

# Govt. may push for passage of key sports Bill in LS amid deadlock over debate on SIR

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The government is likely to push for the passage of a key sports Bill in the Lok Sabha on Monday, amid a deadlock in Parliament over the Opposition demand for a discussion on the special intensive revision of the electoral rolls in poll-bound Bihar, which the government has refused to accede to.

The Lower House has listed the National Sports Governance Bill, which envisages greater transparency in the functioning of sports bodies, for consideration and passage.

## Resolution in RS

The Rajya Sabha has listed for passage on Monday a resolution from Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the extension of President's Rule in Manipur by another six months with effect from August 13.



Opposition MPs protesting in the Well as Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla conducts the proceedings in the House. SANSAD TV/PTI

Other than a two-day discussion on the Pahalgam terror attack and Operation Sindoor in both the Houses, no significant business was transacted so far in the Monsoon Session of Parliament. Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar's resignation on the very first day of the session added to the chaos.

Government sources, however, claim that if the Opposition does not pause its protests, it will get the

National Sports Governance Bill passed in the din. Another Bill listed for consideration and passage in the Lok Sabha is the National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill.

The government's legislative agenda include the Readjustment of Representation of Scheduled Tribes in Assembly Constituencies of the State of Goa Bill, 2024, the Merchant Shipping Bill, 2024 and the Indian Ports Bill, 2025.

# Central nod to increase CISF strength, 58,000 personnel to be recruited over next five years

**Vijaita Singh**

NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has approved the recruitment of 58,000 additional personnel for the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), anticipating future industrial hubs in areas now affected by Left-wing extremism (LWE).

Home Minister Amit Shah has set March 2026 as deadline for the security forces to end Maoist activities in Chhattisgarh, one of the worst-affected States.

The geographical spread of LWE violence has reduced substantially in the past decade. The number of districts affected in 2013 stood at 126 in 10 States, which had fallen to



**Gaining strength:** CISF official says about 14,000 personnel will be recruited per year over the next five years. REUTERS

38 in 2024.

On July 22, the Ministry wrote to inform CISF Director-General R.S. Bhatti that the President had sanctioned an enhancement in the force's authorised ceiling strength, from 2 lakh to 2.2 lakh. As the present strength of the

CISF is 1.62 lakh, the decision could lead to the recruitment of around 58,000 people.

A CISF official said that around 14,000 personnel will be recruited each year over the next five years.

The official said that the new additions would help

in the CISF's deployment across critical sectors such as aviation, sea ports, thermal power plants, nuclear installations, hydro power plants, and jails in Jammu and Kashmir.

## New industrial hubs

"With the decline of Left-wing extremism in States such as Chhattisgarh, new industrial hubs are anticipated to emerge, necessitating a stronger CISF presence to provide comprehensive and effective security to these units," the official said.

The CISF recruited 13,230 personnel in 2024, and the recruitment of another 24,098 is underway during the current year.

Post-Operation Sindoor, there has been an increase in requests by several organisations for CISF security cover. "Around 35 requests are under process and requests from around 100 installations are pending," the official said.

In the past year, the CISF has been deployed at seven new locations: the Parliament House complex, Ayodhya airport, the National Thermal Power Corporation's coal mining project in Hazaribagh, the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Virology in Pune, the Buxar thermal power project, the Jawahar thermal power project in Etah; and the Beas Satluj Link project in Mandi.



**AFTER OP SINDOOR**

# Army overhaul: Drones to be in action at battalion level

Plan gains pace — from integrated brigades to light commando battalions

**AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA**

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 3

THE INDIAN Army is set to undergo a significant organisational overhaul that will include integrating Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and counter-UAV as standard weapon systems at the battalion level across most of its arms, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The transformation will also involve establishing light commando battalions, creating integrated brigades, and developing specialised artillery regiments and batteries tailored for future warfare, sources told this newspaper.

These plans, under discussion for several months, have gained pace after Operation Sindoor in May, following the Pahalgam terror attack. Some of the changes will be drawn from lessons obtained during this operation, the sources said.

One of the initiatives is to incorporate UAVs and counter-UAV systems into infantry battalions, as well as armoured and artillery regiments. While current battalions possess drones, they are often utilised as secondary systems in addition to estab-

EXPLAINED

**E** ● **Lessons from May**

OP SINDOOR in May revealed the increased use of military drones in new-age operations. Inducting a variety of drones as standard weapons at battalion levels will enable better training, procurement and maintenance.

lished weapons and tasks. As a result, personnel are diverted from primary responsibilities to operate the UAVs.

The new objective is to create a dedicated outfit within each unit that will be tasked primarily with operating drones. Each arm has been directed to draw up a structure that allows a select number of personnel to focus and train on this front, the sources said.

In the infantry, for instance, plans are underway to introduce several surveillance drones at the platoon and company levels.

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# Army overhaul: Drones in action at battalion level

This will require reassigning approximately 70 personnel from various sections and modifying the responsibilities of some others — an infantry unit comprises 36 fighting sections across four companies and other supporting platoons, each managing various tasks and weapons.

Additionally, the Army is raising 30 light commando battalions, called Bhairav, each comprising about 250 personnel. These battalions will be specially trained and deployed in designated areas to enhance strike capabilities with teams trained for specific missions. They will operate under various commands with specific operational roles, and be trained and equipped accordingly.

✓ Sources said multiple infantry regimental centres have been instructed to start raising these battalions, and initial units are expected to be ready for operational deployment within a month.

The Army will also establish Rudra brigades, which will consist of an all-arms brigade along with

UAVs and other logistical elements. This will involve restructuring existing infantry, armoured and artillery brigades, which will allow Rudra brigades to function independently across various sectors as integrated units for future warfare.

Likely to be deployed for conventional and hybrid operations, the logistics and network-centric operations for each such brigade will be tailored to specific missions and operational areas.

For the Regiment of Artillery, establishing two batteries with an increased number of guns each, as well as adding a third drone battery equipped with surveillance and combat drones, are being considered. Currently, each artillery regiment consists of three batteries, each with six guns.

Additionally, Divyastra artillery batteries are being created with next-generation long-range guns and loitering munitions capable of conducting surveillance and identifying and engaging targets in depth areas. They will be

equipped with anti-drone systems for self-defence and area protection.

Some of these initiatives were announced by Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Kargil Vijay Diwas on July 26.

The armoured and mechanized infantry are also undergoing reorganisation.

Currently, there is a reconnaissance platoon responsible for navigating and leading units to their targets alongside three squadrons/ companies in Armoured/ Mechanized Infantry battalions. The recon platoons will be enhanced with surveillance and strike drones. Discussions are also underway to have two expanded squadrons/ companies instead of three, converting the third into a drone-based squadron/ company or integrating attack drones as part of tank squadrons.

Plans are also being discussed to modify engineer regiments by introducing a drone section in each company for mine detection,

reconnaissance and area mapping — and bolstering Army Aviation Corps with more UAVs for reconnaissance, surveillance and data collection, thereby reducing the reliance on helicopter hours and pilot effort.

There are also moves to enhance the repair capabilities of Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME) in order to improve drone repair capabilities within corps zone workshops.

Sources said the initiative will increase the demand for specialised and trained manpower. They said the aim is to incorporate drones among other new generation equipment as standard issue items for the combat arms so that they can be procured on a regular basis.

The initiative will also help create a supply chain for procurement, instead of purchases on an ad hoc basis through the special financial powers of top Army brass or as emergency procurement.



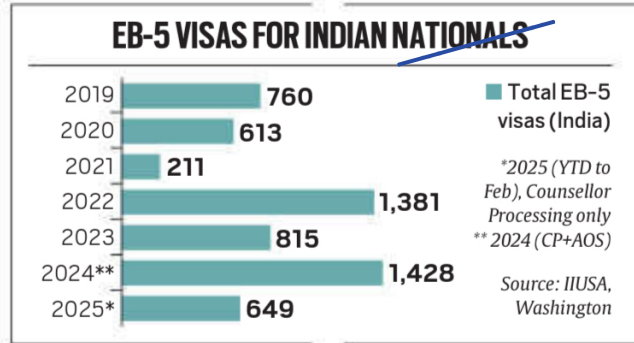
# Amid curbs on H1B and student visas, more Indians are lining up for US investment visas

DIVYA A

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 3

"THE TRUMP Card is Coming. Enter your information below to be notified the moment access opens," says the new US government website on the Gold Card, the \$5 million US residency visa programme announced by President Donald Trump in February.

Despite curiosity around the new programme, the launch date and specific details of which are yet to be released, data shows that the existing investment-based residency programme



EB-5, which the Gold Card will replace, has seen more applications from India over the past one year than ever before.

According to the American

Immigrant Investor Alliance (AIIA), a Washington-based collective of EB-5 investors, demand for EB-5 from Indian citizens has grown sharply since

April 2024, driven by factors such as stricter controls over student and temporary work visas under the Trump regime. Data provided by United States Immigration Fund (USIF), which runs designated EB-5 regional centres in the US, confirms this.

"In the first four months of FY2025 (October 2024-January 2025), Indian applicants filed more than 1,200 I-526E petitions across reserved categories — more than any prior full year," Nicholas Mastroianni III, president and CMO of USIF, told *The Indian Express*, referring to the application forms.

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# Philippines President to visit India as two sides look to deepen maritime ties

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI

In a move aimed at deepening maritime cooperation with the Southeast Asian region, India will host Philippines President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. from August 4 to 8. This will be the first visit by President Marcos Jr., son of the former President Ferdinand Marcos, who visited India in 1976.

The External Affairs Ministry said the visit would formally begin with the ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan which would be followed by a visit by President Marcos Jr. to the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat.

Mr. Marcos Jr. will hold delegation-level talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the two sides signing multiple agreements and MoUs. On August 7, he will visit Bengaluru.



**Bilateral brief:** External Affairs Minister Jaishankar with Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo in March 2025. PTI

The visit is being viewed as the culmination of sustained political-level dialogue even as they strengthened maritime cooperation as both Philippines and India are strong proponents of freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

Mr. Modi had met Mr. Marcos Jr. on the sidelines of 21<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-India Summit and the 19<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit in Vientiane, Lao

PDR in October 2024. They had also met on the sidelines of the 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit in Jakarta in September 2023. Earlier, Mr. Modi had congratulated President Marcos Jr. after his electoral victory in 2022.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had met Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines Enrique A. Manalo on March 18, 2025 when Mr. Manalo partici-

pated in the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi. The Ministers also met in Vientiane, on July 25, 2024, on the sidelines of the ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers' meeting. Mr. Jaishankar had visited the Philippines from March 25-27, 2025. He met Secretary Manalo and the Secretary of National Defence of the Philippines, Teodoro Gilbert, and called on President Marcos Jr. during the visit.

The upcoming five-day visit is drawing attention as it starts soon after several Indian Navy destroyers reached the Port of Manila on August 1 to conduct joint patrol of the West Philippine Sea with the Philippine Navy. Armed Forces of Philippines Chief General Romeo Brawner Jr. told local media that the presence of the Indian destroyers was a "clear demonstration" of mutual resolve to guard the maritime domain.



# As Trump sends nuclear subs, China, Russia hold naval drills

**REUTERS**

MOSCOW, AUGUST 3

THE RUSSIAN and Chinese navies are carrying out artillery and anti-submarine drills in the Sea of Japan as part of scheduled joint exercises, the Russian Pacific Fleet was quoted as saying on Sunday.

The drills are taking place two days after U.S. President Donald Trump said he had ordered two nuclear submarines to be positioned in "the appropriate regions" in response to remarks by former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev. However, they were scheduled well before Trump's action.



**Chinese and Russian naval officials in Vladivostok, Russia, on Thursday. File**

Interfax news agency quoted the Pacific Fleet as saying Russian and Chinese vessels were moving in a joint detachment including a large Russian anti-subma-

rine ship and two Chinese destroyers.

It said diesel-electric submarines from the two countries were also involved, as well as a Chinese submarine rescue ship.

Interfax said Russian and Chinese sailors would conduct artillery firing, practise anti-submarine and air defence missions, and improve joint search and rescue operations at sea.

✓ Russia and China, which signed a "no-limits" strategic partnership shortly before Russia went to war in Ukraine in 2022, conduct regular military exercises to rehearse coordination between their armed forces and send a deterrent signal to adversaries.

# Clashes break out in Syria as govt struggles to ease tensions

## Israeli military says it conducted raid on targets in southern Syria

**KAREEM CHEHAYEB**

BEIRUT, AUGUST 3

NEW OUTBREAKS of violence overnight into Sunday rocked Syria at two distinct flashpoints, straining a fragile ceasefire and calling into question the ability of the transitional government to exert its authority across the whole country.

In the north, government-affiliated fighters confronted Kurdish-led forces who control much of the region, while in the south, in Sweida, they clashed with Druze armed groups.

The outbreaks come at a time when Syria's interim authorities are trying to maintain a tense ceasefire in Sweida province after clashes with Druze factions last month, and to implement an agreement with the U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces that would reintegrate large swaths of northeastern Syria with the rest of the country.

The Syrian government under interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa has been struggling to consolidate control since he led a surprise insurgency that ousted former President Bashar Assad in December, ending the Assad family's decades-long autocratic rule.

Political opponents and ethnic and religious minorities have been suspicious of Sharaa's de facto Islamist rule and cooperation with affiliated fighters that come from militant groups.

State television said clashes between government forces and militias belonging to the Druze religious minority rocked the southern province of Sweida on Saturday after Druze factions attacked Syrian security forces, killing at least one member. The state-run Alikhbaria channel cited an anonymous security official who said the ceasefire has been broken. The Defense Ministry has not issued any formal statement.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said in addition to the member of the security forces killed, one Druze was killed and at least nine others were wounded in the clashes that took place in the western part of Sweida province.

The Israeli military said on Sunday that it conducted a raid on targets in southern Syria the previous day. It said it seized weapons and questioned several suspects it said were involved in weapons trafficking in the area.

**AP WITH REUTERS INPUTS**



# Court begins Hasina's trial over crimes against humanity

Prosecution calls Bangladesh former PM the 'nucleus of all crimes' with regard to the violent suppression of the 2024 protests; her two top aides have been named co-accused in the case

Press Trust of India

DHAKA

**B**angladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) on Sunday commenced the trial of deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in absentia over crimes against humanity related to the violent suppression of the 2024 student-led protests.

The interim government-appointed Chief Prosecutor, Tajul Islam, in his opening statement, described Ms. Hasina as the "nucleus of all crimes" and called for the maximum penalty.

The prosecution also



**Tipping point:** Last year's student-led protests had toppled Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government on August 5, 2024. AFP

named Ms. Hasina's two top aides – former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and former Inspector General of Police

Chowdhury Abdullaah Al Mamun – as the co-accused in the case.

The ICT commenced the proceedings against

Ms. Hasina on several charges, with the major one being killings and tortures to tame last year's Students Against Discrimination (SAD)-led violent street campaign that eventually toppled her Awami League government on August 5, 2024.

While Ms. Hasina and Mr. Kamal are being tried in absentia, Mr. Mamun is in custody and has agreed to be the "approver" in the case.

The prosecution said it would present testimonies from individuals injured during the protests and eyewitnesses to the violence in the coming days.

# + Trump writes to 17 pharma CEOs seeking a cut in drug prices

**Lalit K. Jha**  
WASHINGTON

In a rare and direct move, U.S. President Donald Trump has personally written to 17 top pharmaceutical CEOs – including Indian-American Vasant Narasimhan, MD and CEO of Novartis – demanding an urgent action to bring down skyrocketing drug prices in the United States.

The letters, signed by the President and disclosed at a White House briefing on Thursday, give companies time until September 29, 2025, to commit to offering Americans the same prices they charge in Europe and other developed nations. The announcement, delivered by White House press se-



Donald Trump

cretary Karoline Leavitt, marks a significant escalation in the administration's war on what it calls "abusive drug pricing practices."

"For too long," Ms. Leavitt told reporters, "Americans have paid more than twice for the same life-sav-

ing medications compared to other countries. President Trump says this injustice ends now."

## Four demands

The letter addressed to Dr. Narasimhan and his peers includes four binding demands: extend global parity pricing to Medicaid, apply fair pricing to new drugs, redirect overseas profits to American patients, and enable direct consumer purchases at internationally benchmarked prices.

Each letter was tailored but echoed the same urgent message: the days of global freeloading on American innovation are over.

"This unacceptable burden on hardworking Amer-

ican families ends with my administration," Mr. Trump wrote, warning companies that if they fail to comply, the White House will "deploy every tool in our arsenal."

Among the many recipients of these letters is Novartis CEO Vasant Narasimhan, a U.S.-trained physician who has led the Swiss pharmaceutical giant since 2018. While Novartis is headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, it derives substantial revenue from U.S. patients and government programmes.

## Human story

Behind the policy is a human story. During the briefing, Ms. Leavitt read a letter from a mother in Ohio who struggles to af-

ford insulin for her son, even while working two jobs. "This is about people," she said. "Families are being forced to choose between rent and medicine."

In his letter, Mr. Trump said the unacceptable burden on hardworking American families ends with his administration. "Most proposals the Trump administration has received to resolve this critical issue promised more of the same, shifting blame and requesting policy changes that would result in billions of dollars in handouts to industry," he said.

"Moving forward, the only thing I will accept from drug manufacturers is a commitment that provides American families

immediate relief from the vastly inflated drug prices and an end to the free ride of American innovation by European and other developed nations. Accordingly, I'm calling on Eli Lilly and Company and every manufacturer doing business in our great country to take the following actions within the next 60 days: extend the most favoured nation pricing to Medicaid; guarantee most favoured nation pricing for newly launched drugs; return increased revenues abroad to American patients and taxpayers; provide for direct purchasing at most favoured nation pricing," Mr. Trump wrote.

*(This article is published in an arrangement with SWH)*



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