

CRPF sub-inspector injured, two houses torched in clash between Manipur groups

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) sub-inspector was injured and at least two houses were torched after violence erupted between two groups in Manipur on Monday.

Officials in Imphal said unknown miscreants burnt a house in the Taphou Kuki village in the Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi district in the early hours. Soon after, another house was torched at Taphou Naga village in the adjoining Naga-dominated Senapati district.

As tension mounted, two groups exchanged fire after 9 a.m. The CRPF sub-inspector was caught in the



Burning streets: A road blocked by local people amid reports of violence in Senapati, Manipur, on Monday. ANI

crossfire and got shot. He was later admitted to a local hospital.

Local people in Senapati blocked National Highway no. 2, also known as the Imphal-Dimapur (Nagaland) road, for a few hours

after the violence. Following the incidents, the security forces heightened alert along the highway and in vulnerable villages in the two districts.

The Taphou Kuki village authority condemned the

“highly deplorable, inhuman, and unacceptable” arson attack, appealing to individuals and groups to refrain from violence, destruction of property, and any actions that may further escalate tension and suffering among the people.

Probe sought

“We urge the district administration, police, and other competent authorities to take immediate and appropriate action to investigate the incident, identify those responsible, and ensure that justice is delivered in accordance with the law,” the village authority stated in a release.

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CJP calls for march on Sept. 5 over 'unfulfilled assurances'

Centre yet to commit to withdrawing FIRs or provide written assurance on 3 main demands, says outfit; urges youth from across country to take part in march from India Gate to police headquarters

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Monday announced a "peaceful march" from India Gate to Delhi Police headquarters on September 5, alleging that the Centre failed to honour the assurances that had prompted the group to end its 36-day agitation at Jantar Mantar on July 25.

According to a statement issued by the outfit after a meeting of its national working committee, the march would be led by families of students who died following the NEET paper leak controversy as well as the victims of alleged police brutality during the July 20 protest march to Parliament. It also appealed to students and youth organisations from across the country to participate.

The CJP said the Supreme Court repeatedly sought a list of FIRs on August 18 so that they could potentially be considered



The CJP ended its stir after the Centre agreed to drop Dharmendra Pradhan as Education Minister, among other demands. FILE PHOTO

together, but "the Union government has not given a clear commitment to withdraw them". The outfit added that it had withdrawn the agitation in good faith, but the assurances have not been implemented and the promised "written assurances" were still pending.

The CJP called off its agitation at Jantar Mantar after the Centre agreed to its three main demands – the removal of Dharmendra Pradhan as Union Education Minister, compensation for the families of those who died by suicide following the cancellation of NEET on May 3 and

withdrawal of FIRs against protesters.

'Don't betray the youth'

"Our patience cannot be mistaken for weakness. Our good faith cannot become an opportunity for the government to betray the young people of this country," the statement read.

"A government cannot take the trust of an entire generation, use it to send young people home, and then quietly retreat from its own word. We will not accept this betrayal," the statement added.

The outfit said the Sep-

tember 5 march would remain peaceful and democratic. "The families who lost their children will walk at the front. Victims of police brutality will walk beside them. Behind them will walk a generation demanding only one thing from its government: keep your word," it added.

'Without govt. support'

CJP founder and convener Abhijeet Dipke wrote on X that he had spoken to two victims who suffered pellet gun injuries during the July 20 march. "Now they have been left to deal with the injuries on their own, without any support from the government," he said.

Mr. Dipke added that he had also written to the Education Ministers of all States seeking information on government schools, including teacher vacancies, budget allocations and additional duties assigned to teachers.

"The nation must know what steps are being taken to improve government schools," he wrote.

Congress targets Modi govt. on price rise and unemployment

The party flags rising prices of food items, including sugar, onions, and milk; party president Mallikarjun Kharge points out that graduates account for 67% of unemployed Indians aged 20 to 29; he slams govt. for absence of jobs after graduation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday targeted the Narendra Modi government over unemployment and price rise, with party president Mallikarjun Kharge accusing the government of “completely ravaging” young India’s entire pathway from education to employment.

Mr. Kharge cited a recent NITI Aayog report estimating that 8.7 crore Indians in the 15-29 age group were not studying, working, or receiving training. Youth unemployment stood at 15.6%, rising to 19.5% among young women, he said, citing the Periodic Labour Force Survey for July.

“Where are the jobs after graduation,” Mr. Kharge asked in a post on the so-



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has accused the government of putting the youth's future at risk. FILE PHOTO

cial media platform X, pointing out that graduates account for 67% of unemployed Indians aged 20 to 29. He questioned the promise of creating two crore jobs every year, saying that by that calculation, 24 crore jobs should have been created in 12 years.

Mr. Kharge alleged that lakhs of government posts

remained vacant, while secure employment was increasingly being replaced by contractual and part-time work. “Expensive and inadequate education, paper leaks, delayed recruitment, a widening skills gap, and disappearing quality jobs have put the future of an entire generation at risk,” he said.

“You, Modi, promised to achieve what previous governments could not do in 70 years! You have certainly delivered on that boast: an education system that costs more, infested with RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), examinations young Indians cannot trust, and degrees that increasingly come without jobs,” the Congress chief said.

The NITI Aayog report, “Reimagining skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047”, based on data from the 78th round of the National Sample Survey conducted in 2021, has called for subsidised training programmes to encourage self-employment, and align skills with local demand and emerging sectors.

The Congress also attacked the government over the rising prices of es-

sential commodities. The party’s communications chief, Jairam Ramesh, cited a media report on a sharp rise in onion prices, saying prices in Nashik had increased by around 76% in a month, while wholesale rates had doubled in some States.

“After sugar, now onions too are slipping out of the common man’s reach,” Mr. Ramesh said on X. The government’s buffer stock was empty, he said, adding that the rising prices of milk, oil, fruits, and other essential commodities were adding to the burden on households.

“The Modi government, which claims to have ushered in *achhe din* (good days), should explain how the poor and middle class were expected to make ends meet,” Mr. Ramesh said.

Opposition raises concerns over 'weakening' of ISRO; Centre hits back

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The government and the Opposition sparred on Monday over the future of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), with Congress general secretary (communication) Jairam Ramesh raising concern over a reported privatisation push in the space sector, and Union Minister of State for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh asserting that the country's space programme was being "scaled up", not scaled back.

Reports about ISRO's future role had raised "legitimate concerns", given the capabilities it built over six decades under scientists, including Vikram Sarabhai, Satish Dhawan, Brahm Prakash, U.R. Rao, and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Mr. Ramesh said.

ISRO's role in rocket development and manufacturing could be "severely limited", he alleged, adding that a substantial part of its satellite-related assets could be transferred to private companies. He questioned the reported plan to hand over the second spaceport being developed at Kulasekarapattinam in Tamil Nadu, for which ISRO is investing



Union Minister of State for S&T Jitendra Singh says ISRO is focusing on frontier missions such as Gaganyaan. FILE PHOTO

about ₹1,000 crore, to a private company.

'Over 100 resignations'

"The future of the historic Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh is itself anybody's guess," Mr. Ramesh said. He also claimed that 100-120 key ISRO professionals had left the organisation in recent months, "perhaps seeing the writing on the wall".

Responding to Mr. Ramesh, Dr. Singh accused him of being determined to "run down every Indian achievement".

"ISRO is not being weakened. It is being enabled to concentrate increasingly on the frontier missions – Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan-4, the Bharatiya Antariksh Station, and future missions to the moon,

Venus and Mars," the Minister said. As India targets 50 launches a year, industry would have to emerge as the manufacturer at scale while ISRO focused on developing next-generation technologies and missions, Dr. Singh said. He described this as the "natural evolution" of the space programme.

More start-ups

Citing the expansion of private participation, he said India now had more than 440 space start-ups, and referred to the July 18 launch of Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1, which he said was the first privately developed Indian rocket to reach orbit. "That is not ISRO's legacy being diluted. That is ISRO's legacy bearing fruit," Dr. Singh said.

Space sector is expanding: BJP

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday said that India's space programme was expanding. Responding to MP Jairam Ramesh's charge, BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said: "I understand your frustration with India's remarkable journey in space. But the numbers tell a story that is difficult to ignore."

The government was targeting a \$44-billion space economy, requiring private rocket factories, satellite manufacturing facilities, and a deeper supply chain, alongside ISRO's research and frontier missions, he said.

Sriharikota would remain central to major programmes, including PSLV, LVM3 and human spaceflight, while Kulasekarapattinam would add capacity for the growing small-launch sector, he said.

Dr. Singh also cited the increase in foreign satellites launched by ISRO from 35 before 2014 to more than 430, and Chandrayaan-3's successful landing near the Moon's south polar region, to highlight the government's space strategy.

Bills on simultaneous elections unconstitutional: Cong. leader

Chidambaram tells JPC proposed legislation violates Constitution's Basic Structure; think tanks point to infirmities; while some Padma awardees support move, others say it can lead to chaos

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister P. Chidambaram on Monday strongly opposed the proposal for simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections while appearing before the Joint Committee of Parliament (JPC) examining the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

He described the initiative as "monstrous", "mindless" and "unconstitutional".

According to sources, Mr. Chidambaram told the committee that the proposed legislation, which seeks to synchronise Lok Sabha and Assembly elections under the "One Nation, One Election" framework, violates the Constitution's Basic Structure. The senior Congress leader argued that curtailing the tenure of a legislature elected for a fixed five-



P. Chidambaram

year term would directly undermine constitutional principles and parliamentary democracy.

'Govt. lacks majority'

The former Home and Finance Minister said his conscience did not permit him to support the Bills, and contended that the government lacked the required two-thirds majority needed for the constitutional amendment. Sources said the committee recorded his concerns and invited specific suggestions and recommendations for improving the legislation.

The committee, headed

by BJP MP P.P. Chaudhary, held a three-part meeting on Monday. The first part was with Mr. Chidambaram, second part with Padma awardees, and third with two independent think-tanks.

A group of 10 Padma awardees, including Tarlochan Singh, Navin Khanna, Meenakshi Jain and Niru Kumar, appeared before the panel. While some supported simultaneous elections, others cautioned that the move could create "chaos" in the country.

Ms. Jain argued that repeated enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct disrupted development projects, and said synchronised elections would allow uninterrupted implementation of regional development programmes.

Dr. Saumitra Rawat said continuous election cycles affected academic calendars and entrance examinations such as NEET, while cardiologist Ashok Seth pointed to the strain

recurrent polls placed on the healthcare system through repeated diversion of medical and administrative personnel.

Many of the Padma awardees recommended clearer statutory provisions governing election schedules and timelines for fresh elections.

The committee later heard submissions from Nation First Policy Research and the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, both of which suggested that the law in its present form has many infirmities. The organisations called for clearly defined and judicially reviewable grounds for postponing Assembly elections, fixed outer limits for any deferment, and mandatory parliamentary oversight.

They also stressed the need to avoid governance vacuums during election deferrals, suggesting either structured limits on President's Rule or caretaker governments restricted to routine administration.

Simultaneous polls possible in 2029, says panel chief

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies in 2029 under "One Nation, One Election" is possible if the Constitution is amended and State governments support the move, according to P.P. Chaudhary, the Chairman of the panel examining the related Bills.

Mr. Chaudhary said on Monday that if the constitutional amendment is approved in Parliament by 2028, the rollout of "One Nation, One Election" can begin that same year.

"Under the Indian Constitution, the States are empowered to hold simultaneous polls," he said after a meeting of the panel.

Mr. Chaudhary said there may be different opinions of political parties, but the committee has to work together in the interest of the country.

Mr. Chaudhary said the Parliament mandated the committee to fix the short-comings, if any, and make sure that the simultaneous polls are held successfully.

Jaishankar meets Putin in Moscow, hands over PM's personal message

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday said that he plans to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the upcoming summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to be held at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

He made the remarks at the meeting with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who called on Mr. Putin in the Kremlin.

“At the beginning of our conversation, I would like to ask you to convey my very best wishes to Mr. Modi. I hope to see him soon, as we planned, as part of our work within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation,” said Mr. Putin.

“It looks like our schedules may also allow us to meet again this year.” he said.

At the meeting in the Kremlin, Mr. Jaishankar



Cordial visit: Vladimir Putin and S. Jaishankar during their meeting at Senate Palace of the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia, on Monday. PTI

briefed the Russian President about his meetings in Moscow and said, “Prime Minister Modi looks forward to meeting you at the SCO summit, then welcoming you to India for the BRICS Summit, and, in due course, as per your mutual convenience, having the annual summit, so we have a very strong picture of cooperation to present.”

Mr. Jaishankar handed over a personal message

from the Prime Minister to Mr. Putin.

‘Imbalance in trade’

The External Affairs Minister also co-chaired the 27th India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation with First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov.

“Our discussions focused on our wide-ranging

cooperation in trade, investments, energy, fertilizers, nuclear, connectivity, technology, space and mobility domains,” said Mr. Jaishankar after the meeting with Mr. Manturov and his team. He added that bilateral India-Russia trade should aim to touch \$100 billion by 2030 but cautioned against growing imbalance in bilateral trade.

“Progress on market access, removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, strengthening payment mechanisms, and stronger business-to-business engagement will be critical for addressing this imbalance and achieving our shared objective of U.S. \$100 billion in bilateral trade by 2030,” he said, calling for growing engagement between Indian and Russian businesses. He referred to the “complicated international scenario” as a window for new opportunities and “de-risking”.

'Standard practice' followed, say officials on U.S. envoy remarks

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Indian officials followed the "standard practice" of checking the modalities for public appearances by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of his meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the G7 summit in France earlier this year, official sources said on Monday.

This comes hours after U.S. Ambassador Sergio Gor claimed that the External Affairs Ministry had asked for the press event not to feature questions. Mr. Gor went on to say that Mr. Trump subsequently forgot about the purported request and went on to answer questions from journalists for 45 minutes.

"Discussions regarding arrangements for public appearances of leaders are normal practice ahead of any VVIP visit. In this regard, the Indian side communicated its standard practice for such visits," a source said, referring to the interaction between Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump in Evian, France, on June 17, 2026.

Addressing a media conclave on Sunday, Mr. Gor said the Ministry had an "ask" regarding making the meeting between the two leaders free of questions from the press.

Mr. Trump, however, forgot about the Indian side's "ask", Mr. Gor



Sergio Gor

claimed, and proceeded to answer questions. "A 45-minute press conference followed, and everything was on the table," he said.

Official sources, however, pointed out that during the press interaction, all questions, both from U.S. and Indian presspersons, were aimed at Mr. Trump and that Mr. Modi was not asked any questions.

'PM afraid of media'

Meanwhile, the Congress said the office of the Prime Minister was being "diminished and disrespected".

In a post on X, Congress leader Pawan Khera said Mr. Gor's remarks were revealing, suggesting that avoiding questions from the media was a regular practice under Mr. Modi. "Why is Modi so afraid of facing the media?" he asked.

In another post, Mr. Khera said Mr. Trump had not taken Mr. Modi's concerns seriously. "A compromised PM is not taken seriously," he said.

U.S. vows 'economic asphyxiation' of Iran with new set of sanctions

Washington says expanded secondary sanctions will target Iran's digital assets, technology, gold, aviation and shipping; warns other nations to cut off financial ties with Iran; Tehran calls U.S. financial offensive 'an admission of military defeat'

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON AND TEHRAN

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Monday laid out plans for the "economic asphyxiation" of Iran, expanding Washington's secondary sanctions threats and warning of dire consequences for countries that do not join the campaign.

The announcement comes almost six months into a war on Iran that has ground to a stalemate, with stalled peace talks and Tehran blocking most traffic through the crucial Strait of Hormuz.

Mr. Bessent earlier said the United States was declaring an "economic D-



Mural messaging: Commuters pass a giant billboard depicting U.S. President Donald Trump in Tehran on Monday. AP

Day" on Iran, but his announcement named no specific countries beyond Iran and no timelines.

"Around the globe, our objective is to sever every economic lifeline that sustains this tyrannical regime

until Tehran stands alone," Mr. Bessent told a press conference. "We are going to hold everyone accountable, and this is economic asphyxiation of this regime."

He added that countries

not joining U.S. sanctions would "share in the isolation" of Iran, and noted that President Donald Trump was making phone calls to world leaders with requests to stop interactions with Tehran.

The Treasury Department said expanded secondary sanctions would target Iran's digital assets, technology, gold, aviation and shipping sectors.

In a post before the announcement, Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said the latest U.S. threats were an admission of military defeat, and warned countries against aiding Washington.

"Your narrative doesn't add up," Mr. Gharibabadi

said, asking why, if Washington had achieved its goals, "there is a need for the largest financial invasion in history".

"Is this a victory or an admission of America's defeat?"

Iran's Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf brushed off U.S. threats, saying on X that "economically, the U.S. is not in a position that would allow it to further restrict its relations with other countries".

On Monday, Pakistan's Army chief Asim Munir visited Iran and met with Mr. Ghalibaf. Islamabad played a key role in brokering an April ceasefire that later fell apart.

The Mecca pact is for joint defence. Against whom?



D P
SRIVASTAVA

THOUGH THERE is a pause in the shooting war, the situation in West Asia continues to be volatile. The Strait of Hormuz remains closed. Houthi attacks on the Bab el-Mandeb at the mouth of the Red Sea have closed the second waterway for the transport of Saudi oil to Asian markets. This also affects shipments of Russian crude oil to India. Amid these developments, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan have signed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement. This raises the question: Joint defence against whom? There could be three possible threats: The Houthis, Iran, and Israel.

The joint statement issued after the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Summit stipulates that "any armed attack against any of the three states shall be regarded as an attack against them all". However, the extent and nature of commitments by the three countries for joint defence are not known. Nor has the geographical scope of such an arrangement been spelt out. Will this include conflicts outside West Asia? Can Pakistan invoke it in case of an Indian riposte to a future terror attack?

Has the Mecca Agreement created an Islamic NATO? Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty provides for collective self-defence but limits its scope to Europe. The only time Article 5 was invoked was in Afghanistan, post 9/11. NATO's travails in Ukraine and absence in the Iran war point to the fact that what matters is common threat perception, not a formal pact. Within the Mecca Agreement, the threat perceptions differ. Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping do not pose a direct threat to Turkey or Pakistan. Turkey is more concerned with the Israeli presence in Syria. Pakistan regards India and Afghanistan as threats. In 2015, Pakistan did not take part in the action against the Houthis despite requests from Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Is the Mecca Agreement an alliance of Sunni powers against Shia Iran? Iran has emerged as the most important regional power, having withstood more than 23,000 Israeli and US bombing raids in the war. Can Turkey and Pakistan provide Saudi Arabia with the protection from Iranian retaliation that the US could not? However, they do not mind sharing Saudi riches. The accord gives Pakistan a diplomatic profile at a time when its economy is sinking and it is beset by internal problems in Balochistan and PoK. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan had signed a Strategic

Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) last year. A Pakistan Air Force contingent and 13,000 ground troops were deployed in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia in April this year. Did the Pakistanis fire a single shot in discharge of their obligations under the SMDA?

The third possible threat is Israel. PM Netanyahu's pronouncement of a Greater Israel may have made Arab governments uncomfortable. However, the US umbrella could provide better protection to Saudi interests than Turkey could.

The trilateral pact has not gone unnoticed in Tehran. The influential daily Kayhan, close to the IRGC, has carried a strong editorial against Pakistan, questioning its credentials as a neutral mediator in Iran's talks with the US. In Pakistan, Shia cleric Jawad Naqvi has already criticised the government for joining the alliance.

India has friendly relations with Saudi Arabia. It is a good customer for Saudi oil. Saudi Arabia has a mature diplomatic establishment. It will nevertheless be useful to sensitise them to our concerns. If attacked, India is bound to exercise its right of self-defence.

The lasting solution to the West Asia crisis is mainstreaming Iran, so that it has a stake in a peaceful region. The June 17 MoU holds the promise of lifting both secondary and primary sanctions against Iran. This goes beyond the Obama-era nuclear deal. Iran's capacity to dominate Hormuz is tacitly recognised by all countries. This should be used as a deterrent against future aggression, rather than as a toll, which would bring a small fraction of the revenue Iran could earn from the export of its oil and petrochemicals once sanctions are lifted. The US should lift the blockade. The nuclear issue need not be insurmountable. Iran has already committed in the MoU to not "procure or develop nuclear weapons". The US has to moderate its demands. Insistence on "zero enrichment" will only be a deal-breaker. Iran has a legitimate sense of grievance. It was twice attacked by Israel and the US amid negotiations. But the future of its people is more important. The alternative to an agreement is continued disruption of global oil supplies, loss of revenue for the Gulf states and Iran, and chaos in West Asia.

The writer is former ambassador to Iran. He negotiated the Chabahar Agreement

NATO's travails in Ukraine and absence in the Iran war point to the fact that what matters is common threat perception, not a formal pact. Within the Mecca Agreement, the threat perceptions differ

U.S. administration proposes \$1.03 lakh fee for H-1B visas

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON

The U.S. on Monday proposed a \$103,265 fee for all H-1B visa cap-subject applications, including those eligible for the advanced degree exemption, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said.

The new proposal came a month after a federal appeals court rejected a plea to stay a district judge's order overturning the [Donald] Trump administration plan to charge a \$1,00,000 fee for H-1B visa applications.

"...DHS proposes to implement the USD 103,265 amount as a separate, additional H-1B fee rather than combining it with the existing H-1B petition fee," the notice said.

It said the fee would apply only to H-1B cap-subject petitions, including those eligible for the advanced degree exemption, but not to cap-exempt filings.

The proposed fee is specifically to recover the interagency costs described in this rule and having a standalone fee is intended to facilitate tracking, allocation, and reporting of the associated revenue, the DHS said.

The U.S. Congress set the current annual regular cap for the H-1B category at 65,000, commonly known as the "regular cap". It also set aside 20,000 additional H-1B visas for workers who hold a Master's degree or higher from a U.S. college, commonly called the Master's cap.