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PARLIAMENT DEBATES CONSTITUTION

SITHARAMAN RENEWS ATTACK ON CONG, NEHRU

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Imitating the debate on the Constitution in the upper house, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched a scathing attack on former Congress leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi and said that the Constitutional amendments that they brought were not about strengthening democracy but protecting those in power.

Sitharaman asserted that post Second World War, over 50 countries had become independent and had their Constitution written but many have changed their entire feature but India's Constitution stood the test of times.

"India's experience has shown that a constitution remains robust yielding to several amendments which were the need of the hour. I would like to talk about the first Constitutional Amendment Act of 1951. There was an interim government between August 15, 1947, and it lasted till April 1952, post which an elected government took over the charge.

"But during 1951, when the first constitutional amendment was passed it was an interim government and not an elected government. The amendment added three more heads to Article 19 (2) saying public order could be a cause to restrict freedom of speech, friendly relations with foreign could be a cause to freedom of speech or an incitement to an offence could also be a cause. These were the amendments brought at that time," she



Congress' record of curtailing freedom of speech didn't confine with jailing of Majnu Sultanpuri and Balraj Sabani
-Nirmala Sitharaman
Finance minister

said. She highlighted the Supreme Court's two "landmark" judgements in 1950, one year back from this amendment that paved the way for freedom of press under Article 19 (1) (A). "Many High Courts also upheld the freedom of expression of our citizens but the interim government in response thought that there was a need for the first Amendment that was brought by the Indian National Congress (INC) and it was essentially to curb the freedom," Sitharaman said. The Finance Minister also added

P3

KHARGE REJECTS CHARGES, SLAMS BJP AND RSS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday countered Nirmala Sitharaman's allegations against the Congress and said that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel himself wrote a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, stating that Constitutional amendments are the only solution to pressing problems.

Speaking in the Rajya Sabha during the discussion on the 'Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India,' Kharge said, "On July 3, 1950, Sardar Patel wrote a letter to Nehru, stating that Constitutional amendments were the only solution to pressing problems. Patel himself said in that letter, 'As you say, we have involved ourselves in so many legal and Constitutional difficulties that we do not know how to overcome them. My own feeling is that very soon we shall have to sit down and consider Constitutional Amendment.'"

"By distorting facts, even Sardar Patel's contributions have been disrespected," he attacked the BJP.

He also mentioned that nobody has the right to criticize the leaders like Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel.

"Great leaders like Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sardar Patel contributed immensely to the nation's independence. We have no right to criticize them. But the Prime Minister has attacked the credibility of not just Nehru, Patel, and others, but even his own leader Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. He speaks about individ-



"Threats to the Constitution persist. For the sake of future generations, we must preserve and protect it."
-Mallikarjun Kharge
LoP in Rajya Sabha

uals he has neither met nor heard. The hatred for Nehru has blinded him to the extent that he has raised questions on the Constituent Assembly, the Interim Government, and the Provisional Parliament. He should at least realize when he is criticizing his own leader and when he is targeting Nehru," Kharge said.

The LoP said PM Modi even claimed that Nehru brought in a Constitutional amendment when no elected government existed but the first amendment was passed by the Provisional Parliament, which comprised members of the Constituent Assembly itself.

Further, Mallikarjun Kharge high-

P3

Priyanka's bag sports 'Palestine', row erupts

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a show of support for the people of Palestine, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday carried a bag to Parliament that had 'Palestine' imprinting on it.

The Congress general secretary has been raising her voice against Israel's actions in Gaza and expressing solidarity with Palestinians.

Gandhi was seen carrying a handbag with the word 'Palestine' and Palestinian



emblems, including a watermelon -- seen as a symbol of Palestinian solidarity.

"Useless things": Priyanka Gandhi reacts to BJP remarks on carrying bag "Palestine" written on it

The newly-elected Wayanad MP's act sparked a row with BJP slamming her.

The BJP seized on the opportunity to criticise her, alleging that the bag's inscription indicated her support for Palestine over India's interests. BJP MP

P3

BJP: Nehru's letters 'historical heritage not family property'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The issue of the Prime Minister's library and museum member writing to the leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi requesting him to give back the documents, that were withdrawn from the museum allegedly on the order of Congress senior leader Sonia Gandhi has snowballed into a controversy.

BJP MP Sambit Patra took on the Congress and said that the collection of letters written by Jawaharlal Nehru were a historical heritage and not the property of any family.

"This is a historical heritage (collection of letters written by Jawaharlal Nehru), not the property of any family... The country



wants to know what was in the correspondence between Jawaharlal Nehru and Lady Mountbatten and Jagjivan Ram and Jayaprakash Narayan?... What was there in these letters that the first family felt it should not be made public?... We demand that the collection of letters written by Jawaharlal Ne-

hru should be returned..." Patra said addressing the media.

Rizwan Kadri, a member of the Prime Minister's Museum and Library (PMML) Society wrote a letter to the Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi requesting to give back the documents, that he called are "important aspect of its history" and were withdrawn from the museum allegedly on the order of Congress senior leader Sonia Gandhi.

"In September 2024, I wrote a letter to Sonia Gandhi requesting that the 51 cartons from approximately eight different sections, which were part of the Nehru collections at the Prime Ministers' Museum (formerly the Nehru

P3

Dissanayake: Sri Lankan territory will not be used against India

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India and Sri Lanka reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties for a secure and stable Indian Ocean Region. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake reiterated Sri Lanka's stance on not allowing its territory to be used in any way that could compromise India's security.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in 'India - Sri Lanka Joint Statement: Fostering Partnerships for a Shared Future' said, "Recognizing shared security interests of India and Sri Lanka, both leaders acknowledged the importance of regular dialogue based on mutual trust and transparency to work together in countering traditional and



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake meet at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

each other's security concerns. As natural partners, both leaders underscored the common challenges faced by the two countries in the Indian Ocean Region and reaffirmed their commitment to work together in countering traditional and

non-traditional threats as well as to ensure a free, open, safe and secure Indian Ocean Region."

The MEA added, "India being Sri Lanka's closest maritime neighbour, President Dissanayake reiterated

P3

Air quality 'severe' in Delhi, GRAP Stage-4 curbs imposed

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

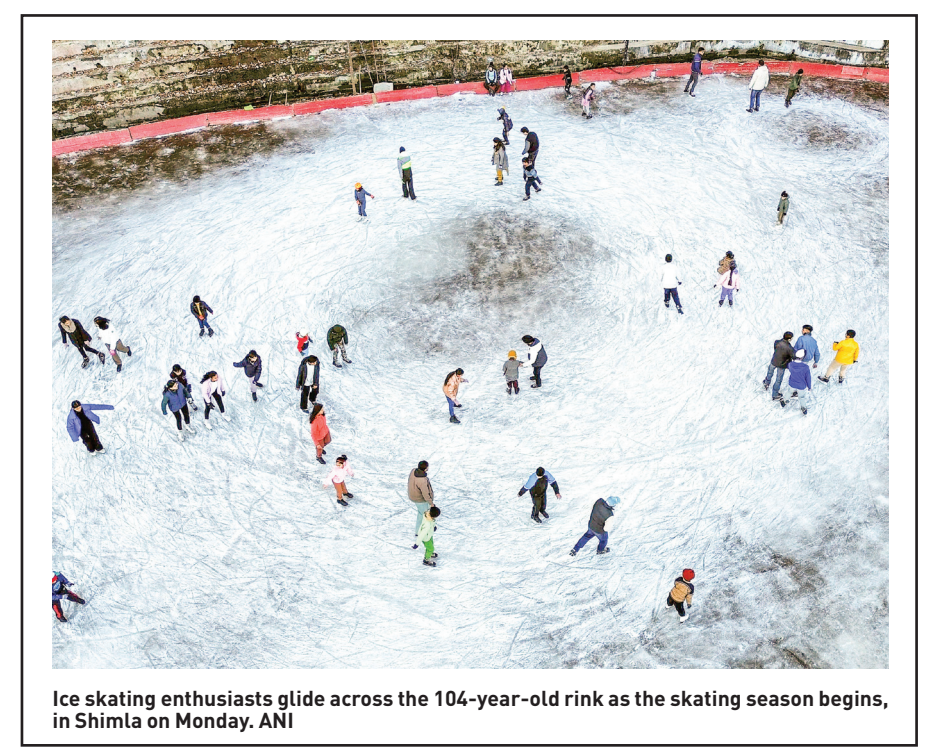
NEW DELHI: The Centre's air quality panel for Delhi-NCR on Monday imposed the strictest Stage 4 curbs under the winter air pollution control plan, including a ban on all construction activities, as the region's air quality deteriorated to 'severe' due to unfavourable weather conditions.

Stage 4 curbs under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) for winters

also include a ban on the entry of polluting trucks carrying non-essential goods into Delhi and mandatory shifting of school classes, except those for X and XII, to hybrid mode.

Delhi's 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI), which was 379 at 4 pm, breached the 400 mark around 10 pm amid extremely calm wind conditions and the buildup of an inversion layer, which adversely affects the vertical mixing height - the height up to which pollutants can

P3



Ice skating enthusiasts glide across the 104-year-old rink as the skating season begins, in Shimla on Monday. ANI

TMC differs with Cong on EVMs

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

With the Opposition raising questions on the reliability of the Electronic Voting Machines, Trinamool Congress MP and party National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Monday differed with the Congress on the issue.



"People who raise questions on EVM, if they have anything then they should go and show a demo to the ECI"
-Abhishek Banerjee

DETAILS P4

Tabla mourns its maestro

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The music world mourns the loss of Ustad Zakir Hussain, the legendary tabla virtuoso, who passed away on Sunday in San Francisco, USA. He was 73.

Widely regarded as one of the greatest percussionists of all time, Ustad Zakir Hussain was not only a master of his craft but also a cultural bridge-builder who elevated Indian classical music to international



acclaim.

His contributions to both traditional and contemporary music have left an indelible mark on the global music landscape.

Born on March 9, 1951, in Mumbai, Zakir Hussain inherited his talent and passion for tabla from his father, iconic Ustad Alla Rakha.

Demonstrating exceptional promise from a young age, Zakir Hussain began performing by the time he was a teenager. His

unmatched skill and innate rhythm soon catapulted him to prominence in the Indian classical music world.

Zakir Hussain redefined the role of the tabla, transforming it from a mere supporting instrument to a central figure in performances.

His mastery of intricate rhythms and his ability to convey profound emotion through his music made him an iconic figure in the world of classical music.

RELATED REPORTS P9

WHO SAID WHAT
IN PARLIAMENT

‘RS 13,422 CRORE
DISBURSED TO
STREET VENDORS’

NEW DELHI: The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry has disbursed 94.31 lakh loans amounting to a total of Rs 13,422 crore to street vendors under the PM SVANidhi scheme till December 8, Rajya Sabha was informed on Monday. In a written reply to a question, Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu said that out of 94.31 lakh loans, 40.36 lakh loans have been repaid by street vendor beneficiaries. The micro-credit scheme for urban street vendors, which provides collateral-free loans up to Rs 50,000, was launched by the Narendra Modi government in 2020 during the COVID-19 outbreak.

CPI(ML) MP LABELS
WEALTH CREATORS
AS WEALTH
LOOTERS

NEW DELHI: Lok Sabha MP Raja Ram Singh on Monday labelled some of so-called “wealth creators” as “wealth looters,” alleging massive undervaluation in property deals involving the Adani Group. During a discussion on the supplementary demand for grants in the Lok Sabha, Singh questioned the government’s endorsement of such practices as economic progress. Properties worth Rs 61,832 crore were acquired for Rs 15,977 crore by Adani group — these are not our figures but bank estimates,” Singh the CPI(ML) MP, alleged.

NO PLANS TO
REVISE ROYALTY
ON COAL

NEW DELHI: The Central government has no plans to revise the existing rate of royalty on coal, Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy informed the Rajya Sabha on Monday. Rajya Sabha member Sasmit Patra had asked the government whether it was considering revising the coal royalty for Odisha.

NO PLANS TO ADD
NEW CITIES,
RS INFORMED

NEW DELHI: The government on Monday informed Rajya Sabha that it has, at present, no proposal under consideration to include additional cities under the ambitious Smart Cities Mission. The government was asked whether it has any plan to select and develop another 100 new cities as Smart Cities apart from those 100 Smart Cities which were selected earlier. “At present, there is no proposal under consideration of the Central Government to extend the existing SCM by including additional cities,” MoS Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu said in his written reply in the upper house of the Parliament.

OPPOSITION FIRES ON ALL CYLINDERS
TO ATTACK CENTRE IN RAJYA SABHA

Accuses it of weakening constitutional bodies, attacking federal structure

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Opposition MPs in Rajya Sabha on Monday accused the government of attacking the federal structure and undermining constitutional bodies while claiming that an Emergency-like situation exists in the country.

Participating in a debate on the 75-year journey of the Constitution, Debashish Samantaray, whose party Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is not a part of either the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) or opposition’s Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), alleged that Constitutional watchdogs have been converted into “pet-dogs”.

“What is the situation today, anyone can be sent to jail, chief ministers were put in jail, denied bail. There is definitely an Emergency in the country, I will say it openly,” he said.

“The so-called Constitutional watchdogs have become pet dogs, anyone can be behind bars without justification,” he said.

“We speak about Emergency, but there is a pseudo-Emergency in India,” he said.

“The Constitution somewhere has gone off track and none of us are willing to address it...,” he said.



Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar listens to DMK MP Tiruchi N. Siva as he speaks during Winter Session of Parliament, on Friday. ANI

“Injustice has been the hallmark of the Modi government. How will PM Modi defend his record on justice to the 21 lakh MGN-REGS workers in Bengal who have worked but haven’t been paid in three years because the Modi government has withheld Bengal’s dues as his party lost elections,” Gokhale said. “The rapists of Bilkis Bano were released by this

government. Umar Khalid, Khalid Saifi... numerous others are in jail for speaking against the government... The 750 farmers who died outside the borders of Delhi... People of Manipur who have seen homes burn and family die...,” he said.

He alleged that minorities are being subjected to “atrocities every day”.

Gokhale said, “Where is

social justice? Minorities are subjected to atrocities every day, the PM ran a poisonous communal campaign during the Lok Sabha elections.

“Where is economic justice when youth have no jobs and families have no money left, thanks to rising inflation? Can the finance minister at least reduce tax on the middle class.

DMK’s Tiruchi Siva accused the Union government of undermining the federal structure of the country. He said while there is no explicit term for federalism in the Preamble of the Constitution, the first line says “Bharat, that is India, is a union of states”.

He said the devolution of funds to Tamil Nadu by the Union government has been declining.

‘Cong lacked
courage to act
on Article 370’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri said the previous Congress-led governments abdicated its responsibility to the Constitution with regard to Kashmir as the “temporary” provision was made “de-facto permanent” because it “lacked the courage to act”.

Speaking on the ‘Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India’ in Rajya Sabha, Puri, the Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, slammed the Congress in his speech, which also included references to Kashmiri Pandits and the anti-Sikh riots.

Referring to Article 370, Puri said this was the only provision in the Constitution whose drafting Babasaheb Ambedkar did not oversee. When the Constitu-



ent Assembly passed Article 370, then numbered 306A, Ambedkar stayed silent.

Even Sardar Patel was shocked at the leeway given to Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues, he added.

He said it took the “indomitable courage and resolve” of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to abrogate this Article of the Constitution which, though “intended to be temporary”, was made de facto permanent by appeasement politics”, adding that a historic wrong was corrected with the abrogation of Article 370.

FY25 disinvestment receipts Rs 8,625 cr

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The government has realised Rs 8,625 crore through various minority stake sale disinvestments so far during the current financial year 2024-25, MoS Finance Pankaj Chaudhary informed Lok Sabha on Monday in a written reply. The government was asked to spell out details of disinvestment targets set and achieved by the government during the last five financial years.

The minister informed the Lower House of the Parliament that the separate disinvestment target or estimate has been discontinued since the stage of 2023-24 (RE).

During 2024-25, the government has specified no estimate or target for disinvestment receipts.



“So far, the Government has realised Rs. 8,625 crore through various minority stake sale disinvestment transactions during the current financial year,” the minister said in his written reply in Lok Sabha. The government typically carries out disinvestment through a minority stake sale and strategic disinvestment of CPSEs.

Strategic Disinvestment implies the entire or substantial sale of government shareholding of a CPSE along with the transfer of

management control.

In the case of privatization, the government equity in CPSE and its management control is transferred to a private strategic buyer(s) and in other cases of strategic disinvestment, the government equity is transferred to another CPSE along with control.

“The policy on strategic disinvestment/privatization is based on the economic principle that Government should discontinue in sectors, where competitive markets have come of age and economic potential of such entities may be better discovered in the hands of strategic investor due to various factors such as infusion of capital, technological upgradation and efficient management practices,” the minister’s reply read.

‘Govt should raise voice for minorities in Bangladesh’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress Lok Sabha MP Priyanka Gandhi on Monday urged the Union government to raise its voice against the ‘atrocities’ committed against minorities in Bangladesh.

Speaking in the Lok Sabha, the Congress MP from Wayanad urged the government to hold talks with Bangladesh.

“The first issue I want to



discuss is that this government should raise its voice against the atrocities committed against the Hindu and Christian minorities in Bangladesh; it should hold talks with them and take

their support,” Priyanka Gandhi said.

Gandhi, on the occasion of Vijay Diwas, paid tribute to soldiers who fought in the 1971 war and highlighted the leadership role of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during the war.

“Today is Vijay Diwas. First of all, I want to salute the brave soldiers who fought for us in the war of 1971. Whatever was happening in Bangladesh, no one was listening to the

voice of the people of Bangladesh, our Bengali brothers and sisters. Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister at that time; I want to salute her. She showed courage in the most difficult situations and showed such leadership that made the country victorious,” Priyanka Gandhi stated.

She further raised the alleged removal of the ‘iconic 1971 surrender painting’ from the Army Headquarters in New Delhi.

‘Recent fall in forex reserves is not sharpest’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The government on Monday clarified that the recent decline in India’s foreign exchange reserves is not the highest decline in the country’s history.

Minister of State for Finance, Pankaj Chaudhary, stated in a written reply in the Lok Sabha that the reserves declined by 2.63 per cent during the week ending November 15, 2024, compared to the previous week.

While this drop has drawn attention, the Minister highlighted that it is far from being the steepest decline in percentage terms in the past two decades. The sharpest fall was recorded in the week ending October 24, 2008, when the reserves dropped by 5.65 per cent during the global financial crisis.

He said “For the week ended November 15, 2024, the Foreign Exchange Reserves (FER) decreased by 2.63 per cent vis-a-vis the previous week. However, in percentage

terms, the highest decline till date in the last 20 years was observed in the week ended October 24, 2008”.

The recent pressure on India’s foreign exchange reserves and the Indian Rupee (INR) is attributed to various external and domestic factors.

These include capital outflows, fluctuations in the dollar index, rising global interest rates, and increasing crude oil prices. Together, these factors have created a challenging environment for the Indian currency.



Congress MPs Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, KC Venugopal, Deepender Hooda and others protest against the central government at Parliament during the Winter Session, in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

‘One Nation, One Election’ Bill in Lok Sabha today

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The ‘One Nation, One Election’ bill, which provides for simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and state assemblies, is slated to be introduced in Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

The listed agenda of Lok Sabha for Tuesday includes the Constitution Amend-

ment Bill concerning simultaneous elections.

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill will be introduced by Union Law Minister Arjun Meghwal.

Meghwal is also likely to tomorrow introduce a Bill to further to amend the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, the Government of National Capital

Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. This bill seeks to align elections for assemblies in Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, and Puducherry for purposes of simultaneous elections. The Union Cabinet approved the ‘One Nation One Election’ bill earlier this month.

While the BJP and its al-

lies are in support of the bill, several opposition parties including Congress, Trinamool Congress and DMK are opposed to it.

The Union Cabinet had in September accepted the recommendations of the High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections. The panel was headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind.

Scholarship schemes for minorities
improved girl child enrolments: Rijju

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Minister of Minority Affairs Kiren Rijju said scholarship schemes for the minority students have helped in increasing the enrolment of girl child among the minorities. He said that over all enrolment of minority communities in schools and institutes of higher education has increased and the improvement is most visible in the Muslim community.

Replying to the questions raised by Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma on the details of all the active scholarships for the minority students, the Minister said that the government has been implementing various schemes for socioeconomic empowerment of the six centrally notified minority communities Buddhist, Christian, Jain, Muslim, Parsi and Sikh, including various educational



empowerment schemes such as pre-matric scholarship scheme for Class IX-X, post-matric scholarship scheme for Class XI to PhD, and merit-cum-means based scholarship scheme for technical and professional courses at UG/PG levels.

These scholarship schemes are implemented in all states and UTs across the country for economically disadvantaged students from minority community. The distribution of scholarship is made proportionately on the basis of population of minorities in the respective States/Union Territories as per Census 2011.

The post matric scholarship provides minority students with better opportunities for higher education and professional and technical courses at UG/PG levels, increase their rate of attainment in higher education, and enhance their employability.

The minister further said that in a recent impact and assessment study conducted through National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), Delhi, it is observed that the enrolment in schools and institutes of higher education has increased and the improvement is most visible in the Muslim community.

GLIMPSES OF DAY 17 OF WINTER SESSION



BJP MPs Rajnath Singh, Ravi Kishan and TMC MP Mahua Moitra



RS MP Sudha Murty at Parliament



NCP MP Praful Patel, BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy and JD(U) MP K. C. Tyagi

DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON INDIA-PAK 1971 WAR

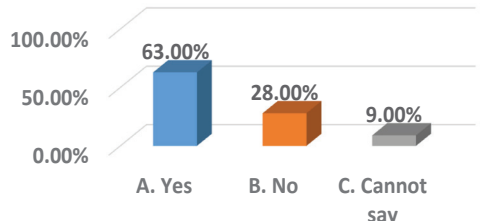
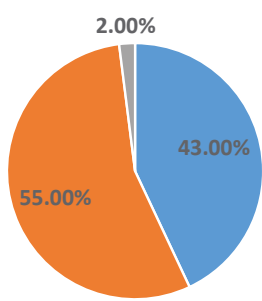
63% of people believe that removing the image of Pakistan's surrender from the Indian Army office attempts to undermine the pride of the Indian Army

Brig BS Mehta recalled the 1971 Indo-Pak War's decisive tank battles at Garibpur and Basantar. Despite being outnumbered, Indian forces destroyed Pakistani armour, showcasing exceptional skill and leadership. Col Hanut Singh's strategic brilliance at Basantar repelled massive counterattacks, solidifying India's victory and marking its emergence as a dominant regional power.

Q1.

The image of Pakistan's surrender in 1971 has been removed from the Indian Army office. What is your opinion?

- A. Correct
- B. Incorrect
- C. Cannot say



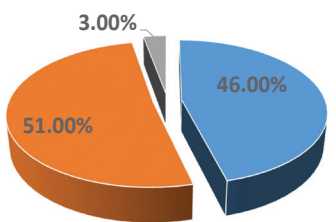
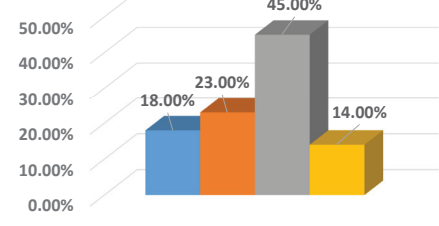
Q2.

Does removing the image of Pakistan's surrender from the Indian Army office attempt to undermine the pride of the Indian Army?

Q3.

The new image installed in the Indian Army office depicts a scene up to the Pangong Lake region. What does this mean?

- A. India's growing strength
- B. India's technological prowess
- C. A message for China
- D. Cannot say



Q4.

When Bangladesh turned out to be ungrateful, should India still remember its Victory Day?

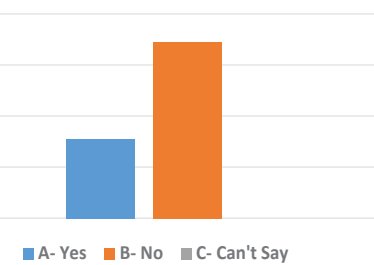
TDG SURVEY ON HOW SAFE ARE WOMEN IN DELHI

69.00% of people believe that after 12 years since the Nirbhaya case, women in Delhi have not become safer

Despite 12 years since Nirbhaya's brutal assault, Delhi remains unsafe for women. Crime rates, including rapes and assaults, remain high. Government initiatives like fast-track courts, Zero FIR, and the Nirbhaya Fund exist, but public safety hasn't improved. Women continue to fear violence, highlighting the need for stricter implementation.

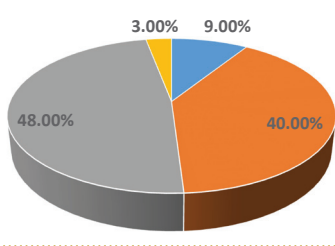
Q1.

It has been 12 years since the Nirbhaya case. Have women in Delhi become safer?



Q2.

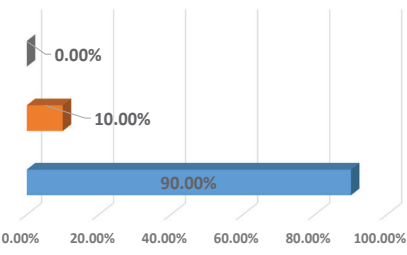
Despite strict laws, rape and harassment cases have increased. What do you believe is the reason for this?



Q3.

Should cases like rape be heard only in fast-track courts?

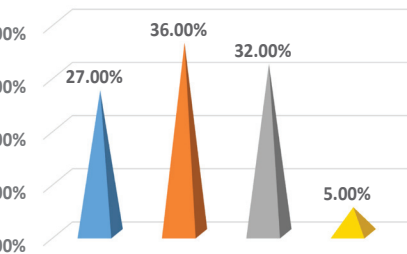
- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Can't say



Q4.

Even now, women hesitate to file cases in crimes like rape. What do you think is the reason?

- A. Lack of Trust in Police
- B. Family Pressure
- C. Fear of Social Stigma
- D. Can't Say



DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON BANGLADESH-INDIA CONFLICT

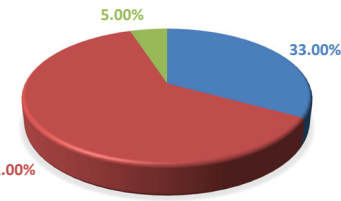
Around 43% Indians believed that the Bangladeshi professor comment that Pakistan and Bangladesh are the same in propaganda against India.

Bangladesh's complex relationship with India and Pakistan stems from historical, political, and cultural factors. While India supported Bangladesh's independence in 1971, tensions arose over border issues, trade imbalances, and water sharing. Some factions in Bangladesh maintain affinity for Pakistan, fueled by religious ties and anti-India sentiments, often influenced by propaganda.

Q1.

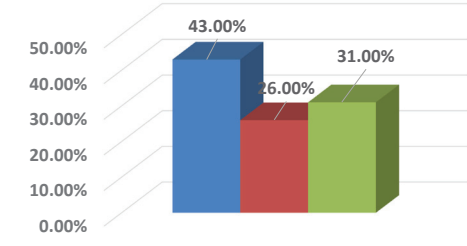
A Bangladeshi professor said Hinduism is an enemy. What is your opinion?

- A. Islamic Jihad
- B. Hindu hatred
- C. Can't say



Q2.

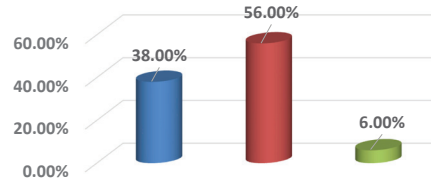
Why did the Bangladeshi professor say Pakistan and Bangladesh are the same?



Q3.

Why are statues of the founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman being destroyed on Victory Day?

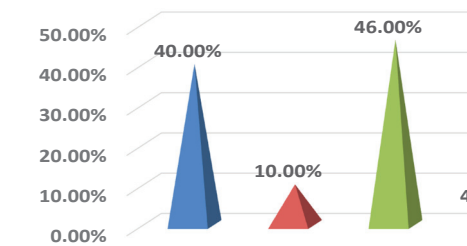
- A. City of protest
- B. Religious control
- C. Can't say



Q4.

Why did Sheikh Hasina call 'Fascist Yunus' on Bangladesh Victory Day?

- A. Al-Qaeda-Influenced Government
- B. Youth in control
- C. Pakistan-Supported Government
- D. Can't say



Priyanka's bag sports 'Palestine', row erupts

CONTINUED FROM P1

Manoj Tiwari accused her of "appeasement" and said the Congress party uses different agendas to get votes by entangling them.

Manoj Tiwari said, "Congress does appeasement. They don't do anything good to the Muslim community. They use different agendas to get votes by entangling them. You may have heard PM Modi has said about Congress' one gimmick - 'Garibi Hatao', which was used by Nehru Ji, Indira Ji, Rajiv Ji and currently it is being used by both Rahul and Priyanka Ji. They love and support the people of the country by dividing them. Now, the people of the country knows this trick."

Reacting to the BJP's accusation of appeasement, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said that instead of talking about this "rubbish," the government should take some steps regarding the atrocities happening in Bangladesh, against minorities and Hindus.

Union MoS SP Singh Bhagel noted that Vadra carrying a bag with Palestine written on it was not just a mere coincidence, rather it was an attempt to give a message.

He stated that through this move, she is trying to appease, satisfy and polarise the Muslim votes. Notably, on December 11, Palestine Embassy Charge de Affairs Abed Elrazeg Abu Jazer met Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at her residence to congratulate her on her victory in the Waynad Lok Sabha seat. Jazer said that Vadra assured him of her support for Palestine's freedom.

"I met Mrs. Priyanka Gandhi at her residence to congratulate her on her victory as a member of the Indian parliament in the 18th Lok Sabha (Waynad) constitu-

ency. Mrs. Priyanka affirmed her support for the Palestinian people's struggle to achieve their aspirations of freedom and independence," the statement said.

Jazer said that Vadra recollected meeting Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat as a child when he visited India to meet Former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi or Rajiv Gandhi.

Since October 2023, Israel-Palestine has been engaged in an ongoing conflict after Hamas attacked Israel and captured its citizens.

According to a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs, India has strongly condemned the terror attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023 and the loss of civilian lives in the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict.

India's policy towards Palestine has been long-standing and consistent. We have supported a negotiated two-state solution, towards the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine within secure and recognized borders, living side by side in peace with Israel, as per MEA.

"India has strongly condemned the terror attacks on Israel on 07 October 2023 and the loss of civilian lives in the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. We have called for restraint and de-escalation and emphasized peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. We have also called for the release of the remaining hostages. The Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister have spoken to several leaders, including the President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Israel and the President and Foreign Minister of Palestine. External Affairs Minister met the Foreign Minister of Palestine on 20 January 2024."

Sitharaman renews attack on Nehru

CONTINUED FROM P1

that India, a democratic country which prides itself even today on freedom of expression saw the first interim government coming up with a constitutional amendment which was to curbing the freedom of speech of Indians and that was within one year of adoption of the Constitution.

"In Parliament, it also did not move smoothly with various eminent members presenting scathing remarks but Prime Minister Nehru went ahead. The interim government continued to curb the freedom of speech before the amendment and prior to it. Majnu Sultanpuri and Balraj Sahani were both jailed in 1949 for reciting a poem against

Stage 4 curbs reimposed in Delhi-NCR

CONTINUED FROM P1

disperse. Rhe Commission for Air Quality Management (CQAM), the Centre's pollution watchdog has introduced a revised plan to combat winter pollution on December 13.

The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) is a set of emergency measures implemented in Delhi-NCR to combat air pollution based on the severity of air quality. Delhi continues to grapple with air pollution, as air quality indices remain in the 'very poor' category, posing significant health risks to residents. The air quality is not expected to improve soon.

"Considering the highly unfavourable meteorological conditions including calm winds and very low mixing height leading the AQI of Delhi into the higher end of the VERY POOR Category, the CAQM Sub-

Jawaharlal Nehru. Congress' record of curtailment freedom of speech didn't confine with these two people," Sitharaman added.

Further, Sitharaman pointed out the Constitutional amendments brought in to nullify a judgement that arose between Indira Gandhi vs Rajnarayan wherein the order of the Allahabad High Court setting aside the election of Indira Gandhi was challenged.

"During the pendency of this case in the Supreme Court, the Congress enacted the 39th Constitutional Amendment Act in 1975 which added Article 392 (A) to the Constitution which says that elections to the President, Vice President, Prime Minister and

Committee on GRAP decides to impose Stage-III of the revised GRAP schedule issued on 13.12.2024 in the entire NCR, with immediate effect," the CAQM said.

Under the revised Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), stricter measures have been introduced to tackle air pollution in Delhi-NCR. Schools and colleges in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, and Gautam Budh Nagar will shift to hybrid classes for students up to Class V during Stage III, allowing parents and students to opt for online learning where available.

Inter-state buses except electric, CNG, or BS-VI diesel vehicles - will be barred from entering Delhi. Resident welfare associations will now need to provide electric heaters for staff like sanitation workers.

Lok Sabha Speaker cannot be challenged in any court in the country and it can be done only before a parliamentary committee. Imagine that for a person to save her chair, an amendment was made even before the court judgement," she said.

"The judgement that came from the Supreme Court in the Shah Bano case, the Congress passed the Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Divorce act 1986 which denied Muslim women their right to alimony. Our party passed the Nari Shakti Adhinyam whereas the right of Muslim women was denied by this act," she added.

Sitharaman also slammed the Congress on enforcing Emergency in the country.

'Historical heritage not family property'

CONTINUED FROM P1

Memorial), be either returned to the institution, or we be granted permission to scan them, or provided with their scanned copies. This would allow us to study them and facilitate research by various scholars," he said.

These include important correspondences between Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Lady Mountbatten, as well as letters exchanged with Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant, Jayaprakash Narayan, and others. These letters are a significant part of Indian history and have been proven through records to have been withdrawn from the museum in 2008 at Sonia Gandhi's direction," Rizwan Kadri added.

Kharge rejects charges

CONTINUED FROM P1

lighted that when many countries did not have universal adult franchise and women were denied the right to vote, India, through the efforts of the Congress and the Constitution, granted universal adult franchise to everyone.

"India became only nation where, from the moment the Constitution was implemented, people from all sections of society were given this right. Isn't this the contribution of Nehru and Ambedkar? You may not even realize how much pain and sacrifice they endured for the country. Those who did not fight for the nation's independence and Constitution cannot truly understand their importance," he said.

Dissanayake in India

CONTINUED FROM P1

Sri Lanka's stated position of not permitting its territory to be used in any manner inimical to the security of India as well as towards regional stability."

Expressing satisfaction at the ongoing defence cooperation in training, exchange programmes, ship visits, bilateral exercises and assistance to augment defence capabilities, PM Narendra Modi and President Dissanayake agreed to advance maritime and security collaboration.

President Dissanayake also thanked India for its support through the provision of a Dornier Aircraft for maritime surveillance; and establishment of the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre in Sri Lanka amongst other assistance vital for Sri Lanka to enhance its maritime domain awareness.

He further appreciated India's role as a 'first responder' for Sri Lanka in the field of Humanitarian Assistance

"The Prime Minister accuses us of making empty promises. But in reality, who is the biggest liar? People are still waiting for the 15 lakh rupees that were promised. Was the promise of two crore jobs false or true? This is outright deception. These people who make hollow promises are misleading the nation. In these 11 years, name one thing that has strengthened our democracy or Constitution," he said.

Kharge also emphasized that if land reforms, bank nationalisation, the Food Security Act, or MGNREGA had not been introduced, the poor in this country would have perished.

Taking a jibe at Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Kharge said she studied at Jawaharlal Nehru

University and the students there are so progressive and contributed to nations development whether it is in Economics, Political Science but here today, there's talk of dismantling democratic values.

"Merely pointing fingers at each other won't help. The Jan Sangh had once aimed to structure the Constitution based on the laws of Manusmriti. This was the intent of the RSS. Those who despise the tricolor, the Ashoka Chakra, and the Constitution are now lecturing us. On the day the Constitution was implemented, these people burned effigies of Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru at Ramliha Maidan. They insult the Nehru-Gandhi family without shame," he said.

to strengthen capabilities of Sri Lanka on disaster mitigation, relief and rehabilitation, including through training, joint exercises and sharing of best practices; and enhance capacity building and training for Sri Lankan defence forces and conduct tailor-made training programmes, wherever required," the MEA added.

Meanwhile, India conveyed its full support for Sri Lanka's Chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Both leaders underscored the need for a substantive action plan by IORA member countries for the security and development of all in the region.

Both leaders also underlined their commitment to further strengthen and enhance regional cooperation under BIMSTEC.

Notably, the Sri Lankan President is on a three-day state visit to India from December 15-17. This is the first bilateral visit of Dissanayake to India after assuming office in September.

SHOW HOW EVMS CAN BE HACKED: TMC MP ABHISHEK BANERJEE

He termed the allegations as "just random statements" and demanded that people making such allegations should demonstrate how the EVMs can be "hacked"

NEERAJ MOHAN
NEW DELHI

With the Opposition raising questions on the reliability of the Electronic Voting Machines, Trinamool Congress MP and party National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Monday differed with the Congress on the issue.

He termed the allegations as "just random statements" and demanded that people making such allegations should demonstrate how the EVMs can be "hacked"

"The people who raise questions on EVM, if they have anything then they should go and show a demo to the Election Commission. If work is done properly at the time of EVM randomisation and the people who work on the booth check during mock polls and counting, then I don't think there is any substance in this allegation," he said.

"If still someone feels that EVMs can be hacked, then they should meet the Election Commission and show how EVMs can be hacked... Nothing can be done by just making random statements..." the TMC MP added.

Earlier the Congress had raised doubts on the EVMs after the party lost the Haryana and Maharashtra Assembly elections. The party even met the Election commission raising doubts on the electoral process in Maharashtra

EVM ALLEGATIONS

- He urged critics to demonstrate how EVMs can be hacked to the Election Commission.
- Congress raised doubts about EVMs after losing Haryana and Maharashtra elections, calling the process flawed.
- Maharashtra CM Fadnavis criticized Congress, saying they blame EVMs when they lose, but not when they win.
- BJP's Pralhad Joshi suggested Congress should introspect about leadership, citing allies like Mamata Banerjee, Pawar, and Yadav.
- Joshi emphasized the need for a strong opposition in democracy, urging Congress to recognize its shortcomings.



"EVM is a part of the election process. There are issues in the entire election machinery in the Maharashtra assembly elections and targeted manipulation has taken place...The results of the Maharashtra assembly elections are impossible. No one can understand them... We have raised questions on the entire election machinery which is very dangerous for democracy," Jairam Ramesh had told ANI on December 1. Meanwhile, Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis on Monday took a jibe at the Congress alleging that the party only found faults with EVMs when they lost elections.

"Whenever the Congress party loses elections, instead of introspecting, they blame someone else. Unless they introspect, they will not win elections...When they (Congress) form governments in Karnataka, Jharkhand, there is no problem with EVMs, but when they lose Maharashtra, they blame EVMs," Fadnavis said.



"It is not possible for anyone to substantiate the complaints about EVMs with logical or scientific reasoning. How long will you continue to mislead the public?"

- Sukanta Majumdar
Union Minister

The BJP has also raised questions on the credibility of the leader of Opposition



"An alliance cannot sustain itself for long based on a lie. Abhishek Banerjee may have realised this late, but at least he has understood the truth now."

- Satish Chandra Dubey
Union Minister

in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi told reporters, "Congress should try to realise it

at least when people of INDI Alliance say this. They don't understand it when we say this but now even their allies are saying this...At least now they should understand, they should realise that they won't be able to go ahead with a leader like Rahul Gandhi. (West Bengal Chief Minister) Mamata Banerjee is also saying this, as NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar and (Samajwadi party chief) Akhilesh Yadav as well..." Joshi told reporters.

The Union Minister also underlined the importance of a strong opposition in a democracy. "What I feel personally is, that the Congress party should realise themselves, they should understand what is their mistake, and they should introspect what is their problem. We also want constructive opposition. We do not want Congress or the Opposition completely weak. That is not what we want. Opposition is as important as ruling (government at the centre) in democracy..." he added.

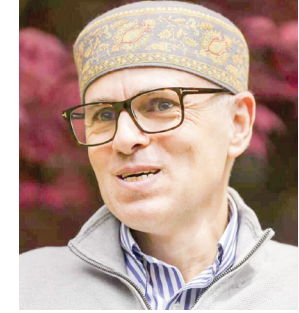
Changed approach after becoming CM: Cong MP to Omar Abdullah

TARUNI GANDHI
NEW DELHI

Congress MP Manickam Tagore on Monday hit out at Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah over his remarks on EVMs, asking why he had changed his approach towards INDIA bloc partners after becoming the Jammu and Kashmir chief minister.

He said parties such as the Samajwadi Party (SP), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Shiv Sena (UBT) have also spoken against electronic voting machines (EVMs).

In an interview, the NC



leader dismissed the objections to EVMs, saying it cannot be that the Congress celebrates its win in polls held through the machines and then raises questions on their reliability when it loses. Reacting to his remarks, Tagore said, "It's the Samajwadi Party, NCP and Shiv Sena

(UBT) that have spoken against EVMs. Please check your facts, CM Omar Abdullah."

"The Congress CWC resolution clearly addresses the ECI only. Why this approach to our partners after being CM?" he said.

Abdullah had said, "When you get hundred-plus members of Parliament using the same EVMs and you celebrate that as sort of a victory for your party, you can't then a few months later turn around and say... we don't like these EVMs because now the election results aren't going the way we would like them to.

Congress getting into hot water by blaming EVM: Maha BJP chief

TARUNI GANDHI
NAGPUR

Maharashtra Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Monday lashed out at the Congress saying that they were getting into hot water by blaming Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for their defeat. He said that the Congress has lost its confidence and the peoples trust.

"Congress cannot win by blaming EVMs," he added. "We are still going among the people. We are running a membership drive of inducting 1.5 crore people and doing our work. By blaming



Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule

EVMs for their loss, Congress apne pair par kulhadi maar rahi hai (Congress is getting into hot water). Congress cannot win by blaming EVMs, they have lost their confidence and trust," Bawankule told reporters.

Speaking on the proposed 2.5-year formula to have a

rotational ministerial berth in the Maharashtra government, Bawankule said that there was no dispute in portfolio allocation.

"There is no delay in allocating portfolios to the ministers. There is no dispute. I was also part of the talks and the matter stands finished. There is no dispute and it will be announced soon," Bawankule said. Meanwhile, Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar on Monday accused at least 15 ministers in the cabinet of being "tainted," saying that they have been charged with "corruption" and "harassment".

Tractor march evokes poor response in Haryana

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

The call for 'Tractor-March' given by the farmer leaders evoked poor response in Haryana as farmers in most of the districts of the state were seen reluctant to participate in the agitation.

The tractor marches were reported in a few places in districts like Ambala, Panipat and Hisar.

The call for tractor march was given by the farmer leaders associated with the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha after the Haryana police had foiled another attempt of farmers to enter Haryana and launch the Delhi march on December 16.

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher has also announced 'Rail roko' from 12 noon till 3 pm in Punjab on Wednesday. Farmers in Kaithal, Hisar, and Panipat, organized tractor marches to support Punjab farmers protesting at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders.

In Kaithal, farmers gathered at Kisan Chowk in Kalayat and marched to the SDM office. After the protest, they submitted a memorandum to the tehsildar, urging the Prime Minister to intervene in the ongoing 11-month-long protest at the two borders.

In Hisar, farmers held a tractor march on the Delhi-Sirsa highway, starting from the Ramayan toll plaza and ending at the Hansi mini secretariat, where they submitted a memorandum to the SDM. In Panipat, a tractor march was

Hospitalise Dalawal now: Doctors

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

With the health of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dalawal deteriorating day by day, the team of doctors visited to examine his health at Khanauri border have recommended his immediate hospitalization.

However, the 70 years old farmer leader has refused to take any medical treatment. Dalawal's fast unto death has completed 21 days on Monday. Dalawal, who is also a cancer patient, has been on a fast-unto-death at the Khanauri border for the past



21 days for the pending demands of the farmers including a legal guarantee of MSP on crops.

As per the doctors report the creatinine level is increasing, while the GFR (Glomerular Filtration

Rate) is dropping. The doctors said that Dalawal is not eating anything and he is just drinking water. Also Dalawal has lost over 12 kg weight and he was unable to walk without support.

BKU leader Naresh Tikait writes to PM Modi over farmers' protests

TDG NETWORK
CHANDIGARH

Extending his support to the farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dalawal who is on fast unto death for the past three weeks at Khanauri border, Bhartiya Kisan Union (Tikait) leader Naresh Tikait has written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his intervention to resolve farmers issues.

The BKU president alleged the agriculture sector is going through a crisis leading to farmers

agitation across the states. Tikait also criticized the government's agricultural policies, alleging that the current policies have failed to address the challenges being faced by the farmers of the country. He alleged that such policies are harmful for the farmers and agriculture. Tikait also appreciated the Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's statement in favour of farmers and thanked him for raising issues of farmers. Tikait pointed out that

farming is no more profitable but even becoming a loss-making business leaving the farmers helpless in lack of proper pricing policy. He noted that crop prices are not being increased in proportion to the input cost due to rising costs of diesel, pesticides, labour and farming implements. Tikait reminded that since the suspension of the Delhi protests, farmers have been fighting for the implementation of the MSP guarantee law and other issues.

held on the Panipat-Rohtak road, with wrestler Bajrang Punia joining the protest.

Meanwhile, Bhartiya Kisan Union (Charuni) president Gurnam Singh Charuni has also urged

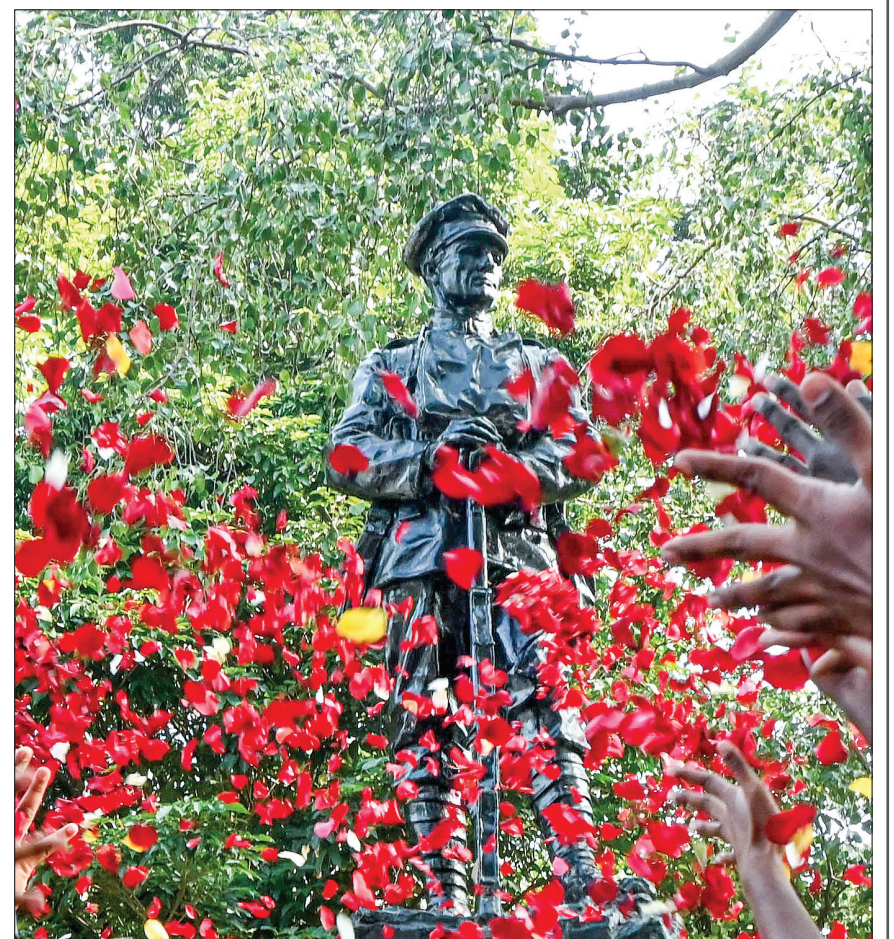
the Samyukta Kisan Morcha leaders to get united over the issues of the farmers and fight this battle strongly. "Considering the current situation of the ongoing struggle at the border,

it is imperative for all of us to rethink and unite under one platform. A joint committee should be formed to take this movement to a nationwide level so that farmers' demands can be met.

Farm minister seeks farmers' input ahead of Budget

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan held wide-ranging consultations with farmers and agricultural stakeholders on Monday, gathering strategic suggestions for the upcoming annual budget. The pre-budget meeting at Krishi Bhawan brought together farming organisations, agricultural entrepreneurs, and industry representatives to discuss the sector's challenges and potential reforms. Chouhan told participants that the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare is conducting an internal review to develop budget proposals for the finance ministry, an official statement said. The minister highlighted government efforts, including the development of 109 new crop varieties by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), which were released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently.



Floral tributes being paid to the soldiers who laid down their lives in the India-Pakistan 1971 War during the 53rd Vijay Diwas celebrations, at the War Memorial in Bengaluru on Monday. (ANI)

Three-pronged strategy adopted to root out Naxals: Amit Shah

AGENCIES
CHHATTISGARH

A comprehensive three-pronged strategy is being adopted by the government to free all Naxal-affected areas in the country from the menace, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Monday.

Paying tributes here to all those who laid down their lives fighting Naxalism, Shah said as part of this strategy, first, those who are willing to renounce violence and ready to return

to the mainstream are being welcomed.

Secondly, he said, efforts are being intensified to apprehend those who refuse to abandon the path of violence.

"Lastly, strict action will be taken against individuals intent on harming others, ensuring they face the full force of justice," he added.

The home minister emphasised that this menace must be completely uprooted to prevent further loss of innocent lives.

Underscoring the government's unwavering resolve to restore peace in Chhattisgarh and other Naxal-affected states, Shah said the achievements of the past year in combating Naxalism in Chhattisgarh are unprecedented.

Never before has such a vast area been liberated from Naxal influence in a single year nor have such significant numbers of Naxalites surrendered, been neutralised or arrested, he said.

Within a year, 287 Naxalites were neutralised, approximately 1,000 were arrested and 837 surrendered in Chhattisgarh, he added.

Shah commended the Chhattisgarh government for executing a highly effective and well-coordinated strategy in this effort.

He acknowledged the commendable teamwork of Chhattisgarh Police and central security forces who have launched a robust operation guided by a clear and focused plan.

KEJRIWAL DOUBLES DOWN ON ATTACK ON BJP-LED CENTRE AHEAD OF POLLS

Arvind Kejriwal accuses Centre of failing to ensure women's safety

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

AP supremo and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday accused the BJP-led Centre of failing in its responsibility to ensure women's safety and maintain law and order in the national capital.

Addressing a 'Mahila Adalat' event at Thyagaraj Stadium, Kejriwal claimed that unlike the BJP which does not treat women's safety as a priority, his government has fulfilled all its promises.

"Ten years ago, you gave me the responsibility to improve schools, hospitals, and water supply in Delhi, and I have done my work. But you gave the responsibility of security to BJP and Amit Shah, who has failed," Kejriwal said.

"Delhi's women are not a vote bank for me; I see them as my sisters and mothers. I have done everything within my power to ensure their safety. Before AAP came to power, there were no CCTV cameras in the city. We installed CCTV cameras and



Delhi Chief Minister Atishi with AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal and Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav during the 'Mahila Adalat', at Thyagaraj Stadium in New Delhi. ANI

MAHILA ADALAT

- Kejriwal accused the BJP-led Centre of failing to ensure women's safety, highlighting AAP's efforts like CCTV cameras and bus marshals.
- BJP criticized AAP for ignoring Swati Maliwal's harassment complaint and inviting Akhilesh Yadav, whose father defended criminals against women.
- Survivors of sexual assault shared their stories at the event, which marked the 12th anniversary of the 2012 Delhi gang rape.
- A video played at the event accused Amit Shah of inaction on women's safety.
- The Mahila Adalat event, attended by key political leaders, took place ahead of the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections.

appointed bus marshals to enhance people's security," Kejriwal added.

Responding to Kejriwal's allegations, the BJP took a swipe at AAP, saying the party should first act on its MP Swati Maliwal's complaint of alleged harassment by Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar.

The BJP also criticised AAP for inviting Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav for the 'Mahila Adalat', alleging that his father, the late Mulayam Singh Yadav, once defended those who commit crimes against

woman.

"Arvind Kejriwal, who established women's courts, should have delivered justice to Swati Maliwal by expelling Bibhav Kumar. Also, inviting Akhilesh Yadav for the 'Nirbhaya Day' programme is an insult to her memory."

"Kejriwal seems to have forgotten that Akhilesh Yadav's father Mulayam Singh Yadav once defended boys who commit crimes against women, saying 'boys make mistakes'. Does Kejriwal have the courage to ask Akhilesh Yadav to apologise to the country's women for his father's comments," the BJP asked in a statement.

The 'Mahila Adalat', held on the 12th anniversary of the 2012 Delhi gang rape that led to stricter anti-rape laws in the country, saw hundreds of women raising slogans like "Nirbhaya Amar Rahe" and "Mahila Shakti Zindabad".

Survivors of sexual assault shared their harrowing experiences at the event, with several breaking down while addressing the crowd.

BJP may bet on new faces, list likely to be out by month-end

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

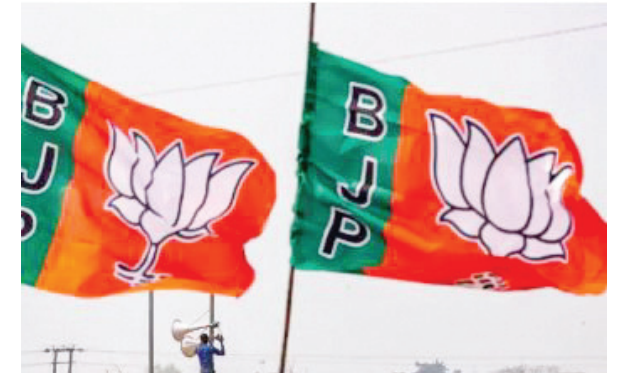
The BJP candidates' list for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls, expected around last week of this month, is likely to have a significant number of fresh faces, party leaders said on Monday.

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has announced its candidates on all the 70 constituencies for the polls due to be held in February next year. The Congress too has announced 21 candidates so far.

"The final round of meetings on candidates selection by the national leadership is yet to take place. These meetings will be held after the Parliament session concludes on December 20," said a top functionary in Delhi BJP, adding the party may release the lists from the last week of this month.

The BJP leaders said the process for candidates' selection was in an advanced stage and three probable on each constituency were already shortlisted.

"This time chances are that the party will place bets on fresh faces, including women and youngsters, who have strong ground connect and reach among the people in the constituencies although they have



The BJP leaders said the process for candidates' selection was in an advanced stage and three probable on each constituency were already shortlisted.

yet not contested the elections," said another senior Delhi BJP leader.

Those experienced party leaders, who have lost the elections twice or more may not be lucky this time and a lot of scrutiny of those who lost in close contests in the previous polls is likely to happen this time, he added.

"Winnability will be the prime factor with top leaders taking the final call with inputs from authentic feedback mechanisms like surveys and reports from the ground," he said.

The BJP out of power in Delhi since 1998 is making all efforts to upstage the rul-

ing AAP that has dominated the assembly elections since 2015. The AAP romped home winning 67 and 62 seats, respectively in the last two assembly polls in 2015 and 2020.

Despite winning the Lok Sabha polls on all the seven constituencies in 2014, 2019 and 2024, the BJP has failed miserably to translate that success in the assembly polls. The party scraped through with just three seats in 2015 and eight seats in 2020.

Some potential leaders, who crossed over to the BJP in recent months are likely to be seriously considered for election tickets.

Sisodia slams BJP for 'poor' law and order in Delhi

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia, who is contesting for the Jangpura seat in the upcoming Delhi Assembly Elections 2025, has sharply criticized the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its handling of law and order in the national capital.

In a statement, Sisodia highlighted that while Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal successfully addressed key issues like schools, electricity, and hospitals, the law and order situation under Home Minister Amit Shah's leadership had worsened.

"People of Delhi gave the responsibility to Kejriwal ji to work on the schools, electricity, and hospitals. He worked on government hospitals and made them better. There is 24-hour power supply now, there is



zero electricity bill, government schools are fantastic now," said Sisodia.

He continued, "All responsibilities that were given by him to Kejriwal ji, he shouldered them well. On the other hand, people of Delhi gave Amit Shah and BJP the responsibility to take care of law and order."

"But what happened while he is in office? Law & order deteriorated, murders are happening, shootings are happening. So, people feel that Amit Shah is unable to handle law & order," he continued.

Sisodia claimed that the people of Delhi are growing increasingly frustrated with the BJP's failure to address these issues. "In this election, it's peoples' warning that Amit Shah should either improve law & order otherwise people know how to do that," he added.

Sisodia also weighed in on the controversial issue of Rohingya refugees. Referring to a tweet by BJP leader Hardeep Singh Puri in 2022, where he claimed that the party was rehabilitating Rohingyas in Delhi, Sisodia demanded an explanation from Puri regarding the statement. "It was a tweet of Hardeep Singh Puri that we are rehabilitating Rohingyas in Delhi... So, Hardeep Puri should answer about his tweet on 2022... He should answer where did he rehabilitate Rohingyas," questioned Sisodia.

BJP woos auto drivers

TIKAM SHARMA
NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Monday addressed a gathering of over 1,000 auto drivers from West and Central Delhi at the party's state office. The drivers extended their support to the BJP ahead of the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, highlighting their discontent with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's unfulfilled promises over the past decade.

Sachdeva flagged off a large rally of auto drivers from the state office, joined by prominent leaders such as auto union representatives Rajendra Soni, Vinod Bhatia, and Suraj Vaidh. Delhi BJP Vice President Rajkumar Bhatia and Municipal Councillor Sandeep Kapoor were also present.

Separately, a delegation of industrialists from Badli, Bawana, and Narela, under the Laghu Udyog Bharti banner, met Sachdeva to



express gratitude for resolving long-standing factory license issues. Delhi BJP Spokesperson Dr. Anil Gupta, Laghu Udyog Bharti President Diwan Chand Gupta, and leaders Mukesh Kumar and Anil Kumar were present during this interaction.

Addressing the auto drivers, Sachdeva highlighted their critical role in Delhi's ecosystem, noting that they connect every corner of the city and often hear citizens' concerns, but their own issues remain ignored.

CM Atishi flays BJP over its slum outreach campaign

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A day after BJP leaders spent the night in Delhi's slums as part of an outreach programme ahead of the assembly elections, AAP on Monday accused the saffron party of demolishing slums and deleting names of slum dwellers from electoral rolls.

Led by its Delhi unit chief Virendra Sachdeva, BJP leaders stayed overnight in 1,194 slum clusters across the national capital to connect with the slum dwellers and address their concerns.

In a press conference, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi charged that the BJP leaders were visiting the slums, sharing food and clicking pictures with the slum dwellers to show their concern.

"However, I warn the slum dwellers to be wary of them (BJP leaders) be-



cause there are many examples that the slums they visit are demolished, like it happened in Sundar Nagri where they had gone a few months ago," she said.

The senior AAP leader also alleged that the BJP leaders go to the slums and then get the names of slum dwellers deleted from voters' lists, citing the example of Shahdara's Ambedkar Basti.

Ahead of elections to the 70-member Delhi Assem-

bly, due in February, the BJP has launched a massive outreach campaign to get a foothold in the city's slums, considered to be strongholds of the ruling AAP.

"BJP leaders are directly communicating with the slum dwellers to better understand their lives. We have learned about their struggles and the upcoming BJP government will work through DUSIB to improve their living conditions," Sachdeva said.

LG to CM: Convene assembly for laying pending CAG reports

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena has written to Delhi Chief Minister Atishi to convene a special sitting of the Legislative Assembly immediately for laying 14 pending CAG reports on the table of the House.

He has stressed that the session be convened without any further loss of time to ensure adherence to the constitutional mandate. It may be noted that the session of the Delhi Legislative



Assembly has not been convened yet.

These 14 reports include "Performance Audit on Regulation and Supply of Liquor in Delhi", Performance Audit on Prevention and Mitigation of Vehic-

ular Air Pollution in Delhi", "Public Health Infrastructure and Management of Health Services", "Performance Audit Report on Functioning of Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC)", apart from revenue, expenditure and financial audits of the government, pertain to the period when Arvind Kejriwal was the Chief Minister of Delhi and have been lying pending since year-and-a-half in many instances.

The LG has given his formal consent for tabling of

all these reports.

The communication to this effect signed by the LG said he has recommended placing a copy of the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India relating to the Government of NCT of Delhi before the Legislative Assembly of NCT of Delhi in pursuance of Section 48 of Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991. The LG noted that the CAG reports are vital to assess the financial and administrative health

of Government in a democratic set up.

An official release said that the reports are the touchstone of transparency in governance.

It said adherence to the constitutional mandate of placing such reports on the Table of the Legislature from time to time expeditiously is an essential ingredient of a functional democracy to ensure full disclosure and to seek guidance of the Apex Legislative Body for taking course corrections where necessary.

Delhi Airport connects to 150 destinations, highest in the country

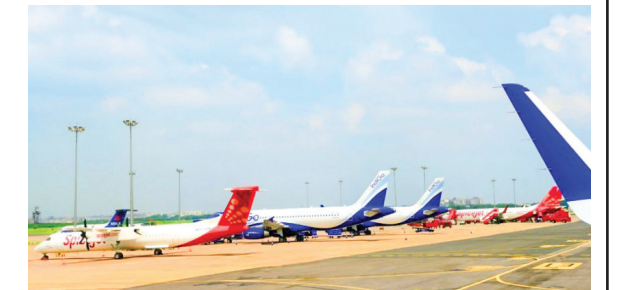
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Airport has become the first airport in the country that connects to 150 destinations.

On Sunday, Thai AirAsia X launched direct flights between Delhi and Bangkok-Don Mueang (DMK), marking the 150th destination connected to Delhi Airport.

The new route will operate with Airbus A330 aircraft twice a week, with plans to increase the frequency to four times a week by mid-January 2025.

In a statement, Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) highlighted that over the years, Delhi Airport has added more than 20 exclusive international destinations, including Phnom Penh, Bali Denpasar, Calgary, Montreal, Vancouver, Washington Dulles, Chicago O'Hare, and Tokyo Haneda, among others.



On Sunday, Thai AirAsia X launched direct flights between Delhi and Bangkok-Don Mueang (DMK), marking the 150th destination connected to Delhi Airport.

In the past decade, the airport has experienced a 100 per cent increase in transfer passengers, further solidifying its position as a leading transit hub in South Asia.

Out of all the long-haul destinations from India, 88 per cent of destinations are connected from Delhi and 56 per cent of all long-haul weekly flights departing from India, operate from the Delhi airport. Almost 50 per cent (42 per cent, to be exact) of long-

haul passengers from India choose Delhi as their gateway.

Delhi Airport enables seamless connections for four million domestic passengers annually to international destinations. The ongoing introduction of wide-body aircraft by Indian carriers is poised to transform Delhi Airport into a super-connector hub, reinforcing its position as a leading choice for international and long-haul travel.

Over 400 criminals arrested ahead of assembly polls

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested 415 wanted criminals, including 81 proclaimed offenders, under its 'Operation Crackdown' conducted in the northwest district of the city from December 1 to 15, an official said on Monday.

The operation, involving over 1,500 personnel, was aimed at curbing criminal activities and ensuring

public safety ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Abhishek Dhania said.

Teams have arrested 81 proclaimed offenders and parole jumpers among those held, the officer said.

He said that the operation targeted those involved in theft, robbery, and other serious offenses. It led to the detention of 21 individuals linked to organised crime,

including bootlegging, gambling, narcotics, and street crimes.

During the crackdown, 61 people were apprehended in drug trafficking cases and 53 juveniles wanted in various cases were detained, 18 of whom were involved in heinous crimes, the DCP said.

Social media accounts of 67 juveniles were deactivated to curb the glorification of criminal activities through online platforms, he added.

Additionally, 22 illegal weapons and live cartridges were seized and 15 people were arrested. Preventive measures were taken against 81 individuals involved in arms act cases, the DCP said. The officer said the district police have investigated 44 cases of cyber fraud, arresting 31 people. Notably, fraudulent withdrawal of over Rs 9.5 lakh were prevented. He said that special drive

against smuggling and illegal liquor distribution led to the seizure of 8,545 litres of illicit liquor and the arrest of 127 individuals. The police took action in 107 gambling cases, arresting 127 people.

The DCP said 55 people were arrested in 73 cases of snatching. Over 15,000 preventive arrests were made during this the crackdown and 31 of 51 missing Bad Characters (BCs) were traced and arrested.

DELHI SHIVERS AT 4.1 DEG C, AIR QUALITY 'SEVERE'

Delhi's average AQI rose to 399 at 9PM Monday and breached the 400 mark at 10PM.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi on Monday recorded a minimum temperature of 4.5 degrees Celsius, 4.1 degrees below normal, according to the weather department.

This is the fourth time in December when the minimum temperature dropped below 5 degrees Celsius, with cold wave conditions observed in Pusa, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The maximum temperature in the city settled at 24.5 degrees Celsius, a notch above normal, with the weather department forecasting cold wave conditions ahead. Temperatures dipped to 3.5 degrees Celsius at Pusa. Humidity levels fluctuated between 100 and 66 per cent during the day.

The weather department has forecast cold wave conditions on Tuesday with the maximum and minimum temperatures on Tuesday expected to hover around 24 degrees Celsius and 5 degrees Celsius, respectively.

Delhi's average AQI rose to 399 at 9PM tonight and breached the 400 mark at 10PM. Considering the steep rise in the AQI of Delhi owing to highly unfavourable meteorological conditions and absolute calm wind conditions, the CAQM Sub-Committee on GRAP called for an emergency meeting.

According to CPCB data,

COLD WAVE



- Delhi's minimum temperature dropped to 4.5°C, with cold wave conditions in Pusa.
- Cold wave to continue, with temperatures around 5°C (min) and 24°C (max) on Tuesday.
- AQI hit 400, classified as "severe."
- Non-BS compliant vehicles banned, and non-essential construction halted to curb pollution.
- Air quality expected to remain "severe."

this is the second time this month that the air quality has been in the "very poor" category on December 8.

Out of 37 monitoring stations, a total of 18 recorded air quality in the "severe" category, 16 in the "very poor" category, and the remaining stations in the "poor" category, according to SAMEER app.

The CPCB classifies AQI between 0 and 50 as "good", between 51 and 100 as "satisfactory", between 101 and 200 as "moderate", between 201 and 300 as "poor", between 301 and 400 as "very poor", and above 400 as "severe".

The primary pollutant on Monday was PM_{2.5}, with levels recorded at 189.5 µg/m³ at 4 pm.

These fine particles pose

significant health risks as they can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream.

Mahesh Palawat of Sky-met Weather Services said the air quality will remain in the "very poor" category for the next two days, with little improvement expected as wind speeds are expected to remain slow.

As air quality deteriorated, the Centre's air quality panel for Delhi-NCR invoked restrictive measures under Stage 3 of the air pollution control plan on Monday.

The Sub-Committee decided to impose Stage-IV ('Severe+' Air Quality) of the GRAP schedule (issued on 13.12.2024) in the entire NCR, with immediate effect.

These measures aim to

NDMC to install mist sprayers on electric poles

TIKAM SHARMA
NEW DELHI

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) announced on Monday, December 16, 2024, the installation of "mist sprayers" on electric poles to combat rising air pollution and enhance the cleanliness and beauty of the NDMC area. The initiative, part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Ease of Living mission, was unveiled by NDMC Vice Chairperson Kuljeet Singh Chahal.

Chahal highlighted that under PM Modi's leadership, efforts have been focused on improving urban living standards in a structured manner. This project marks a significant step

reduce vehicular emissions, a major source of pollution during the winter months.

The ban on construction work extends to all non-essential projects, though exceptions are made for national security, healthcare, and specific public infrastructure projects.

The air quality is expected to remain in the "severe" category on Tuesday, further deteriorating to the "severe" category on Wednesday, according to the Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi.

toward making the NDMC area pollution-free, according to a council statement.

Details of the Mist Sprayer Installation

In the first phase, 15 mist sprayers will be installed on electric poles along a 500-metre stretch of Lodhi Road. Each pole will feature five nozzles, with six spray holes per nozzle, creating 30 spray points per pole. The system will use 81 litres of water per pole per hour, supported by four 5,000-litre tanks that will utilise treated water from sewage treatment plants (STPs) to conserve fresh water.

Chahal noted that the initial phase of the project is expected to be implemented next year, with plans to com-

plete the work within a set timeline. After successful implementation on Lodhi Road, the project will be expanded to other prominent locations like Shanti Path and Africa Avenue, followed by a wider rollout across the NDMC jurisdiction.

Chahal also outlined NDMC's other efforts to combat pollution, including: Mechanical Road Sweepers (MRS): Equipped with GPS tracking, these sweepers ensure efficient cleaning of roads, monitored in real-time via the Smart City Integrated Command and Control Centre.

Anti-Smog Guns and Mist Spray Machines: Deployed to reduce dust and particulate matter.

Schools to hold hybrid classes for up to class V

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In view of the implementation of restrictive measures under GRAP III, the Delhi Directorate of Education (DoE) on Monday directed

Delhi Cantonment Board are directed to conduct classes for students up to Class V in a 'hybrid mode,' wherever online learning is feasible, with immediate effect until fur-



all school administrations to conduct classes for students up to Class V in hybrid mode. In a circular, the DoE stated, "All heads of government, government-aided, unaided recognised private schools of DoE, NDMC, MCD and

their orders." The Delhi's air quality deteriorated, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) recorded at 379 on Monday, placing it in the "very poor" category. This marks a sharp rise from Sunday's reading of 294 in the "poor" category.

Traffic Police intensifies vehicle checks under GRAP III

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Traffic Police on Monday intensified checks on vehicles following the implementation of restrictive measures under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) Stage III to combat air pollution.

Under Stage III, non-essential diesel-operated medium goods vehicles with BS-IV or older standards are banned within Delhi. Similarly, non-essential diesel light commercial vehicles of BS-IV or older standards, registered outside Delhi, are not allowed entry



into the city.

Previously, such restrictions were applicable only to BS-III vehicles. Persons with disabilities remain exempt from restrictions on BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel cars in Delhi and neighbouring districts of Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghazi-

abad, and Gautam Budh Nagar under the current GRAP stage.

After the implementation of these restrictions, checking has been intensified in different locations of the national capital, a senior police officer said. There are over 10 entry points from Haryana and

Uttar Pradesh to Delhi. The BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel vehicles will not be allowed to enter into the city, he said. Barricades have been placed at multiple locations and vehicles are being stopped under a special drive to verify their registration and age, the officer added.

Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 379 at 4 pm on Monday. The poor air quality, primarily caused by adverse weather conditions, typically persists from November to January.

Crime Branch busts arms supplier network, 2 accused held

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Crime Branch of the Delhi Police has dismantled a major arms supplier network and arrested two individuals, a senior police officer announced on Monday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Crime Sanjay Kumar Sain stated that the network is linked to the notorious Tillu Tajpuria and Chhenu Pahalwan gangs.

According to the police, two accused were apprehended, and 10 firearms along with 15 live cartridges were seized from their possession.

In a statement, DCP Sain explained that on December 11, based on credible intelligence, investigations revealed that Ajay, alias Totla, alias Devgan--a former auto-lifter turned arms supplier--was actively supplying firearms to Vinay Pandit, a known member of the Tillu



Tajpuria gang and currently associated with the Chhenu Pahalwan gang.

The breakthrough occurred on the morning of December 12, when Ajay, a resident of Madanpur Khadar, was apprehended near the Delhi-Noida border while riding a motorcycle that had been reported stolen from the Jaitpur area. During interrogation, Ajay confessed to having a pistol and ammunition at his residence in Sangam Vihar. This led to the immediate recovery of the weapon and three live cartridges, the police officer

said. A case was registered under various sections of the Arms Act and Section 317(2) of the BNS at the Crime Branch police station. The accused was presented before the court and remanded to police custody, the statement added. Further investigations under police custody led to the arrest of Shamim, a resident of Village Karah Kadilpur in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, who was identified as another arms supplier linked to Ajay. Shamim admitted to directly supplying arms to Ajay, who in turn sold them to Vinay Pandit for

use by the Chhenu Pahalwan gang.

Based on Shamim's information, police recovered an additional three pistols and seven country-made firearms (locally known as 'kattas'). His interrogation revealed alarming details about the scale of the arms network, including the fact that the firearms were being custom-made in rural villages to meet specific demands. The operation has uncovered a deep-rooted nexus between local arms manufacturers, suppliers, and powerful criminal groups, including the Tillu Tajpuria and Chhenu Pahalwan gangs, who have been linked to several violent incidents in the region. Shamim was presented before the court, and a police custody remand has been secured to recover more illegal weapons and identify other accomplices, the statement said.

Delhi's groundwater extraction rate 'critical' at 99%, Bengaluru 150%

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi's groundwater resources are under immense strain, with an extraction rate of 99.13%, classified as 'critical'. In contrast, Bengaluru faces an even more severe situation, where groundwater extraction has soared to 150.84%, according to the Jal Shakti Ministry. Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Raj Bhushan Choudhary, revealed these alarming statistics in response to a Rajya Sabha query. While desalination technology exists at Kalpakkam, its applicability is limited. The reverse osmosis (RO) membrane technology is recommended for groundwater treatment. Urban areas like Vasant Vihar in Delhi and Yelahanka in Bengaluru are particularly stressed, extracting far beyond their available resources.

Customs seizes 2 gold bars worth Rs 22 lakh at IGI

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A passenger travelling from Riyadh to New Delhi was intercepted by customs officials at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport with two gold bars worth over Rs 22 lakh.

According to customs officials, airport security detected two gold bars, weighing 300 grams and valued at Rs 22.2 lakh, concealed inside an adaptor.

"A male passenger (Indian) arriving from Riyadh was intercepted at Delhi airport by Customs officials on December 15. X-ray scans revealed two gold bars of 300 g worth Rs 22.2 lakh cleverly concealed inside an adaptor," said the Customs department.

A week earlier, a passenger travelling domestically from Indore, Madhya Pradesh, to New Delhi was



caught with 13 gold pieces weighing nearly 999 grams.

The estimated value of the foreign-origin gold was approximately Rs 72.72 lakh. Authorities stated that further investigation was underway.

Airport security had flagged suspicious images during the X-ray screening of the baggage. The passenger was intercepted based on information

provided by the Air Intelligence Unit (AIU) of Customs at IGI Airport.

In another incident, customs officials reported that three male passengers travelling from Almaty, Kazakhstan, to New Delhi were intercepted.

The passengers, holding Uzbek passports, admitted to concealing eight irregularly shaped gold pieces in their rectal cavities, according to Delhi Customs.

Court issues notice to BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj in defamation complaint

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Rouse Avenue court on Monday issued a notice to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Bansuri Swaraj in a defamation complaint filed by former Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Satyendra Jain.

Jain has filed a criminal defamation complaint against BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj. He has also filed a civil defamation case against her.

Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) Neha Mittal issued notice to Swaraj and listed the matter for hearing on December 20 at 11:00 AM.

The court has asked Advocate Rajat Bhardwaj, the counsel for Satyendra Jain, to file a processing fee (PF) to serve her copy of the complaint. Advocate Rajat Bhardwaj appeared through video conferencing and Advocate Kaushtubh Khanna physically appeared.

On December 10, the court had listed the complaint of Satyendra Jain for order on pre-summoning evidence or notice in support of his complaint.

Jain has alleged that Swaraj made defamatory remarks against him during an interview on a TV channel on October 5, 2023, claiming that this interview

was watched by millions of people. He has claimed that these remarks were made by Swaraj to defame him and to gain undue political advantage. The allegations were levelled in the context of an Enforcement Directorate (ED) raid at his house, the plea said.

Former Delhi Minister Jain has alleged that Swaraj falsely stated that Rs. three crores were recovered from his house. He claimed that she had also stated that 1.8 kg of gold and 133 gold coins were recovered from his house.

"It is stated that these statements were made in context with the raid of ED at the complainant's house. He



is on bail in this case and the same is pending before the court," read the complaint filed.

Jain alleged that Swaraj had further defamed by calling him "Corrupt" and "Fraud". Several false, ma-

licious and defamatory allegations were levelled against the complainant, he alleged.

In his complaint Jain said, "It is stated that the accused has played havoc with the reputation of the complain-

ant and the smear campaign has caused a cascading effect on the complainant as husband, father, brother, friend and as a common of the society, apart from scarring his otherwise unblemished political reputation. It

Former Delhi Minister Jain has alleged that Swaraj falsely stated that Rs. three crores were recovered from his house. He claimed that she had also stated that 1.8 kg of gold and 133 gold coins were recovered from his house.

"It is stated that these statements were made in context with the raid of ED at the complainant's house. He is on bail in this case and the same is pending before the court," read the complaint filed.

accused is immeasurable as the complainant's character and reputation stand assailed not only as the elected representative and mass leader but even in his personal capacity."

WPI INFLATION EASES TO 1.89% IN NOV 2024 FROM 2.36% IN OCT

The annual WPI inflation for November 2024 stood at 1.89%, reflecting eased food and manufactured product prices, with mixed sectoral trends.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI


The annual inflation rate based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) stood at 1.89 per cent (provisional) for November 2024, compared to 2.36 per cent in October 2024 and 1.91 per cent in September 2024.

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the easing inflation reflects a moderation in price increases for food items and manufactured products.

The overall WPI index decreased marginally by 0.06 per cent month-over-month, slipping from 156.1 in October to 156.0 in November 2024.

Positive inflation was primarily driven by higher prices in food articles, textiles, and machinery and

KEY POINTS



- WPI inflation for November 2024 dropped to 1.89%, down from 2.36% in October.
- Eased inflation driven by lower food and manufactured product prices, with a 0.06% monthly WPI decrease.
- Primary Articles index fell 1.20%, while Manufactured Products rose 0.35%.
- Food inflation eased to 8.92%, while Fuel & Power inflation remained negative at -5.83%.

equipment. Despite the decline, inflation remained elevated in specific categories, indicating a mixed trend across commodity groups. In terms of sectoral per-

formance, the index for Primary Articles (weight: 22.62 per cent) declined by 1.20 per cent in November 2024. This was largely due to reduced prices of food

articles (-1.83 per cent) and crude petroleum & natural gas (-0.41 per cent).

However, there were price increases in minerals (2.10 per cent) and non-food ar-

ticles (0.56 per cent). For Fuel & Power (weight: 13.15 per cent), the index rose slightly by 0.41 per cent due to higher mineral oil prices, although electricity prices declined marginally (-0.07 per cent).

The category of Manufactured Products (weight: 64.23 per cent) saw an increase of 0.35 per cent in November 2024, supported by price hikes in food products, pharmaceuticals, and electrical equipment.

However, there were price declines in basic metals, rubber, chemicals, and motor vehicles. Notably, out of the 22 subgroups within manufactured products, 10 registered price increases, while 10 saw declines, and two remained unchanged.

Preeti Lobana appointed country manager, VP for Google India

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Tech giant Google on Monday announced the appointment of Preeti Lobana as the new country manager and vice president for India.

She succeeds Sanjay Gupta, who recently transitioned to an elevated role as President of the Asia Pacific region at Google.

As the new Country Manager and Vice President for India, Lobana will play a key role in shaping Google's strategy to bring the transformative power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to all customers, fostering innovation, a Google release said.

"A seasoned Googler with eight years of experience as Vice President of customer-centric solutions, Preeti will now spearhead Google India's sales and operations, driving the company's commitment to India's burgeoning digital economy," according to the release.



Sanjay Gupta, President of Asia-Pacific, Google said India's vibrant digital landscape has been a source of immense inspiration and innovation for the company.

"With AI poised to redefine the boundaries of what's possible, I am incredibly excited to welcome my colleague, Preeti, as our new Country Manager... Preeti's leadership will be instrumental as we deepen our engagement with India's unique ecosystem, leveraging AI advancements like Gemini 2.0 to accelerate digital inclusion and unlock unprecedented economic opportunities for

every Indian," Gupta said. In her new role, Lobana will partner deeply with Roma Datta Chobey, who led as the interim country manager and will continue her leadership as Managing Director for Google India's Digital Native Industries.

As per the release, Lobana brings over 30 years of experience in senior leadership roles across the technology and financial industries, giving her a deep understanding of the evolving Indian landscape.

Her career has been marked by a consistent focus on business transformation, operational excellence, and customer experience.

Most recently, she served as Google's Vice President, gTech - Process, Partner, Publisher Operations, Ads Content and Quality Operations, leading a global team and driving innovative ad solutions and support for Google's customers and partners.

Govt has no timeline for regulatory guidelines for Virtual Digital Assets

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The government on Monday informed Lok Sabha that there is no anticipated timeline for the introduction of comprehensive regulatory guidelines for the Virtual Digital Assets industry in India.

The government was asked by two members of Parliament whether it was taking steps to establish a comprehensive regulatory framework for the Virtual Digital Assets industry.

The members also sought details of the timeline anticipated for the introduction of regulatory guidelines.

The government in its



reply noted that Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs) are by definition borderless and require international collaboration to prevent regulatory arbitrage. The Indian government does not register crypto exchanges and it maintains crypto assets, by definition,

are borderless and require "international collaboration" to prevent regulatory arbitrage.

Therefore, India believes any comprehensive regulatory framework on VDA can be effective only with significant international collaboration.

FDI inflow in last 10 years totalled \$709.8 billion: MoS Finance

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Minister of State for Finance, Pankaj Chaudhary, has highlighted India's remarkable achievements in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), with inflows reaching USD 709.8 billion between April 2014 and September 2024.

He attributed this success to the Government's investor-friendly policies, which have made India one of the most attractive destinations for global investors.

India's FDI policy framework is built on the principle of openness, allowing 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route in most of the sectors.

More than 90 per cent of



FDI inflows are received through this route, showcasing the effectiveness of simplified regulations. Strategic initiatives such as increasing FDI limits, removing regulatory barriers, and improving infrastructure have further enhanced the ease of doing business in the country.

Since 2014, significant reforms across multiple sectors have boosted FDI inflows. In the defence sector, the FDI cap was raised from 26 per cent to 49 per cent, while 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route was permitted in railway infrastructure.

Similarly, the insurance sector has seen its FDI limit progressively increase to 74 per cent, with the pension sector also opening up to foreign investment.

The telecom sector witnessed major liberalization in 2021, allowing 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route. In the manufacturing sector, foreign investments have been permitted under the automatic route, including contract manufacturing. Other key reforms include easing local sourcing norms for Single Brand Retail Trading (SBRT), allowing 26 per cent FDI in digital media, and liberalizing the space sector in 2024 to attract global players.

The Government has been maintaining detailed

data on FDI equity inflows, with state and district-level records available since October 2019. This systematic approach helps in assessing the impact of foreign investments at both macro and micro levels.

The Government's proactive reforms have strengthened India's position as a global investment hub. In 2020, 74 per cent FDI under automatic route was allowed in defence manufacturing, demonstrating India's commitment to advancing domestic capabilities.

Similarly, 20 per cent FDI under automatic route was permitted in Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) in 2022, marking a significant milestone in the financial sector.

Online gaming sector is poised to boost \$1 trillion digital economy goal: Report

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India's digital transformation over the past two decades has positioned it as one of the largest and fastest-growing markets globally, with over 700 million internet users.

The country is on track to achieve a \$300-billion electronics industry and a \$1-trillion digital economy by



2025-26, potentially contributing 18-23 per cent to the national GDP, according to a report by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

A key driver of this ambitious target is the burgeoning online gaming sector, which promises to bring transformative cross-sectoral impacts.

With its growth potential, the online gaming sector is poised to boost India's

US\$1-trillion digital economy goal by driving foreign direct investment (FDI), tax revenues, employment, and the development of complementary industries like fintech, Web 3.0, augmented reality (AR), and cybersecurity.

India's gaming industry demonstrates similar dynamics, stimulating demand for processors, content, devices, and broadband access

while accelerating technological development.

This ripple effect benefits sectors as diverse as media, healthcare, manufacturing, and automotive.

A Finnish study, The Digital Games Industry and its Direct and Indirect Impact on the Economy underscored how the gaming industry pioneers innovations that spill over into other sectors.

Surge in women employees in manufacturing companies: Report



TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Women participation is surging in the Automotive, Electronics, Electric Vehicle, and Phone Manufacturing companies, as per a report by TeamLease Services.

The report noted that these sectors are increasingly recognizing the value women bring to roles requiring attention to detail, finger dexterity, and focus. Technological advancements in manufacturing have further amplified the demand for a female workforce, contributing to this positive trend.

It said "Automotive, Electronics, Electric Vehicle, and Phone Manufacturing companies are leading the change and employing a larger female workforce. These industries require attention to detail, finger dexterity, and a focused mindset, which women naturally possess".

Despite these gains, the report also highlights challenges in achieving gender parity. Among the temporary workforce, men domi-

nate with a staggering 89.5 per cent share, revealing significant underrepresentation of women in these roles.

However, women exhibit higher representation in postgraduate qualifications (24.3 per cent) compared to men (10.5 per cent).

Conversely, men lead in technical qualifications, with higher proportions in diplomas (13.5 vs. 5.7 per cent) and ITIs (11.5 per cent, with no female representation). This imbalance calls for targeted initiatives to encourage women to pursue technical education and roles, bridging the gender gap in manufacturing.

The report also mentioned that the workforce in these sectors is predominantly young, with 43.6 per cent of employees aged 28-37. This demographic is well-suited to adapt to technological advancements but requires urgent skill-building in technical and analytical areas.

The educational profile of the workforce is diverse, with nearly half holding graduate degrees--48.5 per cent of men and 46.4 per cent of women.

Bengaluru allows entrepreneurs with global partnerships, exclusive networking

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

Bengaluru, a city that has become synonymous with innovation and entrepreneurship, continues to cement its reputation as India's Silicon Valley. This was reinforced recently by Karnataka IT Minister Priyank Kharge at an international event organised by a media outlet. In his speech, Kharge highlighted India's rise as the world's largest startup ecosystem, with over 1.25 lakh startups and 110 unicorns. He emphasized that Bengaluru is a key player in this ecosystem, housing more than 16,000 startups, accounting for 47% of India's startup funding. The city also stands as one of the top five unicorn destinations globally, trailing only New York, London, and Beijing.

Kharge noted that Karnataka, with over 18,000 startups, has become a

STARTUP CORNER



global powerhouse, supported by 1,536 venture capital firms, 2,256 corporate venture funds, and 17,000 angel investors. He also pointed out the success of the state's Elevate programme, which has disbursed Rs 250 crore to fund 983 startups, 32% of which are from Tier I and II towns, and 24% are



women-led startups. In addition, Karnataka's new Global Capability Center (GCC) Policy aims to attract 500 GCCs and generate \$50 billion in output by reskilling and upskilling talent, further reinforcing Bengaluru's global appeal.

In line with these developments, the city is also seeing a wave of unique initiatives aimed at empowering entrepreneurs. One such event, "Startup Valley," is creating a stir in the startup community. Set to take place on January 19, 2025, this ex-

clusive, invite-only event promises a transformative experience for entrepreneurs. Unlike traditional networking events, Startup Valley focuses on creating meaningful connections with handpicked individuals who could potentially become life-long friends in the startup journey. Participants can expect to gain actionable points for their startup, meet potential co-founders, collaborators, and fellow entrepreneurs, and engage in fun social games that teach vital startup

skills like ideation, MVP development, fundraising, and product-market fit.

The event is presented by StartupParty, a community-driven initiative known for its free, ad-free approach to startup events. Startup Valley aims to build a community that will be a part of India's biggest invite-only startup community, StartupParty. As Bengaluru continues to grow as a global innovation hub, events like Startup Valley are further enhancing its role as a melting pot of talent and opportunity, aligning perfectly with the state's commitment to fostering entrepreneurship.

In a further bid to strengthen Karnataka's position as a global leader in innovation, the state has also taken steps toward international collaboration. The Karnataka Depart-

ment of Electronics, IT, and BT signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with New Jersey's Department of State to foster collaboration in sectors such as deep tech, life sciences, and electronics. This partnership, signed by Dr. Ekroop Caur, Secretary of Karnataka's IT Department, and Tahesha L. Way, Lieutenant Governor of New Jersey, aligns with Karnataka's Global Innovation Alliances (GIA) initiative. It aims to drive cross-border knowledge-sharing and technological advancements, reinforcing Bengaluru's status as a global innovation hub.

Bengaluru's ecosystem continues to thrive, supported by government initiatives, international partnerships, and groundbreaking events like Startup Valley, which are all contributing to the city's rise as a global leader in the startup world.

TRANSFORMING TELANGANA: REVANTH REDDY'S LONG MARCH TO PROGRESS

OPINION

RASHEED KIDWAI



of the Telangana way of life... Our philosophy is to spread love and question domination. We can endure hunger, but we will not tolerate losing our freedom. Telangana will not turn a blind eye if democracy is to be destroyed in the guise of welfare."

FOR THE PEOPLE

The summer of 2024 was a busy time in India's youngest state. Telangana was gearing up for Formation Day celebrations on June 2, and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had commissioned a new anthem to commemorate a decade of the state's existence: *Jaya Jaya Hey Telangana*, written by the beloved poet-lyricist Ande Sri and composed by Academy Award-winner M.M. Keeravani. Reddy paid tributes to Telangana Movement martyrs at Gun Park and hoisted the national flag at Parade Grounds, Secunderabad. Addressing a massive gathering, Reddy waxed eloquent about how "freedom is very much part

A first-generation politician, the 55-year-old Reddy is the first Congress Chief Minister of Telangana and has breathed new life into the party's presence in the state. In his first year in office, he has established himself as a master rhetorician and a veritable strongman. It is common knowledge that he puts in 18-hour days and is famously approachable, with his residence at Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule Praja Bhavan (formerly Pragathi Bhavan) being open to the public. This is a man who proactively solicits feedback and counsel to improve governance in a model he calls 'Praja Palana', which translates to "people's governance".

Indeed, Reddy's first year in office has been marked by

concerted efforts to achieve social justice and provide equal opportunities to the diverse Telangana populace. These aspirations have been articulated in the wake of the ten-year rule of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (earlier the Telangana Rashtra Samithi), headed by K. Chandrashekhara Rao — a period Reddy has described as one of destruction: economic, social, and cultural.

FINANCIAL AID FOR THE VULNERABLE

Reddy has inherited debts amounting to ₹7 lakh crore from his predecessor. He has aggressively lobbied for relief through restructuring of the state's loans and has mounted pressure on the Centre to give Telangana its fair share of central endowments. His government cracked down on Telangana's chronic unemployment problem and filled 30,000 posts within three months of being elected. As many as 55,000 government jobs have been created. In the sizeable agri-reliant rural belt, farmers have received deposits amounting to ₹7,500 crore, benefitting 69 lakh individuals. Recently, a compensation of ₹10,000 per acre was announced to help farmers through lean periods caused by crop damage from untimely rains. A mammoth ₹18,000 crore in farm loans has been waived — an unprecedented sum. Telangana farmers have



obtained another crucial benefit: uninterrupted power supply, a blessing for farm productivity. This is a convenience that extends to the general citizenry. The state has supplied a record-breaking 298.19 million units of power as of March 2024, and low-income families receive 200 units of free electricity per month. In another move to ramp up state infrastructure and diminish the social inequity gap, Reddy's Indiramma housing scheme has allocated ₹22,500 crore to build 4,50,000 houses for the poor. Under the scheme, households which own plots receive ₹5 lakh for construction, and those that don't are provided land and the same building allowance.

SUPPORTING WOMEN AND MINORITIES

Reddy has also identified and addressed gender-based inequity. Already, ₹3,500 crore has been spent

under the Mahalakshmi scheme to facilitate free bus travel for women and transpeople and to provide cooking gas cylinders at a subsidised price of ₹500 to 42 lakh women. Days ago, he announced plans to ease 1 crore women out of poverty, involving them in entrepreneurship and business through self-help groups.

Reddy's groundbreaking caste survey, launched in June 2024, was designed to deliver social justice and aims to determine demographics in depth. The questionnaire carries prompts on the political leanings, and the economic and social status of Telangana residents, as well as challenges peculiar to groups. The survey is in its final stages.

RESTYLING CITIES

Reddy's government is also going the extra green mile. A 'Green Telangana - 2050 Master Plan' focuses on three zones: urban, suburban, and rural. Experts are hard at work blueprinting a sustainable development scheme based on the region's infrastructure needs. The transformation of the capital, Hyderabad, is one of Reddy's pet projects, with a ₹1,000-crore budget allotted to spruce up the Musi riverfront, meet the irrigation needs of the Rangareddy and Nalgonda regions, and generate jobs and tourism revenue in Hyderabad. The Hyderabad Metro Rail

is expanding, and a major Regional Ring Road is being completed. One hundred and fifty kilometres away, the second capital, Warangal, is also getting a facelift, with big-ticket infrastructure building underway.

TAKING TELANGANA TO THE WORLD

Despite his soaring popularity, Reddy's detractors have found reasons to criticise him, among which are his frequent trips to New Delhi. Reddy has clarified that these visits are "to get funds approved for Telangana". Meanwhile, he has travelled to the United States and South Korea, meeting with global investors and facilitating a robust fund flow into the state, amounting to ₹31,532 crore and representing over 30,000 jobs. Early in 2024, he secured another ₹40,232 crore in investments for Telangana on a whirlwind three-day trip to Davos, Switzerland, having liaised with over 200 major corporations and business leaders.

The data throws up a clear finding: Telangana is rising, and Anumula Revanth Reddy is the architect of a vision coming slowly but surely to fruition. The ambitious target of the state evolving into a \$1 trillion GDP economy by 2035 might yet be a dream, but as the Telangana chief said in a leadership summit speech: "No dream is too big for New India."

Can India adapt Australia's age gating to regulate social media usage by children?

OPINION

DR. ASWATHY PRAKASH G. & DR. ALISHA VERMA



Children's social media usage has always been a contentious issue, with concerns about online safety, mental health challenges, and exposure to age-inappropriate content. Traditionally, this was seen as a problem for parents to address, with parental consent being enough for a child to access social media in many jurisdictions. However, Australia has now pioneered legislation forbidding individuals under sixteen from accessing major social media platforms, regardless of parental permission. For the past week, the world has been debating Australia's social media ban for children under 16. While some have lauded this bold move, others have criticized the hurried passage of the bill without adequate deliberation. Set to take effect in

2025, the law aims to protect the mental and physical well-being of Australian adolescents through strict age restrictions on social media use.

In India, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP), requires social media companies to obtain verifiable parental consent to process any personal data of a child (defined as anyone below the age of 18). However, since the DPDP rules are yet to be notified, how such consent will be obtained remains unclear. In August 2024, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) proposed a KYC-based system for verifying children's age under DPDP compliance. Against this backdrop, this article compares Australia's outright ban with India's position

and considers whether India should adopt a similar approach, while also suggesting alternative measures.

AUSTRALIA'S AGE GATING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 amended the Online Safety Act 2021, shifting the responsibility for user protection from parents and children to social media platforms. It introduced a broad definition of "age-restricted social media platforms," encompassing a wide range of commonly recognized social media services. Australians will not need official ID for age assurance under the law. Instead, platforms have 12 months to find suitable alternatives or face \$49.5 million fines. The 2024-25 Budget committed \$6.5 million to trial age assurance technologies to determine their efficacy, maturity, and suitability for Australia. Platforms must also ringfence age verification data and destroy it immediately, with strict penalties for noncompliance. Additionally, it mandates a review within two years of implementation, allowing the Government to recalibrate policies as needed to reflect changes in the behavior of social media platforms and young users.

INDIA'S KYC-BASED AGE VERIFICATION

While there are no specific age gating laws on children's

social media usage in India, section 9 of the DPDP act requires data fiduciaries such as social media platforms to obtain verifiable parental consent for processing data of children under 18 years. The act also prohibits tracking children's behaviour or targeting advertisements to them. The NCPCR, intends to seek proposals from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to introduce KYC-based age verification mechanisms for children under the DPDP Act. The MeitY has already engaged with social media companies to explore potential age verification solutions. While options such as Di-gi-loc-ker and Aadhaar were considered, but they were deemed ineffective for age verification. However, the effectiveness of this mode of age verification is highly uncertain, as it involves collecting extensive personal details of children and creating large pools of potentially sensitive data in the hands of various platforms. Misuse or security breaches might occur with this data.

LESSONS FROM GLOBAL PRACTICES

Around the world, efforts to protect children online have ranged from strict regulations like the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to self-regulatory measures taken by technology companies. Age verification is required in many countries, including the United States, EU, France, Germany, Belgium, Norway and UK among others. Online services and apps in the US must get parental consent before collecting data on children under 13 under COPPA. Similar consequences are seen in

the EU Digital Services Act and UK Online Safety Bill. UK's Online Safety Bill enforces age verification to prevent teens from seeing age-inappropriate information. Parents must approve children's social media use till 13-16 in Norway, France, and Belgium. These rules encourage platforms to enforce age verification procedures.

BALANCING SAFETY, ACCESSIBILITY AND PARENTAL AUTONOMY

The negative effects of social media on teenagers are widely reported around the world, such as cyberbullying, bad eating or sleeping habits, mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. However, for the young children that are often touted as digital natives, social media is a modern digital playground to make friends with others and extended family, express themselves, learn new skills, and join campaigns and activities. Moreover, laws such as those in Australia deprive parents of the right to choose what is best for their children since not all children are equally vulnerable to online threats and may use these sites for good.

In its March 2021 general comment on the UNCRC, the UN acknowledged children as digital rights holders and stressed their engagement by enabling them with digital literacy and encouraging digital citizenship. An outright ban on social media might violate international children's rights to accessibility and participation.

A PATH FORWARD

Today's children are born and brought up in a digi-

tally connected world, and the internet is an integral part of their social development. Hence, an absolute ban may force them to use it secretly, potentially causing more harm than it does now. There should be a co-operative strategy to involve legislators, technology providers, educators, and civil society in setting an environment in which children may flourish safely online. Technologies like AI-driven content filtering and blockchain verification systems hold potential for the improvement of safety protocols. International cooperation with agencies such as ICMEC can help keep the internet safe for children, foster the exchange of best practices, and facilitate the creation of global standards for protecting children online. Age gating and verification based on KYC require careful design with considerations related to the privacy, ease of use, and inclusiveness. There is a need to introduce strong digital literacy programmes into education to teach children safe online navigation, privacy and risk recognition. As things stand today, Indian parents are tasked with overseeing their tech-savvy children's social media usage, despite many parents lacking the necessary digital literacy. Therefore, laws like those in Australia, which place the onus on platforms to verify users and ensure children do not access them until the prescribed age, are a welcome move.

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PERSPECTIVE AIRSTRIKES

IN SYRIA: ISRAEL IS WORKING TO ENHANCE ITS OWN SECURITY

The latest bombing by Israel of a weapons depot in Syria's Tartus area—where Russia has its now abandoned naval base—triggered an earthquake that measured 3.0 on the Richter scale, giving an indication of the ferocity of the attack. This comes in the backdrop of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) moving deep inside the Syrian part of Golan Heights soon after the fall of Bashar Al Assad. In the process, the IDF has captured Mount Hermon, the highest point in Syria. Mount Hermon is strategically located along the border of Syria and Lebanon, hence, from that height, the IDF has an untrammelled view of not just Syria, but also Lebanon, which is the seat of Israel's archenemy Hezbollah. Significantly, Mount Hermon is located just 40 km from the Syrian capital Damascus. Hermon is a strategic high ground, which was earlier blocking the visibility of any drones and other projectiles coming from Lebanon and Syria towards Israel. Now that the IDF has captured this territory, it will be able to monitor any such projectiles approaching Israel from both Syria and Lebanon and will be able to shoot these down. This is a huge strategic advantage for Israel, which has carried out over 500 airstrikes inside Syria, destroying at least 80% of Assad's arsenal and other military assets, while wiping out both its air force and navy—and all without facing any resistance whatsoever.



What Israel has

destroyed will take decades for Syria to rebuild, if at all. Given that the enemies of the Jewish state, primarily Iran, have been using Assad's Syria as a conduit for arms and ammunition to the Hezbollah, which has had Israel on its crosshairs for decades, the downfall of the Ba'athist regime and the exit

of Iran and Russia from Syria have given Israel a huge advantage over its enemies. Tel Aviv is further amplifying this advantage by ensuring that Assad's military arsenal does not fall in the hands of Syria's warring sides—and there are several, backed by different global powers. The rise of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is unlikely to bring peace to the region, and instead, is more than likely to see the revival of the civil war that has been dogging Syria since 2011. There is a vacuum right now in Syria as HTS does not have the capacity to control the whole country. It is this vacuum that is being taken advantage of by Israel and, eventually will be filled by the several warring groups, unless HTS is able to bring the situation under control. Therefore, it makes perfect sense for Israel to change the ground reality to the extent that it can secure itself further.

However, the question is for how long this peace that Israel has bought for itself will last. Iran may have exited from Syria, but its repeated failure in its aim of erasing Israel from the face of the earth has not taught it any lesson. For Iran the setback is at best temporary, as it devises new strategies to use its terror proxies against Israel. Something similar can be said of the Hezbollah as well, which is likely to try and regroup in this period. There is also the very real possibility of the war in Syria spilling over into its neighbouring countries. So Israel should wait before declaring itself victorious in this war.

But there is a lesson to be learnt by US President Joe Biden in Israel's actions in Syria. When Biden made the US troops leave Afghanistan, he allowed weapons and other defence materiel worth around \$8 billion to fall in the hands of the Taliban. From there the weapons have landed in the hands of even Pakistani deep state for it to use as and when it wants—particularly against India. If Biden had ensured the destruction of all those weapons before the exit, perhaps the region would have been more stable. But that was not to be.

JOYEETA BASU

Drum and microphone: Zakir Hussain's dialogue with technology

In the heart of Indian classical music, the tabla has long stood as a voice, not just a percussion instrument. Its rhythmic tones, mimicking the human voice, have entranced audiences for centuries. However, with the rise of sound amplification technologies, a new layer was added to its story—one in which the microphone, a seemingly alien gadget, became integral to the tabla's performance. Zakir Hussain, one of the world's most celebrated tabla maestros, stands at the intersection of tradition and technology, embodying the evolving role of the tabla in modern musical spaces.

The microphone, as some early critics observed, was once seen as a disruptive force in classical music, especially in Hindustani traditions. The early 20th century witnessed debates about the use of amplification in live concerts. While some purists viewed it as a threat to authenticity, others saw it as a tool for broader accessibility. As concert halls grew in size, and audiences expanded, the need for microphones became undeniable. For tabla players, this shift was particularly notable, as the delicate nuances of their intricate compositions risked being drowned out in large venues.

Zakir Hussain, who rose to prominence in the 1980s and '90s, was among those who skillfully navigated this shift. His approach to the tabla was revolutionary—not only in terms of technique but in how he engaged with technology. Hussain was one of the first to embrace amplification as a means of enhancing the tabla's expressive potential rather than diluting it. In doing so, he redefined the role of the tabla, both as a traditional percussion instrument and as a global voice capable of transcending geographic and cultural boundaries.

In interviews, Hussain has spoken about the complex relationship tabla players have with the microphone. The tabla, traditionally perceived as an emulation of the human voice through its tonal subtleties and timbre, had to adapt to the world of amplification. "The microphone, if used properly, can bring out the voice of the tabla in ways that are difficult to achieve in an acoustic setting," he explains. However, this new medium of sound reproduction also posed challenges. The question of fidelity—how true the amplified sound was to the tabla's original voice—became central. As audio technology advanced, Hussain began to experiment with differ-



Zakir Hussain's appearance in the Taj Mahal Tea ad became iconic, blending his rhythmic mastery with the brand's message of harmony and tradition. X

ent types of microphones, positioning them to capture the tabla's tonal complexities without losing its essence.

The dialogue between Hussain and sound engineers became crucial in this process. The relationship between performer and technician was no longer limited to a simple task of amplification; it evolved

into a collaboration that shaped the very nature of the performance. Engineers, tasked with finding the right balance between clarity and warmth, had to understand the intricate details of tabla playing—the tonal shifts, the subtle variations in pressure, and the nuanced articulation of the bols (the spoken syl-

lables that represent each drum stroke). Hussain, ever the innovator, pushed the boundaries of sound engineering, insisting on a sound that was not only amplified but also rich in detail, able to express the tabla's full range of emotional depth.

The advent of recorded music further expanded the

tabla's reach. Early recordings of tabla performances, often captured in less-than-ideal acoustic conditions, had a certain rawness to them. However, as technology improved, the quality of sound reproduction also evolved. Today, tabla performances, whether live or recorded, benefit from advanced sound engineer-

ing techniques that allow the instrument's voice to be heard clearly, whether in a concert hall in New York or on a smartphone speaker in a distant village.

Zakir Hussain's global presence, aided by the reach of audio-visual technology, brought tabla into the international spotlight. Through television broadcasts, recordings, and online platforms, his performances reached millions. The internet, as Denise Nuttall discusses, has become a new medium for tabla players to connect with audiences, with Hussain's own work serving as a model for how traditional music can be preserved and disseminated in the digital age. His live performances, often accompanied by intricate light shows and modern sound systems, showcase the seamless blend of old and new. The tabla, traditionally a medium for intimate, live interactions between performer and audience, is now part of a larger, digitized world, where its voice resonates across continents.

But while technology has amplified the tabla's reach, it has also posed questions about authenticity. As scholars like Nuttall and Roy have noted, the internet and digital recordings have democratized access

to tabla instruction and performance. Yet, this shift has disrupted traditional pedagogical practices. No longer confined to the guru-shishya relationship in physical spaces, tabla knowledge is now transmitted through virtual platforms. The purity of the oral transmission, once central to the preservation of tabla traditions, now exists alongside the convenience and accessibility of online tutorials and performances.

Zakir Hussain's career exemplifies the delicate balance between tradition and technology. Through his innovative use of the microphone and his embrace of modern sound engineering, he has transformed the tabla into a global voice. But his mastery lies not just in technical skill or the ability to engage with technology—it is in his capacity to make the tabla speak, whether through an amplifier, a microphone, or the ancient tones of its own wood and skin.

In this sense, Hussain has not just adapted to the changing landscape of music technology; he has shaped it, ensuring that the tabla's voice, both ancient and contemporary, will continue to resonate for generations to come.

TDC Network

Dangerous in the sweetest way

Ustad Zakir Hussain, the legendary tabla maestro, occupies an unparalleled position in Indian Classical Music. His artistry has been celebrated not just for his technical mastery but for his ability to forge connections with fellow musicians, audiences, and the historical traditions of Hindustani music. His work embodies a journey of mutual respect, collaboration, and an unyielding commitment to preserving and elevating the art form.

In the words of another Ustad, Zakir Hussain was described as "K.hatarna 'k ast" (he/she is dangerous), a compliment underscoring his unmatched musical abilities. This epithet reflects the reverence he commands across Hindustani musical networks, stretching from India to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Such praise also illustrates the cultural weight given to lineage, skill, and legacy in these musical traditions.

Conversely, musicians of lesser ability were labeled as "Gushneh [coll. gurusneh] ast" (he/she is hungry), denoting their inadequate skills and limited means to sustain themselves through music. This dichotomy between seasoned professionals and amateurs underscores the traditional bias that privileged hereditary musicians, particularly those steeped in the traditions of Hindustani music. Ustad Zakir Hussain's rise, however, demonstrates a fusion of these traditions with individual innovation, solidifying his place among the greats.

In a post-concert interview, Ustad Zakir Hussain reflected on his collaborations with two iconic artists, Ustad Rashid Khan and Pandit Budhaditya Mukherjee. Speaking of Ustad Rashid Khan, Zakir Hussain said, "Getting on stage with Rashid, it was,



Ustad Zakir Hussain and Ustad Amjad Ali Khan during the "Pancham Seventy" concert in 2012 at Mumbai's Shanmukhananda Hall. X

you know, sublime as far as I could tell. We just somehow, was just there." His words capture the effortless joy and camaraderie that define an ideal musical partnership. He continued, "With Budhaditya Mukherjee Sahib, I have to say that it was just like a step further than what it was. The first half with Rashid was as expected for me; fun & enjoyment and great camaraderie & all that stuff."

Describing his collaboration with Pandit Budhaditya Mukherjee, he noted, "To be able to play with someone like Budhaditya Ji's calibre, of an artist who's of a very high status & then you hear him play like in the same way as great Ustaad's like Vilayat Khan Sahib, you tend to go back into that world & then to be able to pull out information, tabla information, that I've heard great maestros play with those other great maestros & see that this was the place to be able to showcase that with someone of the stature of Budhaditya Mukherjee, was really a very special moment."

These reflections reveal several dimensions of Zakir Hussain's genius: His partnership with Ustad Rashid Khan exemplified the importance of mutual respect, joy, and effortless connection, enriching the overall experience for both musicians and the audience. With Pandit Budhaditya

Mukherjee, Zakir Hussain described the collaboration as "a step further," emphasizing how a great accompanist doesn't just support but enhances and elevates the performance. Playing alongside Budhaditya Mukherjee reminded him of legendary maestros like Ustad Vilayat Khan, showcasing Zakir Hussain's ability to bridge the past and present. This connection allowed him to channel historical styles and techniques, enriching his contemporary performances. His opportunity to "pull out tabla information" passed down by maestros reveals his role as a custodian of tradition and a conduit for its modern expression.

Ustad Zakir Hussain's reflections illuminate the art of accompaniment as a dynamic, reciprocal relationship. The accompanist is not a mere background artist but an integral contributor, shaping the performance through skill, sensitivity, and historical awareness.

His collaborations with masters like Ustad Rashid Khan and Pandit Budhaditya Mukherjee showcase his unique ability to preserve tradition while continuously pushing the boundaries of creativity.

In the world of Hindustani music, where the hierarchy of hereditary lineage often dictates a musician's status, Ustad Zakir Hussain stands as a figure who transcends these structures.

It's shocking and saddening news that the Tabla Maestro par excellence, who enthralled the lovers and connoisseurs of Indian classical music in India and abroad for more than half a century, is no more. It's a huge loss for the world of music, especially Indian classical music.

It's always daunting to step out of the long shadows of your Guru and father, who himself dominated the field of music for decades, and create a distinct niche for yourself—reinventing your craft while incorporating current and contemporary trends without losing one's centuries-old base of Indian classical music and achieving soaring heights with imagination and creativity.

That's what happened with young Zakir, who saw his father, the renowned Tabla maestro Ustad Alla Rakha, play with the Sitar Maestro Pt. Ravi Shankar for decades and observed the minutest details from close quarters. After decades of firsthand lessons from his father and rigorous training, he graduated to perform with Pandit Ravi Shankar in place of his father. Obviously, it was a matter of great joy and pride for Ustad Alla Rakha to see his son play with Pt. Ravi Shankar. Grown-up Zakir Hussain played with all the top musicians of India, including Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma and Ustad Amjad Ali Khan.

He was honest and frank enough to admit that a Tabla player was essentially an accompanist, and how much impact his act would have on the audience depending on how much time and space the main musician was willing to give to the Tabla player. In this regard, he found Pt.

Tabla Maestro Zakir Hussain, a born Genius



An artist of the Gurukul School of Arts pays tribute to Indian tabla player Zakir Hussain through paintings, in Mumbai on Monday. (ANI Photo)

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Shiv Kumar Sharma the most liberal and encouraging, and gave considerable opportunity to the tabla player to showcase his talent. He also disarmingly confessed that giving accompaniment to Sitar Maestro Ravi Shankar was the most difficult, as Pandit Ji often played on unusual beats; instead of teen taal, he would play three-and-a-half taal!

Based in the USA for more than four decades, he reached out to the youth through his experiments and demos, in which he would create

different sounds, like that of galloping horses or a thunderstorm. He was a very interesting and articulate teacher who explained the origins of different sounds and how to mix them and converse with the interplay of sounds. He once explained to young students of an American school how they could place an order in a restaurant for a hamburger or a cappuccino.

Notwithstanding his long years abroad and collaborations with foreign musicians like Mickey Hart, Charles Lloyd, Dave

Holland, Joe Henderson, Billy Cobham, Edgar Meyer, Bela Fleck, and John McLaughlin, he retained his Indian roots. He created Project Shakti in 1973, pioneering the fusion of Indian classical music with jazz and bringing the Tabla to the world stage. He was thankful to George Harrison for inviting him to record for Living in the Material World.

I was fortunate to host his father, Alla Rakha, along with Pt. Ravi Shankar in Santiago, Chile. A decade later, I presented Zakir Hussain at the residence of

the Indian High Commissioner in London in 1988 with Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma. I needed to present him twice in Chicago while serving as the Consul General of India. Five years later, I helped organize two performances in Nairobi, Kenya. He was also kind enough to sit for a long interview for my book, *In the Minds of the Maestros*. I have fond memories of the lunch I hosted in his honour at the residence of the High Commissioner.

For his lifelong contribution to Indian classical music, he was deservedly honoured with the Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan, in the footsteps of Pt. Ravi Shankar and Ustad Ali Akbar, he was a significant bridge between Indian and Western music.

Lovers and connoisseurs of Indian music will hugely miss him. May his soul rest in peace!

SUPREME COURT: WRONG PRACTICE OF CONVERTING CIVIL DISPUTES INTO CRIMINAL CASES RAMPANT IN MANY STATES

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Rikhab Birani Versus The State Of Uttar Pradesh* observed and has expressed concerns over the 'wrong and rampant practice' of converting civil disputes into criminal cases in several states.

The bench comprising of Chief Justice of India, CJI Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar was hearing the present matter.

In the present case, the court was hearing the plea filed seeking to quash of charges under Section 420, Section 406, Section 354, Section 504, Section 506 of Indian Penal Code, IPC filed against the petitioner by the complainant who alleged foul play in the transfer of the sale deed of certain property.

The petitioner in the plea had challenged the order of the Allahabad High Court, wherein



the court refused to quash the charges in the petition under S. 482 of Code of Criminal Procedure, CrPC in the prima facie view that "at this stage, it cannot be said that no offence is made out against the applicants."

The bench asked the counsel appearing for

the respondent no. 2 i.e., the original complainant if any civil suit had been filed on the present facts, the counsel answered that only a criminal case was filed considering that the petitioner had shifted to another residence.

The bench of Chief Justice of India, CJI ver-

bally remarked that the recent trend of wrongly giving civil disputes a criminal colour.

The Chief Justice of India, CJI told the respondent that, "This is again one of those cases where a civil default or civil case is converted into a criminal one and this has to be checked very

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strongly. Please advise your clients otherwise your case may not become barred by limitation also. This is happening in quite some states and it is wrong. It being a wrong practice.'

It was also alleged before the court that the petitioner's inducement, the complainant had transferred Rs. 19 lakhs into the petitioner's account on 'the false promise' that a sale deed would be executed in favour of the complainant.

The court in the case stayed the criminal trail wherein it is noted

that, 'the complainant defaulted in making the payment and committed a breach of contract. The earlier complaints did not result in registration of any First Information Report as no criminal offence was established.'

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has granted three weeks time for the counter to be filed by the original complainant.

Accordingly, the court listed the matter for further consideration on March 2025.

Bar Council of India tells SC: Advocate cannot do full-time journalism

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Mohd. Kamran v. State of Uttar Pradesh and Anr* was informed by the Bar Council of India, BCI that a practising advocate cannot work simultaneously as a full-time journalist. This being due to the bar under Rule 49 of the BCI Rules of Conduct.

The bench comprising of Justice Abhay S Oka and Justice Augustine George Masih was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case has earlier sought the stand of the BCI on whether an advocate can be a full-time journalist.

In the present case, the bench was hearing the petition filed by an advocate, who was working as a freelance journalist, wherein it seeks to quash the defamation case.

The counsel appearing for the Bar Council of India, BCI informed the bench that, "They cannot practice law and simulta-

neously also be an accredited journalist.'

The counsel appearing for the petitioner also submitted before the court that he would not work as a journalist, whether full-time or part-time and was only practising law.

The bench in its order recorded that, "The Bar Council of India, BCI has taken a stand that it is not permissible for an advocate to do full-time journalism."

The bench also stated that the voluntary undertaking of the petitioner that he would refrain from the field of journalism, whether full-time or part-time.

The bench while considering the facts and circumstances of the case clarified that the presence of Bar Council of India, BCI is no longer required as the controversy is over now. Accordingly, the court listed the matter for further consideration on February 2025.

Supreme Court: Petition filed against Yati Narsinghanand's 'Dharam Sansad'; contempt action sought against Uttar Pradesh police

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Aruna Roy & Ors v Shri Ajay Kumar Mishra & Ors* observed wherein the court was hearing the contempt petition is filed against Uttar Pradesh administration and police for not taking steps against the 'Dharam Sansad' which is being organised by Yati Narsinghanand, who has a history of making communal statements targeting the Muslim community between December 17 to December 25, 2024 at Ghazi-

abad.

It has been pointed out by the petitioner, the former civil servants and activists, at the website and the advertisements for the 'Dharam Sansad' include hate speeches against the followers of Islam religion and incite violence against them.

It has also been argued by the petitioner before the court that the Ghaziabad District Administration and the Uttar Pradesh police have failed to act as per the directions which are issued by the Supreme

Court in order to take suo motu action against hate speeches.

The counsel, Advocate Prashant Bhushan orally mentioned the matter before bench headed by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna for urgent listing.

The bench of Chief Justice of India, CJI Sanjiv Khanna told Advocate Prashant Bhushan to file an urgent listing of the present matter.

The petitioners include Aruna Roy, Retd IAS, Ashok Kumar Sharma, Deb Mukarji & Navrekha Sharma, Retd IFS, Syeda Hameed,

Former Member planning Commission and NCW Chief and Vijayan MJ, Social researcher and Policy analyst.

In 2021, the 'Dharam Sansad' events held by Yati Narsinghanand created controversy for communal comments. Therefore, he was being arrested in the hate speech cases registered and was later released on bail after certain days of custody.

The Supreme Court in the case observed and has issued notice to him in a criminal contempt case over his remarks against the judiciary.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Calcutta High Court in the case *Smt. Lachmina Devi & Anr. -Vs- Union of India & Ors* observed and has held that in cases for providing compassionate employment, it is 'reprehensible' to consider the source of inception of a child's birth and to discriminate against those who may have been born from a void marriage.

The bench headed by Justice Ananya Bandopadhyay in the case observed and has held that the objective to grant compassionate appointment to redress financial constraints occasioned

in a family in the event of the death of the bread earner ensures a means of sufficiency to assuage abrupt crisis and indigence, which cannot be refused ambiguously and unjustifiably on the basis of a circular which is unequivocally unconstitutional to judge a child's entitlement to an appointment on compassionate ground which being on the basis of its descent.'

Adding to it, she stated that it is reprehensible and repugnant to distinguish the eligibility or suitability to the aforesaid appointment considering the valid or void source of inception of a child's birth.

In the present case, the

court was hearing the petition filed challenging the refusal of compassionate employment to the younger son of a deceased railways employee, born from his second wife.

It was also stated before the court that the other son, and the first wife did not have any objection to the compassionate appointment of the second son.

Therefore, the appointment was rejected based on a circular dated January 02, 1992.

The bench headed by Justice Ananya Bandopadhyay found that the circular on the basis of which the compassionate employment was rejected, had been struck down by a division bench of the Su-

preme court in the case *Namita Goldar v Union of India*.

The court in the case held that the younger son or petition no. 2 would be entitled to compassionate appointment in place of his father regardless of the legitimacy of his parents' marriage.

The court stated that a child by virtue of its birth cannot be enmeshed by legitimacy and/or stigmatized by illegitimacy contrary to the principle enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution of India to its prejudice devoid of any iota of fault on its part of having taken birth through a void marriage.

Accordingly, the court allowed the petition.

SUPREME COURT DISPLEASED PLEA FOR WOMEN'S RESERVATION IN BAR ASSOCIATION

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Meena A Jagtap Versus Bar Council of India*, BCI was hearing the petition filed seeking 33% reservation for women lawyers in Gujarat's bar bodies.

The court called out the petitioner, a lady advocate, for engaging a male advocate to argue the case.

The bench comprising of Justice Surya Kant and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing the present mat-

ter.

The bench in the case expressed disappointment over the petitioner's engaging of a male advocate, when her plea filed was for reservation for women lawyers. The counsel appearing for the petitioner i.e., a male advocate apprised the court that the petitioner is a lady advocate practicing before courts in Gujarat.

The bench headed by Justice Kant in the case expressed that the bench had two preliminary ob-

jections.

Firstly - as to why the petitioner did not initially approach the Gujarat High Court, and secondly, as to why the petitioner herself was not arguing the case.

The bench of Justice Kant stated that the lady advocate is asking for 33% reservation, why can't she argue the case? We would like to know whether she deserves that reservation or not? She should be ready to argue the case. Why should she ride on



the shoulders of a male advocate?'

The counsel appear-

ing for the petitioner explained that the petition filed before the Supreme

Court as it is already seized of similar matter with respect to Delhi Bar

bodies.

He also he conceded to what was falling from the court and conveyed that the petitioner would appear and argue on the next date.

The bench of Justice Kant remarked that the Court has not passed any final order in the Delhi Bar matter and the same had arisen out of a judgment of the Delhi High Court. As such, the petitioner should first approach the Gujarat High Court. The counsel ap-

pearing for the petitioner urged the court that the Delhi High Court judgment would come in the way of the petitioner and prejudice the Gujarat High Court.

The bench headed by Justice Kant stated that the Delhi High Court judgment may have persuasive value, but the Gujarat High Court can take its own view.

Accordingly, the court listed the matter for further consideration on December 19, 2024.

Kerala High Court mulls suo motu contempt action against organisers, persons who attended CPI(M) area conference by blocking road

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Kerala High Court in the case *N Prakash v M V Govindan Master* observed and has noted that 40,821 road accidents occurred in the State this year up till October 2024, in which 3,168 persons died and 45,657 persons sustained injuries.

The court in the case is set to consider whether the suo moto contempt proceedings should be initiated against



persons who conducted and attended CPI(M) party's area conference in Vanchiyoor, by

obstructing roads on December 05, 2024.

The Division bench com-

prising of Justice Anil K. Narendran and Justice Muralee Krishna S was hearing the present matter.

In the present case, the court was hearing the petition filed against CPI(M) State Secretary M V Govindan for leading the party area conference by allegedly blocking public roads.

The bench stated that as per the statistics provided on the official website of Kerala Police, the number of road accidents in Kerala

in the year 2024 up to October is 40,821 in which 3,168 persons died and 45,657 persons sustained injuries. The rash and negligent driving in the State has gone to the extent of causing accidents in which even pedestrians walking through the footpaths or waiting in the pedestrian facilities of public roads sustain fatal injuries.

In such circumstances the question as to whether a suo moto proceedings of contempt, under Article 215 of

the Constitution of India for openly flouting the directions contained in the order and judgment of this Court in WPC No.11886 of 2021 requires consideration.

Earlier, the court directed the State Police Chief to submit a report regarding the incident. A report has been placed on record furnishing the names of persons who attended the Party Conference, along with names of persons who were on the stage.

The court while consider-

ing the facts and circumstances of the case noted that the blocking roads and obstructing transportation and movement of pedestrians would attract penal consequences under the *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita* and the *Motor Vehicles Act*.

It has also been noted by the court that accidents are increasing in the State, and the construction of unauthorized structures on roads would further elevate the risk of accidents for pedes-

trians.

The court orally stated that, 'Persons who is attending a public meeting on a stage put up on a public road has to face the consequence, or organizers and persons who attended it must face the consequences...They should face the consequences, we will see how to handle these types of issues.'

Accordingly, the court listed the matter for further consideration on December 18, 2024.

TOP OF THE DAY

KAZAKHSTAN MARKS 33RD INDEPENDENCE DAY

ASTANA : Kazakhstan marked a significant milestone on December 16, celebrating the 33rd anniversary of its independence. The day is not only a moment for national pride but a time to reflect on the remarkable transformation Kazakhstan has undergone since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Since its independence, Kazakhstan has emerged as a key player in Central Asia, experiencing exponential growth across various sectors. The nation's economy, bolstered by energy, manufacturing, and technology industries, is the largest in the region. Moreover, Kazakhstan has positioned itself as a leader in green energy initiatives and sustainable development, drawing significant international attention.

'TAIWAN MUST INVEST IN ASYMMETRIC WARFARE'

Taipei : Noting that traditional weapons would be easy for China to counter, US-based military analyst Eric Gomez has stressed the need for Taiwan to invest in asymmetric weapons, Taipei Times reported citing a new report. The report, which was published by the Cato Institute said that Taiwan should maintain its existing conventional forces to combat low-intensity conflicts while acquiring more asymmetric warfare capabilities to counter potential aggression from China.

SYRIAN REBEL FORCE DEPLOYS NEAR DAMASCUS

HUSSEINIYEH: A rebel force deployed to a village in southeastern Damascus to stop looters who swarmed a residential complex and set some apartments on fire. The raid by the rebel force comes a week after the fighters marched on the Syrian capital in their lightning offensive that forced Syrian President Bashar Assad to flee, ending five decades of his family rule. On Sunday, a rebel force arrived at the village of Husseiniyeh after looters, including women and children, emptied a residential complex, walking away with furniture, windows, food, copper wires and anything they can get their hands on.

UNLIKE RUSSIA, ASSAD AIMED TO FIGHT

DAMASCUS: Ousted Syrian leader Bashar Assad says he had no plans to leave the country after the fall of Damascus a week ago but the Russian military evacuated him after their base in western Syria came under attack. The comments are the first by Assad since he was overthrown by insurgent groups. Assad said in a statement on his Facebook page that he left Damascus on the morning of Dec 8, hours after insurgents stormed the capital. He said he left in coordination with Russian allies to the Russian base in the coastal province of Latakia, where he planned to keep fighting.

ISRAEL OKAYS PLAN TO DOUBLE SETTLEMENTS IN GOLAN HEIGHTS

Around 50,000 people live on the Israeli-controlled side of the Golan Heights

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

The Israeli cabinet on Sunday (local time) unanimously approved Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan, which aims to double the settler population in the Golan Heights, Times of Israel reported. Around 50,000 people live on the Israeli-controlled side of the heights, evenly split between Jews and Druze. The new plan worth 40 million Israeli New Shekel (NIS) (USD 11 million) plans to double it.

Netanyahu's office said the government had "unanimously approved" the "demographic development" of the territory, which would seek to double the Israeli population there.

The money will go toward education, renewable energy, the establishment of a student village and a plan for absorbing new residents, it added.

"Strengthening the Golan is strengthening the State of Israel, and it is especially important at this time. We will continue to hold onto it, cause it to blossom, and settle in it," Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement. Notably, Israel conquered the Golan from Syria in 1967 and annexed it in 1981. Though most of the world does not recognize Israeli control of the region, the US granted its recognition

THE CABINET DECISIONS

- Population & Budget: 50,000 people (Jews and Druze); NIS 40 million (\$11 million) allocated for development.
- Plan Details: Funding for education, renewable energy, student village, and resident absorption.
- Netanyahu's Statement: Emphasizes strengthening Israel by settling and developing the Golan.
- Historical Context: Israel conquered Golan from Syria in 1967 and annexed it in 1981; US recognized control in 2019.
- Syria-Israel Tensions: Israel's recent airstrikes and incursions in Syria; Syria's new leader prioritizes reconstruction over conflict.



Druze women walk near the fence leading to the buffer zone that separates Israeli and Syrian forces in the occupied Golan Heights. (File Photo)

in 2019, according to Times of Israel.

Since the rebels led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) overthrew the over two-decades-long Bashar al-Assad regime on December 8, Israel has launched hundreds of airstrikes across Syria and carried out a land incursion that stretches past the occupied Golan Heights into a previously demilitarized buffer zone, as reported by The Washington Post. The Israeli army swiftly took control of the abandoned army positions, and air attacks have decimated most of Syria's military capabilities.

Syria's de facto new leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, denounced what he described as Israel's "uncalculated military adventures" on Saturday, while emphasizing he was more interested in state-building than opening another conflict.

Israel to close embassy in Ireland

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

Israel will shut down its embassy in Ireland because of Dublin's recognition of a Palestinian state and support for South Africa's genocide case against Tel Aviv at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Al Jazeera reported.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar on Sunday (local time) said that the Israeli embassy in Ireland would shut down in view of what he called "double standards" and "extreme anti-Israel policy" of the Irish government.

"Today, I have instructed the closure of Israel's Embassy in Ireland. The actions, double standards, and anti-semitic rhetoric of the Irish government against Israel are rooted in efforts to delegitimize and demonize the Jewish state. The Irish gov-



Representative Image

ernment recognized a "Palestinian state" during attacks on Israel (a move praised by Hamas), attempted to redefine 'genocide' in international law to support baseless claims against Israel at the ICJ, backed politically motivated cases at the ICC, promoted anti-Israel measures within the EU, and fostered hostility toward Israel," Sa'ar said in a post on X. "Notably, Ireland is one of the few European countries that has not

adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism, and its government has failed to take effective measures to combat the surge of antisemitism within Ireland. Israel will focus its resources on strengthening bilateral relations with countries worldwide, according to priorities that also take into account the attitudes and actions of these states toward Israel," he added. Israeli opposition leader and former Prime Minister Yair Lapid criticized the move and said that he believed that Israel's embassies should precisely operate where there is opposition to Israel. In a post on X, he explained, "Mr. Sa'ar, I suggest you not use the word 'shame,' because someone who betrayed and deceived everyone he was ever a partner with does not understand the concept.

Had a 'very warm' phone call with Trump: Netanyahu



AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed holding a phone call with US President-elect Donald Trump, during which he reaffirmed his country's 'determination' to continue acting against Iran and its armed proxies, CNN reported. Netanyahu said in the video message that he had a "very friendly, very warm, and very important conversation" on Saturday (local time) and told about the need for Israel to "complete its victory." The leaders also spoke of the need to bring home the remaining hostages in Gaza. Hamas carried out a massive terror attack on Israel on October 7 killing over 1200 people and holding over 250 as hostages. Around 100 of them are still believed to be in captivity in Gaza. Israel launched

a strong counter-offensive targeting Hamas units in Gaza in an operation that has killed over 45,000 Palestinians. "I discussed all of this again last night with my friend, US President-elect Donald Trump," Netanyahu said in a statement. "It was a very friendly, very warm and very important conversation. We spoke about the need to complete Israel's victory, and we also spoke at length about the efforts we are making to free our hostages," he said as quoted by CNN. Netanyahu said that Israel continues to "work tirelessly to bring our hostages home, both the living and the dead. And I add, the less we talk about it, the better, and so with God's help, we will succeed." On Sunday, the Israeli Prime Minister took to social media platform X and strongly affirmed that they would "change" the Middle East.

Palestinian Authority cracks down on Jenin terror groups

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM

Palestinian Authority security forces on Sunday continued a rare crackdown on terror strongholds in Jenin.

An Israeli military source described the raids to The Press Service of Israel as "the most serious Palestinian operation in recent years."

The operation, which began yesterday morning, has prompted a general strike across the area, with businesses, schools, and UNRWA offices closing in protest. Human rights organizations are urging the PA to end the campaign. Dubbed "Operation Homeland Defense," PA forces have taken control of four neighborhoods in the Jenin refugee camp, surrounded hospitals, and conducted thorough searches in alleyways.

A Palestinian Authority source told TPS-IL that the raids were directly ordered by PA President Mahmoud Abbas, "who ordered the



security forces not to return home until you gain full control of the camp, whatever the cost..."

During the operation, PA forces killed Yazid Ja'isa, a commander in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group. Ja'isa had previously clashed with the PA, including an incident where he seized weapons from Palestinian police guarding Joseph's Tomb and proposed exchanging the weapons for the release of Islamic Jihad members imprisoned in Jericho.

According to the Palestinian source, "In recent weeks, the Palestinian Authority forces have tried to hold talks with the terrorist organizations, but they have once again provoked the Palestinian Authority, fired at government institutions and even confiscated Palestinian Authority vehicles and driven them around the camp..."

A senior PA official told TPS-IL the crackdown is part of a broader strategy to demonstrate PA authority's ability to maintain governance

-- Ramallah eyes eventually administering the Gaza Strip. "This is about restoring Palestinian control in Judea and Samaria and eventually Gaza," the official stated, emphasizing the importance of demonstrating governance capacity to international stakeholders, particularly the United States. The operation has sparked unrest in other areas. Terrorists in Jenin have called on refugee camps in the area of Shechem (Nablus) to join the fighting.

'Pakistan now wants talks with Kabul'

AGENCIES
KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday criticized the federal government for dismissing his earlier proposal for direct talks with the Afghan interim government, only to now pursue the same strategy, Dawn reported.

Speaking at the Chief Minister's House, Gandapur expressed his frustration, stating that his call for negotiations had been rejected and his statements taken out of context.

The Chief Minister pointed out that KP, as a province directly affected by the border situation, could not resolve its law and order issues without engaging Afghanistan in dialogue. "When they disagreed earlier, I was compelled to speak out because KP is the province bearing the brunt



of these issues," he said.

Gandapur further added that the federal government had now approached him, acknowledging that negotiations with Kabul were necessary to address the challenges, but he expressed skepticism about their commitment. Gandapur emphasized that Afghanistan must be included in any discussion aimed at improving the security situation in KP. He noted the presence of significant numbers of militants both in

Pakistan and across the border in Afghanistan, with an estimated 16,000 to 18,000 militants operating in Pakistan and 22,000 to 24,000 on the Afghan side.

According to Gandapur, once militants crossed into Afghanistan, they were beyond Pakistan's reach, complicating efforts to tackle the issue effectively, reported Dawn. The Chief Minister stressed the importance of avoiding a confrontation with Afghanistan, given the country's history of resistance against foreign powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union. He also criticized the Afghan interim government for failing to maintain stability within its own borders, pointing out that several international actors remained active in Afghanistan, contributing to the region's ongoing instability.

Polls may begin between late 2025 and early 2026: Yunus

AGENCIES
DHAKA

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus announced on Monday that Bangladesh's next general elections could be scheduled between late 2025 and the first half of 2026. Yunus made the statement during his address to the nation on Victory Day, marking Bangladesh's victory in the 1971 Liberation War. Victory Day commemorates the moment on December 16, 1971, when General Amir Abdullah Niazi of Pakistan's armed forces and 93,000 soldiers surrendered to the Indian Army and the Mukti Bahini, marking the end of Bangladesh's nine-month war for independence. In his address, Yunus em-

phasized the importance of political consensus to move forward with elections. He said, "If political consensus allows us, again, to conduct elections based on accurate electoral rolls with a few reforms, it may be possible to hold elections by the end of 2025." Yunus acknowledged, however, that additional time might be needed to implement the necessary reforms. "And if we add to this the extent of reforms expected in terms of the electoral process and the Electoral Reforms Commission's recommendations and on the basis another six months may be required," he added. Yunus clarified that the timeline for the elections could be fixed between late 2025 and the first half of 2026.

B'DESH CELEBRATES VICTORY DAY OF LIBERATION WAR

Dhaka: Bangladesh is celebrating on Monday the anniversary of the victory against Pakistan in the Liberation War. People from all walks of life in Bangladesh are remembering the brave hearts who sacrificed their lives in the Liberation War with deep respect. The Victory Day celebrations begin with a 31 gun salute at sunrise.

In Dhaka, six guns of an artillery regiment of the Bangladesh Army saluted the brave hearts who sacrificed their lives in the War of Independence by

firing 31 rounds of cannon. Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus paid tribute to the brave hearts of the Liberation War by laying wreaths at the National Memorial in the morning. Thousands of people will offer wreaths there to pay tribute to the brave hearts who laid down their lives in the Liberation War. Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus will address the nation, marking Victory Day. The address will be live on Bangladesh Television and BTW World, the state tele-



vision stations. Buildings have been illuminated on the occasion of Victory Day. People from all walks of life are celebrating with the national flag. December 16 is a national holiday in

Bangladesh. Social, cultural and political organizations are organizing various events. In 1971, India's allied forces helped Bangladesh's freedom fighters in a bloody nine-month war.

to India, and an interim government led by Yunus took charge. Meanwhile, Vijay Diwas celebrations in Bangladesh's capital began with a 31 gun salute at sunrise. Six guns of an artillery regiment of the Bangladesh Army saluted the brave hearts who sacrificed their lives in the Bangladesh Liberation War by firing 31 rounds of cannon. India and Bangladesh will jointly commemorate the 53rd anniversary of Vijay Diwas of the 1971 India-Pakistan war today, with the annual exchange of war veterans and serving officers. Eight Indian war veterans and two serving officers of the Indian Armed Forces have arrived in Dhaka to commemorate Bangladesh's Victory Day celebrations.

Bangladesh. On August 5, a student-led movement ousted Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina after weeks of protests and violence that led to over 600 deaths. Hasina fled

THE BUNDESTAG



The chancellor, Olaf Scholz, addresses the Bundestag on a day where the only item on the agenda is a confidence vote, submitted by Scholz to pave the way for new elections in February in Berlin, Germany. Source: Filip Singer

EU slaps sanctions on dozens more Russian officials

AGENCIES
BRUSSELS

The European Union on Monday imposed fresh sanctions on dozens of officials linked to Russia's war on Ukraine, including two top North Korean defense officials, a military unit blamed for an attack on a Kyiv children's hospital and the heads of companies in the energy sector.

Russia's vast shadow fleet of ships that Moscow is exploiting to skirt restrictions on transporting oil and gas, or carrying stolen Ukrainian grain, was also targeted. Fifty-two vessels were added to a growing list of ships banned from European ports and deprived of services. "This package of



sanctions is part of our response to weaken Russia's war machine and those who are enabling this war, also including Chinese companies," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. "We will stand by the Ukrainian people on all fronts: humanitarian, economic, political,

diplomatic and military." In all, EU foreign ministers froze the assets of 54 people and 30 "entities," which are usually companies, ministries, government agencies or other organizations. Travel bans were also imposed on officials. The EU has slapped sev-

eral rounds of sanctions on Russia since President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine in February 2022. More than 2,300 officials and entities have now been impacted.

North Korean Defense Minister No Kwang Chol was targeted for being directly involved in the military cooperation, including sending thousands of troops to Russia. Deputy Chief of the armed force's General Staff, Kim Yong Bok, was also hit for going to Russia to supervise their deployment.

Several companies were also targeted this time, including Russian defense firms, a chemical plant and a civil Russian airline providing logistical support to the armed forces.

30 N KOREAN TROOPS KILLED IN RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

This is the first reported casualties since the Pentagon and Ukraine announced North Korea has sent about 10,000 troops to Russia to help it in the almost three-year war.

AGENCIES
KYIV

Ukraine's military intelligence agency claimed Monday that around 30 North Korean troops were killed or wounded in fighting against the Ukrainian army at the weekend in Russia's Kursk border region.

This is the first reported casualties since the Pentagon and Ukraine announced North Korea has sent about 10,000 troops to Russia to help it in the almost 3-year war.

The casualties occurred around three villages in Kursk, where Russia has for four months been trying to quash a Ukrainian incursion, the agency, known by its acronym GUR, said in a public post on the Telegram messaging app.

At least three North Korean servicemen went missing around another Kursk village, GUR said.

It was not possible to independently verify the Ukrainian claims. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov referred related questions to the Russian Defense Ministry, which didn't immediately comment.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has pledged unwavering support for Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor under a mutual defense pact.

The alliance gave a jolt to international relations, and Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday that

KOREAN ANGLE



A file photo North Korean troops

- Russia-Ukraine war, which began in February 2022, has led to significant geopolitical tension and widespread humanitarian crises
- Language barriers hinder coordination between Russian and North Korean forces.
- Putin warns of new threats amid U.S. missile plans in Europe and Asia.
- Ukraine's incursion in Kursk aims to counter Russian advances.

the planned deployment of U.S. intermediate-range missiles to Europe and Asia has brought new threats.

"In view of rising geopolitical tensions, we must take additional measures to ensure the security of Russia and our allies," Putin told a meeting with top military brass. "We are doing it accurately and in a balanced way to avoid being drawn into a full-scale arms race."

However, military analysts say the language barrier has bedeviled combat coordination between Russian and North Korean troops.

"The poor integration and ongoing communication problems between Russian and North Korean forces will likely continue to cause friction in Russian military operations in Kursk ... in the near term," the Insti-

tute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said late Sunday.

On Nov. 5, Ukrainian officials said that their forces had for the first time engaged with North Korean units that had been recently deployed to help Russia.

Ukraine seized land in Russia's Kursk border region last August in what was the first occupation of Russian territory since World War II. The operation embarrassed the Kremlin and aimed to counter unceasingly glum news from the front line.

The incursion hasn't significantly changed the war's dynamics. Over the past year, Russia has been on the front foot, with the exception of Kursk, and has been grinding deeper into eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region despite heavy losses.

Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov said Monday the military has been making steady gains in Ukraine, claiming that they have accelerated recently, with Russian forces capturing about 30 square kilometers (11.5 square miles) of territory a day.

The Russia-Ukraine war, which began in February 2022, has led to significant geopolitical tension and widespread humanitarian crises. Russia's invasion aimed to weaken Ukraine's sovereignty, but Ukrainian forces, bolstered by Western support, have fiercely resisted. The war has resulted in thousands of deaths, displaced millions, and devastated Ukraine's infrastructure. Global economies are impacted, with energy prices soaring and food security threatened.

12 Indians found dead in bedroom in Georgia's mountain resort

AGENCIES
TBILISI

Twelve Indian nationals were found dead at a restaurant in Georgia's mountain resort of Gudauri, according to the Indian mission here.

Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs said in a statement that no signs of injuries or signs of violence were detected in an initial inspection. All victims died from carbon monoxide poisoning, local media reported, citing police.

The Indian mission in Tbilisi said that all 12 victims were Indian nationals. However, Georgia's internal affairs ministry statement said 11 were foreigners while one victim was its citizen.

The Indian Embassy in Tbilisi said it was "committed to providing all possible sup-



Gudauri, a ski resort in Georgia.

port" to the bereaved families and that it was working to repatriate the bodies of the 11 Indian nationals. Preliminary tests found no traces of violence on the bodies, police said, adding that a power generator had been placed indoors, near the bedrooms, and turned on after the power supply went down on Friday.

Police have launched an

investigation into the incident under Article 116 of the country's criminal code, suggesting negligent manslaughter. Gudauri, lodged high up in the Caucasus Mountains close to the border with Russia, is becoming increasingly popular with tourists, offering a cheaper alternative to Europe's main resorts in the Alps. More than 300,000

international travelers visited the Gudauri resort in 2023, according to a local consulting firm.

The resort's parking lot sits at 7,200 feet (2,195 meters) - higher than the tops of many slopes in the Alps. Gudauri offers 56 kilometers (35 miles) of skiable terrain, climbing to a peak of 10,750 feet (3,277 meters).

Canada promises Trump a border crackdown

AGENCIES
OTTAWA

Six Lego-like concrete blocks mark the end of a rural road at the U.S.-Canada border. The police vehicle, revving through blowing snow, crunches to a stop.

The barriers, installed last August in a joint venture with President Joe Biden's administration, stop vehicles bearing migrants from barreling across the border into the United States.

But they do not stop migrants crossing on foot.

"People can still hop over them," said Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Sergeant Daniel Dubois.

Canadian police say they have installed more cam-



A Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) vehicle is parked near the Canada-U.S. border during a patrol. (File Photo)

eras and sensors over this section of the border over the last four years. Ottawa promised this month to deploy more officers and technology targeting southbound border-crossers after U.S. President-elect Donald Trump threatened Canada and Mexico with sweeping 25% tariffs if they do not reduce the movement

of migrants and drugs into the U.S.

But Canadian law enforcement officials acknowledge they are limited in what they can do to stop southbound migrants.

"Even if we were everywhere, we couldn't stop it," said Charles Poirier, an RCMP spokesperson in Quebec.

Trump is to announce \$100 billion SoftBank investment in US

AGENCIES
PALM BEACH

President-elect Donald Trump will join SoftBank Group CEO Masayoshi Son at his Florida home on Monday to announce that the company is planning to invest \$100 billion in U.S. projects over the next four years. That's according to a person familiar with the plans who spoke on condition of anonymity before the planned announcement. Trump is set to speak at his Mar-a-Lago resort at 11 a.m., marking the first time he will address reporters since he won the election last month.

Trump in the past has announced deals with much fanfare but they have sometimes failed to deliver on promised investments. But the announcement



House Speaker Mike Johnson, left, President-elect Donald Trump, from third left, Vice President-elect JD Vance and Trump's pick for Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, attend the NCAA college football game in Landover on Saturday.

nonetheless is a win for Trump, who has used the weeks since he won the election to try to promote his policies, negotiate with foreign leaders and try to strike deals.

Before even taking office, he has been threatening to levy steep tariffs on Mexico and Canada, which prompted a visit from Canada's prime

minister and a call with Mexico's president.

In a post on his Truth Social site Tuesday, Trump said anyone making a \$1 billion investment in the United States "will receive fully expedited approvals and permits, including, but in no way limited to, all Environmental approvals." "GET READY TO ROCK!!!" he added.

German Chancellor Scholz loses confidence vote

AGENCIES
BERLIN

Olaf Scholz has lost a historic vote of confidence in the German parliament, paving the way for early national elections following the collapse of his government.

The German chancellor had called the vote in order to deliberately lose it, urging the Bundestag, or lower house of parliament, to declare its lack of confidence in him so that the first formal step could be made towards triggering new elections.

Scholz will now ask the president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to dissolve parliament, and to formally call new elections which have to take place within 60 days and have been pencilled in for 23 February.

The embattled chancellor required 367 votes of no confidence on Monday to succeed in his aim, and in the end 394 MPs obliged him. There were 207 yes votes, and 116 abstentions.

"My goal is to bring the federal election forward," Scholz had told a packed chamber in a forceful speech. "This is about having trust in our country and not putting our future at risk." Scholz said his aim was to shore up confidence in the future of the country, insisting: "Germany's best days lie ahead of us."

Scholz's three-way "traffic light" coalition collapsed in November after the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) quit in protest over the chancellor's sacking of the finance minister.

Canada's finance minister resigns after policy clash with PM Trudeau

AGENCIES
OTTAWA

Canada's Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland unexpectedly resigned on Monday over a policy clash with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, dismissing his plans for increased spending as "political gimmicks".

Freeland quit just hours before she was due to present a fall economic update to parliament, a document widely expected to show the



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (right).

minority Liberal government had run up a much larger 2023/24

The resignation by Free-

land, 56, who also served as deputy prime minister, leaves Trudeau without a key ally in cabinet ahead of an elec-

tion which polls suggest he will lose badly. "For the last number of weeks, you and I have found ourselves at odds over the best path forward for Canada," Freeland said in a letter to Trudeau posted on X. Freeland had been finance minister since August 2020. There was no immediate reaction from Trudeau's office.

Domestic media reports said Freeland and Trudeau had clashed over a government proposal for temporary tax breaks and other spending measures.

WRITERS GRETA GERWIG AND NOAH BAUMBACH DEVELOP IDEA FOR 'BARBIE' SEQUEL



AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

The wildly successful 'Barbie' film, which earned a staggering USD 1.4 billion globally and became one of the most talked-about cultural phenomena of 2023, could soon return to the big screen.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, sources close to the project hint that Oscar-nominated writers Greta Gerwig and Noah Baumbach have already developed an idea for a sequel to the blockbuster film.

Although Warner Bros. and the filmmakers have denied the reports, insiders confirm that discussions are underway, and the project is currently in its "early stages."

The massive success of Barbie, which captivated audiences with its whimsical yet poignant portrayal of the iconic doll's life in Barbie

land, left fans eagerly asking whether there would be more stories to tell.

While Warner Bros. and Mattel were quick to show interest in a potential sequel, the decision ultimately rested with Gerwig and Baumbach, the creative minds behind the film's success.

Gerwig, who both directed and co-wrote Barbie, has been vocal about the importance of having a meaningful story before committing to a sequel.

In March 2024, while accepting her "Time Women of the Year" honour, she explained, "My North Star is, what do I deeply love? What do I really care about? What's the story underneath this story? If I find the undertow, then we get it. If I don't find an undertow, there's no more," as per The Hollywood Reporter.

However, it appears that Gerwig and Baumbach have now found that "undertow."

'WE HAVE TOLLYWOOD, BOLLYWOOD, KOLLYWOOD BUT OUR INDIANNESS IS MORE IMPORTANT'



TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

CineTalkies convenor Sunil Barve opened up on this year's theme, and discussions around cinema and said that his platform aims to connect Indian cinema with its roots and culture.

Sunil Barve, film producer-director Vipul Shah and chief guest Ramesh Taurani attended the program 'Cine Srishti: Bhartiya drishti' organized by Sanskar Bharati in Mumbai.

In a conversation with ANI, Sunil Barve said, "Sanskar Bharati's attempt at Cine Talkies 2024 was originally because when we talk about cinema, we often talk about the release of films, and events about star-studded shows. Or we talk about award ceremonies, but we never see discussions on cinema."

"It must have been done on the street, but we have never seen it on such a large scale and keeping this in mind, Sanskar Bharati decided

that it is very important to organize this program called CineTalkies....this year's theme was Woods to Roots. We have Tollywood, Bollywood Kollywood etc, however, our Indianness is more important," he added.

Filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar also shared his views in the program 'Cine Srishti: Bhartiya Drishti' organized by Sanskar Bharati. He emphasised the importance of women-centric films and urged that there should be more such movies made in Bollywood.

He praised the entire idea behind the program, saying, "It was a very good program organised by Sanskar Bharati. There was a very good discussion, especially today there was a discussion on women-centric cinema," the ace director while discussing the idea behind the program.

Madhur, renowned for films such as Chandni Bar, Page 3, and Fashion, added that there is a need to make more women-centric films.

PICTURE PERFECT

Bollywood actors Riteish Deshmukh and Genelia Deshmukh at the celebration of film director and screenwriter Anees Bazmee's 45 years in Bollywood, in Mumbai on Sunday. (ANI)



'WOMEN-CENTRIC CINEMA SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO MAINSTREAM': MADHUR BHANDARKAR

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar on Sunday, emphasised the importance of women-centric films and urged that more of such movies should be made in Bollywood.

Speaking at the program 'Cine Srishti: Bhartiya Drishti' organized by Sanskar Bharati, he praised the entire idea behind the program.

In a conversation with ANI, he shared, "It was a very good program organised by Sanskar Bharati. There was a very good discussion, especially today there was a discussion on women-centric cinema."

Madhur, renowned for films such as Chandni Bar, Page 3, and Fashion, added that there is a need



to make more women-centric films.

"There was a good panel here and many things were discussed like how women-centric films should be increased further in Bollywood and how they should

such women-centric films and good topics so that our women-centric cinema can be brought to the mainstream," he said.

Bhandarkar was also honoured during the event on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Bhandarkar recently attended the 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) and said this is a place where filmmakers from all over the world come together.

"I am very happy to be here. I have been attending for almost 20 or 22 years. I have been involved in various capacities -- sometimes as part of the standing committee, sometimes as a jury member, and sometimes as the chairman. It's a place where filmmakers from all over the world, as well as different states of India, come together.

Shoojit Sircar attends launch event of book 'Shah Rukh Khan - Legend, Icon, Star'

TDG NETWORK
KOLKATA

Bollywood's Badshah, Shah Rukh Khan, is a phenomenon who has captured the hearts of millions. Reflecting on his extraordinary journey, it is evident he has transcended the role of an actor to become an emotion. Filmmaker Shoojit Sircar spoke about his bond with SRK and discussed his remarkable career during the launch event of the book Shah Rukh Khan - Legend, Icon, Star, written by Mohar Basu, in Kolkata.

The book's author, journalist and writer Mohar Basu, was also present at the launch event.

Speaking about the book and the superstar, the acclaimed director shared, "I know Shah Rukh from Delhi, and for me, launching this book is an honour and privilege. Shah Rukh Khan is a superstar... He was doing theatre in Delhi, then left college to work in television, and eventually came to Mumbai. After coming to Mumbai, he be-



came the Badshah. What can be a bigger inspiration than this? Whenever I work on something, I go and discuss it with him. We will do something together--we're in discussions and keep talking as well."

Mohar Basu also spoke candidly about her book, describing it as a tribute to Shah Rukh's illustrious career. "We launched Shah Rukh

Khan - Legend, Icon, Star last month on Shah Rukh Khan's birthday. Today marks the first launch event for the book, here in Kolkata. This book explores Shah Rukh Khan's cultural impact, his journey, and the inspiration he has provided to fans worldwide over the decades. It has been received very well so far, and I hope the love continues."

The book paints vivid portraits of Shah Rukh Khan's inspirational life and unravels what he means to people around the globe--whether it's a taxi driver in Paris, an Irishwoman in London, three generations of women in a family in Pakistan, or the legions of screaming fans across Europe, Asia, the US, the Middle East, and, of course, India.

BRAIN PICKING



I believe in the power of one and that we are all bound by the thread of oneness and humanity.



- DIA MIRZA
(Indian Actress)

KATRINA KAIF OFFERS PRAYERS AT SHIRDI SAI BABA TEMPLE WITH MOTHER-IN-LAW



TDG NETWORK
SHIRDI

Bollywood star Katrina Kaif on Monday sought blessings at Sai Baba temple of Shirdi with her mother-in-law Veena Kaushal.

Several visuals from Katrina's sacred visit surfaced online in which she could be seen offering prayers at the temple. Both mother-in-law and daughter-in-law were dressed up in ethnic attire.

Katrina opted for a simple ivory kurta that she paired with a matching dupatta and flared palazzo. Vicky Kaushal's mother Veena opted for a salwar suit.

Katrina and her mother-in-law were also captured by the Mumbai-based shutterbugs at the airport.

Recently, Katrina and Vicky celebrated their third wedding anniversary in Jodhpur.

Katrina took to Instagram and penned an adorable wish for Vicky, calling him "jaan".

She also shared a picture in which the duo is seen snuggling up together for a romantic pose. Dressed in a yellow top, Katrina looked gorgeous as she elevated her look with nerd glasses. Vicky, on the other hand, looked uber cool in a black t-shirt and stylish black glares. "Dil tu, jaan tu... (red heart emoji)," she captioned the post, leaving netizens in awe. Kareena Kapoor Khan reacted to the image by dropping a red heart emoji in the comment section.

SANDHYA THEATRE INCIDENT: ALLU ARJUN EXPRESSES 'CONCERN' OVER INJURED BOY



TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

Actor Allu Arjun, who was released on interim bail following his arrest in the Sandhya theatre incident on Saturday, expressed his concern about the health of the injured victim and wished him a speedy recovery.

He said that he has been advised not to visit victim Sri Tej, due to the "ongoing legal proceedings" but added that his prayers remain with him. He also affirmed his commitment to help with his medical needs. Taking to X, he wrote, "I remain deeply concerned about young Sri Tej, who is under constant medical care after the unfortunate incident. Due to the ongoing legal proceedings, I have been advised not to visit him and his family at this time My prayers remain with them and I remain committed to tak-

ing responsibility for addressing the medical and family needs. I wish him a speedy recovery, and I look forward to meeting him and his family at the earliest" The 'Pushpa' actor was granted bail by Telangana High Court after furnishing a personal bond of Rs 50,000.

His release was met with support from family members and colleagues from the film industry, many of whom gathered at his Jubilee Hills residence in Hyderabad.

Allu Arjun was arrested on Friday in connection with the death of a woman during the screening of his latest film last week. He was released on Saturday morning on the orders of the Telangana High Court.

On Saturday, fellow actors Rana Daggubati and Naga Chaitanya visited Allu Arjun and greeted him with warm hugs to show their support.



Music industry in grief after the demise of the legendary maestro

"It is very sad to hear about the demise of Sri Ustad Zakir Hussain sir. He was a talent with whom everyone could connect. We grew up listening to his tabla and music," Filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar

"Shocked, deeply saddened and devastated by the passing-on of the legend Ustad Zakir Hussain @ zakirhq9. Along with being the best himself, Zakirji was known for his immense humility, approachable nature, and for being responsible for the careers of numerous musicians, who are now forced to reckon with themselves He left us too soon." Award-winning musician Ricky Kej

"A very sad day"
Amitabh Bachchan

"Zakir Bhai was a father figure to all of us in the music industry. He was our Guru, and we learned a lot from his music," Music composer and singer Salim Merchant

TAVI: A MINIMALLY INVASIVE APPROACH TO TREAT AORTIC STENOSIS

In cases of severe aortic stenosis, repairing or replacing the diseased heart valve is crucial.



DR. D. K. JHAMB

On a November afternoon, 43-year-old Mehmood Ansari (name changed) came rushing to the emergency unit of SHALBY Sanar International Hospitals complaining of chest pain, syncope with blackouts and breathlessness. Ansari had no noticeable symptoms over the recent time but had reported extreme fatigue for past few months. The onset of chest pain with blackouts had pushed him to seek immediate help.

Having severe Aortic Stenosis, he was promptly referred to the Cardiology department of the hospital where he underwent further medical investigation.

Following some tests (including blood tests, ECG, echocardiogram and others), Ansari was found to have a degenerated prosthetic aortic valve of the heart.

The condition also called aortic stenosis (AS) is a narrowing of the aortic valve opening of the heart. Also, referred to as a failing heart valve, it leads to restricted blood flow from the left ventricle of the heart to the aorta (body's largest artery carrying blood from the heart to rest of the body). Thus, largely impacting the overall blood flow within the body. In this case, however, it was a repeat onset of symptoms because of restenosis.

WHAT IS AORTIC STENOSIS?

Human heart has protective structures called valves which prevent the back flow of blood when it moves from one chamber to another. These valves are highly elastic and open and close subsequently to enable the blood flow.

The valve between the left ventricle (lower chamber of the heart) and aorta (main artery) is called the aortic valve. Sometimes a congenital heart defect or scarring due to calcium deposits can keep this valve from opening fully, restricting the blood flow.

Over a period, it can significantly hamper the circulation of blood within the heart and the rest of the body. If not attended, it can lead to heart failure in the longer run. In severe cases, surgery is imperative to repair or replace the diseased valve.

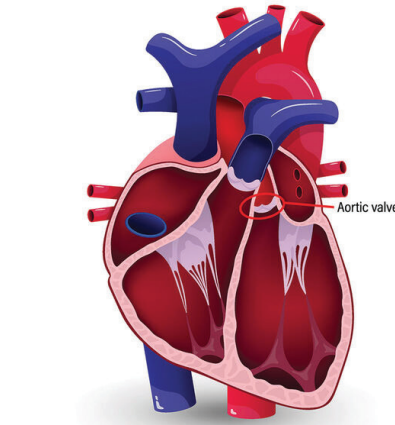
WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Many people with aortic stenosis don't experience noticeable symptoms until the amount of blood flow becomes greatly reduced as we see in case of Ansari. The condition can be mild or severe, depending upon the extent of restriction.

Common symptoms to watch out for are rapid, fluctuating heartbeat, shortness of breath, dizziness, blackouts, recurrent pre-syncope, syncope, reduced ability to do normal activities, chest pain and others.

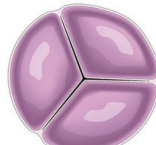
TAVI: VALVE WITHIN VALVE

In severe cases of aortic stenosis, repairing or replacing the diseased heart valve is crucial. A conventional valve repairment requires

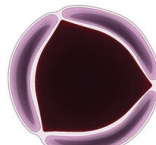


Normal aortic valve

Closed

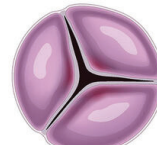


Open

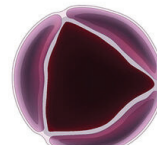


Aortic stenosis

Closed



Open



an open heart procedure in which the chest is surgically opened for the surgery.

However, TAVI (Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation) involves a minimally invasive procedure to fix a prosthetic valve over the degenerated valve. It offers an alternative treatment to those who are not eligible for an open heart surgery.

The procedure is somewhat similar to placing a stent in an artery. A catheter is inserted through groin which helps in placing a fully collapsible replacement valve over the worn out valve. As the prosthetic valve expands, the inserted tissue takes up the role of regulating blood flow. Hence, valve function gets restored.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR TAVI?

The procedure is eligible to people in all risk categories. It is often prescribed to people with moderate to severe symptoms of aortic stenosis. The minimally invasive procedure is emerging as an effective alternative for people in high risk category of valve replacement surgery.

To see if a person is eligible for TAVI, the attending cardiologist might

AFTER TAVI: KEY LIFESTYLE RECOMMENDATIONS	
Aspect	Details
Eating Healthy Foods	Focus on a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
Becoming Physically Active	Engage in regular, moderate physical activity as recommended by your doctor.
Saying No to Smoking	Quit smoking completely to reduce the risk of complications.
Limiting Alcohol	Avoid or limit alcohol consumption to maintain heart health.
Regular Medical Checkups	Attend follow-up appointments to monitor recovery and overall health.
Regular Dental Checkups	Prevent infections by maintaining good oral hygiene and visiting the dentist regularly.

Common symptoms to watch out for are rapid, fluctuating heartbeat, shortness of breath, dizziness, blackouts, recurrent pre-syncope, syncope, reduced ability to do normal activities, chest pain and others.

make you take some tests including blood readings, echocardiogram, ECG, CT scan, coronary angiogram and others.

We put our heart in tak-



ing care of yours!

The author is the Director & Head of Department at

Interventional Cardiology of SHALBY Sanar International Hospitals, Gurugram.

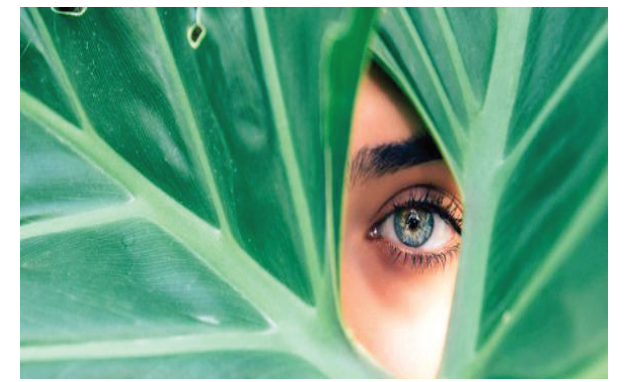
Nutraceuticals and Glaucoma: Enhancing eye health beyond conventional treatments



FOOD IS MEDICINE
DR ANISH DESAI

Glaucoma is a serious ophthalmic condition that can lead to irreversible blindness. It is characterized by damage to the optic nerve, often due to increased intraocular pressure (IOP), which can result in the destruction of retinal ganglion cells. Glaucoma primarily affects individuals aged 40 and older, with an estimated 57.5 million people worldwide suffering from this condition. The most common forms of glaucoma are acute and chronic, with the latter being more prevalent. Despite the availability of treatments, glaucoma remains the leading cause of irreversible blindness, making the exploration of additional management options crucial.

Nutraceuticals are gaining recognition for their role in supporting eye health, particularly in glaucoma patients. These compounds, found in natural foods and dietary supplements, are believed to help improve various aspects of eye function and slow disease progression. They act through multiple mechanisms, such as enhancing antioxidant capacity, improving blood flow to the optic nerve, and supporting retinal health.



Saffron, derived from the Crocus flower, is known for its potent antioxidants, such as crocin, which may help reduce IOP in glaucoma patients and protect against retinal damage. Consuming saffron in its natural form or through supplements can support glaucoma management and eye health.

Black currants, rich in anthocyanins, promote healthy circulation and improve blood flow to the optic nerve head (ONH), enhancing retinal function. Incorporating black currant into the diet or using supplements may help improve ocular blood flow and slow visual field damage in glaucoma patients.

Citicoline, found in foods like eggs and soy, has neuroprotective effects and supports retinal function in glaucoma management. It enhances bioelectrical activity in the visual cortex, making it a valuable addition to eye health regimens, especially in topical nutraceutical formulations.

Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10), a natural antioxidant found in spinach, broccoli, and whole grains, protects the eyes from oxidative stress and supports cellular energy production. When combined with vitamin E, CoQ10 improves retinal function and enhances cortical responses, making it an essential tool for individuals managing glaucoma.

While glaucoma requires medical intervention to control IOP, nutraceuticals offer a promising complementary approach to protect the optic nerve and preserve vision. These natural compounds not only support glaucoma management but also enhance overall ocular health, making them a vital part of a holistic approach to vision care.

IS YOUR WINTER SKIN FLAKING BECAUSE OF THE SKINCARE PRODUCTS YOU'RE USING? TIME TO INVESTIGATE THE INGREDIENTS!

DR SOMA SARKAR

Winter can be a challenging time for your skin. The drop in temperature, lower humidity levels, and indoor heating often strip the skin of its natural moisture, leaving it dry, dull, and sometimes irritated. A thoughtful skincare routine can help your skin stay hydrated, nourished, and glowing throughout the colder months.

Hydration is the cornerstone of winter skincare. To ensure your skin remains moisturised, look for products containing hyaluronic acid with a combination of high, medium, and low molecular weights. High molecular weight hydrates the skin's outer layer, medium molecular weight improves elasticity, and low molecular weight penetrates deeper layers for lasting hydration. This multi-layered approach keeps your skin plump and well-nourished. Complement hydration with ceramide-based moisturisers, which lock in moisture, protect against environmental aggressors, and maintain softness and smoothness throughout the day.

Sunscreen is just as important in winter as it is in summer. Opt for mineral sunscreens with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide to shield your skin from harmful UV rays while strengthening its natural defenses. Combining sunscreen with moisturizing properties can simplify your routine without sacrificing effective-



ness. Equally crucial is gentle cleansing. Avoid harsh foaming cleansers and soaps with high pH levels, as they strip the skin's natural oils. Instead, choose cleansers with lactic or mandelic acid, which gently exfoliate without causing irritation. Cleansing twice daily is sufficient to keep your skin balanced and free from impurities.

Hair care also plays a role in winter skincare. Frequent washing can strip your scalp of natural oils, leading to dryness. Limit shampooing to two or three times a week and use hydrating shampoos and conditioners enriched with natural oils like argan or jojoba oil. Wash your hair with lukewarm water instead of hot water to prevent further dryness.

What you eat significantly impacts your skin's health. Winter offers a variety of fresh, colorful fruits and vegetables packed with antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. Include berries for vitamin C, leafy greens for

hydration and antioxidants, and nuts and seeds for essential fatty acids. Although it's tempting to drink less water in cold weather, staying hydrated is vital for maintaining healthy skin. Aim for 2-3 liters of water daily, or substitute with warm herbal teas.

Antioxidants further boost your skin's resilience during winter. Incorporate products with ingredients like vitamin C, niacinamide, or resveratrol into your routine to protect against environmental stressors and enhance your skin's natural glow. Antioxidants can also be consumed through citrus fruits, green tea, and pomegranates.

Additional tips for glowing skin include using a humidifier to counteract the drying effects of indoor heating, avoiding overly hot showers that weaken the skin's barrier, and exfoliating gently once or twice a week to remove dead skin cells. Don't forget your lips—apply a hydrating lip balm with shea butter or beeswax to prevent chapping.

By following these steps, you can protect your skin from winter's harsh effects and maintain a hydrated, radiant complexion. The key to winter skincare is consistency and using the right products to suit your skin's needs. Stay hydrated, eat well, and give your skin the care it deserves this season!

Dr Soma Sarkar, MBBS, MD, dermatology, and co-founder of Skin Beyond Borders (SkinBB)

TDG NETWORK

BCPBF-The Cancer Foundation, in collaboration with the University of Chicago, successfully concluded a two-day workshop focused on clinical trial excellence at the University of Chicago Center in Delhi. The workshop aimed to equip clinical research professionals with the skills needed to independently design and execute clinical trials, addressing the growing need for skilled professionals in India.

The event featured expert-led sessions from renowned faculty, including Dr. Suresh Ramalingam (Emory University), Dr. Rajat Thawani (University of Chicago), and Dr. Geetika Srivastava (US FDA). Key topics included research design, ethical considerations, and regulatory perspectives. Participants engaged in hands-on protocol discussions, enhancing their practical knowledge.

Dr. Sameer Kaul, President of BCPBF, emphasized the workshop's role in empowering India's clinical

Dr. Sameer Kaul, emphasized the workshop's role in empowering India's clinical research community, positioning the country as a competitive hub for global clinical trials.

research community, positioning the country as a competitive hub for global clinical trials. Dr. Rajat Thawani highlighted the importance of addressing misconceptions around clinical trials and training clinicians to maintain high research standards.

Looking ahead, the initiative plans to expand annually to more cities across India, with a vision to extend the model to other countries facing similar challenges, amplifying its global impact.



SECRET TO UNDERSTAND THE GITA



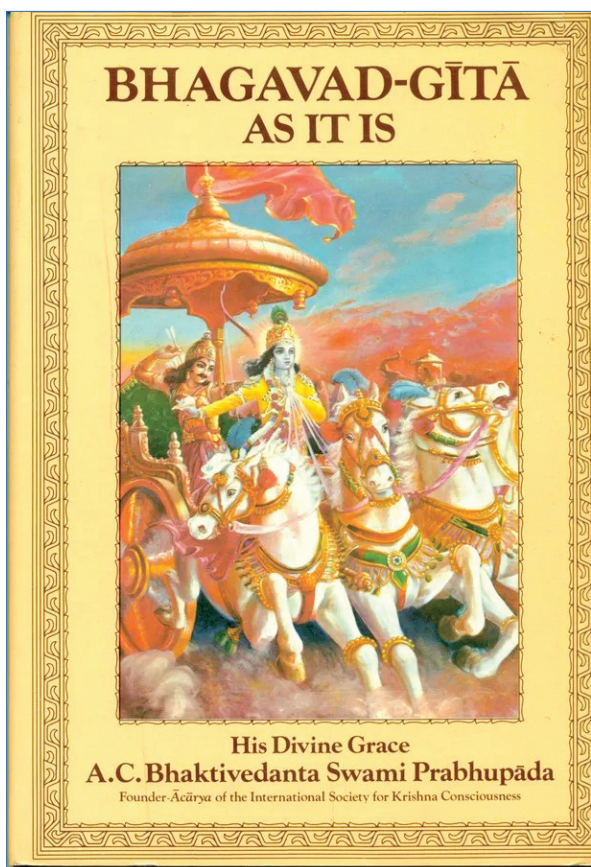
SRI CHANCHALPATHI DASA

Srila Prabhupada says. The Bhagavad Gita is complete in its presentation. Bhagavad Gita is teaching us something, right? And Srila Prabhupada says, Bhagavad Gita teaches us the science of God. Krishna is the teacher, and Arjuna is the student. Prabhupada says that how to receive Bhagavad Gita is given in the Bhagavad Gita itself. The example given is the medicine bottle and the label instructions. And one of the examples of the label instruction is that, just like Arjuna is receiving the Bhagavad Gita, we have to follow in his footsteps.

If we follow in his footsteps and adopt that spirit, then we are on the right direction.

We have to emulate and follow the way Arjuna has received this message. He is the perfect example of a student, and we are students of the Bhagavad Gita. We should follow in his footsteps. How Arjuna received this knowledge is described in the 10th chapter. We will see how this connects to the ever-fresh, ever-attractive glories of Krishna.

Arjuna says, *vistarenamo yogam vibhutim ca janardana, Bhuyab kathaya trptir hi srnvato nasti me mrtam janardana atmano yogam* (BG 10.18). Here, the word yogam refers to His mystic opulence, His yogic opulence, mystical opulence. So, Arjuna is saying to Lord Krishna, "Your glories stir up the extent of this mystery. I am never satiated by that. Tell me again in detail, Krishna, of Your mighty potencies



This is the eagerness Arjuna has to hear about Krishna. That is the spirit in which we must also hear the message of Krishna from the Gita. There has to be a certain amount of eagerness, and that is because Krishna's attributes and potencies are so wonderful. One never tires of hearing them. If we feel that way, then we are on the right path. We are following in the footsteps of Arjuna. Then, the right communication is happening. That is an indication.

The right communication is happening. That is an indication. The author is the President of Vrindavan Heritage Tower and Vice Chairman & Co-Mentor of Hare Krishna Movement.

and glories, for I never tire of hearing Your ambrosial words."

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amount of eagerness, and that is because Krishna's attributes and potencies are so wonderful.

One never tires of hearing them. If we feel that way, then we are on the right path.

We are following in the footsteps of Arjuna. Then,

Trust in God's ultimate plan for us



SANT RAJINDER SINGH JI MAHARAJ

Much of our daily life is spent worrying. Life gives us many reasons to wonder how things will work out for us. We worry about our finances. Health is a major concern for most. Careers, jobs and studies have us worried. If we have a family, we are always worried about their health and welfare.

Life on this planet is filled with challenges. Daily we learn about new diseases that threaten our health and the health of our children. We try to eat healthy but each day new research tells us that certain foods cause problems, so we may give up eating them, only to learn that another wave of research tells us they are in fact good for us. We then resume eating them until we find later research shows it is not good anymore. We feel we are on a roller coaster

ride, going through the ups and downs of life with little comfort.

Natural disasters abound, whether earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, droughts, record heat waves or frigid temperatures. Besides physical challenges, there are conflicts between neighbours, communities, cities, states, countries and cultures. All these crises cause us worry and stress. On top of this, we learn that worry and stress add to stress-related illnesses that affect our body and mind.

Medical science has discovered that worry can lead to stress, which in turn can affect our physical and mental health. Scientists, medical researchers and doctors have released numerous studies on how stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline affect us. The purpose of these hormones is to help us when in danger so the body can either fight or take flight. Over extended periods of time, when not faced with physical threats to our life, we bathe our organs in these hormones, contributing stress-related illnesses. We are in a vicious cycle and wonder how we can stop it.

One reason that people worry is that they fear the outcome. We know there are so many challenges in

life and begin to think the worst could happen to us. This colours our day with thoughts of stress and worry and keeps us from happiness and peace. Is there a way to overcome life's worries and live in peace and joy? Each of us was created by God, who is the author of our lives. Because we were created by God, God knows how each of our journeys will end. It is the journey from the beginning to the end that needs to unfold. Some parts of our lives are laid out already by actions we committed in the past.

We also have some free will in which we can make choices about what happens along the way. However, how we end up is already known to God. Along the way, our lives will take various twists and turns. We will have ups and downs, but the ultimate end of each of our stories is that we will reunite with God. God sent

us out to the world and we must return to God eventually. The final scene for each soul is that we will end the cycle of living in a world of



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SAVE BUT BE SAFE



MYSTIC MUSING

RAJESH M. IYER

While Paglot Baba and one of his disciples were sitting by the river, they noticed a man nearby saving a scorpion from drowning. However, as the man brought the scorpion to safety, the latter stung his hand.

'What do you make of that?' The disciple was curious to know Baba's thoughts. Instead of responding, Baba instructed the disciples to take another look.

The disciple saw the scorpion yet again head towards the river, slip and almost drown. What shocked the disciple was that the man yet again dipped his hand in the river, picked up the scorpion, and placed it on a safe platform just as the scorpion stung his hand again.

The disciple went up to the man and asked him why he saved the scorpion despite it stinging him. The man replied with a sage-like composure, 'We're both following our nature. Stinging is the scorpion's nature, while saving someone in trouble is mine. We must also be ready to endure a little pain in the process.'

Even as the impressed disciple came back to Paglot Baba, the latter stood up and moved towards the man. Meanwhile, the scorpion had slipped again. Just as the man was about to put his hand in the river, he saw Baba stand-

ing near him with a stick, which the latter gave to him. The moment the sage put the stick in the water, the scorpion grabbed it with its pincers. The scorpion was pulled out of the water without much ado.

As Baba joined the disciple, he said, 'Agreed, we must help everyone in distress. Also, we must be ready to endure pain. A noble thought, indeed. But does it make sense to invite pain and danger when you can do without it? Save but be safe is the mantra. There's no need to forsake intelligence even when you're helping someone. Life moves well when heart and mind coordinate. Compassion and ethical practices must be accompanied by wisdom.'

Like the sage, we need to understand that we all have scorpions around us who'll invariably sting us even when we help them. Does that mean we don't help them when we find them in trouble? Of course, we must help. However, with caution.

Despite being at loggerheads with someone, make sure we help them out when they're in dire straits. It is not to show them down or with the hope that they'll now realise their mistake. It's because that's our inherent nature. Nevertheless, in all this, we need to ensure our safety.



Despite being at loggerheads with someone, make sure we help them out when they're in dire straits. However, in all this we need to ensure our safety. Compassion and ethical practices must be accompanied by wisdom.

INDIA TRAIL AUSTRALIA BY 394 RUNS AT GABBA

Most of the third session was washed out as the rain continued to fall throughout the session.

AGENCIES
BRISBANE

Rain stopped play in the third session of Day 3 of the ongoing Test match at The Gabba on Monday as India still trail Australia's score by 394 runs.

At Stumps on Day 3, the visitors are struggling at 51/4 with right-hand batter KL Rahul (33*) and team skipper Rohit Sharma (0*) unbeaten at the crease.

The Rohit Sharma-led side resumed the third session from 48/4, trailing by 397 runs, with KL Rahul and skipper Rohit Sharma unbeaten with scores of 30 (52) and 0 (1), respectively.

Most of the third session was washed out as the rain continued to fall throughout the session. This third and final session of the day only witnessed three overs where the Indian side were able to score just three runs.

Earlier in the second session, the rain interrupted play, but Pant remained consistent in his approach of picking up runs on loose deliveries that fell in his hitting arc.

As Pant and Rahul started to gain momentum with the odds stacked against them, rain once again came in to stall play. The duo returned to the pitch once the rain let off.

Rahul arguably played the shot of the day with a cover drive straight out of the cricket textbooks off Cummins. With the scoreboard regularly ticking and the partnership becoming a threat to the Australians, Cummins upped the ante to extend the dominance ex-



India's Rishabh Pant and Australia's Josh Hazlewood walk back to the pavilion as rain stops play during Day 3 of the third Test match, at the Gabba Stadium in Brisbane. ANI



India's KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal during Day 3 of the third Test match against Australia, at the Gabba Stadium in Brisbane

uded by the hosts.

The Australian skipper had worked out his angles and pitched the delivery beautifully to draw Pant (9) out. He nipped the ball away from Pant enough to catch the outside edge straight through to Carey.

Rahul tried to take the fight back by reeling off a four off Mitchell Starc, which turned out to be the final action in the second session.

In the first session of Day

3, a start-stop session utterly dominated by Australia, Indian players were once again asked to reflect on their flaws as the impending doom of defeat started to linger in Brisbane. It was A-Lister Jasprit Bumrah who paved the way for India by removing Mitchell Starc in the opening hour. Starc looked deadly the moment he smoked the ball into the stand with a picture-perfect slog-sweep off Ravindra Jadeja.

Bumrah sensed the threat radiating from the Starc and forced out an edge from the southpaw in the next over. Starc's feet were stuck on the ground as he attempted to push the ball away. A loose waft from the Australian was enough to pick up a nick as the ball travelled into the safe gloves of Rishabh Pant. With Alex Carey on the field, Nathan Lyon resisted the temptation to go after the Indian attack, as rain made its presence felt at irregular intervals.

With the tempo of the day set, Mohammed Siraj broke the shackles and managed to breach Lyon's defence to hit the middle stump.

With just a wicket left, Carey decided to charge at Akash Deep but ended up mistiming his shot, forcing Australia to wrap up its innings on 445.

In reply, Indian batters continued to live through the nightmares inflicted in Adelaide, with Starc be-

BRIEF SCORES

India 1st Innings: Yashasvi Jaiswal c Mitchell Marsh b Mitchell Starc 4
KL Rahul batting 33, Shubman Gill c Mitchell Marsh b Mitchell Starc 1, Virat Kohli c Alex Carey b Hazlewood 3, Rishabh Pant c Alex Carey b Cummins 9, Rohit Sharma batting 0;
Extra: (NB-1) 1
Total: 51/4 in 17 overs
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 8-1-25-2, Josh Hazlewood 5-2-17-1, Pat Cummins 2-0-7-1, Nathan Lyon 1-0-1-0, Travis Head 1-0-1-0.

ing the driving force of the Australian pace attack.

His first victim of the day was Yashasvi Jaiswal, a player he has developed a rivalry with since the Perth Test. The young Indian southpaw managed to avoid a golden duck by edging the ball to the boundary, but Starc retaliated by swinging the ball and using the scrambled seam delivery to its effective use.

He picked up Jaiswal's wicket on his second ball of the match after the Indian chipped it away straight into Mitchell Marsh's hands. Shubman Gill (1) was next to return cheaply after he edged it away to Marsh, who took a flight and snaffled it with both hands.

Virat Kohli (3) soon joined the duo's company after being tempted by Hazlewood to chase the outside off delivery and edge it away towards the wicketkeeper.

'It's a team in transition, won't point fingers at other'

AGENCIES
BRISBANE

After a disappointing day with the bat during the third Test at Brisbane, Indian pacer Jasprit Bumrah defended the team's disappointing show, saying that the "team is in transition".

As conceding 445 runs in the first innings, India's woes down under continued with a poor performance with the bat, as they could score only 51/4 in a rain-affected day three at Brisbane. The day was marked by some poor shot selection from Indian batters, particularly Virat Kohli, whose issues with outside off-stump deliveries continue.

Speaking during the post-day press conference, Bumrah said that the team is in transition with plenty of new players coming around and playing cricket in difficult conditions. Not only in batting, he also said that the bowling attack, consisting of more inexperienced names like Akash Deep and Harshit Rana, is also facing transition and it is his job to help them.

"See, we do not as a team point fingers at each other and we do not want to get into that mindset where we are pointing fingers at each other and say that 'you should do this, you should do that'. Obviously, we, as a team, are going through a transition where new players are coming here and it is not the easiest place to play cricket. Over here, it is a different atmosphere with this wicket being a different challenge. So yeah, we are not looking at that," he said.

"Obviously, as a bowling



unit, as I said, we are in transition, so it is my job to help the others. I have played a little more than them, so I am trying to help them. But again, everyone will learn through it, will get better and eventually will find different ways. So this is the journey that you will have to go through," he added.

Questioned on whether he finds bowling so much overs hard, Bumrah said that he does not look at things that way and rather newer players should be given enough cushion and help so that they can learn.

"Last time as well, we had a little more experience when we came here, but this is the journey that every team will go through. All these experiences will help them and they will get a lot of improvement going further, but that is a journey that, as I said, all players will have to go through. Nobody is born with all the experiences, nobody is born with all the skills. You keep learning, you keep finding new ways, you keep learning about your own game, and I am sure that you will get better answers," he added.

Talking about conversations he has had with Mohammed Siraj, the pacer who has had 11 wickets in this series at an average of 25.00, Bumrah said that he had some talks with the bowler before coming to Australia and he is in good spirits. He also lauded the pacer for bowling despite a niggle during the game, saying that Siraj has got a "great attitude". "We have had conversations but this was the conversation he had with me before we came to Australia. I think when we came here in Perth, as well as the last game, he looked in very good spirits. He was bowling well and he has picked up a fair few of the wickets. In this game, I think I will give him credit that he had a little bit of a niggle but he still kept on bowling and still helped the team because he knew if he goes inside and he does not bowl, then that team will go under pressure. So I think he has got a great attitude and he has got a fighter spirit that the team loves," said Siraj.

Bumrah said that in terms of wickets, some days a bowler will bowl well but sometimes he would not.

'It's not just about chess, there's lot of emotional pressure too'

AGENCIES
CHENNAI

World Chess champion D Gukesh said that the title win was not just because of good strategy on the board, but he also credited mental conditioning coach Paddy Upton for helping him deal with the emotional pressure.

D Gukesh defeated China's Ding Liren to become the youngest-ever World Chess champion. He arrived on Monday in India on Monday and received a warm welcome from the fans and officials.

"In a world championship, it's not only about chess. There is a lot of mental and emotional pressure to deal with. Paddy's teachings helped me in that regard," D Gukesh said in a press meet organised by Velmamal Vidyalaya, his childhood school.

Upton, a renowned mental conditioning coach, worked with Gukesh in the run-up to and during the 14-game marathon event in Singapore. "The suggestions and the conversations I have had with him, have been very important for me and my development as a player," he said. D Gukesh also provided inputs of how his association started working with the South African who had previously worked with the 2011 cricket World Cup-winning Team India and the national men's hockey team that won the bronze medal in the Paris Olympics.

"Paddy has been a very important part of my team. After I won the Candidates (April), I asked Sandeep sir (Sandeep Singhal of Westbridge Capital) for a mental trainer,"



World Chess Champion D Gukesh besides his parents during a press conference after winning the FIDE World Chess Championship. ANI

World Chess Champion D Gukesh receives a warm welcome on his arrival at Chennai International Airport. ANI

had lauded the teenager's "self-awareness."

"I think that's the thing that's really stood out, his ability to recognise his thoughts and manage his mind and his understanding of how to do so," Upton said. "...he is a world champion because he was able to manage himself and remain focused and stay in the game even though he's 0-1 down right from the beginning. So that really is a mark of a champion," he had stated. Gukesh also thanked Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin for supporting him in his chess journey.

CARLSEN, GUKESH SHOWDOWN TO HEADLINE NORWAY CHESS STAVANGER

The youngest-ever world champion, Gukesh Dommaraju will take on Magnus Carlsen, the world's highest-rated player, in a highly-anticipated contest at next year's Norway Chess 2025. Magnus Carlsen, the world's highest-rated player, will take on youngest ever world champion Gukesh Dommaraju in a highly-anticipated contest at Norway Chess 2025. The tournament will take place in Stavanger from May 26 to June 6, 2025. Gukesh, 18, has achieved remarkable success this year, winning the Tata Steel Masters, leading India to gold at the Chess Olympiad, dominating the Candidates Tournament, and finally claiming the ultimate prize in classical chess: the World Championship title in Singapore last week.

Gukesh recalled, "He immediately put me in touch with Paddy Upton, who has a lot of experience work-

ing with high-performance athletes," said the youngster. In an interview, a day after Gukesh's win, Upton

Williamson hits 33rd ton; NZ set 658 to win vs England

AGENCIES
HAMILTON

New Zealand batter Kane Williamson scored his 33rd Test century as the Black Caps strengthened their hold in the third and final Test against England in Hamilton on Monday.

Williamson matched Australian counterpart Steve Smith to score his 33rd Test hundred as the Kiwis looked to salvage something from the series with a victory having already lost the opening two matches, as per ICC.

Only England right-hander Joe Root has more Test centuries than Williamson among current players, with the former New Zealand captain once again at his brilliant best as he reached triple figures with yet another knock that put his side in



Williamson slams 33rd Test ton, NZ set 658 runs to win for England

a dominant position. After Williamson's departure on 156 in 204 balls (with 20 fours and a six), New Zealand continued to flourish with middle and lower-middle-order batters adding valuable runs. Rachin Ravindra (44 in 90 balls, with four boundaries and a six), Tom Blundell (44 in 55 balls, with two fours and

three sixes), Daryl Mitchell (60 in 84 balls, with seven fours and two sixes), and Mitchell Santner (49 in 38 balls, with three fours and five sixes) helped fatten the lead and the hosts were finally bowled out for 453, setting England a massive target of 658.

Jacob Bethell (3/72) was the top bowler for England,

while skipper Ben Stokes and Shoib Bashir got two scalps. Joe Root, Gus Atkinson and Matthew Potts got one wicket each. In reply, England faltered in their second innings as well, losing both their openers in quick succession. Tim Southee removed Ben Duckett for 4 runs in a second over, after the batter missed a wild slash and dragged the ball onto the stumps.

Three overs later, Matt Henry trapped Zak Crawley (5) in front of leg, a DRS decision that went in New Zealand's favour. At the end of Day 3, England were 18/2, still needing 640 more runs with two full days of play left. Root and Bethell are on the crease for England. Earlier during the match, England won the toss and opted to field first.

Zimbabwe fined for slow overate in 3rd T20I against Afghanistan

AGENCIES
HARARE

The host's Zimbabwe were penalised for slow overate during the third and final T20I of the three-match series against Afghanistan at the Harare Sports Club.

The charges were levelled by on-field umpires Iknow Chabi and Forster Mutizwa, third umpire Percival Sizara and fourth umpire Langton Rusere.

Zimbabwe skipper Sikandar Raza pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the sanctions raised from the Emirates ICC Elite Panel Match Referee Andy Pycroft.



The charges were levelled in accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum overate offences, players are

fined five per cent of their match fee for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time. Zimbabwe are currently hosting Afghanistan for an all-format tour, which started with a three-

T20I series between the two sides. While the hosts had emerged victorious in the first match, the visitors bounced back and clinched the series with successive wins. The two teams will now contest in three ODIs that will be followed by two Test matches. Coming to the third match, Rashid Khan and Azmatullah Omarzai guided Afghanistan to clinch a three-wicket victory over Zimbabwe in the third T20I match of the series on Saturday at the Harare Sports Club in Harare.

With the win on Saturday, Afghanistan clinched a series win over Zimbabwe.