Prominent activists have served a legal notice to the government and demanded a complete rollback of the amendments

ed rules, including a three-fold increase in application fee, the introduction of a new fee for appeals, and a cap on free information for those living below the poverty line.

The rules also require that RTI application pertain to a single subject and be limited to 150 words.

### Satisfactory meeting

Mr. Hazare's office said Mr. Pande has assured him that the discussion will be conveyed to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who will take a call on the matter. Mr. Pande described the meeting as "satisfactory", claiming that Mr. Ha-

zare was pleased with the information presented to him.

Meanwhile, prominent activists on Wednesday served a legal notice to the Maharashtra government and demanded a complete rollback of the amendments, claiming that the changes were introduced without prior disclosure or public consultation.

The legal notice has been issued by former CIC Shashi Gandhi, advocate Prahlad Kachare, RTI activist Vijay Rumberkar, journalist Vinita Deshmukh, and civil rights activists Vikas Volankar, Jugal Khatu and Mohammed Afzal.

As per the notice accessed by *The Hindu*, the provisions of the amended rules were introduced in a pattern of restrictions that make access to information more expensive, more technical, more burdensome and more difficult than without Parliament.

## Mizoram CM rejects alliance claim between ZPM and NDA

Press Trust of India  
AIZAWL

Mizoram Chief Minister and Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) leader Lalduhoma on Wednesday ruled out a formal alliance with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre and said that joining that coalition is not, and the party's agenda. His declaration came amid claims that the ruling ZPM has formally joined the NDA alliance.

Speaking at a press conference here, Mr. Lalduhoma said the party values cordial relations with the Centre but sees no immediate need for a formal alliance with the NDA.

"Even now, right from the first day we met after forming the government,



CM and ZPM Chief Lalduhoma

the Prime Minister and the Home Minister have constantly invited us to join them. However, we usually part on good terms by saying - Let us maintain a good working relationship, we are practically on your side. It is not really necessary for us to officially align right now?" the Chief Minister said.

"Choose a different path" - We have not joined the NDA. While other parties have chosen a different path. We want to maintain a very good relationship with the Centre, but an official alignment is not on our table," Mr. Lalduhoma added. He said that the issue of joining NDA has never been tabled at any meeting of the party's Political Affairs Committee.

## Trouble mounts for Mann over video row

Opposition in Punjab demand immediate resignation of the Chief Minister after Haryana Police register FIR over 'fabricated' forensic reports on 'objectionable' video; ruling AAP, Mann deny allegations, accuses Opposition of misleading people in the name of religion ahead of Assembly polls

The Hindu Bureau  
CHANDIGARH, DELHI/  
GURUGRAM

Opposition parties in Punjab on Wednesday stepped up the heat on Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann amid the controversy surrounding an "objectionable" video purportedly showing him in an act that hurt Sikh sentiments.

On Tuesday, Haryana Police registered an FIR over allegations that forensic and cyber analysis reports presented by the Chief Minister to exonerate himself were fabricated and arrested two persons for allegedly conspiring to prepare the reports.

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Chief Minister have denied the allegations and said the Opposition was misleading people in the name of religion and resorting to petty politics ahead of the upcoming Assembly election. Mr. Mann earlier denied that the person in the video was him and dismissed the clip as "fake".

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Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann speaking at a 'Sarpanch Miti' programme in Bathinda on Wednesday.

Senior leader and former Punjab BJP president Sunil Jakhar said Mr. Mann's video is not a political issue but one connected to religious sentiments. "This is an issue of how an arrogant person is challenging the Sri Akal Takht Sahib," Mr. Jakhar said.

BJP leader and Delhi Minister Manoj Kumar Singh Sisodia alleged that some Punjab police officers were roped in and TIO lakh was

paid to produce the forged reports, which he said gave a "clean bill of health" to the video. He also questioned the "silence" of AAP national committee and BJP leadership on the matter.

Demanding that the Punjab police register a case and arrest Mr. Mann, Mr. Sisodia accused the Chief Minister of insulting Sikhs and the Akal Takht.

Haryana BJP president Archana Gupta said the viral video "showed Mr. Mann indulging in an act of disrespect towards Sikh gurus" and that the people of Punjab and the country will never forgive his act.

"Orchestrating a fake forensic report to discredit a matter with complete seriousness and expose every individual involved in this conspiracy and ensure strict punishment for them," she said, referring to the FIR and arrests made in

### Case file

In October 2025, a video went viral on social media purportedly showing Mr. Mann in an act that hurt Sikh sentiments. Following this, the Punjab police registered an FIR. In January this year, the Akal Takht issued a statement. Mr. Mann denied that the person in the video was him.

On June 15, the Akal Takht declared Mr. Mann "Guru Dosh" in violation of the Gurbani and "Khalisa Panth Vaidhi" (an equivalent of Khalsa Panth or the Sikh community). Akal Takht Jalandhar president Singh Gargi, pronouncing the edict, said the video had been confirmed as authentic by two forensic laboratories.

On June 18, AAP said forensic tests by two independent laboratories showed a discrepancy between the person in the video and Mr. Mann.

in Gurugram in the case. Akal leaders said the matter should be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for a probe. "Only a CBI probe can get to the bottom of this issue as it has become an inter-State case and there is a money trail which needs to be investigated," senior Akal leader Maheshinder Singh Grewal said.

Demanding the registration of an FIR against the Chief Minister under the new sacrilege law, the Congress said all doubts that the AAP government was trying to cover up its lies would be removed if an FIR was registered in Gurugram. "Mr. Mann must present himself before the Akal Takht and seek forgiveness," State Congress committee president Amarinder Singh Raja Jassal said.

The Akal Takht, the highest Sikh temporal seat, meanwhile, has asked Haryana Police to "investigate the matter with complete seriousness and expose every individual involved in this conspiracy and ensure strict punishment for them".

Reacting to all the allegations, Mr. Mann said a "fake video" had been deliber-

ately created and circulated to defame him after his political opponents failed to challenge the work done by his government for the people of Punjab. "Those who have no issue left against my government are now trying to tarnish my image through fabricated propaganda," he said.

"What about Badali?" The Punjab government had the video examined by forensic laboratories, he said. "However, those who own and operate that laboratory are being targeted because the BJP, Akal Dal and Congress have united against me," Mr. Mann alleged.

He also questioned the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), the religious body overseeing the administration of historical gurdwaras. "Politics has fallen to a very low level because they have no other way to oppose me. Now, the SGPC has ordered the putting up of posters outside Gurdwara Sahibs calling for my boycott. Why were similar posters not put up against the Akal Dal or Sukhbir Singh Badli [ISAD president] after their admitted responsibility for incidents of sacrilege?" he said.

## Video clip showing Tamil Nadu Minister touching girl athletes' legs in Madurai sparks outrage

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

A video showing Tamil Nadu High School Education Minister P. Viswanathan touching the outstretched legs of girl athletes participating with them at an event in Madurai recently has sparked outrage.

The athletes were resting after having run a marathon organised as part of the birthday celebrations of Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

After distributing prizes at the Mehr Government School, where the event was held, the Minister greeted the athletes.

The video captures him touching the outstretched legs of the athletes and cracking their toes, while another guest is shaking hands with them.

DMK leader and former



P. Viswanathan

Minister S.S. Sivasankar expressed consternation over the incident, saying the good-stouch had-touch session, which is usually taught in schoolchildren, should be extended to members of the Cabinet.

"Act more responsibly" - A person of authority should act responsibly and responsibly rather than getting swept away by the moment and contemplated by DMK leader and former

founder, Tulli-Centre for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse. She wondered why, despite a large number of people being present at the event, and with video cameras recording the event, no onlookers had intervened to stop the Minister's conduct. "Bystander intervention becomes critical as it serves as an immediate check for abuse," she said.

"Don't spread lies" - Reacting to DMK leader Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi, who had strongly criticised him over the incident, Mr. Viswanathan said the DMK will have to "face consequences" if it continues to "spread lies" through its IT wing.

In a statement, Mr. Viswanathan said Mr. Poyyamozhi attributing motives to the DMK act was "uncivilised".

## Deepender links arrest of IAS officer to RS poll

The Hindu Bureau  
GURUGRAM

Congress Rohtrak MP Deepender Hooda on Wednesday linked the CBI arrest of IAS officer Pankaj Agrawal in the ₹504-crore IDFC First Bank scam to allegations of political interference during the Rajya Sabha election.

In a post on X, the MP claimed Mr. Agrawal was the Returning Officer during the RS poll and "at the behest of BJP" made a "concerted effort" to ensure a BJP-backed candidate's victory by invalidating Congress votes. He alleged the BJP government used the threat of action against the officer, already "implicated in graft", to serve political interests.

"The IDFC First Bank scam was of such magnitude that the CBI could not overlook it," Mr. Hooda claimed.

## 'Lack of jobs behind desperation': Rahul on bonded labour in U.P.

Mayank Kumar  
LUCKNOW

A day after reports emerged of the rescue of 12 men who were allegedly forced to work as bonded labourers at a factory in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, Rahul Gandhi, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday hit out at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in the State over "disappearing jobs" and "assault on human dignity".

"The case of bonded labour of workers in Muzaffarnagar is very shocking. In addition to being forced to work without pay, they were bitten by dogs, speared, whipped, and fed with this is an assault on human dignity - the victims deserve Justice



The U.P. police arrested bonded labourers on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

no other options or protections become easy prey for such exploitation. This isn't a typical criminal incident - it is the detest of a collapsed economy."

On Monday, joint teams from the Labour Department and the police raided the factory in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, and rescued 12 men, who had from U.P., Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand. The workers said they were lured by promises of employment, fair wages and an improvement of life. However, they were denied food and subjected to severe harassment, they said.

On Tuesday, the police arrested two persons - Shilva Tyagi and Pradeep Balyan - in the case. A search party led by the State has been identified as the owner of the factory.

## Heavy rain disrupts normal life in Mumbai, many areas inundated

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

Mumbai woke up to heavy rain on Wednesday with the met office at Colaba recording 248 mm rainfall and Santacruz logging 225 mm in the 24 hours.

An Orange alert has been issued for the city and neighbouring districts. Commuters navigate a waterlogged road in Mumbai on Wednesday. PTI

Everard Nagar, King's Circle in Matunga area, and residential colonies in Dadar, disrupting normal life. "Waterlogging in low-lying areas are being drained off rapidly," said Municipal Commissioner Ashwini Bhide.



Commuters navigate a waterlogged road in Mumbai on Wednesday. PTI

# Will launch fast from July 5 if amendments to RTI rules not revoked, Anna warns govt.

**Vinaya Deshpande Pandit**  
MUMBAI

Activist Anna Hazare on Wednesday gave the Maharashtra government until July 5 to withdraw the Maharashtra Right to Information (Amendment) Rules, 2026, warning that he would launch a hunger strike and a nationwide agitation if the changes are not scrapped.

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Calling for a fight against the amendments, Mr. Hazare expressed dissatisfaction with the State government’s stand. “I did not get any satisfactory answers from the government dur-



Anna Hazare

ing this meeting. If the soul of the RTI Act has to be kept alive, a new committee needs to be formed immediately. This committee should consist of experts and officials who have in-depth knowledge of the RTI Act and who are pro-people,” he said after the meeting.

The noted activist had earlier written to the Maharashtra government seeking the complete withdrawal of the amendments, asserting that they weaken the spirit of the RTI Act and dilute its provisions. Mr. Hazare has opposed several provisions in the amend-

**Prominent activists have served a legal notice to the government and demanded a complete rollback of the amendments**

ed rules, including a three-fold increase in application fee, the introduction of a new fee for appeals, and a cap on free information for those living below the poverty line.

The rules also require that each RTI application pertain to a single subject and be limited to 150 words.

## **Satisfactory meeting**

Mr. Hazare’s office said Mr. Pande had assured him that the discussion will be conveyed to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who will take a call on the matter. Mr. Pande described the meeting as “satisfactory”, claiming that Mr. Ha-

zare was pleased with the information presented to him.

Meanwhile, prominent activists on Wednesday served a legal notice to the Maharashtra government and demanded a complete rollback of the amendments, claiming that the changes were introduced without prior disclosure or public consultation.

The legal notice has been issued by former CIC Shailesh Gandhi, advocate Prahlad Kachare, RTI activist Vijay Kumbhar, journalist Vinita Deshmukh, and civil rights activists Vivek Velankar, Jugal Rathi and Mohammed Afzal.

As per the notice accessed by *The Hindu*, the provisions of the amended rules “collectively reveal a pattern of restrictions that make access to information more expensive, more technical, more burdensome and more difficult than contemplated by Parliament”.

- Social activist Anna Hazare has warned the Maharashtra government that he will begin an **indefinite fast from 5 July** if the **Maharashtra Right to Information (Amendment) Rules, 2026** are not withdrawn.
- Several RTI activists have also issued a **legal notice** demanding complete rollback of the amended rules.

## 1. What is the issue?

Topic	Details
Main Demand	Complete withdrawal of Maharashtra RTI Amendment Rules, 2026
Protest	Hunger strike from <b>5 July</b> if amendments remain
Led by	Anna Hazare
Government Response	Discussions held with Maharashtra Chief Information Commissioner; matter to be placed before Chief Minister
Activists' Action	Legal notice demanding rollback

Amendment

Earlier

New Rule

RTI Application Fee

Lower

**Three-fold increase**

Appeal Fee

No separate fee

New appeal fee  
introduced

Free Information for  
BPL

No upper limit

Cap introduced

Subjects in RTI

Multiple issues possible

Only **one subject per  
application**

Word Limit

No strict limit

Maximum **150 words**

Objection	Explanation
Cost increased	Higher fee discourages citizens
Technical barriers	One subject rule makes applications difficult
150-word limit	Restricts detailed information requests
Appeal fee	Makes justice costlier
BPL restriction	Reduces access for poor citizens
No public consultation	Rules allegedly introduced without consulting stakeholders

## 4. Activists' Arguments

They argue that the amendments:

- weaken the spirit of the RTI Act
- reduce transparency
- increase the financial burden on citizens
- make access to information more difficult
- contradict the objective of accountable governance

## 5. Government's Position

Point	Status
Meeting held	Yes
Chief Information Commissioner	Held discussions with Anna Hazare
Final decision	Yet to be taken by the Chief Minister

## 6. Constitutional Connection

Article	Relation
Article 19(1)(a)	Freedom of Speech and Expression
Supreme Court Judgments	Right to Information derived from Article 19(1)(a)
Article 21	Sometimes linked through right to life and dignity

## 7. RTI Act, 2005 – Quick Revision

Feature	Details
Enacted	2005
Objective	Promote transparency and accountability
Applies to	Central, State and Local Public Authorities
Time limit	Normally <b>30 days</b>
Life & Liberty cases	<b>48 hours</b>
First Appeal	To First Appellate Authority
Second Appeal	Information Commission
Penalty	₹250/day (maximum ₹25,000) on PIO for unreasonable delay or refusal

## 8. Information Commissions

### Central Information Commission (CIC)

Deals with Central Government bodies

Headed by Chief Information Commissioner

Decides second appeals

### State Information Commission (SIC)

Deals with State Government bodies

Headed by State Chief Information Commissioner

Decides second appeals

## 9. Important Supreme Court Judgments

### Case

### Importance

State of Uttar Pradesh v. Raj Narain

Citizens have the right to know government actions

S.P. Gupta v. Union of India

Expanded Right to Know

People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India

Strengthened transparency under Article 19

## 10. Why is RTI called the "Sunshine Law"?

Because it:

- exposes corruption
- increases transparency
- strengthens democracy
- empowers citizens
- improves government accountability

## 11. Criticism of RTI (General)

Challenge	Explanation
Delay in replies	Pending applications
Vacancies in commissions	Appeals remain pending
Misuse	Frivolous applications
Threats to activists	Safety concerns
Digital divide	Limited access in rural areas

**Year**

**Change**

2019

Central Government empowered to decide tenure and salary of Information Commissioners

2026 (Maharashtra Rules)

Procedural changes including fees, word limit and single-subject rule



# Symbolism over substance? Public health officials slam T.N. govt.'s gold ring scheme

Under the new scheme, the govt. will spend ₹755.83 cr. annually to gift gold rings to newborns; however, several health professionals opine that while the gold may be intended as a celebration of birth, the more pressing need is investment in workforce and infrastructure that enable safe deliveries

**Serena Josephine M.**  
CHENNAI

Every year, the Tamil Nadu government will spend ₹755.83 crore on gifting one-gram gold rings to roughly 4.42 lakh babies born in government hospitals under its new scheme, *Thaimaaman Thanga Mothiram Thittam*.

The gold ring may be intended as a celebration of birth, but for many within the public health sector, the more pressing need is investment in the workforce and infrastructure that makes safe deliveries possible.

Already, the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme provides maternal assistance of ₹14,000 in cash support and two nutritional kits valued at ₹4,000. With this in place, the questions raised are plenty – Can the State government sustain a recurring cost of ₹755.83 crore a year, or ₹17,000 per ring (today's gold rate), for 4,41,667 deliveries along with administration cost? Whether symbolic incentives such as gold rings are the best use of public resources when basic gaps in the health system remain unresolved? Does this self-defeat the State's family welfare measures by incen-

## Nurturing newborns

A look at the salient features of the *Thaimaaman Thanga Mothiram Thittam*

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Elevate the public healthcare setting from a baseline necessity to a preferred destination of pride and celebration, with dignity at birth

- Reclaim the status of government institutional deliveries by offering a high-value, permanent, tangible benefit that complements the existing maternity cash benefits and maternal kits

- Erase the socio-economic bias surrounding public health facility deliveries, recognising that every mother's journey is noble and every child is a treasure



### TARGET BENEFICIARIES AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Resident of Tamil Nadu

- All pregnant women giving birth at government institutions

- Mother should be registered on Pregnancy and Infant Cohort Monitoring and Evaluation portal with RCH ID

- Beneficiaries must submit residential proof through any one of the enlisted documents such as ration card, voter identity card or Aadhaar card

- The scheme extends coverage to all newborns, regardless of birth order. Mothers with higher-order births are eligible for benefits without restriction

- Gold rings to be distributed without any gender-based discrimination

### KEY SPECIFICATIONS

- One-gram gold rings will be procured through the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation (TNMSC). The TNMSC-empanelled vendor will supply the rings directly to 94 hospitals

- A State project/programme management unit will be set up to implement, monitor, and manage the scheme

- Each gold ring will have a fixed weight of one gram, with an official Bureau of Indian Standards hallmark. The Government of Tamil Nadu logo will be embossed on it

- Each unit will be uniquely serialised and protected by a tamper-proof seal with branding

Source: Government Order issued by the Health and Family Welfare Department

tivating higher order births?

### 'Bizarre move'

A head of a government institution found it bizarre that the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation

(TNMSC) is tasked with procuring and supplying the rings, based on the yearly indent given by the Director of Public Health and Preventive Medicine.

"TNMSC was set up in the 1990s with the objec-

tive of procuring quality medicines for government hospitals. But now, it is tasked with purchasing the yellow metal. How far this is ethical is a question to be asked," he said.

A health officer said that

from a policy perspective, the scheme had no connection with the Sustainable Development Goal 3 (reducing global Maternal Mortality Ratio to less than 70 deaths per 1,00,000 live births and to end preventable deaths of newborns and children under five years of age by 2030).

Another public health officer said Tamil Nadu had already achieved near-universal institutional delivery coverage, with institutional deliveries exceeding 99%, leaving limited scope for further improvement on this indicator.

"A government's legitimacy comes from good governance, not symbolic kinship. Public resources should be directed towards strengthening systems and services that create lasting benefits," he said.

While more incentives are being introduced, many frontline healthcare personnel continue to face inadequate remuneration, he said, adding that Reproductive and Child Health contract staff receive approximately ₹4,500 per month.

### 'Self-defeating'

"There is an acute shortage of obstetricians and gynaecologists. The government should announce funds to

hire more OB-GYNs as and when they announce such schemes," a doctor said.

"This scheme covers all newborns, irrespective of the third or fourth child. Isn't this defeating the government's own family welfare programme? On the one hand, we are motivating mothers to undergo sterilisation after having two babies, and on the other, the government is giving incentives to have any number of babies," she said.

The doctor further added that certain conditions could be brought in for the scheme, including two mandatory post-natal visits for mothers at the end of the first week and the sixth week of delivery, and complete immunisation till 1.5 years of age for the child.

Former Director of Public Health and Preventive Medicine K. Kolandasamy said it was a good scheme as it would improve institutional deliveries.

The scheme could act as an incentive for families belonging to the lower-middle income group to opt for government hospitals for childbirth, thereby reducing their maternal and childbirth-related health expenditure in private hospitals, Mr. Kolandasamy added.

The Tamil Nadu Government has announced the **Thaimaaman Thanga Mothiram Thittam**, under which **every eligible newborn delivered in government hospitals will receive a 1-gram gold ring**.

The scheme has generated debate, with several public health experts arguing that funds should instead be invested in healthcare infrastructure, manpower, and maternal services.

## 1. Scheme at a Glance

Particular	Details
Scheme Name	Thaimaaman Thanga Mothiram Thittam
State	Tamil Nadu
Launch Year	2026
Benefit	1-gram gold ring to eligible newborns
Annual Cost	<b>₹755.83 crore</b>
Expected Beneficiaries	Around <b>4.42 lakh newborns annually</b>
Implementing Agency	Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation (TNMSC)
Delivery	Government hospitals

## 2. Objectives of the Scheme

Objective	Explanation
Promote institutional deliveries	Encourage births in government hospitals
Celebrate childbirth	Symbolic recognition of every newborn
Increase trust in public healthcare	Improve perception of government hospitals
Reduce social bias	Treat every child equally irrespective of gender

## 3. Eligibility

Criteria	Details
Residency	Resident of Tamil Nadu
Delivery	Government hospital only
Registration	Pregnancy registered on Pregnancy & Infant Cohort Monitoring Portal
Identity Proof	Aadhaar/Voter ID/Ration Card etc.
Birth Order	No restriction (covers all children)

## 4. Key Features

Feature	Details
Ring Weight	1 gram
Hallmark	BIS Hallmarked
Supplier	TNMSC-approved vendor
Distribution	Directly through 94 government hospitals
Branding	Tamil Nadu Government logo embossed
Security	Tamper-proof sealed packaging
Serial Number	Unique identification for each ring

## 5. Financial Details

Item	Value
Total Annual Budget	₹755.83 crore
Beneficiaries	4.42 lakh babies
Approximate Gold Value	Around ₹17,000 per ring (including procurement & administration, as discussed in the report)

## 6. Why is the Scheme Being Criticised?

Issue	Details
Opportunity Cost	Experts argue funds could strengthen healthcare infrastructure
Shortage of Doctors	Need for more obstetricians and gynaecologists
Low Frontline Salaries	Contract reproductive and child health staff reportedly receive low remuneration
Infrastructure Gaps	Labour rooms, ICUs and equipment require investment
Symbolic Benefit	Critics say the scheme is symbolic rather than addressing systemic needs
SDG Alignment	Some experts question whether the scheme directly contributes to maternal and neonatal mortality reduction

## 7. Government's Arguments

Government View	Explanation
Encourage institutional delivery	Families may prefer government hospitals
Universal Coverage	Available regardless of gender or birth order
Public Confidence	Enhances the image of public healthcare
Financial Relief	May reduce delivery-related expenditure for lower-income families

## 8. Existing Maternal Benefit Scheme

Before this scheme, Tamil Nadu already operated:

Scheme	Benefit
Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme	₹14,000 cash assistance + Nutrition kits worth ₹4,000

## 9. Public Health Experts' Suggestions

Instead of spending ₹755 crore annually on gold rings, experts recommend:

- Recruit more obstetricians and paediatricians.
- Upgrade labour rooms and neonatal ICUs.
- Improve salaries of frontline healthcare workers.
- Strengthen maternal nutrition programmes.
- Expand post-natal care and immunisation services.
- Improve emergency referral systems.

## 10. SDG Linkage

SDG	Target
SDG 3 – Good Health & Well-being	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all
Maternal Mortality Target	Less than 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030
Child Mortality Target	End preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years

## 11. Institutional Delivery in India

Indicator	Status
Tamil Nadu	Institutional deliveries exceed <b>99%</b> , according to the report
National Goal	Promote safe institutional childbirth to reduce maternal and infant mortality

Scheme	Ministry	Purpose
Janani Suraksha Yojana	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare	Cash incentive for institutional delivery
Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare	Free antenatal check-ups
Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare	Free delivery and newborn care
POSHAN Abhiyaan	Ministry of Women & Child Development	Nutrition improvement

# Nurturing newborns

A look at the salient features of the *Thaimaaman Thanga Mothiram Thittam*

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Elevate the public healthcare setting from a baseline necessity to a preferred destination of pride and celebration, with dignity at birth
- Reclaim the status of government institutional deliveries by offering a high-value, permanent, tangible benefit that complements the existing maternity cash benefits and maternal kits
- Erase the socio-economic bias surrounding public health facility deliveries, recognising that every mother's journey is noble and every child is a treasure



## TARGET BENEFICIARIES AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Resident of Tamil Nadu
- All pregnant women giving birth at government institutions
- Mother should be registered on Pregnancy and Infant Cohort Monitoring and Evaluation portal with RCH ID
- Beneficiaries must submit residential proof through any one of the enlisted documents such as ration card, voter identity card or Aadhaar card
- The scheme extends coverage to all newborns, regardless of birth order. Mothers with higher-order births are eligible for benefits without restriction
- Gold rings to be distributed without any gender-based discrimination

## KEY SPECIFICATIONS

- One-gram gold rings will be procured through the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation (TNMSC). The TNMSC-empanelled vendor will supply the rings directly to 94 hospitals
- A State project/programme management unit will be set up to implement, monitor, and manage the scheme
- Each gold ring will have a fixed weight of one gram, with an official Bureau of Indian Standards hallmark. The Government of Tamil Nadu logo will be embossed on it
- Each unit will be uniquely serialised and protected by a tamper-proof seal with branding

# 'Passport is a travel document, not proof of citizenship'

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI

The Indian passport is a “travel document” and not a “citizenship document”, a senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Wednesday.

The purpose of the Indian passport is to help Indians transit and travel through foreign ports and territories and it should not be compared with other documents that are used to establish citizenship rights, the official said.

Highlighting the importance of passports in connecting the Indian workforce with the global economy, MEA officials said the government will intensify mobility engagements with western na-

tions and Japan in coming months to help citizens get secure employment opportunities in these industrialised economies.

## **Voter list exclusion**

“Passport is a travel document, not a document of citizenship and theoretically speaking that distinguishes passport from other documents. Even though while travelling abroad, passport attests to your nationality, yet it is not a document of your citizenship,” a senior official said, in response to a question from *The Hindu* on whether the Indian passport could be used to challenge an exclusion from the voter list through the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls that



Passport is to facilitate foreign travel. It must not be compared with documents establishing citizenship, says MEA official.

is currently under way in 16 States.

Another MEA official said that the Indian passport is issued “after a lot of due diligence and we make sure that the person who gets it is actually entitled, and we also base ourselves on documents from several government agencies like the Aadhaar, PAN

card.” The second official said that the MEA will host a major event on international mobility – the Human Resource Mobility Forum to be held in New Delhi from June 30 to July 1 – that will focus on countries like Italy, Germany, Japan, Russia, and Denmark.

## **Ethical migration**

A large number of recruitment agencies from across the country are expected to participate in the event that will highlight ethical migration and create awareness about how to avoid unscrupulous agents that use illegal means to send Indians to conflict zones and high risk areas.

“We have to demolish the myths that one can go to Italy or Greece using un-

fair means and then send home lots of money,” the official said.

Speaking on the occasion of the 14th Passport Seva Divas, marked on June 24, the official said that 27 countries have given visa-free entry status to Indian passport holders, while 47 countries offer visas on arrival and 66 countries provide electronic-visas (e-visas) to Indian passport holders. The MEA official said that around 10% of Indian passport-holders possess an e-passport, a chip-based document.

There are 545 passport seva kendras across the country catering to the needs of the growing number of passport applicants, and this passport network now covers almost every

Lok Sabha constituency.

In addition, one-stop centres for distressed women in the Indian diaspora have been opened in the Gulf countries and Singapore, supported by the Indian community. More such centres are expected to be established in other countries.

“Team MEA reaffirms its commitment to keep making passport services delivery faster, more transparent and accessible...” External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on the occasion of Passport Seva Divas, noting that chip-enabled e-passports and the opening of new passport seva kendras (PSKs) have contributed to ease of travel, helping Indians get global job opportunities.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) clarified that an **Indian passport is primarily a travel document and should not be treated as conclusive proof of Indian citizenship**. It facilitates international travel and indicates nationality for travel purposes, but legal determination of citizenship depends on the provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955 and other relevant laws.

## 1. Key Statement

Topic	Details
MEA Clarification	Passport is a <b>travel document</b> , not a citizenship document
Main Purpose	Facilitate international travel and identification abroad
Citizenship	Determined under the Citizenship Act and constitutional provisions, not by the passport alone
Importance	Relevant in debates on electoral rolls, citizenship verification and legal identity

Basis	Passport	Citizenship
Purpose	International travel	Legal membership of the State
Issued By	Ministry of External Affairs	Citizenship acquired under the Citizenship Act, 1955
Proof	Strong evidence of nationality for travel, but not conclusive legal proof of citizenship	Established through law and prescribed documents
Validity	Renewable	Continues unless terminated or renounced under law
Main Function	Travel, visa, immigration	Political and constitutional rights

### 3. Difference Between Nationality and Citizenship

Nationality	Citizenship
International legal identity	Legal relationship with a country
Used mainly for foreign travel	Confers constitutional and political rights
Mentioned in passport	Determines voting, elections, constitutional protections
Every citizen has nationality	Concepts often overlap in India but are legally distinct in some countries

### 4. Constitutional Provisions

Article	Subject
Articles 5–11	Citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution
Article 11	Parliament empowered to regulate citizenship
Citizenship Act, 1955	Governs acquisition and loss of citizenship

## 5. Ways to Acquire Indian Citizenship

Method	Meaning
By Birth	Born in India subject to statutory conditions
By Descent	Through Indian parent(s)
By Registration	Registration under the Citizenship Act
By Naturalisation	After fulfilling prescribed residence and other conditions
By Incorporation of Territory	When new territory becomes part of India

## 6. Ways Citizenship Can End

Method	Explanation
Renunciation	Voluntary surrender
Termination	Acquisition of another country's citizenship in specified circumstances
Deprivation	Government may revoke citizenship in situations provided by law

## 8. Why Did the MEA Clarify This?

The clarification came in the context of public discussion on whether possession of a passport alone could settle questions relating to:

- citizenship verification,
- electoral roll inclusion,
- identity documentation.

The MEA stated that these issues are governed by the relevant legal framework and not by the passport itself.

## 9. Passport Services in India

Item	Details
Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs)	545
e-Passports	About <b>10%</b> of Indian passport holders possess chip-enabled e-passports (as stated in the report)
Visa-free Access	<b>27 countries</b>
Visa on Arrival	<b>47 countries</b>
e-Visa Access	<b>66 countries</b>

## Judgment

State Trading Corporation of India  
Ltd. v. Commercial Tax Officer

Sarbananda Sonowal v. Union of India

Mohd. Arif v. Supreme Court of India

## Significance

A company is not a citizen under the  
Constitution.

Illegal migration linked with citizenship  
and national security concerns.

Discussed constitutional protections  
available to citizens in specific contexts.

## IN BRIEF

Flipkart Minutes, Amazon  
Now scale up operations

The quick commerce race in India has intensified with Amazon and Flipkart scaling up their instant delivery services, Amazon Now and Flipkart Minutes, respectively. The expansion could heighten the competition in a market currently led by players such as Zomato, Swiggy, Zepto and Big Basket among others. Amazon announced its plans to scale Amazon Now to customers in more than 300 cities across the country, while Flipkart Minutes, the quick-commerce offering from Flipkart, has scaled to 1,000 micro fulfillment centres across 130 cities in under two years since the launch of the service in August 2024, according to the company.

ISP to be released with 60-day  
lag with base year 2024-25

The new index measuring the output of the country's services industry, with 2024-25 as the base year, will be released each month with a 60-day lag, the statistics ministry said in a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on Wednesday. The first-ever Index of Services Production (ISP) for April 2026 will be announced on July 14. The subsequent numbers will be released on the 29th day (or next working day in case of a holiday) of every month, according to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). As a counterpart of the IP (Index of Industrial Production), which measures the economic growth of the industrial sector, it will be a new macroeconomic indicator to measure short-term changes in the growth of the services sector, the ministry said in a statement. The conceptual and methodological framework for compiling ISP was finalised in consultation with a technical advisory committee (TAC), which was constituted in May 2025 and headed by Debjani Ghosh of government think tank NITI Aayog.

AI coding costs to  
cross developer pay?

The Hindu Bureau  
BENGALURU

By 2028, AI coding costs will cross average developer's salary on rising large language model (LLM) tokens consumption and the shift to consumption-based licensing models, forecast Gartner, a Stamford-based business and technology insights company.

AI tokens are units of data processed by gen-AI models. Taken discipline would not emerge via developer choice alone as they tend to optimise for speed and convenience over cost efficiency, he said adding.

Nitish Tyagi, Sr. Principal Analyst at Gartner said, "Organisations are rapidly moving from experimentation to scaled deployment of AI coding agents, but many are underestimating the financial impact of rising token consumption."

AI tokens are units of data processed by gen-AI models.

Without a governed engineering operating model, costs can rise faster than the productivity gains these tools are designed to deliver," he added, noting how AI coding agents are used within firms, is further driving cost pressures.

'Investors may move to safer  
bets on structural challenges'

Economists vocal on rising concerns of structural challenges in the process of economic growth and concentrated stock ownership in higher risk small and mid-cap stocks by retail investors

Ashokanithran T.  
MUMBAI

It will be a safer decision to invest in FMCG, pharma, IT and telecom stocks given their historical performance at a time when India is set to face structural challenges to its growth story, experts at Ambit Institutional Equities opined.

Further, bank, cement and IT stocks are tactical plays, the experts continued. The call assumes importance as economists have become vocal about rising concerns of structural challenges in the process of economic growth and concentrated stock ownership in higher risk small and mid-cap stocks by retail investors.

Stock market concentration is expected to increase further as small and mid-cap stocks are trading at higher prices than their earnings, signifying a



Reality bites: Consumption demand is uneven across households, government balance sheet lacks space for fiscal consolidation, I.F.E.

downward risk, said Bharat Arora, Director of Strategy research at Ambit. Indian economy's structural challenges remain even as global uncertainties subsided, according to a research note. The Indian economy has seen among the worst booms of capital repatriation, with foreign institutional investors selling more than ₹2.8 lakh crore in 2026, as earnings of the

companies do not justify the prices and their returns in dollars are in low single digits.

Uneven demand Consumption demand is uneven across households and the government balance sheet lacks space for fiscal consolidation, said Swamyasiddha Panda, Economist at Ambit Institutional Equities.

Post-pandemic, consumption boomed on formal hiring and credit and that engine has slowed now, she added.

Without addressing the income crisis, reviving retail and private investment, and bridging the organised-informal divide, India's economy remaining trapped in a low growth equilibrium, ill-equipped for the shocks ahead. The time for denial is over; the government must take decisive action," the Systematic report stated.

## Adani to either outsource non-core activities or move to GCCs

Lakshendra Mishra  
MUMBAI

The Adani Group is taking three foundational steps to build the organisation that will execute its vision over the next decade, including moving non-core activities to its Global Capacity Centres (GCCs) or third parties, Chairman Gautam

Adani said while addressing shareholders at Adani Enterprises Ltd's AGM on Wednesday.

"Firstly, we are simplifying the way we work. We are putting in place a three-layer structure across both our headquarters and our sites to reduce bureaucracy, sharpen accountability and bring decisions closer

to execution," he said. Second, the Group will change the way it works with contractors.

Thirdly, the Group is placing worker dignity at the heart of its transformation.

"Across our own and contractor workforce of nearly 4 lakh people, almost 88% are people who

work on the ground at our sites. They are the people who turn our plans into reality," he emphasised.

"To put that in perspective, this represented over 30% of India's total new private-sector capital expenditure for the year," Mr. Adani added.

Commenting on FY25-26, he said during the year the Group made a record capital investment of more than ₹1.5 lakh crore in hard infrastructure.

"We have partnered with multiple lenders to distribute credit cards and working with some of the NBFCs (for loans). Also updated infrastructure and technology via the insurance and investments (offerings) will follow little later," she added.

Since its introduction in 2016 the app has undergone revamps and sported new features, BHIM 3.0 roll out in 2025 being the last, Ms. Nataraj said.

NBSL is also actively evaluating integrating its

Goyal to visit U.K. to  
review preparedness  
for trade deal roll-out

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal will travel to the United Kingdom from June 25-27 to meet his U.K. counterpart and review the preparedness of both countries for the implementation of the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and its companion Double Contribution Convention (DCC) on July 15.

During the visit, the Ministry of Commerce said in a statement on Wednesday, Mr. Goyal will hold a high-level bilateral meeting with Peter Kyle, the U.K. Secretary of State for Business and Trade.

The engagement marks an important step towards the operationalisation of the agreements and the strengthening of the economic partnership between the two countries," the Commerce Ministry statement said.

"The bilateral discussions will focus on aligning regulatory roadmaps, streamlining cross-border customs coordination and finalising administrative mechanisms to facilitate the smooth implementation of CETA and the DCC," it added.

Goyal will hold a meeting with Peter Kyle, U.K.'s Secretary of State for Business and Trade.

The Ministers will also review preparedness for the implementation of the CETA's tariff liberalisation commitments and the operational roadmap for the DCC.

"The two sides will further discuss the operationalisation of mutual market access commitments across key services sectors and review measures aimed at strengthening bilateral trade and investment ties," the statement said.

He said the Group was building a data centre platform through a 3 GW capacity by 2030. Adani Power, with a capex of ₹2 lakh crore, was targeting 45 GW thermal capacity by FY32.

In nuclear energy, the Adani Atomic Energy, the Group plans 10 GW capacity by 2035.

BHIM UPI to offer  
financial products

The Hindu Bureau  
HYDERABAD

From credit cards, loans, investments and over time insurance, a basket of financial products is planned to be offered on BHIM payments app, NPCI BHIM Services (NBSL) MD-CEO Lalitha Nataraj said.

"We have partnered with multiple lenders to distribute credit cards and working with some of the NBFCs (for loans). Also updated infrastructure and technology via the insurance and investments (offerings) will follow little later," she added.

Since its introduction in 2016 the app has undergone revamps and sported new features, BHIM 3.0 roll out in 2025 being the last, Ms. Nataraj said.

NBSL is also actively evaluating integrating its

The platform had processed transactions worth ₹26,952 crore in May 2026.

app in the mobile apps of banks. It has made a beginning with Canara Bank and is in talks with at least one more public sector lender as well as a private bank, she said.

Banks stood to benefit from new features, she added. Also updated infrastructure and technology via the insurance and investments (offerings) will follow little later," she added.

The monthly transaction volumes via BHIM rose from 79.64 million in June 2025 to 244 million in May 2026.

The platform processed transactions worth ₹26,952 crore in May 2026.

## Climate change



Hot on Soar: Poppies are pictured beneath an electricity pylon in Ratcliffe on Soar, central England on Wednesday. The U.K. recorded its hottest ever June temperature on Wednesday with the mercury rising to 35.7C south of London, breaking the previous record of 35.6C set in 1976. The U.K.'s Met Office weather service said the temperature was recorded in Charford, near Gatwick Airport. AP

## businessline's MSME meet starts today

HI Bureau  
HYDERABAD

To honour the achievements of micro, small and medium enterprises, businessline is organising its fifth annual MSME Conclave in Bengaluru on June 25 and Coimbatore on June 27. The two-city event will highlight the sector's crucial role in India's economic development.

World MSME Day takes place globally every June 27. The event celebrates small businesses, showcases their economic contributions, and advocates for their sustainable growth.

The first event at Bengaluru, co-powered by the Central Bank of India, will feature two power-packed



panel discussions — one on 'ESDM: From Vendors to Value Creators' and the other on 'Talent Skilling and Beyond Challenges' — at the Bengaluru Conclave. Sharangarajiah Rudrappa Patil, Minister for Entrepreneurship and Skill Development of Karnataka, will be the Chief Guest. The guest of honour is B.V. Naidu, chair-

man, Karnataka Digital Economy Mission (KDDEM). The first panel, 'ESDM: From Vendors to Value Creators', will feature Ashok Chaudhary, President, IESA; Sachin Dhruva Nalk, Founder & CEO, Cazor Labs; B.S. Srinivasan, Managing Partner, Vspof Electronics; and Sonam Motwani, Founder and CEO, Karthika. The session will be moderated by Raghuvaran Srinivasan, Editor, The Hindu Businessline.

The second panel, 'Talent Skilling and Beyond Challenges' will have Rakesh Patil, Co-Founder and CTO, Beyond Appliances; Kartik Narayan, CEO, Apna Co; Nitin Dave, CEO, Staffing Solutions; Quees Corp;

and Nagaraju S, Council Member, Panel Chairman, Labour Law, KASSA, Synergy Punching (Promoter and Director). The session will be moderated by Bharat Kumar (Digital Editor, The Hindu Businessline).

The preside chat with Satish Kumar T, Chairman & Managing Director, Milky Mist will be hosted by Raghuvaran Srinivasan, Editor, The Hindu Businessline. The past four years too, an MSME Day, businessline had hosted similar conclaves for MSMEs, which saw the participation of many from the sector. These conclaves play a vital role in the Indian economy.

## Rishi Ranjan Kala

The Centre's flagship rooftop solar programme is beginning to deliver on its promise of sharply reducing household electricity costs, with Kerala and Rajasthan emerging as the leading states where a large share of consumers are now receiving zero electricity bills.

The trend underscores the growing impact of rooftop solar adoption on household finances.

Across India, nearly one in four beneficiaries under the scheme paid zero electricity consumption charges in a month, thanks to power generated from rooftop panels being adjusted against grid net metering. Kerala topped the rankings with over 50% of

its 3.64 lakh applicants recording a recent monthly billing cycle, highlighting how solar energy charges are following by Rajasthan, where more than 42% of nearly 3.96 lakh applicants achieved the same outcome.

Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Maharashtra rounded out the top five states by share of zero-bill consumers.

Among the top 10 States with the highest number of applications under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSG: MBY), Andhra Pradesh had the lowest percentage of applicants who paid zero monthly electricity consumption charges.

The writer is with The Hindu Businessline

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## ISP to be released with 60-day lag with base year 2024-25

The new index measuring the output of the country's services industry, with 2024-25 as the base year, will be released each month with a 60-day lag, the statistics ministry said in a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on Wednesday. The first-ever Index of Services Production (ISP) for April 2026 will be announced on July 14. The subsequent numbers will be released on the 29th day (or next working day in case of a holiday) of every month, according to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). As a counterpart of the IIP (Index of Industrial Production), which measures the economic growth of the industrial sector, ISP will be a new macroeconomic indicator to measure short-term changes in the growth of the services sector, the ministry said in a statement. The conceptual and methodological framework for compiling ISP was finalised in consultation with a technical advisory committee (TAC), which was constituted in May 2025 and headed by Debjani Ghosh of government think tank NITI Aayog. PTI

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) will launch India's **first-ever Index of Services Production (ISP)**, with **2024–25 as the base year**.

- The **first ISP for April 2026** will be released on **14 July 2026**.
- Thereafter, the index will be released **every month with a 60-day lag**, generally on the **29th of each month** (or the next working day if it is a holiday).

The ISP is designed to become a **high-frequency indicator of the services sector**, similar to how the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** tracks industrial output.

## 1. What is the Index of Services Production (ISP)?

Particular	Details
Full Form	Index of Services Production (ISP)
Introduced By	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)
Base Year	<b>2024–25</b>
First Release	<b>14 July 2026</b>
Frequency	Monthly
Time Lag	<b>60 days</b>
Purpose	Measure short-term growth in India's services sector

## 2. Why is ISP Needed?

India's economy has become increasingly **service-driven**, but until now there was **no comprehensive monthly index** measuring the output of the services sector.

The ISP fills this gap by providing policymakers and analysts with a regular measure of service-sector activity.

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## 3. Objectives of ISP

Objective	Explanation
Measure service output	Monthly estimation of production in the services sector
High-frequency indicator	Track economic activity quickly
Policy formulation	Assist the Government and RBI in policy decisions
Economic forecasting	Support GDP estimation and trend analysis
Investment decisions	Provide timely information to investors and businesses

## 4. Why is it Important?

Importance	Benefit
India's largest economic sector	Better measurement of services output
Early economic signal	Helps detect slowdown or acceleration
Better GDP estimation	Improves national accounts
Policy planning	Enables quicker responses by policymakers
International comparability	Aligns India with global statistical practices

## 5. ISP vs IIP

Feature	ISP	IIP
Full Form	Index of Services Production	Index of Industrial Production
Sector Covered	Services	Industry
Measures	Output of services	Industrial production
Frequency	Monthly	Monthly
Base Year	2024–25	2022–23 (latest revised base year)
Released By	MoSPI	MoSPI

## 6. Major Sectors of the Indian Economy

Sector	Activities
Primary	Agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining
Secondary	Manufacturing, construction, electricity
Tertiary (Services)	Banking, insurance, IT, education, healthcare, tourism, transport, communication, trade

## 7. India's GDP Composition (Approximate)

Sector	Share in GDP
Agriculture	~16–18%
Industry	~26–28%
Services	~55–60%

**Key Point:** The services sector contributes the **largest share** to India's GDP.

## 8. Major Service Industries Covered

Examples include:

- Banking
- Insurance
- Information Technology (IT)
- Telecommunications
- Hospitality
- Tourism
- Healthcare
- Education
- Transportation
- Logistics
- Real Estate
- Professional Services
- Retail and Wholesale Trade

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## 9. Release Schedule

Item	Details
First ISP	April 2026 data released on <b>14 July 2026</b>
Subsequent Releases	Around the <b>29th of every month</b>
Delay	60-day reporting lag

## 10. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Particular	Details
Constituted	May 2025
Purpose	Develop methodology and framework for ISP
Chairperson	<u>Debjani Ghosh</u>
Associated Institution	<u>NITI Aayog</u>

## 11. Base Year – What Does It Mean?

A **base year** is the reference year against which future production or output is compared.

### Characteristics of a Good Base Year

- Normal economic conditions
- Recent period
- Reliable and comprehensive data
- Free from abnormal shocks as far as possible

## 12. Related Economic Indicators

Indicator	Measures
GDP	Total value of goods and services produced
GVA	Value added by different sectors
IIP	Industrial production
CPI	Consumer inflation
WPI	Wholesale price inflation
PMI	Business activity in manufacturing/services
ISP	Service-sector output

## 13. Why Does India Need High-Frequency Indicators?

- Monitor economic growth in near real time.
- Help the RBI assess demand conditions.
- Support government fiscal planning.
- Improve investment and business decisions.
- Identify sector-specific slowdowns early.



Tourists visit the archaeological ruins of Nisa, an ancient fortress near capital Ashgabat in Turkmenistan. AFP

### Ultra-reclusive so far, Turkmenistan slowly opens up to tourists

Agence France-Presse  
ASHGABAT

From a gas crater dubbed the "Gateway to Hell" to the shimmering marble buildings of its capital, Turkmenistan is tentatively opening up to tourists after decades of isolation.

One of the world's most reclusive countries, the former Soviet republic adopted strict visa requirements after gaining independence in 1991 and closely monitors travellers.

Now, tour agencies in the Central Asian nation have noticed a recent decrease in visa rejections and this year authorities announced plans to expand the tourism sector.

At the archaeological ruins of Nisa, an ancient fortress near the capital, Ashgabat, AFP spotted a Western tour group taking advantage of this tentative thaw.

"I wanted to see what the mystery was about," said Nick Frey, a 29-year-old U.S. tourist admiring the fortress. "I think the uniqueness is really what stood out."

Ashgabat has the highest density of white marble buildings in the world, according to Guinness World Records.

Turkmenistan's odd architecture and reclusiveness has made it a magnet for content creators on social media, some of whom have dubbed it the "world's weirdest country".

Before arriving, all holidaymakers must prove their tourist credentials and their itinerary is strictly mapped out.

President Serdar Berdimuhamedov appears to be warming to the new visitors.

"The country's tourism industry is increasingly expanding," he said earlier this year, adding that he wanted to develop international cooperation.

## Sudan's war refugees recount horrors in Egypt's jails as deportations surge

Former detainees describe extortion, overcrowding, scarce water and abuse; authorities have deported over 5,500 people since November, a sharp rise from about 100 each in 2023 and 2024, security officials say, UNHCR says returns to Sudan should not take place under current circumstances

Reuters  
CAIRO

Al-Nazir Al-Sadig sought safety in Egypt from the civil war in Sudan. Instead, the 18-year-old died of pneumonia after more than three weeks in a squalid Cairo jail, where he had suffered beatings and extortion at the hands of other inmates, his friends and relatives said.

A high-school student, Al-Sadig was detained as part of what lawyers and human rights groups describe as an "unwelcoming crackdown on refugees that contrasts sharply with Egypt's stated role as a safe haven."

Egypt rejects the claims that it is unwelcoming to refugees. It took in more than a million people when war broke out in Sudan in 2023, acting as a buffer to those who might otherwise continue north to Europe. But authorities, facing an economic crisis and rising anti-migrant sentiment, have since tightened an increasingly strict line with a series of arrests and deportations.

Starting late last year, plain-clothes security officers have detained thousands of refugees and other migrants in homes and workplaces, pulling them off streets into unmarked vehicles, according to 48 refugees, seven lawyers, and eight activists. The reporting found some left Egypt, taking their chances

in war-torn Sudan rather than risk being separated from their families and deported. Others have gone into hiding, at a time activists warn a newly implemented law risks further eroding asylum protection. Authorities have deported more than 5,500 people since November, a fraction of the overall refugee population but a sharp escalation from around 100 formal deportations each year in 2023 and 2024, three security officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity and citing figures not reported previously.

Egypt does not publish detailed immigration data and Reuters could not independently verify the deportations and detention figures in the current crackdown.

"Unprecedented" move Reuters documented three fatalities of Sudanese refugees in Egypt's overcrowded prisons this year: a 30-year-old who collapsed 72 hours after he was detained; a 67-year-old diabetic man, and the high schooler Al-Sadig. Two of the security officials said a total of nine Sudanese nationals had died in custody, without elaborating on the circumstances of the deaths. Reuters could not independently verify the other fatalities.

Ten former detainees in police-run jails described refugees sleeping in shifts



Home calls: A file photo of Sudanese refugees waiting in Cairo to board a train to Aswan, ahead of a journey to Khartoum. REUTERS

because of a lack of floor space, beatings and other abuse, as well as denied food, and filthy sanitary conditions. One Eritrean refugee detained in the crackdown recounted a violent sexual assault by other female inmates, her account supported by medical records from a Cairo hospital.

Karim Zamarah of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, a human rights group, described the scope of the campaign as "unprecedented", going against Egypt's obligations under international law that restrict deportations of refugees.

"Protection as it existed in Egypt for decades has collapsed," he said.

Egypt's State Information Service said in a statement to Reuters that it was not carrying out only through clear legal procedures and judicial guarantees, and only when an individual is

proven to have broken the law or to pose a national security risk, and denied that a broad-based campaign against refugees exists.

Egypt's government has said it does not intend to do not reflect state policy, highlighting that millions of Sudanese and other migrants live, study, and work in Egypt and benefit from public services such as education and healthcare.

Egypt had the second highest number of asylum applications globally in 2025, according to U.N. numbers, "reflecting the confidence of individuals seeking protection," in the country, the information service said in a statement to Reuters.

Reuters questions to relevant authorities were not answered. The information service, which liaises with clear legal procedures and judicial guarantees, and only when an individual is

At a bus stop in the heart of downtown Cairo, Hosna, a 40-year-old school teacher, waited with her four children and hundreds of other people for transport back to Sudan.

"There is no safety" Ms. Hosna said she feared her two teenage sons could be arrested because, despite receiving U.N. refugee status upon arrival two years ago, the family was still awaiting an appointment for Egyptian residency. The children of two families in her apartment building in Cairo had been detained and deported, she said.

"I came here searching for safety but there is no safety. It's better to die in my country than lose my children," Ms. Hosna said, giving only her first name. More than a dozen refugees, including Ms. Hosna, expressed concern about returning to a precarious security situation in Sudan.

UNHCR said it was concerned by the arrests, detention, and deportations, including of women and children registered with the U.N.

"Returns to Sudan should not take place under the current circumstances, given the ongoing conflict and humanitarian situation, which do not allow for safe and sustainable returns," UNHCR said in response to questions from Reuters.

Sudan's information ministry did not respond to a request for comment about deportations from Egypt and risks of deportation, which do not allow for safe and sustainable returns, UNHCR said in response to questions from Reuters.

placed millions of people fleeing racially charged

campaigns of ethnic cleansing and other violence.

A new asylum law Egypt passed in 2024 grants refugees the right to work and seek education and healthcare. But it drew criticism from UNHCR, the U.N. refugee agency, for giving officials wide discretion over who qualifies as a refugee.

Mr. Zamarah said implementing bylaws published this month offered insufficient protection from refoulement, the forcible return of refugees to a territory where their life or freedom is at high risk.

"The law's expanded grounds for denial and revocation risk codifying the crackdown," he said.

In its statement to Reuters, the Egyptian government said the law "affirms respect for human dignity and the principle of non-refoulement" and guarantees refugees the right to be free from discrimination or inhuman or degrading treatment.

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### Stepping up



Shaking a leg: People from Malawi, a country in southeastern Africa, dance in front of St. Peter's basilica on Wednesday, the day Pope Leo holds the weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. REUTERS

## Right-wing leader Keiko Fujimori set to win presidential run off in Peru

Agence France-Presse  
LIMA

Conservative Keiko Fujimori appeared to win Peru's presidential election on Tuesday.

The election has been one of the tightest Latin American leadership contests in decades, with crime and political instability dominating a race to choose the country's ninth leader in a decade.

Ms. Fujimori's victory would mark the return of a family name to power more than two decades after she was ousted from office by former president Alberto Fujimori.

With 99.86% of ballots tallied, Ms. Fujimori held 50.12% of the vote, a margin of over 43,000 over rival Roberto Sanchez. AFP



Leading lady: Keiko Fujimori, with 99.86% of ballots tallied, Fujimori held 50.12% of the vote, a margin of over 43,000 over rival Roberto Sanchez. AFP

her leftist rival Roberto Sanchez according to the National Office of Electoral Processes headed by Ms. Fujimori, claiming a "serious violation of the electoral process".

Mr. Sanchez alleges administrative irregularities in the handling of the over-

seas vote, which represents around 3,000,000 ballots, by the electoral authority.

The overseas vote largely favoured Ms. Fujimori, who was propelled by massive support from voters in the U.S. and Japan.

According to Mr. Sanchez, if votes cast abroad were excluded, he would hold a lead of around 25,000 votes over Ms. Fujimori.

He questioned on Monday the announcement of these votes by the National Jury of Elections. The request was denied Tuesday.

The winner will take office July 28 for a five-year term and will inherit a stable economy, with GDP growth of over three percent and low inflation.

## Europe swelters under record-breaking heatwave; France, Spain most-affected

Agence France-Presse  
PARIS

Europe struggled to cope with a record-breaking heatwave on Wednesday, with at least 94 million people expected to experience temperatures above 35 degrees Celsius, most of them in France and Spain.

AFP estimates based on analysis of forecasts from the German weather service and 2025 population projections from the Joint Research Centre suggest maximum temperatures will surpass 30 degrees Celsius for more than 350 million people, more than two-thirds of the continent's population.

The extreme weather - whose effects have been made worse by buildings and infrastructure not de-

signed to cope with high temperatures - is being driven by atmospheric patterns trapping hot air.

But a scientific study published this week said the current heatwave was "significantly exacerbated by human-induced climate change", without which the current temperatures would have been 2-4 degrees Celsius cooler.

The World Health Organization's head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned on Wednesday that the heatwave is threatening the health of Europeans, urging the continent's leaders to invest in making their health services more climate-resilient.

"We're suffocating," said Noroune El Kaoui, 48, an automotive worker at a Renault plant in Douai, northern France.

"We feel waves of heat. We feel waves of heat."

France are currently under the highest red alert level for heat, according to an AFP estimate.

Average daytime and nighttime temperatures reached 29.8 degrees Celsius on Tuesday - the hottest since current records began in 1947 - with 39 degrees Celsius to 41 degrees Celsius expected on Wednesday in northwestern Brittany to Paris.

Conditions at schools, offices and factories have become unbearable as temperatures rise, with early closures and employees to work from home.

"We're suffocating," said Noroune El Kaoui, 48, an automotive worker at a Renault plant in Douai, northern France.

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Under shade: Tourists cross a road holding umbrellas to protect themselves from the scorching sun in Paris, France, on Tuesday. AFP

Some people even faint at times. It's extremely, extremely hard to keep up at work," he told AFP.

On a building site in London, electrician Harrison Hammond, 29, said bosses had told employees to take the heat seriously. But he said it was "a different story" as he travelled home by train to Essex, east of the British capital, on Tuesday night when temperatures hit 30 degrees Celsius. "They had no air conditioning on. Everyone was really suffering," he said.

Power outages have been reported in France, including in the northwest

department of Finistere, where high temperatures knocked out a transformer on Tuesday, leaving about 68,000 households without electricity.

In the U.K., where temperatures are forecast to hit nearly 40 degrees Celsius, east of London, the British energy regulator Ofgem warned that supply could be squeezed due to pressure on the system.

Sales of fans and air conditioners have skyrocketed.

French hypermarket Carrefour on Monday said it had sold 30,000 units by 6:30 pm - "a thousand times more than on a normal day", CEO Alexandre

Engineer Yana Markevich complained about legal restrictions in the U.K. on installing air conditioning,

which has been criticised by some green campaigners for its high energy consumption.

People already live in a world where heatwaves are becoming more intense. I don't think denying ordinary people access to proper cooling in their own homes is a serious climate policy," she told AFP.

Tourism hit June is a key month for tourism in Europe but popular landmarks, including the Eiffel Tower and Louvre museum in Paris, and the stainless steel Atomium in Brussels, have been shutting early because of the heat.

"Visiting Paris in this heat is awful," said American engineer John Beeder, wearing a fisherman's hat

and holding a small fan. Curators at University College London's Grant Museum of Zoology said some of the thousands of specimens it houses from across the world were potentially under threat.

The heatwave is expected to extend into eastern Europe in the coming days.

Poland's weather service issued high-level heat warnings for the western part of the country from Thursday to Saturday, and predicted temperatures could break the record of 42.2 degrees Celsius set in 1921.

Groatia's popular Adriatic coast was also put under red alert for Friday and Saturday, while Hungary said it was imposing a maximum level alert from Saturday to Tuesday.

# Europe swelters under record-breaking heatwave; France, Spain most-affected

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## **‘We’re suffocating’**

Around 44 million of the nearly 67 million people in

France are currently under the highest red alert level for heat, according to an AFP estimate.

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“We feel waves of heat.



**Under shade:** Tourists cross a road holding umbrellas to protect themselves from the scorching sun in Paris, France, on Tuesday. AFP

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## **Tourism hit**

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Europe is experiencing one of its **most severe heatwaves on record**, with **France and Spain** among the worst-affected countries.

- Around **94 million people** are expected to experience temperatures **above 35°C**.
- More than **350 million Europeans** are likely to face temperatures exceeding **30°C**.
- Scientists have linked the intensity of the heatwave to **human-induced climate change**.
- The heatwave has disrupted transport, tourism, electricity supply, workplaces, schools and public health systems across Europe.

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## 1. Heatwave at a Glance

Particular	Details
Region Affected	Europe
Most Affected Countries	France, Spain
Population above 35°C	<b>94 million</b>
Population above 30°C	<b>350+ million</b>
Main Cause	Persistent high-pressure system trapping hot air ("heat dome")
Climate Factor	Human-induced climate change has intensified the event

## 2. Why is Europe Experiencing Such Extreme Heat?

### Immediate Meteorological Causes

- High-pressure atmospheric blocking system.
- Heat dome trapping warm air.
- Dry soil reducing evaporative cooling.
- Warm air masses moving from North Africa.

### Long-Term Factors

- Global warming.
- Increased greenhouse gas emissions.
- Urban Heat Island Effect.
- Land-use changes.

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## 3. Climate Change Connection

According to the scientific assessment cited:

Observation	Details
Impact of Climate Change	Heatwave significantly intensified by human activity
Without Climate Change	Temperatures would have been approximately <b>2–4°C lower</b>
Trend	Heatwaves are becoming more frequent, longer and more intense

## 4. Major Impacts

### A. Public Health

Impact	Details
Heat stroke	Increased cases
Dehydration	High risk among elderly and children
Cardiovascular stress	Increased hospital admissions
Mortality	Greater risk during prolonged heatwaves

### B. Infrastructure

Sector	Effect
Electricity	Increased demand for cooling; outages reported
Power Grid	Overloaded due to air-conditioner usage
Roads	Surface damage and expansion
Railways	Speed restrictions and delays
Buildings	Higher cooling demand

## D. Economy

- Lower labour productivity.
  - Reduced construction activity.
  - Higher energy costs.
  - Agricultural stress.
  - Increased insurance losses.
- 

## 5. Countries Mentioned

Country	Situation
<u>France</u>	Highest heat alert; power outages and school disruptions
<u>Spain</u>	Among the worst-hit countries
<u>United Kingdom</u>	Temperatures forecast near 40°C; pressure on electricity grid
<u>Poland</u>	High-level heat warnings
<u>Croatia</u>	Red alert along the Adriatic coast
<u>Hungary</u>	Maximum heat alert issued

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## 6. What is a Heatwave?

A **heatwave** is a prolonged period of abnormally high temperatures relative to the normal climate of a region.

### India (IMD Criteria)

Plains	$\geq 40^{\circ}\text{C}$
Hilly Regions	$\geq 30^{\circ}\text{C}$
Coastal Areas	Based mainly on departure from normal temperature and humidity

## 7. Heatwave vs Heat Dome

Heatwave	Heat Dome
Period of unusually high temperatures	Atmospheric high-pressure system trapping hot air
Outcome	Weather event

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# Word of the day

## **Gingham:**

a clothing fabric in a plaid weave

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**Synonyms:** checkered cotton, woven plaid

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**Usage:** *The cozy kitchen featured matching blue and white gingham curtains.*

---

**Pronunciation:** [newsth.live/gingham](https://www.newsth.live/gingham)

---

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /'dʒɪŋ.gəm/

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# Word of the day

## **Estival:**

of or occurring in summer

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**Synonyms:** summery, aestival

---

**Usage:** *The clear blue sky had a distinct estival feel to it.*

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**Pronunciation:** [newsth.live/estival](https://www.newsth.live/estival)

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**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /'ɛs.tɪ.vəl/

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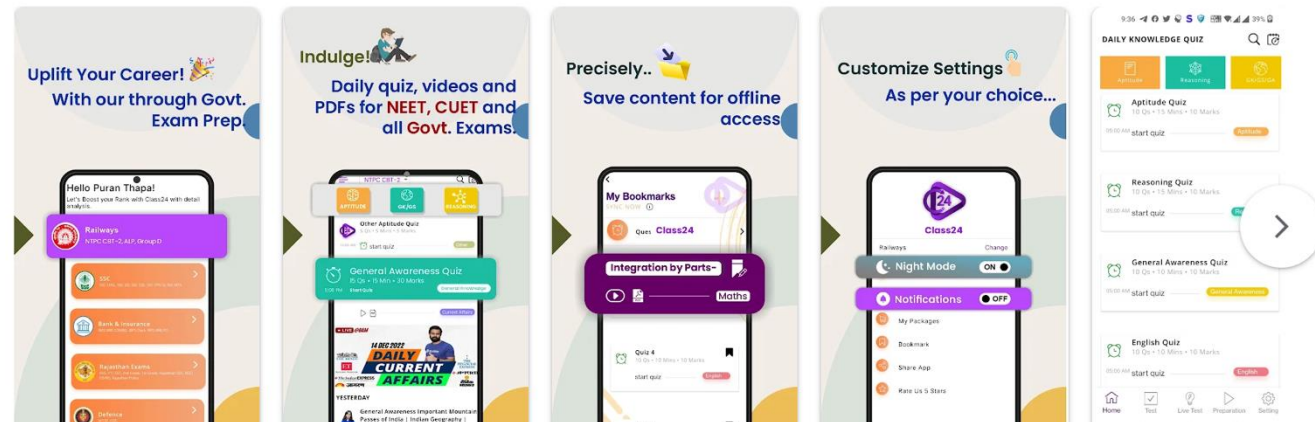
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