

Bihar Governor, MoS likely to attend Khamenei's funeral in Iran next month

PM and Jaishankar have foreign visits planned around same dates

Divya A

New Delhi, June 29

BIHAR GOVERNOR Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain (retired) and Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita are likely to represent India at Iran's state funeral for Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei next month, *The Indian Express* has learnt. An official announcement is yet to be made.

Last week, Iran President Masoud Pezeshkian had sent a formal invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the funeral next month. However, sources said there were scheduling issues, as a multinational visit by the Prime Minister was planned around the same dates.

Khamenei was killed in a US-Israeli air strike on Tehran on February 28. While the burial was initially scheduled for March, it was postponed in view of the conflict raging then. The funeral proceedings will begin



(Top) Bihar Governor Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain (retired); Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita

in Tehran on July 4, and he will be laid to rest in his home town of Mashhad on July 9.

With External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, too, unlikely to be available due to pre-scheduled foreign visits, New Delhi wanted to send a delegation commensurate with the importance it attaches to its civilisational ties with Tehran.

As MoS, External Affairs, Margherita represented the Indian government at the

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Khamenei funeral

40th-day mourning ceremony for Khamenei organised by the Iranian Embassy in New Delhi.

Lt Gen Hasnain's inclusion adds strategic heft to the delegation. Besides being the Governor of Bihar, he is widely recognised as an expert on Jammu & Kashmir conflict, Pakistan, West Asia, and transnational extremism.

In 2024, after Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian were killed in a helicopter crash, then Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar had visited Tehran to represent India.

Modi is among the world leaders who have received formal invitations on behalf of Pezeshkian -- leaders of China, Russia, Qatar, France and Pakistan, too, have been sent invitations. Last week, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced that a delegation would be sent for the funeral. A host of other world leaders are also expected to attend the funeral.

The invitation from Iran, days after it signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the US to end hostilities, is a reminder of the civilizational and

strategic ties between Tehran and Delhi amid the shifting dynamics in West Asia.

During the conflict, India and Iran kept bilateral channels open despite Delhi deciding not to take sides. Iran's Foreign Minister Syed Abbas Araghchi visited India in May for the BRICS meeting; its Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi also visited India last week for the BRICS energy ministers' meet. The US has waived sanctions on Iranian oil imports for 60 days.

Modi's last official bilateral visit to Iran was in May 2016, when he had met Khamenei and then President Hassan Rouhani to sign a trilateral agreement -- it included Afghanistan -- for the development of the Chabahar Port. Two years later, in February 2018, Rouhani made an official visit to India, at the invitation of Modi, when he visited New Delhi and Hyderabad.

Modi and Pezeshkian last met on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, in October 2024. Modi had invited Pezeshkian to visit India. Pezeshkian will also be invited to India later this year for the BRICS Leaders Summit.

'China encroaching on ancestral land': Arunachal to probe

Sukrita Baruah

Guwahati, June 29

ARUNACHAL PRADESH Home Minister Mama Natung said on Monday that the state government would constitute a committee to investigate claims by a community organisation in Upper Subansiri district that the Chinese military had allegedly encroached on Indian territory along the border in the district.

The Nah Welfare Society (NWS), a community organisation based in Taksing in Upper Subansiri, which borders China, had recently written to the Deputy Commissioner of the district alleging the "establishment of Chinese camps inside Indian territory at the border" in the Taksing circle.

The letter alleged, "The Chinese government is very fast expanding its territory by occupying new and important places of our land situated in the border area. They have constructed roads, bridges, and set up military camps at many locations along the border in our ancestral lands, which were our hunting grounds where we

freely roamed and collected forest produce just a few years ago. Our cattle grazing areas are now under the occupation of the Chinese PLA."

The letter claimed that these activities have "increased manifold" in the last "10-15 years". "The intention and speed of the present activities of the Chinese PLA in the Taksing area is very alarming and a matter of grave concern for us. We are losing our land inch by inch by day to them," the organisation alleged.

Govt takes notice

Arunachal Pradesh Home Minister Mama Natung told The Indian Express that the state government is awaiting an official report from the district on these claims.

"Currently, these are still claims, and we are awaiting an official report on this based on findings by the district administration, elected representatives, locals and panchayat committees. If encroachment has happened, it will be very wrong. We will constitute a committee to find out what's going on," he said.

Delhi SIR begins today; will include voters displaced by demolitions: CEO

Designated BLOs to visit every registered address even if it's 'a pillar under a flyover', says CEO; month-long exercise to run until July 29; the national capital has 13,033 polling booths covering 1,45,10,298 voters; draft roll will be published on August 5

Suruchi Kumari

NEW DELHI

Ahead of the door-to-door exercise for the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls beginning in Delhi from Tuesday, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ashok Kumar on Monday said the Election Commission of India (EC) will work out a mechanism to ensure that voters whose homes have recently been demolished are not excluded.

Noting that the issue had emerged in the run-up to the exercise, Mr. Kumar said the concern was regarding electors whose registered addresses no longer exist because their houses have been demolished.

"Since their houses at the registered addresses may have been demolished by the time of the Booth Level Officer (BLO)'s visit, and they might not be able to obtain alternative residence proof during the duration of the SIR, we will work out a plan to ensure their inclusion," he said at a press conference.



The big count: Homeless people sleeping under a bridge at Wazirabad in New Delhi on Monday. BLOs would visit every registered address even if it were a temporary location, the CEO said. ANI

The month-long exercise will run until July 29, during which BLOs, including teachers, anganwadi workers and other government staff, will visit every household to distribute pre-printed enumeration forms in duplicate to all existing electors.

Delhi has 13,033 polling booths covering 1,45,10,298 voters, and each elector will receive two copies of the form at their registered address.

"Electors will have to fill the form and submit one copy to the BLO, who will issue an acknowledgement receipt. BLOs will also assist

voters in filling out the forms during their visits. If a voter is unavailable, the forms will be handed over to an adult family member or left at the residence if it is locked," Mr. Kumar said.

He added that the draft electoral roll will be published on August 5, after which claims and objections may be filed until September 4. The claims and objections would be disposed of by October 3 and the final electoral roll would be published on October 7.

Responding to a question about the inclusion of homeless persons, Mr. Ku-

mar said BLOs would visit every registered address even if it were a temporary location. "BLOs will visit the registered address of the elector even if it is a pillar under a flyover. If they are not there, they can file claims and objections after the draft list is published," he said.

Asked whether the exercise could be affected by the monsoon and if the deadline for submission of enumeration forms could be extended, he said the one-month period was adequate. "One month is enough for conducting the exercise," he said.

As part of the SIR, electors are required to map their details with the electoral roll prepared during Delhi's last exercise in 2002 or with the last SIR roll of any other State where they were enrolled at the time. If a voter's name is not found in previous SIR rolls, they can establish eligibility by linking themselves to parents or grandparents whose names appear in those rolls.

Electoral process

Around 42% of electors were mapped in Delhi as part of pre-SIR mapping. Electors can check their own names or those of their blood relatives in previous SIR rolls through the ECINET app. If unable to map their names to any previous SIR roll, they will have to submit one of the 12 documents approved by the EC after receiving a notice from the Electoral Registration Officer following publication of the draft roll on August 5. The Delhi roll was frozen on June 16, with around 2.48 lakh new voters added between January and June 16.

Bengal passes preventive detention, legal curbs Bill

Govt. can detain a person for a year to prevent anti-social activity; CM Suwendu Adhikari says State 'will not misuse [law]... for political vendetta'; law won't stand legal scrutiny, says Trinamool MLA

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The West Bengal Assembly on Monday passed two controversial laws providing for detention of 'anti-socials' for a year and restricting access to a lawyer for such persons, and payment of compensation by those accused of damaging private or public property.

The West Bengal Public Safety and Control of Anti-Social Activities Bill, 2026 empowers the government to detain a person if it deems necessary to stop future anti-social activity for almost a year. It said the government can detain those "generally reputed to be desperate and dangerous to the community".

The Bill proposes constitution of an advisory board where every detention case will be scrutinised within three weeks. The board, which will comprise a chairperson who is or has been a High Court judge, will decide if a person remains in detention or has to be released.

Section 10 (4) of the Bill states, "A detained person shall not be ordinarily represented by a legal practi-

Cracking down

The West Bengal government says the newly introduced Bills aim to curb anti-social activities

- The West Bengal Public Safety and Control of Anti-Social Activities Bill, 2026, allows preventive detention for up to one year if authorities believe a person may engage in future anti-social activities. Cases will be reviewed by an advisory board headed by a current or former High Court judge
- The Bill states that detained

persons will ordinarily not be represented by a lawyer before the advisory board, though the board may make exceptions

- The West Bengal Maintenance of Public Order (Amendment) Bill, 2026, empowers authorities to recover compensation from those found responsible for damage to public or private property

tioner before an advisory board." The proviso of the same sub-section says that the board may remove this prohibition in appropriate cases which should be recorded in writing.

Another legislation passed, titled 'The West Bengal Maintenance of Public Order (Amendment) Bill, 2026', imposes a payment of compensation by persons committing offences such as damage to public or private property.

'Won't misuse'
Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari said such a law has

become necessary because of the criminalisation of politics and added that similar laws have been implemented in Maharashtra, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Jharkhand.

Mr. Adhikari referred to incidents of mob violence when the Trinamool Congress was in power, particularly the killings of Hara-gobinda Das and Chandan Das in April 2025.

"We will not misuse this law. This law will not be used against anyone for the purpose of political vendetta," he said, amidst

concern from the Opposition.

Trinamool MLA from Chanchal and former IPS officer Prasun Banerjee described certain provisions of the Bill as "scary" and said the law will not stand judicial scrutiny. He said by empowering the administration, the BJP government is creating a "Frankenstein" with sweeping powers. He said that by allowing District Magistrates to issue warrants, the Bill is trying to create a "State within the State".

'Anarchy is prevailing'

The State's Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sankar Ghosh said that "anarchy" was prevailing in society because of the Trinamool's 15-year rule and those opposing the Bill want the anarchy to stay. "Right to protest can be a fundamental right but right to destroy public property cannot be a right," he said.

Minister Agnimitra Paul said the Trinamool government was run by "goons" and the new law is an attempt at course correction.

Several Opposition MLAs said the Bill will curb peaceful protests and students' movements.

Why are States opposing VB-G RAM G

EXPLAINER

Sobhana K. Nair

On July 1, the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) will become operational, replacing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

The Union Rural Development Ministry notified the draft rules for the new employment scheme on May 22, giving a month to stakeholders to submit their feedback.

The difference

The VB-G RAM G marks a shift from a “demand-driven framework” to a “supply-driven scheme”. Under the new system, allocations will be capped within a fixed budget determined by the Union government based on “objective parameters”.

While the new Act increases the number of guaranteed workdays from

100 to 125, it also significantly raises the financial burden on States from the current 10% share to 40% of total expenditure. Under the MGNREGA, the Union government was responsible for 100% of the labour wages and 75% of the material wages. In practice, this translated to a 90:10 cost share between the Centre and the States.

Section 5(1) empowers the Union government to “notify rural areas in a State” where the scheme will be implemented. This is a departure from the MGNREGA, which was universal. Another departure from the MGNREGA is that the new law allows for a blackout period, pausing the programme during peak agricultural seasons to “facilitate availability of labour”.

Objections by the States

At least three States – Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand, two of them with BJP-led governments – questioned the shift in



At least three States have raised questions about the shift in the financial model of VB-G RAM G.

the financial model, which now requires a majority of States to bear 40% of the total expenditure, in contrast to the MGNREGA.

Five States have sought a revision of wage rates, and four have aired reservations over the provision of 60 non-working days during the peak agricultural season.

Bihar has sought that wages should increase from the present ₹255 to ₹413. Jammu & Kashmir, meanwhile, wants an in-

crease in wages from ₹272 to ₹311. Both Jharkhand and Punjab argued that wages should be competitive and in line with market conditions. Uttarakhand underlined the tough landscape that workers have to work on and sought a compensatory hike. Nearly all States have highlighted delays in clearing the wage and material bill by the Centre.

Centre to hold power

One of the key concerns raised by academics and activists is that the VB-G RAM G gives disproportionate power to the Centre. As per the draft rules on inter-State distribution of funds, the Union government will adopt objective parameters utilised for horizontal devolution among States as recommended by the 16th Finance Commission. The exact application methodology is determined at the discretion of the Union government, a clause, flagged as concerning.

Only electric two-wheelers to ply on Delhi roads from 2028

Territorial government notifies new EV policy that mandates all two-wheelers to shift to EVs from April 1, 2028; only electric three-wheelers and NI trucks to be registered from January 1, 2027

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Notifying its new EV policy on Monday, the Delhi government said that it would focus entirely on electric vehicles, and that no subsidies would be provided for hybrid vehicles. Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced that the Cabinet had approved the policy at a ₹7,000 crore budget with an overall investment of ₹15,000 crore, including for development of charging infrastructure, purchase and scrapping incentives.

The territorial government has also put into place deadlines for various categories of vehicles to be transitioned to EVs. From January 1, 2027, only electric three wheelers and NI trucks will be registered. The deadline for two-wheelers to shift to EV is April 1, 2028. School buses would also need to convert at least 10% of their fleet to EV within two years of notification of the policy.

Calling the policy 'transformative and revolutionary', the CM said that the transition would be instrumental in combatting air pollution in the city. Ms. Gupta said that the new policy was likely to come into effect on July 1, 2026, and would remain effective till March 31, 2030.

The transport department will be the nodal



No entry: Transport Secretary Niharika Rai claimed 46% of air pollution was caused by two- and three-wheelers. FILE PHOTO

agency for the implementation of the policy with Delhi Transco Ltd. (DTL) responsible for developing charging infrastructure in the city, including collaborating with the power department and distribution companies to provide power for the EV transition.

Transport Secretary Niharika Rai said that 33% of air pollution was caused by commercial goods carrier vehicles and 46% by two- and three-wheelers. "The policy focuses on these vehicles specifically. We are trying to convert the entire fleet of these vehicles into EV," she said.

The government has allocated a budget of ₹7,000 crore for implementation of the policy with an additional ₹3,000 crore as purchase and scrapping incentives. About ₹1,000 crore has been allocated for development of charging infrastructure in the city. Besides, citizens would also be exempted from road tax

and registration fee would be waived for all electric vehicles (EVs). The government was expected to lose ₹3,000 crore worth of revenue from these benefits, the officials said.

However, the officials specified that the road tax and registration fee exemption would be applicable for cars costing only up to ₹30 lakh, at ex-show-room price.

The official said that citizens would get purchase incentives of up to ₹30,000 for two-wheelers: ₹30,000 in the first year of notification of the policy, ₹20,000 in the second year and ₹10,000 in the third year. For three wheelers, the incentives will be ₹50,000, ₹40,000 and ₹30,000 respectively, for the first, second and third years. Similarly, a subsidy of up to ₹1 lakh would be provided for NI commercial trucks in the first year of the EV policy.

Scrapping incentives for

vehicles below BS-IV emission norms categories would be around ₹10,000 for two-wheelers, ₹25,000 for three-wheelers and ₹1 lakh for four-wheelers. Scrapping NI trucks would beget ₹50,000 as incentive and Gramin Seva units completing their lifecycle in the coming years, would also get ₹15,000 subsidy, the officials said.

Moreover, electric N2 trucks, i.e., those carrying loads from 3.5-12 tonnes, would be exempted from 'No Entry' timings for the next 10 years. However, this is applicable only to the first 1,000 N2 trucks purchased within three months of notification of the policy.

The officials also said that no subsidy would be provided for hybrid vehicles. A new dedicated EV portal would keep track of purchased and registered vehicles for which consumers would have to submit their documents to avail subsidies and incentives.

Consumers would be able to apply for the subsidies within 30 days of issuance of registration certificates. The subsidies would be provided within 60 days through DBT.

The government also plans to install 32,000 charging points infrastructure within the next four years, funded by PM e-Drive schemes as well as the Delhi government budget.

Dozens killed as Pakistan targets Afghan militants

Agence France-Presse
TSAMKANI (AFGHANISTAN)

Pakistan launched its deadliest attack on Afghanistan in months, with Islamabad saying on Monday it killed dozens of militants as the Afghan government reported civilian casualties.

The night-time strikes are the latest flare-up of violence between the neighbours whose relationship has been fraught since 2021, when the Taliban government took power in Kabul, and follow a weeks-long war that erupted in February.

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said air and ground operations killed 29 militants and were aimed at a group that it blames for a deadly weekend assault in Karachi, although Afghan authorities have repeatedly denied their territory harbours attackers. The Taliban regime said the air



In ruins: Afghan residents looking at a building damaged in a Pakistani air strike at a village in Paktia province on Monday. AFP

strikes hit three eastern provinces, killing 36 civilians and wounding 163.

The Pakistani operation along the border is the deadliest since March, when an attack on a drug treatment centre in Kabul killed hundreds according to the United Nations.

Mr. Tarar said the latest offensive targeted Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a splinter group of the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In the countries' capitals, the Foreign Ministries summoned each

other's diplomats over the attack in Afghanistan's border area and earlier in Pakistan's megacity Karachi.

In Paktia's Tsamkani district, hundreds of mourners gathered before the funeral beds of some of those killed.

Mediation from several countries, including China, has failed to produce a lasting resolution between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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Dozens killed as Pak. targets Afghan militants

Their war earlier this year killed hundreds of Afghans and displaced tens of thousands, according to the UN.

There have been sporadic attacks since a cease-fire was reached in March, with Pakistani strikes in June killing 13 people, Afghan officials said.

Islamabad is mediating between the United States and Iran to end their war in West Asia, but Pakistan says its battle against militancy at home requires its strikes on Afghanistan.

Explosives were detonated and gunmen opened fire inside a Rangers paramilitary camp in Karachi on Saturday in one of the worst militant attacks in Pakistan's most populous city in years.

Authorities said three paramilitary personnel were killed and that they had detained an Afghan involved in the attack.

Pakistan says its forces use "precise targeting" to aim at militant hideouts and weapons stores, especially those of the TTP that has waged a violent campaign against Pakistan for years.

Afghan authorities have repeatedly denied that the country is used by militants and say Pakistani operations have caused a heavy civilian death toll.

Iran to get \$6 billion in frozen assets from Qatar: Pezeshkian

President praises interim agreement, calls it 'a great victory for the Iranian people'; no mention of assets release by the U.S. or Qatar; Tehran had struck a tanker with Qatari crude oil this weekend

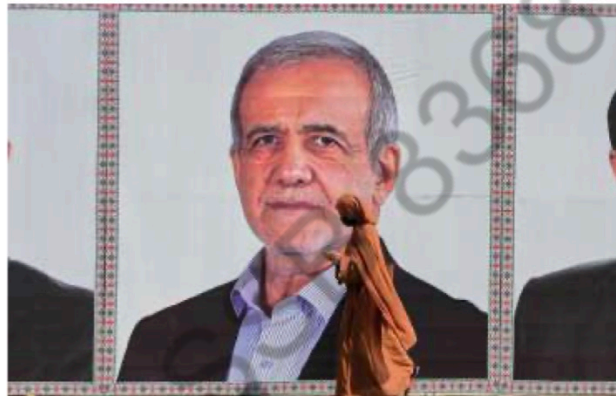
Associated Press

DUBAI

Iran's President said on Monday that \$6 billion in frozen Iranian assets would be released by Qatar, as negotiations with the United States were challenged by attacks across the Persian Gulf this weekend.

Masoud Pezeshkian's mention of the funds appear aimed at selling the Iranian public on the interim deal, particularly as its grip on the Strait of Hormuz has been tested by efforts to open Oman's territorial waters to both inbound and outbound traffic from the Persian Gulf.

During the war that began when the U.S. and Israel launched attacks on Iran on February 28, Tehran's attacks and threats stopped cargo ships and tankers from moving



A woman walks past a billboard featuring Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in Pakistan — a key mediator in the negotiations. AP

through the strait, in which about a fifth of all traded oil and natural gas passed in peacetime, creating a global energy crisis.

The strait has long been considered an international waterway despite its location in Iran and Oman's territorial waters.

In recent days, Iran has twice attacked vessels going through a route near the Omani side, drawing

retaliatory American airstrikes and concerns that negotiations to reach a formal end to the war could be disrupted. Iran launched drone and missile attacks targeting Bahrain and Kuwait on Sunday.

On interim deal

Mr. Pezeshkian offered praise for the interim deal, which includes waivers for

sanctions on Iran's oil and petrochemical sectors, in comments published on Monday by the state-run IRNA news agency, calling it "a great victory for the Iranian people."

"Based on the plans made, \$6 billion out of the total \$12 billion of Iranian resources in Qatar will be released and returned to the country, and necessary follow-ups are being carried out," he said.

Mr. Pezeshkian is the highest-ranking official within Iran to reference the release of the funds held by Qatar, a key mediator along with Pakistan in the negotiations. So far, U.S. officials say no frozen Iranian assets have been released. Qatar as well as has not acknowledged any such transfer and Iran attacked a tanker filled with Qatari crude oil this weekend during the crossfire in the Persian Gulf.