

# Govt. introduces paper leak Bill in Lok Sabha; debate likely today

Six hours allocated for discussion; 91 amendments moved by members, says Speaker as he brokers truce between govt. and Opposition, which demanded a discussion on police action on protesting students; Ram Temple, E20 issues may be raised

**Sreeparna Chakrabarty**  
**Sandeep Phukan**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Union government on Monday introduced in the Lok Sabha a Bill providing for harsher penalties and time-bound investigations into examination paper leaks amid a huge uproar by the Opposition members, who demanded a discussion on the police action on protesting students in the country.

The stalemate is likely to end on Tuesday, with Speaker Om Birla brokering a truce between the Treasury and the Opposition benches on Monday afternoon, sources said. The floor leaders of both National Democratic Alliance and Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) had been in touch since the morning.

Six hours have been allocated for the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, and 91 amendments have been moved by Lok Sabha members cutting across party lines, Mr.



Presiding officer Dilip Saikia arriving to conduct the proceedings of the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon Session on Monday. ANI

**Birla announced in the House earlier.**

The Bill seeks to amend the anti-paper leak law with stricter punishment of up to 10 years in jail and ₹50 lakh fine.

The proposed legislation, which seeks to amend an existing law, was first promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a midnight Instagram post last week in a bid to quell the students' protest at Jantar Mantar.

The Bill was introduced by Union Minister of State for PMO and Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh even

as the Opposition protested and sloganeered over the police crackdown on students during the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led July 20 protest march to Parliament as well as in some States like West Bengal and Bihar.

## No let-up in protests

The Opposition, which had been protesting since 11 a.m., when the House was convened, was unrelenting and did not let the Bill be taken up for discussion and passage despite repeated appeals from Mr. Birla as well as Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren

Rijiju. He said several members, including those from the Opposition, were prepared to participate in the debate but the Congress and "some of its friends" were causing disruptions and not allowing a debate. At 2 p.m., however, the Speaker said both ruling and Opposition sides should try and arrive at a decision by 5 p.m. till when the House was adjourned.

Senior Congress leaders are understood to have met the Speaker after this and agreed to the discussion being taken up on Tuesday.

"All political parties have agreed to discuss the anti-paper leak Bill on Tuesday. Following Om Birla's initiative and sustained dialogue, floor leaders of political parties have agreed to commence discussion on the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill 2026," sources said.

Opposition sources said they were now looking to widen the offensive by targeting the government over the alleged Ram Temple donation embezzlement

case and ethanol-blended fuel.

With the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election due in early 2027, the Samajwadi Party is seeking to use the Ram Temple issue to make inroads among the BJP's core support base of Ram devotees, while the Congress has held over 50 press conferences demanding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on the alleged donation theft.

"We shouldn't allow the BJP to hijack our religion. We are all very proud Hindus and not political Hindus like them," a senior Congress leader told *The Hindu*.

The Opposition plans to highlight concerns over ethanol-blended fuel, which it believes resonate with the middle class, another key BJP constituency.

And with the CJP taking limelight for spearheading the Gen-Z protests and the government appearing intent on sidelining Opposition parties, these parties do not want to give much elbow room to the government.



# 8% of Capital's electors marked for exclusion so far

Devansh Mittal

New Delhi, July 27

TILL MONDAY afternoon, booth level officers (BLOs) in Delhi had marked around 11.9 lakh electors — about 8.2% of the Capital's electorate — as 'uncollectible' or excluded during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, according to senior officials. The Capital had over 1.45 crore voters before the start of the exercise, according to the official data.

Among those excluded are people who have died, may have relocated, were absent during inspection or may have had their names more than once in the electoral list. Apart from this, the SIR has an 'Other' reasons category for people who have refused to either sign or submit their enumeration forms.

To give more time to BLOs to complete their work, the Election Commission of India (ECI) — two weeks back — had even extended timelines for various phases of the SIR. Twelve days are left to finish the current phase of the SIR, in which more than 13,000 BLOs are conducting house to house visits to distribute enumeration forms to electors who will fill out their details as per the last SIR in 2002 till August 8. At 1.53 lakh, the South district tops the districts in the Capital with most exclusions so far. Next is South East with 1.18 lakh electors excluded.

According to official data from the CEO office, as of 8 pm on Monday, 99.8% of the enumeration forms had been distributed to electors and 50.07% had been returned by them and digitised by BLOs. At 36.39%, South East district is the worst performing district in digitising enumeration forms so far. East district has digitised 41.60% and South has digitised 43.07% enumeration forms. The best



More than 13,000 BLOs are conducting house-to-house visits in Delhi to distribute enumeration forms to electors. FILE

## IN NUMBERS

- Total electors in Delhi: **1.45 cr**
- Enumeration forms distributed so far: **99.8%**
- Forms returned and digitised: **50.07%**
- Electors marked 'uncollectible': **11.9 lakh or 8.2%** (projected to exceed 30% by end of the exercise)
- Worst-hit district: **South** with **1.53 lakh** 'uncollectible' forms

performing districts, so far, are Outer North at 62.82% and Southwest at 60.42%.

"Delhi has a lot of migrant labourers, government servants and private white collar professionals — all of whom move a lot and don't get their addresses updated... This is why, the deletions may be more than 30%," an official from the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Delhi said. Neighbouring Gurgaon, where the enumeration exercise just got over last week, also saw 29% of the electors getting excluded — the highest in Haryana. The Delhi CEO office did not respond to queries in

this regard.

On exclusions, another election official said that people are not willing to fill out enumeration forms themselves. "So many electors are asking their BLOs to fill out their complete forms, even when they are educated," the official said.

"Regular meetings are being held to review progress in all districts. Special camps are also being set up and additional BLOs have also been deployed where necessary," the official said.

Meanwhile, the AAP has raised questions over the ongoing exercise. "The BJP government's claims on SIR are completely false. The government is saying that 99% of the forms have been distributed, which is entirely wrong," AAP Delhi unit chief Saurabh Bharadwaj alleged at a press conference on Monday, saying that nearly 50% of people in unauthorised colonies say that they haven't received the SIR form.

The draft electoral roll in the Capital will be published on August 17. Claims and objections can be filed between August 17 and September 16. The disposal of claims and objections will stretch until October 15. The final electoral roll will be published on October 19.



# Gadkari can sue Meta, X over AI deepfakes on E20: Bombay HC

Omkar Gokhale  
Mumbai, July 27

UNION TRANSPORT Minister Nitin Gadkari can file a civil suit against Meta platforms, X Corp, Google LLC, and others over allegedly defamatory AI-generated deepfake videos and manipulated digital content linked to the ethanol-blended fuel controversy, the Bombay High Court ruled on Monday.

The suit seeks the removal of “defamatory” content, which, according to Gadkari, “falsely” associates him with the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme and the E20 initiative. According to his plea, both are administered exclusively by the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, and Gadkari has no role in either programme.

Justice Abhay Ahuja allowed Gadkari, represented by advocate Sandeep S Ladda, to institute the suit in the Bombay High Court. The court will hear his application for interim relief, including a temporary injunction on Tuesday.

The Union Ministries of Electronics and Information Technology and Telecommunications have also been named as respondents. In the suit, Gadkari said purpose of his civil suit against Meta Platforms, X Corp, Google LLC and others was not to prevent public discussion or criticism of his actions or government policies.

“The purpose and object of filing the suit is not to curtail or prevent the public at large from engaging in discussion, debate, analysis or fair, just and bona fide criticism of any decision taken by the plaintiff himself or by his office,” the plea said.

It added that Gadkari “does not seek to stifle or restrain fair criticism, dissent, debate or bona fide expression of opinion concerning his public life, governmental policies or official functions”. The defamatory and deepfake content published by defendant platforms are “false, fabricated and defamatory with respect of the plaintiff”.

The suit argues the content in question is “ex facie false, fabricated, malicious, abusive and



Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari during the Monsoon session of Parliament in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

grossly defamatory”, and that the deepfake videos amount to an unauthorised use of Gadkari’s personality and publicity rights without his consent.

It says, “Plaintiff has no role or nexus whatsoever with EBP or the E20 initiative, which is administered exclusively by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. The Defamatory Content, insofar as it consists of profane and abusive language directed at the Plaintiff, falls outside the ambit of legitimate political criticism or satire. The Deep Fake Content constitutes

an unauthorised exploitation of the Plaintiffs personality and publicity rights. That the balance of convenience lies in favour of the Plaintiff, who continues to suffer irreparable harm to his reputation not compensable in terms of money.”

In his plea, Gadkari has alleged that some unknown persons circulated posts and deepfake content, falsely portraying him as personally responsible for the EBP and E20 initiatives. The suit claimed these posts also allege that he and his family had financially benefited from it.

Gadkari claimed the objectionable content “falsely portrays” plaintiff as personally responsible for the decisions and falsely allege that he and/or his family have “derived undue pecuniary benefit from the programme, insinuating corruption, conflict of interest and abuse of office”.

The suit calls the allegations false and designed to create a misleading impression that Gadkari misused his public office for private gain, causing irreparable harm to his reputation. It seeks directions to the defendants to remove, disable and stop the circulation of the allegedly defamatory and manipulated content.

After Gadkari dismissed claims that EBP damages vehicles, saying manufacturers had attributed the reported breakdowns to contaminated or non-standard fuel, the BJP’s Nagpur social media cell chief filed a complaint accusing several influencers of spreading misinformation and using abusive, defamatory language against the minister.

# CJP warns of fresh protests over govt's 'promise breach'

Centre violating assurance of not taking action against protesters, says CJP; hundreds of students held while many are under surveillance, says its spokesperson; FIRs withdrawn in Bihar, Bengal

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Monday warned of fresh protests, accusing the Centre of violating its assurance that no punitive action would be taken against protesters.

"We are observing a complete breach of the agreement regarding no police action against the protesters. Hundreds of students have been arrested in Bihar and Bengal, and hundreds are being surveilled/harassed in Delhi and other States," CJP spokesperson Ashutosh Ranka said in a post on X.

The statement came following reports of crack-down on volunteers assisting protesters with logistics in various States.



CJP leaders Saurav Das, centre, and Ashutosh Ranka, right, with Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal and others in New Delhi. R.V. MOORTHY

The Bihar government announced later in the evening that it was withdrawing all FIRs against protesters registered before 6 p.m. on July 26.

FIRs in West Bengal and Assam have also been withdrawn, the CJP said on Monday night.

However, Mr. Ranka, in

a late-night post, said volunteers from Rajasthan were being harassed and demanded coordination between the Centre and State governments to withdraw FIRs. The CJP was awaiting a written agreement from the Centre by Tuesday, he added.

In Uttar Pradesh, Samaj-

## Govt. tables Bill in LS to toughen penalties on leaks

**NEW DELHI**

The Union government on Monday introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha providing for harsher penalties for exam paper leaks amid a huge uproar by Opposition members demanding a discussion on police action against protesting students first. » **PAGE 13**

wadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav alleged that many students in Prayagraj have been abducted by a special team of police in a vehicle without number plates.

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# CJP warns of protests over 'promise breach'

“Under the guise of the Prayagraj protest, many students have been picked up by the U.P. Police’s special team in an unmarked vehicle. When the Union government had promised that no action would be taken against any student, then on whose orders is such deceit taking place,” Mr. Yadav wrote in a post on X, also posting a video news report in support of his claims. The Prayagraj police have registered two FIRs at the Civil Lines police station in connection with the alleged vandalism of two SUVs and attack during Saturday’s student protest.

Rajya Sabha MP and senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who addressed a press conference with CJP leaders on Monday, said if governments file FIRs against people who peacefully protested in different parts of the country, the CJP will create a framework to track the affected people. “They (CJP) will create a website where lawyers who are willing to provide help can register their names, location and the kind of help they can offer. I will personally contribute ₹1 crore... our lawyers will support them across India,” he said.

Addressing the press conference, Mr. Ranka reiterated the Centre’s assurances. “If the government does not share the written agreement by tomorrow, and if students, youth, and protesters who have been arrested or detained in different States are not released, the Cockroach Janta Party will once again be forced to protest,” he said, adding that multiple reports have emerged in Delhi about the detention of volunteers who supported the protesters with logistics.

On Saturday, the CJP called off a 36-day protest at Jantar Mantar in Delhi after the Union government agreed to its three main demands, including the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as Education Minister. “We demand that all the FIRs against the protesters be immediately withdrawn, students be released and no future FIRs be filed by Delhi police/Central investigative agencies/police in BJP-allied States, failing which we will be forced to sit on protest again,” Mr. Ranka said.

*(With inputs from Nikhil M. Babu in Delhi, Senjuti Sengupta in Kolkata, Mayank Kumar in Lucknow, Amit Bhelari and Amarnath Tewary in Patna)*



# Iran says it still controls Hormuz, not involved in negotiations with the U.S.

Six ships turned back after trying to pass the strait without permission, Iran state media reports; amid halt in campaign by both sides, Trump says 'good chance' of progress in talks to produce a deal, dismisses concerns on ammunition shortage

Reuters  
DUBAI

Iran said on Monday it was still in control of the Strait of Hormuz and not seeking to resume peace talks with the U.S., after President Donald Trump halted a two-week bombing campaign that his top brass told him had run its course.

Following 13 successive nights of bombing that provoked Tehran to fire on U.S. bases, Mr. Trump halted the campaign over the weekend. Iran said it would pause its own attacks for as long as the U.S. pause in bombing endures.

On Monday, Mr. Trump said that diplomacy with



**Tehran backdrop:** A woman walks near a billboard depicting U.S. President Donald Trump in the Iranian capital on Monday. REUTERS

Iran could produce a deal to end the war, but warned that Washington would resume military strikes if negotiations failed.

"I have a lot of patience... We'll see what happens. I think there is a

good chance that something could happen," Mr. Trump told reporters. "If it doesn't, we go back to doing what we were doing two days ago."

Mr. Trump's had suspended the campaign fol-

lowing advice from his top brass that the bombing, aimed at breaking Iran's grip on strait, had reached the limits of what it could achieve, according to a U.S. official and U.S. media reports.

The official said the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine, had also expressed concern over the depletion of air defence weapons.

But Mr. Trump dismissed concerns that five months of war had depleted U.S. munitions.

"We have a lot of ammunition," he said. "We have a lot of the mid-level stuff too, more than we could ever use, no matter what."

Earlier in the day, Es-

mail Baghaei, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, said in a televised press conference that Iran had not asked to resume peace talks with the U.S.

In a clear bid to signal that the U.S. bombing had failed in its objective, Tehran indicated it was still in control of the crucial waterway. Several Iranian state media outlets carried the same report that Iran had turned around six "offending ships" on Monday that had attempted to cross the strait without its permission.

"The traffic route in Hormuz is the route specified by Iran, and other routes are contaminated and have no way out," the state media reports said.

# Sudan's Army claims control of major highway linking Khartoum to El-Obeid

**Agence France-Presse**  
KHARTOUM

Sudan's Army has regained control of a key highway linking the capital Khartoum with the flashpoint city of El-Obeid, military sources said on Monday.

Their rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have for months amassed troops around El-Obeid, attempting to encircle it ahead of an apparent large-scale assault.

They have now been pushed west, off the 400-kilometre highway that connects Khartoum with the largest city in the embattled Kordofan region.

Hours after the development, paramilitary drone strikes shook El-Obeid. At



**Amid ruins:** Damaged interiors of a building after it was reportedly targeted by the Rapid Support Forces in El-Obeid on Monday. AFP

dawn, RSF drone strikes tore through two municipal buildings in apparent retaliation.

## Crucial link

El-Obeid lies at a key crossroads: its north-south high-

way runs from Khartoum to the rest of Kordofan, while its east-west axis connects RSF strongholds in the Darfur region to Army-controlled central and eastern Sudan.

The highway to Khar-

toum remains closed to civilians, who have for most of the war relied entirely on the eastern road to the White Nile, where the RSF regularly launches deadly drone strikes. The Army advance "opens a second supply route to El-Obeid and beyond", according to the military source.

The war between the Army and the RSF – former allies before they fell out in a power struggle – erupted in April 2023 and has since killed over 200,000 people, aid workers estimate.

It has also created the world's largest displacement and hunger crises, with over 33 million people in need of humanitarian aid.

# Red Sea shipping slows after Houthi hits on Saudi Arabia

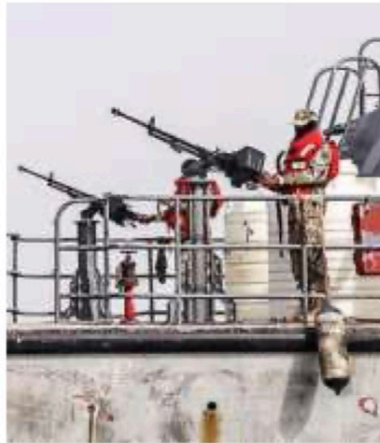
**Reuters**

SINGAPORE

Ship traffic through Bab el-Mandeb fell on Sunday after Yemeni Houthis attacked Saudi oil installations along the Red Sea coast, while transit through the Strait of Hormuz stayed low over the weekend, shipping data from Kpler showed on Monday.

Eleven commodity vessels passed through the Bab el-Mandeb strait on Sunday, the lowest level in months, the data showed.

Red Sea traffic has been disrupted off the coast of Yemen since last week by the Iran-aligned Houthis, who want to blockade Saudi exports, expanding the U.S.-Iran conflict that has already choked oil supply through the Strait of Hormuz.



Navy sailors from the Yemen's Aden-based government seen aboard a vessel patrolling in the Red Sea on Monday. AFP

Seven of the vessels that passed through strait were oil tankers with three of them entering the Red Sea. Two of them are very large crude carriers (VLCCs) heading to the port of Yanbu to load Saudi crude while the third is a Russian-linked ship, the data showed.

Four vessels exited the

Red Sea on Sunday. Another ship is exiting the waterway through the Bab el-Mandeb strait.

## **Lull in Hormuz**

Fewer than 10 commodity vessels passed through the Strait of Hormuz daily over the weekend even though the U.S. and Iran have paused strikes in West Asia, shipping data from Kpler showed.

Seven vessels transited on Sunday including three Iranian-linked oil products tankers that exited the strait, the data showed.

On Saturday, there were only three vessels that passed through with their transponders switched off.

On Friday, seven vessels passed, mostly exiting the Gulf, including two VLCCs carrying crude from Iraq and the UAE and a tanker carrying fuel oil.



SAUDI ARABIA SAYS IT HAS SHOT DOWN DRONES LAUNCHED BY IRAN-BACKED ARMED GROUPS

# 'Good talks' says Trump even as drones target Iran's neighbours

Will return to war if talks don't yield results: President

Reuters  
Washington, Dubai, July 27

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump said on Monday that the United States was having "good talks" with Iran and there was a chance of a deal over their conflict, but warned strikes would resume if the negotiations failed to deliver.

Washington abruptly suspended a two-week campaign of air strikes against Iran on Saturday in the president's latest strategic U-turn in the five-month-old conflict.

"We're talking right now," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One. "We're having good talks... I think there's a good chance that something could happen, and if it does, good, if it doesn't, we go back to doing what we were doing two days



Vessels in Strait of Hormuz near Bandar Abbas, Iran, on Monday. AP

ago." "Not much time. Either it goes fast or not at all," he told *Axios* when asked how long he was willing to give for talks.

In contrast to the president's remarks, Tehran appeared to quickly test the pause in the US military campaign, with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iraq repor-

ting drone attacks on Monday.

Saudi Arabia said it shot down drones aimed at petroleum targets, including in the capital Riyadh. It said the drones had been launched from Iraq by Iran-backed armed groups, and it reserved the right to respond.

Separately, Iran's Houthi allies in Yemen said they had targeted the 1,200-km East-West Pipeline carrying oil to Saudi Arabia's main Red Sea port of Yanbu, in retaliation for what they said were Saudi drone incursions into Yemeni airspace.

The spokesperson for Iran's

Foreign Ministry, Esmail Baghaei, said on Monday that Iran had not asked to resume peace talks with the US.

Messages were still being passed between the sides through mediators and Iran had not forsaken diplomacy, but "reports about Iran requesting negotiations with the US are fabricated," Baghaei said. "This is not in our DNA."

Several Iranian state media outlets cited an "informed source" as saying that Iran had turned around six "offending ships" on Monday morning that had attempted to cross the Strait of Hormuz without its permission. One of the vessels, the source said, had "an accident".

Trump's decision to suspend the campaign reflected advice from his military that the bombing had reached the limits of what it could achieve. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine, had expressed concern over the depletion of air defence munitions, the official said.

# India's rupee billionaires top 500 for first time, quadruple in 4 years

Siddharth Upasani  
New Delhi, July 27

THE NUMBER of individuals who reported a gross total income of at least Rs 100 crore crossed 500 in Assessment Year 2025-26, up 39% from the previous year, the Ministry of Finance said in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha on Monday. The finance ministry data showed the number of rupee billionaires as per their income has quadrupled in four years to 576 from 142 in AY 2021-22. Assessment Year refers to the 12 months after the year in which income is earned, or the financial year. As such, AY 2025-26 is 2024-25, or April 2024-March 2025.

One billion is equal to 100 crore.

"There is no statutory definition of the term 'billionaire' either under the Income-tax Act, 2025 or under the erstwhile Income-tax Act, 1961," Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in response to a question by Congress Member of Parliament Murari Lal Meena asking if the government is aware that there has been a significant increase in the number of billionaires in the country.

Chaudhary went on to provide details of the number of individuals who had reported gross total income of at least Rs 100 crore in the Income-tax Returns (ITRs) filed for the last five Assessment Years.

Usually, the government releases these figures as part of its income tax return statistics. The last year for which data is available is AY 2023-24. This was released in July 2024.

There is no official indicator

## • Annual gross total income over Rs 100 crore



NOTE: YEARS ARE ASSESSMENT YEAR; FIGURES ARE FOR THOSE REPORTING ANNUAL GROSS TOTAL INCOME OF AT LEAST RS 100 CRORE; SOURCE: FINANCE MINISTRY RESPONSE TO LOK SABHA QUESTION

of income levels in India, with researchers relying on Income Tax return statistics, released by the finance ministry with a lag. However, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is currently conducting the first-ever National Household Income Survey. Started in April, the survey will end in March 2027, with the results expected to take a few more months to be processed before their release. Latest GDP data shows that India's per capita gross national income in 2025-26 was Rs 2.41 lakh in current prices, up 8% from 2024-25.

In addition to measuring household income, the maiden income survey is supposed to also assess the impact of adoption of technology on wages.

According to Forbes, India has 229 'dollar billionaires' as per their net worth. Since one US dollar is equal to around 96 rupees, dollar billionaires have a net worth of at least Rs

9,600 crore. Meanwhile, the Bloomberg Billionaires Index — also based on net worth, not annual income — estimates there are 23 Indians in the world's richest 500 people.

## Inequality in India

In his answer in Lok Sabha on Monday, Pankaj Chaudhary said the government does not maintain data on aggregate wealth of taxpayers. Further, in response to Meena's question if the government has conducted any study on the impact of the increasing concentration of income and wealth on income inequality, investment, employment generation, and inclusive

economic growth, Chaudhary said data from the latest Household Consumption Expenditure Survey for 2023-24 (August-July) showed that the Gini coefficient for rural and urban areas had declined to 0.237 and 0.284, respectively. This, he said, was indicative of a narrowing rural-urban gap.

The Gini coefficient is the most commonly-used measure of inequality.

The MoS in the finance ministry added that India's labour market had recovered after the Covid pandemic, the unemployment rate for those aged 15 years and above had decreased to 3.1% in 2025 as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey, and the government had taken several measures to reduce income and wealth inequality, including a progressive Income-tax structure and increased spending on food, health, education, housing, and social security.

According to the World Inequality Report 2026, published by Paris School of Economics' World Inequality Lab, inequality in India is among the highest in the world and has shown "little movement in recent years". As per their estimates, the top-10% of the country's earners capture about 58% of national income, with the bottom 50% receive only 15%.

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