

Protesters march to Jharkhand Assembly; 5 injured in clashes

Students, aspirants continue sit-in in Ranchi seeking cancellation of JSSC-CGL exam and CBI probe into irregularities; police deny use of force; former JPSC Chairman arrested; march comes day after State government agreed to cancel three exams

Suruchi Kumari
Aniket Singh Chauhan
RANCHI

Thousands of students and job aspirants from across Jharkhand marched towards the State Assembly in Ranchi on Monday, breaking through barbed barricades and reaching the Assembly gates as their indefinite strike over alleged irregularities in government recruitment examinations entered its 17th day.

At least five protesters were injured, including one who suffered a head injury, after the police resorted to lathi-charge and dispersed the crowd.

At present, the protesters are continuing their sit-in at the Jaipal Singh Munda Stadium in the cap-



Taking a stand: Protesters marching towards the Jharkhand Assembly in Ranchi on Monday. PTI

ital, seeking resolution of their demands. The protesters are demanding cancellation of the Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission-Combined Graduate Level (JSSC-CGL) examination and an investigation

by the Central Bureau of Investigation into alleged irregularities in the recruitment process.

The march came a day after the State government agreed to cancel three examinations, including the

preliminary examination of the 14th Jharkhand Public Service Commission Combined Civil Services.

Meanwhile, former JPSC chairman L. Khiangte, who resigned on July 22 after the State CID took over the

Rahul slams police action; BJP steps up attack

PATNA

While the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Monday condemned the police action against protesting students in Jharkhand, the BJP stepped up its attack on the Hemant Soren-led government and dared the Congress to withdraw support to it if the party was serious about the students' demands. » **PAGE 10**

probe, was arrested in connection with the investigation.

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'BATTLING FOR 26 YEARS'

» **PAGE 10**

SC to hear Tamil Nadu's plea on Cauvery dispute this week

Shortfall in release of river water has left farmers in perilous situation, says T.N.; it seeks judicial direction to Karnataka to implement CWMA order to ensure release of 3,500 cusecs for 15 days

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Tamil Nadu government on Monday sought an early hearing of its application over the Cauvery water allocation dispute with neighbouring Karnataka.

Appearing for Tamil Nadu, senior advocate C.S. Vaidyanathan highlighted before Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant that the deficit in allocation of the river water has left farmers in a perilous situation. The CJI listed the State's application for hearing on Thursday.

The State government sought a judicial direction



The CJI listed T.N.'s application over the Cauvery water allocation row with Karnataka for hearing on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

to Karnataka to implement the July 30 decision of the Central Water Management Authority (CWMA) to ensure the release of 3500 cusecs for 15 days from its two reservoirs at Kabini and Krishnaraja Sagar.

Tamil Nadu has ap-

proached the top court for the release of 4.536 tmc ft (at the rate of 3,500 cusecs for 15 days) on or before August 12.

The State urged the court to direct the CWMA to issue an appropriate direction to Karnataka to

make good, on a pro-rata basis, the shortfall at the inter-State point of Biligundulu for the period from June 1 to August 12, and in this regard release 26.954 tmc ft of water forthwith. It further sought an order to the CWMA to monitor the flows in the reservoirs of Karnataka every 10 days and ensure stipulated monthly/daily releases at Biligundulu.

The State claims that Karnataka had continued to defy the orders of the Cauvery tribunal for allocation of water to its neighbour except a few times when there were inevitable surpluses in the reservoirs on account of floods.

First round of Manipur govt.'s talks with UNC 'fruitful, an icebreaker'

Both sides agree to continue discussions to find solutions to the issues raised by the Naga apex body, including abrogation of SoO pact; won't lift blockade until demands are met, says UNC chief

Press Trust of India
SENAPATI/ IMPHAL

The first round of talks between the Manipur government and the United Naga Council (UNC) was "fruitful and cordial", with both sides agreeing to continue discussions to find solutions to the issues raised by the Naga apex body, a government spokesperson said on Monday.

A delegation of Ministers and nine MLAs, led by Deputy Chief Minister L. Dikho and Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam, held talks with the UNC representatives at the Senapati district headquarters.

The UNC has been demanding abrogation of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact with Kuki militant groups, declaration of



Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand holding a meeting with a delegation of the United Naga Council in Imphal. FILE PHOTO

the Kuki National Front-President (KNF-P) as a terrorist organisation, removal of the Deputy CM, and arrest of KNF-P cadres allegedly involved in the killing of six Naga civilians.

Government spokesperson Thokchom Radheshyam described the meeting as an "icebreaker" and said further rounds of talks would be held. "Today, the United Naga Council and

the Manipur government representatives, led by Mr. Dikho and Mr. Konthoujam, came to Senapati to discuss and find solutions to several issues. We had fruitful and cordial discussions. This is the first round of discussions and a series of talks will follow to find a solution," he said.

On the demand for abrogation of the SoO agreement, he said, "That

is the policy of the government of India. Manipur is part of India and we have to go by the policy and decision of the Centre."

UNC chief Ng Lorho, however, said the group would not lift its blockade of national highways until its four-point charter of demands is fulfilled.

'Bringing peace'

"We discussed with the Ministers and the legislators the way forward on how to bring peace. We discussed our four-point charter of demands and we stick to it," Mr. Lorho said after the meeting.

The UNC chief warned that the organisation could take "more stringent actions" if its demands are not met. He said further talks should be held in Senapati and not Imphal.

Rights groups call for overhaul in hearings by apex court-appointed panel on Aravalis

The Hindu Bureau

JAIPUR

Civil rights groups in Rajasthan have called for an overhaul in the process of hearings by the Supreme Court-appointed high-powered committee on the Aravali hill range to ensure “meaningful and inclusive” public participation. The panel is now visiting the hill regions in Delhi, Haryana, and Rajasthan.

The Supreme Court has directed the committee to conduct an independent review of the Centre’s report on the definition and delineation of the Aravali hill range and address “critical ambiguities” in the findings. The panel will examine the overall eco-



The panel is visiting hill regions in Delhi, Haryana, and Rajasthan. ANI

logy of the region and its impact on people’s lives and socio-economic conditions. It has to submit its report by August 31.

“Token tour”

“Such an assessment is simply not possible through what amounts to a token tour of nine districts

in just four days,” read a statement issued by the rights groups.

The committee has conducted public hearings in places such as Alwar and Ajmer. The People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and other groups said the mining lobby dominated the hearings and the admini-

nistration did not make any meaningful effort to inform or involve locals.

PUCL-Rajasthan president Anant Bhatnagar said if the panel fails to make its process genuinely participatory and inclusive, people’s groups will organise their own public hearings at different locations across the Aravali region.

Meanwhile, Akhil Bharatiya Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram, a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-affiliated social welfare organisation, has written to the committee raising several issues over its public consultation notification, including not providing enough time to submit comments and failing to reach rural communities.

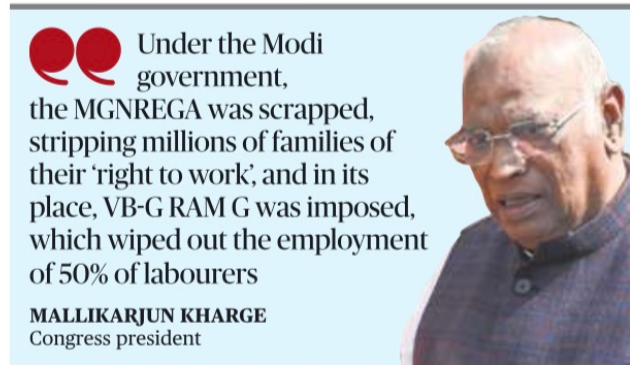
Congress slams new rural jobs law amid fall in employment generation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday criticised the Centre over a sharp decline in employment generation under the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), which replaced the United Progressive Alliance (UPA)-era Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), and said the new law should be renamed “rozgar chori” (employment theft).

Data from the Union Rural Development Ministry show that the number of person-days generated under the scheme during its first implementing month of July 2026 was 49.94% lower than the number generated under the MGNREGA in the corresponding month of the previous year.

A person-day is a unit that measures the amount of work done by one per-



son in a working day.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, in a post on social media platform X, said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had wielded the “lathi” not only against the youth but also against the country’s labourers.

“Under the Modi government, the MGNREGA was scrapped, stripping millions of families of their ‘right to work’, and in its place, VB-G RAM G was imposed, which wiped out the employment of 50% of labourers. Has the payment of ₹17,144 crore in pending MGNREGA funds

been made to the States?” Mr. Kharge said in an online post in Hindi.

On drought assistance

Mr. Kharge also questioned whether any assistance had been provided to drought-affected States. “There is a 26.50% shortfall in sowing for the kharif crop. Does anyone care? Has the Central government taken any steps regarding the funding pattern of VB-G RAM G, on which BJP-ruled States had demanded a review? When the country’s poor labourers are suffering the most,

the Modi government is snatching away their minimum economic and social security and mocking them,” he said.

Congress general secretary (communications) and former Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh said the data from the first month of implementation of VB-G RAM G exposed “the cost of destroying the MGNREGA”. He argued that the MGNREGA had empowered gram panchayats and freed workers from dependence on “the political whims of the government of the day”.

“The Modi government has instead centralised the scheme, imposed a heavy financial burden on State governments, made access increasingly dependent on technology and biometric authentication, removed the guarantee of employment, and made it harder for workers to claim their rights. the VB-G RAM G is simply ‘rozgar chori’,” Mr. Ramesh said.

Rajya Sabha clears two Bills; Minister says consumers will not pay UPI charges

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Amid the Opposition walkout, the Rajya Sabha passed the Bankers' Books Evidence Bill and returned the Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill on Monday.

Countering the Opposition's charge that the Taxation Bill proposed further burden on small traders and consumers by imposing a tax on Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said they would remain free for consumers.

She added that once the Bill was passed, the National Payments Corporation of India could finalise the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR), which would be applied to certain categories of merchant transactions. The Upper House had witnessed disruptions and adjournments in the morning too.

CPI(M) member John Brittas moved a statutory motion to disapprove an



Nirmala Sitharaman

ordinance brought by the Finance Ministry in June. The statutory motion and the Bill were discussed together. He accused the government of being subservient to the United States and said the charges of UPI transactions were based on the U.S. diktats. "The Prime Minister promised that UPI will be free for everyone," he reminded the government.

During the debate, AAP member Sanjay Singh said the new Bill would create problems for the public as digital transactions had become a part of trade and commerce.

Countering all these ar-

guments, Ms. Sitharaman said UPI had remained free for consumers since its launch, and every Indian would continue to make instant digital payments without paying a transaction charge. "Will consumers pay any UPI charge? No, consumers will not have to pay any charges on UPI transactions," she said. Adding that vast majority of merchant transactions, including low-value transactions to roadside vendors, would continue to remain free.

When Mr. Brittas walked out soon after his reply, Ms. Sitharaman said Communists in this country were total cowards and they could not face facts, but "they will go on filibustering, making noise."

Earlier, the Rajya Sabha proceedings were interrupted twice in the morning session with continued protests from the Opposition demanding a statement from Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the police action on July 20 on protesters in Delhi.

Russia's share in India's oil imports jumps to 48% in June

The U.S. Senate has passed a bill that will see tariffs of up to 100% being levied on top 5 countries importing Russian oil and gas; the Bill now awaits passage in the House of Representatives

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

At a time when the U.S. looks all set to enact legislation to impose a tariff of up to 100% on India for its Russian oil imports, an analysis of the latest data shows Russia's share in India's oil imports rose to an all-time-high of 48% in June 2026.

The U.S. Senate last week passed the bipartisan Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026 which seeks to levy tariffs of up to 100% on countries that continue to buy Russian oil and gas, and that were the largest purchasers of these products from Russia over the previous year. India qualifies for tariffs under these criteria. The Bill still requires to be passed by the U.S. House of Representatives before it becomes law.

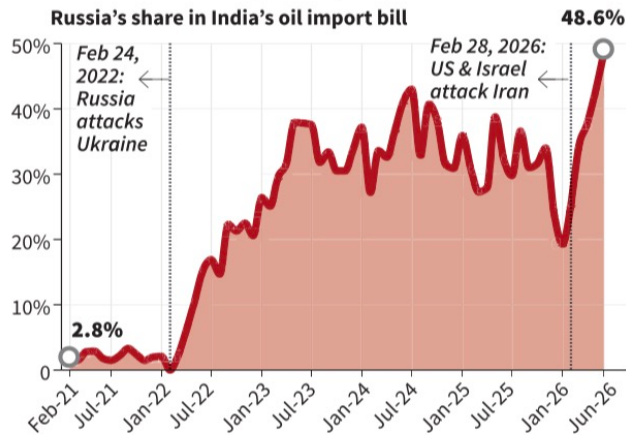
An analysis by *The Hindu* of the latest data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry shows that India significantly lowered its total crude oil imports in June 2026. In terms of volume, June crude oil imports at 18.2 million metric tonnes (MMT) were down 16.5% compared with May 2026, and were 13% lower than in June last year.

However, elevated crude oil prices this year have meant that the oil import bill, while 22% lower in June 2026 than in May, was still 40% higher than in June of last year.

While India drastically

War relations

Each time a recent war has spiked oil prices, India has turned to Russia



Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry

cut down on overall oil imports, its purchases from Russia bucked this trend. That is, India imported 8.7 MMT of Russian oil in June 2026, just 1% lower than in May, and 25% higher than in June of last year.

As a result of this strategy, Russia's share in India's crude oil imports jumped to 48% in terms of quantity and 48.6% in terms of the value. Russia's share has been rising consistently every month since March and the outbreak of the war in West Asia.

According to the U.S. Bill, the tariffs would apply on a country that was among the five largest importers of crude oil or natural gas from Russia during the 12 months preceding the date of the enactment of the Act, and that then continues to import oil or gas from Russia after 30 days of the enactment.

China and India are the top two importers of Russian oil and India's rising dependence on Russian oil shows it cannot quickly cut back on this source at a time when supplies through the Strait of Hormuz are still constrained.

The premium Russia has charged India for its oil has been steadily declining, data shows, from \$77.7 per tonne in April 2026 to \$10.6 per tonne in June. Russia had been providing India a discount until as recently as February 2026.

Sanctions exposure

The Bill also specifies that tariffs could be imposed on countries that have helped Russia evade sanctions. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) told *The Hindu* that India has specifically taken measures to pre-empt any sanctions exposure.

"It [sanctions exposure] was pre-empted through ship-to-ship transfer operations in international waters via the Red Sea route through Yanbu and Fujairah precisely so that a single choke point, or a single sanctions regime, could not halt India-bound cargo," MoPNG said in a clarificatory note it had sent *The Hindu* in late July.

It is unclear as of now whether India's actions would entail helping Russia evade sanctions.

Apart from Russia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) too saw its share in India's oil imports rise to historic highs. India sourced 17.5% of its oil imports by volume from the UAE in June 2026 and 18% by value, the highest share for both so far.

Taken together, this means that Russia and the UAE together accounted for nearly two-thirds of India's oil imports in June 2026, the highest-ever combined share enjoyed by any two countries. The MoPNG, however, said that such concentration was not a matter of concern given Indian oil marketing companies stand ready to diversify quickly.

"Indian refineries had spent a decade acquiring the logistical flexibility to switch between crude grades and shipping routes the moment disruption struck, which is the definition of a diversification strategy, not its absence," the note said.

India's move to label places in Arunachal Pradesh illegal: China

Press Trust of India

BEIJING

China on Monday termed India's move to identify 27 places and features in Arunachal Pradesh by their standard names on the official Indian map as "illegal, null and void".

"China does not recognise the so-called 'Arunachal Pradesh' illegally set up by India," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said.

"India's move of attempting to replace names long been used by China with its so-called 'standard

names' is illegal, null and void," he said in a reply posted on the Ministry's website.

"Still less will it change the fact that Zangnan region belongs to China," he said.

China calls Arunachal Pradesh as Zangnan.

India last week formally identified 27 places and features in the State by their standard names on the official Indian map. Beijing has been periodically releasing Chinese names for locations in the State since 2017 to assert claims over the area.

BID TO BREAK DEADLOCK IN PARLIAMENT, MONSOON SESSION DUE TO END AUGUST 13

Shah to make statement on police action, Opp must not disrupt: Govt

Rahul demands Home Minister explain who ordered action; Nadda criticises LoP, says he only wants anarchy, not dialogue

**Jatin Anand, Asad Rehman
& Liz Mathew**
New Delhi, August 10

TO BREAK the gridlock in Parliament, the government Monday agreed to the Opposition demand that Union Home Minister Amit Shah make a statement in the House on the alleged use of excessive force against protesters in Delhi during last month's anti-paper leak demonstrations. The only con-

NATION **PAGE 7**
**DAYS AFTER HE WAS
APPOINTED, HIGHER
EDUCATION SECY
GANGWAR REPLACED**

dition, the government said, was that the Opposition must not disrupt Shah's speech.

In response, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi reiterated that Shah

should tell Parliament "who ordered the firing on students", saying the Opposition was not interested in the Home Minister's "fantasy conversations".

Gandhi's remarks drew a strong response from Union Health Minister JP Nadda who accused him of being interested in "anarchy" and not dialogue. Nadda was one of the two Union Ministers who held talks with the Cockroach Janta Party to negotiate an end to the



Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Parliament on Monday. ANI

protest last month.

With three days left in the monsoon session, Union Parlia-

mentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju informed Lok Sabha

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Shah statement

Monday that the government was ready to discuss the lathi-charge on student protesters during the march to Parliament on July 20.

On August 6, Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice-President C P Radhakrishnan had told Rijiju to "echo the sentiments of the Opposition" to Shah and "consider the request" for the Home Minister's presence in the House.

Rijiju said, "The offer made by the government is very clear: The government is ready to have a full and detailed discussion about the student movement. While the discussion (is on) and the reply is being made, they should not create any disturbance to distract the House or to prevent the statement of the

Honourable Home Minister. They must listen to the reply ... We must have a threadbare discussion." BJP MP Jagdambika Pal, who was in the Chair, also appealed to the Opposition to let the House function.

Later in the day, flanked by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Gandhi told a press conference: "The question was never that Mr Amit Shah is going to give a speech on some general topics in Parliament. The question was always that Mr Amit Shah has to make it clear who authorised the shooting of our youngsters in Delhi. He is the Home Minister. Pellet guns were fired, students were beaten with lathis with nails. The question is: Mr Amit Shah should come clean: Did he order it or not? If he ordered it, he

is guilty of getting our children shot. And if he didn't know about it happening, he is incompetent. Either way he should go. This was the discussion."

Gandhi said Shah was "suddenly saying he is ready to speak". "We are not interested in his fantasy conversations. We are interested in whether he authorised, or not, the shooting of our children ... That is what the Opposition has demanded for 15 days and we continue to demand," he said.

Criticising Gandhi, Nadda said, "His objective is not to engage in dialogue, but to create anarchy. When Parliament began, Rahul Gandhi first demanded a discussion on NEET. When the government was ready for a discussion on NEET, he brought up the issue of the Ram Mandir Trust."

"After that, Rahul Gandhi remained adamant that the Union

Home Minister should make a statement on the developments at Jantar Mantar. Today, when it was decided after discussions that the issue of Jantar Mantar would be taken up for discussion, Rahul Gandhi is now misleading people and country by claiming that firing took place at Jantar Mantar, whereas no firing took place there," he said.

He said while Shah was ready to answer every question, Gandhi was spreading confusion and "running away" from a discussion. "We want to make it clear that Rahul Gandhi should not run away from the discussion; we are ready. We are ready to discuss every issue inside the House, so do not run away. Can Rahul Gandhi not hear the voices of the students in Jharkhand today? We strongly condemn this and once again challenge Rahul Gandhi to come to the House. We are ready for a

discussion, and he will be given a befitting reply," he said.

Nadda advised Opposition parties to resolve their differences over the Parliament logjam. Earlier, the Congress's Deputy Leader in Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, said the party had also demanded a discussion on the alleged theft of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Asked if the government would also be willing to discuss the issue, Rijiju told reporters: "I don't want to make any comment on that. I have come here to make clear the government's stand that it is ready for a debate on the student agitation."

Sources said at the meeting of the Business Advisory Council of Lok Sabha, Speaker Om Birla appealed to the floor leaders of political parties to "let the voice of the people be heard" and allow Question Hour to be held.

Held for remarks against women protesters, Mohandas gets bail

Shaju Philip

*Thiruvananthapuram,
August 10*

A POLITICAL commentator, who was arrested on Sunday night for the derogatory comments he made against Jantar Mantar protesters, including women, last month, was granted bail by a magistrate court in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday.

Earlier in the day, cyber police in the city recorded the arrest of T G Mohandas, who was taken into custody from Kochi on Sunday. Police had sought his custody but it was rejected by the court.

The right wing commentator was booked under sections 192 (provocation for causing rioting), 79 (insulting modesty of women), and 353 (1) (circulating false statements to cause



**Right wing political
commentator T G Mohandas**

In the past, Mohandas had served as the convener of the intellectual cell of the BJP in Kerala. BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Monday said if there is anything wrong with the statements attributed to Mohandas, the party completely disagrees with it.

However, he questioned the timing of the arrest, "The BJP

views the drama, including the midnight arrest, as an act of political vendetta and an attempt to divert public attention when the Congress government (in Kerala) is on the defensive on many issues."

Referring to the youth protest in Delhi, Mohandas, in a video uploaded on July 26, said that if tasked with handling the protest, he would have imposed a curfew in the Jantar Mantar area. He allegedly also made derogatory remarks against women protesters.

The cyber police had registered an FIR against Mohandas on July 29, it was only on August 9 that the police took steps to arrest him. Opposition CPI(M) raised the allegation that the state's Congress government was soft-pedalling on the case against him.

Over 100 killed as powerful earthquake strikes Colombia

Associated Press

BOGOTA

At least 111 people were killed and 87 injured in Colombia on Monday when a 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck the Latin American country, leaving several cities ravaged and trapping residents under debris of hundreds of collapsed buildings while their loved ones and rescue workers searched through the rubble.

The “highest magnitude earthquake in Colombia in the last decade” was followed by two aftershocks of magnitudes 2.8 and 4.8, the Colombian Geological Service said. The U.S. Geological Survey reported the



A rescue worker searching for survivors in a collapsed building in Cali, Colombia. AP

tremor's epicentre in San Jose Del Palmar, about 400 kilometres west of capital Bogota. The tremors were felt in neighbouring Ecuador and Panama, though minimal damage was reported there.

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Bangladesh urges India to expedite Hasina's extradition

Indian High Commissioner Trivedi calls on Bangladesh PM Rahman; 'somewhat reassured' after the meeting, says Minister; exchanged views on 'matters of mutual interest', says Indian mission

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Bangladesh has urged India to “expedite” the extradition of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who took shelter in India after being deposed in 2024. The matter featured in a discussion when Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dinesh Trivedi called on Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Monday.

The meeting took place amid tension in bilateral relations following Ms. Hasina’s virtual press conference on August 5, in which she had criticised Mr. Tarique Rahman’s government.

Following the meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman said that he felt “somewhat reassured” by the conversation that took place between Mr. Tarique Rahman and Mr. Trivedi.

“Bangladesh hopes that India will expedite the process of extraditing Sheikh Hasina,” said Shahadat Shadhin, the Prime Minister’s Deputy Press Secretary. The meeting took



Dinesh Trivedi (right) with Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman during a meeting in Dhaka on Monday. PTI

place at the Bangladesh Prime Minister’s Office in the Secretariat in Dhaka, Mr. Shadhin said, and added, “Prime Minister emphasised on the need to create a conducive environment to further advance India-Bangladesh bilateral relations.”

Positive development

Mr. Khalilur Rahman and Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kobir were present during the meeting.

“The Prime Minister at the same time reiterated the request to extradite the suspected killers who are connected to the assassina-

tion of Shaheed Osman Hadi,” said Mr. Shadhin, referring to reports that the individuals connected to the December 2025 killing of Hadi had fled to India.

The Indian High Commission in Bangladesh said the two sides “exchanged views on matters of mutual interest” to strengthen relation with a “people-centric approach”.

Following the meeting, Mr. Khalilur Rahman said, “On August 5, Ms. Hasina undermined the Justice Department of Bangladesh, which is a pillar of our nation. The Government of India had allowed

her to do that. We want all states in the world to respect our state institutions. We hope the Government of India will understand that matter.”

“After talking to them, I am somewhat reassured that such incidents will not be repeated,” said Mr. Khalilur Rahman while speaking to the presspersons after the meeting. He further said that Mr. Tarique Rahman has two invites from India, one for the BRICS summit in September and another for a bilateral visit.

Diplomatic sources here have interpreted the meeting as a positive development as it came at a time when Dhaka is also hosting a high-level security-related delegation from India.

Hasina’s conference

The Bangladesh government had said that it was “outraged” by the remarks made by Ms. Hasina in the press conference held in New Delhi’s Foreign Correspondent Club. Mr. Kobir had met Mr. Trivedi before the conference saying that Ms. Hasina’s political activities from India could “harm” positive movements in bilateral ties.

Mojtaba rejigs Iran's top leadership; Trump demands war compensation

Mohsen Rezaei to head Iran's top security body; his predecessor Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr named as political adviser to the Supreme Leader; Iran Guards get new Commander-in-Chief; Trump responds to Tehran's call for U.S. to meet conditions

Reuters

DUBAI/TEHRAN/WASHINGTON

Iran has carried out changes in its political and national security establishments, with Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei naming former Revolutionary Guards commander Mohsen Rezaei as secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), the country's top security body.

A separate decree from Mr. Khamenei named Mr. Rezaei as his representative to the council.

Mr. Rezaei, 71, is more of an outspoken public figure than his predecessor, Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr,



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian with Mohsen Rezaei, then adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader, at a ceremony in July. REUTERS

who was appointed as political adviser to the Supreme Leader.

On the military front, Revolutionary Guards general Ali Abdollahi was named head of the country's armed forces on Mon-

day. Mr. Abdollahi had previously led Khatam al-Anbiya, Iran's interbranch central military command tasked with coordinating operations. A statement on Ayatollah Mojtaba's website also con-

firmed Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi as new Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday demanded Iran pay compensation for the deaths of people he said it had killed in wars, attacks and protests over the years, raising the rhetorical stakes with Tehran as hopes faded for an imminent deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Mr. Trump said he was responding to Iran's earlier call for Washington to meet conditions. "I am likewise demanding compensation from Iran, for all

of the people that they have killed and gravely wounded with their roadside bombs and many conflicts, for which they are famous," Mr. Trump wrote on his Truth Social service.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian told state media on Monday he had a nearly seven-hour meeting with Ayatollah Mojtaba where they discussed "people's livelihoods, employment, people's housing," as well as "problems being created as a result of the (U.S.) sanctions."

Most important, he said, was Mr. Khamenei's emphasis on unity.

(With inputs from AP and AFP)

+ Taiwan tests Internet ‘throttling’ for first time in war exercise

Reuters

TAIPEI

Taiwan slowed the mobile internet in a large swathe of the central part of the island on Monday for the first time during annual war games, simulating communication disruption in the event of a Chinese attack or natural disaster.

Democratically governed Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, has long lived with the threat of a Chinese invasion and holds air raid drills along with its war games every year, clearing

people from the streets for 30 minutes.

During the internet “throttling” drill on Monday on the central metropolis of Taichung, only basic mobile phone services worked, though key services, from ATMs and traffic signals, were not affected, and neither were landlines nor fixed internet services.

Earlier on Monday, Taiwan’s military simulated repelling a Chinese air landing assault on the strategically vital Penghu Islands. The 10-day Han Kuang exercise kicked off last week.

PoK elections put off amid security fears; UN takes note

Divya A

New Delhi, August 10

AS ONGOING elections in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) are marred by violent clashes and security crackdowns, killing dozens of protestors, polling in four of the 11 seats for the last phase was held on Monday, while polling on the remaining seven seats has been postponed indefinitely owing to the deteriorating security situation.

New Delhi has described the ongoing elections as an attempt by Islamabad to camouflage its illegal occupation and hide its “grave” violation of human rights in the region.

After the first two phases on July 27 and August 2, where 34 of the 45 seats went to the polls, the Pakistan Muslim League-N has already claimed victory in 24 seats, amid reports of widespread rigging.

A PML-N victory would return the party to power in the region after a decade. The now-banned civil society group Joint Awami Action Committee, or JAAC, has already announced a boycott of the elections.

Authorities have said that new voting dates for the remaining seven seats are yet to be decided, even as they say the



A policeman stands guard beside vehicles patrolling for security in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. FILE/REUTERS

electoral process is expected to be completed this month, as per the news agency PTL. There are 53 seats in PoK: 45 members are directly elected, while eight seats are reserved for women, technocrats, and clerics.

The election campaign has been overshadowed by weeks of protests led by the JAAC, which has urged residents to boycott the vote.

Besides economic hardship in the region and concerns over curtailment of civil liberties, the present round of protests centres on 12 seats reserved for refugees, thus voted externally.

The JAAC argues that the arrangement gives disproportionate political influence to people living outside the region. The JAAC, formed in 2023, has demanded greater political rights for local people.

Meanwhile, the United Nations has expressed concern over the security situation in PoK, with a spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres highlighting the need for accountability for actions against people engaging in peaceful protest.

On whether there will be calls for accountability from

British national shot dead in PoK, reports UK daily

A BRITISH national was shot dead in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir during clashes between security forces and protestors, according to *The Guardian*. Mohammad Akhtar, a resident of Peterborough, was killed on 9 June after his family said Pakistani security forces opened fire on a gathering where protestors were demanding economic and electoral reforms. Akhtar was staying in the city of Kotli, close to the area where the clashes occurred, and his family said he was hit by a stray bullet. **ENS**

the authorities on the crackdown on protests in the PoK, the deputy spokesman for the secretary-general, Farhan Haq, said last Friday, “It’s important that all authorities everywhere allow for peaceful protest, and certainly that is the case here.”

He added, “If there have been people harmed for engaging in peaceful protest, there needs to be accountability for that.”

In first one-on-one with a foreign diplomat, Nepal PM meets Indian envoy

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, August 10

FIVE MONTHS after being elected as the Prime Minister of Nepal, Balen Shah met Indian ambassador in Kathmandu Naveen Srivastava on Monday for the first one-on-one bilateral meeting and discussed strengthening Nepal-India relations, promoting bilateral cooperation and enhancing development partnership for the mutual benefit of two countries.

This is a departure from Shah's earlier position that he would meet only heads of State and heads of government, and not officials below that rank.

After the meeting, Nepal Prime Minister's Office posted on X, "Ambassador of India to Nepal Naveen Srivastava paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister Balendra Shah at Singhadurbar today."

"Discussions were focused on further strengthening Nepal-India relations, promoting bilateral cooperation and enhancing development partnership for the mutual benefit of two countries," Nepal PMO said. Indian envoy Srivastava said, "Honoured to call on Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal this morning. Conveyed warm greetings from Prime Minister



Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava (left) with Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah in Kathmandu on Monday. PTI

Modi ji. Had an engaging & productive exchange of views on further deepening robust, multi-faceted India-Nepal partnership".

Srivastava had met the Nepalese Prime Minister in a group call-on by ambassadors of several countries, just after Shah was sworn-in as the new PM in March this year.

In May, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri was expected to visit Kathmandu.

However, the visit was later deferred as Shah had conveyed that he will not undertake any foreign visits in the near future — at least for the first 100 days of his term. Shah had also not met

visiting US ambassador Sergio Gorr, who is also US special envoy on South and Central Asia.

The statements by the Shah government on Lipulekh, objecting to India and China planning to conduct the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through the pass, have posed challenges to the ties. India had said that such claims are "neither justified nor based on historical facts and evidence", and it remains open to "constructive interaction with Nepal".

However, they have engaged on issues including water resources, power transmission and developmental projects.