

CJP team attacked over attempt to inspect school

Team attempted to inspect a govt. primary school in a Rajasthan village where classes are being held in a cattle enclosure; CJP blames BJP and threatens agitation if the school is not repaired

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

A team of Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) activists was allegedly assaulted and chased out of Rampura-Kanwarapura village near Jaipur on Friday, when it attempted to inspect a government school as part of the organisation's 'School Thik Karo' campaign. The vehicles of team members were damaged, and women supporters were allegedly roughed up.

The team, led by party co-convenor Ashutosh Ranka, travelled to the village in the Bagru Assembly constituency to inspect the Government Primary School. However, some villagers had barricaded the road and checked the vehicles entering the area.



CJP workers being confronted during their 'School Thik Karo' campaign at Bagru village in Jaipur, Rajasthan, on Friday. PTI

When the team of about 40 CJP workers arrived in the village, some people confronted them, raised slogans, and asked them to leave. During a scuffle that followed, the team members were allegedly manhandled and driven out with stone-pelting. The villagers later staged a sit-in

outside the school.

Mr. Ranka said one volunteer had suffered a fractured arm. He alleged that those involved in the attack had been brought in by the ruling BJP. "We had informed the police about our visit... The police were aware of stone-pelting but did not intervene," he said.

The school building had earlier been declared unsafe because of its dilapidated condition and was closed. Currently, classes are being held in a cattle enclosure. "We had inspected the school last year as well... It was being run in a buffalo shed even then," Mr. Ranka said.

The villagers, however, claimed that the funds for school repair work had already been sanctioned.

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke announced that he would arrive in Jaipur and launch an agitation if the school repair work did not begin, and if the BJP members who allegedly attacked the volunteers were not arrested within the next 48 hours.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

CJP team attacked over school inspection

The CJP, which cancelled its visit to another government school in a nearby village later in the day, claimed that the confrontation in Rampura-Kanwarpura was pre-planned and had the backing of State Education Minister Madan Dilawar.

‘Political battlegrounds’

The confrontation occurred amid a political row over a recent Education Department order imposing restrictions on the entry of outsiders into government schools and barring photography and videography without the written approval of the heads of institutions. The order was issued after CJP activists joined an agitation by students and villagers at a school in Alwar district on August 14.

The CJP has opposed the restriction and accused the BJP government of attempting to prevent public scrutiny of the condition of government schools. The party’s ‘School Thik Karo’ campaign seeks to assess the condition of school buildings, availability of teachers, and other facilities and academic arrangements.

The incident also spilled over into the Rajasthan Assembly, where the BJP and the Opposition Congress traded allegations. Education Minister Mr. Dilawar later accused the CJP and Congress of attempting to “disrupt education and spoil the atmosphere”. He added: “Turning the schools into political battlegrounds is extremely regrettable. Everyone should remain vigilant against the attempts to tarnish the school environment for selfish interests.”

The People’s Union for Civil Liberties-Rajasthan demanded the immediate arrest of all those accused of attacking the CJP delegation.

Gen Alpha protests: Oppn. terms U.P. govt.'s checklist for schools an 'eyewash'

Mayank Kumar

LUCKNOW

Amid a series of protests by schoolchildren over inadequate infrastructure and a shortage of teaching staff in Uttar Pradesh, Opposition parties in the State on Friday said comprehensive education reforms and an overhaul of existing facilities are the need of the hour. The Opposition also expressed dissatisfaction with the 14-point checklist issued by the Education Department on Thursday for nearly 40,000 basic and secondary schools, calling it "mere eyewash".

The State, which is due to go to the polls next year, has seen a spate of protests by schoolchildren or Gen Alpha following youth-led protests at Jantar Mantar in Delhi. Recently, hundreds of students at a government-aided school in U.P.'s Fatehpur walked out of their classrooms and



Schoolchildren form a human chain as they stage a protest against poor facilities and shortage of teachers, in Lucknow on Aug. 17. PTI

staged a protest demanding better infrastructure.

'Deeper anxiety'

Criticising the Bharatiya Janata Party-led State government, Ghazipur MP and senior Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Afzal Ansari said, "The checklist is an attempt at hiding systematic failure; an eyewash. The truth is that the BJP government has let Uttar Pradesh and the country down by benefiting a few indivi-

duals while allowing the structural collapse of the education system. Protests by Gen Alpha and Gen Z point to a deeper anxiety and unrest in society."

The quality of education in government schools has declined due to a lack of teachers and falling pedagogical standards, drawing students' anger, he added.

"Rather than issuing a checklist, the government must initiate comprehensive reforms in the educa-

tion sector to match international standards while keeping employability in mind," said Mr. Ansari.

The Congress alleged that the Education Department's announcement was a ploy to divert attention from the closure of thousands of schools across the State.

"Over 25,000 schools have been closed in U.P. over the last nine years. The BJP government has completely failed to provide quality education. Hence, students are forced to hit the streets," said senior U.P. Congress leader Anil Yadav. He added, "I believe the BJP intentionally doesn't want quality standards to rise, as it feels that educated people will challenge its Hindutva-centric authoritarian regime."

The 14-point checklist includes regular inspections of facilities such as drinking water and electricity supply.

After Cong. stir, FIR over pellet gun use registered

Shrimansi Kaushik

NEW DELHI

Following a seven-hour dharna (sit-in) by the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, outside the office of New Delhi's Deputy Commissioner of Police, police registered an FIR against the use of pellet guns on protesters during the July 20 march to Parliament.

Mr. Gandhi held the dharna after Sahil Lochab, a 19-year-old who lost vision in one eye after being hit by pellets during the protest, said the police had refused to register an FIR on his complaint.

The Congress leader, accompanied by his sister and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and other senior Congress leaders, ended the sit-in after the police relented.

Mr. Lochab said he had written a seven-page complaint as soon as he was discharged from the hospi-



Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi protest inside Parliament Street Police Station in New Delhi on Friday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

tal and went to various police stations. "But the police did not acknowledge my complaint. I have been trying to get an FIR registered first at Connaught Place, then at Mandir Marg, Sansad Marg and even the Crime Branch but to no avail," he said.

A student of the School of Open Learning at the University of Delhi, Mr. Lochab had said in his complaint that he received multiple pellet injuries on his chest, back, arms, and face. He was seriously in-

jured in his right eye; pellets had entered his body, and several of them could not be taken out. "Doctors have told me that the possibility of my eyesight coming back is less than one per cent," he wrote.

The FIR was registered in the evening under Sections 118(1) (voluntarily causing hurt using dangerous weapons) and 125 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 10**

After Cong. stir, FIR over pellet gun use registered

On Friday, Mr. Gandhi accompanied Mr. Lochab and his mother first to the Mandir Marg police station and then to the Sansad Marg police station. "Sahil and his family have been moving pillar to post to get his complaint registered. Why is the police refusing to do so?" he told presspersons outside the DCP's office.

"It took them so long to register the FIR. It has been a month since the march when he received his injuries. Even after multiple visits, the police refused to receive the complaint. Who was holding it back? The final order has come from the Union Home Ministry. We all know now that even for an FIR to be registered, the Home Minister has to give an order," Mr. Gandhi said.

Senior Congress leader Salman Khursid said that with the registration of the FIR, which mentions the use of pellet guns, "it is now documented that the police used pellets on July 20, contrary to the police's denial earlier."

The Hindu had reported that an entry in the general diary of Delhi's Sansad Marg police station recorded the use of pellet guns by the Rapid Action Force (RAF), contradicting the Delhi Police's initial denial on use of pellet guns against protesters. The reported use of pellets has raised questions over the police's crowd-control protocols and the circumstances in which force was deployed against demonstrators.

On Thursday, the Supreme Court constituted a five-member High-Powered Enquiry Committee to conduct an independent inquiry into the police action. The committee will examine the use of pellet guns, lathis, tear gas and electric batons.

Saving faces

Use of facial recognition equipment at protest sites is worrisome

India appears to be normalising the technical ability to subject political gatherings to searchable biometric surveillance without first having settled, through legislation and judicial oversight, the circumstances in which the state may lawfully do so. While the Delhi Police have continued to deny the use of excessive force and manhandling people involved in the Cockroach Janta Party protests, contrary to protestors' testimonies, facial recognition equipment was present at the protest site while the demonstrations were on. According to its affidavit to the Supreme Court of India, the police deployed a facial recognition system (including Artificial Intelligence-enabled cameras to scan faces in real-time against a database), a mobile surveillance van and a command and control vehicle, smart spectacles for identifying individuals on the move, and drones and videographers; the van and the spectacles have been tied to private contractors. The police have also not addressed whether actual biometric processing occurred with every individual within the range of cameras. Even if the police discarded the images associated with infructuous checks, that the data may have been accessible to private contractors, whose terms of engagement are unclear, is worrisome. However, no statute governs the use of facial recognition systems; the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, whose data-processing obligations are not yet in force, still makes broad exemptions for state agencies. The Automated Facial Recognition System of the National Crime Records Bureau can be used to identify criminals, unidentified bodies, and so on, and the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act 2022 expanded the set of records that the police may collect from specified persons. However, these actions are still only allowed *vis-à-vis* specific groups of people.

Irrespective of the constitutional validity of the police's actions, the chilling effect on potential participants may also curtail the right to protest. The state has to pass a well-established proportionality test when interfering with the right to privacy. While the first question – the existence of a legitimate objective – already poses important challenges to facial recognition en masse, the technology is indiscriminate at the point of capture. After all, there is a less restrictive but equally effective alternative (e.g., conventional policing). At this time, far too many questions are unanswered – including over the data-processing agreements, access, legal provisions that authorised major decisions, and the expected rate of false positives – for the use of facial recognition with all protesters to be justified.

SC lauds scrapped MGNREGA as a 'good, effective scheme'

The scheme was applauded by a three-judge Bench while hearing a petition on delayed wages under the defunct scheme; petition seeks to elevate the right to work as a fundamental right

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday praised the repealed Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), calling it a "salutary scheme" that was neither a freebie nor an exploitation of rural workers.

The court's accolade came amid claims by civil rights groups that MGNREGA's successor, the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) or the VB-G RAM G Act, has seen a 50% decline in employment generation, despite an increase in guaranteed work days from 100 to 125 per household annually.

The new law reflects a shift from a demand-driven, rights-based framework to a centrally controlled model. Also, the funding burden on States has increased three-fold, shifting from a 90:10 ratio to 60:40. The "MGNREGA was a good, effective scheme. It did a wonderful job in rural areas and was implemented pan-India. It was neither a freebie nor



MGNREGS labourers working in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. The VB-G RAM G is a replacement for MGNREGA. C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

exploitation," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a three-judge Bench, orally observed.

Compensation sought

The Bench was hearing a petition filed by activist Aruna Roy seeking directions for the government to pay delayed wages under the MGNREGA, along with compensation.

Advocates Prashant Bhushan, Cheryl D'Souza and Neha Rathi, appearing for Ms. Roy, urged the court to examine whether a law could prescribe minimum wages lower than the

threshold determined by the State concerned.

The petition also sought

to elevate the statutory guarantee of rural work to the status of a fundamental right under Article 21 (right to life) of the Constitution.

"The Constitution does not make the right to work a fundamental right. It is more a democratic aspiration under Part IV (Directive Principles of State Policy)... To achieve that aspiration, the state formulates the policy by which work is provided at a graded, compensatory level. Should we treat it on par

with Article 21?" Justice Joymalya Bagchi asked Mr. Bhushan. Mr. Bhushan said the right to lead a dignified life is part of Article 21. "A dignified life requires you to get employment at minimum wages. Anything below minimum wages is forced labour," he submitted.

Justice Bagchi said a minimum wage threshold might risk shrinking employment opportunities, while Chief Justice Kant noted that wages were usually linked to prevalent local conditions.

Justice V. Mohana stated that the issues raised by Mr. Bhushan must be examined afresh in light of the new law, rather than under the MGNREGA. "We have to see fresh details, fresh statistics," Justice Mohana said.

Mr. Bhushan submitted that States were required to provide nearly half the funds under the new law. "The number of employments has come down by half. States have no money," he said.

The court asked him to file a new petition while disposing of the current one.

Govt. got 29 projects worth ₹4,895.65 crore post nod to firms with 10% China stake

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Centre received a total of 29 foreign direct investment (FDI) projects worth ₹4,895.65 crore under a revised framework allowing firms with up to 10% Chinese ownership to invest via automatic route, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said on Friday.

In March, the government amended Press Note 3 of 2020. Without specifically naming any country, the original framework required government nod for foreign direct investment (FDI) from countries sharing land border with India. Among India's neighbours, China is the largest source



The reform provides greater certainty to investors.

of investment.

Under the March amendment, firms with up to 10% ownership by an entity based in a land-border country (LBC) can invest via the automatic route, without prior government approval. The investments

cover I-T, AI, information and communication, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, data centres and transport services.

The proposals were submitted by entities based in Mauritius, the U.S., the Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, Luxembourg, and the Cayman Islands, among other jurisdictions.

“The reform provides greater certainty to investors, reduces transaction time and strengthens the ease of doing business in India,” as per the government statement. Before the amendment, foreign investors with beneficial ownership from LBCs of India needed prior government approval.

Ethanol blending policy is behind rise in sugar prices, says Opposition

Sugar prices went up from ₹48 to ₹67 a kg over last three months, says Congress, blaming the diversion of sugar cane for fuel; asks why petrol prices were not reduced despite falling global crude rates; Kejriwal says government run by 'illiterates'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The diversion of sugar cane and food-grains for ethanol production is driving food prices higher, the Congress said on Friday, adding that vehicles not designed for 20% ethanol-blended fuel face mileage and compatibility problems. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) too claimed that diverting sugar cane towards ethanol production has reduced sugar output, pushing sugar prices up by ₹20 per kg in just 17 days.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Centre had, on Thursday, allowed duty-free imports of 10 lakh tonne of raw sugar under a Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) till October 31, amid the rising prices of the sweetener in



As more sugarcane is diverted towards ethanol, domestic sugar prices have surged nearly 20% in August to a record ₹5,350 per 100 kg. India is now considering importing sugar for the first time in nearly a decade to meet domestic demand during the festival season

SYED NASEER HUSSAIN
Congress MP



local markets. The move is aimed at enhancing domestic availability and capping price rise.

Immediate review

In a post on X, Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh demanded an immediate review of the E20 fuel policy and sought the provision of non-ethanol petrol options.

"The people are paying

the price for both expensive food and expensive travel because of the wrong decisions of the arrogant Modi government," Mr. Ramesh said, adding that "a fuel policy under which both the vehicle and the kitchen become expensive" could not be acceptable to the country.

According to the figures cited by Mr. Ramesh, sugar prices have risen from ₹48

to ₹67 a kg and jaggery prices from ₹50 to ₹65 a kg over the past three months. Rice and maize flour, he said, have become costlier by 16% and 11%, respectively, while animal feed prices have risen 10.34%.

The Congress leader also asked why there was no cut in petrol prices despite a decline in international crude oil prices and lower costs resulting from 20% ethanol blending. He alleged that alternatives to petrol had been limited to benefit ethanol producers, while serious questions remained over the impact of E20-blended petrol on vehicle mileage and compatibility.

Food security

Congress Rajya Sabha MP Syed Naseer Hussain said the Modi government's ag-

gressive push for E20 was compromising India's food security. "As more sugarcane is diverted towards ethanol, domestic sugar prices have surged nearly 20% in August to a record ₹5,350 per 100 kg. India is now considering importing sugar for the first time in nearly a decade to meet domestic demand during the festival season," he said in a post on X.

AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal said in a video message that the government started making ethanol from sugarcane in order to save foreign exchange spent on oil imports. "Now, they will import sugar using that foreign exchange," he said. "It's a government entirely run by illiterates. No one knows what will happen if they do something," he added.

Centre notifies key scheme to manufacture mobile phones

The ₹62,500 cr. scheme, offering incentives for Indian brands, was cleared by Cabinet last month; it builds on PLI Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing which ran from 2020 to FY26

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) on Friday notified the Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS), aimed at incentivising the domestic assembly of smartphones and greater local value addition in the process. "The time has come to focus on developing Indian brands," IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said at an event announcing the scheme's notification. "Indian brand, Indian design, Indian IP; that's the thought process."

The ₹62,500 crore scheme had been approved by the Union Cabinet on July 15, and continues an earlier scheme that ran from 2020 to the last financial year.

With the notification and the announcement, the Ministry provided some fresh information about how the scheme would be operationalised. For instance, phone makers receive additional incentives for sourcing certain parts domestically.

This is on top of the base incentive (tapering down from 2.75-2.25% over the five year tenure, with rates of 2.25-5% depending on the year and the incremental sales) for the assembly itself. These additional incentives amount to 1.5% (with individual component incentives ranging



Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, centre, addresses the media during the launch of the MPMS, in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

from 0.2-0.5%).

The 1.5% additional incentive would only be applicable if a firm is sourcing domestically for at least a quarter of the phones it sells in a given fiscal year.

While foreign phone-makers face a higher bar to avail incentives, the corpus is fungible overall, meaning there is no earmarked amount as such for domestic players. Indian brands – which will need to be majority-owned by Indian citizens and incorporated in India, along with intellectual property and trademark held locally – will have a flat 5% incentive throughout the scheme's tenure, and are not subject to a minimum sales threshold applicable for other brands; they will have a baseline fixed at 2025-26.

Indian brands will also enjoy a domestic design and research and development incentive of 3%. Indian brands only need to demonstrate a ₹1,000 crore turnover, while oth-

ers need a minimum of ₹10,000 crore.

The scheme pushes expectant firms to grow production quickly. Incentives are only disbursed for sales that are beyond 115% the production of the previous fiscal year. For instance, if a unit produced ₹10 crore worth of phones in the preceding fiscal and then ₹12 crore in the next, it would only be eligible for incentives on production of ₹50 lakh. Briefing reporters on the details of the scheme, IT Secretary S. Krishnan said that it would create 60,000 "direct" jobs.

"Domestic value addition in mobile phone manufacturing is at 23%, which is a substantial deepening" of the sector. Mr. Krishnan said. "Our goal of doubling overall domestic value addition from 18-23% to 35-40% will be achieved in the coming days." The latter target is in line with the value addition achieved by Chinese phone assembly units. The

number has a ceiling due to the global nature of electronics value chains, where various components crisscross the globe multiple times. Mr. Krishnan said that the phone manufacturing industry was important because "technology and skill transfer enables new sectors across the ecosystem [such as] laptops, gaming consoles, drone manufacturing, medical devices, components, tablets, smart watches and automobile windshields."

A massive amount of phone assembly by firms like Apple and Samsung has moved into India, making India an exporter of finished handsets. "Around 70-75% of phones were imports in 2014-15, and now we're exporters," Mr. Krishnan pointed out.

"India is the second largest phone manufacturer in the world and practically all phones sold here are made here."

The government is aiming for ₹39 lakh crore in cumulative production (the combined sale value of the finished products) by the end of MPMS, which runs through 2030-31, and cumulative exports worth ₹15 lakh crore.

An empowered committee will make recommendations to the government on applications by Indian brands for incremental incentives, as well as any "non-fiscal" support from the government.

Two vessels with 22 Indians on board hijacked by pirates

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Two commercial vessels carrying a total of 22 Indian nationals have been hijacked by armed pirates in separate incidents in Yemen and Somalia, a senior Shipping Ministry official said on Friday. The Indian crew members aboard both vessels are safe, as per the latest information.

The Eritrea-flagged oil products tanker, M.T. Sibul 1, carrying 20 crew members, including 16 Indians, was hijacked in the Gulf of Aden on August 20, about 30 nautical miles off the Yemeni coast, the official said.

A second vessel, the Cameroon-flagged M/V LUTUF, was hijacked on August 17 off Somalia's Puntland coast. The vessel has 10 crew members, including six Indians.

Maritime tracking information indicates that the tanker was approached by an unauthorised vessel before control of the ship was lost. The vessel was seized and subsequently taken toward Somalia's Nugaal coast, according to a Somali official cited by The Associated Press. The M/V LUTUF was carrying Turkish weapons and satellite

The Indian crew members aboard both vessels are safe, as per the latest information

equipment, destined for a Turkish military facility in Mogadishu.

The hijackers – eight armed men suspected of involvement in a previous hijacking – steered the ship toward Nugaal.

The renewed threat adds to security pressures already facing commercial shipping in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and wider Indian Ocean region, where vessels have had to contend with attacks linked to the conflict in Yemen.

The two hijackings also come as Indian seafarers face heightened security concerns elsewhere in the region, including the Strait of Hormuz, where tensions involving Iran, Israel and the U.S. have disrupted one of the world's key shipping corridors.

The 2026 BIMCO-ICS Seafarer Workforce Report estimates that India supplies 3,11,936 seafarers, underscoring the country's large exposure to risks affecting merchant crews worldwide.

Balochistan militants are 'foreign-sponsored proxies', says Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Army chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir on Friday described militants active in Balochistan as "foreign-sponsored proxies" working to destabilise the restive province.

Mr. Munir made the remarks while interacting with prominent figures and political leaders from Balochistan, according to a statement issued by the Ar-



Asim Munir

my. Balochistan has been facing a long-running separatist insurgency led by groups, including the out-

lawed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), which seeks independence for the mineral-rich province.

Mr. Munir stressed that the present and future of Balochistan and Pakistan are "one and forever".

Without naming any country, he alleged that militants active in the province "are foreign-sponsored proxies being employed by hostile elements to destabilise Balochistan, obstruct its development

and create a wedge between state and its people".

Insurgents demanding independence for Balochistan have been alleging political marginalisation and exploitation of the province's natural resources by the central government.

The BLA has in recent years stepped up attacks targeting security forces, government installations, and projects linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Imran Khan shifted back to jail after medical check-up

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan was shifted back to Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi on Friday morning after undergoing a medical examination at the state-run Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), where doctors from Al-Shifa hospital were also present, the government said.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Khan's international media spokesperson Zulfi Bukhari had said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder was shifted to privately-owned Shifa International Hospital following a Supreme Court order.

The Supreme Court on August 18 directed that Mr. Khan, 73, be taken to the hospital within two days following a medical report



Strict watch: Security personnel cordon off a street outside the Shifa International Hospital in Islamabad. REUTERS

submitted before it which said he was suffering from "level three plus" anxiety.

Level three plus anxiety refers to high-level or severe anxiety where worry overwhelms daily tasks, triggers intense physical strain and disrupts clear thinking.

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar blamed PTI

workers for the failure to take Mr. Khan to the Shifa hospital.

In a social media post, the Minister said that "in view of the security situation created by PTI workers on the way to and outside Al-Shifa hospital", Mr. Khan was taken to PIMS, where he was found to be "healthy".

Iran vows 'devastating' response as U.S. threatens tough economic hit

Iran's armed forces chief says Tehran is ready across land, sea, air and cyberspace to deliver 'crushing, punishing' retaliation; President Masoud Pezeshkian says it is time to end the war now, claiming that Iran is in a stronger position than the U.S.

Reuters

DUBAI/WASHINGTON

Iran said on Friday that its response to any new U.S. threats would be "devastating" after Washington pledged to impose the toughest financial penalties in history with the aim of toppling the Iranian leadership.

U.S. Treasury chief Scott Bessent said he would give details on Monday of the planned sanctions, which follow a warning from President Donald Trump of economic consequences against any country that provided "any type of lifeline to Iran".

The chief of staff of



Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf during a visit to the grave of an Iraqi paramilitary commander killed in a 2020 U.S. drone strike. AP

Iran's Armed Forces, Major General Ali Abdollahi, said the Islamic Republic's reaction would be broad and decisive.

"With preparedness

across land, sea, air, air defence and cyberspace, Iran's armed forces will respond to the enemy's new threats with crushing, punishing and devastating

responses," Mr. Abdollahi was quoted as saying by Iranian media.

Iran's Parliament Speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the country's main negotiator in mediated talks with the U.S., said Washington appeared to have concluded it could not prevail in its direct military confrontation.

"We must make plans to deal with the unjust sanctions so that we can overcome them," he said in neighbouring Iraq, accusing the U.S. and Israel of resorting to what he said was economic and "cognitive" warfare.

Meanwhile, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian

said that it was time to end the months-long war because Tehran appeared to be in a stronger position than Washington.

"It is better that we bring the war to an end now as we are in a position of power and dignity," Mr. Pezeshkian said.

"The whole world acknowledges our victory and emphasises that America has attacked our schools, hospitals and infrastructure in violation of all regulations and is hated around the world."

His remarks come weeks after Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said he had approved the deal to end the war.