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COCKROACH PROTEST CRUSHED, DIPKE, 4 FORMER CMS AMONG 3,000 DETAINED

New Delhi, Oct 10

An unprecedented security blanket cloaked New Delhi on Saturday as forces deployed the strategy of mass detentions to foil the Cockroach Janta Party's call for a protest at Jantar Mantar demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the poll process.

After a day of detentions, the CJP gave a fresh call for protest tomorrow to demand Gyanesh Kumar's resignation.

Four former Chief Ministers--Arvind Kejriwal (Delhi); Mamata Banerjee (West Bengal); Pinarayi Vijayan (Kerala) and Manik Sarkar (Tripura)-- were among nearly 3,000 detained by the Delhi Police from different locations in Delhi-NCR.

Of them, 2,000 protesters were detained in New Delhi district alone where prohibitory orders were in force as over 35,000 personnel of the Delhi Police, paramilitary and some state forces guarded the capital, sealing and monitoring all entry points and asking commuters the purpose of their movement across 40 check-points.

The police allowed only locals and those with valid reasons to proceed. Apart from politicians, the CJP's top brass was also detained.

The movement's founder, Abhijeet Dipke, and spokespersons Ashutosh Ranka and Saurav Das were picked up from the airplane en route Mumbai to Delhi, with the police heard on the video telling them that they did not have the permission to protest at Jantar Mantar. Earlier, the Delhi Police also detained influencer Dhruv Rathee from his Sector 56 Gurugram home.

Among other detainees were CPM general secretary MA Baby, former CPM MP Brinda Karat, CPI(ML)-Liberation general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, activists Yogendra Yadav, Jean Dreze, lawyer Prashant Bhushan and CPI(ML)-affiliated All India Students' Association president Neha Bora.

While the larger Opposition slammed the clampdown as "dictatorial" and Dipke said even late Indira Gandhi had not done this during the 1975 Emergency, the BJP defended preventive detentions. "The government will deal sternly with the ill intentions of the Opposition to destabilise the country with the backing of foreign forces," BJP president Nitin Nabin said.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi urged youngsters to keep protesting and said "it will be ensured that this regime and the people who have attacked the Constitution are defeated".

Kejriwal dubbed Saturday restrictions as "worse than the Emergency" and called upon youngsters to seek Gyanesh Kumar's resignation for alleged vote theft.

TMC's Mamata who along with colleagues and leaders was detained from Delhi's South Avenue, sat



on a dharna outside the party office there and even wore a band aid to symbolically depict a state of what she called a "super emergency".

On the ground, the police pushed protesters back from multiple layers of barricading across Delhi, detaining them in stadiums, community centres and police stations.

INDIA Bloc to Hold Vote Chori Protest in Delhi on Monday, Submit Memorandum to CJI

New Delhi, Oct 10

The INDIA bloc will hold a protest march in Delhi against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh on the 'vote chori' issue on Monday, while a delegation of its senior leaders will submit a memorandum to the Chief Justice of India for his intervention in the matter. On Monday, the Congress and the entire INDIA bloc and the country's youth will again take to the streets in massive numbers. This time too, the voice will echo across the nation – louder than ever before, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said.

"We will also meet the Chief Justice (of India) and demand that when the Constitution is being torn to shreds on Delhi's streets and democracy is being crushed, the guardians of the law cannot sit with blindfolds on," he said.

"Will we stay silent while the Constitution is ripped apart? That will never happen. We will ensure accountability is fixed!" he added.

Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal said the party appeals to every Indian concerned about democracy's survival to join the INDIA bloc's "massive" protest march in Delhi on Monday against the nationwide "vote chori" orchestrated by the Modi-Shah regime.

"Yesterday, we held a comprehensive meeting with various leaders to prepare for this march,"



he said.

"INDIA bloc MPs, leaders, workers and all concerned citizens will hold a huge protest march against Gyanesh and Co, and a delegation of our senior leaders will submit a memorandum to the Hon'ble CJI (Surya Kant) for his intervention in this crisis," the Congress general secretary said.

"Gyanesh must go. There will be no backing down," he added.The remarks come a day after INDIA bloc leaders met President Droupadi Murmu and raised its "vote chori" claim to demand Gyanesh Kumar's resignation and repeal of all Assembly polls held in the last two years.

After the meeting, Rahul Gandhi said he was "shocked" that the president did not deny the "election theft" charge.

Revanth urges Congress leaders to join INDIA bloc protest in Delhi

Hyderabad, Oct 10: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Saturday, October 10, invited the party MPs, MLAs, MLCs, district unit presidents and other leaders to participate in a major protest called by the INDIA bloc in Delhi on October 12 over "people's voting rights".

Reddy asked chairpersons of various state-run corporations also to attend the protest in the national capital, Congress sources here said.

AICC general secretary K C Venugopal has said that the opposition bloc would stage a major protest in Delhi on Monday as part of its continuing fight to protect people's voting rights.



Venugopal, who spoke to reporters at Alappuzha in Keralam, said the bloc recently met the President to convey its concerns on the matter and would also meet the Chief Justice of India on Monday.



Telangana to establish Centre of Excellence for MSMEs

Hyderabad, Oct 10

: Telangana IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu on Saturday, October 10, said the state government plans to establish a Centre of Excellence for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

Sridhar Babu, who inaugurated the LUB MSME South India Summit, organised by Laghu Udyog Bharati (Telangana) here, said the proposed centre will support technology adoption, market access and investment linkages, with a focus on promoting products made in Telangana in national and international markets.

MSMEs play a vital role in industrial development and support the livelihoods of millions of families, he said. He said the state government had introduced a dedicated MSME policy to strengthen the sector and improve support for small businesses.The government is also planning to organise a monthly MSME Grievance Day to address MSME grievances and facilitate their resolution, he said.The minister further said steps are being taken to improve industrial estates in Hyderabad and its outskirts.

Vijay to meet Chandrababu Naidu on Krishna water sharing, proposed dams

Chennai, Oct 10 Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay is expected to visit Vijayawada on October 13 for talks with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Krishna water supplies, proposed dams on rivers flowing into Tamil Nadu, and river interlinking.

The proposed meeting comes amid a shortfall in water received by Tamil Nadu under the Telugu Ganga project.

Under the agreement, Andhra Pradesh is required to deliver 12 thousand million cubic feet (tmc) of Krishna River water annually at the interstate border. However, Tamil Nadu had received only 2.251 tmc by October 9 this year.

The gap between the stipulated annual supply and the quantity received so far is expected to be a key issue during the discussions.

Vijay's visit will provide an opportunity for the two governments to review water releases and discuss Tamil Nadu's requirements for the remaining period of the year.

Tamil Nadu has received less than one-fifth of the stipulated annual quantity. The figures place the outstanding balance at 9.749 tmc, although the annual allocation and the amount received by October 9 cover different periods.Besides Krishna water supplies, Vijay is expected to raise



Andhra Pradesh's moves to construct dams across rivers that flow into Tamil Nadu.The discussions are likely to cover the implications of these projects for water reaching the downstream State.

AP NDA Coalition Promises 28.18% Average Quota For BCs In Local Body Elections

Vijayawada, Oct 10

Andhra Pradesh coalition government on Saturday proposed an average reservation of 28.18 per cent for Backward Classes (BCs) in local body elections. The coalition partners in the government promised more than 34 per cent party-level opportunities wherever statutory quotas fall short.

Briefing reporters after the cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu at the State Secretariat, Agriculture minister K. Atchannaidu



said the proposed reservation for BCs is based on the report of Rajiv Ranjan Mishra Commission and in accordance with Supreme Court guidelines.Atchannaidu recalled that N.T. Rama Rao introduced 20 per cent reservations for BCs in 1987. The Chandrababu Naidu government increased the quota to 34 per cent in 1995 through amendments to the Panchayat Raj Act. The minister charged that the YSRC government reduced the quota for BCs to 24 per cent in 2019, costing BCs around 17,000 political positions at various levels.The agriculture minister said when NDA coalition government sought to restore the 34 per cent quota recently, it faced legal objections.

Parents arrested for repeated rape, sexual abuse of minor daughter in Gujarat



A couple living in the Kutch district of Gujarat were arrested over the past weekend for the alleged repeated rape and sexual abuse of their minor daughter over a period of a fortnight in the second half of September.The horrific incident came to light only after the minor girl managed to get her hands on a phone and call police, which led to her rescue and the arrest of her parents, police officers said.However, even this happened only after the couple had succeeded in thwarting the complainant's attempt to reach police once, and cutting off ways for her to reach for help by switching off the mobile phone that she had used, officers said.

Senior officers of the Kutch East Police have claimed that they have found evidence to support the minor's allegations in a phone that they seized from her mother. This evidence allegedly includes nude photos of the child, as well as photos of her with her father, the officers said.According to police officers, the complainant, who is in her early teens and the oldest among four siblings, was "caught" by her mother allegedly talking to a male friend in a North Indian state. The woman had allegedly complained about this incident to her husband.The minor told the police that the alleged abuse had begun the next day. She was not given food for a day, after which her father had allegedly raped her in front of her mother in the living room of their home.The entire sequence of abuse was repeated again and again during the latter half of last month, the complainant alleged – she was stripped and beaten before being raped, according to police officers.The complainant allegedly told the officers that on September 30, she had finally attempted to reach out to police from the home of a relative who lives in the same housing society.

However, her parents had snatched away the phone and switched it off, she allegedly told police.This was followed by another day of abuse on October 1, and her mother allegedly took photos of the events, the complainant told police. But then she managed to escape again to her relative's home and to call the police helpline number 112.The minor gave the police her address, after which personnel from the jurisdictional police station reached her home and rescued her, police officers said.Mukesh Chaudhary, Deputy Superintendent of Police of the Kutch East Police, told The Indian Express that the father and mother of the complainant had been placed under arrest on the same day after the FIR was registered and evidence was found on the mother's phone that corroborated the account of the complainant.

Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka detained during anti-CEC protest after face-off with Delhi Police



Security was stepped up across the New Delhi district as INDIA bloc MPs marched to the Election Commission office on Tuesday, with the Opposition demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and withdrawal of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. However, the MPs were stopped on the way, following which they sat on a dharna.Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi was joined by Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'brien and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav. Gandhi was seen adhering to Gen-Z lingo at the protest as he carried a poster that read: "Gyanesh, it's done bro!" He posted the slogan on X,too, adding: "It's time to resign"

More than five companies of paramilitary personnel, along with local police, have been deployed along the route from Makar Dwar of Parliament to the Election Commission office. Around 140 Opposition MPs are expected to join the march, which is likely to begin between 10.30 am and 11 am.Multi-layered barricading has been put in place outside the main entrance of the Election Commission and around Jantar Mantar. Police said prohibitory orders under Section 163 remain in force in the district and gatherings are not allowed.

Opposition steps up protests over electoral rollsThe New Delhi district has been witnessing protests since October 2 by the Left and other opposition parties.On October 1, the INDIA bloc announced a joint action plan which included protests across the country, a march by the Opposition MPs to the EC headquarters, and a mega rally in Delhi on November 1.These decisions were taken at a three-and-a-half-hour meeting of the group in Delhi, which was attended by leaders of 19 parties and Independent MP Kapil Sibal.Among the Opposition faces who attended the meeting were Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi; Trinamool Congress (TMC) chief Mamata Banerjee; Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah; RJD's Tejashwi Yadav; NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule; PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti; CPI(M) chief M A Baby; CPI(M)-L's Dipankar Bhattacharya; and CPI's P Santosh Kumar.In connection with protests over the last five days near Jantar Mantar, police have registered nine FIRs under various sections, including those related to violation of prohibitory orders, rioting, and attacking police personnel while they were discharging their duties.Eighteen people have also been arrested, while more than 300 people were detained and later released.Police are also bracing for another protest later this week.The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) has given a call for a demonstration at Jantar Mantar, as part of a nation-wide stir, on October 10, demanding the resignation of CEC Kumar.

Eye on regulation of student housing, Delhi Govt holds meet with PG owners



DelhiThe consultation comes nearly three weeks after the first meeting of a 20-member High-Powered Committee on Student Accommodation and Safety, chaired by Sood.As the Delhi government works on a regulatory framework for students' housing accommodation in the Capital, Education Minister Ashish Sood on Monday held consultations with PG owners, operators and managers. Regulating private PGs, addressing safety concerns and expanding student housing have emerged as key components of the Delhi government's proposed 'Paying Guest Accommodation Regulation and Safety Bill, 2026', officials said on Monday.The law was proposed two days after a five-storey boys' private PG building collapsed in Southwest Delhi's Satya Niketan on September 6, killing seven people including five Delhi University students.Mandatory registration, safety audits, standard rental agreements and mechanisms to check arbitrary charges are among the measures being considered as part of the proposed regulatory framework, officials said.

In a statement issued Monday, the government said the consultation with PG operators was aimed at understanding "operational perspectives" and addressing key challenges while prioritising student security and basic living standards. Officials said that the need to address the challenges arises owing to the large outstation student population in Delhi, as at least six lakh students come to the Capital annually for higher education."Following the recent unfortunate incident in Delhi, the process of regulating PGs and formulating new laws for them is ongoing. Under this initiative, a few days ago, I had engaged to understand the concerns of the students and residents living in PGs. Today, I met with PG operators, owners, and managers to understand their perspectives and stakes," Sood said in the statement."Before drafting any new law, our government is engaging with everyone through stakeholder consultations. This is true participatory governance—the very model of participatory governance we are working on," he claimed.

The consultation comes nearly three weeks after the first meeting of a 20-member High-Powered Committee on Student Accommodation and Safety, chaired by Sood. The committee was constituted to examine the shortage of student housing in Delhi, safety standards and regulation of student accommodation. It is responsible to draft new laws and regulations on PGs, officials said.At its September 15 meeting, the committee discussed mandatory registration and a central database for institutional and private PGs, regulation of lease agreements, curbing arbitrary electricity surcharges and introducing zone-wise rent bands. It also proposed mandatory structural and fire-safety audits, emergency evacuation protocols and regular mock drills for PG operators and students.A centralised digital grievance mechanism was also proposed, through which students would be able to report overcrowding, building safety hazards and lease violations for time-bound resolution.The committee had decided to develop, within 15 days, a portal for PG owners to register their facilities and provide details such as the age and size of the building and fire-safety measures, officials said. A separate portal was proposed to map student data across universities and educational institutions in Delhi.The committee, which has a 60-day deadline to submit its recommendations, also would examine the shortage of university hostels and the possibility of allowing higher floor area ratio for expansion of accommodation on campuses. The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and Urban Development Department have been tasked with identifying suitable land parcels for new hostels, while under-utilised government and DDA properties are also to be examined for possible conversion into student housing.Sood said the government's aim was to ensure that students had access to safe and affordable accommodation.

Midnight burglary in Shimla, loot snatched by officials, then silence

When she woke up at 8 am on September 8, Renu Baljees could suddenly feel something was off. For one thing, it was an hour and a half later than usual, and her body refused to move – unusual for this active 76-year-old. For another, her three-storey house in the upscale, picturesque Fingask Estate locality adjoining Shimla's iconic Mall Road was deathly quiet. Her first thought was: why didn't the alarm go off this morning?But as she strolled through the house, the reason became increasingly clear: the battery to the alarm had been pulled out, and her cordless phone was missing. And once she stepped into another room, everything started to make perfect sense. The room had been completely ransacked. She had been robbed of valuables – later estimated to be worth Rs 1 crore.

"My phone was gone. I had no way of communicating," she says. "I had a bell that connected me to my bakery on the ground floor; I rang it. The staff quickly came up. They found a maid lying unconscious after she was knocked down. Another maid was missing. All my valuables had been stolen." The missing maid, Karishma, who was originally from Nepal, had been hired only ten days ago.What followed was still strange. During the investigation, police found that Karishma and her three accomplices had allegedly been intercepted by uniformed personnel at Uttarakhand's Rudrapur while fleeing towards Nepal, and the jewellery was taken by the officials. The recovery of the jewellery from Karishma wasn't, however, reported to the police.On September 22, police arrested four excise officials. They have now been released on bail. "We are investigating if there was an organised network involved," one officer says.

The burglaryEver since her husband died in 1996, Renu knew how to live alone, caring for her two daughters and running the family bakery. Now 76, and with her daughters abroad, Renu increasingly relies on her staff: her assistants at the bakery and her live-in domestic help.According to the police, Renu had placed a request for a maid through an online placement agency. She, however, denies this, claiming instead that she received "repeated WhatsApp calls from a man who claimed he could provide trustworthy help".The suspect maid caught on CCTV camera installed in the house. The suspect maid Karishma caught on CCTV camera installed in the house. (Source: Special Arrangement)On August 27, Karishma, a woman originally from Nepal, arrived at Renu's house with only a rucksack in tow. Slim, dressed in trousers and a T-shirt, with her long hair tied in a bun, she was unassuming – and fit right in."The man had shared a copy of the contract between him and me, along with Karishma's identity proof, on WhatsApp," she says. "But police verification was always on my mind, and I kept asking her for documents. She kept evading it by telling me she would send them to me later, and that her brother and sister-in-law would bring them when they came down on September 7, but it never happened. She also sent me her number, but that's been switched off since. Later, I realised that the copy of the contract and Karishma's identity proof have since disappeared from my WhatsApp chat."

A CCTV recording from the time of the burglary allegedly showed Karishma entering the house with three accomplices – all men — and leaving with what police suspect was the loot. The FIR initially estimated the jewellery to be worth Rs 1 crore, although Renu now claims that this value is conservative.But as the investigation progressed, there was another development that has since left investigators puzzled.On September 10 – two days after the burglary – Renu received a call from a woman who introduced herself as Karishma's older sister. According to investigators, the call came from a Nepal number.The outer view of triple story house of businesswomen Renu Baljees at Finghask Estate in Shimla. The outer view of triple story house of businesswomen Renu Baljees at Finghask Estate in Shimla. (Source: Express Photo)"She came straight to the point. She sought my forgiveness for what had occurred, and told me that some uniformed people had intercepted her sister and her accomplices at Rudrapur and took all the valuables from them," she says.Located in Udham Singh Nagar district of neighbouring Uttarakhand, Rudrapur is a popular transit point for travellers going towards the western Nepal border.It's still unclear who this caller was — or how she knew that Karishma and her accomplices had been intercepted at Rudrapur. But for investigators, this puzzling call served to confirm a thread they were already pulling at – a white taxi that the group had allegedly taken out to Uttarakhand on September 8 and which was also captured on CCTV."The call was significant, but by then, one of our teams had reached Uttarakhand chasing the taxi. We were also coordinating with the police in Rudrapur," the officer says.



The taxi driver, investigators later allegedly found, was originally from Nepal but had no known connection to the suspects. He became the key to solve this puzzle. "The taxi driver's testimony helped us establish what happened, and he played a crucial role in identifying the four officials (at the Rudrapur border crossing). He's now a witness," the officer says.

The probeOn September 22, the Shimla Police took custody of the four personnel from Uttarakhand Police. While two — Sub-Inspector Devendra Kumar and Constable Baljit Singh – are from the excise department, the others have been identified as Uttarakhand Purv Sainik Kalyan Nigam employee Pappu Lal and Naeem, a personnel with the auxiliary volunteer force, the Prantiya Rakshak Dal. Both Lal and Naeem were attached to the excise department at the time of the incident.At the same time, the investigators are now pursuing some more suspects – those involved in the original burglary, and the missing woman Excise constable they believe was part of the group that intercepted the quartet in Rudrapur.Investigators say that Karishma and her three accomplices, who committed the burglary in Renu's house, are from Nepal."We're trying to trace the (Excise) constable and establish her role in the events of that day," the officer says. "We believe they are all hiding in Nepal now".The role of the man, who claimed to be from the online placement service and had arranged the job for Karishma at Renu's house, is also under scrutiny. His phone is now switched off, police say. Karishma's phone too isn't working.Investigators suspect that Karishma may have sedated both Renu and her other live-in house help, to make an easy getaway. Renu claims her food was spiked."Anjali, who has been working with me for many years, is the one who cooked the food – chapatis and sabzi. Anjali and I both ate that food that night. Karishma didn't," Renu says.The police claim 80% of the stolen jewellery items have been recovered – an assessment Renu disagrees with. "We are now trying to find out if they were all part of an elaborate network that provides maids and robs them, or if the personnel were simply there, took the stolen loot and allowed them to enter Nepal and disappear."Back at her Fingask Estate house, Renu has been shaken by the incident. But even during this traumatic time, she has turned to a person she trusts the most, her old help, Anjali."I know that I'm not alone in feeling like this," she says. "Here, you'll find families that have domestic help, who have been working for a family for years. This must also have shaken them".

Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka detained during anti-CEC protest after face-off with Delhi Police



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Burglars decamp with Rs 32 lakh cash

Hyderabad: Burglars targeted an Axis Bank ATM at Satamrai in Shamshabad on the suburb and reportedly decamped with around Rs 32 lakh in cash in the early hours of Tuesday.According to preliminary information, the burglars entered the ATM centre after midnight on Monday and used gas cutters to break open the ATM machine. After accessing the cash compartment, they allegedly removed the money and fled from the spot.

The theft came to light after customers found the machine damaged and informed the bank officials.On receiving information, the Shamshabad police immediately reached the location and inspected the spot.A CLUES team also visited the spot and collected forensic evidence that could help establish the sequence of events and identify the suspects.

Rescue satellite closes in on NASA's doomed telescope Swift



Cape Canaveral (US): A private spacecraft that was supposed to supply a lifeline to NASA's Swift Observatory managed to get close to the sinking telescope and even snap photos more than a week after the rescue was abandoned.But the three-armed robotic salvager had to turn away because of low fuel, according to Katalyst Space Technologies, which attempted the daring operation."We got so close, but so far," Katalyst CEO Ghonhee Lee told The Associated Press this week.Telescopes

Katalyst's Link spacecraft got within 15 kilometres (nine miles) of Swift last weekend, using its own sensors to gather data on the doomed telescope for NASA. The rescue effort had already been called off in August because of Link's own troubles in orbit, but the company wanted the practice for future satellite service calls.Link went into an uncontrollable spin soon after rocketing to Swift's rescue in July. Flight controllers managed to reduce the tumble and stabilise the spacecraft, using up precious fuel. In the end, there wasn't enough fuel remaining to boost the ageing Swift to a higher, longer-lasting orbit so it could continue observing the cosmos.Access Satellite DataLee blamed Link's problems on the rush to get it flying. The mission was thrown together in just nine months, and engineers often had to grab whatever was available instead of waiting for the preferred parts, he said.NASA paid the company USD 30 million to carry out the attempt, which was always going to be rushed. Both sides viewed it as an experiment with little to lose, although no one wanted a wreck that would unleash clouds of space debris."Unfortunately, it wasn't the outcome that we were expecting," NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said following Sunday's launch of the Roman Space Telescope. "But that's exactly the type of missions that we should be flying at NASA. We will learn from that."Explore Stargazing Apps

Isaacman said it makes sense to extend the life of a valuable spacecraft, especially if the cost to salvage it is less than to replace it. That's why the Roman telescope was designed to be refuelable even though it's headed toward an observation point 1 million miles (1.6 million kilometres) away.It's unlikely that Link has enough fuel left to attempt another close approach to Swift, according to Lee. But it can keep exercising its 3-foot (1-metre) arms and provide important data before it reenters and burns up in the atmosphere sometime in the next month, he said.TelescopesLaunched in 2004, Swift has a little more time remaining in orbit, depending on how active the sun is. Intense solar storms of recent years are responsible for bringing the telescope down much sooner than expected.NASA anticipates Swift will plunge through the atmosphere sometime between October and year's end. The space agency resumed observations with the telescope last week after halting them early this year to save precious power.Like Swift, the Hubble Space Telescope's orbit also has been shortened by solar activity. Katalyst is developing a next-generation spacecraft that could boost the 36-year-old Hubble to a longer-lasting orbit."Hubble does still have a few years of life yet, right? So the good news is this isn't imminent," Lee said.Servicing old telescopes and other satellites used to be "a very, very niche concept," he added, "and we believe it's going to become more and more commonplace."

Amritpal outfit names more candidates: Deep Sidhu's brother, gangster-turned activist Lakha Sidhana



The Akali Dal Waris Punjab De (WPD) on Wednesday named gangster-turned activist Lakhbir Singh Sidhana aka Lakha Sidhana as the party candidate from the Maur Assembly constituency for the 2027 state elections. It also fielded Mandeep Singh Sidhu, the brother of the late actor Deep Sidhu, from Talwandi Sabo.The names were announced by Tarsem Singh, the father of jailed Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh, who also the heads the Akali Dal (WPD).The announcements had been stuck for a long time as both leaders wanted to contest from Maur constituency. While Sidhana had unsuccessfully contested from the constituency Maur in the 2022 Assembly elections as a Samyukta Samaj Morcha candidate, it will be the maiden outing for Sidhu.

On his part, Sidhu had been camping in Maur, and his posters have already come up across the constituency. Party sources claimed that Sidhu was eventually convinced to contest from Talwandi Sabo because Sidhana had been working in the Maur constituency for the last five years. Furthermore, Amritpal Singh's family had supported Sidhana's candidature during the 2024 parliamentary elections too.Sidhu's candidature from Talwandi Sabo has also put an end to speculation that Amritpal himself wanted to contest from the seat.

The Akali dal (WPD) had earlier named Papalpreet Singh, a close associate of Amritpal Singh, from Majitha and named Satwant Singh, son of Kehar Singh who was executed for his role in the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, as its candidate from Bassi Pathana.Sidhana had earlier courted controversy after being blamed for instigating the protesters leading to violence on Republic Day near the Red Fort during the farmers' agitation against the now repealed central farm laws in 2021.A native of Sidhana village in Punjab's Bathinda, he had denied the allegations. As per police, he had than 25 criminal cases registered against him in Punjab, including on charges of murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, and under Arms Act. A humanities graduate from Punjabi University, Patiala, Sidhana claims to have quit the crime world for social work. He had joined the People's Party of Punjab in 2011m before quitting it in 2013, but not before it gave him political visibility. Since then he has remained actively involved in social work, including arranging mass marriages of poor girls.

In 2017, he had hit the headlines for allegedly defacing English signages demanding that they be written in Punjabi. He was arrested and sent to Faridkot Modern Jail from where he did a live session on Facebook appeal farmers not to burn paddy stubble.Sidhu, a practising lawyer who hails from Udaykaran village in Muktsar district, was earlier pitched as a candidate for bypolls to Gidderbaha Assembly constituency in 2024. His name was propped up by Faridkot MP Sarabjeet Singh Khalsa had announced candidature after the bypoll was necessitated following after sitting MLA Amarinder Singh Raja Warring won the Ludhiana Lok Sabha seat. Sidhu had started meeting people in the villages of the constituency before eventually backing out to avoid split in Panthic votes.His brother and actor Deep Sidhu had founded Waris Punjab De on September 30, 2021, which was later taken over by Amritpal Singh. At the time, Sidhu had said he and his group cannot align with Amritpal "at any cost". "My brother had launched Waris Punjab De with another ideology…not the one he (Amritpal) is now taking it to. Deep had clearly said that talks are the (only) way but Amritpal is clearly asking youths to pick up weapon. He is misusing Deep's name and portraying him as a separatist," Sidhu had said.

Meta launches 'Muse Voice Transcribe' with native support for five Indian languages

New Delhi: US-based technology giant Meta has introduced its first real-time audio-perception model — Muse Voice Transcribe — which offers native support for five major Indian languages and advanced streaming features. Muse Voice Transcribe — developed by Meta Superintelligence Labs — delivers streaming transcription, speaker separation across over 20 voices in hour-plus recordings, native code-switching and diarisation from a single model with no post-processing step, the company said in a statement.Get Language Courses

Muse Voice Transcribe is trained across over 70 languages spoken in multiple countries with 25 validated at launch. "It ranks first on the Artificial Analysis streaming speech-to-text leaderboard as of September 1, 2026," the statement added.Available via the Meta Model API and already running dictation in Meta AI for Mac and Muse Code, Muse Voice Transcribe delivers real-time automatic speech recognition, diarisation with over 20 speakers and endpointing.Take Sociology CoursesIt is multilingual with seamless code-switching and improves accuracy with language, keyword, and context biasing. "The longer the model waits to predict, the more accurate the transcript, but the higher the latency. Muse Voice Transcribe has "adaptive delay," dynamically changing delay for each word based on difficulty," the statement noted.This is enabled with reinforcement learning (RL), where word error rate (WER) reward and a delay reward are combined multiplicatively. "Muse Voice Transcribe is an autoregressive multimodal model from the Muse Spark family," Meta said.It explained that the audio is processed in 80 ms chunks (12.5 Hz), each of which is transformed into a single soft token. At each audio chunk, the model decides to either continue listening to the next audio chunk or emit a text token.With adaptive delay, Muse Voice Transcribe achieves the Pareto front on speed-accuracy trade-off measured by time to final transcription, the company said.



Who are the Sikh businessmen defending RSS chief's visit to London gurdwara

The visit of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat to the Khalsa Jatha British Isles Gurdwara in central London on September 6 has sparked a debate among sections of the Sikh community, particularly over his presence at the shrine and the two Sikh businessmen who accompanied him. The two, UK-based businessman and philanthropist Peter Virdee and Rajya Sabha MP and entrepreneur Vikramjeet Singh Sahney, have since defended the visit, arguing that a gurdwara is open to everyone and that welcoming a visitor should not be interpreted as an endorsement of his organisation or ideology.

Who is Peter Virdee?

Born Hardip Singh Virdee on December 6, 1973, in Birmingham, Peter Virdee is a British-Sikh businessman, property developer and philanthropist. He built his business interests primarily through B&S Property, an asset management firm involved in high-value property developments. His interests have also extended to renewable energy through PV Energy Ltd, international minerals trading through 3VI Ltd and insurance brokerage.Virdee has also been a prominent political donor in Britain, contributing to both the Conservative and Labour parties. He was the first Sikh to serve on the board of the English National Opera and founded the Virdee Foundation, which supports initiatives involving vulnerable children, disaster relief and healthcare, including cancer-screening camps in Punjab.

His public profile, however, has also remained controversial too. Virdee was convicted in Germany in a •125-million carbon-credit VAT fraud case between 2008 and 2012. After being arrested in London in 2017 and extradited to Germany, he was sentenced by a Frankfurt court to 39 months in prison in 2021. In May 2024, Britain's National Crime Agency charged him in a separate foreign-bribery case.

Who is Vikramjeet Singh Sahney?

A Padma Shri awardee, Vikramjeet Singh Sahney is an Indian entrepreneur, educationist, philanthropist and politician. He is chairman of Sun International Limited, whose business interests span international trading in fertilisers, commodities and chemicals, with operations across regions including the Middle East, Africa and Europe.Sahney is also the International President of the World Punjabi Organisation, which works to strengthen social, economic and cultural ties among Punjabis across more than 20 countries. His philanthropic work has included efforts to evacuate and rehabilitate Afghan Hindus and Sikhs following the Taliban takeover. He organised three chartered flights that brought more than 500 people out of Afghanistan and helped provide education and rehabilitation support to their children. Through the Sun Foundation, he has also worked on skill development programmes for disabled and underprivileged youth.During the Covid-19 pandemic, his initiatives included mobile testing clinics, distribution of oxygen cylinders and large-scale langar services. His contributions have also been recognised by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, which conferred on him the Anmol Sikh Rattan Award. Sahney is currently a Rajya Sabha member from Punjab. He was elected to the Upper House as an Aam Aadmi Party nominee but later joined the Bharatiya Janata Party along with other parliamentarians earlier this year.



What did they say about Bhagwat's visit?

Sahney defended Bhagwat's presence at the gurdwara, saying he was there "as a devotee". According to Sahney, Bhagwat offered a Rumala Sahib, prayed before Guru Granth Sahib and partook of Karah Prasad. He said he was "deeply anguished by the outrage expressed by a small section" over the visit.Sahney also drew a comparison with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's visits to Sri Darbar Sahib, arguing that Sikh institutions have historically received politicians despite controversies surrounding their political organisations.He further said the RSS had recognised Sikhism as a distinct religion and pointed to a statement Bhagwat made in Ludhiana in February reiterating that position.Virdee, who accompanied Bhagwat to the London gurdwara, also defended the visit. "The Guru's door is open to all," he said, arguing that no social media group had the authority to decide who could enter a gurdwara. He described Bhagwat's visit as an act of paying respects before Guru Granth Sahib and stressed that "hospitality is not endorsement, and dialogue is not surrender".Virdee also criticised what he called "pop up organisations and self appointed 'Sikh police'", accusing some critics of using personal abuse and confrontational tactics.

Why is the RSS's relationship with Sikh institutions contentious?

The controversy can be traced back to the tensions between sections of the Sikh religious leadership and the RSS and its Sikh wing — the Rashtriya Sikh Sangat.In July 2004, the Akal Takht issued a directive asking Sikhs to remain cautious about the activities of the RSS and Rashtriya Sikh Sangat.

IISc students sound alarm over workload, financial stress after 2 campus deaths

A survey conducted by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Students' Council following two student deaths, allegedly by suicide, in August has found widespread concern among students over academic pressure, financial stress and campus wellbeing, with a majority seeking more mental health support.The Indian Express emailed IISc for a response. They have yet to respond.One of the strongest findings related to governance: 88 per cent of the 1,035 respondents said students should have representation on the Wellness Committee, the body that oversees campus mental health support, signalling a strong desire among students to have a direct voice in shaping policies that affect them. Meanwhile, 69 per cent said a proposed weekly Students' Council initiative—informal gatherings dubbed 'Mondays for Mental Health'—would be helpful.

While 81 per cent of the respondents said making attendance and leave policies more student-friendly would help mental health outcomes, 80 per cent said they believed their financial situation was contributing to mental distress and more aid would be helpful.Improve environment, increase financial aidWhile 50 per cent of the respondents said that mandatory academic workload was causing "significant mental distress", 46 per cent pointed to disruptions in basic campus amenities as a significant contributing factor.

Asked to rank the most urgent needs for improving mental health on campus, students placed improving the work environment for students at the top, with 74 per cent support, followed by greater financial assistance and lower financial load (68 per cent), student-friendly attendance policy and academic workload (64 per cent), greater student participation in decision-making (54 per cent), and greater awareness, accessibility and transparency in mental health support (50 per cent).The survey showed that while 47 per cent of students said the psychiatric support available on campus is inadequate, an overwhelming 84 per cent said there should be more awareness and accessibility of the mental health support already on offer. Eighty-five per cent also favoured increasing reimbursement for students who seek mental health support from providers outside the campus.The survey was conducted after the deaths of 19-year-old BTech student Rakshan and 22-year-old second-year MTech student Gopal, on August 9 and 20, respectively.

'Fees hiked, students discouraged to meet'A researcher alleged that the IISc environment is one where the administration cracks down on students for speaking against policies. "Any student meeting or gathering requires permission from the Registrar, which just discourages students from meeting and discussing the issues we face freely…which is why we continue to suffer from academic workload, financial distress, toxic work environment and many such problems all alone in silence," the researcher said. "In such a setting, it's only inevitable that some of us will eventually give up. And IISc administration fully understands that. Ceiling fans are removed, terraces are locked, and new hostel buildings are engineered with a conscious design of being suicide proof."IISc has allegedly barred its students from speaking to the media without permission. "The IISc is not like how it used to be…

a vibrant campus which valued discussions and dissent. Given the packed schedule, these are very crucial to reduce the stress," a student who did not wish to be named said.Financial problems are also a major concern, a student said, pointing out how undergraduate fees have increased.



On Amruta Fadnavis's dinner invite, Jarange Patil's 'battlefield' response

Manoj Jarange Amruta Fadnavis dinner invite, Manoj Jarange-Patil, Amruta Fadnavis, Maratha quota protest, Kunbi certificates, Maratha reservation, Manoj Jarange hunger strike, Devendra Fadnavis, Eknath Shinde, Bhaubeej, Maharashtra Maratha agitation, Maratha quota, Indian Express newsJarange Patil has accused the government of failing to implement the assurances given during last year's agitation. (File Photo)Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil Thursday turned down a dinner invitation from Amruta Fadnavis, the wife of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, saying he would accept it only on Bhaubeej as he remains focused on his 13-day hunger strike demanding Kunbi certificates for the Maratha community.On Wednesday, Amruta Fadnavis said Manoj Jarange "is like a brother to me" and invited him for dinner."A sister has offered the invite, hasn't she? We will definitely go. But while a brother is out on the battlefield leading a protest, a sister shouldn't invite him for dinner," Jarange told reporters in Antarwali-Sarati."One shouldn't get distracted during a hunt. A sister should think about this carefully. I will come over for dinner on Bhaubeej (a traditional festival celebrating the brother-sister bond). Sister should invite us for Bhaubeej, and we will visit bringing a traditional saree-choli gift," he said, referring to a festival celebrating the bond between a brother and sister.Her offer has come at a time when the activist has been attacking Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, and ministers like Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil, Sanjay Shirsat, and Uday Samant, holding them responsible for ruining the lives of the Maratha community members."Earlier, I used respectful language. For three years, I spoke positively about Eknath Shinde. Now, people are speaking on behalf of their political parties rather than their caste and community. My relationship with Eknath Shinde deteriorated because of Minister Sanjay Shirsat," he said."Words are chosen based on a person's behaviour. Hence, such language is necessary. Both the chief minister and deputy chief minister have made a mistake. Therefore, I will speak out—I will stand with my community, not with any party."Jarange has already said that no government delegation will visit Antarwali-Sarati.Meanwhile, the Shiv Sena condemned Jarange over his criticism of Shinde."Manoj Jarange using singular, informal language for Eknath Shinde has not gone down well with anyone in the Maratha community.

EYE SECRETS

Editorial

Cosmos to human brain—let there be light

What is the common thread that connects the discoveries in the two seemingly unrelated fields that have won the Nobel Prize this year? Light! In fact, it is the common thread running through the extraordinary research works that were awarded the coveted prizes in the Physiology (Medicine) and Physics categories. In medicine, light is used as a remote control to switch on specific neurons to understand how the brain works. In physics, it acts as a signal that reveals the presence of otherwise invisible neutrinos, the subatomic particles with no electric charge and almost no mass. They pass through matter almost without a trace. Every second, 65 billion neutrinos from the Sun pass through our bodies, but we do not even notice. Both the breakthroughs that have won the Nobel Prize involve unlocking invisible worlds simply by learning how to harness the glow of light. American psychiatrist and neurologist Karl Deisseroth and his German colleagues Peter Hegemann and Georg Nagel have been awarded this year's Nobel Prize in Medicine for their work in the field of optogenetics, a technique that lets scientists control specific cells using light. They have developed a way to use light to control specific nerve cells in the brain, allowing researchers to study and influence how they shape memories, feelings and behaviour. The scientists laid a foundation for a new era in neuroscience by revealing how to switch on and off neural circuits behind "specific behaviours relevant for neurological and psychiatric disorders".

This method will have potential applications in the treatment of conditions like visual impairment and depression. Conditions such as Parkinson's and epilepsy have also been understood better as a result of this new research pathway. The advent of optogenetics has made brain mapping possible at a level that scientists could only dream of at one time. Francis Halzen of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who won this year's Nobel Prize in Physics, has worked on an area that virtually transformed how humanity explores the cosmos. The Belgian-born Physicist was awarded the coveted prize for his pioneering work on an observatory that detects particles from space, shedding light on the distant universe. He led the development of IceCube at the South Pole, which uses a cubic kilometre of Antarctic ice fitted with light sensors to detect the elusive particles called neutrinos. These carry information about violent, high-energy processes in the cosmos. Neutrinos are practically cosmic ghosts. Because they glide through stars and galaxies completely uninterrupted, they carry pristine, unaltered messages from the most violent events in the universe—like exploding supernovas or giant black holes. To spot these sneaky ghosts, Francis Halzen helped transform a solid cubic kilometre of crystal-clear ice into a gigantic trap. Today, an international collaboration of roughly 450 physicists, engineers, and computer scientists from nearly 60 institutions continues to operate and expand this monumental facility.

'Focus on 403, not 3': Akhilesh rules out Samajwadi Party's third Rajya Sabha candidate



After a week of suspense, Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday announced that the party is not fielding a third candidate for the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls,

After a week of suspense, Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday announced that the party is not fielding a third candidate for the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls, stating that the party's focus is not on three seats but on the 403 Assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh.

Yadav had earlier stated that his party would field a third candidate once the required numbers are secured. However, in a post on X this morning, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said, "Now, our focus is not on three, but on 403".Tuesday is the last day for filing nominations for the biennial polls, followed by scrutiny of papers on October 7. Names can be withdrawn till October 9, while polling will be conducted on October 16.The SP has already fielded party veteran Ram Gopal Yadav and Reliance Industries executive Dhanraj Nathwani for the Rajya Sabha polls, who filed their nominations in Lucknow last week.The BJP on Monday had announced eight candidates, including Dalits and Brahmins, leaving out Union Ministers Hardeep Singh Puri and B L Verma, whose terms in the Upper House are set to end next month.They comprise state minister Dharampal Singh, Shruti Gangwar Prakash Pal, Vidya Sagar Sonkar, Priyanka Singh Rawat, Radhakant Ojha and Gopi Krishna Pandey and Ram Pratap Singh Chauhan.

The SP and the Congress together effectively have 102 MLAs on their side, with the numbers enough to elect two MPs (37 first-preference votes are required). They are, however, nine first-preference votes short of getting a third candidate electedIn the 403-member Assembly, the ruling NDA has 291 MLAs, including the BJP's 255.

Multiple groups, moving crowds: Why CEC protest became a challenge for Delhi Police



What began as a protest planned at Delhi's Jantar Mantar on October 2 against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar has, over the past four days, spread across central Delhi, with multiple groups attempting to march amid prohibitory orders and the Delhi Police registering more than nine FIRs.The police response has included denying permission for the march and deploying paramilitary personnel, local police from eight police stations in the New Delhi district and personnel from the Delhi Police Reserve Battalion. All roads leading to Jantar Mantar in the New Delhi district were also fortified with barricades and police personnel.

According to a police officer, the agitation has not been confined to a single conventional demonstration but has involved political parties, student organisations, activists, lawyers and other groups attempting to march towards restricted areas in central Delhi."The challenge is not merely about preventing a crowd from entering Jantar Mantar, which is already heavily fortified. It is about controlling multiple moving groups, preventing attempts to breach barricades, managing detentions and, simultaneously, dealing with a large number of people recording events on mobile phones and cameras," the officer said.

Advisory for media personsThe protests have also brought journalists into closer contact with police operations, prompting the police to issue an advisory on Monday.This came after three women journalists alleged that they were harassed by police personnel while covering the protests. Their complaints have been transferred to the Crime Branch for investigation.The police advisory asked journalists to carry either an identity card issued by their organisation or valid PIB/DIP accreditation and, importantly, to keep it visibly displayed.Journalists were to ensure that their presence does not obstruct police operations or the movement of law-enforcement personnel.They were also asked to maintain a reasonable and safe distance during tense situations and to position themselves so that they are clearly distinguishable from protesters.Another police officer said the advisory was an attempt to create a clearer operational distinction between those covering the protest and those participating in it."Because many of those protesting also sometimes start making videos, with a mic and mobile phone camera, it becomes extremely difficult for us to distinguish between an actual journalist and activists," the officer said.The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which staged a massive protest in July demanding the resignation of then Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET paper leak, was given permission to hold a one-day protest at Jantar Mantar.A Delhi Police officer of DCP rank handed over the permission letter to CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke at the Delhi Airport. The protesters, however, did not leave Jantar Mantar after the first day and returned for a second round of demonstrations.Delhi Police officers have acknowledged that they had underestimated the number of people who might turn up in support of the CJP.This time, the police have taken measures to prevent protesters from reaching Jantar Mantar.

After the July protest ended following the resignation of Pradhan, Delhi Police officials underwent anti-protest counselling and were advised to remain calm, composed and patient while dealing with protesters and crowds.During the current protests, very few Delhi Police personnel have been seen carrying batons. Paramilitary personnel have mostly been seen carrying tear-gas shells.Many Delhi Police personnel have also been seen without name-plate badges while dealing with protesters. Sources claimed some personnel avoid wearing them because they do not want to be identified and subsequently trolled on social media.

Nearly 1/3rd of electors in Delhi issued SIR notices now verified

As the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process continues in the Capital, nearly one-third of the electors (around 31%) who had to prove their eligibility to stay on the electoral rolls have been verified, data from the office of the Delhi Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) showed on Monday, with over 55 days left to dispose of the rest of notices and objections.This is a sharp uptick in the number of notices disposed of compared to a week back. In the period from August 31 to September 29, only 4.01 lakh notices had been disposed. Over the next one week, more than six lakh notices were disposed of, with the total figure reaching 10.28 lakh on Tuesday.

Election officials have attributed this increase to exemptions from in-person hearings for voters who received notices, changes in the portal in which they had to upload documents, additional deployment of officials and special camps.Delhi had around 1.45 crore electors before the SIR process of voter rolls began in the Capital.Among them, 97.5 lakh were included in the draft electoral roll, while around 47.5 lakh electors were classified as "uncollectible" – after the Booth-level officers (BLOs) found them absent, shifted, dead or having duplicate entries, among other reasons – and were struck off the roll.Among the 97.5 lakh who did make it to the draft roll, one-third or around 33.1 lakh electors were issued notices to prove that they are eligible to be on the final roll. While 13.79 lakh electors got notices because they could not link themselves to the electoral roll of the last SIR, 19.33 lakh were flagged for "logical discrepancies" in their enumeration forms.On the new changes, an Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) said, "Now, I don't need to call hundreds of people to my office everyday for hearings, right? BLOs are going house to house and where needed, electors can also forward their documents to the BLO on Whatsapp also."After its first meeting since The Indian Express reported on the rupture within the Election Commission, the poll panel had said last week that electors who were issued notices will not be required to attend hearings to prove their eligibility. "BLOs will visit the homes of such persons for collection of documents and thereafter upload them on the ECINet, for decision by the ERO. Such persons need not be called for hearing to ERO/AERO office," a statement from the ECI said.Some BLOs, however, expressed disappointment with the deadline for disposal of notices, claims and objections getting extended to November 30. "I am also working in the school for 5-6 hours, after which now I have to again go door-to-door to collect documents. The deadline has also been increased by another month. It was supposed to be a three month exercise, but now it will last five months. Should we leave school work and do this full time only?" a BLO said.Another BLO said that in some areas it is easier to conduct hearings at a central location instead of going house to house due to often confusing and wrong addresses.The number of Assistant EROs, who are often school principals and can also dispose of notices like EROs, was also increased in Delhi. On September 24, the number of AEROs was increased from 297 to 902, an increase of 605. An official said that BLOs have been given a target of conducting at least 10 hearings every day.An ERO pointed out that the change in the ECINET portal which lets EROs dispose of notices without conducting a hearing is one reason behind the uptick in notices being disposed of. "Especially for notices for very minor logical discrepancies, if a BLO has verified the elector and is satisfied, we don't need to trouble the electors for documents. I cleared hundreds of notices in one night after this became available," an ERO said.



After HC rap over depleting water table, Gurugram plans borewell phase-out



Following scrutiny from the Punjab and Haryana High Court over the rapid depletion of groundwater and unchecked extraction across the district, Gurugram authorities on Monday drew up an action plan directing government departments to gradually discontinue the use of borewells and push industrial units to switch to tertiary-treated wastewater for operational needs.At a high-level review meeting chaired by Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) Chief Executive Officer P C Meena on Monday, departments currently reliant on groundwater were instructed to identify alternative supply channels and phase-out tube wells, officials said.

"All concerned agencies have been given a deadline of October 6 to submit detailed roadmaps outlining measures to cut extraction and scale up rainwater recharge. The district administration was also tasked with framing a comprehensive enforcement strategy to identify and seal unauthorised borewells across the city" GMDA spokesperson Neha Sharma said.Addressing the meeting, Meena highlighted the need to replace fresh groundwater usage with tertiary-treated wastewater from sewage treatment plants (STPs). Currently, the GMDA supplies 10 million litres per day (MLD) of treated effluent to the textile industry. Now, authorities plan to bring other industrial clusters under the treated water distribution network."To ensure accountability at the local level, the Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) was directed to monitor the functioning of captive STPs in group housing societies to ensure compliance with discharge standards. Directives were also issued to mandate separate electricity connections for these treatment plants and strictly enforce the zero-liquid discharge policy in residential complexes", Sharma added.

The meeting saw authorities resolve to shift focus toward retaining rainwater within the urban catchment rather than allowing run-off to discharge into storm-water drains, officials said. This strategy includes reviving water bodies facing degradation, clearing encroachments, lowering green-belt levels to trap surface run-off, and converting designated neighborhood parks into bioswales.The HC in ongoing proceedings concerning the city's shrinking groundwater reserves had directed the Monday's meeting. It had said it expects the authorities to examine the issues and to suggest appropriate measures to tackle the "worsening situation of ground water in Gurugram", noting that if the situation continues unabated then "the future generation would have to face disastrous consequences."In an effort to refill underground water supplies, the GMDA, in partnership with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), is also carrying out a feasibility study to construct a large underground rainwater retention reservoir beneath the football ground at the Tau Devi Lal Stadium in the city, officials said.

FIR against 2 'BJP agents' over Form 7s to delete 5,698 Bengaluru voters



An FIR was registered in Bengaluru against two alleged BJP booth level agents (BLAs) and others for submitting fraudulent Form 7 applications seeking the deletion of 5,698 voters from the electoral rolls in Jayanagar Assembly constituency.The FIR registered on October 5, based on a complaint by former Jayanagar MLA and Karnataka Pradesh Mahila Congress president Sowmya Reddy, names BLAs Ramakrishna and Yogesh as accused, alleging that they are affiliated with the BJP.

The move comes amid a growing row over bulk Form 7 filings in Karnataka, with the Congress alleging a conspiracy to delete lakhs of eligible voters from the electoral rolls amid the Special Intensive Revision exercise, and the BJP and Janata Dal (Secular) seeking protection from what they term "false or unwarranted" cases against party workers.Form 7 allows an elector to object to the inclusion of a name or seek deletion of an existing entry from the electoral roll.5,698 voters permanently shifted: What the Form 7s saidAccording to the October 5 complaint, the alleged irregularities took place between June 16 and October 5 during the electoral roll revision process. Form 7 applications were allegedly submitted claiming that 5,698 voters had permanently shifted from the constituency.As per the complaint, the applications sought deletion of 54 voters in Pattabhiramanagar (Ward 165), 525 in Byrasandra (Ward 169), 719 in Jayanagar East (Ward 170), 4,327 in Gurappanapalya (Ward 171), and 82 voters across J P Nagar, Sarakki and Shakambarinagar (Wards 177, 178 and 179).Reddy alleged in her complaint that the applications disproportionately targeted voters from minority communities and other sections perceived to be politically opposed to the BJP and its allies.The complaint also alleged that the identity details and voter IDs of two citizens or voters identified as C Ramesh and his wife Roopa were used to file the Form 7 applications without their knowledge or consent. Some of the applications allegedly carried forged signatures and were submitted to Booth Level Officer Lokesh at the election office in Jayanagar 4th Block.In Bengaluru, the Vyalikaval police on October 2 registered an FIR after Congress leader Anoop Iyengar alleged that 778 Form 7 applications had been filed seeking deletion of voters in eight polling parts of Ward 64 in the Malleswaram Assembly constituency. The complaint alleged that several voters were still residing at the addresses mentioned in the electoral rolls and that some applications contained false information or suspected forged signatures. G S Vasanthalakshmi, identified in the FIR as a BJP member, was named as an accused. The allegations are under investigation.Similar complaints have been reported from other parts of Karnataka. Police have registered cases in Bidar, Mysuru and Belagavi over Form 7 applications seeking deletion of voters, with the complaints alleging false information and forged documents.

After sexual harassment complaint, Delhi cop's additional charge withheld



The Delhi government has withheld a temporary posting given to Assistant Commissioner of Police Vivek Bhagat, who is accused of sexually harassing a woman journalist during a protest against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.The government said Bhagat had requested that he not be given the charge of Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police until the allegations are fully investigated.The government said the proposal to confer the Additional Duty Charge (ADC) on 12 Selection Grade DANIPS officers, including Bhagat, was initiated on August 25, much before the present set of events, and the orders were issued after due approval on October 5.

It clarified that this was a temporary arrangement with no financial benefit, and that officers assigned the charge could not exercise the statutory powers of the regular incumbents."Accordingly, the October 5 order is being modified in respect of Bhagat and will be reissued for the 11 remaining officers," the government said.Bhagat is currently posted as Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Connaught Place.The complaintsThe development came at a time when three women journalists had complained of alleged sexual harassment and manhandling during the October 3 protest near Jantar Mantar against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the revision of electoral rolls.The women journalists had alleged that they were manhandled and subjected to inappropriate behaviour while covering the police action during the protest.One of the complainants specifically alleged that Bhagat touched her inappropriately while she was covering the police action. The complaints by the three women have been transferred to the Crime Branch for a "fair and impartial" inquiry.The government order said the arrangement had been made in the interest of government work. Besides Bhagat, the officers assigned the current duty charge include Dr Vikas Sheokand, A Venkatesh, Gursewak Singh, Renu Lata, Vidushi Kaushik, Manu Himanshu, Sakaria Mihir Pravinbhai, Garima Tiwari, Ashish Kumar, Manish Ladla and Rohit Gupta.

Israel orders military to hunt down remaining Oct Hamas attackers



Jerusalem: Israel has ordered its military to hunt down and kill the remaining participants in the Hamas-led October 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel, Defence Minister Israel Katz said, putting their number at 2,000.Katz on Monday said about 6,000 attackers crossed the border into Israel on that day, adding that 4,000 of them had already been killed and that he and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had ordered the military to pursue the rest, reports Xinhua news agency."We ordered the military to pursue and kill them all, from the most senior to the most junior," Katz said.Separately, speaking on Monday at a state memorial ceremony at Mount Herzl in Jerusalem, Netanyahu said Israel will continue pursuing those who carried out the attack and held hostages, and to end Hamas' rule in Gaza.Earlier in September, Netanyahu in his address to the General Assembly, shot down accusations of carrying out a "genocide" of Palestinians in Gaza, calling it "the greatest lie of the century".

Netanyahu projected a powerful country that was fighting on seven fronts, against "Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, Iran, militias in Iraq, militias in Syria, Palestinian terrorists in Judea Samaria (West Bank)"."They all ganged up on us to wipe us off the face of the Earth. They failed", he said.When Hamas attacked Israel from Gaza in October 2023, he said, "We didn't collapse. Instead, we rose and fought like lions".Netanyahu also defended his country's bombing of Iran claiming, "If we hadn't done it, we'd all be dead".The Hamas-led attack killed about 1,200 people in Israel. It triggered the massive Israeli military operations across Gaza that have killed more than 74,200 people, according to Gaza's health authorities.Israel has killed much of Hamas' senior leadership during its three-year military operations in Gaza, including Yahya Sinwar and his younger brother Mohammad Sinwar.

Saudi Arabia intercepts Houthi drone, debris kills Yemeni citizen



houthi, saudi arabia warThis image from an undated video released Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2026, by the Ansar Allah Media Office, the media arm of Yemen's Houthi rebels, shows Houthi fighters posing and chanting atop what the group described as the wreckage of a downed Saudi F-15 fighter jet bearing a Saudi flag in Marib province, Yemen. The Saudi Civil Defence on Thursday said that debris from an intercepted Iran-backed Houthi rebel drone killed a Yemeni citizen, while a Saudi citizen and a Pakistani were wounded in Taif province in the western part of the country, officials said. The debris also damaged vehicles and buildings, according to the civil defence, Iran's Araghchi, Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir discuss regional developments amid stalled US talksIranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir held a telephonic discussion on the latest regional developments during Araghchi's visit to Beijing on Wednesday, Iranian media reported, as US-Iran negotiations remained stalled with no agreement in sight.The United Arab Emirates (UAE) strongly condemned Yemen's Houthis over the group's attempt to target Mecca in Saudi Arabia using a drone. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) released a statement saying that the drone attempt was a violation of Saudi's sovereignty and a threat to regional security and stability. The Gulf "reaffirms its legitimate right to take all necessary measures to defend the security of the two holy mosques, the pilgrims, and the entire Saudi territory, its citizens, and its residents," the foreign ministry said in a statement.Trump says US-Iran war 'hopefully' nearing end:US President Donald Trump said that Washington is "hopefully toward the end" of its war with Tehran, claiming that the United States has been in direct contact with Tehran over a possible agreement. On being asked by a reporter whether he had heard from the Iranian side, Trump said that he had directly spoken with Iranian officials and reiterated that Tehran is eager to reach an agreement with Washington.Follow the latest world news and major international developments here. This live blog is a rolling curation of the day's key global stories, with updates added as events unfold and the news agenda changes. The headline, introduction and Top Developments section will be refreshed throughout the day to reflect the stories that matter most at that moment.

Israel was ready to 'shoot down' flydubai plane. But aircraft turned towards Saudi



Days after the co-pilot of a flydubai flight from Dubai allegedly attempted to crash the plane, a latest report has said that Israel was prepared to shoot down the aircraft as it headed towards Tel Aviv.Israel was ready to intercept and shoot down the flydubai aircraft after the captain was attacked in the cockpit, CBS News reported, citing two Israeli sources with knowledge of the matter.Israel was prepared to shoot down flyDubai plane, says reportAfter the plane plunged 14,000 feet, the Israeli Air Force attempted to get in contact with the cockpit, the report said.When no answer was received, a pre-established committee was convened, a command center was established, Israeli airspace was closed, and fighter jets were scrambled.However, the fighter jets were called back when the plane turned towards Saudi Arabia. Notably, Saudi Arabia likewise scrambled fighter jets, according to the report.

If the flight had maintained its course, Israeli fighter pilots were prepared to close the distance and seek visual contact, it added.If the plane had gotten within a certain distance, Israel would have sent the fighter jets into Jordanian airspace to investigate the situation, CBS News further reported, citing the sources.The purpose of making visual contact would have been to determine if a hijacking had occurred.The report stated that confirmation of a hijacking combined with silence from the attackers would have led to the matter being referred to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the country's defence minister.According to the report, the protocol calls for a rogue flight approaching Israel to be shot out of the sky, but the authority to order this action would have rested with the PM.Shooting down the plane would be considered better than hundreds being killed if a rogue aircraft slammed into Israel's prominent buildings, the sources told CBS News.flydubai Flight 1073 was traveling to Tel Aviv from Dubai on September 30 when the co-pilot attacked Captain Smit Machchhar in an alleged attempt to gain control of the aircraft. The jet reportedly lost 16,000 feet of altitude in over 30 seconds.However, an aviation catastrophe was averted. Despite sustaining severe injuries in the attack, Captain Machchhar managed to unlock the cockpit door and alert the passengers and crew, who were able to subdue the attacker.Two off-duty pilots who were travelling on the flight assumed command before diverting the aircraft to Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, the CBS report added.Earlier, Israeli envoy in India, Reuven Azar, said fighter jets were called into the air in response to emergency signals from the Tel Aviv-bound flydubai plane, according to news agency PTI.When asked about Tel Aviv's response after the aircraft sent emergency alerts, Azar said Israel is very small, and a jet can penetrate very fast and, within seconds, crash into a building, on civilians or on an installation in Israel, the report added."And therefore, both are civil aviation authorities; our air force and even our political echelons had been immediately called to alert," he said.

Saudi airstrikes reported on Yemen's Houthi-held capital Sanaa



Riyadh: Loud explosions rocked Yemen's Houthi-held capital Sanaa, as the Houthi-run al-Masirah TV reported renewed Saudi airstrikes on the city.A Sanaa resident, speaking to Xinhua on condition of anonymity, said warplanes could be heard overhead as powerful blasts echoed across the capital, rattling windows and shaking buildings, late on Saturday (local time). "The blasts were so powerful that the ground shook beneath us," the resident said."It felt like an earthquake. Our windows were rattling, and the children woke up terrified." Local residents believed that the airstrikes targeted Houthi positions.Casualties were not immediately known.

Earlier on Saturday, the Houthis said they had launched ballistic missiles and drones at an Aramco facility in the Saudi capital Riyadh in retaliation for what they described as intensified Saudi strikes on Yemen.Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said that 60 air and missile strikes had hit Yemen over the previous 24 hours, reports Xinhua news agency.Tensions between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia intensified after the group announced a maritime embargo against Saudi Arabia on July 20, followed by an escalation in cross-border missile and drone attacks and airstrikes.The confrontation widened further in September amid fighting between the Houthis and Yemeni government forces, largely backed by Saudi Arabia. The Houthis captured the Red Sea port city of Mocha on Sept. 10 and strategically located Mayyun Island the following day. Yemen's conflict began in late 2014, when the Houthis seized the capital Sanaa and much of northern Yemen, prompting a Saudi-led coalition to intervene in March 2015 in support of the internationally recognised Yemeni government.

North Korea's Kim oversees hypersonic missile launch, calls for bolstering war deterrent

Seoul: North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has overseen the launch of an intermediate-range strategic missile and called for continued efforts to bolster the "fatality" of the country's offensive weapons, state media reported on Sunday. North Korea conducted a firing drill of the missile toward the East Sea at dawn on Saturday as part of efforts to train missile troops operating the "hypersonic strategic weapon system," reports Yonhap, quoting the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).Kim said it is very important to demonstrate the counterattack means of the North's military in a "constant mobilisation posture," according to the report. "We must continue our responsible efforts nonstop to constantly and repeatedly make the enemy recognise the reliability and fatality of our strategic offensive means," the North's leader was quoted as saying by the KCNA.

"This is a form of exercising deterrent," he said, noting that such a missile launch is aimed at "more rapidly developing the country's nuclear war deterrent."Photos published by state media showed Kim overseeing the launch with his daughter, Ju-ae, and his wife, Ri Sol-ju. The KCNA said the missile, launched toward the northeast, hit a target 1,000 kilometres away from the East Sea.The South Korean military earlier said it detected North Korea firing a ballistic missile toward the East Sea early Saturday morning from the Wonsan area, and it flew over 700km.Kim Yo-jong, the powerful sister of the North's leader, disclosed the missile firing Saturday in an unusually swift move. She claimed military authorities of South Korea and Japan failed to track the trajectory of the



missile due to the limitations of their tracking capabilities.Experts raised the possibility of North Korea firing the Hwasong-16 Na hypersonic medium-range ballistic missile, citing North Korea's media report that the launched missile was capable of changing its flight orbit at a low altitude. The missile launch came amid heightened tensions over last month's land mine blast inside the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that injured three South Korean soldiers.The South Korean military blamed North Korea for the Sept. 21 mine blast and called it a "blatant" violation of the armistice agreement that ended the 1950-53 Korean War.Seoul demanded an apology and responsible measures from Pyongyang. North Korea has denied responsibility for the incident, accusing Seoul of fabricating the findings and warning of "merciless" retaliation if the South takes any corresponding actions.

Omani co-pilot on flydubai flight told investigators he wanted to 'die as martyr'

The Omani co-pilot who allegedly attempted to crash the Israel-bound flydubai flight and attacked his Indian co-pilot was reportedly acting to seek "revenge for Gaza".29-year-old Hamam al-Hammami told the interrogators that he was acting "in revenge for Gaza" and that he "wanted to die as a martyr", reported the Times of Israel, citing Channel 12 news.A Mossad official also told Israeli ministers on Sunday that al-Hammami briefly visited countries hostile to Israel in recent years, Channel 12 reported citing two sources."We are checking whether, during those visits, an individual or an organization of any kind activated or recruited him," a Mossad representative said, according to the report.Agents of Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security agency, are participating in the interrogation of al-Hammami and flew to the United Arab Emirates to participate in his questioning, Times of Israel reported.Additionally, new details about the Omani co-pilot emerged from Australia and New Zealand.

Al-Hammami reportedly did not complete his university studies in Australia, according to the institution where he was enrolled. He had studied engineering at RMIT University in Melbourne but did not complete the qualification, the university said in a statement on Monday.His time in Australia is now being examined as investigators look into whether his years there played any role in his alleged radicalisation.RMIT said it was "aware of media reporting of a former student alleged to be involved in the FlyDubai flight incident," adding it was unable to comment further as investigations continue.The university is among Australia's oldest tertiary institutions and has around 99,000 students.Australia is looking into



the Omani pilot's links to the country. Investigators are also probing al-Hammami's alleged visits to radical mosques and extremist websites during his time in Australia, the Financial Times reported on Sunday citing people familiar with the matter.Flight training in New ZealandAl-Hammamai had also spent six months in New Zealand as part of his flight training, police said on Tuesday. He was in New Zealand from November 2018 to May 2019 on a six-month student visa, according to police."Immigration records show he arrived in New Zealand on 30 November 2018 and departed 23 May 2019," New Zealand Assistant Commissioner Michael Johnson said in an emailed statement to news agency Reuters."Police can confirm the co-pilot was in New Zealand to complete a portion of his flight training for a UK-based company, no longer operating in New Zealand," he added.New Zealand police said they were reviewing records and making further inquiries into the co-pilot's time in the country.

India's LNG imports fall 14 per-cent, Oman tops supplier list in September

New Delhi: Oman emerged as India's largest supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in September, replacing the United States as the country continued to diversify its energy imports amid ongoing geopolitical disruptions in West Asia, according to a report.According to Kpler data, India imported 585,000 tonnes of LNG from Oman in September, up 11.6 per cent from August, giving the Gulf nation a 27 per cent share of total LNG imports.

Nigeria became the second-largest supplier, with shipments of 351,000 tonnes, although volumes fell 35 per cent from the previous month. The US, which topped the supplier list in August with 848,000 tonnes, slipped to third place after exports to India declined 59 per cent, accounting for 16 per cent of September imports.Qatar, once India's dominant LNG supplier with a market share of around 45 per cent, fell to sixth place and supplied about 94,000 tonnes during the month. The UAE supplied 311,000 tonnes, while Angola exported 205,000 tonnes to India.

The sharp decline in Qatari supplies followed disruptions caused by Iran's strike on Ras Laffan Industrial City in March, a key LNG production hub and a major source of natural gas exports to India.India's overall LNG imports also declined 14 per cent month-on-month to 2.17 million tonnes in September from 2.5 million tonnes in August.Natural gas plays an important role in fertiliser production, industrial heating, power generation and urban transportation. India imports nearly half of its LNG requirements, with about 60 per cent of shipments from West Asian suppliers such as Qatar and the UAE transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.

flydubai crew asked passengers to free co-pilot after he was overpowered

New Delhi: The crew of a hijacked flydubai flight reportedly clashed with Israeli passengers after they subdued an axe-wielding co-pilot who had attacked the pilot. The passengers, however, refused to release the hijacker despite demands from the cabin crew, according to a media report.Two Israeli passengers who helped restrain the co-pilot said the crew members repeatedly asked them to free the attacker, leaving the passengers suspicious of the crew's intentions, reports New York Post. "They were asking us to untie the terrorist — we had no idea why," banking executive Tzvika Manes, one of the three civilians who helped overpower the alleged would-be hijacker, said in an exclusive interview with the New York Post.Real estate professional Daniel Schlichter, who was seated in the second row close to the cockpit, also recalled the tense confrontation with the crew. "They were saying to free the terrorist — we got instantly suspicious of them," Schlichter told The Post.The disagreement escalated into an argument, with the Israeli passengers making it clear that they would not release the co-pilot under any circumstances. "They said, 'You are not God, you are not going to kill him,'" Manes recalled. "We didn't want to kill him, we just wanted him not to kill us."The Tel Aviv-bound flydubai flight FZ 1073 was prevented from allegedly crashing after Indian captain Smit Machchhar, who had been attacked with a crash axe, managed to open the cockpit door and alert those on board to the danger. Within minutes, several passengers, including two off-roster pilots travelling on the flight, intervened and helped regain control of the aircraft, averting what was described as an alleged crash attempt.The passengers overpowered and restrained the co-pilot, identified as Omani citizen Hamam Al-Hamami, and tied his hands behind his back. They also made it clear that he would remain restrained until he could be handed over to local police.A video shared by i24NEWS, an Israel-based news channel, showed al-Hammami kneeling inside the aircraft with his hands tied behind his back. His clothes appeared to have bloodstains on them. In the 45-second video, passengers can repeatedly be heard saying "just police" and "only police", indicating that they intended to hand the restrained co-pilot over to law enforcement authorities rather than harm him.One passenger, whose face was not visible and who could not be identified, could also be heard saying, "One hour, 40 minutes. More five minutes." The remarks appeared to indicate that the passengers had already kept the co-pilot under control for an extended period and were prepared to hold him for a few more minutes before handing him over to local police.The Israeli passengers also provided al-Hammami with an oxygen mask, saying they wanted him to remain alive so that authorities could investigate the incident and establish what had happened. "We wanted him to live so he could be investigated," Schlichter said.

Climate footprint of space exploration is passing below the radar



As the world becomes more reliant on space technologies for vital functions like climate monitoring, the environmental consequences of space activities also become increasingly urgent and in need of more attention. The rapid growth of the number of satellites in orbit has led to concerns about interference with climate monitoring systems and the accumulation of orbital debris. With no specific international regulations addressing these challenges, it is crucial the world's governments act quickly to ensure space exploration doesn't drift into unsustainability.

How are space activities affecting the environment?

Every rocket launch releases carbon dioxide, black carbon, and water vapour into the atmosphere. Black carbon is of particular concern because it absorbs sunlight 500-times more effectively than carbon dioxide does, amplifying global warming. As commercial space ventures become more common, the cumulative impact of these emissions will worsen.Rocket propellants, especially those using chlorine-based chemicals, deplete the ozone layer at high altitudes, increasing exposure to ultraviolet radiation on the ground as well as disrupting atmospheric circulation — both of which affect the global climate. According to a December 9 article in MIT Tech Review, when satellites "burn up in the atmosphere" once their missions end, they release "satellite ash in the middle layers of the earth's atmosphere. This metallic ash can harm the atmosphere and potentially alter the climate."Next, like many other forms of manufacturing, the production of satellites demands energy-intensive processes involving metals and composite materials, whose extraction and preparation have large carbon footprints of their own. Satellites also use propulsion systems to adjust their location and orientation in orbit, and their emissions add to the overall count. Equally, the rise of space mining — e.g. extracting valuable (on the earth) minerals from asteroids — could lead to increased industrial activity both in space and on the ground. Such mining activities haven't begun yet but they are sure to be part of the future.While space technology supports essential climate monitoring and disaster management, the environmental costs for the earth's atmosphere and space are escalating, requiring urgent redressal.

What are the dangers of orbital debris?

Orbital debris, or space junk, refers to defunct satellites, spent rocket stages, and pieces of satellites produced when they break apart in low earth orbit (LEO). According to the European Space Agency, as of September 2024, there had been around 6,740 rocket launches since 1957 that placed 19,590 satellites in orbit. Around 13,230 are still in space and of them 10,200 are still functional.Since the space in earth's orbit is a resource just like water bodies and land masses on the ground, the occupation of orbits by non-functional objects constitutes a form of pollution as well — with the added threat of risk magnification.For example, space surveillance networks have catalogued around 36,860 space objects thus far, including those produced in the 650+ fragmentation events (break-ups, explosions, and collisions). The total mass of all space objects in orbit exceeds 13,000 tonnes. As this mass continues to increase, the collision risks to satellites increase as well.Most space junk can reach speeds of up to 29 km/hr. When moving so fast, even a minuscule piece of metal can smash through a satellite like a bullet, damaging critical components, including those used for communication, navigation, and to monitor climate parameters of merit.Orbital debris also poses an indirect threat by interfering with scientists' ability to collect data about the earth — from tracking disasters to monitoring weather — from space, such as by interfering with radio waves. Such threats also obligate satellite operators to invest in shielding satellites and actively perform costly manoeuvres to avoid collisions; both requirements drive up mission cost.The risks are even more significant for human-crewed missions. For example, the International Space Station frequently adjusts its orbit to avoid debris.

What are the barriers to space-sector sustainability?

Regulation is key to ensuring space remains accessible and space activities remain environmentally sustainable. Without clear guidelines, the unchecked growth of emissions and debris will harm the earth's climate and increase the barriers to future space exploration.Space activities currently fall outside international sustainability instruments like the Paris Agreement, so governments need to establish standards for emissions from rockets and satellites to prevent them from becoming overlooked contributors to global warming.Without regulations, the increasing number of satellites and debris will overcrowd LEO, rendering future missions more expensive, which in turn would subtract from space's identity as a shared global resource that needs to be equally accessible to everyone. International cooperation through bodies like the Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (COPUOS) is necessary to create enforceable standards in this context.Governments can also ensure such frameworks align with the Outer Space Treaty's principles of responsible use of space while addressing the Treaty's current lack of binding provisions. This unity is particularly crucial if countries are to address the environmental impacts of space activities.

How can space exploration be more sustainable?

Achieving sustainability in space exploration requires innovative solutions but which also present challenges of their own. For example, reusable rockets like those developed by SpaceX and Blue Origin reduce manufacturing waste and lower costs by allowing engineers to reuse rocket components in multiple missions. But the reusable parts are often heavier, which increases fuel consumption. These rocks also have limited applicability for high-orbit missions and their wear-and-tear invokes costly refurbishments. Thus scaling this technology while maintaining efficiency remains a hurdle.Second, transitioning to cleaner fuels like liquid hydrogen and/or biofuels can minimise harmful emissions during liftoffs. However, hydrogen is currently produced with non-renewable energy, negating its environmental benefits. Cryogenic fuels — which provide more thrust for the same mass — are more expensive and more complex to handle, keeping them out of reach of smaller operators.Electric propulsion is another option, but its low thrust restricts its use to specific missions like in-orbit manoeuvres.Third, designing satellites with biodegradable materials that naturally disintegrate during re-entry can prevent long-term debris accumulation. On the flip side, these materials currently lack the durability required for the extreme conditions of space. High development costs and limited adoption further slow progress. Autonomous debris removal (ADR) technologies such as robotic arms and laser systems also offer hope for cleaning up orbital debris, but again, they are currently expensive as well as need more legal clarity before they can begin to operate safely.A global traffic system to monitor satellites and debris in real time could reduce collisions and optimise orbit use. Resistance to data-sharing, including due to security and commercial concerns, and the lack of a unified international authority hinders its development, however.None of these hurdles are permanent of course. Moreover, whereas individual solutions face significant challenges, a combined approach may be more feasible.For example, binding agreements through COPUOS can standardise emission limits, debris mitigation, and data-sharing practices;

Way in the world: how Muslim women travelled from 17th-20th centuries

I began reading Three Centuries of Travel Writing by Muslim Women (Zubaan Books) chronologically, hoping rather ambitiously to read it from cover to cover, one essay at a time. That was a mistake, I think. The book is better served, and savoured, if the reader were to dip into it in no particular order. Each essay is so precisely contextualised by the immaculate 'Introduction' prefacing each entry and followed by 'Further Reading and 'Notes' that even a casual reader can dip into this richly documented, beautifully translated volume of disparate writings and partake of the spirit behind it.For the more serious reader/researcher, there is of course the scholarly introduction by Siobhan Lambert-Hurley and Daniel Majchrowicz who edited the book (along with Sunil Sharma). They write: "On the face of it, the premise of this volume is simple: a comparative study of travel narratives by Muslim women who travelled the world before the 'jet age' transformed modern mobility. Yet in our contemporary moment, the very juxtaposition of these terms — Muslim, women, travel mobility — instantly raises a number of questions."

Colonialism, gender, travel, religion, money come together in unexpected ways throughout this book. What is more, these accounts by educated and "privileged" Muslim women also contain descriptions — sometimes empathetic, occasionally derisive — of other Muslim women they meet during their travels who are poor and disadvantaged and, being illiterate, could not have recorded their experiences or left written records of their lives. So, apart from records of the new and the unexpected, there are also observations about the different practices of child-rearing, food, cooking habits, dress, religious and social practices.

Multiple voicesThese first-hand accounts, originally written in Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Chaghtaai Turki, Punjabi, Bengali, Indonesian, German and English, span the 17th to 20th centuries thus presenting an array of experiences and impressions. Written variously as conventional travelogues (Halide Edib, Zainab Cobbold), excerpts from autobiographies (Salamah Bint Said/Emily Ruete, Huda Shaarawi), diary entries (Muhammadi Begum, Begum Hasrat Mohani), written for limited circulation as magazine articles (Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Shams Pahlavi), recorded for family and friends (Begum Sarbuland Jung, Ummat al-Ghani Nur al-Nisa), or with a pronounced political overtone (Suharti Suwarto, Melek Hanim) quite naturally, therefore, present different voices and concerns. Chatty, informal, informed when the writing is for herself or her family members; or formal, structured, detailed, sometimes even didactic when she knows what she is writing is meant for public consumption.Travel as lifeThere are 45 accounts in all, grouped under four headings: Travel as Pilgrimage, Travel as Emancipation and Politics, Travel as Education, and Travel as Obligation and Pleasure. While large numbers of Indian women have written haj accounts, there is only one Indian in the second section, Shareefah Hamid Ali, who represented India at the United Nations and travelled by air. Several Indian Muslim women chose to travel for education, sometimes their own, or their husband's or sons'. There is Mehr-al-Nisa from Hyderabad who joined her doctor husband in Ohio to train as an x-ray nurse, and Zaib-un-Nisa from Karachi writing an account of her 60 days in America as a member of the U.S. Department of State-sponsored Foreign Leader Exchange Programme where she crosses the breadth of the United States in a hired car with her husband.Safia Jabir Ali, daughter of the esteemed Tyabji clan, married Jabir Ali who travelled extensively for business from their home in Burma to Europe.Her memoir, written in Urdu, is brimful with an easy confidence: "I had to travel by myself from Bombay to Marseilles, and that was the first time I had occasion to depend entirely on myself and spend more than three weeks among entire strangers. However, as probably some of you know by experience, on board the steamer, one gets to know people very soon.

I was lucky in being able to travel on the Loyalty, the steamer of an Indian company where there were a good many Indian passengers, and some of us soon became great friends."Connecting the dotsThe last part, 'Travel as Obligation and Pleasure', has by far the most interesting experiences: Mughal Princess Jahanara's mystical meeting in Kashmir; Salamah Bint Said, a princess of Zanzibar, who flees her home to unite with her German lover in Hamburg, converts to Christianity and takes the name Emily Ruete; and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's pleasure trip to the Himalayas, among others.While most women travelled with a male (husband, father, son, brother), some travelled alone: "

Safia Jabir Ali travelled alone from Bombay to meet her husband in post-First World War Britain, Sediqeh Dowlatabadi from Tehran in 1923 to study

UGC rules on UG, PG: A case for 'liberating' autonomous colleges from universities



Recently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) published the Draft (Minimum Standards of Instruction for the Grant of Undergraduate Degree and Postgraduate Degree) Regulations, 2024. The draft is open for feedback from stakeholders. The draft democratizes higher education in terms of its flexibility, mobility, assessment patterns, curriculum design, and vocationalization. Therefore, it is imperative to redefine our education policy in tune with the skill gap and economy's demand so that the workforce can be transformed.Educational policies are periodically revised to suit changing demography, socio-cultural context and socio-economic developments. The deficit in skilled workforce having socio-economic implications and the emergence of knowledge-based economy demands the redefining of the curriculum and the pedagogy. For instance, in recent times, we have been hearing about the decline in enrolment in conventional degree programmes in liberal arts and science colleges and the closure of degree programmes that do not run successfully in reputed universities in India and abroad indicating the need for reimagining the tertiary education landscape.

According to a Dell Technologies report, 85% of the jobs in 2030 that Generation Z and Alpha would embrace have not been invented yet. In addition, as per the world Economic Forum report, 65% of primary-school children today will be working in job types that do not exist yet. Having set the context for the need for education policy, it is our duty to critically analyse the pros and cons of the UGC draft for the minimum standards to be complied with from a neutral perspective.

Academic flexibilityThe UGC draft states that academic institutions should value learning through Hybrid flexible (HyFlex) modes in 60:40 ratio. However, it is depressing to note that despite the UGC promoting online distant learning in recent years, many universities have not bothered to empanel themselves on the concerned portal that would facilitate affiliated colleges offering Online Distance Learning (ODL). While many south Indian universities are moving towards bankruptcy, they don't quite realize that ODL is a potential revenue stream to become sustainable.Autonomous colleges in the top 100 NIRF rankings have the privilege of availing the ODL courses benchmarked with the standards of MOOC. However, lack of awareness among State universities and their stiff-necked attitude towards affiliated colleges has not let the autonomous colleges to register in the UGC portal. Only if UGC takes stock of the compliance of the universities and be a party to all the litigation in the court on compliance issues filed by the constituent colleges, academic flexibility as a scheme would be realized.While the positive impact of ODL needs to be appreciated, having learnt from the pandemic, we need also to recognize that social learning is acquired or imbibed through campus experiences from co-curricular and extra-curricular activities as well. This happens through immersive engagement through various clubs and societies as part of the curriculum. The idea of "whole person education" cannot be realized through ODL alone. Hybrid, flexible learning is the way to go.Tamil Nadu has the lion's share of around 232 autonomous colleges among 995 such colleges in India. However, for 45 years autonomous colleges have not been liberated from the clutches of the universities to experiment academic flexibility in spirit and word.

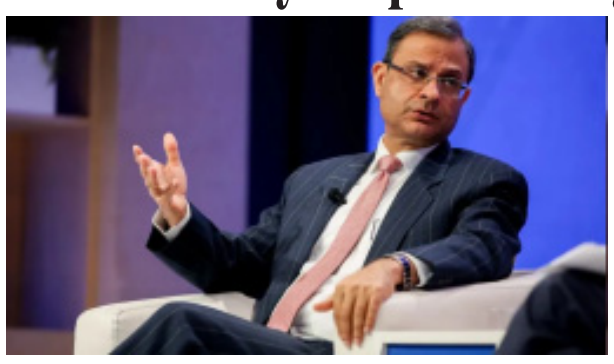
Multiple entry and exitHEIs shall provide multiple entry and exit options in academic programmes, as per the new draft rules. Multiple entry and exit would enhance student mobility and academic flexibility.Millennials seek value for money and go for professional certifications in addition to the degree programme. They seek return on investment on the tuition fee for UG and PG programmes.Keeping these perspectives in mind, the degree programme has been divided into certificate, diploma, degree and honours as four levels, rendering flexibility to the stakeholders. This scheme facilitates the students to exit after certificate or diploma levels and get into the world of work for internship or job and get back to complete the rest of the credits promoting lifelong learning. It is to be noted that only if the students pursue the vocation related to their domain, multiple entry and exit would have continuity.Although students would welcome it, financial sustainability is a concern if enrolment varies. If the number of entries and exits balance, then the programme can be sustainable.

Academic mobilityAcademic mobility is not only envisaged between arts to sciences and vice versa but also between mainstream to vocational stream in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies and silos. Value-added courses integrate vocational education with mainstream education. Edutech firms have started developing modules by roping in industrial cohorts as ecosystem partners to design modules by suitably converting their practices into graded modules. Such courses are to be benchmarked with vocational standards for a seamless transition to the world of work. Further, the four-year course will enhance the global mobility of students.The UGC has been driving at enrolling in the Academic Bank of Credits as a mandatory assignment for autonomous colleges. Unfortunately, autonomous colleges are caught in the grip of universities that offer the degree certificates. The UGC needs to intervene and liberate the autonomous colleges.Minimum attendance requirement and outcome-based attendanceGuideline 7.0 discusses reforms in minimum attendance requirements. The concept of attendance needs to be redefined owing to the promotion of diverse learning modes (HyFlex) and as an attempt to dignify varied learning styles (cognitive, affective, kinesthetic and auditory).The redefinition may take into account learning outcomes rather than just the physical presence of students in the class. Since the knowledge is accessible, learning is progressively reckoned as facilitated constructivism where students construct the knowledge on their own rather than based on teachers' instructions.Moreover, students are progressively inclined towards active learning that includes internships and projects than being confined to classrooms. Hence attendance cannot be defined exclusively on the number of instructional lectures attended by the students. Consequently, a process needs to be designed, wherein 450 hours per semester are distributed into several learning outcomes, and the marking of attendance for the absentees is made through the assessment for learning outcomes as per Bloom's taxonomy levels of K5 and K 6 and a passing minimum of 40% is benchmarked. This proposal would appeal to students who learn by modes other than reading, writing, and speaking (cognitive mode) and dignify the auditory, kinesthetic and social learners who would have to learn outside the classrooms occasionally.

Beyond boundaries of domainsThe UGC draft guidelines have ventured into achieving this goal in principle by democratizing admission norms by liberating it from domains. A major shortcoming in our system is the rigid segregation between the sciences and humanities/arts unlike the U.S. where students are encouraged to secure credits across streams.Unlike conventional universities, new-age private universities now offer courses that hybridize the sciences and the arts but this trend should spread to the older, established universities and colleges too. The future of higher education lies in intermarrying between disciplines and spanning across the boundaries of domains in solving problems.The need of the hour is solving problems from a transdisciplinary perspective where the boundaries between the domains cease to exist. Institutes of excellence such as the IITs, IISERs and IISc have already begun experimenting it. Unless there is a need and reward-based interventions by the UGC, the teaching fraternity would find it difficult to move from status quo.The ability to span across boundaries is a trait of researchers and teachers that is needed to bring the faculty from various specializations to join together to explore a given problem from multiple perspectives. Textbooks need to be rewritten from transdisciplinary perspectives right from schools to promote cross-disciplinary admissions as intended by the UGC.Common entrance tests as non-equitable assessmentsEligibility criteria for admission (Undergraduate / Postgraduate) states that admission in any discipline of the UG programme is possible (120 credits) if the student qualifies the national level or university level entrance examination in the discipline of the UG programme. Further, it states that a student is eligible for admission in any discipline of PG programmes if the student qualifies for the national level or university level entrance examination in the discipline of the PG programme.Although it is indispensable to have such screening examinations to normalize the knowledge acquired by the students, these examinations will not help scout real innovators and creators who can help build a skilled workforce. Such entrance tests do not test the ability of students to ideate, rather they test the ability to answer conditioned and stereotypical questions that can be learnt through a strategic pedagogy offered by tutorial colleges and structured thinking.Consequently, students who learn through learning styles other than cognitive means (read, write and speak) cannot succeed in such entrance tests and would miss the opportunity to progress towards higher education. While entrance tests could be one of the windows to assess the knowledge level of students, if alternative windows that evaluate their real competency, skill sets and ideation ability, are made available to admit lateral thinkers, the country would produce innovators and creators.

In my inquiry into these aspects, I have come to learn and experience that often those who clear the UGC NET, GATE, CSIR or JAM examinations by conscious monkey training from childhood are at times not critical in their thinking. On the other hand, many students with adequate research aptitude, demonstrated lab skills and process intelligence to execute projects are not inclined towards or are incapable of clearing the competitive exams.Each year, colleges witness the exodus of such potential candidates to careers other than domain or research for want of financial assistance. There should be provisions to allow such potential candidates to pursue research as their career. The government should be able to offer patronage to them for junior research fellowships so they can register for PhD after MSc or M.A. It would be ideal if a support system or another window is created for such students to pursue and publish in Indian peer-reviewed journals through a fast-track mode.Unfortunately, the present educational system provides opportunities for post graduate students of science to pursue research internships in institutes of excellence only based on academic excellence rated exclusively through marks obtained. This denies opportunities for low-scoring but highly skilled graduates from certain universities, allowing some geographic domains to reap almost all the benefits. Students selected through marks and references obtained from professors, if subjected to an intensive pre-internship process, can be an alternative mode of selection for paid research internships.Many of our students who are incapable of clearing GATE or CSIR exams get admissions in universities abroad because they can demonstrate their proven research skills and publications in journals. They can put together convincing applications based on their statements of purpose. The same students return after graduation to serve as faculty in the institutes of excellence that denied them opportunities to study. Our system has failed to spot such talented students.The UGC encourages innovation and out-of-the-box ideas through autonomy, good governance, and empowerment as per the draft guidelines. Common entrance tests may not foster such out-of-the-box thinking. While critiquing the idea of conducting entrance tests, it is imperative to find an intervention that would mitigate the limitations. Although the idea of boundary-crossing flexibility from sciences to arts and vice versa in principle is an intelligent move, the execution of the idea should be strategized through project-based pathway courses as part of the credit framework (foundational or bridge course). This should be a criterion while students seek cross-disciplinary admissions.Bottom-up consultationsThis article has critiqued the UGC draft guidelines and suggested interventions. An effort has been made to perceive the implementation of the policy in the context of colleges.

Data more valuable than capital, treat it as 'fiduciary responsibility': RBI chief to fintechs



Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Thursday urged the fintech ecosystem to treat data as a "fiduciary responsibility" to build trust instead of considering it just as a business asset. He also cautioned fintech companies against building businesses by exploiting regulatory gaps, saying that the strategy of "scaling first and seeking clarity or forgiveness later" was not right."I would urge all of you (fintechs) to treat data as a fiduciary responsibility, not as a business asset. Every fintech in this room holds something whichis much more valuable than capital, and that is the data, financial as well as non-financial, of very real people like you and me," Malhotra said while addressing representatives from the fintech sector at the Global Fintech Fest in Mumbai."This data must be treated the way a trustee treats assets held for a beneficiary, collected with a clear purpose and used strictly within the consent provided and protected as though it was one's own," Malhotra said while addressing representatives from the fintech sector at the Global Fintech Fest in Mumbai.

Malhotra further said that using data as a mere monetisable asset first, instead of treating it as a responsibility, erodes the trust of consumers, which is then difficult to earn back.His caution for the fintech industry comes at a time when many fintech players are reportedly relying heavily on data to push new products to customers.On a similar note, Malhotra also urged fintech players to stop building businesses whose scale is dependent on exploiting the gaps that remain in the regulatory system."The account aggregator framework was built precisely to formalise this principle — consent-based, purpose-limited data sharing, so that no single entity, including the aggregator itself, can see or exploit the underlying data," he said.While fintechs are outside the central bank's regulatory purview so that regulations do not become a burden on early-stage innovation, Malhotra also urged such fintech players to be responsible in their operations."As a firm's payment volumes, lending book, or user base grows to a point where its disruption could meaningfully affect the financial system, that firm acquires a responsibility that goes beyond its balance sheet or its shareholders. I would describe this as the obligation to be not just 'too big to fail' but 'too significant to be careless'," said Malhotra.

She leaked urine whenever she exercised: How a 43-year-old discovered a hidden problem



For nearly two years, Priya Bhuvad, 43, a corporate professional, quietly adjusted her life around a problem she found embarrassing: urine leakage whenever she jumped, exercised, danced or did other high-impact activities.There were other signs, too. She often felt that her bladder was not completely emptying. She noticed her vaginal laxity and reduced sensation during intercourse, but, like many women, did not initially connect these symptoms to a pelvic floor problem. The pelvic floor is a group of muscles and supportive tissues at the bottom of the pelvis that hold the bladder, uterus, vagina and bowel in place and help control urination and bowel movements. Pregnancy, obesity and menopause may weaken them and you need exercises to strengthen them.

Fit and busy with work, Bhuvad had not prioritised pelvic floor exercises, core strengthening or rehabilitation after childbirth. She had had two normal vaginal deliveries, the last six years earlier. An examination eventually showed that her urinary bladder was bulging into the vagina, the rectal wall was protruding into the vaginal space and there was first-degree uterine prolapse, a condition in which the uterus slips downward from its normal position into the vagina.She underwent surgery to repair the front and back walls of the vagina and strengthen the tissue between the vagina and anus. Surgery for the uterus was not required because the descent was minimal. Six months later, her urinary incontinence and other pelvic floor symptoms had improved substantially. "Many women believe that urine leakage or a feeling of heaviness after childbirth is a normal part of becoming a mother, so they continue to live with these symptoms for years without seeking medical help or doing muscle-strengthening exercises," says Dr Surabhi Siddhartha, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, Motherhood Hospital, Kharghar, Navi Mumbai.

More than a childbirth problemAt her hospital, Dr Siddhartha sees women in their 40s frequently present years after vaginal delivery with pelvic floor problems that may have gone unaddressed since childbirth. "Pregnancy and delivery put considerable stress on the pelvic floor muscles; without rehabilitation, weakness may become more apparent with ageing and the hormonal changes of menopause," she adds.The scale of urinary incontinence is reflected in Indian studies. A 2023 study of 118 women aged 20 to 70 reported urinary incontinence in 27.1% of participants, with stress urinary incontinence — leakage triggered by activities that increase abdominal pressure — the most common subtype. A separate 2025 study of 500 women aged 40 and above reported urinary incontinence in 37% of participants, with stress incontinence accounting for more than half of the cases.For women, this can mean leakage while coughing, sneezing, laughing, exercising, jumping or dancing.But leakage is only one warning sign. Pelvic floor dysfunction can also cause heaviness or pressure, a vaginal bulge, difficulty emptying the bladder or bowel, urinary urgency, painful intercourse and persistent pelvic or lower-back pain.It can affect younger women, too

Pregnancy is an important risk factor, but it is not a prerequisite. Dr Anjali Talwalkar, consulting gynaecologist associated with Cama & Albless Hospital, Mumbai, recalls the case of Kiran Kadam, 25, an unmarried woman who developed persistent pelvic pain after treatment for tuberculosis. She had subsequently developed a chronic, irritating cough and an allergic variant of the cough.Investigations eventually pointed to pelvic floor weakness, for which she was advised intensive pelvic floor rehabilitation. Recovery took time: regular exercises, physiotherapy and home practice were needed over several months.Dr Talwalkar attributes the weakness primarily to the repeated increase in intra-abdominal pressure caused by prolonged coughing. Weight loss during her illness had also contributed to physical deconditioning. "Somebody who is having a lot of intra-abdominal pressure symptoms, like chronic cough or chronic constipation, and they are pushing all the time — then the pelvic muscles say, give up," she explains.

Other contributors can include obesity, repeated heavy lifting, chronic constipation, hormonal changes and physical deconditioning. In other words, pelvic-floor weakness is not synonymous with childbirth.Why women often miss the signsAwareness remains a major problem, particularly among younger women who may not expect pelvic floor symptoms. There is also a gap between knowing about pelvic floor exercises and actually doing them. A Motherhood Hospital report says more than 90% of women are aware of pelvic floor exercises, but only a minority practise them regularly. The postpartum period can be a missed opportunity: routine follow-up often focusses on feeding, contraception and recovery, while pelvic floor assessment receives less attention.

Kegels are not a diagnosisPelvic floor exercises, including Kegels, can help, but simply being told to "do Kegels" is not always enough.The first step is determining what is actually causing the symptoms. Pelvic floor assessment may include evaluation of muscle strength and coordination, followed by physiotherapy, biofeedback (sensors measure muscle activity and give the patient visual or audio feedback, so they can see whether they are using the right muscles and improve their technique with practice) or, in selected cases, electrical stimulation.Technique matters, too. Some women inadvertently tighten their abdominal muscles instead of the pelvic floor. Others may focus only on strengthening when the problem involves poor coordination or an inability to relax the muscles properly.

The postpartum gapFor women whose symptoms begin after childbirth, early rehabilitation can make a difference. Yet many either never start pelvic floor exercises or stop within weeks because they have no obvious symptoms or are unsure whether they are doing them correctly. "Pelvic floor disorders should never be accepted as an unavoidable consequence of ageing or childbirth," says Dr Siddhartha

Bankruptcy law misuse: Why IBBI is on alert after NCLT order in Subhash Chandra case

IBBI has asked insolvency professionals to flag possible misuse of the bankruptcy process, including suspicious related-party transactions and very low creditor recoveries.IBBI has asked insolvency professionals to flag possible misuse of the bankruptcy process, including suspicious related-party transactions and very low creditor recoveries.The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) on Wednesday issued a circular asking insolvency professionals to stay vigilant to signs that the bankruptcy law is being misused for purposes other than resolution or liquidation of the companies under financial stress.

The IBBI said that it has received information from law enforcement and regulatory agencies that the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 is also being used to dodge taxes, escape investigations, closure or merger of companies without regulatory scrutiny, or monetising and ring-fencing assets.The board listed six indicators to be alert for: very low recoveries for creditors without proper valuation, a single non-bank creditor dominating the committee of creditors (CoC), a cluster of related companies with common promoters, addresses, directors, or interlending taken into bankruptcy process; a common resolution applicant recurring across connected corporate debtors, linkage of corporate debtor or its group to fraud probes by another regulator, and suspicious loans between group companies.

The circular has come on the heels of a National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) order on August 25 involving Essel Group founder Subhash Chandra, which approved a repayment plan providing for just Rs 6.25 crore to the creditors against their admitted claims of Rs 22,006.57 crore. Later, a five-member special bench of NCLT stayed the August 25 order, which was passed by a single-member bench of the tribunal.In this case, the five entities — Veena Investments, Direct Media Distribution Ventures, World Crest Advisors, Lemonade Capital Advisors, and Corpcall Capital Advisors — collectively held nearly 62% of the total voting share and pushed the repayment plan, while banks like LIC Housing, HDFC, RBL, Axis, and Canara Bank voted against it. The public banks alleged that the non-bank entities were associates or related parties of debtors and acted under Chandra's influence.

However, the IBBI also said that some of these indicators may arise in cases involving genuine financial distress. "They are intended to flag circumstances that warrant closer examination, and no indicator, by itself, should be treated as conclusive of misuse of the insolvency process," said the bankruptcy law regulator."This is a timely order by IBBI when many bankruptcy cases are resulting in very lower recovery in NCLT. It casts an obligation on resolution professionals to look at the lapses during the process itself and inform the tribunal in advance. This will create checks and balances. Not only the corporate debtor, but the resolution professionals will also be under scrutiny," said Prateek Kumar, partner at Khaitan & Co.



The board further said that if the insolvency professional (IP), who conducts the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP), forms a view that the process may be serving a fraudulent or malicious purpose other than the resolution of insolvency or liquidation of the corporate debtor, then the person shall file an application before the NCLT with fact for the appropriate direction under the code."The application should identify the indicators noticed, the material relied upon by the IP, and the reasons for forming such a view," said the IBBI.The IBC created a time-bound mechanism to deal with companies that fail to repay their loans — by either reviving such firms through a resolution process or liquidating them if resolution is not possible. If a company fails to pay its debt, its creditor then can approach the NCLT to initiate the "insolvency process" under the lawHowever, the August 25 order of NCLT yet again raised the question of "haircuts", a highly debated issue under the IBC framework.

According to data available with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, between the financial years FY22 and FY26, a total of 1,077 cases were resolved under the IBC, with creditors recovering Rs 2.47 lakh crore. The average recovery was close to 29%. In FY26, the recovery against the admitted claims was 20%, the lowest in last five years.This means that a bank may have claims running into thousands of crores rupees,

Up your fibre: Should you have soluble or insoluble?



When we hear the word "fibre", most of us immediately think of digestion, constipation and keeping our bowel movements regular. But fibre does far more than keep the digestive system moving. It plays an important role in gut health, blood sugar control, cholesterol management, weight management and the health of the trillions of bacteria that live in our gut.So, when it comes to fibre, is one type better than the other? The answer is no. Our bodies benefit from both soluble and insoluble fibre, and the best approach is to get a variety of fibre from a wide range of plant foods.Two types of fibreSoluble fibre absorbs water and forms a gel-like substance in the digestive tract. This slows down digestion and the absorption of carbohydrates, which can help prevent sharp rises in blood sugar after meals. It can also support healthy cholesterol levels. Good sources of soluble fibre include oats, barley, beans, lentils, apples, citrus fruits, carrots, nuts and seeds.Insoluble fibre, meanwhile, does a different job. It adds bulk to stool and helps food move through the digestive system. This makes it particularly useful for bowel regularity and preventing constipation. Whole grains, vegetables, nuts, seeds and the skins of many fruits and vegetables are good sources.The important point, however, is that we do not need to sit down and calculate how much soluble versus insoluble fibre we are eating. Most plant foods contain a combination of different types of fibre. A diet that regularly includes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, pulses, beans, nuts and seeds will naturally provide a mixture of both.

The danger of going from zero to "high fibre"One of the biggest mistakes people make is increasing fibre too quickly. Someone who has been eating very little fibre may suddenly start consuming large salads, several servings of fruit, chia seeds and fibre supplements in an attempt to improve their health. Instead, they may find themselves dealing with bloating, gas and abdominal discomfort.The body needs time to adjust to an increase in fibre, so it is better to increase intake gradually. Adequate water is equally important. Since fibre absorbs water, significantly increasing fibre without drinking enough fluids can sometimes make constipation worse rather than better.There is another trap: assuming that a packaged food is automatically healthy simply because its label says "high-fibre". Fibre-fortified cereals, biscuits and other processed foods can still contain considerable amounts of sugar, salt or refined ingredients. Whenever possible, fibre should come from whole or minimally processed foods.And increasing fibre does not have to mean making dramatic changes. Simple choices can make a meaningful difference: eat a whole fruit instead of drinking fruit juice, choose whole grains more often, add dal or beans to meals, include vegetables at lunch and dinner and have nuts or seeds in appropriate portions.

More fibre is not always betterIt is also important not to look at fibre in isolation. Someone may consume plenty of fibre but still have a diet high in ultra-processed foods, added sugar, unhealthy fats or excessive calories. Fibre is one component of a healthy dietary pattern; it cannot compensate for an otherwise poor diet.For most adults, roughly 25–30 grams of fibre a day is a reasonable general target, although individual requirements can vary. What matters more than obsessively counting grams is making fibre a regular part of everyday meals.More is not necessarily better. Very large amounts of fibre, particularly when introduced suddenly, can cause significant bloating, gas and digestive discomfort. The goal should be an adequate and varied intake rather than an unnecessarily high one.People with certain digestive problems may also need to modify the amount or type of fibre they consume, particularly when symptoms are active. Anyone experiencing persistent bloating, abdominal pain, unexplained changes in bowel habits or other digestive symptoms should not simply keep increasing fibre without understanding the underlying cause.Small, consistent dietary changes are far more sustainable—and usually more beneficial—than suddenly making extreme changes in an attempt to eat more fibre.

Telangana district tops India, women make up 78% of informal workers

Telangana's Nirmal district has the highest share of women among informal workers in India at 78%, while Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag is at the bottom with 6.7%.Telangana's Nirmal district has the highest share of women among informal workers in India at 78%, while Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag is at the bottom with 6.7%.Nirmal district, in northern Telangana, tops a new ranking: 78% of all its informal workers are women, the highest of any district in the country. Nanded, immediately across the state border in Maharashtra, is ranked 288th in the country, with women making up only 31% of its informal workers.According to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Thursday and analysed by The Indian Express, the 10 districts with the highest share of women in informal workers are all from south India or the north-east. Meanwhile, at the bottom of the list is Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag, where only 6.7% of informal workers are women.High participation of women in the workforce is a very state-specific feature, with women making up at least half the informal workforce in only 25 districts – 22 of them are in south or north-east India, with the remaining three in the east: Chandel and Pakur in Jharkhand and Deogarh in Odisha.The all-India average is 29%.As per the data, the top-10 districts are either in Telangana, Manipur, Meghalaya, or Mizoram, "reflecting the significant role played by women in the unincorporated sector in these states", MoSPI said in its report.Overall, women make up at least 33% of the total informal workforce in 237 districts.Pay divideWhile districts from the south and north-east see major participation from women, they pay very little. For instance, the best-paying district in the top-25 with women making up at least 50% of the informal workforce is Meghalaya's South West Khasi Hills, where the per hired worker emolument is Rs 1.7 lakh, only 35% or so higher than the all-India average of around Rs 1.3 lakh.Meanwhile, workers in Dehradun get paid the most, with emoluments per hired worker at Rs 4.6 lakh. Only 19% of workers in the district of Dehradun are women.The new report provides data for 757 districts. "However, the geographical coverage of some districts and number of districts may differ from the current administrative configuration due to subsequent changes in district boundaries, names and/or the creation of new districts," it added.Based on the data collected from the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) of 2025, this is the first time that MoSPI has released district-level estimates from a large-scale national survey. The enterprises covered are from the unincorporated non-agricultural sector, which broadly comprises establishments operating in manufacturing, trade, and other services in the informal sector.Concentration of activityUnsurprisingly, districts with greatest women participation are those with the highest percentage of female owned proprietary establishments. Nirmal tops this list again, with almost 80% of its proprietary establishments owned by women.However, in terms of the number of workers or establishments, the distribution of the top-10 districts is more pan-India. West Bengal's North 24 Parganas has the greatest number of informal workers with 21.3 lakh as well as establishments (16.6 lakh).In a sign of how concentrated even informal economic activity is in India, the top-10 districts in terms of the number of establishments are responsible for around 11% of the total Gross Value Added. The top-50 districts account for almost a third of the GVA.Source of dataAccording to Geeta Singh Rathore, Director General of MoSPI's National Sample Survey, the unincorporated non-agricultural sector contributes "significantly" to employment, livelihoods, and economic activity."Given the diversity of economic activities and local conditions across the country, there is an increasing need for statistics that provide a more granular understanding of the sector for evidence-based policymaking," Rathore said in the report.The main ASUSE 2025 report was released earlier this year in May after a 'fact sheet' was made public in March. As per the survey, the total number of unincorporated establishments rose by 58.5 lakh in 2025 to 7.92 crore. This was a smaller increase than the 83.5 lakh in the 12 months ended September 2024. As a result, fewer jobs were also created: 74.5 lakh in 2025 compared to 1.1 crore in October 2023-September 2024.

Sheraton Hyderabad Adds 42 New Apartments, Takes Total Inventory To 326

Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel has added 42 new apartments to its long-stay accommodation portfolio, taking its total inventory to 326 units, comprising 98 apartments and 228 rooms.Geographic ReferenceThe expansion comes as Hyderabad continues to see strong commercial activity, with growing demand for accommodation from business travellers and professionals staying in the city for longer periods.The new apartments are available in three categories — Studio Rooms measuring 35 sq. m., One-Bedroom Apartments spanning 61 sq. m. and Two-Bedroom Apartments covering 88 sq. m. The units offer garden, city and Outer Ring Road views.Designed for extended stays, the apartments are equipped with practical amenities including washing machines, dishwashers and potable water supply. The offering is aimed at corporate travellers, professionals relocating to Hyderabad, project teams and families looking for longer-term accommodation.The addition of the 42 apartments expands the hotel's presence in Hyderabad's extended-stay segment, alongside its existing rooms and serviced apartment inventory.

When Northeast women become "Others" in Andhra Pradesh



Last week's violence involving students from Northeast India and local students at RK Nursing College in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, raises questions that go far beyond a single altercation. At its heart lies a larger concern about the safety, dignity and social inclusion of young Northeast women who travel thousands of kilometres from their homes in pursuit of education and professional mobility.

The incident, which unfolded on 21–22 August, reportedly began with the theft of a mobile phone belonging to a Rongmei Naga nursing student. She had left it for charging in the hostel while taking a shower and was preparing to travel home the next day. The phone was later recovered without its SIM card and charger. The alleged offender was said to be a local student.Missing Belongings

The episode, however, did not emerge in isolation. Thirty-one students from Manipur, Nagaland and Assam, including Rongmei, Zeme, and Maring Nagas and Meitei students, expressed frustration over repeated instances of missing belongings. Some students claimed that, during earlier journeys home for holidays, items from their luggage had gone missing and were subsequently found among the belongings of other students. Yet, according to them, these grievances were not subjected to a transparent institutional inquiry.When the students requested their teacher to file an FIR over the 21st August case, their request was declined. Tensions escalated into an argument. Subsequently, some local students allegedly contacted their parents, following which a group gathered outside the college with sticks and stones. Police personnel, including women constables, arrived to control the situation. Six Northeast girls were injured during the confrontation.

The Northeast students alleged that they were pressured to pack their belongings and leave the college, prevented from recording the events, and attempt to physically separate them by the police. The police reportedly maintained that they needed to appear strict towards the Northeast students to calm the local people. The Northeast women reported that they were denied breakfast and lunch on 22 August and were left deeply traumatised.The immediate question is what institutional failures allowed unresolved grievances to accumulate to the point of confrontation?If belongings were repeatedly reported missing, were proper inquiries conducted? Was CCTV footage examined? Was there a functional grievance-redressal mechanism through which students could safely register complaints?For many students from Northeast India, migration to other parts of the country involves a social transformation. At home, an individual may identify as Meitei, Naga, Mizo, Khasi, Garo, Assamese or through another distinct ethnic or tribal identity. Outside the region, however, these complex identities are often collapsed into a single, homogenising category—the "Northeasterner".

Physical appearance, language, food habits and cultural practices can make regional identities unusually visible. This is where the idea of racialised "othering" becomes important. Racialised exclusion does not always take the form of explicit abuse or acts of violence. It operates through everyday stereotyping, ridicule, suspicion, exclusion or differential treatment. This does not mean, however, that every disagreement involving a student from Northeast India should automatically be described as racism. Such conclusions must be based on evidence.

Students from Northeast India are increasingly moving across the country for education and employment. Yet mobility does not automatically produce inclusion. For them, a hostel is not merely a place of accommodation. It is her temporary home. The college, therefore, becomes not only a site of learning but also an important structure of care, authority and protection.The young women involved in the Kakinada episode are not merely students. They are also migrants, women and members of ethnic communities whose identities become particularly visible outside their home region. These social locations intersect to create specific forms of vulnerability.

A student who is far from home may worry not only about theft or physical violence, but also about retaliation, academic consequences, loss of accommodation and the absence of local support networks.A local student may have access to family, friends, language and social networks that a migrant student does not possess. Recognising such differences is not a demand for "special treatment". It is a recognition that formal equality does not always produce substantive equality. Treating unequal circumstances as though they were identical can itself reproduce inequality.

The response to conflict cannot simply be to ask migrant students to "adjust", remain silent or leave. At the same time, local students should not be collectively blamed merely because of their regional identity. Collective blame would reproduce the same logic of "othering" that we seek to challenge.One of the dangers in situations such as this is the rapid transformation of an individual dispute into a conflict between "locals" and "outsiders". Once this happens, individual responsibility can disappear into collective identity. An incident of this nature can become a regional conflict. This is why educational institutions must intervene early, fairly and decisively.

In this case, North East Connect Association (NECA) Hyderabad intervened to support the Northeast students, who lacked immediate local support.The reported assurance by the Superintendent of Police that no student would be forced out of the hostel, along with the warning that action could be taken against the institution if the matter was not properly addressed, is therefore significant. The temporary relocation of the students and efforts to resolve the situation may provide immediate relief, but the larger question remains how the institution can ensure that such insecurity does not recur.

Education must also provide protectionThe Kakinada episode should prompt a broader examination of private professional institutions that actively recruit students from across India. Families send their daughters far from home because they believe education will provide dignity and a better future. Institutions that enrol students from distant regions have a corresponding responsibility to ensure accessible grievance redressal mechanisms, non-discriminatory administrative procedures and protection against intimidation.

Students cannot be treated merely as enrolment numbers or sources of institutional revenue. Educational institutions must create systems that take these unequal conditions seriously. A "Northeast Cell" should be formed in every colleges/universities in South India, like Delhi University.The immediate requirement in the Kakinada case is a transparent investigation, and those found responsible for violence, theft or other wrongdoing must be held accountable through due process. Racialised exclusion is not always produced through acts of hatred. It can also be sustained through silence, indifference and an unequal willingness to listen.The young Northeast women who travelled to Andhra Pradesh did not leave home to become symbols of a regional conflict. They travelled in search of education, professional opportunity, dignity and a future.The real test of an inclusive India is not whether people from different regions can enter the same classroom. It is whether they can live there with dignity, security and the confidence that, when they face injustice, the institution will listen to them and protect them.

Looming US sanctions on Iran put China oil buying in spotlight



SINGAPORE, GNS News Agency, August 26- China has for several years been the biggest buyer of Iranian oil, putting its purchases in the spotlight as the U.S. threatens heavy economic sanctions on Tehran.Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent was scheduled to hold ?a press conference at 1 p.m. EDT (1700 GMT) on Monday.

The Reuters Power Up newsletter by columnist Ron Bousso provides everything you need to know about the global energy industry. Sign up here.Following are key details on China's ?oil trade with Iran, which last year averaged 1.4 million barrels per day, according to ship-tracking firm Kpler.The U.S. renewed its blockade of Iran's ships and ports on July 13 ?in an attempt to cut off oil sales as a deal to halt their war broke down, throttlingIranian ?exports.

There have been no visible crossings of the Strait of Hormuz since then, according to ?Kpler data, although many vessels turn off their location transponders, making them difficult to track.Shipments fell to 785,000 ?barrels per day in June, the lowest since February 2023 and probably rose in July to 823,000 bpd, but ?the intake so far in August has dropped to 534,000 bpd, provisional Kpler data showed.

WHO ARE THE CHINESE BUYERS?

Chinese independent refiners have been the main Iranian crude buyers, attracted by what has typically been a steep discount to mainstream barrels.A drone view shows a Chinese-flagged oil tanker moored at an oil terminal at Tsing Yi port in Hong Kong, China March 19, 2026. REUTERS/Joyce Zhou Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab

China's big state refiners have ?shunned Iranian oil since 2019, when the U.S. reimposed sanctions on Tehran, and China's official customs data does ?not show any purchases of Iranian crude.Iranian oil delivered to China has long been branded as Malaysian, and more recently Indonesian, ?and is ?settled in Chinese currency, trading in a tight loop involving a chain of difficult-to-track intermediaries, refinery sources and traders involved in the business have said.

HAVE PREVIOUS U.S. SANCTIONS BEEN EFFECTIVE?Washington has intensified its efforts to clamp down on Chinese purchases of Iranian oil since President Donald Trump returned to the White House early last year, imposing sanctions on ?mostly smaller Chinese refiners ?and other participants in the ?supply chain, which have in some cases proven disruptive.The U.S. Treasury Department has also warned two larger Chinese banks they could face secondary sanctions if Iranian funds were found ?moving through their systems, but has stopped short of designating them.In April, Washington ?imposed sanctions on Hengli ?Petrochemical (Dalian) refinery, along with about 40 shipping firms and vessels, accusing Hengli of buying billions of dollars worth of Iranian oil, escalating its efforts to curb Tehran's oil revenue. Hengli has denied buying Iranian oil.However, sanctions themselves have done ?little to ?slow overall flows of Iranian oil into China.China's Iranian oil imports ?stood at 1.24 million and 1.58 million bpd in January and February, respectively, Kpler data showed.China, which has said it rejects ?unilateral sanctions, has called for a resolution through diplomatic and political means.

Trump administration moves to impose more than $100,000 fee for H-1B worker visas



President Donald Trump's administration on Monday released a proposed regulation to codify an unprecedented more than $100,000 fee on new ?H-1B visas for highly skilled foreign workers that Trump first imposed last year but has been blocked by the courts.The fee ?first imposed by Trumpin a temporary proclamation last year, opens new tab

vastly raises the cost of the visas that are heavily relied on in the tech, education and research sectors.Jumpstart your morning with the latest legal news delivered straight to your inbox from The Daily Docket newsletter. Sign up here.A federal judge in June ruled that the fee was illegal and blocked the Trump administration from collecting it. A Boston-based appeals court is reviewing that decision while a different court considers whether a ?judge in Washington, D.C., properly rejected a challenge to the fee by a major business group.Trump's 2025 proclamation imposing the fee expires ?in September, one year after it was issued, but directed the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to adopt regulations making it ?permanent.The proposed $103,265 fee by DHS, posted online in the Federal Register on Monday to be formally published on Tuesday, kicks off a 30-day public comment period. The ?rule could be finalized by the end of the year.The H-1B program allows U.S. employers to hire foreign workers with training in specialty fields and offers ?65,000 visas annually, with another 20,000 for workers with advanced degrees, approved for three to six years.sharply increased the cost of obtaining some H-1B visas, which had typically come with about $2,000 to $5,000 in fees, depending on various factors.

DEBATE OVER VISA PROGRAMTrump, a Republican, and other critics of the H-1B program say it is abused by many ?companies who replace American workers with cheaper foreign labor. But business groups and many individual companies have said the visa program is needed to address ?a lack of qualified American workers for some jobs and to allow U.S. businesses to recruit top talent.About 70 employers had paid the $100,000 fee on a total of ?85 visa ?applications as of late February, according to court filings.In imposing the fee, Trump invoked the president's power under federal immigration law to restrict the entry of certain foreign nationals who would be detrimental to U.S. interests.

The fee is being challenged by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the largest U.S. business lobbying group, Democratic-led states and a coalition of unions and employers. Those lawsuits could be amended to challenge the rule proposed this week once it is finalized.

LEGAL CHALLENGES MOUNTThe lawsuits claim that ?Trump's power to restrict entry does ?not allow him to override the ?law that created the H-1B visa program. The states and groups that sued also say that the Homeland Security Department cannot impose fees, taxes or other means to generate revenue for the United States without permission from Congress.The ?Trump administration has maintained that the fee is not a traditional tax and that courts have little power ?to question the president's ?authority to restrict entry into the country.Amid Trump's broader immigration crackdown, employers last year registered for about 344,000 H-1B visas, down more than 25% from 2024 and fewer than half of the 794,000 visas sought in 2023, according todata, opens new tabfrom U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.The Trump administration has also ordered enhanced vetting of H-1B applicants ?and proposed ?a new visa selection process that would favor higher-skilled and better-paid workers. Earlier in August, ?the Department of Homeland Security in a separate rule

added fees of up to $4,500, opens new tabto applications to extend the stay of H-1B workers or to transfer employees based in other countries to the ?United States.Reporting by Daniel Wiessner in Albany, New York; Additional reporting by Daphne Psaledakis and Susan Heavey in Washington; Editing by Alexia Garamfalvi and Matthew LewisOur Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles., opens new tabDan Wiessner (@danwiessner) reports on labor and employment and immigration law, including litigation and policy making.

Trump's Kim gambit deepens doubts over US reliability at a key moment for Asia

TOKYO/TAIPEI/NEW DELHI,- Donald Trump's olive branch to North Korea's Kim Jong Un at the expense of a long-standing ally comes at a pivotal moment for U.S. security ?ties in Asia, as partners from Japan to India reassess how much they can rely on Washington.The U.S. president's abrupt decision to cut back military drills with South Korea last week, which he described ?as hostile to Pyongyang, has reinforced fears that Trump's unpredictability could strain alliances that have long maintained peace in the region, government officials and security experts said.

Make sense of global markets with the Trading Day newsletter. Sign up here.Japan worries it too could find itself in Trump's cross-hairs as it embarks on thorny security negotiations; Taiwan is warily watching an upcoming summit between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping; and India is growing less certain of its place in Washington's strategic calculus."The decision will certainly fuel growing doubts in the region about U.S. security commitments," said Jeremy Chan, a senior analyst with political risk consultancy ?Eurasia Group and former U.S. diplomat in Japan and China.

Adding to the anxiety, the United States cancelled another military exercise with South Korea scheduled for next month, Seoul said on Monday, after Washington cited constraints on U.S. ?forces due to the Iran war.Trump has been frustrated by the failure of U.S. allies to support the war and made it clear that many of them must spend ?more on their own defence, a White House official said when asked about such concerns.He is eager to restart talks with North Korea and secure a win on the international stage to counter his unpopular conflict with Iran, according to a ?person briefed on discussions between U.S. and South Korean officials.

'EXTREMELY TROUBLING' FOR TOKYOTrump's push to meet Kim - which has so far drawn a frosty response from Pyongyang - could backfire and embolden nuclear-armed North Korea, said Itsunori Onodera, an influential Japanese lawmaker ?and former defence minister.Such a prospect is "extremely troubling" for Tokyo, he said on a Fuji TV news programme last Thursday. Despite Trump's overtures, Pyongyang fired a volley of ballistic missiles off its east coast earlier that day, triggering alerts in neighbouring South Korea and Japan.

What worries Japanese officials more is Trump's approach as Tokyo embarks on talks with Washington over how much it should pay towards the cost of hosting U.S. forces, America's largest overseas deployment.Japan is bracing for the possibility that Trump could, with little warning, demand a sharp hike that would ?be politically difficult to swallow, said a senior Japanese government official, requesting anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.Trump could also wield upcoming U.S. military exercises with Japan in October as leverage, analysts say. Officials in Washington and Tokyo ?said they did not expect the exercises to be curtailed, though Trump could change his mind at any point, they cautioned.The drills, known as Keen Sword, may already be smaller than their 2024 iteration because of the diversion of U.S. assets and personnel ?to the conflict ?with Iran.That shift - which recently saw America's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier in Asia, the USS George Washington, depart for the Middle East to relieve the beleaguered USS Abraham Lincoln - has stirred concern that U.S. deterrence against China is being eroded.During a visit to Asia this month, Pentagon policy chief Elbridge Colby said working with allies to ensure combat readiness along the so-called first island chain that runs from Japan through the Philippines is a priority for Washington.

TRUMP, XI AND TAIWANNowhere are concerns about China's growing military pressure more acute than in Taiwan, the democratically governed island claimed



Make sense of global markets with the Trading Day newsletter. Sign up here.Japan worries it too could find itself in Trump's cross-hairs as it embarks on thorny security negotiations;

by Beijing.Trump has held up approval of a $14 billion package of arms sales to Taipei in order to maintain warm relations and a fragile trade truce with ?China's Xi.

As Trump prepares for his latest round of ?summitry with Xi in Washington next month, officials in ?Taipei say they expect Washington will at the very least carve up the arms sales into smaller chunks to try and avoid upsetting Beijing too much.Domingo Yang of the Taiwan defence ministry's think tank, the Institute for National Defence and Security Research, says there is a distinction between Trump's rhetoric and actual U.S. behaviour, noting U.S. intelligence sharing, training and patrols ?with Taiwan remain substantial.A U.S. Navy aircraft transited the Taiwan Strait on Friday in a move the United States described as demonstrating its "commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."Trump's ?latest actions have also rocked confidence ?in India, where the U.S. risks squandering years of efforts to draw New Delhi closer as a counterweight to Russia and China, security analysts say.It also comes after the Pentagon's decision in June to rename its Asia military headquarters to Pacific Command from Indo-Pacific Command, a move some analysts say is a sign India is no longer as strategically important to Washington.

The Pentagon denied any such shift. But Trump's steep tariffs on Indian exports and repeated claims that he had mediated an India-Pakistan ceasefire had ?already exasperated New ?Delhi. Officials there are now "very, very cautious" about committing to long-term defence deals with Washington, according to two Indian sources with knowledge of the ?matter."The latest decision only reinforces President Trump's transactional view of foreign affairs and serves as a reminder that differences over specific policies, even among allies, can carry costs for the broader bilateral relationship," said Pearl Pandya, senior analyst at Armed Conflict Location & Event Data, a conflict monitoring group.

Reporting by ?John Geddie, Yukiko Toyoda, Nobuhiro Kubo and Tim Kelly in Tokyo; Ben Blanchard in Taipei; Aftab Ahmed in New Delhi; Greg Torode in Hong Kong; and Michael Martina, Idrees Ali, Trevor Hunnicutt and Phil Stewart in Washington; Editing by Lincoln Feast.Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles., opens new tabJohn is the lead writer for Japan & Greater China, reporting on everything from elections to earthquakes. Previously based in Singapore and London, his work has received several journalism accolades, including a 2022 SOPA Award for Excellence in Reporting on the Environment.Ben joined Reuters as a company news reporter in Shanghai in 2003.

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