

Release all minors held over student protests: SC

Top court mulls independent probe into allegations of police excesses during the protests; States permitted to proceed with probes, police restrained from taking 'coercive action' against students

Aaratrika Bhaumik

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday indicated that it would consider constituting a high-powered investigation team to conduct a "thorough, fair, and independent" inquiry into allegations of police excesses during the recent student protests in Delhi and several States. While permitting the State authorities to proceed with the investigation of the FIRs registered in relation to the protests, the court ordered the immediate release of all minors arrested in connection with the demonstrations and restrained the police from taking coercive action against "protesting students" unless they had criminal antecedents.



Whosoever has committed excess, committed atrocities on innocent people, the law will take care of them. For that, there needs to be a completely independent and fair investigation... Probe is meaningless if no responsibility is fixed

SURYA KANT
Chief Justice of India



The interim order permitting the authorities to proceed with the investigation of the existing FIRs raised concerns among the protesters on Tuesday, with the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which led the demonstrations, contending that the direction was contrary to the Centre's assurance that no punitive action would be taken

against protesters. Saurav Das, the CJP's spokesperson, said in a post on X that the order "raises extremely serious concerns" and is in "direct contradiction" to the Centre's assurance to the "youth of this nation".

Underlining that the Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful protest, a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI)

Surya Kant, while hearing a batch of petitions alleging disproportionate force by the police during the protests, observed that an independent probe was necessary to examine the allegations of police violence through a "scientific" and "evidence-based" inquiry.

"Whosoever has committed excess, committed atrocities on innocent people, the law will take care of them. For that, there needs to be a completely independent and fair investigation... Probe is meaningless if no responsibility is fixed," CJI Kant said.

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NOD FOR PELLET GUN USE

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RAF diary entry shows Delhi Police authorised pellet gun use on July 20

RAF registered entry at Parliament Street police station on July 22, soon after *The Hindu's* report on pellet gun injuries; RAF later withdrew pump action guns, electric shields, anti-riot guns, shock batons from personnel deployed at Jantar Mantar

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Days after the Delhi Police denied the usage of pellet guns during the July 20 march to Parliament – in which at least four persons reported being hit with pellets – a general diary entry filed at Parliament Street police station reveals that the Rapid Action Force (RAF) did fire two rounds from an anti-riot gun on the directions of a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) rank officer.

The Hindu has accessed the general diary entry, which was registered by the RAF at 1.24 a.m. on July 22. This was the first time that a pellet gun was used against unarmed protesters in the national capital.

Following the July 20 incident, the RAF withdrew shock batons, electric shields, pump-action guns, and the anti-riot guns, which fire pellets, from personnel deployed at Jantar Mantar. A review by an RAF Inspector-General also highlighted “serious deficiencies” in RAF beha-



RAF personnel deployed near the Parliament House during the CJP protest march in New Delhi on July 20. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

viour during the march, in violation of its principle of “sensitive policing”.

Two rounds fired

The diary entry says that, to control the crowd during the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest, “on the orders of Zone-1, DCP, Jantar Mantar,” the RAF Deputy Commandant fired “55 rounds of non-electrical shell, 15 rounds of electrical shell, five tear smoke grenade, two rounds using ballistic cartridges with plastic pellets from an anti-

riot gun.” The RAF, which is the anti-riot unit of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), was deployed and was under the operational control of the Delhi Police at the time of the incident.

The diary entry was made hours after *The Hindu* reported on July 21 that two people allegedly hit by pellets fired by RAF personnel had undergone surgery at government hospitals. One of them, Sahil Lochab, 19, risks losing vision in his right eye due to

a pellet piercing his pupil, his family said.

Police sources said that during a law-and-order situation, Central forces, in this case the RAF, are given a general consent by the police officer concerned, to use all crowd-control equipment at their disposal.

‘Serious deficiencies’

Significantly, in a video conference with RAF personnel after the incident, RAF Inspector-General Seema Dhundhia “gave clear directions that during the current Delhi deployment, the situation has been analysed and until further orders pump action guns (PAG), anti-riot Gun (ARG), electric shock weapon, and electric shield shall not be used or issued to personnel.”

The minutes of the meeting accessed by *The Hindu* said that “serious deficiencies were observed in many aspects of the operation, which need to be improved in the future.”

The Inspector-General reiterated that the core principle of the RAF is

“sensitive policing”, and directed that the use of force in every situation must be done only to the necessary extent, in a judicious, fair, restrained, and sensitive manner.

Ms. Dhundhia said that “some videos available on social media showed incidents of RAF personnel using unnecessary force on persons who had already separated from the crowd, deliberately making people fall, and assaulting persons going out of the barricade. Such incidents are completely contrary to the established work culture and image of RAF and are not justified under any circumstances.”

Retired Intelligence Bureau Special Director Yashovardhan Azad moved the Supreme Court for a ban on pellet guns on July 27, along with two victims of pellet gun injuries, an artist and another professional. They demanded the decommissioning or ban on the use of wholly or partly metallic kinetic projectiles or pellets fired from pump action rifles or projectile action guns.

Paper leak Bill a milestone, says govt.; Opposition calls it 'cosmetic exercise'

Minister says amendment shows PM's resolve not to compromise the future of children; Congress leader asks why the government is amending a law it had hailed as 'historic' just two years ago; SP member slams the govt. over police action

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Treasury and Opposition benches sparred in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday as the House took up the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, with the Opposition describing it as an "admission of failure".

The Bill seeks to strengthen the 2024 anti-paper leak law with stricter punishment of up to 10-year imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹50 lakh.

Initiating the discussion on the Bill, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said the amendment showed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve not to compromise the future of children. The government described it as a "milestone" legislation in the history of Parliament.

"Incidents of paper leaks have taken place in various States ruled by different parties. The anti-paper leak Bill is a reaffirmation of the government's commitment to safeguard the welfare of



Minister Jitendra Singh speaks in the Lok Sabha during the debate on the Public Examinations Amendment Bill, 2026 on Tuesday. PTI

students and youth. The amendment... (is being) brought to make the law more stringent," Mr. Singh said.

Speedy justice

Mr. Singh said the Bill provided for the establishment of Special Fast Track Courts to deal with offences relating to public examinations.

He said it envisaged completion of investigations within two months and trials within three months from the date of filing of chargesheet. The Bill also empowers the Centre

to refer investigation of offences under the Act to a Special Task Force constituted for the purpose.

The Minister also informed the House that the government had already initiated steps for the establishment of the fast-track courts.

The proposed amendments would reinforce deterrence against organised examination-related crimes and ensure speedy justice, he added.

Initiating the debate for the Opposition, Congress deputy leader Gaurav Gogoi questioned why the go-

vernment was amending a law it had hailed as "historic" just two years ago.

"If that law was so effective, why has the government been forced to bring such major amendments within two years?" Mr. Gogoi asked, calling the Bill a "cosmetic exercise" that reflected the failure of the 2024 law enacted after the earlier NEET-UG controversy.

'Inability exposed'

He argued that the latest paper leak had exposed the government's inability to protect the integrity of public examinations and said harsher punishments alone would not end the menace without structural reforms in the education system.

He also questioned the fate of recommendations by a 2024 committee headed by former ISRO Chairman K. Radhakrishnan and sought details of the 47 officials the government claimed to have removed or transferred from the National Testing Agency (NTA).

"Who are these 47 peo-

ple, when the sanctioned strength of the NTA is 34?" Mr. Gogoi asked. He also questioned why the government had so much faith in the NTA chairman. "Is it because he is associated with a particular Sangh?" he asked.

The Congress leader also alleged that 44 of the 45 accused in the 2024 NEET-UG paper leak case had secured bail.

Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Dimple Yadav lashed out at the government for the police action against protesting students.

Responding to the Opposition, BJP MP Anurag Thakur hit out at Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi for sitting on a dharna outside the Prime Minister's residence, saying Mr. Gandhi did so because students did not ask him to lead the protests.

Calling the amendment "transformative", BJP member Bansuri Swaraj accused the Opposition of "selective outrage", contending that paper leaks had also occurred under the UPA government's tenure.

'Indian space technology firms raised \$200 mn in 2025 led by Bengaluru'

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

As India's space tech funding reached a record \$200 million in 2025 with Bengaluru emerging as the ecosystem leader attracting more than half of the money, as per market research firm Tracxn.

Tracxn said in a report the sector raised about \$871 million as of July. The top 10 most-funded firms alone account for over 60% of this total, led by India's space tech unicorn, Skyroot Aerospace at \$150 million. Skyroot built Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital-class rocket, which successfully reached low Earth orbit on



Money state: Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital class rocket built by Skyroot Aerospace ahead of maiden launch. ANI

July 18.

Upward trend

The report titled 'Space Tech in India' maps 285 firms in India with 274 being active. Out of these 72

received equity funding.

From \$43 million in 2021 to \$200 million in 2025, the sector has seen a steady rise in funding in the last five years. In 2026 till date, the startups raised

\$113 million in 24 rounds.

Seed-stage funding increased from \$7 million in 2022 to \$62 million in 2025 while late-stage funding emerged for the first time, reaching \$17 million in 2025 and \$53 million in 2026 YTD signalling a subset of firms transitioning from development to pre-commercial operations.

The investor base also expanded from domestic venture capital firms and angel investors to sovereign wealth funds and global institutional investors.

However, the increase in funding during 2025-26 has been driven by a small number of large rounds rather than a broad-based rise in deal activity.

India, strongest growth market for Germany

Gurmehar Kaur

NEW DELHI

With India emerging as one of its strongest growth markets, the German National Tourist Office (GNTO) has unveiled its four campaign themes for this year, while Germany's national carrier Lufthansa

confirmed a €3 billion investment to lift its India-bound fleet, including doubling the capacity in its Mumbai-Munich route by upgrading it with an Airbus A380. The Lufthansa group is also expanding its India network through Swiss International Air Lines, which will begin fly-

ing Zurich to Bangalore, its newest India route.

These announcements came as GNTO unveiled four campaign themes for 2026 – culture, city life, cuisine and nature, and as Lufthansa marked its 100th year of operations.

Kevin Markette, Senior Director, Sales, South Asia,

Lufthansa Group, said “The clearest demonstration of Lufthansa's commitment to India is that we are bringing our newest technology and product to the market.” Fuel efficiency is a priority as sustainability concerns shape airline investment decisions industry-wide, he added.

Oman presents Iran with plan for fees to use Hormuz

Reuters

DUBAI

Oman has presented Iran with a plan backed by Gulf states to manage the Strait of Hormuz, including collecting voluntary fees for using it, a Gulf source and a Western diplomat told *Reuters* on Tuesday. The plan could serve as a basis to end the disruption through the strait caused by the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who abruptly called off a two-week bombing campaign over the weekend in his latest strategic U-turn, said there were “good talks” under way with Iran but threatened to restart strikes unless negotiations deliver. Iran denies seeking to resume talks with the United States. Under the Omani



The plan could serve as a basis to end the disruption through the strait caused by the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. REUTERS

proposal, Iran would not exercise sole control and fees would be voluntary.

The system would be analogous to one in place on Asia's Strait of Malacca, where Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore ask ships to pay voluntary contributions to fund navigation, environmental protection and search-and-rescue op-

erations. The Western diplomat compared it to a voluntary carbon tax for flights, where anyone buying a plane ticket can choose to tick a box if they want to pay to offset their emissions.

The Gulf source said that there had been no formal response from Iran to the proposal.

We are not anyone's proxy force: Iranian Kurdish party

Stanly Johny

The Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), an armed Kurdish group and political party based in Iran's Kurdish region, says it will not join the U.S.-Israel war against Iran unless the "existence of the Kurdish people comes under threat", insisting that it is "not anyone's proxy force" but a movement seeking a democratic transformation of Iran.

In an email interview with *The Hindu*, Rivar Abdanan, a PJAK spokesperson and member of the party's Leadership Council, said the group rejects being viewed merely as a military actor and instead seeks to build "a democratic, self-administered society" in Kurdistan while working towards "the establishment of a democratic republic throughout Iran".

Mr. Abdanan said PJAK's military posture is guided by self-defence and political strategy rather than opportunism. "The Islamic Republic wants to drag us into a long and exhausting war," he said, adding that the party wants to preserve Kurdish political and



Rivar Abdanan

social capacity for a future democratic transition.

While PJAK would respond if Iranian attacks threaten Kurdish existence, it would not join any international coalition until it is certain that Kurdish political rights are guaranteed. "We will not become part of any international coalition or project," he said, though PJAK would pursue "constructive engagement" with governments and actors opposing the Islamic Republic if they sincerely support a democratic political order benefiting all of Iran's peoples.

Asked whether PJAK condemns the U.S.-Israeli attacks on Iran, Mr. Abdanan said the issue "cannot be reduced to a simple choice between encouraging war or condemning

war". While stressing that PJAK does not believe war is a path to democracy, he argued that the roots of the conflict lie in the Islamic Republic's "repressive domestic policies and its expansionist policies across the region". He said the group views "pressure on this dictatorial regime and strikes against its centres of repression" as positive, provided civilians are not harmed and the future right to self-determination of Iran's peoples is not undermined.

On relations with Washington and Tel Aviv, Mr. Abdanan said PJAK keeps "diplomatic channels open to all governments and political actors" whose engagement serves Kurdish interests and supports "the establishment of a democratic political system in Iran".

At the same time, he noted that many Iranian Kurds remain sceptical of both powers, citing what he called America's inconsistent policies towards Syrian Kurds and the lasting memory of Israel's alleged role in the capture of Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan.

Magnitude 7.1 quake shakes south Japan, many feared trapped

Agencies

Tokyo, July 28

AN EARTHQUAKE registering a magnitude of 7.1 shook Kumamoto on Japan's southern main island of Kyushu late Tuesday afternoon, causing damage and injuries, officials said.

The second floor at the Aeon Mall shopping centre in Karshima Town collapsed, trapping an unknown number of people. Rescue operations were being carried out, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency said without giving further details.

There was a report of an explosion before the collapse at the centre, Kyodo News Agency reported. A tsunami advisory for the nearby Ariake and Yatsushiro Seas on the western coasts of Kumamoto and three neighbouring prefectures was temporarily issued but was lifted within two hours, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. The area is about 900 kilometres southwest of Tokyo.

The US Geological Survey initially said the earthquake had a magnitude of 7.1, but revised it later to 6.8. Japan's PM Sanae Takaichi, in a message posted on X, said her government has set up a task force to gather information, assess possible damage and prepare for rescue operations if needed. Takaichi later told reporters that there have been reports of a number of injuries and damages to roads, bridges and buildings, as well as blackouts and fire, though details are still unclear. Takaichi warned people cooking to be careful with fire and with shards of broken glass.

Kyodo News Agency said a hospital in Yatsushiro city accepted about 40 people with injuries from the quake. A train was derailed and fell on its side at the Yatsushiro station, and

● QUAKE LOCATION



stone walls were damaged at the Kumamoto castle, Kyodo said.

"The shaking reminded me of the Kumamoto quake (10 years ago) and I was frightened," said Hiroki Shimoda, an official at the Mifune town hall.

Japan's Fire and Disaster Management Agency said there were no reports of damage to major public facilities and infrastructure, though authorities were still assessing the extent of damage. Local fire departments received many emergency calls reporting fires and damage to homes.

Shinkansen bullet trains and local trains in Kyushu have been suspended for safety checks, while the runway at the Aso Kumamoto Airport was closed. The Japanese Defence Ministry said it dispatched aircraft to the area to assess the situation.

The UN nuclear watchdog said that Japan's nuclear regulation authority has informed it that there is no damage or safety issues at the Sendai nuclear power plant after a 7.1-magnitude earthquake. "The IAEA will continue to monitor the situation," said the watchdog in a post on X.

ISRAELI PM SEEKS SUPPORT BEFORE OCTOBER ELECTIONS IN ISRAEL

Trump's irritation with Netanyahu highlights strains as leaders meet

Meeting between the two leaders was positive, says White House

Steve Holland
Washington, July 28

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump voiced irritation with Benjamin Netanyahu ahead of their White House meeting on Tuesday, complaining that details of the Israeli prime minister's planned talking points on Iran had surfaced publicly, in a fresh sign of strain between the two leaders.

Asked about reports that Netanyahu wanted to talk to him about Pickaxe Mountain, a fortified facility buried deep underground near one of Iran's main nuclear sites, Trump said, using Netanyahu's nickname, "I don't need Bibi to tell me that. Bibi's telling me that because he wants me to stay involved."

"Why don't you just tell it to me? Why do you have to announce it to the world?" Trump said in an interview with "Fox & Friends."

Netanyahu's office did not



US President Donald Trump with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington on Tuesday. @NETANYAHU

immediately respond to requests for comment on Trump's remarks.

But photos posted by Netanyahu's office on X showed the two leaders sitting beside each other in the Oval Office with wide smiles. They were joined by Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

Trump met Netanyahu after

first having brief closed-door talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt described both meetings as "positive and productive."

Netanyahu has run hot and cold with Trump, who at times has had to rein in the Israeli leader from attacking targets in Lebanon to try to weaken Iran-backed Hezbollah militants.

An acrimonious phone call in June in which the president called the PM "fucking crazy", first leaked to the media and later publicly confirmed by Trump himself, laid bare the strains between the two leaders.

Sources familiar with the matter said Netanyahu aims to get Trump's support for his reelection campaign ahead of an October 27 vote. **REUTERS**

'Good meeting' between Trump and Zelenskyy

Washington: President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met Tuesday ahead of Sen. Lindsey Graham's funeral, with the two leaders discussing ways for Ukraine to produce its own powerful weapons and "other ideas that could help" in its ongoing war against Russia.

In a post on social media after the meeting, Zelenskyy thanked Trump for the "good meeting" and the Republican administration's efforts to aid Kyiv in the long-running war, which began more than four years ago when Russia invaded Ukraine.

"The President and I discussed licenses for Patriot interceptor production and several other ideas that could help," said Zelenskyy, who also noted that he offered condolences to Trump for the death of Graham, a close ally. "We also spoke about diplomacy — it's important that the diplomatic process be reinvigorated." **AP**