

Bail the norm, jail is exception even in PMLA cases, says SC

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court in its judgment, granting relief to Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren's aide, Prem Prakash, in an illegal mining-related case registered by the Enforcement Directorate held bail as the rule and jail an exception even in money laundering cases. The court held that Section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) should not be construed by the prosecution in such a way to make bail an impossibility in money laundering cases.

The court said bail is must upon meeting the twin conditions of Section 45 — there should be reasonable grounds to believe the accused to be prima facie innocent and he would not commit any crime while out on bail. Justice Viswanathan referred to the Supreme Court judgment granting bail to Manish Sisodia on August 9 to hold that bail cannot be denied on the whims of the Central agency. The Supreme Court also held that the ED cannot violate the fundamental right to silence of an accused, already in judicial custody, by forcing him to make a self-incriminatory statement in another money-laundering case probed by the same investigative agency.

“Liberty of the individual is always a rule and deprivation is the exception. Deprivation can only be by the procedure established by law, which has to be a valid and reasonable procedure. Section 45 PMLA does not re-write this principle [that bail is the rule] to mean that deprivation is the norm and liberty is the exception.”

Supreme Court Bench

Focus on trial

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court's bail decision for Bharat Rashtra Samithi leader K. Kavitha highlights concerns about the misuse of judicial processes to target political opponents. The serious allegations against Kavitha involve corruption related to the Delhi government's liquor policy. The Court criticized the investigation's fairness, noting issues with the use of witnesses and the granting of pardons to suspects. It also observed that the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act (PMLA) has been used to unjustly prolong detention. The Court had previously granted bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on similar grounds.

Ms. Kavitha is accused of facilitating a deal between the Delhi government and a "south lobby," with allegations involving witnesses and accused individuals. The Supreme Court criticized the Delhi High Court for not granting her bail under the PMLA's provision for women, focusing instead on her education rather than her vulnerability. The Court emphasized that since the investigation by the CBI and Enforcement Directorate is complete, bail should have been granted. It advised prosecutors to focus on presenting a strong case at trial rather than opposing bail, highlighting the importance of concrete evidence and reliable testimony over sensational claims and lengthy charge sheets.

Bengal bandh disrupts life as Trinamool takes on BJP

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

On Wednesday, West Bengal experienced significant disruptions due to a 12-hour bandh called by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in protest of alleged police excesses against their protesters. The bandh led to major disruptions, including the blocking of railway tracks and arterial roads by BJP supporters. While bandhs are less common now, the strike saw clashes between BJP and Trinamool Congress supporters, with violence erupting in various



areas, including North Kolkata, Bhatpara, Durgapur, and Asansol. BJP leaders were involved in several incidents, including detaining commercial establishment owners and arguing with Trinamool supporters, leading to injuries and further unrest.

Bangladesh interim govt. lifts ban on Islamist party

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



The interim government of Bangladesh on Wednesday lifted the ban on the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, its student wing, Islami Chhatrashibir, and “all associated organisations”. The announcement came in a notification from the Interior Ministry of the government, which was preceded by a press conference by the Emir of Jamaat-e-Islami, Shafiqur Rahman, who praised the freedom fighters who freed Bangladesh from the rule of Pakistan in 1971. The end of the ban has opened the political landscape of Bangladesh to the Islamist party.

The lifting of the ban would enable the organisation to participate in the political process of Bangladesh. The ban was one of the last actions by the Sheikh Hasina government that fell on August 5. Ever since, the Jamaat has been conducting its activities openly, operating from their office in old Dhaka's Moghbazar neighbourhood.

“The Government did not find any definite link between terrorism and the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, its student wing Islami Chhatrashibir and all other associate units of the organisation. Therefore, the government believes that the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, Islami Chhatrashibir and all other associate units of the Jamaat are not involved in acts of terrorism.”

Interior Ministry

Karnataka Governor sends back 11 Bills, seeks clarifications

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot has returned 11 Bills passed by the State legislature seeking clarifications from the government on various counts, such as pending cases in the Supreme Court, overlapping provisions of two laws, issues in creation of a new entity for a limited area, and the authority of the government.

The Karnataka State Legislature passed the Karnataka Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments (Amendment) Bill, 2024 to annul the Dharwad Bench of the High Court of Karnataka striking down amendments to the Act made in 2011 and 2012. The State Government has already challenged the High Court decision in the Supreme Court. Since the matter is pending before the Supreme Court, the Governor has sought more clarification on the Bill, according to sources in the State Secretariat.

The Karnataka Municipalities and Certain Other Law (Amendment) Bill, 2024 was passed to enable urban local bodies to levy and collect property tax from every building, vacant land, or both. The Raj Bhavan noted that the Karnataka Town and Country Planning (regularisation of unauthorised Development or Constructions) Rules, 2014, has been questioned in the court of law, and is pending for adjudication.

The Sri Renuka Yellamma Temple Development Authority Bill was passed to constitute an independent statutory body for the development and maintenance of the temple in Saundatti, Belagavi. The Governor returned the Bill noting that the Shri Renuka Yellamma Kshetra Tourism Development Board Act, 2024, was enacted in February 2024, with similar objectives.

Questions over advisers

With the Governor returning the Karnataka Legislature (Prevention of Disqualification) (Second Amendment) Bill seeking clarifications, questions are being raised over the continuation of MLAs serving as advisers to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The advisers are MLAs Basavaraj Rayaraddi (Economic), B.R. Patil (Political), A.S. Ponnanna (Legal), T.B. Jayachandra and Prakash Hukkeri (Representatives of the State in Delhi), and MLCs K. Govinda Raju and Nazeer Ahmed (Political Secretaries).



“If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it.”

–Benjamin Franklin

India is getting complacent in its fight against polio: data

HEALTHCARE GOVERNANCE

Data from the National Family Health Surveys show that the pace of administration of the polio vaccine has slowed down in India. Coverage of the last dose remains relatively poor. Coverage levels are poorest in the north-east, where the latest case of vaccine-derived polio was detected in a two-year-old child in Tikrikilla village in the West Garo Hills of Meghalaya. Notably, coverage was lowest among the poorest households where the education levels of the female head of the family were not advanced. While the last case of wild poliovirus in India was recorded in 2011, rare cases of vaccine-derived poliovirus continue to be reported. Though the government has clarified that the latest case is vaccine-derived, it is unclear whether it is a case of iVDPV (immunodeficiency-related vaccine-derived poliovirus), affecting just that one child, or circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV), which can impact the entire community.

It is time to increase vaccine coverage

The data for the charts were sourced from the National Family Health Survey editions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Chart 1: % of children (12-23 months) who received various doses of specific vaccines by the appropriate age in 2019-21

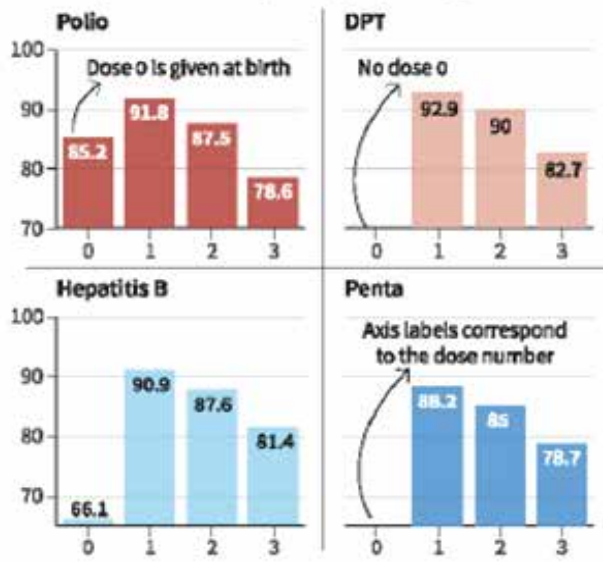


Chart 2: The share (%) of Indian children (12-23 months) who received the last dose of specific vaccines by the appropriate age over the years

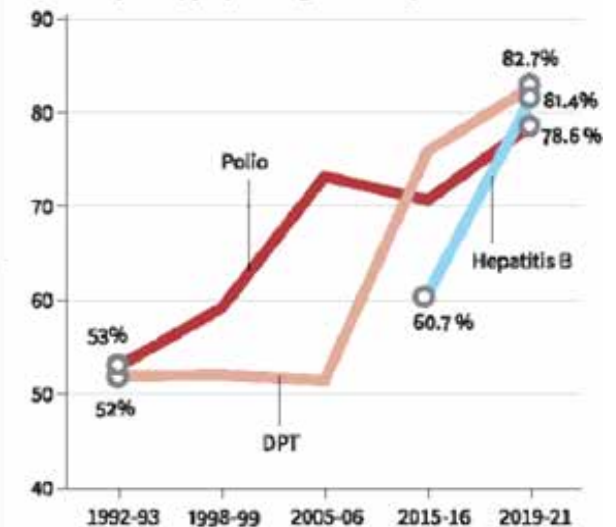
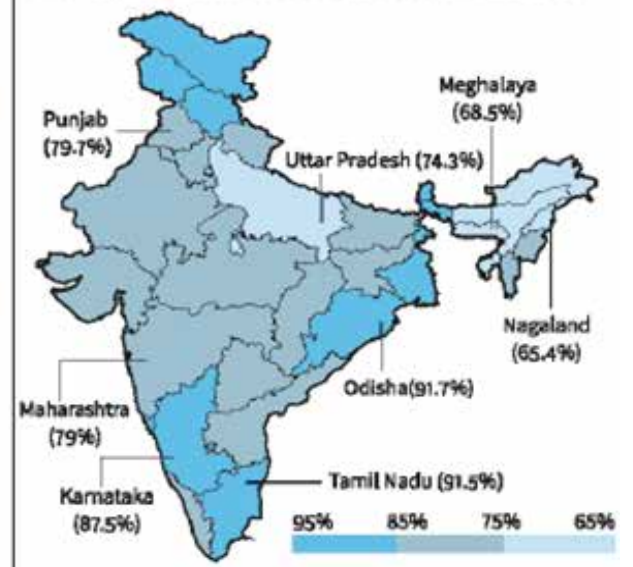


Table 3: The share (%) of children (12-23 months) who received the last dose of the polio vaccine in 2019-21, based on their household's background characteristics

Parameter	%	Parameter	%
Sex		Religion	
Male	80.8%	Hindu	81.3%
Female	80%	Muslim	75.8%
Birth order		Christian	81.2%
1	82.5%	Sikh	82.5%
2-3	80.2%	Buddhist	81.6%
4-5	75.6%	Jain	87.1%
6 or more	67.9%	Caste	
Residence		SC	80.5%
Urban	79.2%	ST	80.4%
Rural	80.9%	OBC	81%
Mother's schooling		Other	79.7%
0	73%	Wealth quintile	
<5 years	80%	Poorest 20%	75.8%
5-7 years	80%	Second	79.6%
8-9 years	81.4%	Middle	83.1%
10-11 years	84.4%	Fourth	83%
>11 years	83%	Richest 20%	82.3%

R. Amanda Mirlam Fernandez, Muhammad Ubaidullah A.L. and Mohamed Althamish N.A. are interning with The Hindu Data Team

Map 4: The State-wise share (%) of children (12-23 months) who received the last dose of the polio vaccine in 2019-21



India signs repeat order for 73,000 SIG 716 rifles; deliveries by 2025-end

INTERNAL SECURITY

The Ministry of Defence has signed a new contract with Sig Sauer for 73,000 SIG 716 rifles, with delivery expected by the end of 2025. This follows a previous procurement of 72,400 SIG 716 rifles through a ₹ 700 Cr. contract signed in February 2019. The SIG 716 rifles, which are intended to replace the older INSAS (Indian National Small Arms System) rifles, have been well-received by soldiers for their performance and reliability. The Army has already issued 66,400 of the earlier rifles



to frontline troops. The SIG 716 rifle, weighing 3.82 kg with an effective range of 600 meters, is considered superior to the INSAS (Indian National Small Arms System) in terms of capability and reliability.

India and Russia sign a working plan to handle emergencies

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India and Russia have signed a working plan for their Joint Commission on Emergency Management for 2025-26. The agreement was signed in Moscow by Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai and Kurenkov Aleksandr Vyacheslavovich, Minister of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM of Russia). The plan focuses on continuing the exchange of best practices and lessons learned in disaster management.

This meeting is significant to draw a strategy for executing the previous agreements between India and Russia, such as, Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for cooperation in the field of Emergency Management in December, 2010, and Regulation to establish the Indo-Russian Joint Commission for Cooperation (2013) in prevention and elimination of consequences of emergency situations.

In the recent meeting, India and Russia discussed three main issues: using space technology for risk forecasting and emergency response, sharing disaster response experiences, and training fire and rescue specialists. It was decided that the next commission meeting will be held in India in 2026. The new working plan aims to enhance bilateral efforts, upgrade capabilities, and build mutual assistance between the two countries.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

With the latest elections, NDA crosses the majority mark in the Rajya Sabha

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Upper House strength

With 12 new members elected unopposed, the BJP strengthened its position in Rajya Sabha while Congress is close to losing the Leader of the Opposition status

■ **BJP's strength in the Rajya Sabha is 96 and with the support of allies, NDA's tally in the House is 119**

■ **The Congress with 26 members is close to losing its Leader of the Opposition**



status. In a full-strength House, a party needs to have at least 25 MPs to get the Leader of the Opposition's position

■ **The next round of Rajya Sabha elections is scheduled for November when 11 members will retire**

Following the latest Rajya Sabha elections, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has achieved a majority with 119 members, including BJP's 96 seats, allies, six nominated members, and two Independents. The Rajya Sabha now has 237 members, with the majority threshold at 119, which will remain until April 2026 when 31 seats from 10 states will be contested. The Congress, with 26 members, is close to losing its Leader of the Opposition

status, which requires a minimum of 25 members. The next major elections will occur in November when 11 seats from Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand will be up for grabs.

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U.P. plan to reward digital influencers draws flak

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

The Uttar Pradesh government has introduced a new social media policy that offers cash prizes to influencers who promote its initiatives and achievements. The policy aims to encourage positive coverage of the government's schemes and create employment opportunities.

The policy would categorise influencers into four categories with payment limits for influencers based on subscribers and followers on their platforms. For X, Facebook, and Instagram, the maximum monthly payment limits are set at ₹ 5 lakh, ₹ 4 lakh, ₹ 3 lakh and ₹ 2 lakh, respectively, while on YouTube, the payment limits for videos, shorts, and podcasts are ₹ 8 lakh, ₹ 7 lakh, ₹ 4 lakh, and ₹ 4 lakh, respectively.

The government reserves the right to take legal action against content deemed anti-national or derogatory. The policy has faced criticism from Opposition parties and Congress, who argue it amounts to censorship and a tactic to sway public opinion, while digital influencers see it as an attempt to manipulate content and influence the public.

'Paid content'

Uttar Pradesh government plans to reward social media influencers who promote its initiatives, schemes, and achievements

Maximum monthly payment limits

■ X, Facebook, and Instagram: ₹5 lakh, ₹4 lakh, ₹3 lakh, ₹2 lakh — based on number of subscribers and duration of content

■ YouTube videos, shorts, and podcasts: ₹8 lakh, ₹7 lakh, ₹6 lakh, ₹4 lakh

■ The government has been authorised to take legal action if paid content shows any 'anti-national, anti-social, derogatory' references



“Doing nothing is very hard to do. You never know when you’re finished.”—Leslie Nielsen



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Centre offers discussions with unions on Labour Codes

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE



Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has agreed to further discuss the implementation of the four Labour Codes with Central Trade Unions (CTUs) following a round-table meeting. The CTUs, who believe the codes favour large corporations, also raised concerns about the Unified Pension Scheme, requested the restoration of the non-contributory Old Pension Scheme, and called for the Indian Labour Conference to be convened.

The meeting, which also included Minister of State for Labour Shobha Karandlaje, primarily addressed the Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) schemes aimed at creating two crore jobs. While Mandaviya welcomed CTU input on the ELI schemes, concerns were also voiced by the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) about the lack of support for the informal sector.

CTUs also demanded that the National Monetisation Pipeline be scrapped, ordnance factory corporatisation be reversed, and the Agnipath scheme be discarded in favour of regular recruitment. Mandaviya assured that he would engage in regular discussions to address these issues and work towards resolutions.

Environment ignored in considering sites for Nicobar Islands project

ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Congress spokesperson Jairam Ramesh criticized the Environment Ministry's approval of a ₹ 72,000 Cr. infrastructure project on the Nicobar Islands, claiming it ignored the least environmentally destructive site at Campbell Bay. Ramesh argued that the project's chosen location, despite the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management report, encroaches on sensitive areas with coral colonies and turtle nesting sites, which should be classified as Coastal Regulation Zone-1A (CRZ 1A). He questioned the reclassification of these areas to CRZ 1B and criticized the lack of transparency regarding the High Powered Committee's findings. Ramesh also expressed concern that the project would lead to an influx of people and tourists, potentially disrupting local tribes.



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Union Cabinet redesigns Agri Infra Fund to cover FPOs

AGRICULTURE RELATED MATTERS

The Union Cabinet expanded the scope of the Agricultural Infrastructure Fund (AIF), worth ₹1 lakh crore to include financial support for Farmers' Producers Organisations (FPOs) to enhance their financial security and creditworthiness. The Agricultural Infrastructure Fund (AIF) would be more attractive now and strengthen the farm-related infrastructure facilities in the country.

The Cabinet approved the progressive expansion to make it more attractive, impactful, and inclusive. These initiatives aim at expanding the scope of eligible projects and integrate additional supportive measures to foster a robust agricultural infrastructure ecosystem. Approximately, ₹ 47,575 Cr. has been sanctioned for 74,508 projects under AIF till date. These sanctioned projects have mobilised an investment of ₹ 78,596 Cr. in the agriculture sector, out of which ₹ 78,433 Cr has been mobilised from private entities, adding that infrastructure projects sanctioned under AIF have helped in generating more than 8.19 lakh rural employment opportunities in the agriculture sector.

SEBI flags 'pattern' in some SME founders rigging stocks

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

Small firms, huge concern

SEBI cautions investors about the template some SME founders use to lift share prices before selling at elevated levels



- Post listing, promoters announce stock splits/bonus issues
- This induces investors to buy the securities
- Promoters then offload the holdings at higher prices
- Investors urged to not rely on unverified social-media posts/rumours

The Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has cautioned investors against a specific pattern deployed by promoters of certain firms listed on the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) platforms of stock exchanges to induce investors through positive portrayal and corporate actions before offloading the stocks at elevated prices.

Post listing, some SME firms and/or promoters have been seen to make public announcements followed up with various corporate

actions such as bonus issues, stock splits and preferential allotments to create a positive picture of operations and induce investors into purchasing such securities. This presents an easy opportunity to the promoters to offload the holdings at elevated prices. SEBI has passed orders against such entities. In the last decade, more than ₹ 14,000 crore was raised via the platforms of which about ₹ 6,000 crore was collected in FY24.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

CCEA clears 12 industrial parks across 10 States

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved an expenditure of ₹ 28,602 Cr. to establish 12 new industrial parks across 10 states and six major industrial corridors, as announced in the Union Budget. These "smart cities" are expected to attract investments of ₹1.5 lakh crore and create up to 1 million direct and 3 million indirect jobs. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal indicated that these projections are conservative. The parks, designed to be "plug and play," will be completed within three years, with land and environmental clearances already secured.

Locations include Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gaya in Bihar, and Dighi in Maharashtra. The industrial parks will be situated along key corridors, including Vizag-Chennai, Hyderabad-Bengaluru, Hyderabad-Nagpur, and Chennai-Bengaluru. This initiative is part of a larger plan to develop around 100 investment-ready "plug and play" industrial parks with full infrastructure, in collaboration with states and the private sector, as outlined in this year's Budget by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Israel's large-scale military operation in West Bank kills nine

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Israel launched a large-scale military operation in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, with its forces killing at least nine Palestinians and sealing off the volatile city of Jenin, according to Palestinian officials.

Israel has carried out near-daily raids across the West Bank since Hamas's October 7 attack out of Gaza triggered the ongoing war there. Israel says it is rooting out militants to prevent attacks on its citizens, while Palestinians in the West Bank fear it intends to broaden the war and forcibly displace more of them.

Palestinian militant groups said they were exchanging fire with Israeli troops. The governor of Jenin, Kamal Abu al-Rub, said that Israeli forces had surrounded the city, blocking exit and entry points and access to hospitals, and ripping up infrastructure in the camp.

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China warns U.S. over supporting Philippines in South China Sea

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, cautioned U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan against using U.S.-Philippines treaties to challenge China's sovereignty in the South China Sea. Wang emphasized China's commitment to defending its territorial claims in the disputed region. Sullivan's visit to Beijing, which began on Tuesday, was aimed at engaging in productive discussions with Wang.

The tensions have escalated recently, with Japan accusing China of violating its airspace and the Philippines labelling China as the main disruptor of peace in Southeast Asia. In response to these developments, Adm. Samuel Paparo of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command indicated that the U.S. military is open to discussions about escorting Philippine ships in the South China Sea, a move that could lead to direct confrontations with Chinese vessels.



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