

Will adopt the traditions and culture of T.N. and live as one among you, says Madras HC Chief Justice

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Madras High Court Chief Justice S.V. Gangapurwala on Thursday assured the Bar and the people of Tamil Nadu that he would adopt the traditions, conventions and culture of the State and live with them "like sugar getting dissolved in milk and enriching its taste".

"The Parsis from Persia had fled and landed at Navsari, the coastal region of Gujarat. The King there took a glass of milk filled to the brim and said, 'you have no place here'. The leader of the Parsis put su-



Justice S.V. Gangapurwala at a formal welcome accorded to him on Thursday. He is flanked by Justice S. Vaidyanathan, to his right, and Justice R. Mahadevan, to his left. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

gar in the milk and said, 'we will live with you like this,' he recalled, promising to repeat it during his tenure in Tamil Nadu. "As a Chief Justice of this glorious High Court, it would be my honour and privi-

lege to work along with brother and sister judges and also the members of the Bar," he said.

In his speech, accepting the welcome address by Advocate-General R. Shunmugasundaram, the chair-

man of the Bar Council of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and the office-bearers of various Bar associations, the Chief Justice promised that all stakeholders would be taken into confidence in every important decision-making process and it would be his bounden duty to redress their grievances. In his address, the A-G said the Chief Justice was born on May 24, 1962, into a family of lawyers, with his father being an accomplished lawyer in Maharashtra.

"In December 2022, his Lordship was elevated to the position of Acting Chief Justice of the chartered

High Court of Bombay after completing 12 arduous years of service. This day, his Lordship is sitting as the Chief Justice in the chartered High Court of Madras. Indeed, the chance to lead two chartered High Courts is uncommon in anyone's judicial career and Your Lordship is gifted with that rare opportunity," the A-G said.

Listing some of the judgments during his tenure in the Bombay High Court, the A-G said he was a distinguished and diligent jurist renowned for giving each party a patient hearing.

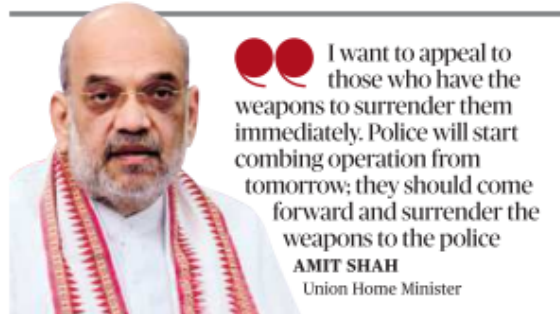
Judicial panel to probe Manipur violence: Shah

The commission will be headed by a retired High Court Chief Justice, says Minister; CBI will also begin investigation; he warns Kuki militant groups of stern action if 2008 agreement is violated

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that a judicial commission would be set up to conduct a probe into the violence in Manipur. The commission, headed by a retired High Court Chief Justice, would find the "causes" of violence and "fix responsibility", he said.

Addressing a press conference in Imphal on the fourth day of his trip to Manipur, the Home Minister termed the ongoing tension in the State as "ethnic violence". Mr. Shah said that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) would also conduct its own probe. Of all the cases registered so far, the CBI would select five and regis-



ter a general case of conspiracy. "The special CBI team will probe the cases without any bias," he said.

More than 2,000 first information reports (FIR) have been registered since the violence broke out on May 3.

With many security agencies now at work in Manipur and to bring them on a common ground, an inter-agency unified command would be set up, Mr.

Shah said. It will be headed by retired Central Police Reserve Force Director Kuldiep Singh, who was appointed security adviser by the Manipur government soon after the violence began.

Warning to militants

The Minister warned Kuki militant groups of stern action if the terms of agreement of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) were vio-

lated. The SoO was formalised in 2008 with two Kuki umbrella bodies – the United Peoples' Front and the Kuki National Organisation – which represent 24 insurgent groups. They had 2,200 armed cadres whose weapons were to be surrendered at designated camps as per the pact. However, it is being alleged that the Kuki groups used those weapons against the Meitei community when the clashes began.

"I want to send a strong message to SoO groups that any kind of violation of SoO pact will be taken sternly, terms of agreement will be strictly monitored," Mr. Shah said.

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Judicial panel to probe Manipur violence: Shah

The Kuki groups, on their part, have accused Meitei radical groups such as the Aarambai Tenggol and the Meitei Leepun of looting arms from police armouries to attack tribal communities.

As many as 1,420 weapons have been looted from police camps since May 3. The Home Minister called for all of them to be surrendered to the police. "I want to appeal to those who have the weapons to surrender them immediately. Police will start combing operation from tomorrow; they should come forward and surrender the weapons to the police. If they fail to do so, strict action will follow. We know the people who possess the weapons," Mr. Shah said. Asked how the police allowed the arms to be taken in the first place, the Minister said, "Many arms have been recovered, [but] when a mob comes, police hesitate to fire at them."

Appealing for peace from "either or side" and cautioning people not to fall for rumours, Mr. Shah said that a peace committee comprising eminent personalities and civil society groups would be set up under the chairmanship of Governor Anusuya Uike.

'HC's hasty verdict to blame'

Mr. Shah said that the peace established in Manipur over the past six years had been disrupted in May due to a court judgment, adding that "there has been some misunderstandings" since then. "I can say without any hesitation that on account of a hasty decision of the Manipur High Court, a situation of ethnic violence between two groups erupted," Mr. Shah said.

On March 27, the Manipur High Court had directed the State government to submit a recommendation for inclusion of Meiteis in the Scheduled Tribe list, preferably within four weeks. This was opposed by Manipur's existing 34 Scheduled Tribes, which comprise 41% of the State's population and predominantly live in the hill districts. A tribal solidarity rally was organised in Churachandpur and other areas on May 3, following which violence erupted. Many parts of the State remain under curfew.

With some sections blaming the violence on illegal migrants from Myanmar, Mr. Shah said that fencing has been completed on a 10 km stretch along the Manipur-Myanmar border.

"The biometrics – iris scan and thumb impression – of people coming from across the border are being recorded," Mr. Shah said, adding that, "For a permanent solution, the Manipur and Myanmar border will be sealed." India and Myanmar currently share a free movement border regime.

The Home Minister announced that helicopter services would be started for the hill areas at a cost of ₹2,000 per person. They can be used as transportation to airports or for travel within the State.

"To deal with any possible food crisis 30,000 tonnes of rice have been allocated by the Government of India," the Minister said. Special medical teams have arrived in Manipur, and will be based at Moreh, Kangkokpi and Churachandpur, he added.

'People's Movement for Clean Cities' completes one year

June 3 marks one year since Chief Minister M.K. Stalin launched the People's Movement for Clean Cities. To commemorate this, a mass cleaning of public spaces will be conducted involving the active participation of elected representatives, non-governmental organisations and the public in a bid to ensure focused attention toward cleaning. Chennai is the first city to launch this activity with the aim of becoming garbage-free and mass participation is seen as a way to achieve this goal. "There will be a focused attention on intensive cleaning of garbage on vacant plots, waterbodies, dumping hotspots as well as clearing debris and tree plantation," said Chief Engineer Solid Waste Management N. Mahesan.

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Chandrayaan-3 reaches launch port at Sriharikota ahead of next month's launch

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft, after the final assembly of payloads at the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru, has reached the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota from where it is most likely to be launched next month.

"Chandrayaan-3 has already reached the launch port, preparation is going on at Sriharikota and we do expect that sometime in July the launch can take place," said U.R. Satellite Centre Director M. Sankaran on Thursday about India's third moon mission.

Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on mission to Chandrayaan-2 to demonstrate end-to-end capability in safe landing and roving on the lunar surface.

It can be recalled that the



Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on mission to Chandrayaan-2. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chandrayaan-2's Lander crashed while attempting to make a landing on the moon surface in 2019.

Mr. Sankaran said that ISRO has looked into various aspects of what happened to Chandrayaan-2 and that all precau-

tions have been taken to ensure that the upcoming mission is successful. "Every aspect of the mission has been looked at particularly from the experience that has happened during the Chandrayaan-2 and all possible precautions have been taken. The mood at ISRO is both upbeat as well as apprehensive," he said.

He added that Chandrayaan-3 has been made more robust based on the experience of what happened at the time of landing for Chandrayaan-2.

Post-flight analysis

Mr. Sankaran said that the post-flight analysis of Chandrayaan-2 has given ISRO a lot of insight. "Every aspect of the mission has been strengthened and whatever is humanly possible has been done.

During Chandrayaan-2 time also we were very hopeful that it would be successful but that is the nature of these missions. The gap between success and failure is so narrow and so thin," he added.

Intense mission

On India's first Human Space Flight programme Gaganyaan, Mr. Sankaran said that something important connected to the mission is expected to take place at the end of the year.

"Gaganyaan as you know is a very intense mission with a lot of new development and activities taking place. Many tests are happening for Gaganyaan which are not visible to the public but a lot of work is going on and we do expect that there will be something which will be visible to people during this year," Mr. Sankaran said.

India-Russia joint venture on Vande Bharat trains hits hurdle

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

The joint venture (JV) between Russian transportation giant Transmashholding (TMH) and Indian public sector undertaking (PSU) Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd. (RVNL) to manufacture 120 Vande Bharat Express train sets, valued at nearly \$3.63 billion (over ₹30,000 crore), has run into problems.

The issue involves sanctions imposed on Russia, following the Ukraine war, by multiple countries that are spare parts suppliers

for Vande Bharat trains.

The Indian Railways awarded the JV deal to the TMH-RVNL consortium after it emerged as the lowest bidder in March. But TMH and RVNL are not able to see eye to eye on the majority shareholding issue for the JV, railway officials confirmed to *The Hindu*.

In the interest of smoother movement of the project, which requires TMH and RVNL to manufacture 120 Vande Bharat train sets, each costing nearly ₹120 crore, officials said that RVNL had requested majority shareholding from TMH. Sources

The joint venture is between Transmashholding of Russia and Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd.

say that TMH has not agreed to this and has also, as a result, not deposited the bank guarantee of nearly ₹200 crore required for the project to get started.

Imported spares

Not all parts of the much-touted 'Make in India' Vande Bharat train sets are manufactured indigenously.

"Many of these parts have to be imported from Western European and American manufacturers," a senior RVNL official said. On May 22, the U.S. imposed sanctions on Metrovagonmash, a division of TMH, which specialises in manufacturing rolling stock for the railways. It is also responsible for the maintenance of the rolling stock and spare parts.

While RVNL has a substantial share in the JV, the Indian PSU is vying for a majority stake as a confidence-building measure. "Many international suppliers and bankers are

more confident if the Indian company has the majority share as many of these companies are being guided by sanctions imposed on Russia due to the Ukraine war. They are not comfortable dealing with Russia," the official said.

By June 2025, the TMH-RVNL consortium has to ready the first two prototype Vande Bharat trains for testing and trials. After the prototypes are approved, every year, 12 to 18 trains will be manufactured in a tapered fashion.

The consortium will also run maintenance services on the trains for 35

years. The railways is spending \$1.8 billion for the train sets and another \$2.5 billion for their maintenance.

"While the Russians are highly technically capable, the question is only that of comfort in dealing with them, and we will resolve this issue within a few days," the official added.

The Russian Embassy did not respond to a request for a comment on the deal. According to sources, both sides had committed to keeping negotiations on the deal bilateral and not making them publicly available.

India, Nepal sign pacts on energy, transport

India to import 10,000 MW of electricity from Nepal, says Modi, who highlights the close cultural link between the two countries; he calls for fast-tracking projects related to the Ramayana circuit

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The border between India and Nepal should not become a barrier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday as the two sides signed a series of agreements on energy and transport, including export of Nepal's hydropower to Bangladesh through Indian territory.

Welcoming Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', who is on a four-day visit to India, Mr. Modi said the two countries should fast-track projects related to the Ramayana circuit.

"I remember that nine years ago, in 2014, within three months of taking charge of office, I made my first visit to Nepal. I said at the time that we will establish ties between India and Nepal that would overcome the presence of borders. Today we signed the Transit Agreement. It will help Nepal's population access India's inland waterways," he said.

Mr. Modi said India would take forward the 2022 India-Nepal vision document for cooperation



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Nepal counterpart, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, in New Delhi on Thursday. R.V. MOORTHY

in the power sector that sets an ambitious goal in India-Nepal power trade and transmission. "Taking this forward, a long-term Power Trade Agreement has been signed between India and Nepal today. Under this agreement, we have set a target of importing 10,000 MW of electricity from Nepal in the coming years," Mr. Modi said. Focusing on energy cooperation, Mr. Modi said that a "new pipeline will be constructed from Siliguri to Jhapa in eastern Nepal".

The two sides signed a number of agreements, including an MoU between NHPC and VUCL (Vidyut Utpadan Company Ltd.) of Nepal, for the develop-

ment of Phukot Karnali Hydroelectric Project and a Project Development Agreement for Lower Arun Hydroelectric Project between SJVN (India) and Investment Board of Nepal. Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said the two PMs agreed to "achieve tangible and time-bound progress on the Pancheshwar multipurpose project".

The two Prime Ministers participated through a video link in the ground breaking ceremony of the Gorakhpur-Bhutwal Transmission Line – on the Indian side. Mr. Kwatra announced that the two countries signed the revised Treaty of Transit un-

der which Nepal will get to access to India's inland waterways. He described it as a "once in a generation" pact.

"I appreciate India's willingness to facilitate export of hydropower from Nepal to Bangladesh through India. We have agreed that the transmission of up to 50 megawatts of power will commence soon," said Mr. Dahal. The two Prime Ministers jointly inaugurated a cargo train from Bathnaha in India to Nepal Customs Yard. The rail link was built with an Indian grant. They also inaugurated integrated checkpoints (ICPs) at Nepalgunj in Nepal and Rupaidiha on the Indian side. They participated in the ground breaking ceremony of ICPs at Bhairahawa and Sonauli as well as Phase-II facilities as part of the Motihari-Amlekhgunj Petroleum Pipeline.

Prime Minister Dahal will proceed to Ujjain on Friday where he will visit the Mahakaleshwar temple. Mr. Modi highlighted India's cultural links with Nepal and said, "The religious and cultural ties between India and Nepal are very old and very strong."

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Jaishankar calls for UNSC reforms at BRICS meet

Press Trust of India

CAPE TOWN

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday called on the BRICS nations to demonstrate their sincerity in reforming multilateral institutions, including that of the UN Security Council.

“For two decades, we have heard calls for reform of multilateral institutions, only to be continuously disappointed. It is, therefore, imperative that BRICS members demonstrate sincerity in regard to reforming global decision-making, including that of the UN Security Council,” he said in his opening remarks at the BRICS Foreign Ministers’ Meeting here.

Mr. Jaishankar said that at the heart of the problems the countries face is the economic concentration that leaves too many nations at the mercy of too few.

“We urge that BRICS give it particular consideration and promote the economic decentralisation that is so essential to political democratisation,” Mr. Jaishankar said.

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India and China hold talks on LAC issue in New Delhi

Readouts from both sides suggested no major headway in the slow-moving negotiations on disengagement along the LAC; Chinese statement said 19th military-level talks will be held soon

Ananth Krishnan

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

The impasse in negotiations to disengage along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) continued at the first in-person India-China border talks in more than four years, held in New Delhi.

Readouts from both sides following the 27th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) held on Wednesday suggested no major headway in the slow-moving talks. The last time New Delhi hosted WMCC talks was for the 13th round in January 2019. In February, both sides met in Beijing for the first in-person talks in China since the 14th round held in July 2019.

Joint Secretary (East Asia) of the Ministry of Ex-



Tussle continues: Beijing has sought to delink border issues from bilateral ties but India has not accepted the suggestion. FILE PHOTO

ternal Affairs (MEA) Shilpak Ambule led the Indian delegation, while the Chinese side was led by Hong Liang, Director-General of the Boundary and Oceanic Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Mr. Hong also called on Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra.

A statement from the MEA said "the two sides reviewed the situation along the LAC in Western Sector of India-China border

areas and discussed proposals for disengagement in remaining areas in a frank and open manner".

"Restoration of peace and tranquillity will create conditions for normalising bilateral relations," the statement added.

A statement from the Chinese MFA made no mention of restoration of peace and normalising relations. Beijing has sought to delink the border from the rest of the relationship

and called on India to put it in "the proper place", a stand India has rejected describing current ties as "abnormal".

China has also appeared to drag its feet in the slow-moving negotiations to disengage in the two remaining friction areas.

The Chinese statement said the two sides "exchanged in-depth views on current issues of common concern" and reached three points of consensus: on implementing the consensus reached by the Foreign Ministers who met in March in New Delhi and in May in Goa and to accelerate the resolution of issues in the Western Section of the border, to maintain communication through diplomatic and military channels to promote cooling down and easing of the situation, and to hold the 19th round of military-level talks at an early date.

Sedition law can be retained but with safeguards: Law Commission

It said sedition being a 'colonial legacy' is not a valid ground for law repeal but in view of the misuse of Section 124A, the panel has recommended that the Centre issue model guidelines to curb its wrong application by enforcement agencies

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) dealing with sedition needs to be retained but certain amendments could be made for greater clarity regarding its usage, the 22nd Law Commission has said in its report to the government.

The commission said sedition being a "colonial legacy" is not a valid ground for its repeal but in view of the misuse of Section 124A, the panel has recommended that the Centre issue model guidelines to curb any misuse.

"In this context, it is also alternatively suggested that a provision analogous to Section 196(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 [CrPC] may be incorporated as a proviso to Section 154 of CrPC, which



Merely ascribing the term 'colonial' to a law or institution does not by itself ascribe to it an idea of anachronism

Report of Law Commission chaired by Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi (retired)

would provide the requisite procedural safeguard before filing of an FIR with respect to an offence under Section 124A of IPC," chairman of the 22nd Law Commission Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi (retired) said in his covering letter to Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal.

Home Ministry letter

According to the note to the Law Minister, the Law Commission received a reference from the Home Ministry through a letter dated March 29, 2016, addressed to the Department of Legal Affairs in the

Law Ministry for a study of the usage of the provision of Section 124A and suggest amendments.

The Law Commission said the existence of laws such as Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the National Security Act (NSA) does not by implication cover all elements of the offence envisaged under Section 124A of the IPC.

"Further, in the absence of a provision like Section 124A of IPC, any expression that incites violence against the government would invariably be tried under the

special laws and counter-terror legislation, which contain much more stringent provisions to deal with the accused," the report said.

The report pointed out that it is often said that the offence of sedition is a colonial legacy based on the era in which it was enacted, especially given its history of usage against India's freedom fighters.

'Normatively neutral'

"However, going by that virtue, the entire framework of the Indian legal system is a colonial legacy. The police force and the idea of an All-India Civil Service are also temporal remnants of the British era. Merely ascribing the term 'colonial' to a law or institution does not by itself ascribe to it an idea of anachronism. The colonial origins of a law are by themselves normatively neutral.

The mere fact that a particular legal provision is colonial in its origin does not ipso facto validate the case for its repeal," the panel said.

"Even though, in our considered opinion, it is imperative to lay down certain procedural guidelines for curbing any misuse of Section 124A of IPC by the law enforcement authorities, any allegation of misuse of this provision does not by implication warrant a call for its repeal," it said.

It noted that there are plethora of examples of various laws being misused by ill-intentioned individuals only to settle their scores in cases of personal rivalries and vested interests and even the Supreme Court recognised the same in a number of decisions. However, any alleged misused can be reined in by laying down procedural safeguards, it said.

'Half of electricity to be from renewable sources by 2027'

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

While India may have internationally committed to half its installed electricity being sourced from renewable sources by 2030, an estimate of the country's projected power needs by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) on Wednesday suggests that this target may be achieved early, by 2026-27.

The National Electricity Plan (NEP) prepared by the CEA is a five-year plan that assesses India's current electricity needs, projected growth, power sources, and challenges. The voluminous document notes that "...the share of non-fossil based capacity is likely to increase to 57.4% by the end of 2026-27 and may likely to further increase to 68.4% by the end of 2031-32 from around 42.5% as on April 2023."

Installed capacity, however, does not perfectly translate into generated power as different sources of energy have varying efficiencies, and not all sources of power are available at all times. For instance, so-



The government is committed to adding 50 GW of renewable energy every year.

lar power is available only during the day and wind energy is dependent on climate vagaries. Accounting for this, the available power from renewable energy will only be around 35.04% of the total generated electricity by 2026-27 and 43.96% by 2031-32, the NEP estimates.

Independent experts told *The Hindu* that the NEP's targets were "ambitious but possible". "It's a little ambitious but the government has recently said that it is committed to adding 50 GW [of renewable energy] every year," said Vibhuti Garg, South Asia director at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

NCERT in 'rationalisation' move drops periodic table chapter from Class X book

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has decided to omit the chapter on the periodic table from Class X Science textbooks as part of the "rationalisation" exercise. The chapter, however, has been retained in Class XI textbook.

The NCERT had notified these changes in its June 2022 circular which has been widely debated in academic circles. The new textbooks with these deletions and changes have now hit the market.

Nearly 68 lakh students opted for Arts and Commerce stream in academic year of 2021-22, which is 54% of 1.25 crore students who passed Class X. Considering that a similar number of students opt for non-science streams in coming years, they may lose out on the opportunity to learn about the crucial basic Chemistry concepts, that are now only accessible in Class XI.

While this data pertains to nearly 60 State boards,



The new textbooks with the deletions and changes have now hit the market.

NCERT textbooks are considered as a cornerstone to guide publication of State board textbooks.

"The periodic table and the logical organisation of elements is fundamental to the understanding of chemistry. To leave that out is not preparing students adequately for things they may have to learn in future. All students should be expected to have a knowledge of these basic aspects of chemistry," said Gautam Menon, Professor of Physics and Biology at Ashoka University.

According to the NCERT, it has been carrying out the exercise - "rationalisation of contents in

the textbooks" - across all classes to "reduce content load on students, in view of the COVID-19 pandemic".

Earlier this year, the council had controversially dropped Darwin's theory of evolution from its Class X textbooks. The council has also deleted chapters - Democracy and Diversity, Popular Struggles and Movements, Political Parties, and Challenges to Democracy - from the Political Science textbooks as part of the exercise.

Among other controversial omissions, the NCERT had also deleted any mention of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a freedom fighter and India's first Education Minister. The authors of the revised Class XI textbook had also deleted the fact that Jammu and Kashmir had acceded to India on the basis of a promise that the State would remain autonomous. History of Mughal courts, references to the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat, the Naxalite movement, and mention of Dalit writers were also omitted from the CBSE syllabus.

GST collections cross ₹1.5 lakh cr. for fifth time, up 11.5% in May

Revenue check

India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues grew 11.5% in May 2023 to more than ₹1.57 lakh crore as against ₹1.41 lakh crore in May 2022



Vikas Dhoot

NEW DELHI

Gross Goods & Services Tax (GST) collections grew 11.5% in May – the slowest uptick in six months – to cross ₹1.57 lakh crore, with revenues from domestic transactions rising 11% and imports yielding 12% more taxes than a year earlier.

Sequentially, May's revenues were the lowest in three months, and 16% below the record ₹1.87 lakh crore collected in April.

This was the 14th successive month that GST revenues exceeded ₹1.4 lakh crore and the fifth occasion that they surpassed the ₹1.5-lakh crore mark.

ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar said GST revenue growth was likely to hover in the 10%-11% range in the coming months, with revenues seen between ₹1.55 lakh crore and ₹1.65 lakh crore.

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GST collections cross ₹1.5 lakh cr. for fifth time

An ongoing drive against indirect tax evasion, as well as higher consumption spending through the withdrawn ₹2,000 currency notes which will remain legal tender till at least September 30, could still bump up collections.

The 12% growth in revenues from goods imports marks a turnaround from a three-month streak of slowing growth capped by a 4.5% contraction in April, and could indicate a recovery in discretionary domestic demand.

Revenues from goods imports were up 29% between April 2022 and January 2023, while taxes from domestic transactions and services imports were up 22%. However, February and March had only recorded a 6% and 8% uptick in taxes on goods imports.

GST compensation cess collections, which had also hit a record high of ₹12,025 crore in April, remained robust at ₹11,489 crore in May, and included a little over ₹1,000 crore from goods imports.

"While the collections in absolute terms are lower than the previous month – which had an embedded year-end [compliance-led] impact, it reflects a continuation of the inherently good economic performance across States witnessed since last year," said M.S. Mani, partner at Deloitte India. Overall domestic revenues grew 11% in May and 16 States recorded higher revenue growth, led by Mizoram (52%), Arunachal Pradesh (47%), Delhi (25%) and Meghalaya and Madhya Pradesh, whose revenues rose 23%. Revenues grew 11% in Odisha, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh, 12% in Karnataka and 13% in Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

Revenues contracted sharply in strife-torn Manipur, dropping 17% year-on-year, while Chhattisgarh also reported a 4% decline in revenues. Eight States recorded slower revenue growth than the national average, including Rajasthan (up 4%) and Gujarat, Punjab, West Bengal and Jharkhand, each of whom saw a 5% rise in GST inflows in May.

"The total revenue of Centre and the States in the month of May 2023 after regular settlement is ₹63,780 crore for Central GST (CGST) and ₹65,597 crore for the State GST (SGST)," the Finance Ministry said in a statement. The government has settled ₹35,369 crore towards CGST and ₹29,769 crore to SGST from the Integrated GST (IGST) collections of the month, which amounted to ₹81,363 crore. A little over 51% of the month's IGST collections came from taxes on imports of goods.

Who should own the world's lithium?

The story so far: The news of potentially significant reserves of lithium, an element needed to manufacture batteries used in electric cars and other renewable energy infrastructure, in Jammu and Kashmir has been welcomed universally.

Commentators have called this a boost for national prosperity and security without dismissing concerns about the potential social and environmental impacts.



New gold: The lithium stones in the Reasi district of Jammu & Kashmir. PTI

What is the status of India's lithium industry?

India's electricvehicle (EV) market was valued at \$383.5 million in 2021, and is expected to expand to \$152.21 billion in 2030. India imported 450 million units of lithium batteries valued at \$929.26 million (₹6,600 crore) in 20192020, which makes the development of the country's domestic lithium reserves a matter of high stakes. Scholars have argued that the ongoing global transition to lowcarbon economies, the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), and 5G networks will greatly reshape global and regional geopolitics. The access to and control over rare minerals, such as lithium and cobalt, will play a crucial role in these epochal changes.

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Who should own these minerals?

In July 2013, a threejudge bench of the Supreme Court of India ruled that the owner of the land has rights to everything beneath, “down to the centre of the earth”. Yet, large areas of land, including forests — which make up more than 22% of India’s landmass — hills, mountains, and revenue wasteland are publicly owned. The Supreme Court also recalled that the Union government could always ban private actors from mining sensitive minerals, as is already the case with uranium under the Atomic Energy Act 1962. In today’s context, lithium is as important as, if not more than, uranium.

How do other countries manage lithium reserves?

The stories of two South American countries, Chile and Bolivia — which have the largest known reserves of lithium — are particularly instructive. In Chile, the government has designated lithium as a strategic resource and its development has been made the exclusive prerogative of the state. The state has licensed only two companies — SQM and Albemarle — to produce lithium in the country. In April 2023, Chile’s president Gabriel Boric announced a new “National Lithium Strategy”, which many in the corporate sector took to be a declaration of his intention to nationalise the industry. On the contrary, Mr. Boric has clarified that his government would honour existing contracts. As a supplement, the new strategy calls for public-private partnerships for future lithium projects, which will allow the state to regulate the environmental impact of lithium mining, distribute the revenue from lithium production more fairly among local communities, and promote domestic research into lithiumbased green technologies. Bolivia’s new constitution, developed under the leadership of former president Evo Morales and approved by a popular vote in February 2009, gave the state “the control and direction over the exploration, exploitation, industrialisation, transport, and commercialisation of natural resources.” The Morales administration nationalised lithium and adopted a hard line against private and foreign participation. This is believed to be one of the factors for the country’s failure to produce any lithium at a commercial scale nearly 20 years after the industry was nationalised. Bolivia’s current president, Luis Arce, seeks to change that. However, instead of handing over lithium resources to the private sector, Mr. Arce wants to join hands with other Latin American countries to design a ‘lithium policy’ that would benefit all their economies. Mexico’s president Andrés Manuel López Obrador also nationalised lithium in February this year, declaring, “Oil and

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lithium belong to the nation, they belong to the people of Mexico.”

In general, the countries in Latin and South America are thinking through ways and means to pursue a multipronged strategy. While the national governments of these countries exercise a significant degree of control, the nature of private sector participation varies between these countries. The actions of these governments are also a response to the mobilisation of Indigenous Peoples in the region who want to hold corporations as well as governments to account.

What next?

As India explores and develops its own lithium reserves, it is notable that the appropriate development of this sector will require a very high level of effectiveness on the part of the Indian state. Much of India’s mineral wealth is mined from regions with very high levels of poverty, environmental degradation, and lax regulation. Effective and careful management of the sector should be paramount if India’s rare minerals development is to meet its multiple goals — social wellbeing, environmental safety, and national energy security.

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