

CWC directs Revanth Reddy to lead education reforms in Telangana

Hyderabad, Aug 19 (GNS): The Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Wednesday directed chief minister A Revanth Reddy to ensure preparation of comprehensive reforms in the education sector and the examination system to avoid any scope for leakage of question papers and to ensure that a fool-proof examination system is put in place and that the education sector caters to the global market needs. Similar directions were given to the chief ministers of three other Congress-ruled States of Kerala, Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh by AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi at the CWC meeting held in New Delhi.

The CMs of Telangana, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala were asked to consult education experts, student organisations including Gen Z and other stakeholders before preparing state-specific education and examination reform plans, and submit reports to the party president in a month. Sources said



Revanth explained the reforms already taken up in the education sector in Telangana, including overhaul of Telangana state public service commission, successful conduct of Group examinations, and introducing Nursery, LKG and UKG in govt school sector, and providing free breakfast and lunch to govt school students across the state. The CWC meeting also decided to continue with the massive outreach pro-

gramme “Chhatron ki Goonj” and organise such programmes in major cities and towns in Telangana.

CM Revanth, who is going on a tour of UK and US from Aug 20 to Aug 30, is to meet the managements of various premier educational institutions and invite them to Telangana to set up their campuses in the Bharat Future City, where the state govt is planning to establish a global educational hub.

RBI Governor Signals Caution on Rate Cuts Amid Inflation Risks

Mumbai, Aug 19 (GNS): Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra said that he would “prefer to wait for more certainty to emerge on the inflation trajectory in terms of the persistence of realised prints at these or higher levels, the forecast, and the likely levels to which inflation may normalise and settle for any recalibration of the policy rate”, according to the minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee meeting released on Wednesday. The central bank chief expressed the view that elevated inflation is primarily being driven by supply-side shocks, with limited signs that price pressures are becoming broad-based.

However, he also emphasised the “need to be watchful as the risks



of higher food, fuel and other input prices translating into a broad-based increase in inflation and de-anchoring of expectations persist. Any evidence of these risks materialising may need policy tightening”. MPC member Nagesh Kumar noted that the Indian economy has displayed remarkable resilience in the face of challenging headwinds stemming from the ongoing conflict in West Asia, especially the volatility in crude oil prices,

trade policy uncertainties, and agricultural risks arising from El Nino affecting the monsoons.

Fellow member Indranil Bhattacharyya observed that high-frequency indicators and early corporate results suggest sustained momentum in industrial and services sector activity of the Indian economy in Q1, while investment retained its momentum, driven by capital goods production, sustained credit growth, and the gov-

ernment’s continued emphasis on capital expenditure. On the external front, robust exports in goods and services cushioned high imports in Q1. MPC member Poonam Gupta was of the view that after abating a bit in June 2026, global uncertainties flared up again in July. Domestically, the quantum and distribution of rainfall had improved in recent weeks. In addition, a range of high-frequency indicators continue to display resilience and dynamism, supporting the growth momentum. Taken together, these developments suggest that the growth outcome during the year may turn out to be somewhat better than projected in the June policy, while inflation could be marginally lower.

Arrest warrant issued against Mahua Moitra



Kolkata, Aug 19 (GNS): A court in West Bengal’s Krishnanagar issued an arrest warrant against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra in a case of controversial comments regarding the Indian Army on Wednesday.

It is alleged that Mahua did not appear in court despite being summoned several times in this case. That is why an arrest warrant was issued against her on the last day of her appearance.

Mahua is accused of making controversial and insulting comments not only against the Indian Army but also against Union Home Minister Amit Shah. In addition, some of her comments on women wearing Tulsi Mala, Burkha and Hijab created controversy. In view of this, a resident of Krishnanagar in Nadia district recently filed a petition in the court. The plaintiff’s lawyer Shirshendu Das said that summons had been issued in Mahua’s name several times in the past. She was asked to appear in person in the Krishnanagar court. However, she did not come to the court even for a day. It was learnt that Chayan Nandi, a resident of Nazirapara area of Krishnanagar, approached the court against Mahua Moitra. His lawyer Shirshendu Das argued on his behalf in the court.

Satyendar Jain sent to Judicial custody in DJB case

New Delhi, Aug 19 (GNS): A Delhi court on Wednesday sent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and former Delhi Minister Satyendar Jain to judicial custody in a case pertaining to alleged irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board (DJB). Jain and former Delhi Jal Board (DJB) CEO Udit Prakash Rai, an IAS officer, were among six people arrested by the Delhi government’s Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) on Tuesday in connection with an alleged corruption and tender-manipulation case involving the augmentation and upgradation of sewage treatment plants (STPs) of the Delhi Jal Board.

The other four accused arrested in the case are Ankit Srivastava, a former contractual consultant with the DJB; Nagendra Yadav, proprietor of M/s AN Enterprises; Raja Kumar Kurra, owner of M/s Euro-teck Environment Private



Limited; and Pankaj Verma, proprietor of M/s Sri-janhar. Special judge Dig Vinay Singh of Rouse Avenue Courts passed the order after the accused were presented in the court.

Though Jain’s application seeking to declare his arrest as illegal was rejected by the judge, the court will hear the AAP leader’s bail plea on August 25. Another accused arrested in the case, Ankit Srivastava, has been sent to two days’ custody of the Anti-Corruption Branch. The remaining accused have also been sent to judicial custody.

Rajnath Singh to Meet Japanese Defence Minister to Boost Defence Ties

New Delhi, Aug 19 (UNI): Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will hold a meeting with his Japanese counterpart Shinjiro Koizumi here on Thursday to further strengthen bilateral defence relations, enhance strategic trust and cooperation, promote stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region, and identify new areas of collaboration, according to a Defence Ministry statement issued on Wednesday. The two ministers will exchange views on deeper maritime security cooperation and closer defence equipment and technology collaboration under the ‘Make in India’ framework, following Japan’s revision of the ‘Three Principles on Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology’.

The meeting provides an opportunity to build a roadmap for further advancing bilateral defence



and security cooperation, the statement said. On his maiden visit to India, Shinjiro Koizumi visited the Western Naval Command in Mumbai on Wednesday, where he held discussions with the Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Krishna Swaminathan and Flag Officer Commanding in Chief, Western Naval Command Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan. The delegation was briefed on the roles and responsibilities and operational capabilities of the Indian Navy. Upon his arrival, the visiting dignitary inspected

a Guard of Honour at the Western Naval Command. He, earlier, laid a wreath at the Gaurav Stambh at the Naval Dockyard. He also paid a visit to the indigenous ship INS Chennai.

India and Japan share a common vision of building a free, open, resilient and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. The two-day visit of the Japanese Defence Minister underscores the growing momentum in bilateral defence cooperation and reflects the commitment of both sides to further expand the partnership.

Tejashwi Yadav detained during RJD march in Patna

Patna, Aug 19 (UNI): Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav was detained by police on Wednesday during the RJD’s ‘Lok Bhavan March’ in Patna. The protest, organised over student grievances, unemployment and the alleged AK-47 firing during a student protest in Siwan, escalated after



demonstrators attempted to cross police barricades at Dak Bungalow Crossing. Police used water cannons to disperse the protesters as the crowd tried to move forward.

Journalism: The Voice of Democracy and a Support for the Marginalized

Hyderabad, Aug 19 (GNS) India is known as the world’s largest democracy. Along with the three constitutional pillars—the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary—the media is popularly described as the “Fourth Pillar of Democracy.” It is important to clarify that the Indian Constitution does not formally use the expression “Fourth Pillar” for the media. However, the freedom of the press is closely connected with the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

The real strength of journalism, however, is not merely in reporting what

happens in the corridors of power. Its greatest responsibility is to bring forward the voices that often remain unheard—the poor, workers, farmers, women, youth, marginalized communities, social activists and ordinary citizens whose problems rarely receive adequate attention. In this context, the work of News Falaknuma deserves appreciation.

The efforts of its Chief Editor Athar Rahim and his fellow editor Syed Asgar Hussain represent an important and meaningful side of journalism. They are providing a platform to talented journalists and writers from different parts of the coun-



try and giving their writings a place in their newspaper. This is not simply the publication of articles. It is the creation of opportunities. It is the recognition of talent.

And it is the encouragement of new voices. For a young journalist or emerging writer, finding a platform where their ideas can reach readers is not always easy. When an

editor gives such a person an opportunity, he does much more than publish an article. He gives confidence to a writer and encourages that person to continue using the power of the pen for society. The true strength of journalism lies here. A pen that becomes the voice of the unheard has the power to bring change to society.

Democracy needs media institutions that do not merely report the voices of the powerful but also listen to people at the margins of society. Journalism should ask difficult questions. It should highlight injustice. It should give space to diverse opinions. Most importantly,

it should ensure that the voices of ordinary citizens are not lost in the noise of powerful interests. As a journalist and writer, I, Irfan Jamiawala, would like to express my heartfelt gratitude, on behalf of journalists and writers, to News Falaknuma Chief Editor Athar Rahim, Editor Syed Asgar Hussain, and their entire team. I sincerely appreciate the way you identify talented journalists and writers from different corners of the country and provide them with an opportunity to present their thoughts and experiences through your newspaper.

Your support can become a bridge between talent and

opportunity. Your newspaper can become a platform where the unheard are heard and where emerging writers are encouraged to continue their journey. This is the kind of journalism that strengthens society. This is the kind of journalism that gives courage to marginalized people.

And this is the kind of journalism that strengthens democracy. I hope that News Falaknuma will continue to encourage new journalists and writers, discover emerging talent from every corner of India, and provide a meaningful platform to the voices of people who have remained socially, economically or politically marginalized.

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Sd/- PRINCIPAL

Trump wanted india to buy more US-made arms. It doesn't add up nowimg

Adya Madhavan

If his behaviour, public statements and social media outbursts are any indication, US President Donald Trump is much more extractive of India in his second term, and relations between the two countries appear to be at their worst. Traditional diplomatic rhetoric and public niceties seem a distant memory with Trump's second coming. Yet, Trump still seems to want to tackle the trade deficit with India. Defence exports to India can be a central component in rectifying that trade deficit - a prospect he is in danger of jeopardising. The Trump administration's second act in the Oval Office may be the beginning of a new chapter of India-US ties.

Traditionally, despite ups and downs, the US has viewed India as a potential partner in Asia. The United States was the second-largest defence supplier to India. Today, that partnership is in the worst state it has ever been in. Earlier this year, Trump claimed that the US was 'paving the way' to provide India with the F-35, and a joint statement released by both countries seemed to indicate that a deal was imminent as well. India is also prioritising modernising its military, and the deal, had it materialised, would have been a large step forward in upgrading India's airpower. However, with each 25% dose of tariffs that the US



has administered to India within the last few days, India's unwillingness to purchase a fleet of stealth fighters seems to be increasing. In a response to a question in the Lok Sabha, the minister of state claimed that 'no formal discussions' regarding the purchase of the stealth fighters had been made yet. If these tariffs were not enough to severely impact the strategic relationship, the US administration's concurrent overtures towards Pakistan add a layer of strategic insult to economic injury.

Theories on statecraft and power are barely enough to explain some of the messaging President Trump has been engaging in. He seems to prioritise economic gains over everything, including peace and partnerships. He himself and the White House, on separate occasions, have

claimed credit for resolving the recent conflict between India and Pakistan - something that the Indian government has outright denied. Pakistan supported these claims, and, not so coincidentally, the recent revision finally set the reciprocal tariff rate with Pakistan at 19%.

On the other hand, India now faces 50% tariffs. A new deal for the joint development of Pakistani oil reserves, which was publicly commemorated by both Shehbaz Sharif and Trump, coincides with the imposition of tariffs on India. For India, all this speaks of Pakistan's growing proximity with the United States at a time when Indian leaders have expressed displeasure with Trump's attitude towards India. While US protectionism is not new, this level of tariff increases is unprecedented. Trump

has made remarks on India relying on military equipment from Russia, which, in his opinion, is "not good". These seem like efforts to impose costs on India for its reliance on Russia and force it to look towards the United States. However, on the other hand, some of his remarks seem to go beyond merely trying to coerce India into trading with the US. Over the last few days, the POTUS has called Indian trade policies "strenuous and obnoxious" and has referred to India and Russia as "dead economies". While the present Indian administration and Indian opposition leaders find little common ground, actors across the spectrum of Indian politics have made statements that indicate that they feel belittled and insulted by Trump's colourful diplomatic lexicon.

The next and potentially

final nail in the coffin is the Trump administration's apparent softening towards China, which serves as another sore point for Indo-US ties. On the China front, in late July, the US and China paused the escalation of tariffs for 90 days, a bid to prevent a trade war. Moreover, Trump has taken an uncharacteristically diplomatic tone and said the US would be "very nice with China". In June, the US also cemented a deal that restored its access to rare earths, bringing a temporary fix to major supply chain disruptions that were caused by Chinese restrictions. While these measures may be temporary given the volatility of American policies currently, for India, Trump's relatively diplomatic and cautious approach to China can be interpreted as a tacit thaw in tensions between the two countries, something that was previously a shared interest between India and the United States.

The tariffs, coupled with the US' proximity to Pakistan, create a trust deficit. Supplier reliability is of paramount importance when purchasing long-term assets, say, fighter jets. A partner capable of imposing such stringent economic measures would create uncertainty about the ready supply of spare parts, software upgrades, and maintenance support for platforms with a multi-decade lifespan.

Understanding POCSO and why lowering the age of consent below 18 is dangerous

When India enacted the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) 2012, it transformed how our justice system viewed minor victims of sexual violence. By declaring any sexual activity involving someone under 18 as a punishable offence, POCSO established a firm boundary: no child can legally consent. It mandated speedy, sensitive procedures and placed the burden of proof on the accused. Through POCSO, India sent out a message that protecting children is a priority. Lately, there has been renewed debate that treating all under-18 relationships alike wrongly equates innocent teenage love with crime, and that the "age of consent" should be lowered to 16. However, before we debate shifting the line to 16, we must first understand the act's purpose, its framework, the arguments for lowering the consent age and the risks of doing so. Only then can we come up with solutions that acknowledge adolescent realities without compromising child protection. POCSO, which is the primary law against child sexual abuse, goes far beyond defining rape. It categorises a range of sexual offences against children: penetrative assault, aggravated assault, sexual harassment, child pornography, grooming and trafficking for sexual purposes. It imposes some of the toughest penalties, with particularly severe terms for penetrative and aggravated assaults.

The offences under the Act are cognizable and non-bailable. The police can arrest without a warrant. However, there are no specific statutory guidelines on granting bail. Bail decisions rest on judicial discretion, where courts weigh constitutional liberties against potential risk to the child.

By shifting the burden of proof onto the accused and fast-tracking child complaints, POCSO builds a safety net at every step of investigation and adjudication. The threshold of 18 years aligns with several statutes to maintain legal consistency. Under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, minors accused of POCSO offences face juvenile courts and receive rehabilitation-centred dispositions unless an inquiry deems the crime "heinous". The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 deems any marriage below 18 void. The Indian Majority Act and Indian Contract Act fix full legal capacity at 18, in line with India's commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Since 18 is the non-negotiable threshold for consent, any sexual act involving a person under 18 is an offence, even if the relationship was voluntary. This creates a legal grey zone when adolescents engage in consensual relationships that later lead to prosecution. Advocates for lowering the age of consent argue that the Act is too punitive and overlooks adolescent autonomy. They point to countries where the age of consent ranges from 14 to 16, often accompanied by "close-in-age" or "Romeo and Juliet" provisions that protect consensual relationships between teenagers while still punishing coercion, exploitation and large age gaps. However, what works there won't necessarily work in India, where social conditions, education and protection frameworks are very different.

Introducing consent will open a Pandora's box, legitimising various forms of child rape, including trafficking and child marriage. Lowering the age of consent would erode deterrence by suggesting consent is negotiable. A trafficker or abuser could claim sexual activity was consensual simply because the minor was over 16. Children aged 16 to 18 years face larger vulnerability when it comes to grooming, manipulation and coercion. They lack emotional maturity to grasp the meaning or consequences of consent. Their brains, specifically regions governing impulse control and risk evaluation, continue developing into their mid-20s. While they may have the physical capacity for sexual activities, their brains may not yet be fully developed to make informed decisions about giving or refusing consent.

Genuine adolescent relationships do exist, but the law cannot be blind to context. With appropriate checks and balances, it is possible to ensure protection without undermining safeguards. In the context of judicial discretion, considerations could include a romantic relationship of at least two years, an age difference of less than three years, no history of trafficking, exploitation, blackmail, or threat, consistent statements by the minor before the Child Welfare Committee and in court corroborated by a support person, a complaint filed by someone other than the minor, and no complaint of gang rape or prior criminal history.

POCSO remains India's strongest legal safeguard against child sexual offences. However, before considering amendments to the law, the priority must be its full and effective implementation. Currently, over 200,000 cases are pending in special courts that are severely understaffed and under-resourced. Conviction rates are below 10%, and compensation is awarded in less than 1% of cases. From slow forensic processes and lack of child-friendly environments to inconsistent appointment of support persons and trials extending beyond the mandated 12-month period, victims face numerous obstacles on the long road to justice.

In Just Rights for Children Alliance v. S Harish (2024), the Supreme Court recognised the complex and evolving nature of child sexual exploitation. The Court called for a systemic framework that goes beyond prosecution and emphasises prevention, rehabilitation and coordination to safeguard children.

Children must be taught the meaning of consent, the right to say no and the importance of respecting others' boundaries. A clear understanding of what is criminal, what is simply wrong and what is unacceptable behaviour is crucial to helping them make sense of the world around them. These early lessons form a protective shield, enabling children to speak up and seek help. Lowering the age of consent from 18 to 16 would undo years of progress in protecting children from sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking. The way forward is not dilution, but full enforcement of POCSO, with the urgency and seriousness this crisis demands.

The debate also needs to recognise that the difficulties arising from consensual adolescent relationships are often rooted in the way complaints reach the criminal justice system. In several cases, relationships between teenagers become criminal cases after opposition from parents or families, particularly when the couple belongs to different social or economic backgrounds. Such situations can place adolescents, especially boys, in prolonged criminal proceedings even when there is no allegation of force or exploitation. This does not mean that the law should permit sexual activity involving minors, but it does highlight the need for courts and investigators to distinguish genuine abuse from cases where the protective law is being triggered by family disputes.

A more balanced approach could therefore focus on strengthening judicial and investigative safeguards without lowering the statutory age of consent. Special courts could be given clearer guidance for dealing with cases involving adolescents close in age, while prosecutors could be required to carefully examine allegations of coercion, grooming, trafficking and exploitation. At the same time, the identity, dignity and privacy of the minor must remain protected throughout the proceedings. Such safeguards would preserve POCSO's protective purpose while reducing the possibility of disproportionate consequences for adolescents involved in consensual relationships.

Rahul's poll claims: time to go beyond politics, and investigate

TM Veeraraghav

Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, made some startling allegations about "systemic electoral fraud" and the inclusion of one lakh two thousand and fifty "fake and bogus votes" in the Mahadevapura assembly segment of the Bengaluru Central Lok Sabha constituency. The number of "votes stolen", as alleged by Gandhi, was more than the 32,707-vote margin of victory for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate, P.C. Mohan, now a four-time MP who has consistently won this seat since 2009.

While discrepancies in electoral rolls are a recognised evil that the Election Commission constantly tries to rectify with revision of rolls, the allegation being made by Gandhi is of "complicity" by the Commission itself, in allowing the one lakh-odd "votes" in Mahadevapura to favour the ruling BJP's candidate. While Rahul Gandhi has been the face of the charge, the Congress candidate who lost in Bengaluru Central, Mansoor Ali Khan, an influential local political figure with financial backing, is the one who invested his resources to conduct an exhaustive exercise for gathering the evidence to back the allegations.

Gandhi has also stated that there were issues with seats in some other states too, essentially alleging that the 2024 Lok Sabha



election results were the product of this manipulation and that the opposition was "robbed" of a victory in these seats. The BJP has categorically declared that Gandhi is crying foul and making irresponsible accusations for political reasons. The respective electoral officers, in turn, have demanded that he give his allegations under oath, in an affidavit, for the record.

Irrespective of the political exchange, the very fact that the allegations have been made by the LoP warrants a clear investigation and response. An investigation by a panel of former Election Commissioners and, perhaps, monitored by the apex court, could be an option. It is obvious that such doubts cast upon the Election Commission need to be put down. It is not enough for these allegations to be fought merely at a political

level. Gandhi must be held accountable - if he is proven wrong - for the allegations he has made. But the EC must also be held accountable if such serious lapses are indeed found. For instance, independent media reports corroborate that there is a small house with 80 non-existent voters registered to it.

Having stated that, there are two questions here: one, why have these allegations been made more than a year after the Lok Sabha election results? And two, what impact will this have on the ongoing controversy over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Bihar?

The first question is important. India has a long history of losing candidates challenging electoral malpractices and even winning in courts, the most prominent of such cases being Indira Gandhi versus Raj

Narain in 1975. Given this history, it was perhaps incumbent on the Congress and its candidate, Mansoor Ali Khan, to have moved the courts as soon as they became aware of the issue. Also, the fact that Gandhi has made a public declaration before moving the courts or the EC on this specific case shows that the aim is to embarrass the EC and the ruling establishment more than to set right the outcome of 2024.

The aim of the opposition should be to work with the EC to make it better, not to embarrass and demolish its credibility. This is a dangerous trajectory and could lead to far-reaching consequences. However, the Congress seems to be on a warpath with the EC and says that it has lost faith in the individuals at the helm of the institution. There are victories the Congress has

enjoyed under the same Election Commission - like the stupendous one in Karnataka in 2023, as also the ones in Telangana, Kerala, and to its allies, the DMK and TMC, in 2024. So, an all-out attack on the EC may seem a tad excessive.

The clear and present agenda of the Opposition is to stall the SIR process in Bihar. Though ironically, if anything, Gandhi's latest allegations only underscore the need for such an exercise. Also, the SIR process is not the only thing on the Opposition's agenda. The INDIA alliance had seemingly resigned itself to the 2024 election results. Gandhi's latest allegations, then, are aimed not at undoing that outcome, but at utilising this churn in the next political battle. Unfortunately, the doubts raised over the election process are both dangerous and disheartening for those who truly believe in the democratic process. The trust in the timing and the process of SIR seems to have been dented. Amidst Rahul's allegations, it's important that the poll body's transparency is demonstrated effectively, and categorical, evidence-based response is encouraged, including by former Election Commissioners.

More than scoring political points and targeting Rahul Gandhi, restoring absolute faith in the institution, irrespective of the individuals involved, is the need of the hour.

India eyes top 10 spot in global shipbuilding by 2030: Sonowal

New Delhi, Aug 19 (GNS): India will be among the world's top 10 shipbuilding nations by 2030 and in top five countries by 2047, according to Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), Sarbananda Sonowal. The mission of Viksit Bharat at 2047 blends speed, scale, sustainability and self-reliance,” he said. Inaugurating India's first port-based Green Hydrogen Pilot Project at VO Chidambaranar (VOC) Port in Tamil Nadu, marking a major step in India's clean energy transition, the minister said the projects launched will generate thousands of jobs, attract global investments and position Tamil Nadu as a key contributor to India's economic aspirations. “Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we continue to make new strides towards achieving our goal of world's Top 10 shipbuilding nations by 2030, Top 5 by 2047,” So-

nowal highlighted. Built at a cost of Rs 3.87 crore, the facility will generate green hydrogen to power street-lights and an electric vehicle charging station in the port colony. With this launch, VOC Port has become the first port in the country to produce green hydrogen. Sonowal also laid the foundation for a pilot green methanol bunkering and refuelling facility at a cost of Rs 35.34 crore.

Aligned with the proposed Coastal Green Shipping Corridor between Kandla and Tuticorin, the initiative is expected to position VOC Port as a key green bunkering hub in south India. Additional projects launched include a 400 KW rooftop solar power plant, enhancing the port's rooftop solar capacity to 1.04 MW, the highest among Indian ports, and a Rs 24.5 crore link conveyor connecting Coal Jetty-I to the port stack yard, increasing efficiency by 0.72 MMTPA.

Sonowal also laid foundation stones for a 6 MW wind farm, a Rs 90 crore multi-cargo berth, a 3.37 km four-lane road, and the Tamil Nadu Maritime Heritage Museum.

The minister highlighted that Tamil Nadu's three major ports Chennai, Kamarajar, and VOC have seen transformative growth under Sagarmala, with 98 projects worth Rs 93,715 crore taken up in the past 11 years, of which 50 are already completed. “This is unique growth. More than Rs 16,000 crore has been invested in these ports alone for modernisation and capacity enhancement,” he said. The government is also focusing on strengthening India's shipbuilding ecosystem by expanding domestic capacity, improving maritime infrastructure and encouraging private-sector participation. Greater emphasis on indigenous ship construction and repair is expected to reduce dependence on foreign yards.

Electronics manufacturing hits 11.5 lakh cr, adds 25 lakh jobs: Minister

New Delhi, Aug 19 (GNS): Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visionary schemes, the electronics manufacturing has emerged as a top sector in India, with production increasing 6 times in past 11 years -- resulting in it becoming a Rs 11.5 lakh crore industry, Union Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Saturday.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters over the recent GST overhaul here, the minister said the electronic products exports jumped eight times during the period and the industry now provides employment to over 25 lakh people.

"In the last 11 years, electronics manufacturing has emerged as a very big sector in India. Electronics production has increased 6 times, exports have increased 8 times, and it has become an industry of Rs 11.5 lakh crore, providing

jobs to 25 lakh people," the minister said. Vaishnaw informed that India has now started manufacturing every single item that an electronic product needs in the country. "If we talk about a mobile phone, then every item of the phone -- be it glass, cover, chip, printed circuit board (PCB) or camera module, has started being produced in the country," the minister stated.

He further informed that recently, a factory was inaugurated at Sohna, Haryana, in which the battery used in the smartphone will be manufactured.

The country needs 50 crore batteries, and 20 crore battery packs will be manufactured from a single factory, the minister informed. He urged citizens to adopt India-made products as much as they can. "It is time for a self-reliant India in which, everyone is adopting 'Swadeshi' with great enthusiasm. All of you

are also requested to increase the use of 'Swadeshi' products in your life," Vaishnaw noted.

The minister said that with GST reforms, PM Modi has provided great relief to middle-class families. He said the prices will come down for various sorts of electronic devices like televisions, refrigerators, dishwashers, microwaves and power banks, which are household needs. food to household items to everyday essentials, the tax burden on all items has been reduced, the minister stated. The minister said the rapid expansion of electronics manufacturing reflects India's growing capabilities across the entire value chain. From components and semiconductor-related products to finished devices, increasing domestic production is helping build a stronger ecosystem and reduce dependence on imports. This shift is also

Renault reduces prices up to Rs 96,000 post-GST reforms

New Delhi, Aug 19 (GNS): Renault India announced a significant price reduction for its cars on Saturday, following the rollout of GST 2.0, passing the entire benefit on to customers. Prices of its three models Kwid, Triber and Kiger have been slashed by up to Rs 96,395. As per the French carmaker, with this revision, the Kwid now starts at Rs 4,29,900 (ex-showroom), while both the new Triber and the new Kiger begin at Rs 5,76,300 (ex-showroom). The updated prices will apply to all deliveries made on or after September 22; however, bookings at the revised rates are open immediately at Renault dealerships.

"Passing on the full GST 2.0 benefit is a reflection of our unwavering commitment to our customers. We believe this timely initiative will not only make our cars more accessible but also energise demand during the

festive season," said Venkatram Mamillapalle, Managing Director, Renault India.

The move comes after Tata Motors also confirmed that it would pass on the full benefit of the new GST rates, effective from September 22. As a result, the Tiago will see price reductions of up to Rs 75,000, while the Nexon will become cheaper by as much as Rs 1,55,000.

Under the new GST 2.0 framework, all internal combustion engine (ICE) cars are now taxed at either 18 per cent or 40 per cent.

Smaller cars such as hatchbacks, compact sedans, and compact SUVs fall under the 18 per cent slab, while mid-size, larger, and luxury models attract 40 per cent. Previously, ICE vehicles were subject to 28 per cent GST plus an additional compensation cess ranging between 1 per cent and 22 per cent depending on size and engine capacity.

Immigration crackdown at US battery plant: S. Korean foreign minister may visit US

Seoul, Aug 19 (GNS) Foreign Minister Cho Hyun said on Saturday he may visit the United States to discuss with Washington the arrests of hundreds of South Koreans by U.S. immigration authorities at a South Korean battery plant site in the state of Georgia. Cho made the remarks as he presided over an emergency meeting on the immigration crackdown, confirming that more than 300 out of 457 people who were taken into custody are South Korean nationals.

"We are deeply concerned and feel a heavy sense of responsibility over the arrests of our nationals," Cho said at the start of the meeting, attended by two vice ministers, officials from the ministry and overseas missions, reports Yonhap news agency. "We will discuss sending a senior foreign ministry official to the site without delay, and, if necessary, I will personally travel to Washington to hold consultations with the U.S. administration," he said. Cho said President Lee Jae Myung has instructed officials to make all-out efforts to swiftly resolve the matter, stressing that the rights and interests of South Korean nationals and the business operations of South Korean companies investing in the United States must not be infringed upon.

Second Vice Foreign Minister Kim Ji-na expressed regret and concern over the crackdown during a meeting with acting U.S. Ambassador to Seoul Joseph Yun on Thursday, Cho said.

U.S. authorities carried out a search warrant at an electric vehicle battery plant construction site operated by HL-GA Battery Co., the joint venture between Hyundai Motor Co. and LG Energy Solution Ltd. in Bryan County near Savannah on Thursday. They described the raid as a criminal probe into alleged unlawful employment practices. U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday the arrested people are "illegal aliens" and the immigration officials were "just doing their job."

India's food processing sector to touch \$535 billion by FY26, growing over 7 pc

New Delhi, Aug 19 (GNS): India's food processing sector is expected to reach \$535 billion by FY26, buoyed primarily by rising consumption and increased exports.

The government support through initiatives like 'Make in India', and technological advancements in AI-driven automation and smart packaging were other factors driving the industry forward, industry experts said at an event organised by Informa Markets.

India's organic food market — currently valued at \$1.9 billion — is projected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20.13 per cent to \$10.8 billion by 2033. Meanwhile, the food ingredients segment is growing at 7–8 per cent annually. Experts indicate that these trends position India to become a global hub for food and packaging materials. Dr Meenakshi Singh, Chief Scientist at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), said

that “food ingredients form the backbone of the food sector, with packaging playing an equally critical role in ensuring safety and quality.”

The three-day event featured over 350 exhibitors from India and abroad and attracted more than 15,000 professionals from 50 countries. “India's food processing sector is undergoing a transformative phase, driven by rising health consciousness, growing preference for organic and plant-based foods, and a notable shift in dietary patterns,” said Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director of Informa Markets in India.

He added that the organic food market is projected to touch Rs 75,000 crore by 2025, as consumers show a growing willingness to pay a premium for healthier options. India's food processing sector contributes 7.7 per cent to the manufacturing output and supporting over 7 million jobs.

Experts at the event said

that FSSAI will emphasise stricter labelling, organic food standards, and consumer awareness in 2025, shaping industry practices.

The government has announced a new initiative called 'BHARATI' to empower 100 agri-food startups, drive innovation and boost exports towards \$50 billion target by 2030.

The rapid growth of the food processing industry is also creating new opportunities for farmers by increasing demand for value-added agricultural products. Better processing, storage and supply-chain infrastructure can help reduce post-harvest losses, improve farmers' realisations and connect producers with domestic and international markets. Experts said greater collaboration between farmers, processors and technology companies will be important for sustained growth. Technology is expected to play an increasingly important role across the sector.

IT pact with US in 1997 crippled India Inc from producing world-class hardware

New Delhi, Aug 19 (GNS): Economists and strategic affairs analysts on Saturday argued that the Information Technology Agreement of 1997 between India and the United States actually crippled India Inc, against its wishes, from producing world-class computer hardware like China and Taiwan. In 1997, the S and India sealed a pact that removed tariffs and barriers to trade in all services relating to information technology. However, the then Bill Clinton administration in the US convinced New Delhi that India should play to its strengths in software development and relation services, while the Indian industry was keen to maintain tariffs on computer hardware in order to nurture its growth.

In a post on X social media platform, strategic affairs analyst and columnist Divya Kumar Soti said: “Do you know that India ceded away hardware sec-

tor to the United States as part of Information Technology Agreement of 1997 against the wishes of India Inc! Clinton administration pursued GoI to remain confined to software and allied services (call centres) and remain out of hardware sector. But for this agreement, today India Inc would have been producing world class computer hardware like China and Taiwan”.

Soti further argued that the US-sponsored ecosystem in India “sold this beautifully to Indians as one magazine after another and one news channel after another told us day and day out that we were the software superpower”. “Today, the reality is exposed. We are such a superpower that as we are forced to enter into a confrontation with the United States, we don't even have an email platform of our own. Our IT sector is heavily reliant on the US for remaining profitable. Hundreds and

hundreds of our engineering colleges churn out sub-standard CS graduates who can only do the jobs which are going to be taken over by the AI very soon,” Soti stressed.

That is why with the advent of AI, Americans now find themselves in a position to threaten outsourcing and the H1-B system, the X post added. Responding to Soti's post, Dr Arvind Virmani, economist and member of NITI Aayog, said he was probably the only economist who opposed this (India-US) agreement, based on economics of tariffs. “After doing 5 yrs of tariff reform (1991+), It was clear to me, that it would produce an inverted duty structure and destroy domestic production of electronics assembly,” Virmani informed in his reply to the post. Today, India produces world's best software engineers but somewhat lack on producing hardware – a scenario which

the Prime Minister Narendra Modi government is aiming to change with its bold reformist policies and initiatives line 'Make in India' and production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes, which can transform the country into a global manufacturing hub in several sectors like semiconductors, electric vehicles and drones in the near future.

The debate over the 1997 agreement has gained renewed relevance as India seeks to build a stronger domestic electronics and semiconductor ecosystem. While the software and services sector created millions of jobs and established India as a major global technology centre, the country remained heavily dependent on imports for several critical hardware components. The experience has highlighted the importance of developing both software capabilities and manufacturing strength.

India's assistance to Kabul not limited to quake relief

New Delhi, Aug 19 (GNS): The humanitarian aid dispatched by New Delhi immediately after the initial earthquake rocked the south-eastern parts of Afghanistan at the end of August is not a gesture in isolation. Though India has not granted recognition to the Taliban rulers in Kabul, it has continued its outreach for the common people's benefit in this beleaguered country. India's evolving engagement with the Taliban is not a matter of ideological alignment, but of geopolitical necessity. Since the regime's return to power in Aug 2021, New Delhi has recalibrated its approach from outright rejection to cautious diplomacy. India's engagement with the Taliban is driven by a range of strategic imperatives. A stable Afghan regime can help deny Pakistan-based terror proxies safe havens, bolstering India's border security.

Afghanistan also serves as a vital land bridge to Central Asia and the Chabahar port corridor, offering New Delhi alternative access for trade and energy resources. Incidentally, a Parliamentary Standing Committee report, tabled in March this year, underscored the need for projects and programmes aimed at the welfare of women and children in Afghanistan. It noted that the allocation for 'Aid to Afghanistan' was Rs 200 crores during the Budget Estimate (BE) 2024-25, but was revised to Rs 50 crores in the Revised Estimate (RE) stage. It was then increased to Rs 100 crores in BE 2025-26. According to the External Affairs Ministry, budgetary allocation to Afghanistan since Aug 2021 was primarily aimed at stabilising the country in terms of food security, medicines and emergency supplies. The report quoted the Ministry that, now that these efforts have been fruitful, leading to marked improvement in these areas, it has been decided to explore de-

velopment cooperation projects in addition to the ongoing humanitarian aid. Earlier, India put in a total of USD 3 billion for dams, hospitals and education even before 2021. The Taliban is seeking New Delhi's help in several construction projects. Operations may soon be revived as security stabilises.

New Delhi faces challenges in moving men and material via the land route as it lies through Pakistan, where several bureaucratic and political roadblocks are often created. Additionally, skirmishes at the Af-Pak border lead to long waits at the entry point. Despite several other difficulties, India has successfully invested in several long-standing humanitarian and reconstruction investments. Such gestures have helped build goodwill, countering the “Great Game” played by other countries. The history of such manoeuvrings has been chronicled by Peter Hopkirk, who authored the

book. , ‘The Great Game’. He wrote extensively about the diplomatic significance of Afghanistan, documenting overt and covert battles fought in the region for centuries. The title of the book – borrowed from the phrase and term coined by a British intelligence officer, Captain Arthur Conolly, in the 19th century – aptly sums up the diplomatic one-upmanship.

While some experts believe that India does not have a clear policy regarding Afghanistan, others prefer to term it as strategic patience. But throughout this time, New Delhi reworked and re-strategised its options. In fact, India has reached out to the successive governments in Kabul. In recent times, following the meeting between Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri with the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, in Dubai early this year, it was

IndiGo's Abu Dhabi-bound flight returns safely after mid-air technical snag

New Delhi, Aug 19 (GNS): An IndiGo flight to Abu Dhabi returned safely to Kochi in the early hours on Saturday after witnessing a mid-air technical snag. The Airbus A320neo aircraft, carrying over 180 passengers and six crew members, departed Kochi but turned back and landed safely at 1:44 am in the early hours. The airline said the decision was taken as a precautionary measure, and the aircraft was undergoing maintenance checks.

A replacement aircraft with a new crew was arranged, and passengers departed for Abu Dhabi.

"A technical issue was detected on IndiGo flight 6E 1403 operating from Kochi to Abu Dhabi on 6 September 2025. As a precautionary step, the pilots decided to turn back and the aircraft landed safely at Cochin International Airport," the airline said in a statement.

While the aircraft is undergoing necessary main-

tenance checks before resuming operations, an alternative aircraft was promptly arranged for customers to complete the journey, it added. “We regret the inconvenience caused to our customers and made all possible efforts to minimise it, including offering them meals and refreshments. At IndiGo, we remain committed to the safety and security of our customers and crew,” the spokesperson added.

Late last month, an IndiGo flight from Surat to Dubai carrying around 150 passengers was diverted to Ahmedabad after the aircraft developed a technical problem. The flight landed safely at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad about an hour and a half later.

Airport officials confirmed that the pilots made a precautionary emergency landing after detecting a technical snag. Passengers were delayed for nearly

two hours before IndiGo arranged an alternative aircraft. Another IndiGo flight from Delhi to Goa had to make a full emergency landing in Mumbai when one of its engines failed mid-air. That aircraft, operating as flight 6E 6271, landed safely at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport on July 15.

The incident did not result in any injuries, and the aircraft landed safely after the pilots decided to return to Kochi as a precaution. The passengers were kept informed about the situation while the airline made arrangements to minimise disruption to their journey.

IndiGo said the affected Airbus A320neo was taken for detailed maintenance checks to identify and rectify the technical issue. The airline's decision to use a replacement aircraft and crew allowed passengers to continue their journey to Abu Dhabi.

Bhatti calls for banking sector support to build Telangana's \$3 trillion economy

Hyderabad, Aug 19 (GNS): Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka said that the banking and financial sectors must become key partners in the State's goal of transforming Telangana into a \$1 trillion economy by 2034 and a \$3 trillion economy by 2047. He made it clear that this objective cannot be achieved through government expenditure alone and requires large-scale private investment, strong financial institutions, deeper financial markets and innovative financing mechanisms.

The Deputy Chief Minister participated in and addressed the 50th State Level Bankers' Committee



development has resulted from the loans extended, how many industries have been established and how many jobs have been created. He said that the real measure of banking performance should be the extent to which agricultural productivity has increased, rural incomes have improved and private investment has been mobilised. Bhatti Vikramarka said that the rural and agricultural sectors are the foundation of Telangana's economy. Farmers should receive loans precisely when they need them, he said. Eligible farmers should not be forced to go around banks seeking credit. "Farmers should not have to search for banks for loans; the banking system itself should reach the farmers," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

He called for dairy, fisheries, horticulture, oil palm, food processing and other allied sectors to be brought into the formal credit system. The objective should not merely be to provide a loan to a farmer, but to convert that credit into higher and sustainable agricultural income, he said.

If a farmer is unable to

repay a loan, banks should not limit themselves merely to recovery measures, the Deputy Chief Minister said. Instead, they should analyse why the farmer's income declined. Issues such as productivity, market facilities, post-harvest infrastructure and working capital should be incorporated into credit strategies, he suggested.

He appreciated the fact that banks had extended 52,337 crore in agricultural loans as of June 2026, but emphasised that timely disbursement of credit was equally important. The Deputy Chief Minister said that the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector would play a crucial role in transforming Telangana into a \$3 trillion economy. For entrepreneurs, receiving funds when they are needed is more important than merely getting a loan sanctioned, he said. The application, sanction and disbursement processes should have clear and measurable timelines, he directed.

He appreciated the approval of 16,265 proposals worth 4,463 crore during the current quarter under the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE). He directed banks not to trouble entrepreneurs in the name of collateral requirements for loans sanctioned under CGTMSE.

Irfan Jamiawala: 32 years of acting, theatre, cinema, social commitment



Hyderabad, Aug 19 (GNS): Irfan Jamiawala's 32-year journey is not merely the story of an actor. It is a long creative journey that connects theatre, acting education, cinema, television and social awareness. Over these 32 years, he has conducted approximately 4,000 free acting training seminars and workshops and participated in nearly 7,000 street plays (Nukkad Natak) addressing important social issues and public-awareness campaigns.

His street theatre was not limited to entertainment. He worked with campaigns related to education, AIDS awareness, prevention of dowry, cleanliness and sanitation, blood donation, and free medicine and medical assistance. For him, an actor is not merely a person who performs dialogues on stage, but also a responsible citizen who can become the voice of society. His theatre journey includes learning and working with institutions and theatre groups such as Bharatendu Natya Kala Parishad, Shri Ram Centre, National School of Drama-TIE, Prithvi Theatre, Sangeet Natak Akademi Delhi, Kalatmak Rangmanch Group, Bahuroop Theatre Group, JAU, Kabira, Natkhat and Khilona.

His professional journey eventually expanded beyond theatre into the film and television industry. During approximately 20 years of experience in film and television, he worked with organisations and production houses including Balaji Telefilms, UTV, Cinevista, Garima Pictures, Meditech, Moving Picture Company, Creative Eye, Maya Pictures and Pixel D Studio.

His responsibilities covered a wide range of creative and managerial departments, including post-production, direction, writing, executive production, artistic

Congress leaders hold meeting on SIR Phase-2 in joint Nizamabad district

Ensure every eligible voter retains their right to vote: Govt Adviser Mohammed Ali Shabbir

Falaknuma News
State Correspondent
M.A.Samad :
Nizamabad, August 19

A key meeting of senior Congress leaders from the undivided Nizamabad district was held at M.K. Gardens in Nizamabad to discuss the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) Phase-2 of electoral rolls following the release of the draft voters' list. Government Adviser Mohammed Ali Shabbir, TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud, Minister and in-charge of the undivided Nizamabad district Seethakka, and Zaheerabad MP Suresh Kumar Shetkar attended the meeting as chief guests. Addressing the gathering, Government Adviser Mohammed



Ali Shabbir said that the right to vote is one of the most important rights in a democracy. He urged Congress leaders and workers to thoroughly examine the draft electoral rolls released under SIR Phase-2.

He said that nearly 1.50 lakh voter names were

found missing from the draft lists across Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts. He called upon party leaders to take the issue seriously and work at the booth level to ensure that the names of all eligible voters are restored to the electoral rolls.

Shabbir directed party

leaders to focus on every constituency, mandal, village and polling booth. He said that apart from identifying missing names, the reasons for their deletion should also be verified, and eligible voters should be assisted in completing the necessary procedures to

regain their voting rights. He called upon every Congress worker to take responsibility for the exercise by directly contacting voters at the grassroots level and checking whether their names were included in the draft electoral rolls. He also stressed the need to create awareness among the public regarding the voter-list revision process, objections and applications, and to assist eligible voters in submitting the required documents.

TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud said that every Congress leader and worker should carefully examine the draft electoral rolls under SIR Phase-2. He directed booth-level party workers to identify miss-

ing names and bring such cases to the notice of the concerned authorities. He called for coordinated efforts by booth-level Congress leaders to ensure that every eligible citizen retains the right to vote, stating that electoral rolls are crucial to safeguarding democracy.

Minister Seethakka, in-charge of the undivided Nizamabad district, said that every leader and worker has a responsibility to ensure that eligible voters do not suffer injustice due to the deletion of their names from the draft electoral rolls. She urged party leaders to examine the lists at the village, town, ward and polling-booth levels and extend all necessary assistance to the public.



Today On The Occasion Of Our Protection Of Legal And Human Rights Association Telangana State Deputy Chairperson Hooriya Fathima Madam Son Birthday Distributed Snacks Biscuits Packets At Venkat Foundation Orphanage Home Near Ujwala Park Karimnagar From Protection Of Legal And Human Rights Association

Harish Rao under house arrest, stopped from visiting TIMS

Hyderabad, Aug 19 (GNS): Police in Hyderabad placed BRS Deputy Leader in Telangana Assembly, T Harish Rao, and some other party leaders under house arrest on Wednesday, August 19, to stop them from visiting Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS).tension prevailed at Harish Rao's residence in Kokapet as police stopped him from leaving for TIMS, Sanathnagar, which was inaugurated by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on August 17. Police personnel blocked Harish Rao's vehicle as the former minister insisted that he be allowed to visit the facility.

Why should a daughter's pain be measured by her religion?

The Constitution of India promises every citizen equality, dignity and justice. But when a daughter from a poor, socially disadvantaged and historically marginalised family becomes a victim of sexual violence, should the assistance and rehabilitation available to her be influenced by her caste or religion? This is the question being raised before the government by noted social worker, leader, writer, filmmaker and journalist Irfan Jamiawala. This is not a question against any religion. It is a question in favour of justice and equality.

India has special legal protections and, in specified circumstances, relief and rehabilitation provisions for victims belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. At the same time, the present constitutional framework concerning Scheduled Caste status raises a serious question regarding religion.

Under Paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, Scheduled Caste status is presently restricted to persons professing Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism. This is where the question of the rights of Dalit Muslims becomes important. Does a Change of Religion Erase the Reality of Caste? India's social history shows that caste-based discrimination and social exclusion are complex realities.

A change of religious identity does not automatically erase generations of social, occupational or economic



disadvantage. If a community has historically experienced discrimination, merely changing its religious identity does not necessarily erase that social history. Therefore, the fundamental question is: Should the State look only at religious identity, or should it also consider the actual social and economic circumstances of the victim? Sexual Violence Has No Religion

The trauma suffered by a Hindu daughter is no different from the trauma suffered by a Muslim daughter. Her wounds have no religion. The pain of her family has no caste. The dignity of a victim does not become less valuable because of her religious identity. Then why should any victim feel that access to protection, relief or rehabilitation depends upon her religion? Irfan Jamiawala's Questions to the Government "If the pain of the crime is equal, why should the rights to justice and rehabilitation be unequal?" "If the Constitution guarantees equality, why should the State not examine inequali-

ties that arise from existing social-justice policies?"

"Can the fundamental dignity of a victim be treated as less important because of her religion?" These questions are not against any community. They are questions for constitutional equality and human dignity. This Is Not a Hindu-versus- uslim Question Turning this issue into a Hindu-versus-Muslim controversy would only divert attention from the real problem. The real question is: In India, should access to justice ultimately depend upon religious identity, or upon the dignity and rights of the human being?

In a constitutional democracy, the principle should be clear: Human being first, identity later. Citizen first, religion later. Justice first, politics later. Article 341 of the Constitution provides the constitutional framework for identifying Scheduled Castes and for changes to the notified list through the prescribed parliamentary process. Therefore, the question of extending SC recognition to Dalit Muslims, or creating an equally effective legal protection and rehabilitation framework for historically disadvantaged communities, deserves serious constitutional and legislative debate. What Should the Government Do? The government should move beyond political allegations and commission an independent, transparent and evidence-based study of the issue.



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