

Nilekani to lead high-powered task force on exam reforms: PM

It will recommend steps to make exam system leak-proof and technology-driven; former ISRO Chairman Somanath, IIT-M Director Kamakoti among members; Pralhad Joshi takes charge as Union Education Minister; chairs review meeting

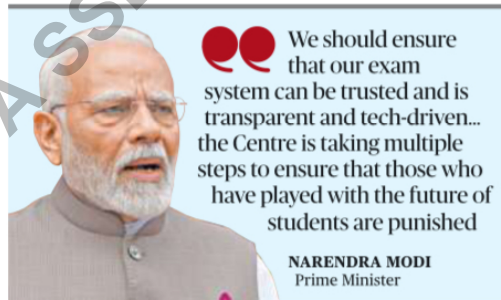
Nistula Hebbar
Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

P rime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced the constitution of a high-powered task force, to be headed by former UIDAI Chairman Nandan Nilekani, to recommend steps to make the country's examination system leak-proof and technology-driven.

The announcement came a day after former Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned following widespread protests over the NEET paper leak and subsequent re-examination.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Sunday officially took charge of the Ministry of Education at Kartavya Bhavan. Mr. Joshi, who also holds the portfolios of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and New and Renewable Energy, chaired a meeting of the Ministry to review the implementation of various schemes and other initiatives.

"We should ensure that our exam system can be trusted, and is transparent and tech-driven. Under the



leadership of renowned technology expert Nandan Nilekani, a high-powered task force will be formed, which will focus on exam reforms," Mr. Modi said in a video posted on Instagram. "The Centre is taking multiple steps to ensure that those who have played with the future of students are punished. We have already announced the formation of fast-track courts. We are bringing a stringent law in Parliament on Monday," he said.

'Compromised image'

Responding to the announcement, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said the Centre was vet to implement the K. Radhakrishnan Committee's 101 recommendations after the 2024 examination

leaks. "This is ultimately only a high-powered attempt to fix the Pradhan Mantri's irretrievably compromised image," he said in a post on X.

The multidisciplinary panel of domain experts will help revamp the National Testing Agency's examination system, especially from a technology perspective, sources said, adding the committee under Mr. Nilekani will consist of former ISRO Chairman S. Somanath, former IB Director Tapan Deka, IIT-Madras Director V. Kamakoti, former Education Secretary Anita Karwal, and logistics expert Amrit Lal Meena.

CONTINUED ON

» **PAGE 10**

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» **PAGES 10 & 11**

Rahul questions Shah over 'barbaric assault' in Delhi

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

Seeking accountability for the "barbaric assault" on students during the march in Delhi on July 20, Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, has asked Union Home Minister Amit Shah whether he had authorised the use of "lethal force". In a letter

written to the Minister, the Congress leader noted that the students were demanding a fair education system. But, instead of being heard, security forces assaulted them with indiscriminate force and lethal weapons, he said, also noting the alleged use of pellet guns.

FULL REPORT ON

» **PAGE 11**

Tejashwi demands release of protesters held in Bihar

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Lashing out at the Bihar Police for the arrest of hundreds during a State-wide bandh on Saturday, the State's Leader of the Opposition, Tejashwi Yadav, on Sunday called for the immediate release of students, Opposition MLAs, and

other protesters, including his elder brother Tej Pratap Yadav.

He warned the State government that more people would hit the streets once again in protest, if those held are not released within 24 hours.

FULL REPORT ON

» **PAGE 10**

Nilekani to lead task force on exam reforms

Mr. Nilekani has worked with the Union government in the past to set up the Aadhaar ecosystem and Unified Payments Interface (UPI). He is also the chairperson of the governing body of the economic policy research think tank, the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), and a co-founder of Infosys.

Joshi takes charge

After assuming charge of the Education Ministry, Mr. Joshi told the media, "The Prime Minister has entrusted me with this responsibility with full confidence. I was in Karnataka yesterday. I reached here last night and came this morning to take charge. I have assumed charge."

"I am reviewing all the details here and the decisions that need to be taken. I have been gathering information and trying to understand the functioning of the Ministry. We had continuous meetings today. This is a new subject for me. I have taken charge today and held detailed discussions with the senior officers. It is a very big department, so I will speak to you in detail after I have understood it completely," Mr. Joshi stated.

Union Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary attended the meeting. Officials said Mr. Joshi reviewed key schemes, including Samagra Shiksha, PM-SHRI Schools and PM POSHAN, and discussed school infrastructure.

Higher Education Department Secretary, School Education and Literacy Department Secretary, and other senior officials of the Ministry were present.

Who approved assault on students, asks Rahul

Congress leader seeks accountability from Home Minister for 'the use of lethal force, including pellet guns' against students in Delhi; Opposition likely to demand PM's apology in Parliament

Sandeep Phukan

NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, has sought accountability from Union Home Minister Amit Shah for the "barbaric assault on students who were peacefully protesting in Delhi" on July 20. In a letter on Saturday, he asked Mr. Shah whether the latter had authorised the use of "lethal force".

Opposition parties are likely to raise this issue in Parliament on Monday and demand an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sources told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Gandhi said peaceful protest was crucial to any democracy and it was the government's responsibility to protect protesters and resolve their grievances through dialogue.

The Congress MP said the students were demanding a fair and accountable education system, but instead of being heard, they were assaulted by security forces with indiscriminate force, including lethal weapons



Rahul Gandhi speaks to media on the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in New Delhi on Saturday. @INCINDIA

pons and tear gas.

"Hundreds have suffered serious injuries. Women students have been assaulted by policemen, including by deliberately targeting their private parts. Most shocking has been the use of lethal pellet guns," Mr. Gandhi said in the letter, a copy of which was posted on his X handle on Sunday.

He mentioned meeting 19-year-old student Sahil Lochab, who could lose his eyesight because of pellet gun wounds.

"As Home Minister, did you approve the use of lethal force including pel-

let guns against students? If not, who did? Are the people in plainclothes seen beating students with lathis police personnel or volunteers? Who authorised their deployment?" Mr. Gandhi asked.

On Saturday, the Opposition leader directly blamed the Home Minister for the use of "lethal weapons and pellet guns" in police action.

"We will not accept our own forces shooting the future of India. So, that is going to be a major issue in Parliament," he said.

Other Opposition leaders have also moved a not-

ice under Rule 267 seeking suspension of business to discuss "use of excessive force on student protestors during NEET examination protest". Trinamool Congress's Sagarika Ghosh said, "It is extremely shocking that that such extreme coercive measures were taken on unarmed students and youth. Government needs to give us answers on who authorised the use of pellet guns."

Asked if the RAF was authorised to use pellet guns, G.P. Singh, Director-General, Central Reserve Police Force, told *The Hindu*, "Now, since agitation has been called off, and assembled people have dispersed, we would make a professional post-event assessment, like we do after every major assignment, and then let you know the view of the Force Headquarters."

Asked if the Opposition would disrupt proceedings in Parliament, Mr. Gandhi said it would be decided in the meeting of Opposition leaders on Monday morning.

(With inputs from Sobhana K. Nair and Vijaita Singh)

Centre warns Indian seafarers about jobs in 'volatile' Black Sea

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

The External Affairs Ministry on Sunday issued an advisory urging Indian seafarers to “carefully assess security risks” before accepting jobs on commercial ships that operate “in and around the Black Sea and adjoining maritime areas”, citing increasing drone and missile attacks on ships in the region that remains highly volatile due to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Earlier, the Indian Embassy in Ukraine said it was “closely monitoring” the situation after a projectile hit the *MV AGN Ragnar* in Ukraine’s Black Sea port of Odesa on Saturday. The ship employed four Indian seafarers, of whom two have been found to be safe while information about the other two is still awaited.

There has been an increase in the number of such incidents since April, resulting in the deaths of five Indian seafarers, the Ministry said. “Indian nationals intending to undertake employment on commercial vessels operating in or transiting the conflict-affected region are advised to carefully assess the prevailing security risks before accepting such assignments,” the Ministry said



The Ministry of External Affairs has cited increasing attacks on ships in the region. FILE PHOTO

in its advisory, noting the security situation in the region and around the Black Sea and adjoining maritime areas. “Commercial vessels operating in or transiting these waters are facing significant security risks, including missile and drone attacks,” it said.

The Ministry urged Indians to follow a set of precautions, such as obtaining “comprehensive information from employers/recruitment agencies and ship operators regarding the vessel’s intended route, ports of call, security arrangements, and emergency response procedures”. The “terms of employment” should “comply with applicable maritime standards and provide adequate provisions for medical care, evacuation, repatriation, and compensation in the event of an emergency,” it said.

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 10**

Centre warns Indians about jobs in Black Sea

Indian seafarers were urged to follow all the advisories issued by the Directorate General of Maritime Administration, including the one on July 23.

Search and rescue under way

The latest advisory came a day after the *MV AGN Ragnar* was struck at the port of Odesa. “Four Indian nationals were on board the vessel. As per the latest information, two have been confirmed safe, and information is awaited regarding the other two nationals. Search and rescue operations are under way. The Embassy is in constant touch with the authorities concerned,” the Indian Embassy in Kyiv said, without specifying who had fired the projectile that hit the ship.

Earlier on July 19, the *MV Golden Leo*, a Guinea Bissau-flagged ship, was also hit by projectiles that led to the deaths of 10 seafarers, of whom four were Indian citizens. This incident had prompted the MEA to summon the chargé d'affaires of the Russian Embassy in India.

CRPF INQUIRY INTO CRACKDOWN ON PROTESTERS

RAF man fired 7 rounds from pellet gun, 5 hit protesters: Probe

Mahender Singh Manral

New Delhi, July 26

THE CENTRAL Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is learnt to have found that a person from its Rapid Action Force (RAF), who was deployed in Connaught Place area during the July 20 protest march to Parliament, fired at least seven rounds from his pellet gun. Five rounds hit protesters, while two struck the ground, sources told *The Indian Express*.

As reported by *The Indian Express* earlier, the CRPF had initiated an inquiry into whether pellet guns were used



RAF personnel during the protest on July 20. GAJENDRA YADAV

by RAF personnel during the crackdown on protesters.

At least three persons were treated in hospitals for pellet

gun injuries sustained during the protest march — Irshad Sheikh, 25, who works in

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Pellet gun

Gurgaon; Sahil Lochab, 19, a Delhi University student, and a 28-year-old journalist with Outlook magazine.

After examining log entries made by RAF personnel, it emerged that a total of seven pellet rounds had been fired by one RAF person in Connaught Place, said a source. "Five of the rounds hit the protesters and two hit the ground. The rounds were fired after protesters attacked security personnel and started pelting stones," the source said.

When contacted, DG (CRPF) Gyanendra Pratap Singh reiterated his earlier statement: "Now, since the agitation has been called off, and assembled people have dispersed, we would make a professional post-event assessment, like we do after every major assignment, and then let you know the view of the Force head-quarter." Queries sent to RAF Inspector General Seema Dhundhia and the CRPF spokesperson did not elicit any response.

On Sunday, *The Indian Express* reported that Dhundhia was learnt to have told personnel that the "force gradient"

adopted for crowd control during the July 20 protest march was not in accordance with prescribed standards and RAF training. The observation came after an internal review flagged serious operational lapses.

In the context of policing, a force gradient refers to the different levels of force that police may use, depending on the threat or resistance they face.

Dhundhia held a video conference on July 22 with company commanders and commandants deployed in Delhi. "The meeting reviewed the role, deployment and conduct of RAF personnel during the protest at Jantar Mantar and the Sansad Chalo march. A series of corrective measures were laid down for future law and order duties," a source said.

"Officers were instructed that force must be used only to the extent necessary, and in a judicious, fair, balanced and sensitive manner. They were also told that before using force, personnel should issue necessary warnings and follow graded crowd-control measures such as lathicharge, tear smoke and other approved methods, depending on the situation," the source said.

India scaling new heights in defence production: PM

India is continuously strengthening its technological capabilities, says Modi in *Mann Ki Baat* address; he lauds Indian sportspersons, students for their achievements in respective fields

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

India is continuously scaling new heights in defence production, defence exports, and political cooperation with friendly nations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday in the latest episode of *Mann Ki Baat*, his monthly radio address.

Mr. Modi also paid tributes to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives during the Kargil War in 1999.

India was continuously strengthening its technological capabilities, he said. Citing the induction of *INS Mahendragiri* into the Indian Navy, he said the modern warship had been designed and built in India. More than 75% of the materials used in it are indigenous. "It is a symbol of the growing strength of an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'." This very month, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) also successfully tested the Pinaka Long-Range Guided Rocket. Behind this success lies the collective perseverance of our scientists and engineers. The DRDO



Whether it is defence production, defence exports, or political cooperation with friendly nations, India is continuously scaling new heights. Global confidence in India's defence equipment and technology is growing

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister



also successfully tested the Kusha missile," he said.

"Whether it is defence production, defence exports, or political cooperation with friendly nations, India is continuously scaling new heights. Earlier this month, I was in Indonesia, where a major agreement regarding Brahmos and Astra missiles was concluded. Global confidence in India's defence equipment and technology is growing," Mr. Modi said.

Remarkable feats

Wishing the Indian contingent the very best for the Commonwealth Games, which began in Glasgow a few days ago, the Prime Minister said people across the country hoped that the

players and athletes would perform exceptionally well and make the nation proud. "Our youth have achieved remarkable feats in sports recently. P.V. Sindhu has become the first Indian to win the Japan Open title in badminton; the entire nation is proud of this achievement of hers," he said.

He said the Indian women's cricket team had won the first-ever women's Test match at Lord's in London. "This is a historic victory. But that is not all. In the long history of Lord's, this was the first Test match played by a women's team. It was on this very ground that India won her first Cricket World Cup in 1983. Now, our 'Nari

Shakti' has brought glory to the nation there," he said.

Mr. Modi said "our young friends" were also bringing glory to India in the field of science. "Olympiads in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Mathematics were held just this month. The Indian contingent delivered a spectacular performance in these competitions. In the Physics Olympiad, all five of our students won gold medals, and India secured the top rank," he said.

"In the Chemistry Olympiad, too, all our students won gold medals. All our students also won medals in the Biology Olympiad, including a gold medal. In the Mathematics Olympiad, our students secured two gold and four silver medals. I am immensely proud of the nation's youth power. It is heartening to see the culture of Olympiads and Hackathons steadily growing in India. I am confident that more and more young people across the country will show interest in such forums and keep the flag of India flying high," he said.

Indus Waters Treaty: India's plans, Pakistan's protests



SHUBHJIT ROY

PAKISTAN HAS been targeting India in recent weeks over the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), which New Delhi placed in abeyance after the Pahalgam terror attack last April. Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif recently said his country would not hesitate to go to war for its water security.

The Indian government's argument, that "blood and water cannot flow together", has at times been perceived to be directed at its domestic political constituency. That weakens its argument in front of the global audience, which often is sympathetic to Pakistan portraying itself as the lower riparian victim.

Pakistan's actions

India maintains it has honoured the treaty amid wars, military crises, terror attacks and prolonged periods of bilateral hostility as Pakistan pursued a policy of cross-border terrorism. According to New Delhi, such treaties cannot remain insulated from persistent acts of hostility.

India feels that Pakistan's conduct reflects a pattern of obstruction. Virtually every Indian project on the Western Rivers (meant for Pakistan's use) — irrespective of its size, storage capacity or technical design — has been objected to by Pakistan. Indian officials argue that the treaty's dispute resolution provisions, intended as an exceptional mechanism to resolve genuine differences, have been converted into instruments for delaying Indian projects.

New hydrological realities

The IWT reflects the technological and hydrological realities of the late 1950s. More than 60 years later, India's population has increased several-fold, resulting in higher demand for drinking water, irrigation, industry and urban development needs. States dependent upon the Indus Basin — including Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan — face increasing water stress and development requirements that could not have been envisaged when the Treaty was signed.

The Indus Basin

India also faces a serious challenge of declining groundwater levels, particularly



The Salal dam on the Chenab. Pakistan had objected to it. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

in Punjab and Haryana, making greater utilisation of available surface water an urgent national priority.

At the same time, the hydrological regime has evolved, with reduced availability in the Eastern Rivers (for India's use), while flows in the Western Rivers have not experienced a comparable decline.

Climate change has altered basin dynamics through greater hydrological variability, increasing the need for flood moderation, drought resilience, storage optimisation and adaptive operations.

Engineering practices have undergone a profound transformation since 1960. Modern dam safety and sustainability require low-level outlets, drawdown flushing, gated spillways, advanced sediment management and flexible reservoir operations. These technologies were either unavailable or not widely recognised when the treaty was drafted.

India's commitments towards clean energy transition and climate goals require efficient development of hydropower infrastructure using state-of-the-art engineering practices, rather than technologies frozen in the engineering standards of the 1950s.

The IWT imposes extensive obligations on India concerning project design, storage limits, spillway configuration, operational procedures and advance information. While Pakistan has built hydropower projects on its rivers, it objects to similar initiatives by India.

Dividing a river system

The Indus Waters Treaty divides the six rivers of the Indus system, giving India control of the Eastern Rivers (Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej), and Pakistan the Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab).

Sections within India have long held that the IWT is one of the most generous water-sharing arrangements ever accepted by an upper riparian state.

Pakistan's water crisis

Pakistan's recurring claims of water insecurity linked to the IWT are contradicted by its official documents and public statements. The Pakistan National Water Policy acknowledges that approximately 35 million-acre feet (MAF) of water flows annually into the Arabian Sea without productive utilisation.

It records that nearly 30-40% of canal water is lost during conveyance, with barely about 58 MAF ultimately reaching farms out of more than 100 MAF diverted through the canal system.

These figures reveal that Pakistan's principal challenge is not upstream water availability but inefficient water management. Chronic canal seepage, ageing irrigation infrastructure, inadequate storage capacity, poor irrigation efficiency, delayed modernisation and inefficient cropping patterns continue to constrain Pakistan's agricultural productivity. These are domestic governance and infrastructure issues that cannot reasonably be attributed to India's hydropower projects.

Senior Pakistani leaders have publicly acknowledged as much. Former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi admitted that Pakistan's water shortages arise primarily from internal mismanagement rather than any diversion by India.

Pakistan has also attempted to portray fluctuations in the Chenab River as evidence of hostile manipulation. But officials say this ignores both hydrological realities

Since the treaty was put in abeyance, Pakistan has been targeting India on international fora for 'treating a lower riparian state unfairly'

and established operational practices of run-of-the-river hydropower projects.

River flows at downstream locations such as Marala are influenced by seasonal snowmelt in the Himalayas. Variations in winter snowfall, delayed melting, or cooler spring temperatures naturally affect early-season discharge levels. Such fluctuations cannot, by themselves, be interpreted as evidence of deliberate interference. Temporary fluctuations in downstream river flows during sediment flushing or maintenance operations are normal, regulated engineering phenomena observed in reservoir operations across the world.

What India may now be looking at

Utilising waters: India is expediting projects designed to prevent the avoidable wastage of waters allocated to it. A key priority will be the accelerated development of hydropower projects on the Chenab basin. These are critical for India's clean energy transition, grid stability and regional development.

Major projects under implementation include the 1,850 MW Sawalkot Hydroelectric Project, the 1,000 MW Pakal Dul Project, the 850 MW Ratle Project, the 624 MW Kinnar Project and the 540 MW Kwar Project.

The Ujh Multipurpose Project, on a tributary of the Ravi, will enable the storage and productive utilisation of waters that presently flow unutilised across the International Boundary while simultaneously providing irrigation, drinking water, flood moderation and hydropower benefits to Jammu & Kashmir and other states.

Flushing reservoirs: India will also restore the efficiency and sustainability of existing hydropower projects through modern reservoir and sediment management practices. For decades, essential maintenance measures such as sediment flushing and operation of low-level outlets were either delayed or constrained because of persistent objections from Pakistan, despite these being internationally accepted engineering practices.

The Salal Hydroelectric Project illustrates the consequences of such restrictions. Originally designed with a gross storage capacity of about 284 million cubic metres (MCM), the project had to plug its low-level sediment outlets following Pakistan's objections, depriving the reservoir of its primary sediment management mechanism. As a result, the reservoir silted up within a few years of commissioning, reducing its effective storage.

US pauses attacks for 2nd straight day, Iran does too

Associated Press
Cairo, July 26

THE UNITED States paused its attacks on Iran for a second straight day Sunday and Tehran said it had done so too, as efforts continued to bring the countries back to negotiations on an interim ceasefire deal.

It was not clear why the US had paused after targeting Iranian coastal areas and infrastructure in a nearly two-week escalation sparked by Iran's firing at ships trying to transit the Strait of Hormuz.

The Pentagon did not respond to questions Sunday. US President Donald Trump is "giving talks some space. He's giving it a little bit of room," Mike Waltz, the US Ambassador to the UN, told *Fox News*. "We've had both Oman and Iran... engaged at every level, from most senior levels all way down to technical level over past few weeks, and particularly in past few days."

Since the US has halted attacks for the past two nights, Iran has as well, its army spokesperson told Iran's state TV on Sunday. Tehran in recent days has counterattacked against countries in the region hosting



US military helicopters and personnel take part in operations to enforce a naval blockade against Iran in Arabian Sea. @CENTCOM, REUTERS

US military forces, killing at least three at a base in Jordan.

A regional official involved in mediation efforts said diplomacy was underway and that a pause in US and Iranian strikes was a "positive signal that helps their efforts to de-escalate."

The official said both countries want to return to the interim ceasefire deal and that a compromise being negotiated centres on having Iran run vessel transit through the Strait with fewer restrictions on ships.

Concerns continued about shipping on the strait and now

on another crucial waterway in the region, the Bab al-Mandeb strait to the Red Sea. Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen last week threatened a blockade of Saudi shipping there.

Iran on Sunday said it continued to speak with Oman about managing safe passage of ships on the Strait, which passes between the countries. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said talks had made progress and continued. Baghaei also said the strait's status remained unchanged.

Tehran has asserted the in-

terim deal with the US allows it to manage shipping on the waterway for now, and it has objected to US efforts to support a route through the strait that passes close to Oman instead.

The US military Saturday said its recently reimposed naval blockade against Iran continued, with a dozen commercial ships redirected, two disabled and two boarded. US forces "remain highly vigilant, focused and ready," it added.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to travel to US and meet with Trump in Washington on Tuesday, his office has said. Netanyahu on Sunday told Fox News he "fully" backs Trump's efforts to weaken Iran and press it to end its nuclear program, adding: "If he can do so without returning to intense military fighting, that's fine. Why not?"

The PM indicated he would not present new information to "our good friend" Trump and instead would listen to "what he has in mind, because I think in many ways, it's his decision." But Netanyahu warned that if Iran again attacks Israel, directly or with armed proxies, "it will make a terrible mistake."

Iran slams Ukrainian attack on its vessel in Caspian Sea

Agence France-Presse

TEHRAN

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Sunday warned that his country would respond to a deadly attack by Ukraine on an Iranian ship in the Caspian Sea.

It came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Kyiv had carried out long-range strikes in the Caspian Sea against vessels transporting military cargo involving Iran, underscoring the increasingly international dimensions of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Sailor killed

"Mr. Zelenskyy has attacked an Iranian commercial vessel, killing a sailor," Mr. Araghchi said on social media platform X, describing it as "a blatant UN Char-



Abbas Araghchi

ter violation done at Israel's behest to drag Europe into its war".

He added that, during calls with the European Union's Kaja Kallas and Russian top diplomat Sergei Lavrov, he "made clear that what the freeloader in Kyiv did CANNOT GO UNANSWERED".

Iran's Foreign Ministry said the attack caused the ship "to explode, killing one sailor and injuring sev-

eral others". The Islamic republic "has never intervened in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine", the Ministry said in a statement.

On Saturday, the Ukrainian President said on social media that armed forces had achieved "very strong results with long-range strikes in the Caspian Sea".

Ukraine's intelligence services reported on Telegram that drone attacks had been carried out against "cargo vessels under international sanctions that were used to transport military cargo between Iran and Russia".

According to Iranian state television, the Foreign Ministry summoned the Ukrainian charge d'affaires in Tehran on Saturday to protest this "hostile and criminal act".

Israeli settlers set fire to mosques in West Bank following deadly clashes

Incident escalated after a settler group descended on the Palestinian village; local people say graffiti in mosque called for revenge; Israeli military says troops searching for suspects; four Palestinians and two Israelis killed in Friday's shooting

Reuters
NABLUS

Israeli settlers attacked Palestinian villages in the occupied West Bank early on Sunday, setting fire to two mosques and scrawling graffiti on buildings, Palestinian officials said.

The attacks followed an incident on Friday when four Palestinians and two Israeli soldiers were killed when a crowd of Israeli settlers approached the Palestinian village of Tal, southwest of Nablus. During the incident, villagers came out of their homes to confront the settlers and a stand-off ensued.

Palestinian local author-



A Palestinian man prepares to pray at a mosque burned by Israeli settlers in Qusra, in Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Sunday. AFP

ities say the settlers provoked the violence. The Israeli military said shots were fired by both sides.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, facing an election in October, or-

dered a security operation against what he described as terrorism against Israeli civilians, reinforcing units in the West Bank.

In an apparent reaction to the deaths of the Israelis, settlers carried out a series of attacks on Palestinian villages in West Bank. Abdel Azim Wadi, head of the village council in Qusra, said settlers had torched a newly completed mosque in his village early on Sunday. "They set it on fire and spray-painted Hebrew slogans on its walls," he said. Among the graffiti were messages including "Jewish revenge".

'Systematic pogroms'

The Palestinian Authority, which has responsibility for the section of the West Bank where Friday's shootings took place, said the incident was part of a generalised assault on Palestinians. "Israeli state-

backed settler terrorism is intensifying into systematic pogroms across the occupied West Bank," the Palestinian Prime Minister's office said.

The Israeli military said troops sent to Qusra were searching for suspects.

In separate incidents, Palestinian officials said settlers had also tried to burn a mosque near Kour. Farid Jiyousi, a member of the Kour village council, said worshippers had put out the fire before it reached the main area of the mosque.

Most countries and UN consider Israeli settlements in the West Bank illegal, a position Israel rejects.

Trump's tariff threat on generics: Why it matters for Indian pharma firms

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, July 26

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Tuesday (July 21) said that tariffs on generic drugs in the US will be raised 100% after two years and to 200% thereafter to "reshore" generic pharma production in the US, adding that companies deciding against building plants in the US will be "penalised".

Trump's threat comes after several such ultimatums, largely designed to attract investment in the US. Actual tariffs on drugs have been exempted in most tariff instruments his administration has used, starting with those under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, Section 122 of the 1974 Trade Act, and Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962.

Here's why this assumes significance for India and how Indian pharma giants are already changing tack in terms of investments in the US.

Boosting investments in the US

On at least two occasions, Trump had threatened tariffs on medicines despite push-back within the US. On April 2 this year, he announced tariffs of up to 100% on specified branded medicines starting July 31 under the Section 232 framework that invokes national security. On September 25, 2025, he announced plans for a 100% tariff on imported branded and patented medicines, but neither proposal has been implemented yet.

• PHARMA PUSH

THE US is India's largest pharma export market, accounting for nearly 40% of exports, with about 90% of shipments comprising generics

SUN PHARMA, India's largest pharma company, announced the acquisition of US-listed Organon & Co. for \$11.8 bn. This is an Indian pharma company's largest overseas acquisition to date

Trade and investment experts said that these threats are largely aimed at pushing global pharma giants to boost investments in Washington rather than increasing tariffs on drugs, which could trigger a backlash for the Trump administration, especially weeks before the mid-term elections.

E.

This assumes significance for India as the US is India's largest market for pharmaceutical exports, accounting for an almost 40% share.

Around 90% of India's pharmaceutical exports to the US are generics. In 2025, India exported \$9.7 billion worth of pharmaceuticals to the US. The US imported \$213 billion worth of pharmaceutical products in 2025, including \$94.1 billion of finished medicines sold in retail packs — the category that includes generic medicines. Tariff-related uncertainties may have triggered investment outflow from India to the US to secure access to the world's largest consumer market. Sun Pharmaceutical Industries, India's

largest pharma company, announced the acquisition of US-listed Organon & Co. for \$11.8 billion. This is an Indian pharmaceutical company's largest overseas acquisition to date.

Rising outbound investments

The outbound investments for pharma during the ongoing financial year, as per official data, is the highest compared with the last four years combined. As per the Commerce Ministry's reply to a Lok Sabha question on Tuesday, outbound investment from India to the US stood at \$4.08 billion in FY26, up from \$3.44 billion in FY25 and \$2.44 billion in FY24. Apart from the pharma sector, India's steel companies are also stepping up investment in the US. Last month, US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, said that JSW Steel's \$500 million investment plans in Ohio and Texas would strengthen the India-US partnership.

A report by the research firm Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that several leading Indian drug makers already manufacture in the US. Sun Pharma, Zydus Lifesciences, Lupin, Aurobindo Pharma, Cipla and Dr Reddy's Laboratories operate US-based manufacturing facilities approved by the country's Food and Drug Administration. Cipla is expanding production at plants in Massachusetts and New York, while Dr Reddy's Laboratories is willing to increase US manufacturing if it makes commercial sense, GTRI said.

FULL REPORT ON

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

How champ Anahat broke a 'curse'

The 18-year-old becomes the first Indian to win the World junior title; hopes her triumph is a game-changer for Indian squash

Sports Bureau

It was a case of now or never for Anahat Singh.

After multiple unsuccessful attempts, the supremely talented 18-year-old had one last crack at the World junior squash women's title. And things finally fell into place in Ontario as Anahat carved her own piece of history by becoming the first Indian to hoist the individual prize.

The 'teen titan' was both delighted and relieved to break the "curse".

"I still feel like I am dreaming. It (crown) means the world to me," Anahat said after cruising past Ruqayya Salem of Egypt 11-3, 11-7, 11-9.

"This is the biggest event a junior can play in. I have been playing in it for four years, and it has not gone my way; I lost in the semis and quarters. If someone asked, I always said: 'This tournament is a curse.' But coming into the event, I knew that it was my last year in juniors and that I had to give my 100%. I am really glad that it worked out," added Anahat, the force which put a halt to Egypt's sustained dominance in women's ca-



Epic effort: Anahat cruised past her Egyptian opponent in the final.
WORLD SQUASH

tegory. The Delhi girl, who lived up to the top billing in the global competition, revealed that she played with a clear mind in the final.

"I knew that I would play terribly if I stressed myself, so I just came on court and hit my lines well. I wanted to enjoy every moment of a World championship final."

Anahat, ranked World

No.20 at the senior level, hoped that her triumph in World juniors would be a game-changer for Indian squash. "If a few people watch my matches and the matches of other players in the event, we will gain a lot more recognition. India is a huge country, so if it reaches the right audience, squash can rapidly grow as a sport".

Mirabai makes it a golden day for India; Rishikanta clinches a silver

K. Keerthivasan

GLASGOW

Weightlifting has always been one of the disciplines that has contributed significantly to India's tally at the Commonwealth Games. The fact that the country has won as many as 33 medals in the last three editions underlines the vital role of the weightlifters.

On Sunday, the opening day of the weightlifting competition here, Indians once again made their presence felt by winning two medals – a gold and silver.

Hours after Rishikanta Singh Chanambam finished second in the men's 60kg category, Mirabai Chanu produced a golden moment in the women's 48kg class. For the latter, it was her third successive Commonwealth Games yellow metal after Gold Coast (2018) and Birmingham (2022).

Surprisingly, the 31-year-old had a shaky start to her snatch sequence, missing the opening attempt at 82kg. She, however, remained unflustered and returned to successfully lift the weight.

The lifter from Manipur went on to clear 85kg on her third visit, establish-



Manipuris' day out: It was triple delight for Mirabai while Rishikanta (below) became the first male lifter from the State to win a medal in the Commonwealth Games. PTI

ing a new Commonwealth Games record much to the delight of the Indian fans at the venue.



After failing to clear 105kg in her first clean and jerk attempt, Mirabai managed to overcome the challenge in her second try and finished with a total of 190kg, both new Games marks. Ruth Asuquo Nyong of Nigeria won silver with a total lift of 168kg while Irene Jane Henry of Malaysia clinched bronze with 167kg.

Growing tally

Earlier, Rishikanta won India's second medal at the Games with his silver. The 28-year-old began the snatch series with 116kg, increased it to 119kg and eventually

produced a 121kg lift. In clean and jerk, the Manipur lifter passed the 143kg test but failed in his next two attempts at 148kg and 151kg. Rishikanta finished with a combined lift of 264kg.

Malaysia's Mohamad Aniq Kasdan won the gold with a total lift of 273kg, setting a Games record. Kasdan also registered a new Games high in clean and jerk with 152kg.

Kenya's Joshua Amunga Moby was the other podium finisher, thanks to his overall effort of 264kg (snatch: 121kg; clean and jerk: 143kg).

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» PAGE 15