

Protest will continue until Pradhan quits: CJP founder

Snehal Mutha

MUMBAI

A day after organising a demonstration in New Delhi demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, the founder of the online movement Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), Abhijeet Dipke, on Sunday said the protest would continue.

Hundreds of people, including students, had gathered at the Jantar Mantar on Saturday demanding the resignation of the Minister over the alleged irregularities in CBSE examinations, entrance tests for higher education, and recruitment examinations. Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and CPI(ML) Liberation general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya also came in support of the CJP's demands.

Addressing presspersons at his hometown in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar district in Maharashtra on Sunday, Mr. Dipke said,



The youngsters of the country are not scared of the government. We will continue to fight for him [Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan] to resign. Someone must be held accountable

ABHIJEET DIPKE
CJP founder



“What to do with this government? No employment, no proper exams. The youngsters of the country are not scared of the government. We will continue to fight until he [Mr. Pradhan] resigns. Someone must be held accountable.”

He said the protest was a success, saying that around 7,000 people took part in it, and dismissed claims that people were paid to take part in the demonstration. “I came to the venue direct from the airport [after arriving from the U.S.]. How could I have paid them? The BJP is also

running a fake campaign that not many people turned up at the venue.”

“I informed my friends that I am going to India and very much mentally prepared to go to jail also. Someone must raise the voice. In our country, the politics has been limited to elections. Once elections are done, [people] forget about it for the next five years,” Mr. Dipke said.

On the future course of action, Mr. Dipke said, “We will discuss with the members of the community, take their suggestions, and accordingly decide on our next move.”

Neutralise armed miscreants in Manipur: CRPF chief to personnel

Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI

G.P. Singh, Director-General, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), has asked personnel deployed in Manipur to “neutralise” miscreants found roaming around in civilian areas with weapons.

Mr. Singh made the remarks during an interaction with CRPF personnel in Manipur on Saturday, according to a 6.05-minute video clip seen by *The Hindu*. He said that discussions were held at the highest levels in the government, and added, “It is expected that there will be a turnaround in the situation in the northeastern State in the next one or one-and-a-half years.”

More than 6,000 police weapons and thousands of rounds of ammunition



Security agencies have flagged the availability of weapons with civilians as a major challenge in the violence-hit State. FILE PHOTO

were looted from armouries after ethnic violence erupted in the State on May 3, 2023.

Security agencies have consistently flagged the availability of a large number of weapons with civilians as a major security challenge.

In the video, the CRPF officer said that personnel need not worry about firing at miscreants and he,

as the D-G, would protect any “*bona fide* action”.

“If you do not fire at miscreants, why has the government given us so much arms and ammunition. I have your back. Till the time I am here, no need to worry about any (legal) action,” Mr. Singh said.

CONTINUED ON

» PAGE 12

Neutralise armed miscreants: CRPF D-G

He was referring to an April 7 incident in which CRPF personnel opened fire as a mob stormed the force's camp at Gelmol, a buffer zone between Meitei and Kuki-Zo areas in Bishnupur district since 2023. The firing led to the death of three protesters.

When contacted, Mr. Singh said the video was meant for "internal purposes".

"I had addressed the troops in Manipur and exhorted them to take the strongest lawful action against armed miscreants. I have always maintained that the responsibility of all the bona fide action taken by the force shall be mine as chief," he said. In the video, the officer said that the security forces should prepare for the coming days to deal with all types of miscreants.

"There are two scenarios here. One is the armed miscreants, some of them are active militant groups, or with surrendered militant groups, all of them have weapons. They are misusing the weapons to vitiate the situation in Manipur. The second is the law-and-order issue, which is connected to the armed miscreants. The crowd provides cover to these armed groups so that they can create tensions," Mr. Singh said.

Calibrated strategy

He further said a calibrated strategy would have to be formed to deal with both scenarios in collaboration with local police, and the strategy should be futuristic and not merely reactionary.

"Find out about the events planned in the next 24 hours or over a period of 7-30 days and how they can be stopped at source," he added.

"Whoever is found roaming in civilian areas with weapons should be neutralised. Please have no doubts over this, I am saying this in clear terms," the CRPF D-G said, adding, "If people continue to charge despite repeated warnings, then the use of force is completely justified."

Efforts on to establish AI ecosystem for the judiciary, says CJI

SC has consciously approached technology as an aid to human reasoning rather than substitute for independent judicial thought, Justice Kant says

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Observing that the Supreme Court has consciously approached technology as an aid to human reasoning rather than as a substitute for independent judicial thought, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said that considerable emphasis has been placed on developing “Swadeshi jurisprudence”.

Delivering a lecture at the Oxford Union and the Oxford Law Society on the theme “Constitutional promise to digital reality: safeguarding justice in the age of AI and technological advancement”, the CJI said that in addition to ongoing technological initiatives, serious efforts are under way to explore establishing an indigenous AI ecosystem for the judiciary.

“The Supreme Court of India has consciously approached technology as an aid to human reasoning rather than as a substitute for independent judicial thought. Considerable em-



It [technology] has, in many ways, brought judicial systems across the world into far closer conversation with one another and strengthened what may now fairly be described as an increasingly interconnected global judicial community

JUSTICE SURYA KANT
Supreme Court



phasis, however, has been placed upon the development of what may be described as a distinctly Indian or ‘Swadeshi jurisprudence’: One that remains attentive to our own constitutional values, institutional realities, linguistic diversity, and social conditions rather than relying solely upon imported technological models or assumptions,” the CJI said.

He said technology has contributed to something beyond the constitutional promise of access to justice.

“It has, in many ways, brought judicial systems

across the world into far closer conversation with one another and strengthened what may now fairly be described as an increasingly interconnected global judicial community,” he said.

Young lawyers, judicial officers, and legal professionals are an encouraging source for the judiciary’s technological transformation, the CJI said.

He also emphasised that technology can never replace human judgment.

He added that an AI system can process immense volumes of legal text with astonishing speed.

‘Detailed NFHS report will provide a broader picture’

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Union Health Ministry sources addressed criticism directed at “missing” indicators, such as anaemia, sanitation, and coverage of clean cooking fuel, in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-6 factsheets saying those are being monitored through dedicated national surveys and administrative databases, and were not “duplicated” in the preliminary release.

Responding to “commentary in sections of the media regarding the absence of certain indicators”, official sources said the factsheets represent the first stage of dissemination and cover 101 major indicators intended to provide a concise snapshot of India’s most critical health and demographic trends.

“The factsheets are the first stage of dissemination. The detailed national report will provide a much broader picture,” sources said. The report will be released subsequently with a much wider range of indicators, detailed analyses and methodological documentation.

“The aim is to ensure

that each indicator is reported through the most appropriate and authoritative source, reducing duplication and improving overall data coherence,” sources said. They said several indicators cited as “missing” from the factsheets are being monitored through dedicated national systems. Sanitation and clean cooking fuel coverage, for instance, are tracked through specialised surveys and administrative platforms such as Swachh Survekshan Gramen and the Statistics and Programme Implementation Ministry’s surveys, making duplication within the factsheets unnecessary, they said.

Key statistics relating to mortality, birth registration and population characteristics continue to be generated through systems such as the Sample Registration System, Civil Registration System and Census framework.

On the absence of anaemia estimates in the factsheets, they said that haemoglobin testing was not undertaken in NFHS-6 due to concerns surrounding the capillary blood sampling methodology used in previous rounds.



URVASHI PRASAD

THE HEADLINE from NFHS-6 on child health is heartening. Stunting — children who are too short for their age — has declined nationally from 35.5 per cent to 29.3 per cent. That is a substantial improvement and deserves recognition. However, read in full, NFHS-6's child nutrition story presents a more complicated picture: National gains are uneven, several large states have deteriorated, and key drivers of child nutrition remain deeply concerning.

Severe wasting, the most dangerous form of acute malnutrition, declined from 7.7 per cent to 5.2 per cent. This is a meaningful gain that should translate into fewer child deaths.

NFHS-6 data on child nutrition has sobering warnings

Yet overall wasting fell only marginally, from 19.3 per cent to 19 per cent, meaning nearly one in five Indian children under five remains acutely malnourished. The proportion of underweight children moved from 32.1 per cent to 31.8 per cent. Nearly one in three Indian children is still underweight.

The state-level data is even more troubling. In Jharkhand, underweight prevalence increased from 39.4 per cent to 41.1 per cent. In UP, wasting rose from 17.3 per cent to 19.2 per cent and underweight from 32.1 per cent to 34.5 per cent. Rajasthan recorded similar deterioration, with wasting rising from 16.8 per cent to 19.8 per cent and underweight from 27.6 per cent to 33.3 per cent. These setbacks in some of India's largest states are obscured by the national headline.

The stunting figure itself conceals wide disparities. Kerala's stunting rate is 20.1 per

cent, compared with 35.6 per cent in Bihar and 35 per cent in Jharkhand. The gap reflects two very different childhood realities under the same national programmes. Jharkhand's wasting rate stands at 22.3 per cent, more than double Kerala's 10.9 per cent, and virtually unchanged from NFHS-5's 22.4 per cent despite four years of programme implementation.

Only 15.3 per cent of children aged 6-23

Breastfeeding remains one of the most evidence-backed, low-cost public-health interventions available. Its decline in states with high malnutrition burdens is a serious policy failure

months receive an adequate diet, up from 11 per cent. This is progress, but it still means more than eight in 10 children during the most critical developmental period are not receiving what nutrition science recommends. Dietary adequacy is only 8.7 per cent in Rajasthan and 11.9 per cent in Bihar. The decline in stunting has occurred despite this gap, not because it has been resolved.

Perhaps the most worrying finding is breastfeeding. Exclusive breastfeeding among infants under six months has fallen nationally from 63.7 per cent to 55.8 per cent. In UP, it has dropped from 59.7 per cent to 34.6 per cent. Jharkhand and Rajasthan have also seen sharp declines. Kerala, in contrast, improved from 55.5 per cent to 72.7 per cent. This suggests the problem is not institutional delivery but postnatal support after discharge. Breastfeeding remains one of the

most evidence-backed, low-cost public-health interventions available, benefiting both child survival and maternal health. Its decline in states with high malnutrition burdens is a serious policy failure.

There are clear successes. Full vaccination coverage increased from 83.8 per cent to 87.1 per cent, while rotavirus vaccine coverage surged from 36.4 per cent to 85.4 per cent, reflecting effective national rollout.

NFHS-6 confirms India can reduce stunting. But wasting, dietary inadequacy and declining breastfeeding remain major risks. Whether the next NFHS shows continued progress on stunting will depend on whether these warning signs are addressed now.

The writer is senior fellow, Pahlé India Foundation and former director, office of vice chairperson, NITI Aayog

The retirement trap India is walking into unprepared

India is entering a phase where ageing, healthcare, personal finance will become deeply interconnected public issues; retirement can no longer be limited to tax-saving instruments

TWILIGHT ZONE

Vishwajeet Goel

India is growing older, at a pace most households are financially unprepared for. As per the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), almost one of five Indians will be over the age of 60 by 2050. The elderly population in India is likely to rise from about 15 crore today to more than 34 crore over the next three decades. At the same time, healthcare costs continue to rise sharply, while inflation steadily chips away at household savings.

Yet, retirement planning in India still largely operates on assumptions built for another era.

We are living longer

Better healthcare access, improved sanitation, rising incomes and medical advancements have helped Indians live longer than previous generations.

But the longer people live, the more years they must fund without a regular income. For most people retirement calculations are based on current spends than future costs.

A family spending ₹75,000/month today may believe a few crores will comfortably sustain retirement. But inflation changes the picture dramatically. Even with moderate inflation, everyday expenses can multiply several times over two or three decades. The impact becomes even sharper in healthcare.



In recent years, medical inflation in India has stayed at 12-14%, much higher than the overall inflation. Treatment can now cost a chunk of retirement savings.

This is why retirement planning can no longer rely on traditional savings instruments. India needs stronger pension participation and long-term retirement-focused investing habits. Instruments such as the National Pension System (NPS) encourage sustained retirement planning via regulated and relatively low-cost structure. Its flexibility across equity, government securities and debt allocation allows investors to gradually align risk with age and retirement goals. More importantly, NPS addresses the absence of a structured pension culture outside of government employment.

In recent years, medical inflation in India has stayed between 12-14%, significantly higher than overall inflation. Treatment can now use a huge chunk of retirement savings.

India is witnessing a rapid rise in chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and cardiac disorders which are long-duration illnesses requiring continuous medication, diagnostics, follow-up care and, in many cases, repeated hospitalisation.

While earlier genera-



Even with moderate inflation, everyday expenses can multiply several times over two or three decades. The impact becomes even sharper in healthcare.

tions often associated retirement with reduced spending, modern retirees may experience the opposite. Healthcare, assisted living, home care support, diagnostics and medicines can become recurring monthly expenses changing the role of health insurance in household financial planning. Health cover today is increasingly becoming central to retirement protection. Without adequate coverage, even disciplined long-term savings can erode quickly after a major medical event.

Starting early

The advantage of starting early in instruments such as NPS is the ability to build a retirement corpus gradually over decades while benefiting from compounding and professional fund management. For younger earners especially, time is the biggest asset. Small but consistent contributions made early can potentially create significantly larger retirement outcomes compared with delayed investing later.

Traditional retirement strategies are not able to keep pace with realities.

Fixed deposits, long

considered the safest retirement instrument, often fail to generate inflation-beating post-tax returns over long periods. Realty is illiquid and does not always provide reliable rental income. Pension cover in India is also limited.

At the same time, Indian society is changing. Urbanisation, migration, nuclear families and changing career patterns mean many retirees may no longer have the same family-support structures similar to earlier generations. Financial independence during retirement is an economic and a social necessity.

Starting early allows compounding to work over decades rather than years.

But retirement planning cannot be reduced to chasing market returns or accumulating the largest corpus. The larger objective is sustainability. People need savings that can survive inflation, market cycles and rising healthcare costs over long retirement periods.

India is entering a phase where ageing, healthcare, and personal finance will become deeply interconnected public issues. It's retirement conversation can no longer remain limited to tax-saving investments or fixed deposits.

The challenge is, how does a country prepare millions of people to financially sustain lives becoming longer, more expensive and medically more demanding? This would define the future of retirement planning in India.

(The writer is Head, Pensionbazaar)

No need to worry about US Section 301, we will tackle it... confident of a good trade deal: Goyal

Asks India Inc to get out of 'comfort zone', look for opportunities at home, abroad

Express News Service
Mumbai, June 7

DAYS AFTER the Trump administration proposed 12.5% tariffs on India and 53 other countries after a United States Trade Representative (USTR) trade investigation under Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974 declared that these countries failed to impose a legal prohibition on "importation of goods produced wholly or in

part with forced labour", Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said Sunday he



Union Minister Piyush Goyal in Mumbai, Sunday. SANKHADEEP BANERJEE



didn't think there was any need to worry about Section 301, and that "we will tackle it".

The proposed tariffs have been announced while US and Indian negotiators are finalising a bilateral trade agreement.

Speaking at the *Financial Express* India's Best Banks Awards in Mumbai, Goyal said US Trade Representative Jamie Greer will visit India in the next two weeks for further discussions on the trade deal. Earlier, he had indicated an agreement could be reached by July.

"So this (Section 301 investigation) is really a mechanism

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Goyal

being created, given their (the US) constraints that the Congress is not going to support any of their actions (on reciprocal tariffs)... They are trying to create a competitive edge for India. So I don't think (we need to) worry about Section 301, we'll tackle it, it's our responsibility," he said.

"The (Section 301) investigation is directed at a particular country," Goyal said, without naming China.

He said India was keenly awaiting what kind of tariffs would ultimately be imposed under Section 301. "We will protect India's interests and I am very confident that the (India-US trade) deal will come through. It will be a good deal," he said.

He, however, reiterated that "India stands for fair and equitable trade" and any deal being signed would be "balanced," and that the country won't negotiate with deadlines set.

Goyal noted that in a world where geopolitics is in a flux, "re-alignment of friends and friendships" would be inevitable.

Replying to a question on whether investments from China could be facilitated further given India's growing trade deficit with that country and the critical inputs required for new-age manufacturing, he

said the government "has no problem with investments from China so long as they are in the desirable sectors and not meant for opportunistic takeover of Indian assets."

He, however, ruled out any revisiting of India's decision to stay out of the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), saying it was incomprehensible in the first place why the then UPA government joined the talks for the 15-country trade bloc, while the country already had preferential trade pacts with most of these countries, except China.

He said the bulging merchandise trade deficit with China — \$112.4 billion in 2025-2026 — could be progressively reduced by a multi-pronged strategy, including creating competitive domestic capacities wherever feasible, and cracking down on unfair trade practices like dumping and predatory pricing.

He hinted that the UK's insistence on proceeding with steel import tariff measures after all processes for implementing the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) were almost concluded would lead to India clawing back some concessions it had given in the pact. "On steel, we will have to rebalance with some products which will possibly even hurt the UK businesses. But that's the nature of trade," Goyal said. He

spoke of "two other issues" that had cropped up closer to the implementation of the bilateral CETA, and one of these was settled in India's favour in recent Delhi talks.

On March 19, the UK government announced that it will limit tariff-free steel imports from July 1, 2026, reducing overall quota volumes by 60% compared to the steel safeguard measure. Any imports above these levels will subsequently face a 50% tariff.

Goyal ruled out putting any curbs on investors repatriating their investments from India or outbound capital, citing the country's comfortable foreign exchange reserves and Current Account Deficit (CAD) remaining well under 2%. "Our financial services are largely about India's best banks and financial services. We've been too inward-looking. We have been content with a large Indian market. We have to shake our conscience, shake ourselves to start exploring world markets," he said.

Goyal called upon Corporate India "to get out of its comfort zone" and look for investment and business opportunities both in India and abroad. "We have to get out of our comfort zone in every area. I mean, for that matter, whether it's banking, financial services, taking UPI internationally, publishing, jewellery, construction, education, culture, even sports," he said.

SECOND PRICE REVISION SINCE CRISIS IN WEST ASIA

LPG cylinder price up Rs 29; OMCs still losing Rs 700: Govt

Ministry: Price of household cylinder lower than that in neighbouring countries

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, June 7

THE PRICE of a 14.2-kg domestic LPG cylinder was raised by Rs 29 effective Sunday, the second such price revision since the start of the war in West Asia which triggered a supply crisis.

The increase follows a Rs 60-per-cylinder hike on March 7, taking the cumulative hike to Rs 89 per 14.2-kg domestic cylinder. It will now cost Rs 942 in Delhi — corresponding changes in price have been effected in other parts of the country.

Beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) will continue to pay an effective Rs 642 per cylinder after receiving a subsidy of Rs 300 per refill on the first four refills annually, down from 9 refills announced last year.

Despite the hike, public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) continue to absorb under-recoveries of about Rs 700 per 14.2-kg cylinder as the market-linked price of the fuel is over Rs 1,600 per cylinder, the Petro-



LPG cylinders being delivered in Nadia, West Bengal, Sunday. PTI

E. EXPLAINED

Consumption down

India's LPG consumption stood at about 90,000 tonnes a day before the West Asia war. But with the disruption in flows through the Strait of Hormuz and seasonal dip in demand, LPG consumption has declined to about 72,000 tonnes a day, according to recent estimates.

leum Ministry said Sunday.

It also said that the price of domestic LPG in India continues to be lower than in neighbouring countries as the government and the OMCs have been shielding house

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Opp targets Govt: 'Why are BJP leaders not protesting now?'

Express News Service
New Delhi, June 7

THE OPPOSITION on Sunday targeted the BJP-led Central government over the domestic LPG price hike, saying it reflects the failure of its economic policies and asked if BJP leaders would hit the streets in protest like they did during the UPA years. The BJP, meanwhile, defended the increase in price, pointing to global factors.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the cost of LPG cylinders had increased by Rs 89

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Domestic LPG price up

holds from spiralling international prices amid the West Asia crisis.

The latest LPG price hike follows increases in the price of other fuels like petrol, diesel, and compressed natural gas (CNG) in recent weeks. The OMCs – Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, and Hindustan Petroleum – are grappling with financial strain as they have been selling consumer fuels below market price. Like in the case of domestic LPG, the companies continue to incur losses on the sales of petrol and diesel, despite the recent price hikes.

“The prices of petroleum products in India are linked to the corresponding prices in the international market. The Government, however, continues to modulate the effective price to the consumer for domestic LPG. Any household can buy as many cylinders as it needs at Rs 942. A PMUY (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana) beneficiary will additionally receive the direct benefit transfer of Rs 300 a cyl-

inder on the first four refills each year (down from nine a year)... and so pays an effective Rs 642 on those refills; this support is unchanged. Even a non-PMUY household would pay about Rs 700 below the market-linked cost of the cylinder,” the Petroleum Ministry said.

There are over 33 crore households with domestic LPG connections, including 10.6 crore households that avail under the PMUY, which provides an additional subsidy of Rs 300 per cylinder.

The international LPG price benchmark, Saudi Contract Price (CP), has risen sharply through the West Asia crisis. It has gone up to \$790 per tonne in June from \$542.50 in February, marking an increase of about 46%.

India depends on imports to meet about 60% of its LPG consumption, and 90% of those imports came via the Strait of Hormuz, where maritime traffic has been effectively halted since early March. The strait's closure

has led to a surge in international oil and fuel prices as the waterway accounted for a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) flows.

“The commercial cylinder used by hotels and businesses is revised automatically every month, because its price is a direct pass-through of the international benchmark. The domestic cooking cylinder is not.

India used to import 60 per cent of its LPG requirements, and the landed cost of that import tracks the Saudi Contract Price (CP) that Saudi Aramco sets at the start of each month. This is an external price over which the Indian consumer has no control,” the Petroleum Ministry said.

Under-recovery is the gap between the international price of LPG and the regulated retail price in the country. It is absorbed by the OMCs and compensated partly by the government. The cumulative under-recovery on LPG in 2025-26 (FY26) was Rs 60,000 crore, up from Rs 41,338 crore in FY25.

In August of last year, the government approved Rs 30,000 crore in budgetary support to the OMCs to partly offset their

losses on domestic LPG sales.

“The under-recovery now absorbed on each domestic cylinder is about Rs 700. The scale of this is visible in the fully market-priced commercial cylinder: the 19 kg cylinder used by hotels and restaurants sells in Delhi at Rs 3,113.50, about Rs 164 a kg, after five increases during the West Asia crisis. The domestic household, by contrast, pays about Rs 66 a kg after the revision. Commercial gas carries a higher rate of tax and larger margins, so it sits above the household's cost-reflective level; even so, the import-linked cost of a domestic cylinder works out to over Rs 1,600,” it said.

According to the Ministry, domestic LPG prices in India are lower when compared to neighbouring countries like Pakistan (Rs 1,046 per cylinder), Nepal (Rs 1,207), Bangladesh (around Rs 1,225), and Sri Lanka (Rs 1,241). In the developed world, LPG prices have shot up even further – for instance, about Rs 1,755 in the US, around Rs 1,765 in Australia, and about Rs 2,411 in Canada – as per the government.



Modi congratulates Major Abhilasha Barak on UN Award

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday congratulated Major Abhilasha Barak on being conferred the UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award and said the honour is a recognition of her exemplary service and also of India's longstanding contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping efforts. Major Barak, currently serving with the United Nations mission in Lebanon, has been honoured with the award for her outreach efforts with women and girls during her deployment in the West Asian nation. She is also the first woman combat helicopter pilot of the Indian Army. PTI

Testing times

GDP data reveal some strengths, but they will come under strain

The GDP growth data released on Friday simultaneously portray recent economic strength and reveal some reasons for worry. The provisional estimates of GDP growth for 2025-26 have been pegged at 7.7%, which is marginally higher than the 7.6% predicted by the government in February. This suggests that March, the first full month since the West Asia crisis erupted, did not see enough of an impact to affect the full year's growth. That resilience will be dented in the months ahead. The data also showed that several key sectors of the economy, such as manufacturing and several services sectors, grew by double digits over and above a relatively high base. These are all good signs for an economy heading into severe supply-related headwinds due to the war in Iran. Notably, both Private Final Consumption Expenditure and Gross Fixed Capital Formation – metrics of household consumption and government and private sector investment activity, respectively – grew faster in 2025-26 than they did in the previous year. The consumption growth is especially welcome given that it had been at a tepid 5.8% for the previous two years. It remains to be seen how much of the investment growth was driven by the private sector. Even if this growth was driven by government spending, it has positive knock-on effects on the rest of the economy.

The weakness in the agriculture sector, however, is something to worry about. The sector's growth slowed to 3% in 2025-26 from 4.2% in 2024-25, despite the 2025 monsoon having concluded at 108% of its long period average (LPA). This is dire news, given that the India Meteorological Department has predicted that this year's monsoon will only be 90% of the LPA. That is not counting the fertilizer supply constraints that will really be felt in the months ahead. The data also show the rising dominance of services in the economy, with their share rising to 54.3% of total gross value added (GVA) in 2025-26, up from 51.9% in 2022-23. The agriculture sector, which continues to employ the largest share of the population by far, saw its share in GVA fall to below 20% from 22.1% in 2022-23. The manufacturing sector's share has remained largely unchanged, another cause for concern. This suggests that India is not growing its value-added manufacturing sector fast enough. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), government, and independent economists are in agreement that 2026-27 will see growth slowing significantly. The RBI predicted growth will dip to 6.6%, and the Chief Economic Adviser said that he saw no need to second-guess this estimate. Last year's tariff-related disruptions were a test of India's export resilience. This year's energy supply disruptions will test the entire economy as well as the government's policy agility.

Not seeking mediation on border dispute: Nepal FM

Kathmandu's focus is on establishing claim on tri-junction; new 'political reality' in Nepal under PM Shah not in favour of tying relations with India to 'old baggage', says visiting Foreign Minister Khanal

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Kathmandu is focused on establishing Nepal's claim on the Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura tri-junction and is not "asking for mediation" by third parties, Nepal's Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal said here on Sunday.

At a press conference at the Embassy of Nepal, Mr. Khanal said he represented a "completely new political reality in Nepal" that was determined to deliver "uncompromising good governance". The new government of Prime Minister Balendra Shah was not in favour of tying Nepal-India relations down to "old baggage", he added.

"We want to solve our disputes through diplo-



Field trip: Nepal's Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal visits the Embassy of Nepal in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

matic processes. We just want to see if we can access some of the documents that might be in libraries or museums in the U.K. Our position was not that we were asking for mediation," Mr. Khanal said, elaborating on Mr. Shah's remarks that Nepal was in contact with China and the

U.K on the Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura dispute with India.

Shah's statement

"The problems that existed when British India left the region still persist, so we believe Britain also has a role to play in this matter," Mr. Shah had said in Ne-

pal's Parliament, stirring debates.

India's Ministry of External Affairs had issued a rebuttal, reiterating that India and Nepal had established a bilateral mechanism for discussing the dispute, and there was no scope for third-party intervention.

As a new-generation political entity, the Rastriya Swatantra Party refuses to "look at India through the distorted, hypersensitive lens of 20th century geopolitics", Mr. Khanal said. "Instead, the RSP wants to shift the entire vocabulary of Nepal-India relations away from geopolitical friction and square it firmly on development diplomacy," he added.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

After a gap of a few years, the border issue between the two sides began simmering again when India on April 30 announced the Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra for 2026, scheduled to be conducted in 20 batches of 50 pilgrims each.

The Ministry of External Affairs announced that the pilgrimage would be conducted “in coordination with the Government of the People’s Republic of China” through the Lipulekh pass that is claimed by Nepal, and the Nathu La pass in Sikkim. This announcement attracted a protest from Nepal, which communicated its objection to both India and China.

“We have expressed our position through an official diplomatic note to both India and China. We have clearly said to both countries that the land [Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura] belongs to us. That’s been our historical claim,” Mr. Khanal said in response to questions.

He said his visit to India had restarted the track of high-level interaction from the two sides, and more such visits would take place from Nepal’s side soon with Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle expected to visit Delhi “very soon”.

Mr. Khanal had held a formal meeting with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during Saturday evening, when the two sides officially announced the operationalisation of peer-to-peer (P2P) cross-border payment transactions under a memorandum of understanding between Nepal Clearing House Ltd. and the National Payments Corporation of India, he said, which would enable digital and financial connectivity between the two sides.

The Nepal Prime Minister was focused on the “domestic front” as he was keen to show “early results” because of the “strong mandate” that the RSP had received in the May election, Mr. Khanal said, refusing to provide a “timeline” for Mr. Shah’s visit to India.

The RSP led by Mr. Shah came to power after defeating the well-established, formerly dominant political players, including the Nepali Congress and the Maoist parties (Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist, or CPN-UML, and CPN-Maoist Centre).

Mr. Shah’s rise to prime ministership took place against the backdrop of the “Gen Z uprising” in Nepal that overthrew the government of K.P. Sharma Oli after Mr. Oli launched a crackdown on Nepal’s digital ecosystem in the first week of September 2025.

“Our rise is driven by an extraordinary and historic mandate from our citizens, centred on uncompromising good governance, strict meritocracy, and direct accountability. Because we are a new generation of leadership, we possess a unique asset – we are absolutely unencumbered by the past,” Mr. Khanal said.

India, Indonesia review bilateral ties as Jaishankar meets his counterpart

Kalol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's expected visit to Indonesia, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Indonesian counterpart Sugiono held the 8th India-Indonesia Joint Commission meeting here on Sunday.

In a press statement, the External Affairs Ministry said the two Ministers covered the "full spectrum" review of bilateral relations covering cooperation in defence, security, maritime, trade and investment, pharma and healthcare, digital, energy, connectivity, space, education, consular and culture domains, as well as political ties.

"The two sides exchanged views on regional



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

and global developments of mutual interest and reaffirmed their commitment to closer cooperation and

coordination in regional and multilateral fora," said the Ministry. Following the meeting, Mr. Jaishankar

said the talks were "substantive".

The Joint Commission meeting was held after a gap of four years, Mr. Jaishankar said in his opening remarks, informing that during the past four years the two sides made "good progress" in bilateral ties.

Mr. Sugiono said Indonesia was looking forward to Mr. Modi's visit that is expected in the coming weeks. He said the visit would provide an "important opportunity to further deepen our cooperation and deliver tangible benefits for our peoples".

The visit will be a reciprocal one by the Indian side as Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto had come to New Delhi in January 2025, when he was the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations here.

WASHINGTON

Pentagon raises threat of Israeli spying to 'critical', say U.S. media



AP

The Pentagon has raised its counter-intelligence threat level for Israel to its highest level, U.S. media reported on Saturday. The move came after concerns that Israel had been attempting to spy on top U.S. officials to get information on “Trump administration’s internal deliberations on the conflicts in West Asia”. AFP

TAIPEI

Taiwan Coast Guard says its vessels are in a 'stand-off' with China ships



AFP

Taiwan's Coast Guard said that its vessels were in a "stand-off" with Chinese ships involved in an operation in waters southeast of the island democracy. The coast guard said that it "strongly condemns China's use of Japan-Philippines negotiations as a pretext to conceal its attempts to create the illusion of 'jurisdiction'". AFP