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OPPOSITION NOT DIVIDED ON FLOOR OF PARLIAMENT: DEREK O'BRIEN



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JEWISH SETTLERS ATTACK PALESTINIAN TOWNS, CLASH WITH ISRAELI TROOPS



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BGT: TEAM INDIA SHIFTS FOCUS TO 'HIGH-OCTANE FIELDING SESSION'

BADAL ESCAPES BID ON LIFE AT GOLDEN TEMPLE

Narain Singh Chaura, a former terrorist, fires at former Deputy CM performing sewadar's duty

TDG NETWORK
AMRITSAR

Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal escaped a bid on his life on Wednesday when a former Khalistani terrorist fired from a close range at Punjab's ex deputy chief minister at the Golden Temple's entrance here but missed as plainclothes policemen overpowered him.

The audacious attack, which occurred at around 9:30 am, was captured on cameras by media persons who had gathered to cover the second day of Badal performing the duty of 'sewadar' at the main gate of the Sikh shrine as religious penance for "mistakes" committed by the SAD government in Punjab from 2007 to 2017.

Blast in Amritsar hours after attack on Badal

P3

As other devotees were entering, the shooter, identified as former terrorist Narain Singh Chaura, slowly walked towards Badal (62), a Z+ protectee who was sitting in a wheelchair due to a fractured leg, and pulled out a gun from his pocket.

The attacker, Narain Singh Chaura, reportedly belonging to the Dal Khalsa group, had fired towards Badal.

P3

Rabi procurement numbers leave Centre and farmers baffled

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

The instability in the figures of procurement of foodgrains left the union government and food corporation of India in a perplexing situation, as the procurement of the wheat in the country has witnessed a surge whereas paddy procurement has reported a decline in last procurement season.

As per the latest procurement figures shared by the union minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution in the Lok Sabha, the wheat procurement in the country during the Rabi Marketing Season in 2024-25 improved to 266.05 lakh MT against the 262.02 lakh MT RMS 2023-24. This is despite the biggest decline reported from the leading wheat growing state of Madhya Pradesh where the

government agencies could procure only 48.39 lakh MT wheat against 70.97 lakh MT procured last year. Whereas, the leading foodgrain producing states of Haryana and Punjab witnessed surge in the production as the government agencies have procured 71.50 lakh MT from Haryana against 63.17 lakh MT procured in 2023-24 and in Punjab the total wheat procurement stood at 124.64

P3

Dhankhar: 'Our demeanour causing dilution of institution'

NEW DELHI: Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar has expressed his dismay over conduct of Opposition members as they insisted, despite his ruling, on clarifications over External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's statement on in the India-China border areas.

DETAILS P2

Murder most foul: Son eliminates parents, sister

NEW DELHI: In a major revelation in the bone-chilling triple murder case in Delhi's Neb Sarai, the Delhi Police on Wednesday said that the son, who is also the complainant in the case is the main accused in the killing of his mother, father and sister. According to the police, accused Arjun's relations was not good with his family members.

DETAILS P6

Fadnavis to take oath as Maha CM today

Ajit Pawar
Deputy CM; no clarity on Shinde

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Devendra Fadnavis is set to be sworn-in as the new Chief Minister of Maharashtra on Thursday at a grand ceremony in Azad Maidan here, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in attendance.

In addition to Fadnavis, two deputy chief ministers, including NCP leader Ajit Pawar, will also take their oaths during the event in south Mumbai.

While the formation of the government under Fadnavis is confirmed, uncertainty remains regarding whether outgoing chief minister Eknath Shinde will be included in the new ministry.

Fadnavis, 54, emerged as the frontrunner for the coveted post following the



Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde with BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis and NCP chief Ajit Pawar addresses the media, on staking claim to form the government in Maharashtra, at Raj Bhawan in Mumbai on Wednesday. ANI

BJP's strong showing in the recent assembly elections, securing 132 seats in the 288-member house.

On Wednesday, Fadnavis, joined by Shinde and Pawar, met with state Governor CP Radhakrishnan to formally stake claim to form the government, presenting letters of support from coalition partners, including the Shiv Sena and the NCP.

Following this meeting, the governor extended an invitation for Fadnavis to lead the new government.

This is for the third time that the BJP leader, an MLA from Nagpur, will be sworn-in as chief minister of Maharashtra.

Fadnavis expressed his hope for Shinde's participation, stating he had requested that Shinde join the government. However, Shinde indicated that updates on his role would be provided to the media later on Wednesday.

In a bid to reassure Shinde, Fadnavis told reporters af-

P3

Hasina accuses Yunus of genocide

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

In her first public address after fleeing Bangladesh four months back, ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina has mounted a stinging attack on the country's interim leader Muhammad Yunus, accusing him of perpetr-



ing "genocide" and failing to protect minorities including Hindus.

In the remarks delivered virtually to her supporters at an event in New York, Hasina, presently living in India, also claimed that there were plans to kill her and her sister Sheikh Rehana just like their father

P3

LEGALLY SPEAKING presents

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Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi being stopped by Police at the Ghazipur border on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway on his way to violence-hit Sambhal on Wednesday. ANI

WHO SAID WHAT
IN PARLIAMENT

71,231 NEW POSTS
CREATED IN CAPFs,
RS INFORMED

NEW DELHI: Union Minister for state Home Affairs Nityanand Rai on Wednesday informed Rajya Sabha in a written reply that 71,231 new posts have been created in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) & Assam Rifles (AR) in the last five years from 2020 to 2024. MoS Home Nityanand Rai in a written reply informed Rajya Sabha that there are 100,204 vacancies in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) & Assam Rifles (AR) as on October 30, 2024. Minister Rai stated that 3,377 vacancies in Assam Rifles, 12,808 vacancies in BSF, CISF 31,782 vacancies, CRPF 33,730 Vacancies, 9,861 vacancies in ITBP, 8,646 vacancies in SSB are available.

75 PROJECTS IN
MAJOR PORTS
AWARDED

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal on Tuesday informed the Parliament that the government has awarded around 75 port development projects in major ports in the last three years. Under the Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030, the number of major port capacity increased from 1598 MMTPA in Financial Year 2022 to 1630 MMTPA in Financial Year 2024, Sonowal said in a written reply to Rajya Sabha.

730 SUICIDES
AMONG CAPFs, NSG
AND ASSAM RIFLES

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of state for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai on Wednesday informed the Rajya Sabha in a written reply that there have been 730 suicides amongst Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), National Security Guard (NSG) and Assam Rifles (AR) from 2020 to 2024. MoS Home Nityanand informed the Upper House that there have been 47891 Voluntary Retirement, 7664 Resignation and 730 suicides amongst the security forces from 2020 to 2024. Rai further said in a written reply that generally, "the working hours in the Central Armed Police Forces are 8 hours shifts."

SPEAKER CAUTIONS
AGAINST PROTESTS
AT ENTRY GATE

NEW DELHI: Against the backdrop of Opposition members holding protests at the entry gate of Parliament House, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday urged MPs not to create hindrances as it obstructs those entering the building, especially women members. His appeal came a day after the Lok Sabha secretariat urged MPs not to hold protests in front of the gates of Parliament House, saying such obstruction of movement could affect their safety.

'OUR Demeanour CAUSING DILUTION OF INSTITUTION'

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar expresses dismay over conduct of Opposition members

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday expressed his dismay over the conduct of opposition members as they insisted, despite his ruling, on clarifications over External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's statement on recent developments in the India-China border areas.

"Time and again, I have invited the 'I want you to kindly contribute and believe in some kind of rules. I would request the Members, please

interact amongst yourselves outside the House. Evolve some kind of a consensus. There are issues of security, of national importance, where we need to exhibit exemplary conduct," he added. attention of Hon'ble Members to the fact that we are being watched by the entire nation. Our demeanour is causing a serious dilution of the institution. When I refer every time to the kind of indecorous behaviour seen and the kind of body language reflected, it doesn't earn me any accolades. But I do it only to restore, Hon'ble Members, your dignity," he said.



Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar conducts the proceedings of the house during the Winter Session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

The Chairman said that the External Affairs Minister had made a comprehensive statement. In his remarks, Jaishankar

said that the maintenance of peace and tranquility in border areas is a pre-requisite for the development of bilateral ties with China.

'DISCUSS, DEBATE'

"Time and again, I have invited the attention of Hon'ble Members to the fact that we are being watched by the entire nation. Our demeanour is causing a serious dilution of the institution. When I refer every time to the kind of indecorous behaviour seen and the kind of body language reflected, it doesn't earn me any accolades. But I do it only to restore,

Hon'ble Members, your dignity," he said. "I want you to kindly contribute and believe in some kind of rules. I would request the Members, please interact amongst yourselves outside the House. Evolve some kind of a consensus. There are issues of security, of national importance, where we need to exhibit exemplary conduct," he added.

"In the coming days, we will be discussing both de-escalation as well as effective management of our activities in the border areas," he said. The minister said that conclusion of the disengagement phase "now allows us to consider other aspects of our bilateral engagement in a calibrated manner, keeping our national security interests first and foremost". Jaishankar said that in his recent meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi, they reached an understanding that the Special Representatives and the Foreign Secretary level mechanisms will be convening soon.

Opposition not divided on floor of Parliament: Derek O'Brien

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties are united in their strategy to corner the BJP in Parliament, but they have different tactics, Trinamool Congress Parliamentary Party leader in Rajya Sabha Derek O'Brien said on Wednesday. O'Brien's remarks came amid speculations over rift in the INDIA bloc after the TMC kept away from the protest on the Adani issue held in Parliament complex by the Congress and other opposition parties.

"The opposition is united, not divided on the floor of Parliament," O'Brien told reporters.

"We are united in Parliament on the strategy to corner the BJP, different par-



ties use different tactics," he said.

O'Brien added that every party wants to raise their issues in Parliament.

The TMC has maintained since the beginning of the session that they want Parliament to function and have kept away from the Congress' demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into allegations of bribery against industrialist Gautam Adani. Explaining the party's

stand on the issue of JPC in a blogpost on Tuesday, O'Brien had said the JPC was bound to be dominated by the ruling party MPs. "AJPC only looks good on paper. Its very structure and track record suggests that it is most unlikely to deliver meaningful results, especially when the ruling dispensation enjoys a dominant majority in Parliament," O'Brien said in his blogpost.

The TMC has said it will raise "people's issues" in Parliament, which include the issue of deprivation of central funds to West Bengal, Manipur crisis, and Aparajita Bill passed by the West Bengal Assembly, along with issues like inflation, unemployment and fertilizer shortage.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar briefed the Lok Sabha on the disengagement updates in Eastern Ladakh and the improvement of border infrastructure along the India-China border, as part of his statement regarding 'recent developments in India's relations with China'.

EAM Jaishankar said, "Through you I would like to inform the House, that disengagement has now been achieved in full in Eastern Ladakh through a step-by-step process, culminating in Depsang and Demchok. With the task of disengagement completed, it is now our expectation that discussions would commence in regard to the remaining issues that we had placed on the agenda".



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar

He brought to attention the previous positions articulated by the Government of India in the Parliament earlier on this issue.

"On 15 September 2020, Raksha Mantri ji made a detailed statement on Chinese attempts to transgress the LAC and the appropriate response given by our armed forces. On 11 February 2021, Raksha Mantri ji again briefed the House about our disengagement agreement on the North and South banks of the Pangong Lake. Thereafter, in August

2021, a third phase of disengagement took place in the area of Gogra, whereby troops would henceforth be in their respective bases. The next step took place in September 2022, pertaining to the Hot Springs area. Again, forward deployments ceased in a phased, coordinated and verified manner, resulting in the return of troops to their respective areas. The most recent October 21, 2024 agreement comes in the wake of the earlier ones. It completes the first phase of what we had agreed to in Moscow in September 2020", EAM Jaishankar explained. Jaishankar said, "There is a long history of frictions, transgressions and face-offs in several sectors of the India-China border. This goes back to Barahoti from 1954 to Longju in 1959, to Sumdorong Chu from 1986

to 1995 and Depsang in 2013 amongst others. In the past, earlier Governments have agreed to a range of steps to defuse situations that have arisen at different times, including offers on our side to create de-militarized zones, limited non-patrolling zones, relocation or withdrawal of posts, disengagement of troops and dismantlement of structures. Different locations have seen different solutions being examined". Notably, the EAM said, "Where the October 21 understanding is concerned, our objective has been to ensure patrolling as in the past to the relevant patrolling points, as well as the resumption of grazing by our civilians as per longstanding practice. This is indeed what we have agreed upon in regard to Depsang and Demchok".

India's fish production increased to all-time record of 175.45 lakh tonnes

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Minister of fisheries, animal husbandry and dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh told Rajya Sabha that annual fish production in the country during the last 5 years has increased from 141.64 lakh tonne during 2019-20 to an all-time record of 175.45 lakh tonne in 2022-23. He also said that fisheries export has risen from Rs.46662.85 crore in 2019-20 to Rs.60524.89 crore in 2023-24.

In a reply to the questions by Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma, the minister further said that govt efforts under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) have led to creation of direct and

indirect employment opportunities to about 58 lakh persons in fishing and aquaculture related activities on account of the fisheries development projects.

The minister also said that enhanced per capita fish consumption has increased from 5-6 kg to 12-13 kg with enhanced aquaculture productivity to 4.7 tonne per hectare.

He said that during the last four financial years (FY 2020-21 to 2023-24) and current financial year (2024-25), the Centre has approved fisheries developmental proposals at a total cost of Rs.20864.29 crore with central share of Rs. 8871.45 crore under the PMMSY. Department of Fisheries,

Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying is implementing the flagship scheme PMMSY for a period of 5 years from financial year 2020-21 to FY 2024-25, at a total outlay of Rs.20,050 crore.

To address the cold chain infrastructure gap, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying under PMMSY supports creation of modern post-harvest cold chain infrastructures such as cold storages and ice plants and fish transportation vehicles including refrigerated and insulated vehicles with ice flaking and ice crushing units and motorcycles, bicycles and autorickshaws with ice/fish holding boxes, etc.



Deputy Leader of Congress in Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi and INDIA bloc MPs protest over the Adani issue, at the Parliament premises in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

GLIMPSSES OF DAY 7



Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge speaks during the Winter Session of Parliament. ANI



Union Minister of Roads, Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari speaks in Rajya Sabha. ANI



Union Minister Prahlad Joshi speaks to the media at Parliament during the Winter Session. ANI



Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra speaks to the media at the Parliament House, in New Delhi. ANI



Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Mausam Noor speaks in Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session of Parliament. ANI

Migrant students' issues: Government intervention crucial

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The intervention of government to address the issues faced by migrant students is crucial, Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma said on Wednesday. In a special motion, he noted that the coaching industry in India, vital for competitive exam preparation, generates an estimated revenue of Rs. 58,088 crores, projected to reach Rs. 1,33,995 crores by 2028.

However, this success conceals challenges such as exorbitant fees, inadequate teaching standards, and lack of personalized attention, he added. "Thousands of aspirants flock annually to Delhi, particularly Old Rajinder Nagar, Karol Bagh, and North Campus, for UPSC and other coaching. Many are housed in private



MP Kartikeya Sharma hostels and PGs, as Delhi University alone accommodates over 60,000 outstation students annually, yet offers only 20,000-30,000 hostel seats, he said.

This gap forces students into unregulated private housing, often plagued by overcrowded rooms, high fees, poor sanitation, and inadequate safety measures. Substandard food, unhygienic kitchens, and irregular meal timings further compromise students' physical and mental well-being. Educational hubs like Kota, Allahabad, Pune, and

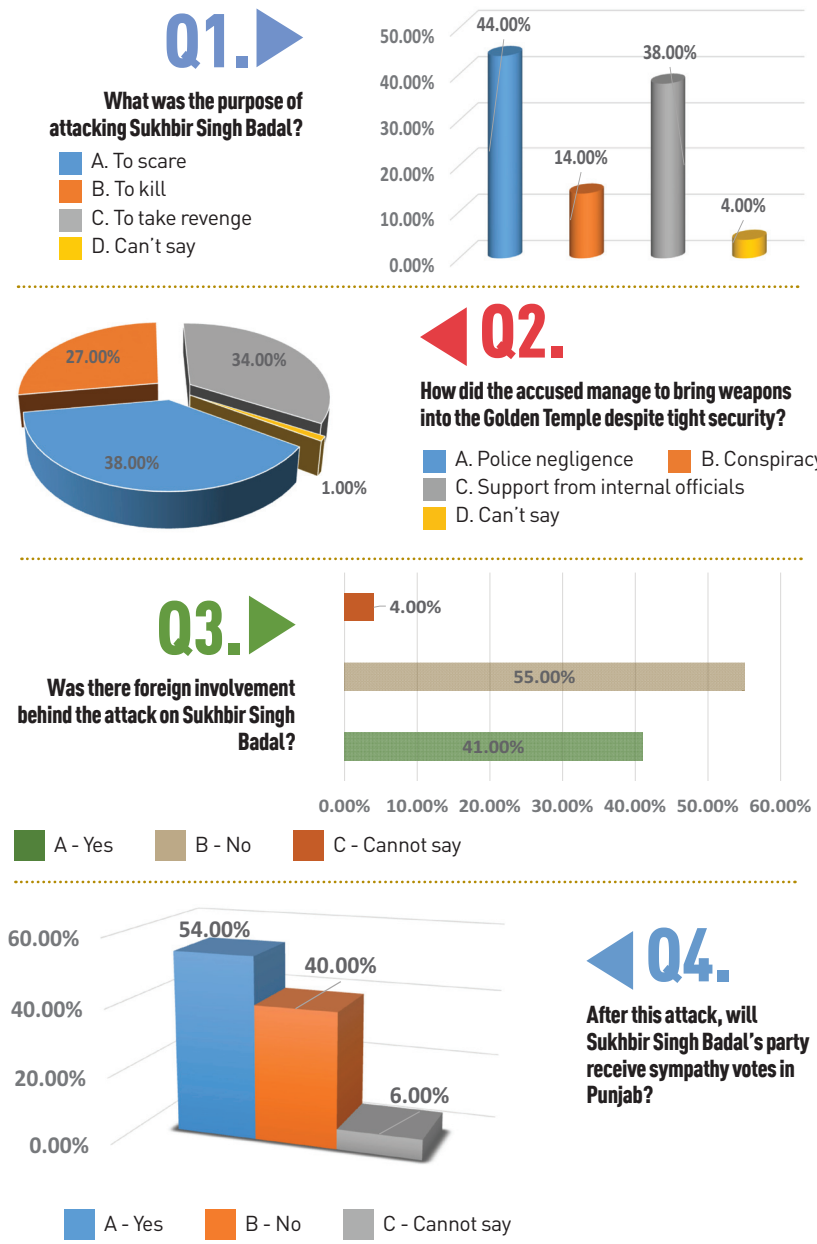
Indore face similar distressing conditions.

To address these issues, Government intervention is crucial, the MP said. "Regulations for hostels and coaching centres, enforced through safety audits and holistic guidelines, can improve living standards and meal quality. Specially designated zones for educational institutions, akin to Special Economic Zones, could include rent ceilings and other controls to ensure affordability and accountability, he added. A 24/7 helpline for student grievances would provide timely redressal and support. Such measures would safeguard the well-being of students, ensuring their focus remains on education while addressing the inequities and challenges of India's booming coaching industry. I urge the Government to look into it."

DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON ATTACK ON SUKHBIR BADAL

41% believe there was foreign involvement in the attack on Sukhbir Singh Badal.

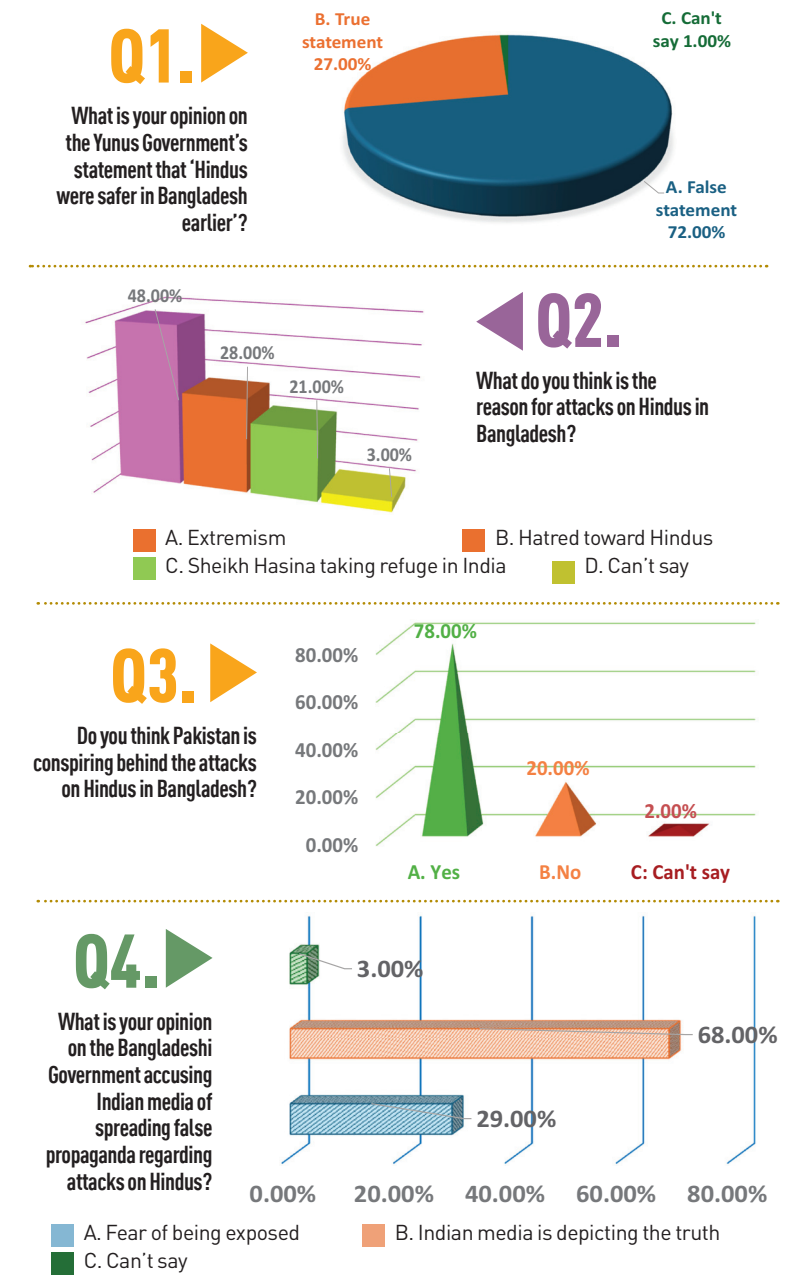
A man opened fire at Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal this morning while he was serving his penance at the entrance of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The shooter was overpowered by people present on the spot. Sixty-two-year-old Badal, a former Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab, is performing 'sewadar' duties after the Akal Takht pronounced the 'tankhah' (religious punishment) for him and several other Akali Dal leaders for "mistakes" committed.



DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON YUNUS GOVT STATEMENT

28% people believe that hatred towards Hindus is the reason for attacks on them in Bangladesh.

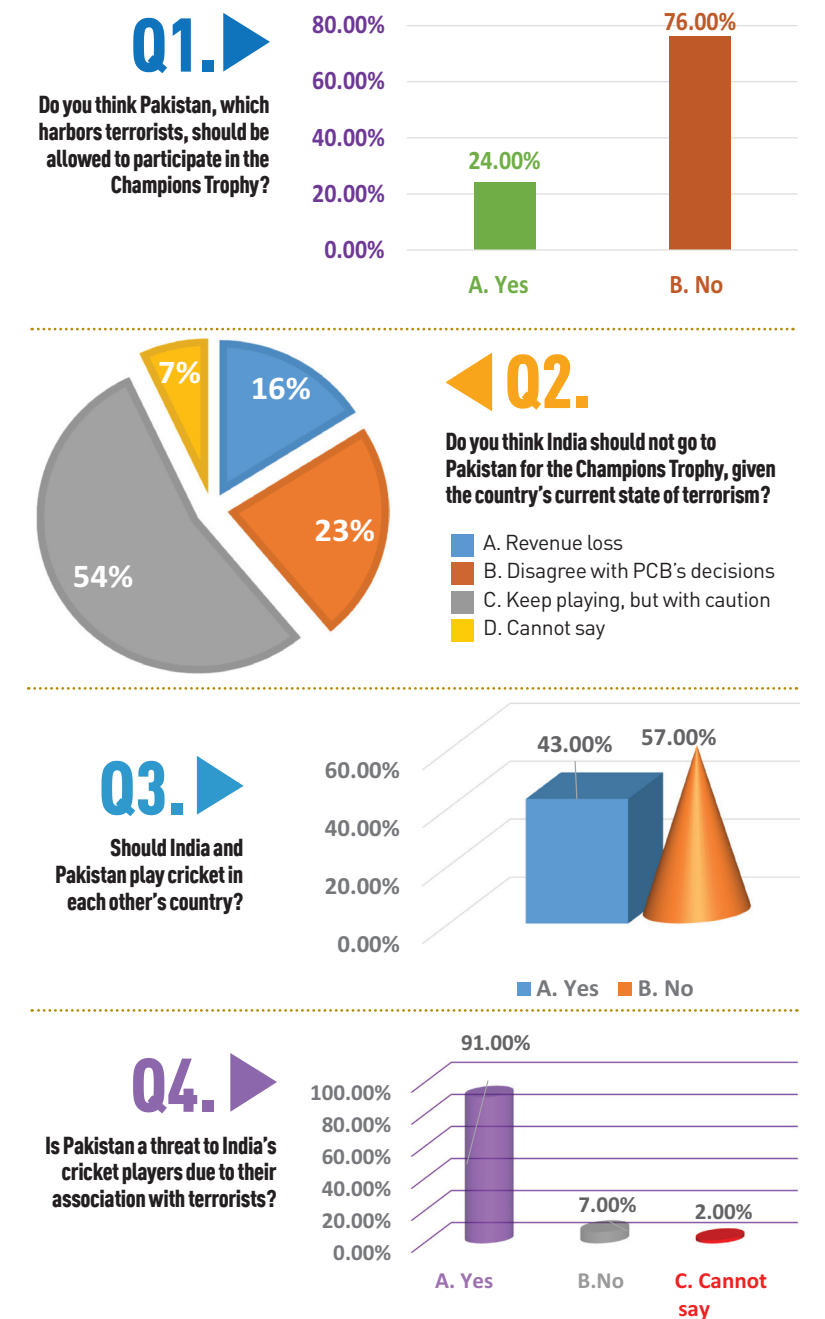
Amid the controversy over the arrest of Hindu priest Chinmoy Krishna Das Prabhu in Dhaka, Shafikul Islam, press secretary to Bangladesh's Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus, assured that Hindus were "safe" and minorities faced no threat in the country. He also stated in an interview that the government has no plans to ban the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).



TDG SURVEY ON CHAMPIONS TROPHY CONTROVERSY

43% believe that India, Pakistan should play cricket in each other's country.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has accepted the hybrid model for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 to be hosted by them, but has put forward a condition to let them play their games under a hybrid model as well whenever a global International Cricket Council (ICC) tournament is held in India.



Fadnavis to take oath as CM

CONTINUED FROM P1

ter meeting the Governor, "The Chief Minister's post is a technical arrangement. All three of us will work together unitedly." He also recounted details from a recent meeting with Shinde at the Chief Minister's official residence, emphasising that both the Shiv Sena and Mahayuti members wish for Shinde's involvement in the new government. "I have full faith that he will be with us," he added. Shinde had been staying in Thane citing health issues, which had fuelled speculation about potential discord within the Mahayuti alliance. However, he returned to Mumbai on Tuesday, indicating a possible resolution to the concerns surrounding his role in the new gov-

ernment. At the legislature party meeting held in Vidhan Bhawan earlier in the day, former Gujarat CM and BJP's central observer Vijay Rupani announced that Fadnavis has been unanimously elected the BJP legislature party leader. Speaking at the meeting, BJP's central observer and Union minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the "double engine government" in the state and the Centre will boost development. Fadnavis thanked the BJP legislators for reposing trust in him, adding that the thumping victory of the ruling Mahayuti alliance in the November 20 assembly elections was due to the mantra of "Ek hai toh safe hai" given by PM Modi. At the Vidhan Bhawan meeting, senior state BJP leader Chandrakant Pa-

til proposed the name of Fadnavis as the legislature party leader. Speaking to reporters at Raj Bhavan, Fadnavis said, "I met Eknath Shinde yesterday and told him that it is the wish of both the Shiv Sena and Mahayuti members that he should be with us in this government. I have full faith that he will be with us." At the Raj Bhavan press conference on Wednesday, when a reporter asked Shinde if he and Ajit Pawar would be sworn in as deputy CMs at Azad Maidan, Shinde replied, "Let's wait till evening. The oath ceremony is tomorrow (Thursday)." Pawar butted in, quipping, "Inka to shaam tak pata chalega. Main to shapath le raha hoon. He (Shinde) will figure it out by this evening. I'm the one taking the oath."

Rabi collection numbers

CONTINUED FROM P1

lakh MT against 121.26 lakh MT of the last year. Whereas, the figures of paddy procurement during the Kharif Marketing Season 2023-24, recorded a decline and the total procurement remained 782.20 lakh MT against 846.45 lakh MT procured in KMS 2022-23. As per the figures, 782.20 lakh MT was the lowest level since 2019-20, when the government agencies could procure 770.93 lakh MT in KMS 2019-20. Moreover, the number of beneficiary farmers also reported a decline as only 1.06 crore farmers managed to sell their produce on the Minimum Support Price this year against 1.24 crores of the KMS 2022-23. Farmer Leader and Haryana President of Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) Tikait, Ratan Mann said that in the

past two seasons the crop yield, especially in Haryana remained unpredictable due to prevailing weather conditions, for example the average wheat yield reached to around 22 quintals, against the normal average of 18 to 20 quintal, due to longer winter spell. But the paddy yield, especially the parml varieties, have witnessed a fall of around 2 to 5 quintals per acre, because of uneven rainfall from August to October. The decline in the paddy procurement was attributed due to fall in production in several states. As in Telangana the procurement declined to 95 lakh MT against 131.86 lakh MT of the last year and in Andhra Pradesh the government agencies could procure only 30.80 lakh MT against 42.05 lakh MT of the last year, while in Bihar the procurement remained only 30.80 lakh

MT against 42.05 lakh Mt of the last year. Similarly in UP the procurement remained only 53.80 lakh MT while it was 65.50 lakh MT last year. Meanwhile, in Punjab procurement has witnessed a surge and reached 185.53 lakh MT against 182.29 lakh MT of the last year. Moreover, there are reports that the paddy procurement may also decline this year again as during the ongoing KMS 2024-25, around 172 LMT of paddy has been procured from farmers in Punjab against 185 lakh MT of the last year. Even in Haryana the paddy procurement is likely to remain below 55 lakh MT against the average 60 lakh MT. This is despite the area under paddy in the country witnessed an increase and reached to 410 lakh hectares (By September 13), against 393 lakh hectares of the last year during the same period.

Badal escapes bid on life at Golden Temple

CONTINUED FROM P1

This has set waves of concern within the political setup of Punjab, considering that it took place at a site with religious importance. The Golden Temple, or Sri Harmandir Sahib, is more than just a place of worship; it is a symbol of Sikh identity and resilience. Chaura, 68, was seen at the shrine on Tuesday as well. Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Jasbir Singh, who was standing close to Badal in plainclothes, sensed the threat to the senior Akali leader and pounced on the shooter, grabbed his hands and pushed them upwards after which the attacker was overpowered with the help of other security personnel

and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) task force members. In the melee, the gun fired and the bullet hit the entrance wall of the shrine behind Sukhbir Badal, who escaped unhurt. Additional Deputy Commissioner Harpal Singh said the police had been keeping an eye on Chaura, who was at the Golden Temple on Tuesday as well. Special Director General of Police Arpit Shukla said more than 20 cases including under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act are registered against Chaura. Amritsar Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said the attack on Badal was foiled because of the alertness of police and

the motive behind it will be ascertained after Chaura's questioning. The shooter came alone to the Golden Temple, he said, adding that the case will be investigated from all angles. Sukhbir Singh Badal is the son of five-time former chief minister of Punjab Parkash Singh Badal and had recently announced his decision to step down as SAD president. He was the deputy chief minister of Punjab from August 2009 to March 2017. Responding to a question, Bhullar said the security deployment at the shrine was sufficient. Police cannot carry out frisking because religious sentiments are involved, he said. "Around 175 police per-

sonnel led by an assistant inspector general have been deployed at the complex," he said. Devotees are not frisked at the entrance of the Golden Temple, one of the most revered Sikh shrines. It has four entry points. No metal detector has been installed at any entrance. However, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee deploys its task force members who keep an eye on suspicious persons. If they find anyone suspicious, they can check the person. The Golden Temple has seen violent incidents in the 1980s, including Operation Blue Star in June 1984 when the Army had flushed out armed militants from the shrine.

Operation Black Thunder-1 was conducted by the National Security Guard in April 1986 against extremists and terrorists holed up in the shrine while Operation Black Thunder-II was conducted in May 1988. Pro-Khalistan terrorists have been involved in many attacks in the state, including the assassination of chief minister Beant Singh in 1995. He questioned the role of the police, asking why no action was taken when they were aware of Chaura's presence. "If the police were so alert, why didn't they arrest him? Instead, the police gave him VIP treatment and were probably waiting for the bullet to be fired," Majithia claimed.

Hasina accuses Yunus of genocide

CONTINUED FROM P1

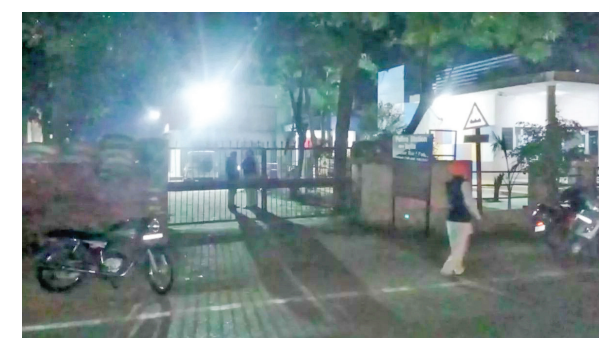
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated in 1975. Describing Yunus as "power-hungry", Hasina alleged that the places of worship in Bangladesh are under attack and the current dispensation has totally failed to deal with the situation. Hasina was speaking to supporters of her Awami League party at the event organised on Sunday to mark "Bijoy Dibos" or Victory Day that falls on December 16. Though Hasina made several statements in the last few months, it was her first public address after taking shelter, said an expert closely tracking developments in Bangladesh. The armed protestors were directed towards Ganabhaban (official residence of the prime minister). If the security guards opened fire, many lives

would have been lost. It was a matter of 25-30 minutes, and I was forced to leave. I told them not to fire no matter what happened," she said, speaking in Bengali. Today, I am being accused of genocide. In reality, Yunus has been involved in genocide in a meticulously designed manner. The masterminds, "the student coordinators and Yunus," are behind this genocide," she said. In her nearly an hour-long address, Hasina said the current dispensation in Dhaka failed to protect the minorities. Hindus, Buddhists, Christians -- no one has been spared. Eleven churches have been razed, temples and Buddhist shrines have been broken. When the Hindus protested, the Iskcon leader was arrested," she said in an oblique reference to arrest of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das.

Blast outside Majitha police station in Amritsar

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

Less than 12 hours after Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal was attacked near the Golden Temple, a powerful explosion was reported outside the Majitha Police Station in Amritsar Rural Police District around 10:00 PM on Wednesday. This marks the second explosion in Amritsar within a week. Earlier a blast at the deserted Gurbaksh Nagar Police Chowki in Ajnala was reported. The latest incident has intensified security concerns, prompting an immediate response from law enforcement agencies to address the growing tension in the region. Amritsar Rural Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Charanjit Singh, along with senior officials, arrived at the blast site to assess the situation. Investigators



The recurring nature of these events is being closely examined to ascertain whether they are part of a larger plot to destabilize the region.

able spots to prevent further incidents. Treating the Majitha Police Station explosion as a grave matter, Punjab Police have deployed forensic teams to collect evidence. The recurring nature of these events is being closely examined to ascertain whether they are part of a larger plot to destabilize the region. No official statement has been issued yet. Following the blast, the gates of the Majitha Police Station were closed, barring media access to the site. Authorities are intensifying security around vulner-

MAHA TRIO INDULGE IN SOME BANTER AND LAUGHTER

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The press conference of the Mahayuti allies here after they staked claim to form government in Maharashtra witnessed some banter thanks to Ajit Pawar, a 'veteran' deputy chief minister.

After it became clear that Devendra Fadnavis would be sworn in as Chief Minister, the question on everyone's mind was whether Eknath Shinde would agree to become his deputy, as the Sena chief has given enough hints that he was not happy after ceding the top post to the BJP.

Fadnavis said he called on Shinde, who was chief minister for the last two-and-half years, last evening and invited him to join the new government.

When Shinde, sitting between Fadnavis and Pawar at the press conference, was asked whether he would take oath as deputy CM, he was evasive, saying, "Wait till evening."

Ajit Pawar, sitting on his left, immediately cut in and said, "Don't know about him, but I am taking oath tomorrow."

GOVT FORMATION



- Mahayuti alliance: Staked claim to form government in Maharashtra.
- Fadnavis as CM: Devendra Fadnavis confirmed as Chief Minister.
- Shinde's role: Eknath Shinde evasive about becoming Deputy CM.
- Ajit Pawar quip: Confirmed his oath-taking, joked about past experiences.
- Past episodes: Ajit Pawar's 2019 early-morning oath with Fadnavis lasted 3 days.
- Deputy CM streak: Ajit Pawar served as Deputy CM multiple times but never as CM.

It drew laughter. Not to be outdone, Shinde quipped, "Ajit dada (as Pawar is called) has experience of taking oath in the morning as well as in the evening." It evoked a guffaw.

Pawar then said, "It was short-lived. This time it would last for five years."

Ajit Pawar famously took oath as Fadnavis's deputy one early morning in November

2019 after the Shiv Sena broke off its alliance with the BJP following the election results.

But the Fadnavis-Pawar government lasted only three days as Pawar failed to get the backing of enough MLAs of the Nationalist Congress Party, then headed by his uncle Sharad Pawar.

Ajit, however, became deputy CM in the Sena-Congress-NCP government led

by Uddhav Thackeray. After the Thackeray government collapsed due to Shinde's rebellion, Ajit Pawar once again sprang a surprise and joined the Shinde-led government as deputy CM.

Prior to 2014, when the Congress-NCP combine ruled Maharashtra for 15 years, Ajit Pawar was deputy CM twice. But the top post has always eluded him.

Special session from Dec 7

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

A three-day special session of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly will be held in Mumbai from December 7 to enable newly-elected MLAs to take oath and elect a speaker, legislature sources said on Wednesday.

The winter session of the state legislature will be held in Nagpur from December 16 to 21.

The sources told PTI that newly-elected MLAs will be sworn-in on December 7 and 8.

CM post is technical arrangement: Fadnavis

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday said the post of Chief Minister is a "technical arrangement" and he would run the new Mahayuti coalition government in Maharashtra by taking allies Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar along.

Fadnavis was speaking to reporters after meeting Governor C P Radhakrishnan who invited him to form the next government. He was accompanied by Shinde and Pawar.

"Chief minister's post is a technical arrangement. All three of us will work together

unitedly," Fadnavis said. "I and two deputy chief ministers will take oath (during the swearing-in ceremony on Thursday evening). It is yet to be decided how many ministers will take oath," he informed.

He met Shinde on Tuesday evening and invited him to join the government, Fadnavis added.

But Shinde, currently the caretaker CM, evaded reply when asked whether he will join the government.

"Wait till evening," said the Shiv Sena president who was chief minister of the Mahayuti government from July 2022 onwards.

CM, Dy CMs to take oath today

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena leader Uday Samant on Wednesday said only the chief minister and two deputy chief ministers will take oath during the swearing-in ceremony to be held on December 5 at the Azad Maidan in Mumbai.

The decision on the modalities of the cabinet and portfolios will be taken later, he said. Samant said it is the desire of Shiv Sena workers, MLAs and MPs that caretaker Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde should be the deputy chief minister.

'Challenge is to meet people's expectations'

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis, all set to become Maharashtra Chief Minister for the third time, on Wednesday underlined the challenges before the new government and said

the real struggle lies in fulfilling the people's expectations.

Speaking after being elected as leader of the state BJP legislature party ahead of Thursday's swearing-in ceremony, he also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for placing faith in him.

"Our responsibility has increased. We need to work harder. The struggle ahead is about meeting the expectations people have from us. We must work in tandem with our allies to achieve this," he said.

The Bharatiya Janata Party had the people's mandate in

2019 but "it was taken away", he said, apparently referring to the Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray severing its ties with the BJP over the chief minister's post and forming government in alliance with the Congress and undivided NCP.

Alert ASI thwarted 'murder' bid

TDG NETWORK
CHANDIGARH

Prompt action by an alert Punjab Police ASI on Wednesday helped thwart a bid on Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal's life outside the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Jasbir Singh, who was standing close to Sukhbir Badal at the entrance of the Golden Temple in plainclothes, swung into action the moment he sensed a threat to the senior Akali leader. Television footage showed Narayan Singh Chaura, a former terrorist, slowly moving towards Sukhbir Badal, who was sitting on a wheelchair due to a fractured leg, and suddenly pulling out a gun from his pocket.

As Chaura tried to pull the trigger, an alert Singh pounced on him, grabbed his hands, pushed them upwards and whisked him away. In the melee, the gun fired but fortunately the bullet hit the entrance wall of the shrine behind Sukhbir Badal, who escaped unhurt. Other security personnel present on the spot along with members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) task force

immediately intervened and snatched the weapon from Chaura. Speaking to reporters in Amritsar, ASI Singh said he was just performing his duty. "I was alert when he (Chaura) came.

When he took out his pistol, we overpowered him and snatched his weapon," Singh said. The audacious attack, which took place at around 9:30 am, was captured by mediapersons camping outside the Golden Temple to cover Day 2 of Sukhbir Badal's penance for the "mistakes" committed by the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) government in Punjab from 2007 to 2017. Amritsar Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar, meanwhile, lauded the policemen for their role in foiling the murder bid on Sukhbir Badal.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann also hailed the promptness of Punjab Police in nabbing the attacker. Special Director General of Police, Arpit Shukla, said one assistant inspector general of police, two superintendents of police, two deputy superintendents of police and 175 police personnel were deployed at the Golden Temple.

SAD condemns attack

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) today termed the murderous attack on Sukhbir Singh Badal as an attack on Sri Darbar Sahib even as he accused the Congress party and its senior leader Sukhinder Singh Randhawa of patronizing the perpetrator - Babbar Khalsa International militant Narayan Singh Chaura and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of allowing the attack to take place. Addressing a press conference here, senior SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia said the murderous attack was aimed at finishing the moderate Akali leadership of Punjab and spoiling the peace in the border State by creating a communal divide.

"We demand a high court monitored probe into the entire incident to unmask the entire conspiracy behind it". Asserting that the "aapar bakshish of Guru Ramdas had saved S Sukhbir Singh Badal and allowed him to complete his 'sewa' even while he was being fired upon; Majithia said "the 'sewa' as mandated by Sri Akal Takht Sahib will continue unabated. We will not be cowed down by such cowardly attacks". Taking on chief minister Bhagwant Man of lying and taking fake credit for nabbing the accused, Majithia displayed video evidence to show the State police was nowhere



MANN ORDERS THOROUGH PROBE

Mohali: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday condemned the attack on Sukhbir Singh Badal and ordered a thorough probe into the assassination attempt.

This development comes following an assassination attempt on Badal this morning at the premises of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, where he was performing penance under the religious punishments pronounced by Sri Akal Takht Sahib. According to the Punjab CMO, the attacker identified as Narain Singh Chaura was immediately arrested by the police. The former deputy CM Badal was not hurt.

Punjab CM Mann, addressing the press, said that he is in constant touch with the Director General of Police and "will not allow such conspiracies" in the state. "It is an unfortunate incident. Due to the alertness of Punjab Police personnel, a big incident was averted. The accused was arrested on the spot. I am in touch with senior officials in the Police and the DGP. I have ordered them to conduct a thorough probe into the incident. Very soon, the motive behind the attack will be known. We will not allow such conspiracies which aim to defame the state to be successful," Mann said.

near the scene of the crime and the militant was allowed to approach the Akali leader despite Punjab Police claims that attacker was under surveillance. "This indicates that this was part of a pre-planned attack and that the attacker was a sponsored hit man of ISI and agencies besides being a close associate of Sukhinder Singh Randhawa". He also thanked S

Sukhbir Singh Badal's personal security personnel Jasbir Singh for thwarting the attack, saying "Jasbir has been part of Sukhbir ji's security detail since the last twenty years and is a part of the Badal family". Giving details of the attacker Narayan Singh Chaura, the SAD leader said "Chaura is a dreaded militant from whom bombs, a MP-5 machine gun and

Spotlight on rising Khalistani sentiment

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

In a chilling incident that has shaken the entire Punjab and the worldwide Sikh community, Sukhbir Singh Badal, former Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab and current president Shiromani Akali Dal, was attacked with an assassination plot at the revered Golden Temple in Amritsar. The attack happened when Badal was performing sewa, or voluntary service, at the Sikh shrine, an act mandated by the Akal Takht, the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs, as part of his penance for the sacrilege incidents that unfolded during his political tenure. Narayan Singh Chaura, an individual with deep roots in the Khalistani movement and an infamous militant past, was promptly arrested after he opened fire at Badal. Chaura, born in the village of Chaura near Dera Baba Nanak, Gurdaspur, and educated at the Sikh Missionary College in Amritsar, has a notorious history. He crossed into Pakistan during the high tide of militancy in Punjab in the 1980s when he was allegedly engaged in smuggling arms and explosives to India to fuel the insurgency. His arrest is consequent upon a spate of criminal activities that had seen him implicated in the Buraill jailbreak case wherein he was involved as

an aider to prisoners trying to escape. The attack has not only raised immediate security concerns about one of Sikhism's holiest sites but has also brought to the forefront the simmering issues of political accountability, communal harmony, and historical grievances in Punjab. Security at the Golden Temple has been an ongoing concern, particularly given its history as a focal point for both spiritual reverence and political activism. Political leaders belonging to different parties have been condemning the attack, where many have sought a proper investigation about how such an incident may happen at a place like this, with strict security protocols. Akal Takht has issued a statement expressing deep concern over the event, urging calmness and unity in the Sikh community while emphasizing the sanctity of the Golden Temple. The attack has again brought the handling of sacrilege cases under Badal's leadership under debate. As it is already known, sacrilege of the Sikh holy scripture had started protesting all over and brought a political damage to the SAD. Badal's penance was widely viewed as a bid to mend the relationship with Sikh Panth and redress the grievances that alienated a fair portion of his voter base.

Get Delhi police nod: Haryana to farmers

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

Two days before the farmer leaders from Punjab were planning to resume their Delhi March on December 6, the Haryana government has made its intentions clear that it will not allow protesting farmers to proceed towards Delhi. As per the information the Haryana police have issued prohibitory orders and imposed 144 CrPC at the Shambhu Border. The Haryana police have pasted the notices at the Punjab and Haryana border directing the farmers not to violate the directions by launching the footmarch on December 6. Meanwhile,

the Haryana police have asked the farmer leaders to seek permission from the Delhi police for any protest in the National capital. In the orders issued by the office of Ambala Deputy Commissioner Parth Gupta the farmers have been advised to reconsider their call for Delhi March after seeking prior permission from the Delhi police and avoid any law and order situation in the District. However, the order has evoked sharp response from the farmer leaders who have condemned the Haryana government and accused it of playing into the hands of the union government.

Reacting to the imposition of Section 144, Tejveer Singh

farmer leader and spokesperson of the Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) Shaheed Bhagat Singh Kisan Morcha said that the Haryana and Punjab governments were following the directions of the centre and why the farmers are not being allowed to reach the country's capital and raise their issues with the government.

"We have, already said that the Punjab's Bhagwant Mann led Aam Aadmi Party government is a puppet of the BJP-led central government. Today, we have received further proof of this as the notice for Section 144 at Shambhu Morcha has been put up by Haryana government officials inside the Punjab state,

that is clearly showing that the Center has taken control over Punjab"

However, the farmer leaders have said that they will continue with their protest and will start the Delhi March as per the schedule on December 6. The farmer leaders also announced that farmers associated with around 20 farmer and labourer associations will be joining the protest march.

On the other hand Bhartiya Kisan Union (Charuni), which played a crucial role in 2020-21 protests, will not support the Delhi March as its leaders said that they were contacted by the farmer leaders before launching this protest march.

Rahul stopped on way to Sambhal

TDG NETWORK
GHAZIABAD

A delegation of Congress leaders led by Rahul Gandhi on its way to violence-hit Sambhal was stopped by Uttar Pradesh Police at Ghazipur border here on Wednesday and had to return, with the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha terming the action as "anti-constitutional". The opposition party's leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, returned to Delhi after staying at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border for about two hours, failing to proceed onwards. A massive traffic jam was witnessed at the Ghazipur border on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway in the

morning as Congress workers gathered there amid heavy security deployment and barricading. The carriageway from Delhi to Uttar Pradesh was heavily congested, with thousands of commuters facing a harrowing time on the road. After being stopped at the Ghazipur border, Rahul Gandhi said he was ready to go alone to Sambhal with police but was not allowed. "We are trying to go to Sambhal. Police are refusing, not allowing us. As the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha, it is my right to go... I said that I am ready to go alone, I am ready to go with the police but they did not accept that either," he said. "Now they are saying that if we come



back in a few days, they will let us go. This is actually against the right of the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha. I should be allowed to go," he told reporters. BJP leaders in Uttar Pradesh decried the Congress's move as a "drama" aimed at "appeasing its Muslim vote bank". Meanwhile, Congress legislative party leader in Uttar Pradesh assembly Aradhana Mishra

'Mona' claimed in Lucknow that she was supposed to be a part of the delegation but was put under "house arrest". "I am under house arrest. This is hooliganism and anarchy by the government. Rahul ji, the Congress party and I will visit Sambhal today, tomorrow or whenever we can," she said. Prohibitory orders are in place in Sambhal where violence erupted on November 24 over a court-ordered mosque survey, killing four people and injuring several others. Holding up a copy of the Constitution in his hands amid heavy security at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border, Rahul Gandhi said the police's decision was against democracy.

DIVYANG CHILDREN TO SHOWCASE TALENT AT RISING RAJASTHAN SUMMIT

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma has announced that the art and skills of Divyang children will be given due respect at the upcoming Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit in Jaipur, scheduled from December 9 to 11. As part of his initiative to create a unique identity for the summit, the Chief Minister is taking a new resolution each day, with the sixth resolution focusing on showcasing the talents of Divyang children.



Sharma emphasised that providing opportunities for the Divyang children's talent to flourish will inspire others and help them achieve success in life.

Sharma emphasised that providing opportunities for the Divyang children's talent to flourish will inspire others and help them achieve success in life. Their participation will be one of the summit's key attractions,

highlighting their skills and abilities. The Chief Minister also praised the achievements of Rajasthan's para-athletes like Avani Lekhara, Mona Agarwal, and Sundar Gurjar, who earned medals at the Paris Paralympics, bringing pride to the state and country. He reiterated the state government's commitment to the welfare of people with disabilities, ensuring equal opportunities for their growth and progress.

The initiative aligns with Rajasthan's broader goals of fostering inclusivity and promoting the talents of all citizens at the Rising Rajasthan Summit.

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Mary Kom, Suresh Raina, and Deepa Malik extend support for 'Honour Run'

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

Renowned Indian athletes, including Mary Kom, Suresh Raina, and Para Olympian Dr Deepa Malik, have extended their support for the upcoming 'Honour Run' scheduled for December 8, 2024, in Jaipur. They have encouraged citizens of all ages to participate in the



prestigious event, which promises to be an exciting and inclusive occasion for fitness enthusiasts.

The 'Honour Run' will feature timed races of 21 km, 10

km, and 5 km, along with a fun, untimed 3 km run. The route will start from Albert Hall, proceed to Patrika Gate, take a U-turn at Hotel Lalit, and return to Albert

Hall. A total of Rs 30 lakh in prizes will be awarded across various categories. The event will be flagged off by Colonel Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, Cabinet Minister, Government of Rajasthan. Senior military dignitaries, including Lieutenant General Manjinder Singh, Army Commander of Sapt Shakti Command, will also be present at the event.

Development projects at Jal Mahal and Amber-Nahargarh to boost tourism

SHALU SACHDEVA
JAIPUR

In a move to strengthen Jaipur's tourism infrastructure, the state government has announced ambitious development projects at two iconic locations: Jal Mahal and Amber-Nahargarh. The projects aim to enhance the existing tourism experience by combining modern expectations with Jaipur's rich cultural heritage. Tourism Secretary Ravi Jain stated that under the guidance of the Chief minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, the state is continuously making progress and moving in the direction to boost tourism. He added that several schemes like PRASAD and SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEMES are being run by the ministry of tourism. The PRASAD scheme aims to foster the development and promotion of religious tourism in India, ultimately enhancing tourism and attracting more visitors, thereby benefiting the state. He further added that the Jal Mahal Development Project is designed to improve the tourism experience around the historic Water Palace, which sits in the middle of Man Sagar Lake. Known for its Mughal and Rajput architectural styles, Jal Mahal is a major attraction in Jaipur, with four of its five floors submerged in water. The project aims to "harness and strengthen" Jaipur's tourism potential, with an estimated cost of Rs. 96.61 crores. Key features of the development include the creation of a Man Sagar Aeration system, Promenade Development, a Nature Trail, landscaping improvements, and the introduction of the Craft-Cuisine-Celebration (3C) Night Bazaar. A highlight



of the project will be the Ghumro Synchronised Water Ballet Show that promises to offer visitors an immersive cultural experience. Other additions include a Ridge Walk and Skywalk connecting Gadh Ganesh and the Baldev Parshuram Temple. The development is expected to generate 8,000 new jobs in the region. Additionally, three Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects, with an estimated cost of Rs 250 crores, will complement the Jal Mahal development. These include the Funicular Development from Gaitore ki Chattriyon to Nahargarh, a cable car from Amber to Nahargarh, and the expansion of the Jal Mahal Recreational Area.

The Delhi depot of Rajasthan Roadways has achieved a remarkable milestone in November 2024, recording its highest booking income to date. Chief Manager Pulkit Kumar shared that the depot earned a total of Rs 3.45 crores in November, surpassing the previous month's income by Rs 78 lakh. October 2024 had already set a significant record, with the depot generating Rs 2.67 crore in booking income, which was higher than the booking income from the same month last year.

Rajasthan Roadways Delhi Depot receives record booking income in November

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

This surge in income is largely attributed to the introduction of new deluxe AC buses on the Delhi-Jaipur route. On October 17, 2024, Rajasthan Roadways, under the leadership of Chairman Shubhra Singh, launched eight new deluxe vehicles, significantly boosting the booking revenue for the depot. The added luxury and comfort of these buses have

Haribhau Bagade inaugurates Prakriti International Documentary Film Festival

TDG NETWORK
JODHPUR

Governor Haribhau Bagade inaugurated the 16th Prakriti International Documentary Film Festival in Jodhpur on Wednesday, emphasising the importance of skill development alongside traditional education. Addressing the event, Bagade highlighted the significant role that skill training plays in the holistic development of students, in line with the goals of the new education policy. He noted that the policy focuses on the all-around development of students, with special attention given to the digitisation of education.



Bagade stressed upon the value of documentaries as a powerful tool for education, urging that they be effectively integrated into the

learning process. He called for the widespread use of audio-visual mediums in education, as they provide an engaging and effective way to disseminate knowledge. The Governor also stressed the importance of communication between students to foster the exchange of ideas and knowledge. He noted that effective presentation is key in education, and he encouraged students to embrace digital platforms for enhanced learning opportunities.

Further, Bagade spoke about the impact of digitisation in education, highlighting initiatives like the CEC (Consortium for Educational Communication), which is opening new avenues for educational advancement in India.

The Governor expressed his belief that India will soon become a global leader in education, particularly in the digital era, and he emphasised the role of youth in driving the country's future success. He also shared his confidence that India's economy will soon become the third largest in the world, driven by innovation and

youth. Professor J.B. Nadda, Director of CEC, highlighted the role of the organisation in promoting digital education. He noted that CEC, as Asia's largest digital education platform, is dedicated to creating an ICT-based learning environment. He also mentioned that the Prakriti Film Festival has been a platform for showcasing new ideas since 1997.

The event also featured a five-minute short film on the festival and was attended by key figures including Prof K.L. Shrivastava, Vice Chancellor of Jai Narayan Vyas University, and Prof B.R. Gadhi, Director of EMMRC, who delivered the welcome address. Dr Sunil Mehru, Joint Director of CEC, provided an overview of the festival's achievements.

Aarush Mathur wins Rajasthan State Under-13 Chess title

TDG NETWORK
UDAIPUR

Aarush Mathur of Jaipur emerged victorious in the Rajasthan State Under-13 Chess Competition held in the city of lakes Udaipur. A total of seven rounds were played in this competition, in which Aarush remained undefeated in all seven. He won six matches



and played one draw, after which he became the winner. Aarush had also added another feather to his success list by winning a bronze medal in the SGFI National Under-19 Competition. Now his eyes are on the National Under-13 Competition starting from December 17, in which he will represent Rajasthan.

Complex robotic surgery saves life of five-month-old child

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

In a groundbreaking medical achievement, paediatric surgeons at Mahatma Gandhi Hospital successfully saved the life of a five-month-old baby through a complex robotic surgery. The baby was born with a congenital diaphragmatic hernia, a serious condition where a hole in the diaphragm allows organs like the stomach, kidney, spleen, and parts of the intestines to shift into the chest cavity. This displaced the baby's lungs and heart, causing breathing problems and severe weakness.



This surgery, which employed robotic transthoracic technology, is believed to be the first of its kind in Rajasthan.

The parents consulted senior paediatric surgeon Dr Siddharth Singh Rathore, who recommended surgery as the only solution. The hospital's advanced robotic surgery facility was used to perform the operation, offering a minimally invasive approach. The procedure was conducted through three small incisions in the chest, significantly reducing the risks associated with

conventional surgery. The baby was discharged just two days later, completely healthy. This surgery, which employed robotic transthoracic technology, is believed to be the first of its kind in Rajasthan. Dr Rathore explained the complexity of the procedure, emphasising the limited space in an infant's chest and the challenges posed by the continuous movement of the lungs and heart. Advanced tools

like robotic 3D vision were essential for the success of the operation, which was completed without blood loss. Dr Rathore also acknowledged the contributions of anaesthesiologists Dr Kalpana and Dr Tanmay, whose efforts were crucial to the operation's success. Mahatma Gandhi Hospital now offers state-of-the-art robotic paediatric surgery services, making it a leader in advanced paediatric care.

Mahendra Soni urges Saathin workers to make Panchayats women and child-friendly

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

Administrative Secretary of the Women and Child Development Department, Mahendra Soni, has called upon Saathin workers to ensure that Panchayats become child and women-friendly. Soni issued this directive on Wednesday during a two-day training program, "Panchayat Sang Saathin," which was attended by 66 Saathin workers from 33 districts. The program was organised jointly by the Panchayati Raj Department, Women Empowerment Directorate, and Manjari Institute with support from UNICEF Rajasthan.



Soni emphasised the importance of Saathin workers in the development of Panchayats that prioritise the welfare of women and children.

National Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, the "Panchayat Sang Saathin" program aims to train Saathin workers to promote a positive attitude towards women and child welfare at the Panchayat level. Soni highlighted that children under 14 years of

age account for 14% of the state's population, while women make up half. Together, women and children represent 64% of the state's population, making it essential for them to benefit from the Gram Panchayat Development Scheme. During the program, Soni

released a training module and poster developed by UNICEF and the department to guide Saathin workers. Neetu Rajeshwar, Commissioner of Women Empowerment, Gururadhan Singh Ramana, Joint Administrative Secretary of Panchayati Raj, and Shafiq Hussain, Social Policy Expert from UNICEF, were also present.

Ramana announced that similar training programs would be held in districts to make Panchayats more women and child-friendly.

Hindu community protests ISKCON priest's arrest in Bangladesh

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

Thousands of people from the Hindu community gathered in Jaipur's Badi Chaudhary on Wednesday to protest the arrest of ISKCON temple saint Chinmoy Krishna Das in Bangladesh and the ongoing oppression of Hindus in the country. The protest, which saw widespread participation from saints, public representatives, youth, and women, was a demonstration of unity against the atrocities faced by the Hindu community in Bangladesh.



The protestors raised slogans such as "If you divide, you will be cut... we will remain united, we will remain virtuous" to emphasise the solidarity of the Hindu community. Saints and mahants sat on the stage, while public representatives like Civil Lines MLA Gopal Sharma, Hawa Mahal MLA

Balmukund Acharya, Jaipur Greater Mayor Kusum Yadav, and BJP leader Ravi Nayyar joined the protest on the road. The participants waved saffron flags and held placards demanding justice, with slogans such as "Save Hindus in Bangladesh" and "Dharmo Rakshati Rakshit." The protestors called on the Indian government to raise the issue at international platforms like the United Nations and Human

Rights Council to ensure the protection of Hindus in Bangladesh. They urged the central government to apply pressure on Bangladesh to safeguard the rights and security of Hindus there. A five-point memorandum was read out, demanding the Bangladesh government uphold religious freedom and protect its Hindu citizens. Speaking to the media, Sharma criticised the cur-

rent Bangladesh government, stating that the power lies in the hands of Islamic fundamentalists since the ousting of Sheikh Hasina. He urged the Bangladesh government to change its stance for the benefit of both nations and warned that the situation could escalate under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The protest concluded with a collective recitation of the Hanuman Chalisa.

MURDER MOST FOUL: SON ELIMINATES PARENTS, SISTER

According to the police, the victims have been identified as Rajesh Kumar (51), his wife Komal (46), and their daughter Kavita (23).

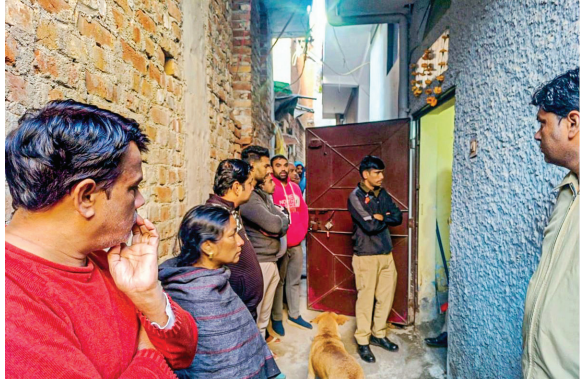
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a major revelation in the bone-chilling triple murder case in Delhi's Neb Sarai, the Delhi Police on Wednesday said that the son, who is also the complainant in the case is the main accused in the killing of his mother, father and sister.

Joint Commissioner of Police, Southern range, SK Jain, said that accused Arjun's relations was not good with his family members, and the motive behind the accused's crime was feeling "humiliated" by his father's scolding and "sibling rivalry."

A man, his wife and their daughter were stabbed to death at their residence in Delhi's Neb Sarai on Wednesday. Earlier, it was believed that the fourth member of the family, the son was out for a walk at the time of the incident.

Addressing a press conference, Jain said, "At the



Police personnel and others at a house at Neb Sarai area where a middle-aged couple and their daughter were found dead, in New Delhi. PTI

scene of the crime, there was no sign of theft and forced entry, and the bodies were found on the bed. It was clear that it was not a case of robbery or burglary. Footage from all CCTV cameras was examined."

He further mentioned that Arjun, the main complainant and son, started to question facts when he was revealed by the Police.

"Slowly, we could see contradictions in his statements. In the end, he con-

fessed to the murder of his father, mother and sister. Arjun's relations with his father and family were not good. His father was an ex-serviceman. He used an Army knife to commit the crime. The motive behind the murders was that the man used to feel humiliated by his father scolding him. The second reason was sibling rivalry. In anger, he planned to kill them and selected December 4 as the date to commit the crime

TRIPLE MURDER

- Arjun, the son, confessed to killing his family due to humiliation from his father and sibling rivalry.
- Police found no signs of theft, confirming it was not a robbery but a planned murder.
- Arjun had unexplained fresh injuries, raising suspicions about his involvement.
- Arjun's anger over his father's scolding and sibling rivalry led him to murder his family on their wedding anniversary.
- Arjun's inconsistent statements during questioning led to his confession.

as it was the wedding anniversary of his parents," the Joint CP said. SK Jain also mentioned that the accused had fresh injuries on his hand and he was unable to explain how it happened. "He murdered the three of them at around five in the morning. He had created an alibi that he is a sports person and goes for exercise every morning etc. Further investigation is going on," he said. The Joint CP elaborated on the details of the investigation.

"First call was received at 0653 hours from Arjun, the son of the deceased. At the scene of the crime, there was no sign of theft or forced entry. It was clear that it was not a case of robbery, burglary or forced entry," SP Jain said.

"On examining Arjun, a number of contradictions were found in his statements. There were fresh injury marks also on his hand. During examination, Arjun admitted to the crime.

Kejriwal slams Centre

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led central government after three members of a family were found dead at their home in the national capital. Describing the incident as "extremely painful and frightening," the AAP convener accused the Centre of allowing criminals a free hand and failing to ensure law and order in the capital. "Three murders in the same house in Neb Sarai This is extremely painful and frightening. Every day, Delhiites wake up to such frightening news. Criminals have been given a free hand, law and order has collapsed. Homes are being destroyed, innocent lives are being lost. And those who are responsible are silently watching all this happen," he wrote in a post on X.

"Will the central government keep quiet like this and watch the law and order situation in Delhi collapse? Will its party still say that crime is not an issue in Delhi?" he added.

The Delhi Police operates under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

Parvesh Verma to challenge Kejriwal: BJP

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Former MP and BJP leader Parvesh Verma will likely contest against Aam Aadmi Party Chief Arvind Kejriwal from the New Delhi constituency in the upcoming Delhi Assembly election, BJP sources told ANI.

Verma has been asked to strengthen the BJP organisation in the New Delhi Assembly constituency and he is ready to give a tough fight to Kejriwal, the sources added.

According to the sources, the BJP is likely to release its first list of candidates for the Assembly election after the ongoing winter session of the parliament.

Parvesh Verma represented the West Delhi Lok Sabha constituency twice after winning the 2014 and 2019 general elections. He also won from Mehrauli in the 2013 Delhi assembly election. His father Sahib Singh Verma served as the Chief Minister of Delhi between 1996 and 1998.

The five-year term of the Delhi Assembly is ending in 2025 and there is a possibility of elections being held in February. The AAP had won 62 out of 70 seats in the 2020 assembly elections.

In the 2015 Assembly election, the party came to power with a resounding victory by winning 67 out of 70 seats.



Manipur: Kuki-Zo mark 19th Remembrance Day, demand UT

NIBIR
MANIPUR

Thousands of Kuki-Zo people across Sadar Hills, Kangpokpi observed the 19th Remembrance Day today at Saikul Sub Divisional Headquarters in Saikul Hill Town. The district-level commemoration, organized by the Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU), was hosted by Kuki Inpi Saikul Gamkai in collaboration with KSO Saikul and KWU Saikul. The occasion marked remembrance of the fallen Kuki-Zo martyrs who have lost their lives in the ongoing conflict in the region.



The business establishments, schools, and other institutions in the district remained closed throughout the day. However, vehicular movement was exempted from the total shutdown, allowing essential travel while maintaining the solemnity of the

occasion. The 19th Remembrance Day also served as a platform to voice a critical political demand. Leaders called on the Government of India to urgently grant the Kuki-Zo people their political rights, specifically the demand for a

Union Territory (UT) with a Legislature. The appeal, delivered with deep emotion and unity, was framed as a hopeful request for the Government to grant the political demand as a "Christmas Gift."

Lamminlun Singsit, the General Secretary of CoTU raised the issue of political recognition. "We have gathered here today to honor our fallen martyrs and stand firm in our commitment to our political movement. Enough is enough; we cannot wait any longer for our rightful political solution," he declared.

Speaking to TDG, Singsit stated, "We uphold our po-

litical demand and we are steadfast until this demand is at our hands. We appeal to the Centre to not delay our political demand. As a Christmas token of gift, we appeal to the Centre to give a final solution to the Kuki-Zo community which is the Union Territory."

The appeal for political recognition comes amidst growing concerns about the delays in addressing the long-standing demands of the Kuki-Zo community. Singsit emphasized the urgency of the matter, urging the Government of India not to further delay a solution that has long been sought by the people.

BJP poised for key changes in Rajasthan, cabinet reshuffle likely soon



TDG NETWORK
AJIT MAINDOLA

Following the formation of the new government in Maharashtra on Thursday, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) high command is now poised to implement key decisions in Rajasthan. State President Madan Rathore is expected to form a new team, with new district and division presidents are likely to be appointed by the end of the month during the organizational elections. Additionally, significant changes could take place within the state government. With Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma's one-year tenure approaching, a cabinet reshuffle is anticipated soon. Sources suggest that Sharma may soon travel to Delhi for discussions, as the high command is reportedly dissatisfied with the performance of some ministers. Furthermore, there are rumors of potential surprising ap-

pointments at the top levels of the bureaucracy, amidst growing reports of tensions within the administrative ranks in Delhi.

Since the formation of the Bhajan Lal government, there has been ongoing discussion about the influence of bureaucracy. Former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has claimed that the bureaucracy is effectively running the government. Many believe that this dominance played a significant role in the disappointing results of the Lok Sabha elections, leading to frustration among workers and leaders. However, there has been some improvement recently, with ministers and MLAs starting to be heard. Despite this, reports of tensions within the bureaucracy continue to affect the government's operation.

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma is working hard to ensure that these internal issues don't disrupt the functioning of the government.

He has managed to bring the situation under control by directly communicating with ministers and MLAs. However, there is still a concern that ministers are not working at the desired pace. The high command is receiving detailed reports on this matter. Sharma, known to be a trusted ally of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, receives these reports directly, allowing him to stay well-informed.

The first year of Sharma's tenure is considered to have been satisfactory, especially given that his opponents did not offer the level of cooperation he had hoped for. The upcoming cabinet reshuffle is expected to strengthen his position, as it will be carried out based on his recommendations. Additionally, the central high command may bring in new faces in the bureaucracy to create a fresh perception of the Rajasthan government among the public.

Currently, the central leadership and state government are focusing on the Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit and the foundation stone laying of ERCP, both scheduled for this month. The Prime Minister is expected to attend both events. As a result, the government's attention is primarily on these two programs. However, after December 17, significant decisions are expected to be made in the state.

Assam: Bangladeshi stall forced to vacate trade fair amid protest

NIBIR
ASSAM

A Bangladeshi stall in Assam was forced to leave a trade fair on Wednesday, December 4. The incident occurred in Silchar in Cachar district which has seen protests amid the prevailing situation in Bangladesh where Hindu minorities have been allegedly targeted. The protest were made by local groups including the Bajrang Dal. The organisers additionally readjusted their hoardings by removing Bangladesh from it.

The trade fair, organized last week, featured stalls from Bangladesh, Thailand, and Afghanistan. However, after the protests, the organisers decided to readjust their promotional hoardings by removing the name of Bangladesh.

"On Monday evening, a group of youths came and addressed themselves as members of Bajrang Dal. They asked the Bangladeshi store owner to leave and it created a heated situation," the organisers said without revealing their names.



Owners of the store which was offering Bangladeshi products after a discussion with the organisers, decided to leave and they took a train towards Kolkata on Tuesday morning.

"Considering the situation here, they decided to leave without wasting time. They packed the product during the night and took the first available train from Silchar in the morning. They headed towards Kolkata," organisers said.

As per the sources, the Bangladeshi stall was owned by two traders, one from Bangladesh and the other from West Bengal. Mithun Nath from Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), who went to the Global Expo Silchar on Monday evening, said that they are blocking all the trade options not just from an emotional point

but from the security angles too.

"We have appealed to every Indian citizen to avoid Bangladeshi products because the people in that country are showing so much hate towards India. Who can guarantee that they are not injecting slow poison in the food products supplied here," he said.

Nath said that they had appealed to the organisers of the Global Expo Silchar to readjust their hoardings by removing the name of Bangladesh on Monday and by Tuesday afternoon, it was done.

"We also appealed to the Visa Application Centre in Silchar to hide the name Bangladesh. We won't allow any kind of display of Bangladesh here because the people in that country are dishonoring our national flag," he said.

Grenade attack by terrorists on Army post in J&K's Poonch

TDG NETWORK
JAMMU

In a terrorist attack on the Indian Army in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, two grenades were hurled at a military post in the Surankote area early Wednesday morning. Officials reported that one grenade exploded while the other was defused by experts, and fortunately, no casualties were reported in the incident. The attack took place at an army post located behind the main camp.

Following the explosion, security forces launched an im-



mediate search operation to trace the assailants. During the operation, the safety pin of the exploded grenade was recovered near the perimeter wall of the Army camp, providing a potential lead in identifying the attackers. Despite the setback, the terrorists managed to flee the scene, prompting a massive search operation by the Army and local police in the region to track them down.

This grenade attack came on the heels of a significant operation conducted by security forces in Srinagar's Harwan area. On Tuesday, a joint search and cordon operation in the upper reaches of Dachigam forest resulted in the neutralization of one terrorist. Identified as Junaid Ahmed Bhat, a member of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the terrorist had been involved in multiple civilian killings, including one in Gagangir, Ganderbal. Bhat was also linked to several other terror attacks in the region.

Police blocked farmers' 'Delhi Chalo' march for MSP guarantee: Tikait

TDG NETWORK
ALIGARH

Farmer leader and national spokesperson of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), Rakesh Tikait, claimed on Monday that farmers participating in the 'Delhi Chalo' protest were stopped by police barricades as they attempted to march towards Delhi, demanding solutions to agricultural issues and a legal guarantee for the Minimum Support Price (MSP).



The protest, organised by the Bharatiya Kisan Parishad (BKP) and other farmer groups,

comes amid heightened security measures and traffic advisories in the Noida-Delhi region.

MANOHAR LAL HIGHLIGHTS POWER, CARBON GOALS AT ENERGY MEETING

Union Minister emphasized boosting storage for affordable, reliable power accessibility.


TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Power and Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal Khattar on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Members of Parliament on the generation and demand of electricity under the National Electricity Plan, the Ministry of Power said in a release.

During the meeting, Manohar Lal Khattar highlighted that power is a critical component in achieving the goal of developed India by 2047. He noted that with the rising electricity demand, it is

KEY POINTS

- Khattar chairs a meeting on electricity generation, highlighting power's role in India's 2047 development and carbon net-zero goals.
- India's power capacity reached 454.5 GW in 2024, with steady growth in thermal, nuclear, and renewable energy.
- Peak electricity demand to hit 366 GW by 2031-32; energy storage capacity needs 16.13 GW by 2026-27.
- Non-fossil-based capacity to rise to 57.4% by 2026-27; Rs 14.54 lakh crore needed for energy infrastructure.



essential to simultaneously increase power generation. Emphasizing India's commitment to achieving carbon net zero, he stated that the

focus would remain on non-fossil-based energy sources. The Union Minister also stressed the importance of enhancing storage capac-

ity to ensure affordable and reliable power for everyone. Union Minister, Khattar also emphasised that state and central government

needs to work in coordination to achieve the targets.

The meeting was attended by other Members of Parliament of various political parties from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

During the meeting Minister of State for New and Renewable Energy, Shripad Yesso Naik said that India is energy transition as per the NDCs and is on the path of achieving SDGs.

He also said that the government is working towards skulking people in the field of energy.

During the meeting, the present scenario of the electricity was also evaluated. As per the ministry, the installed Generation Capacity as of

October 31 this year stood at 454.5 gigawatts (GW) comprising 243.1 GW thermal, 8.2 GW Nuclear, and 203.2 Renewables including large hydro of 46.97 GW. The generation installed capacity achieved has grown at a CAGR of 5.97 since 2014-15. The gross generation from all the sources during the year 2023-24 was 1739 BU comprising of 1326 BU (76 per cent) from thermal, 48 BU (3 per cent) from Nuclear, 365 BU (21 per cent) from RE Sources which includes 169 (10.4 per cent) from Hydro, as per the release.

Due to concerted efforts of the government, the gross generation has increased from 1033 BU during 2013-

14 to 1739 BU in 2023-24, which has grown at a CAGR of 5.4 per cent since 2013-14, as per the release.

The country has observed a maximum peak demand of around 250 GW in May 2024 during the current year (2024-25). The peak demand has grown at a CAGR of 16 per cent from 2013-14 to 2023-24 while Energy Requirement has grown at a rate of 5 per cent during 2013-14 to 2023-24.

The peak not met and energy not supplied by the country is observed to be very minimal over the last five years and was on account of factors other than lack of generation capacity in the country. As per the 20th

EPS report published by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), the peak demand and energy requirement is around 366 GW and 2474 BU by 2031-32.

The projected electrical energy requirement and peak electricity demand on the all-India basis are estimated as 1908 BU and 277 GW for the year 2026-27 respectively.

Energy Storage capacity is an important aspect in achieving the targets of NEP. Energy storage capacity of 16.13 GW/82.37 GWh with PSP-based storage of 7.45 GW capacity and 47.65 GWh storage and BESS-based storage of 8.68 GW/34.72 GWh is required by the year 2026-27.

JanMGNREGA app will be revamped to boost feedback mechanism

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The JanMANREGA app will be revamped to enhance the active disclosure of information and introduce a feedback mechanism for citizens regarding the implementation of MGNREGA, said Union Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday, according to a release by the Ministry of Rural Development.

Addressing the media on

the ministry's achievements, he stated that a training module has been developed to enhance the capacity of field workers under MGNREGA, focusing on training village employment assistants.

Union Minister Chouhan noted that this year, the ministry's budget was Rs 1.84 lakh crore, of which Rs 1.03 lakh crore has been utilised.

While responding to media queries, Chouhan reaffirmed the government's commitment, stating that action would be taken if any state identified shortcomings in

MNREGA or the PM Awas Yojana. He emphasised that schemes like MNREGA are demand-based, and additional funds are sought from the Finance Ministry when the allocated budget falls short, with continuous revisions made as needed.

Chouhan also highlighted that under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin, a target of constructing 2.95 crore houses was set for completion by March 2024. Nearly all houses have been sanctioned, with 2.67 crore already constructed.

RBI raises UPI Lite wallet limit to Rs 5,000

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday revised the wallet limit for the UPI Lite from Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000.

As per the new rules introduced today, the upper transaction limit for UPI Lite under offline framework has been increased from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 per transaction.

"The offline framework has been updated and the enhanced limits for UPI Lite shall be Rs 1,000 per transaction, with Rs 5,000 being the total limit at any point in time," the RBI circular added.

The framework earlier prescribed an upper limit of Rs 500 for digital payment transaction under offline framework and a total limit of Rs 2,000 for a payment instrument at any point in time.

The enhanced transaction and total limits for UPI Lite are set to take effect immediately, providing a significant boost to users who rely on this mode of payment for day-to-day purchases. The RBI has emphasized that this update aims to further streamline digital payment solutions while ensuring security and ease of use for



consumers.

The circular has been issued under the authority of Section 18 read with Section 10(2) of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, and is expected to create a more robust and inclusive digital payment ecosystem in India.

Earlier, On October 9, the

The enhanced transaction and total limits for UPI Lite are set to take effect immediately.

RBI announced an increase in transaction limits for Unified Payments Interface (UPI) services, particularly for users of keypad mobile phones. The announcement was made by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das during the last policy rates announcement. The enhanced transac-

tion and total limits for UPI Lite are set to take effect immediately.

In October 2024, Unified Payments Interface (UPI) achieved a historic milestone by processing 16.58 billion financial transactions in a single month, underscoring its pivotal role in India's digital transformation.

Launched in 2016 by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), UPI has revolutionized the nation's payment ecosystem by integrating multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application.

Telangana govt, Google ink agreement to establish Safety Engineering Centre

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Google and the Telangana government have formalised an agreement to establish the Google Safety Engineering Center (GSEC) in Hyderabad, marking a significant milestone in cybersecurity innovation. The GSEC in Hyderabad will be the first of its kind in the APAC region after Tokyo and only the fifth globally, with similar facilities in Dublin, Munich, and Malaga, according to a statement.

This GSEC is a specialised international cybersecurity hub designed to play a crucial role in developing advanced security and online safety products tailored for the Indian context. The centre will focus on cutting-edge research, AI-driven security solutions, and creat-



ing a collaborative platform for leading experts and researchers in cybersecurity. It also aims to foster skill development, boost employment, and enhance cybersecurity capabilities in India, the Telangana CMO stated.

The release further highlighted that Google, which already has its largest employee base in Hyderabad, is currently constructing its biggest office globally outside its headquarters in the city. The GSEC was first announced on October 3, 2024, during the Google for India 2024 Conclave, sparking intense competition among states to secure

this investment.

"We are very proud that Google has chosen Hyderabad for setting up the GSEC. This partnership is a testament to Hyderabad's position as a leading IT and innovation hub in the country and the world," said Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy after the partnership was formalised.

Welcoming Royal Hansen, CIO of Google, Revanth Reddy remarked, "Telangana has always been at the forefront of digital skill development. Hyderabad has been the epicentre of IT/ITES development globally. Our city is already home

to five of the most valuable tech companies in the world - Alphabet (Google), Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, and Meta (Facebook). With this partnership, I hope we can address global cybersecurity challenges effectively from Hyderabad."

During discussions with the Google team, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy emphasised Hyderabad's leadership in cybersecurity initiatives in India. This leadership, he noted, is underscored by the state's proactive approach in forging strategic partnerships with global technology leaders.

The establishment of GSEC in Hyderabad is expected to be transformative for the city and the state, attracting top-tier safety engineers, local policy experts, and fostering collaborations with academic institutions

and government partners to address India's unique cybersecurity challenges, the release added. The initiative will enhance the digital safety of businesses, government institutions, and citizens while creating thousands of direct and indirect employment opportunities.

Telangana's collaboration with Google aligns with its broader vision of nurturing a thriving technological ecosystem that supports research, training, and innovation in ICT. As part of its ongoing digital transformation, the Telangana Fiber (T-Fiber) initiative aims to connect over 47 lakh rural households. This partnership with Google will ensure the digital safety of these homes through secure Android TV/Smart TV systems.

Delhi leads India in EV adoption: Report

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in India is surging, with Delhi emerging as the leader in EV penetration, according to a report by FICCI and Yes Bank.

The report highlighted that Delhi has achieved an EV penetration rate of 11.5 per cent, driven by its adoption across multiple segments.

Kerala follows closely at 11.1 per cent, and Assam at 10.0 per cent, where the adoption of electric two-wheelers (e2Ws) and three-wheelers (e3Ws) has been significant.

Additionally, Gujarat, Odisha, Kerala, and Punjab recorded the highest compound annual growth rates (CAGR) in EV sales from FY21 to FY24, underscoring the importance of states



collaborating and sharing successful strategies.

The report also noted that the top five states contributed to more than half of the EV volumes in FY24, with the spread of EV sales improving over the past four years. It emphasized the crucial role states play in India's EV transition as the country strives to achieve its net-zero goals.

The report urged a doubling of the current EV penetration rate to meet national targets by 2030. It called for states to renew their EV policies until 2030, emphasizing the need to mandate EV adoption in

public transport and fleet operations.

With many states' EV policies nearing their expiration, the report stressed the importance of providing a stable and long-term policy environment to attract investors and accelerate EV adoption.

The report provided a roadmap to bridge the gap between ambition and execution, offering actionable recommendations to enhance Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) penetration across the country.

It highlighted the need for states to support industry development and charging infrastructure through sustainable fiscal measures. Establish well-defined institutional mechanisms and focused policies and Foster collaboration between central and state governments to fast-track ZEV adoption.

Religious tourism driving residential demand in tier-2 cities: Report

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Tier-2 cities with strong religious tourism appeal, such as Prayagraj, Varanasi, Puri, and Shirdi, are witnessing a sharp rise in residential demand, according to a report by Magicbricks.

Driven by a combination of self-use and investment motivations, these cities are emerging as residential hotspots, leveraging their cultural and spiritual significance.

Prayagraj has seen a remarkable 28 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase in demand, while Varanasi recorded an 18 per cent surge.

Puri, a popular destination for devotees of Lord Jagannath, posted a 52 per cent growth, and Shirdi, home to the revered Sai Baba shrine, topped the list with a 67 per cent rise in buyer interest.

The demand extends beyond the permanent residence, with buyers eyeing opportunities for long-term



gains, holiday homes, and short-term accommodations such as bed-and-breakfasts (BnBs) to cater to the influx of tourists.

While residential prices in Varanasi have reduced by 5.15 per cent in the past year due to increasing supply, the market remains attractive with an average rate of Rs 6,128 per square foot (psf).

Similarly, Prayagraj saw a dramatic price escalation of 122 per cent between January and March 2024 due to high demand, but rates have since stabilized at Rs 6,645 psf.

In contrast, Puri has experienced a 30 per cent price appreciation over the last year, with rates reaching Rs 6,114 psf. Shirdi offers one of the most compelling value propositions, with an average price of Rs 4,028 psf, making it a lucrative option for buyers.

The surge in residential demand in these cities can be attributed to several factors, including the growing popularity of religious tourism, improved infrastructure, and the potential for rental income from holiday homes.

Antler fuels 30 startups

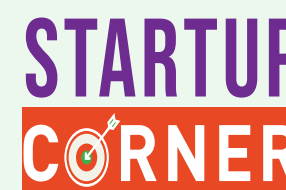
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Venture capital firm Antler has expanded its India portfolio by backing 30 startups in 2024 through its maiden \$75 million (around Rs 635.1 crore) fund.

This brings Antler's total India portfolio to 80 startups, the VC firm said in a statement.

"We are seeing exceptional founding teams emerge from India's talent pool, many of whom have deep expertise in AI and emerging technologies. What's particularly exciting is that these founders are not just building for India, but are leveraging India's talent to solve global problems," said Rajiv Srivatsa, partner at Antler India.

The investments span sectors including AI, consumer tech, fintech, deep-tech, health, and climate tech. The portfolio com-



panies have been selected from over 25,000 founders who engaged with Antler's platform in 2024.

"The firm plans to deploy \$25 million from its existing fund in 2025, continuing its focus on emerging technologies across these sectors," Srivatsa said.

Nitin Sharma, founding partner of Antler India,



[L-R] Nitin Sharma & Rajiv Srivatsa, General Partners at Antler in India and Co-founders of the Antler India Fund

Nitin Sharma, founding partner of Antler India, said, "We doubled our investment pace in 2024. Through our residency programme, we are actively involved in the company-building process from day zero."

said, "We doubled our investment pace in 2024. Through our residency programme, we are actively involved in the company-building process from day zero - from team formation and idea validation to early customer development."

Among the additions to the portfolio are Bizup,

a wholesale marketplace for fashion retail; Meine Electric, which works on aluminium-air fuel cell technology; Namma Yatri, an open mobility platform; Keeper, which provides loans using paid leaves as assets; and Cautio, which makes AI-powered dash-cams for fleets, among others.

Founded in 2017 in Singapore, Antler operates as both an incubator and accelerator globally. The firm expanded into India in 2020, with Srivatsa and Sharma joining as partners and cofounders of the Antler India Fund.

Through its residency programmes, Antler India helps entrepreneurs find cofounders, develop business ideas, and form teams, while providing funding and mentorship.

The next Residency cohort, scheduled to commence in February 2025, will support pre- and post-idea stage solo founders through an 8-12 week programme. Participants can receive up to \$500K in funding through Antler's standard deal. "Through hands-on sessions by domain experts and office hours, we support founders in co-creating and building alongside other ambitious individuals," Sharma said.

PROPOSED DATA PROTECTION PANEL ON AGROCHEMICALS SHOULD BE DISSOLVED

OPINION

KRISHAN BIR CHAUDHARY

It has been learnt that the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has constituted a multi-ministerial committee under the chairmanship of Additional Secretary (Plant Protection) Mr. Faiz Ahmad Kidwai. The first task assigned to this committee is to find out how data protection can be given to companies bringing pesticides to India whose patent has expired for 20 years so that they can make huge profits by selling their agrochemicals to the Indian market and farmers at many times the price and exploit Indian farmers.

It should be known that in the last several years, many attempts have been made by multinational companies and Indian industries associated with them to change the rules related to the Insecticides Act 1968. The only objective of all these efforts has been to

capture the Indian market in some way or the other and exploit the farmers. On this subject, Bharatiya Krishak Samaj has always been of the opinion that those Global Off-Patented Molecules whose patent period of 20 years has been completed in any country of the world should not be given any data protection in India. Because due to this, the monopoly of MNCs remains intact even after the patent is over and the exploitation of farmers continues. According to international rules, the patent period is 20 years, after that giving any kind of data protection is illegal which will give license for looting the farmers by MNCs and their Indian partners.

The import of agricultural chemicals which was less than Rs 9041 crores in the year 2019-2020 increased to more than Rs 14,315 crore in 2022-23.

This situation is not good and there is an immediate need to control the import. Because if we look carefully at the prices of the products imported by MNCs, then these companies are openly looting the farmers.

Let me present before you some examples, Emamectin Benzoate which was sold by Syngenta company to cotton farmers at Rs. 10,000 per kg in the year 2007, as soon as Indian companies got permission to produce it, it immediately became available to farmers at Rs. 3500 per kg and then at Rs. 2000 per kg.

Similarly, the imported Sulfofururon was sold at more than Rs. 48,000 per kg in the year 2001 and today Indian companies are making it available to farmers at cheaper price around Rs.14,800 per kg.

Imported Acetamiprid was sold at around Rs. 6,400 per kg in the year 2001-2002. Today, Indian companies are making it available to farmers at Rs. 800 per kg, which is 87 per cent less.

Cypermethrin which was imported about 30 years ago at \$80-100 per kg, today the Indian company is



According to international rules, the patent period is 20 years, after that giving any kind of data protection is illegal which will give license for looting the farmers by MNCs and their Indian partners.

making it available to the farmers of India at \$8 per kg and exporting it to the world market at \$10 per kg. India is the largest producer of Cypermethrin in the world.

There are many more examples which prove that some Indian industrialists involved in the scam with MNCs and have exploited the Indian farmers on a large scale.

My experience of the last

35 years says that multinational companies have appointed some Indian industries as their spokespersons. The business of these Indian industries is linked to multinational companies in some way or the other. These Indian companies advocate proposals like data protection which exploit farmers. There is a need to be cautious about the network of multinational companies

because the people who get some special facilities in getting such illegal provisions made are engaged in lobbying for them and by misleading the administrative officers, they also violated such international agreements in wrong ways.

Keeping the above facts and hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of 'Make in India' in mind, the proposed data protection committee should be dissolved immediately to promote Indian industries providing cheaper and effective generic molecules to the farmers to protect their crops.

The author is President, Bharatiya Krishak Samaj

PERSPECTIVE FAKE CLAIMS?

THE QUESTIONS ABOUT CONGRESS AND OCCRP

An extremely worrying investigation has come to light on the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), specifically about its links with the American deep state. OCCRP is relevant to India because of the reporting it has done on India, thus providing enough ammunition to the Congress party to take on the Narendra Modi government, specifically on the issue of an industrialist. It is this matter that the Congress has been using to stall Parliament over different sessions, including the ongoing winter session. What is worrying is that this body of investigative journalists—the world's largest—has been operating under the cover of independent and impartial journalism, thus covering themselves with a "holier-than-thou" shroud, whose words should not be doubted. But the truth is, all the while they have been serving the agenda of US agencies. Described as a "giant of investigative journalism", OCCRP in its own words "is one of the largest investigative journalism organizations in the world, headquartered in Amsterdam and with staff across six continents." OCCRP claims to be "a mission-driven nonprofit newsroom that partners with other media outlets to publish stories that lead to real-world action. At the same time, our media development arm helps investigative outlets around the world succeed and serve the public." All very noble. There are me-



dia outlets in India who too have been collaborating with this organisation and have been publishing their work. Some of the exposés OCCRP has done include "the Pandora papers", "the Panama papers", a few on Vladimir Putin's "evil deeds" and of course "Pegasus", the spy software issue that rocked the Indian Parliament, apart from two pieces attacking the Indian industrialist. Although claiming to be an independent non-profit NGO, it is now apparent that OCCRP has received huge funding from US government agencies, many of whom are known to be involved in government-change operations in foreign countries. Essentially, OCCRP is an American deep state asset.

Although claiming to be an independent non-profit NGO, it is now apparent that OCCRP has received huge funding from US government agencies, many of whom are known to be involved in government-change operations in foreign countries. Essentially, OCCRP is an American deep state asset.

'Reimagining the Middle East': Embracing change in a world where power shifts and new alliances emerge

OPINION

PROF. NISHAKANT OJHA



the U.S. can adapt to these changes.

POST-COLD WAR DYNAMICS: U.S. DOMINANCE AND SHIFTING ALLIANCES

Following the Cold War, the U.S. became the primary power in the Middle East, shaping the region's political landscape with policies rooted in Cold War thinking. The Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between Israel and several Arab nations, were part of U.S. efforts to curb Iran's influence. However, as regional dynamics became more complex, the U.S.'s reliance on military intervention and bloc-based politics showed diminishing returns.

The aftermath of 9/11 shifted U.S. focus to the "War on Terror," resulting in interventions that, while aimed at combating terrorism, deepened regional divides. This prompted a reevaluation of U.S. foreign policy as rising global and regional powers began challenging its dominance.

CHINA'S STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE MIDDLE EAST

China's approach to the Middle East contrasts with the U.S., focusing on economic relationships rather than military intervention. Beijing has built strong trade ties with both U.S. allies like Israel and adversaries such as Iran. By mediating between Saudi Arabia and Iran, China has played

a pivotal role in regional diplomacy. Unlike the U.S., which often emphasizes confrontation, China seeks stability to secure energy supplies and expand its global economic influence through diplomacy and soft power. By strengthening its ties with Iran, China has helped Tehran circumvent Western sanctions while ensuring continued access to essential oil supplies.

RUSSIA'S ROLE IN THE REGION

Though economically weaker than China, Russia has positioned itself as a major player in the Middle East. Moscow's military involvement in Syria demonstrated its readiness to counter Western influence and assert its interests. Through security partnerships, Russia has secured a key role in the region, further contributing to the shift toward multipolarity.

THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: A PERSISTENT BARRIER

The Israel-Palestine conflict remains a core issue in Middle Eastern geopolitics, contributing to regional instability. Despite multiple peace attempts, including the Oslo Accords, a lasting resolution remains elusive. Events like the October 7 attacks highlight the urgency of addressing deep-seated grievances. For the U.S., resolving this conflict is crucial for maintaining influence in the region.

- Achieving progress could:
- Strengthen relationships with Arab nations by demonstrating a commitment to Palestinian justice.
- Limit Iran's leverage by reducing its ability to exploit the conflict.
- Enhance global percep-

tions of U.S. foreign policy by promoting fairness and peace.

IMPACT OF THE ARAB SPRING AND SHIFTING REGIONAL DYNAMICS

The Arab Spring significantly affected Palestinian dynamics, with Egypt's General Al-Sisi designating Hamas as a terrorist organization while Qatar continued to support it as a resistance movement. Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, backed the Palestinian Authority, further fragmenting the Palestinian cause. However, Egypt played a crucial role in mediating between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority in 2017.

North African nations are also facing significant challenges. Libya is mired in internal conflict, effectively divided between two governments. Algeria, though buoyed by oil wealth, struggles with protests and the decline in oil prices. Morocco is undergoing gradual reforms but faces major challenges like unemployment, social disparities, and regional imbalances. Tunisia, while making progress in its political transition, is threatened by economic difficulties, particularly the lack of job opportunities.

The Maghreb region, while generally performing slightly better than the Mashrek, remains highly fragmented and the least integrated region globally. In contrast, non-Arab countries like Iran and Turkey have benefitted from the region's turmoil, with Iran increasing its regional influence and Turkey's role solidified after the success of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, although tensions emerged following the military ousting of President Morsi.

THE SHIFTING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE: A MULTIPOLAR MIDDLE EAST

The geopolitical shift in the Middle East is increasingly shaped by a multipolar environment, with global powers like the U.S., China, and Russia vying for influence. Regional actors such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel are adapting to these changing dynamics. New alliances, such as the I2U2 (Israel, UAE, and India), highlight the shifting geopolitical realities. This new multipolarity presents both opportunities for cooperation and increased potential for conflict.

TRUMP'S RETURN AND ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT ON MIDDLE EASTERN DYNAMICS

Should Donald Trump returning to the presidency, his approach is likely to mirror his previous term, with bold and unconventional strategies. Policies like recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal, and expanding the Abraham Accords are expected to be revisited.

REWORKING U.S. ALLIANCES:

Strengthening Relations with Israel: Trump is likely to continue prioritizing Israel's interests, expanding security cooperation and facilitating further normalization agreements with Arab nations.

Expanding the Abraham Accords: Trump may push for more Arab countries to normalize relations with Israel, potentially sidelining Palestinian demands.

Renewing Gulf Partnerships: Expect continued focus on arms sales, counterterrorism, and energy cooperation with Gulf states, though this could strain re-

lationships with Qatar and Turkey.

RUSSIA'S INVOLVEMENT AND A SOFTER APPROACH TO IRAN

The crisis in Ukraine has spurred Russia to deepen its involvement in Middle Eastern conflicts, adopting both geostrategic confrontation and limited counterterrorism cooperation. A more balanced approach to Iran, combining diplomatic engagement with pressure, could stabilize the region and address key security concerns.

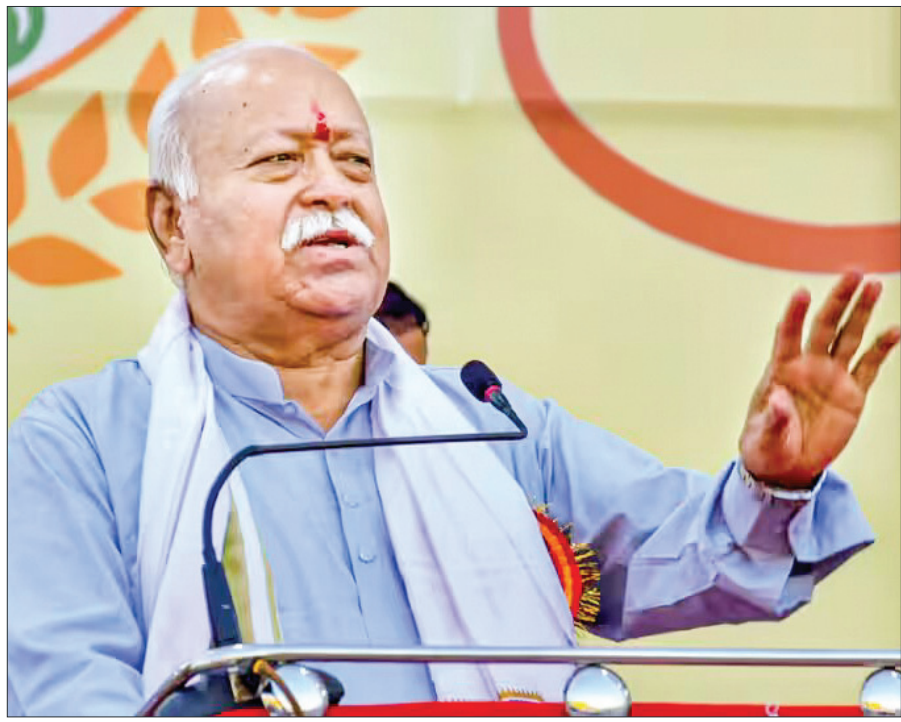
U.S.-CHINA RIVALRY AND ITS IMPACT

Trump's stance on China could spill over into the Middle East, particularly in the realms of technology and energy. As Saudi Arabia strengthens ties with China, this could complicate U.S.-Saudi relations, adding another layer to the region's already complex dynamics.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A STABLE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East is undergoing a profound geopolitical transformation, shifting toward multipolarity. Global powers must recalibrate their strategies to maintain influence while fostering stability. A comprehensive strategy involving diplomatic engagement, economic cooperation, and security partnerships will be essential for achieving long-term peace. As the U.S. navigates these challenges, balancing firmness with flexibility in dealing with Iran and other regional actors will be key to shaping a stable and prosperous future for the region.

Prof. (Dr.) Nishakant Ojha - Renowned Expert in Foreign Affairs, International Counter-Terrorism, Specializing in West Asia and the Middle East.



"One person or one ideology cannot make or break a nation," says RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat. PTI

MORE BABIES OR FEWER? INDIA'S BIG POPULATION QUESTION

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat emphasizes maintaining a fertility rate above 2.1 to prevent societal decline, while policy contradictions and regional disparities hinder effective population management, risking demographic stagnation.

India's population growth and its management have been subjects of significant political, social, and economic debate. Recently, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat reignited discussions by urging Indian families to have at least three children to maintain societal survival. His remarks in Nagpur were grounded in demographic science, which suggests that societies with fertility rates below 2.1 risk extinction. Bhagwat emphasized that India must not let its fertility rate dip below this critical threshold.

TDG EXPLAINER



Nishikant Dubey and Uday Pratap Singh, BJP MPs have urged the Narendra Modi government to bring in a population control law as it is required to "save the country and its demography" and that uncontrolled population results in "explosions of anarchy". PTI

"A decline in population is a matter of concern. Modern demographic studies indicate that when the population of a community falls below a fertility rate of 2.1, that society faces extinction," he said. He added that societies facing such declines "do not need external threats to vanish; they disappear on their own."

Bhagwat's statement has triggered a broader dialogue on population management, raising questions about India's demographic trajectory, the effectiveness of past policies, and the best way forward in addressing population-related challenges.

CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN BJP AND RSS NARRATIVES

The apparent contradiction between the RSS chief's call for larger families and BJP-led state governments' population control policies, such as the two-child norm proposed in Uttar Pradesh, has added fuel to the political discourse. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, for instance, announced a population policy encouraging families to limit themselves to two children through both incentives and disincentives. These include financial benefits for compliance and penalties such as restrictions on contesting local elections for non-compliance.

The timing of Bhagwat's remarks also added a layer of complexity, as they came amid debates about caste-based census data and its implications on welfare distribution, particularly in states like Bihar. Critics argue that such remarks can polarize communities along religious and ideological lines, distracting from the broader goal of equitable development.

A BROADER DEBATE ON POLICY COHERENCE

The reactions underscore a larger issue: the need for coherence in India's population policies. On one hand,

making such statements, the RSS chief should consult BJP leaders who regularly speak on population control." He highlighted Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's emphasis on women's education as the cornerstone of effective population management.

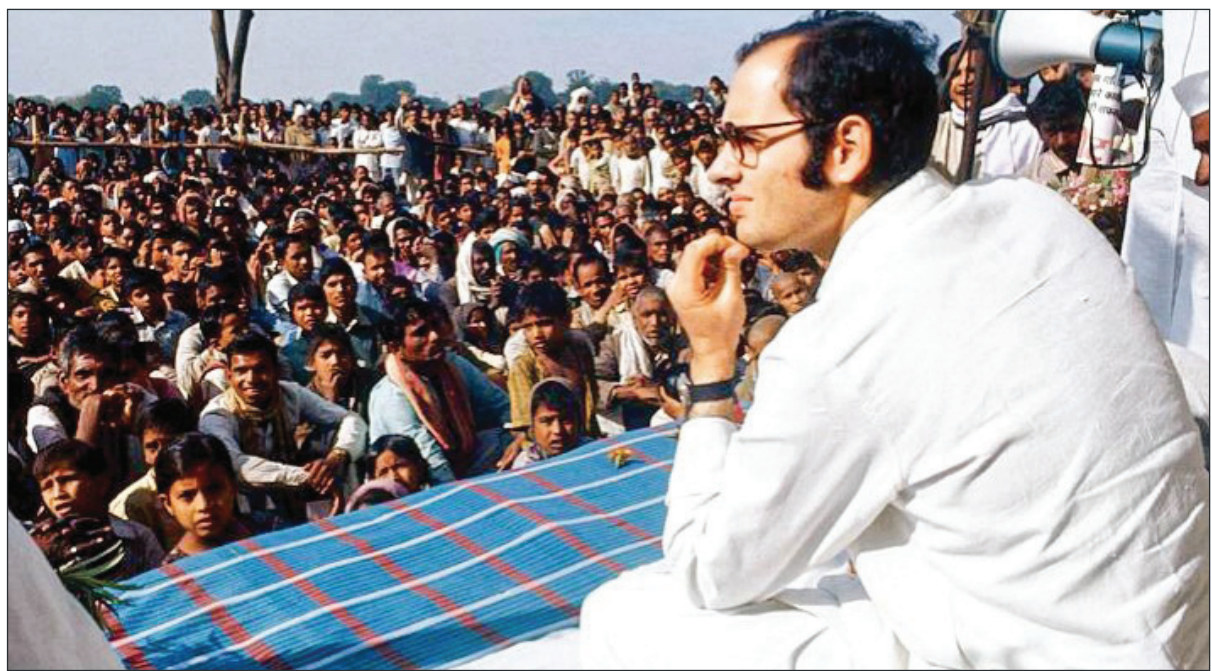
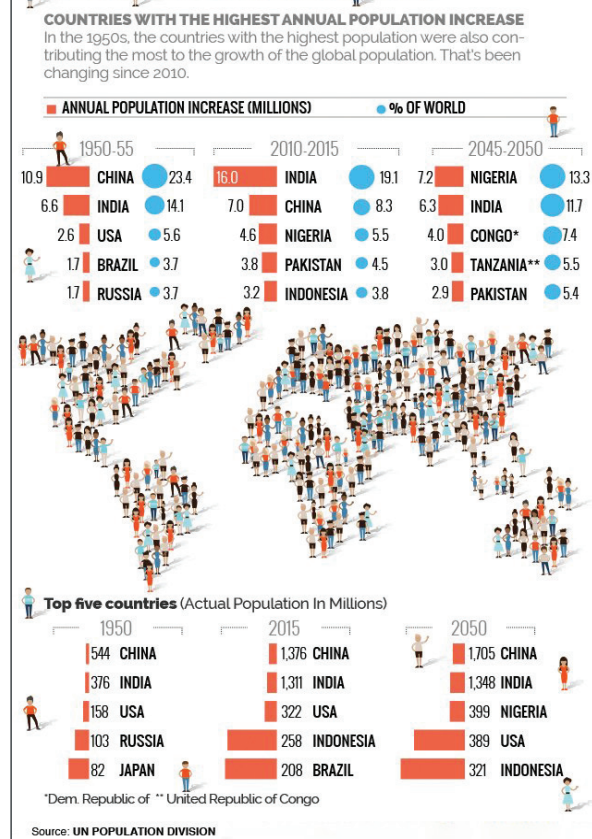
POPULATION POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACTS

India has a long history of grappling with population policies, oscillating between aggressive control measures and more inclusive approaches. These policies, their implementation, and their impacts vary widely across states, often reflecting socio-political priorities rather than uniform demographic planning.

SANJAY GANDHI'S STERILIZATION CAMPAIGN

The most infamous chapter in India's population control history occurred during the Emergency (1975-1977), when Sanjay Gandhi implemented a brutal sterilization program. Over 11 million sterilizations were conducted, many through coercion. States used extreme measures, such as salary deductions and denial of irrigation water, to enforce sterilization quotas. Vulnerable groups, particularly Dalits and Muslims, bore the brunt of this campaign.

SHIFTING POPULATIONS



Emergency's harshest decision: Forced sterilization of 6 million people. Public rights were already suppressed, and sterilization spread fear in every household. India History Archives

ever, some states adopted stringent policies aimed at reducing fertility rates:

- **Uttar Pradesh:** Introduced a draft population policy in 2021 proposing incentives for adhering to a two-child norm, such as additional increments for government employees, alongside penalties like disqualification from local elections for violators.
- **Maharashtra:** Enforced laws barring individuals with more than two children from contesting civic elections and accessing government welfare benefits.
- **Assam:** Implemented similar disqualifications for government jobs and local elections.

While such policies aim to reduce fertility rates, they have often been criticized for disproportionately affecting marginalized communities, exacerbating socio-economic inequalities.

STATE-LEVEL POLICIES AND INCENTIVES

Post-Emergency, India moved away from coercion, emphasizing education and healthcare to address population growth. How-

Pradesh are witnessing fertility rates below the replacement level of 2.1. Leaders like Tamil Nadu's M.K. Stalin and Andhra Pradesh's Chandrababu Naidu have expressed concerns about the long-term consequences of low fertility rates, including an aging population and a shrinking workforce.

These disparities highlight the need for state-specific policies rather than a one-size-fits-all national approach. Southern leaders argue that family planning successes in their states could result in reduced representation in national decision-making post-delimitation of constituencies in 2026, further complicating the debate.

Health Survey (NFHS-5) conducted in 2019-21, India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) declined to 2.0 children per woman, achieving the replacement level of fertility, which is 2.1 children per woman.

This decline in TFR reflects the effectiveness of voluntary approaches that emphasize education and access to family planning services. However, the outcomes have been mixed across different regions and communities, indicating that while progress has been made, challenges remain in uniformly implementing these strategies nationwide.

COERCION VS. VOLUNTARY METHODS

The transition from coercive to voluntary, education-driven population control methods in India has led to notable advancements in fertility rates. According to the fifth round of the National Family

Health Survey (NFHS-5) conducted in 2019-21, India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) declined to 2.0 children per woman, achieving the replacement level of fertility, which is 2.1 children per woman.

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Failure to address these areas could result in under-employment and economic stagnation.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

India's approach to population management has evolved from coercive measures to more inclusive strategies focusing on:

- **Voluntary family planning:** Emphasizing informed choices and access to contraception.
- **Women's empowerment:** Promoting education and economic participation among women.
- **Regional tailoring:** Developing state-specific policies that consider local socio-economic contexts.

However, capitalizing on this potential requires:

- **Employment generation:** Creating sufficient job opportunities to absorb the growing labor force.
- **Skill development:** Enhancing education and vocational training to align with market demands.
- **Healthcare improvements:** Ensuring access to quality healthcare to maintain a healthy workforce.

FERTILITY TRENDS ACROSS RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) highlights a consistent decline in fertility rates among all major religious groups:

- **Muslims:** The TFR decreased from 4.4 in 1992-93 to 2.6 in 2015-16.
- **Hindus:** The TFR reduced from 3.3 to 2.1 during

the same period.

- **Jains:** Reported the lowest TFR at 1.2.

These trends indicate a convergence in fertility rates across communities, driven by improved access to education and healthcare.

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

India's youthful population offers a potential demographic dividend, with over 65% of citizens in the working-age group. This demographic advantage is expected to persist until 2055-56, peaking around 2041 when the working-age population is projected to reach 59%.

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- **Employment generation:** Creating sufficient job opportunities to absorb the growing labor force.
 - **Skill development:** Enhancing education and vocational training to align with market demands.
 - **Healthcare improvements:** Ensuring access to quality healthcare to maintain a healthy workforce.
- Failure to address these areas could result in under-employment and economic stagnation.

WHAT LIES IN THE FUTURE?

India's demographic trajectory presents a unique opportunity to harness its youthful population for economic growth. Achieving this requires comprehensive policies that address employment, education, healthcare, and gender disparities. By focusing on inclusive development and informed policy-making, India can effectively leverage its demographic dividend for a prosperous future.

This shift aims to balance population growth with sustainable development, ensuring that policies are equitable and respect individual rights.

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Compiled by Ruchira Talapatra



Rukhsana Sultana, a close associate of Sanjay Gandhi during India's Emergency (1975-1977), led controversial sterilization campaigns in Old Delhi's Muslim areas. Her efforts, marked by coercion, caused significant unrest and fear among the local population. India History Archives

1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS: SUPREME COURT URGES PUNJAB GOVT TO CONSIDER RELIEF FOR 39 FAMILIES UNABLE TO PROVE THEY ARE GENUINE RIOT VICTIMS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Harbhajan Singh (Dead) & Ors v. The State of Punjab & Ors observed and has directed the Punjab State in order to explore the possibility of providing alternative accommodation to 39 families which are occupying the flats in SAS Nagar Mohali Phase-XI for the last 40 years and is meant for the 1984 anti-Sikh riots victims, as they do not have red cards which are given to identify the genuine victims of the riots.

In the present case, a special leave petition is filed

wherein it claimed that 39 families have been evicted by the authorities.

It being the case of them that they were the residents of Jahangir Puri, Delhi and had to flee from there due to the riots.

On the other hand, it has also been claimed by the authorities before the court that the families are not genuine riots-affected victims but have trespassed into the premises and have been in unlawful occupation for 40 years.

It being the case of them that there being many other genuine families who are economically weaker section group, who need shelter.

The petition was filed be-



fore the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court in its order dated February 23, 2011 stated that the petitioners shall not be dispossessed from the flat until the claims with regards to the issuance of a

Red Card are decided by the Deputy Commissioner, SAS Nagar, Mohali.

On the other hand, one of the family member filed a petition wherein it seeks to quash the eviction notices which are received subsequent to their exercise of as-

The High Court in its order dated September 26, 2017 directed the petitioners for filing a comprehensive reply to the public notice asking them to vacate the house within 48 hours.

certaining the genuineness of the victims.

The High Court in its order dated September 26, 2017 directed the petitioners for filing a comprehensive reply to the public notice asking them to vacate the house within 48 hours.

The court in the case observed and has issued notices of eviction and aggrieved with the same, the petitioners approached the

Supreme Court.

On March 19, 2018, the Court in the case directed the authorities for maintaining the status quo.

The bench comprising of Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice R. Mahadevan was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case noted that they have faced a, 'very peculiar problem', wherein the petitioners have no legal right to con-

tinue occupying the premises. But they have been in possession for almost now 40 years.

It was also conceded before the court that the families were put into possession at the relevant point of time by the local MLAs.

The court in the case directed the respondent to search for the feasibility of providing alternative accommodation.

In 2018, the court in the case also found that the Government floated a rehabilitation scheme under which the petitioners were asked to apply for allotment of small booths and only 3 families had applied for the scheme.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has asked if the respondents could also explore the possibility of providing accommodation to families which belongs to the EWS category in any other premises within Mohali and the adjoining areas.

Further, the court in its order stated that, 'This court would also like to know from the authorities whether it being feasible to regularise the occupation of the petitioners in the premises subject to certain terms and conditions like outright sale after determining a reasonable price or something like that.'

Meghalaya High Court orders expedited construction of Shillong-Dawki Highway: 'Highways are of paramount importance for state welfare'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Meghalaya High Court in the case Shri Kaustav Paul Vs. State of Meghalaya & Ors observed and has directed the State Authorities to expedite the building of the National Highway from Shillong to Dawki near the Bangladesh border terming it of 'paramount importance' for the 'welfare of the state'.

The court in the case asked the authorities to ensure that afforestation work is strictly carried out.

The Division bench comprising of Chief Jus-

tice IP Mukerji and Justice W Diengdoh was hearing the present matter.

In the present case, the Public Interest Litigation, PIL filed seeking the intervention of court to prevent the felling of 103 trees, stated to be of great value coming in the way of the highway construction.

The court stated that, 'This court direct that the respondents shall jointly and severally ensure that the afforestation work referred to in the...paragraphs of the affidavit of the NHIDCL is strictly carried out. Therefore, the construction of highway, which is of the para-

mount importance for the welfare of the State the completion of which is long overdue is to proceed with expedition, complying with the earlier interim orders of this Court in this litigation and in accordance with law, and completed as early as possible.'

The court in its order dated November 07 had called for a joint report from the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited, NHIDCL and the State government for their proposal for afforestation in the area around the 'first package' the (part) of the highway.

The court also stated that it was not pointed out to us at that time that the 103 trees had already been felled by the authorities.

The court in the case was informed that the highway is in 'five packages or parts' and that some obstruction was being faced while continuing the construction.

The counsel, Advocate General appearing for the State Government stated before the court that all steps were taken to facilitate the construction of the Highway, wherein the land had been duly acquired and handed over to NHIDCL.

The Advocate General

appearing for the State Government also stated that despite this 'some elements were obstructing the construction and had also filed cases in Court'.

Accordingly, the court disposed of the petition.

The counsel, Ms. K. Decruse, Adv with Mr. B. Snaintang, Adv appeared for the Petitioner.

The counsel, Mr. A. Kumar, Advocate General with Mr. K. Khan, AAG Ms. A. Thungwa, GA Mr. J.N. Rynjah, GA Mr. R. Pahsyntiew, Adv vice Mr. Philemon Nongbri, Adv for R/5 Dr. N. Mozika, DSGI with Ms. L.M.D. Marak, Adv for R/9 represented the Respondent.

Delhi High Court rejects PIL seeking comprehensive probe into Navjot Singh Sidhu's cancer cure claims

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case Divya Rana Versus Union Of India And Ors observed and has dismissed the Public Interest Litigation, PIL filed seeking comprehensive and scientifically rigorous investigation into the claims of Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu that his wife's Stage 4 cancer was treated through a specific diet plan and Ayurveda.

The Division bench comprising of Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case remarked that the statement of Sidhu were his personal opinion which is being covered under free speech.

The bench also advised the petitioner, Advocate Divya Rana to focus on more pressing public health issues and rejected the petition.



The petition filed seek direction upon Navjot Singh Sidhu to provide the relevant medical records, treatment details and associated documentation regarding his wife's cancer diagnosis and her recovery through Ayurveda diet plan.

The Public Interest Litigation, PIL filed also sought a direction on the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting as well as Meta and X to temporarily remove or disable access to the posts and videos containing Sidhu's claims.

It has been contended by Rana before the court that the take down will ensure that the public is not misled or exposed to potentially harmful misinformation till pending the outcome of

the scientific investigation.

The petition filed also sought framing of guidelines for regulating the dissemination of unverified medical or health-related claims on digital platforms and social media in order to prevent the spread of misinformation.

The petition filed also states that the claims of Sidhu, while offering hope to cancer patients, are currently unverified and risk misleading the public if not scientifically validated.

The petitioner in the plea submits that the present matter affects a vast population of cancer patients and their families who may be misled by unverified claims.

It has also been stated that if the claims are validated, they could lead to affordable and accessible cancer treatment options and if they are proven false, it would prevent the spread of misinformation and protect lives.

Supreme Court: NGT cannot outsource its opinion to committees and base its decision on such opinions

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case M/s Grasim Industries v. State of Madhya Pradesh observed and has criticised the National Green Tribunal, NGT for 'outsourcing' its opinion to a committee and is based on opinion which is only on the findings of the committee.

The bench comprising of Justice BR Gavai and Justice

KV Viswanatan was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case observed that the National Green Tribunal, NGT is a tribunal which is constituted under the National Green Tribunal Act of 2010.

The National Green Tribunal while considering the facts and circumstances of the case is set to arrive at its decision.

The bench in the case

stated that it cannot outsource an opinion. The Supreme Court also referred to the judgement in the case Kantha Vibhag Yuva Koli Samaj Parivartan Trust and Others v. State of Gujarat and Others, wherein the court held that the National Green Tribunal's, NGT adjudicatory functions cannot be delegated to expert committees. In the present case, the National Green Tribu-

nal, NGT had imposed penalties on M/s Grasim Industries which is based on the report of a joint committee.

The court observed that the company was neither added as a party in the case nor was issued any notice before passing the order.

The Supreme Court observed that the approach which is being adopted by the National Green Tribunal, NGT clearly smacks

of condemning a person unheard. The Court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has set aside the order of National Green Tribunal's, NGT. Further, the court granted an opportunity of hearing to company.

Accordingly, the court remitted the matter to the Tribunal for fresh consideration.

Supreme Court seeks Union's view on Bihar Election Commission's plea against election of Nepali citizen as Panchayat Mukhiya

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case State Election Commission Of Bihar, Patna & Anr. Versus Biltu Ray @ Bilat Ray @ Bilat Prasad Yadav And Ors observed and has called for the response on petition filed by Bihar State Election Commission's challenging a direction that citizenship issue of a Mukhiya in the state be referred to the Union.

The court observed that Mukhiya was disqualified by the Bihar SEC on a view that Mukhiya was a Nepali citizen when the elections took place.

The bench comprising of Justice Surya Kant and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case observed and has passed the order for implementation of Union of India, while taking into account the submission that it is the competent authority to grant citizenship.

In the present case, Mukhiya i.e., the respondent became a Nepali citizen pursuant to a special drive in the



The bench while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed that the contention was taken by the complainant before the Election Commission was also that his name was included in the voters list of Nepal and hence, he should be deemed to have relinquished his citizenship under Section 9 of the Act of 1955.

year 2005-06.

In 2021, Panchayat Elections were held in Bihar and he filed his nomination for the post of 'Mukhiya' for

Bhaluaha Gram Panchayat. Therefore, he emerged as the returned candidate for the said post.

On the other hand, the

rival candidate filed a complaint case before the State Election Commission, Patna wherein he alleged that the respondent was a native of Nepal and thus ineligible to contest the election.

However, the SEC took the view that the respondent i.e., the Mukhiya was a 'Nepali Citizen' when the elections took place and held that he was ineligible to contest the election under section 136(1)(a) of the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act 2006. Further, the SEC held that the post of 'Mukhiya' against which the respondent had been declared returned candidate which would be treated as vacant and steps taken for fresh election.

The respondent aggrieved with the same, approached the Patna High Court, wherein the Single Judge of the High Court dismissed the petition stating that the respondent was not an Indian citizen when he filed his nomination.

Further, the court observed that Mukhiya moved the for deletion of his name

from the Nepali citizenship register but the same happened only in 2023, when he was already declared elected in the year 2021.

The Division bench in the case observed and has set aside the order of Bihar SEC and Single Judge, wherein the court directed the former to refer the citizenship issue to the Union government.

The bench in the case also stated that the respondent can continue on the post of Mukhiya.

The bench while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed that the contention was taken by the complainant before the Election Commission was also that his name was included in the voters list of Nepal and hence, he should be deemed to have relinquished his citizenship under Section 9 of the Act of 1955. This court is of the opinion that the Election Commission would not be empowered to decide the question...hence, the said issue has to be decided by the Central Government.



The court in the case also stated that while the readiness means the capacity of the plaintiff in order to perform the contract which would include his financial position, willingness relates to the conduct of the plaintiff.

the said decision, ruling against the petitioner which being on the issue of readiness and willingness to perform the contract.

Further, the court explained the distinction between readiness and willingness to perform the contract.

The court stated that both the ingredients are necessary for the relief of specific performance.

The court in the case also stated that while the readiness means the capacity of the plaintiff in order to perform the contract which would include his financial position, willingness relates to the conduct of the plaintiff. The court while consid-

ering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that the ruling of the High Court was based on facts and it cannot be termed as perverse.

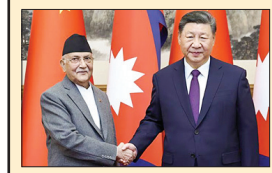
The court in the case declined to interfere with the impugned judgment.

Accordingly, the court dismissed the appeal.

The counsel, Mrs. Vajayanthi Girish, AOR Mr. Girish Ananthamurthy, Adv. appeared for the Petitioners.

The counsel, Mr. Manjunath Meled, Adv. Mr. Sandeep Sharma, Adv. Mrs. Vijayalaxmi Udupudi, Adv. Mr. Ganesh Kumar R., AOR represented the Respondents.

TOP OF THE DAY

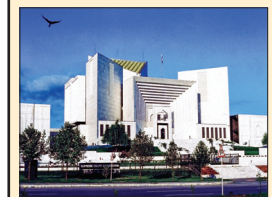


NEPAL, CHINA SIGN BRI COOPERATION PACT

BEIJING: Nepal and China on Wednesday signed the much-awaited Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Cooperation Framework, an agreement which is expected to pave the way for the implementation of the BRI projects. The agreement was inked during Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli's official visit to China - his first official visit to that country after assuming office for the fourth time. "Today, we signed the Framework for Belt & Roads Cooperation.

SINGAPORE PM NAMED SECRETARY GENERAL OF RULING PARTY

SINGAPORE: Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong has been named the new secretary-general of the People's Action Party that has ruled the prosperous city state since independence. Wong succeeds Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who stepped down in May this year from the premiership. The secretary-general position is usually held by the Prime Minister.



PAK COURT SLAMS GOVT & IMRAN'S PARTY

ISLAMABAD: A high court in Pakistan on Wednesday criticised both the federal government and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party over the November 24 protest which paralysed the national capital and ended in violence. Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan had issued a "final call" for nationwide protests, demanding the restoration of the PTI's electoral mandate, the release of detained party members, and the reversal of the 26th Amendment, which he said had strengthened a "dictatorial regime". Khan's party launched the protest on November 24 to give a sit-in at D-Chowk in Islamabad's Red Zone, where most government buildings are located. His supporters were forcibly dispersed on the night of November 26 when they reached close to D-Chowk.

4 CHILDREN KILLED IN GAZA STRIKE

DEIR AL-BALAH: Palestinian medics said an Israeli airstrike on the Gaza Strip killed at least five people, including four children, on Wednesday. The Awda Hospital, which received the bodies, said the five were gathered outside of shelters in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, which dates back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. The hospital said another 15 people, mostly children, were wounded in the strike. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

JEWISH SETTLERS ATTACK PALESTINIAN TOWNS, CLASH WITH ISRAELI TROOPS

The West Bank has seen a surge in settler violence since the start of the war.

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM

Jewish settlers mounted a string of attacks on Palestinian towns in the occupied West Bank overnight, burning homes and clashing with Israeli troops. There were no immediate reports of any Palestinian casualties.

The Israeli military said Jewish settlers attacked the village of Beit Furik after troops arrived in the area to dismantle an unauthorised farming outpost they had built nearby. It said the settlers hurled stones, wounding two members of the paramilitary Border Police, and one group entered the village and burned property.

The West Bank has seen a surge in settler violence since the start of the war.

In Lebanon, a tenuous ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah has held despite Israeli forces carrying out several new drone and artillery strikes on Tuesday, killing a shepherd in the country's south. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed keep striking "with an iron fist" against

ESCALATING VIOLENCE

- Military response: Israeli troops dismantled an unauthorised settler outpost; settlers injured two Border Police officers.
- Settler arrests: Eight settlers were arrested for property damage and assaulting security forces.
- Surge in violence: West Bank violence has escalated since the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel.



perceived Hezbollah violations of the ceasefire.

Hezbollah began launching rockets, drones and missiles into Israel last year in solidarity with Hamas militants who are fighting in the Gaza Strip. The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage.

Israel's blistering retaliatory offensive has killed at least 44,500 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead

ISRAEL RETURNS BODIES OF MILITANTS

JERUSALEM: Israel's military said Wednesday it had returned the bodies of two militants who crossed into Israel from Jordan in October and shot two soldiers. The militants entered Israeli territory south of the Dead Sea on October 18, shooting and wounding two soldiers before being shot dead by Israeli troops. Hamas praised the incursion but not claim responsibility for it. The Israeli military did not release the names of the militants who carried out the attack.

were combatants. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war in Gaza has destroyed vast areas of the coastal enclave and displaced 90 per cent of the population of 2.3 million, often multiple times.

Jewish settlers mounted a string of attacks on Palestinian towns in the occupied West Bank overnight, burning homes and clashing with Israeli troops.

There were no immediate reports of any Palestinian casualties.

The Israeli military said one group entered the village, where they threw stones and burned property.

Hamas Fatah near agreement on who will oversee post-war Gaza

AGENCIES
CAIRO

Palestinian officials say Fatah and Hamas are closing in on an agreement to appoint a committee of politically independent technocrats to administer the Gaza Strip after the war. It would effectively end Hamas' rule and could help advance ceasefire talks with Israel.

The rival factions have made several failed attempts to reconcile since Hamas seized power in Gaza in 2007. Israel has meanwhile ruled out any postwar role in Gaza for either Hamas or Fatah, which dominates the Western-backed Palestinian Authority.

A Palestinian Authority official on Tuesday confirmed that a preliminary agreement had been reached following weeks of negotiations in Cairo. The official said the committee would have 12-15 members, most of them from Gaza.

It would report to the Palestinian Authority, which is headquartered in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and work with local and international parties to facilitate humanitarian assistance and reconstruction.

A Hamas official said that Hamas and Fatah had agreed on the general terms



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but were still negotiating over some details and the individuals who would serve on the committee. The official said an agreement would be announced after a meeting of all Palestinian factions in Cairo, without providing a timeline. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief media on the talks. There was no immediate comment from Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until Hamas is dismantled and scores of hostages are

returned. He says Israel will maintain open-ended security control over Gaza and continue to hold corridors within the territory, with civilian affairs in the rest administered by local Palestinians unaffiliated with the Palestinian Authority or Hamas. No Palestinians have publicly volunteered for such a role, and Hamas has threatened anyone who cooperates with the Israeli military. The United States has called for a revitalised Palestinian Authority to govern both the West Bank and Gaza ahead of eventual statehood.

South Korea's martial law lifted

AGENCIES
SEOUL

The lifting of the controversial martial decree in South Korea may have prevented the country from falling into chaos, but the political turmoil over the now-rescinded order by President Yoon Suk Yeol shows no signs of abating immediately.

Late on Tuesday, Yoon Suk Yeol imposed the martial law in a bid to "eliminate anti-state forces". The move came after he found it difficult to push his and the ruling party's agenda in the opposition-dominated parliament. The military and armed police officers surrounded the parliament soon after the order was passed. Helicopters were also employed as protesters gathered outside the parliament. However, the martial law prevailed for only a few hours as the National Assembly voted against it, following which Yoon Suk Yeol formally lifted it around 4:30am during a Cabinet meeting. Security



forces left the ground of the National Assembly soon after the vote.

While announcing his plan to lift martial law, Yoon Suk Yeol, who has accused the opposition of sympathising with North Korea, slammed parliament's attempts to impeach key government officials and senior prosecutors. He also accused the lawmakers of "unscrupulous acts of legislative and budgetary manipulation".

Hours after the martial law was lifted, the liberal opposition Democratic Party, which holds a majority in the 300-seat parliament, urged Yoon Suk Yeol to resign immediately or face impeachment. "President Yoon Suk Yeol's martial law

The martial law prevailed for only a few hours as the National Assembly voted against it, following which Yoon Suk Yeol formally lifted it around 4:30am during a Cabinet meeting.

declaration was a clear violation of the constitution. It didn't abide by any requirements to declare it," the Democratic Party said in a statement.

"His martial law declaration was originally invalid and a grave violation of the constitution. It was a grave act of rebellion and provides perfect grounds for his impeachment."

According to South Korean media, Yoon Suk Yeol's chief of staff, advisers and senior secretaries have offered to resign.

Impeaching Yoon Suk Yeol would seem difficult if one looks at the numbers. It would need the support from two-thirds of the parliament or 200 of the 300 lawmakers.

The opposition parties, including the Democratic Party, together have 192

seats. However, the opposition seems to have been emboldened by the fact that when the National Assembly voted 190-0 for the rejection of the martial law, around 10 members of his ruling People Power Party voted in favour of the rejection, according to AP. In fact, ruling People Power Party leader Han Dong-hun asked Yoon to explain his decision to impose martial law, and urged him to fire Defence Minister Kim Yong Hyun, who, he said, recommended the martial law. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo would take over the presidential duties if Yoon Suk Yeol is impeached. The latter will also be stripped of his constitutional powers until the Constitutional Court decides his fate.

No plan to ban ISKCON, says aide to B'desh interim govt

AGENCIES
DHAKA

An aide to the Chief Adviser of the Bangladesh Interim Government, Muhammed Yunus, has said that India's neighbouring country does not have any plans to impose a ban on the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) after a monk formerly associated with the organisation was arrested on alleged sedition charges.

Speaking to media, Shafiqul Alam the Press Secretary to Yunus noted that Bangladesh is at a crucial stage and the country's Chief Adviser will soon give a national unity call to all political parties against all misinformation campaigns and against vested interest groups who are attempting to destabilize the nation.

To a query on ISKCON being potentially banned in his country, Alam responded, "We have said we don't have any plan to ban ISKCON. That is like we have said it repeatedly." The situation in Bangladesh has been marked by increasing vio-



Shafiqul Alam noted that Bangladesh government will soon give a national unity call to all political parties against all misinformation campaigns who are attempting to destabilize the nation.

lence against minority communities following the arrest of spiritual leader Chinmoy Krishna Das. Das, who is associated with the Sammilita Sanatani Jagaran Jote, was arrested in Dhaka on November 25. The arrest followed a complaint filed on October 31 by a local politician that accused him and others of disrespecting Bangladesh's national flag during a rally of the Hindu community.

Israel condemns attacks on security forces

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

Clashes broke out on December 3 night in the area of the Palestinian village of Beit Furik as soldiers demolished illegal structures, the Israel Defence Forces said.

Two security personnel were injured by Palestinians throwing stones.

In response, Israeli civilians entered Beit Furik and Huwara, throwing stones and setting fire to property, the army said. Soldiers also arrested several Israeli civilians trying to enter the nearby village of Rujeib.

"The IDF views with great seriousness any violence against its servants and the security forces, which works night and day for the security of the citizens of the region. These events must be condemned and the violators of the law brought to justice," the army said.



Nepal's Army chief to visit India next week

AGENCIES
KATHMANDU

Nepali Army Chief General Ashok Raj Sigdel is scheduled to visit India from December 11 to December 14, Nepal's Ministry of Defence announced on Wednesday.

In a press statement, the Nepal's Ministry of Defence said, "Chief of the Army Staff, Nepali Army, General Ashok Raj Sigdel is scheduled to visit India from 11th December to 14th December 2024".

The press statement also noted, "During his visit, General Sigdel will be conferred upon the rank of Honorary General of the Indian Army by Her Excellency, the President of the Republic of India. He is scheduled to have official call on with higher authorities of India during his



Nepal's Ministry of Defence said, "Chief of the Army Staff, Nepali Army, General Ashok Raj Sigdel is scheduled to visit India from 11th December to 14th December 2024".

visit". "General Sigdel will also participate in the passing out parade of Officer Cadets at Indian Military Academy

(in Dehradun) as a Reviewing Officer", the statement said.

During his visit, General Sigdel is expected to meet top Indian leaders, including President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

The visit by Nepal's Chief of the Army Staff comes days after the Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi visited Nepal from November 20 to November 24, upon the invitation of Nepal's Army Chief Sigdel.

General Dwivedi was conferred the honorary rank of General of the Nepali Army by the President of Nepal during his visit.

The practice follows a seven-decade-old tradition of conferring Army Chiefs of each other's country with the honorary title.

Pak: Imran's party to continue protests, no talks with govt

AGENCIES
KHYBER-PAKHTUNKHWA

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa spokesperson, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif announced that the Imran Khan-founded party will persist with its protests until the "illegitimate government" is ousted from power, The Express Tribune reported.

Speaking in Peshawar, Barrister Saif asserted, "We have protested before, and we will continue to do so until this illegitimate government is ousted."

He added that traveling to Islamabad is a fundamental right of every citizen and emphasised that sit-ins, rallies, and demonstrations are essential aspects of their movement.

During the press briefing, Barrister Saif, accompanied by Shibli Faraz, criticised the government for register-



Traveling to Islamabad is a basic right of every citizen and sit-ins, and rallies are key aspects of their protest, the spokesperson said.

ing "false cases" against PTI leaders, including himself. "The govt has filed false cases against us. Six cases have been registered against me," he said.

Highlighting PTI's commitment to protests, he stated, "Imran Khan has made it clear that the protests will continue. Sit-ins,

rallies, and demonstrations are all part of a movement, and we have the right to protest anywhere."

While underscoring PTI's openness to dialogue, Barrister Saif clarified that no discussions with the government are underway.

"I have always been a proponent of dialogue. It was I who initiated talks with the Taliban. We have even held negotiations with the Tehreek-e-Taliban. We believe in dialogue, but no talks are currently happening. If Imran Khan permits, we will engage in negotiations," he explained.

Barrister Saif further accused the government of 'hypocrisy,' stating, "These fake individuals call us instigators. They should not talk about democracy. The real instigators are those who opened fire on unarmed citizens while negotiations were ongoing."

Addressing the law and

order situation, Barrister Saif pointed to historical challenges in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. "Security is a regional issue. Since 1979, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has faced law and order challenges stemming from Russia's invasion of Afghanistan," he remarked as quoted by The Express Tribune.

Dismissing accusations of deteriorating security under PTI's leadership, he said, "The PTI has not worsened the security situation; the federal government is merely blaming us for failing to maintain peace. It is the federal government's responsibility to ensure border security, and issuing statements alone does not fulfill that responsibility."

In Kurram, Barrister Saif reported that a grand jirga has been mobilised to maintain peace and facilitate a ceasefire.

ST BARBARA'S DAY MASS



Members of the KWK Wieczorek mining orchestra, led by conductor Andrzej Piszczowski, parade through the Katowice district of Nikiszowiec to wake residents ahead of the traditional St Barbara's Day Mass in Katowice, Poland. Source: Anadolu

Trump considers DeSantis for Pentagon with Hegseth under pressure over allegations

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

The nomination of Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump's choice to lead the Pentagon, is under pressure as senators who would need to confirm him weigh a series of allegations that have surfaced against him. Hegseth's mother appeared on Fox News on Wednesday to defend her son, who faces multiple allegations that have emerged in the media about alcohol intoxication at work events, sexual misconduct and potential financial mismanagement.



The Trump transition team was growing concerned about Hegseth's path to confirmation and was actively looking at potential replacements, a person familiar with the matter said. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who competed against Trump for

the Republican presidential nomination in 2024, is being discussed as a possible replacement if Hegseth's nomination does not move forward, according to three other people familiar with the matter. They were not authorised

to publicly discuss internal deliberations and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Trump and DeSantis appeared together on Tuesday at a ceremony in West Palm Beach to honour three fallen sheriff's deputies. The Trump transition team didn't immediately comment. Hegseth's mother, Penelope Hegseth joined the "Fox & Friends" to discuss her son and a 2018 email she wrote him that was obtained by The New York Times, in which she confronted him about mistreating women after he impregnated his current wife while he was married to his second wife.

INDIA VOTES IN FAVOUR OF UNGA RESOLUTION ON PALESTINE

The draft resolution 'Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine' tabled by Senegal was overwhelmingly adopted in the General Assembly.

AGENCIES
UNITED NATIONS

India voted in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution that called for the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and reiterated the call for achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in West Asia.

The draft resolution 'Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine' tabled by Senegal was overwhelmingly adopted in the 193-member General Assembly on Tuesday.

India was among the 157 nations that voted in favour, while eight Member States - Argentina, Hungary, Israel, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea and the United States voted against it.

Cameroon, Czechia, Ecuador, Georgia, Paraguay, Ukraine and Uruguay abstained.

The resolution, adopted as orally revised, reiterated its call for the "achievement, without delay, of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East (West Asia)" on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, including of East Jerusalem.

The resolution called for the "withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967,



THE SUPPORT

- **Resolution adoption:** 157 nations voted in favor; 8 opposed; 7 abstained.
- **Key demands:** End Israeli occupation of 1967 territories, including East Jerusalem, and halt settlement activities.
- **Two-state solution:** Reaffirmed support for Israel and Palestine living side by side within pre-1967 borders.
- **Gaza inclusion:** Emphasized Gaza as an integral part of a future Palestinian state.
- **Violence cessation:** Called for an immediate end to violence, military attacks, and provocations.
- **Syrian Golan:** Demanded Israel withdraw to June 1967 borders.

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including East Jerusalem" and for the realisation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination and the right to their independent State.

Through the resolution, the General Assembly reaffirmed its unwavering support, in accordance with

international law, for the two-state solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognised borders, based on the pre-1967 borders.

It also demanded that Israel, "the occupying Power, comply strictly with its obligations under international

law, including as reflected in the advisory opinion of the International Court of 19 July 2024, including to bring an end to its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as rapidly as possible, to cease immediately all new settlement activities and to evacuate all settlers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and to put an end to its unlawful acts, including by repealing all legislation and measures creating or maintaining the unlawful situation."

It rejected any attempt at demographic or territorial change in the Gaza Strip, including any actions that reduce the territory of Gaza.

The resolution further stressed that the Gaza Strip constitutes an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, and "reaffirms the vision of the two-state solution, with the Gaza Strip as part of the Palestinian State."

The resolution further stressed the need for an immediate and complete cessation of all acts of violence, including military attacks, destruction and acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and incitement.

India also voted in favour of a resolution in the General Assembly that demanded that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of June 1967 in the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Biden in Africa pledges \$600 million more for rail project

AGENCIES
LUANDA

President Joe Biden on his visit to sub-Saharan Africa pledged another USD 600 million for a cross-continent rail corridor project Wednesday, telling regional leaders that "Africa has been left behind for much too long. But not anymore. Africa is the future." Biden used the third and final day of his visit to Angola to showcase the Lobito Corridor railway, where the US and allies are investing heavily to refurbish 800 miles (1,300 kilometres) of train lines in Zambia, Congo and Angola.

The project aims to advance the US presence in a region rich in cobalt, copper



and other critical minerals used in batteries for electric vehicles, electronic devices and clean energy technologies. By the end of the decade, the rail line could even go a long way toward linking southern Africa's west and east coasts. "It's a game changer," Biden said, and cited the transformational effect of building the transcontinental railroad in

the United States. Cargo that once took 45 days to get to the United States — usually involving trucks to South Africa — will now take less than 45 hours, he said. He also predicted the project could transform the region from a food importer to exporter. Altogether, Biden said the US has invested USD 4 billion along the Lobito Corridor.

Oil delivery to Czech Republic from Russia is interrupted

AGENCIES
PRAGUE

Oil delivery to the Czech Republic from Russia through the Druzhba pipeline has been interrupted, Czech officials said Wednesday. The state Mero company that operates the pipeline network in the country said it was assessing the situation. "The supplies have not been threatened," Mero said. It said the state has reserves for 90 days and oil delivery from the West through the TAL and IKL pipelines has not been interrupted. Czech Industry and Trade Minister Lukas Vlcek said it was not immediately clear what happened. "The Czech refiners are well ready for

such a situation and we have a robust system of state reserves," Vlcek said. Orlen Unipetrol refiner said its operations have not been affected. The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary are the only remaining European Union member states still receiving oil from Russia.

The other EU countries stopped buying Russian oil following the country's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 as part of the EU sanctions to punish Russia for the aggression. The EU exception for the Czechs to get Russia's oil expires on Thursday. The government previously said it was not planning to seek an extension.

Hungarian official says there is 'no consensus' on inviting Ukraine to join NATO

AGENCIES
BUDAPEST

Hungary's foreign minister said a meeting of his counterparts in NATO member countries in Brussels on Wednesday had produced "no consensus" on the prospect of inviting Ukraine to join the transatlantic military alliance, a step Kyiv sees as an essential condition for bringing an end to Russia's war. Péter Szijjártó, a fervent critic of Ukraine with close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin's government, criticised some Western countries that have increased military support to Kyiv following Donald Trump's election to the White House, claiming such moves risked escalating the



conflict.

He warned that bringing Ukraine into NATO's ranks "would be tantamount to initiating World War III." "We believe that Ukraine would not be able to add to European security in its present situation, but rather, as a country at war, inviting Ukraine into NATO

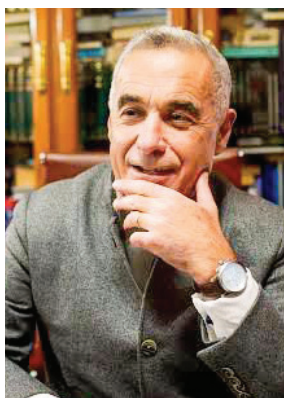
we would risk ... the threat of war, namely, the threat of a NATO-Russian war." Szijjártó told a news conference. The meeting of NATO foreign ministers came as Russia makes advances on the battlefield in Ukraine while Kyiv's Western supporters seek to improve its position before Trump takes office in January. Trump has criticized the billions the Biden administration has spent in supporting Ukraine and has said he could end the war in 24 hours, comments that appear to suggest he would press Ukraine to surrender territory that Russia now occupies. Leaders of the 32 NATO member countries have declared that Ukraine is on an "irreversible" path to membership.

Controversial presidential front-runner wants Romania to be 'self-sufficient power'

AGENCIES
IZVORANI

Sitting at his desk in an isolated compound north of Bucharest, presidential front-runner and far-right populist Calin Georgescu says Romania's Western alliances remain secure providing they "serve the sovereignty of the country and nothing else." Georgescu unexpectedly topped the polls in the first round of the Romanian presidential vote on November 24, despite being a huge outsider, plunging the European Union and NATO country into unprecedented turmoil.

On Sunday, he will face reformist Elena Lasconi of the Save Romania Union party in a final vote. "I am interested in us being a sovereign and self-sufficient power,"



the 62-year-old independent candidate told The Associated Press on Wednesday. "Freedom and independence come from the ability to finance yourself, not from being financed by others."

His vision for his country's future lies in a series of Romania-first policies in a push to become self-reliant in areas such as energy, food, and water. Other key

Georgescu unexpectedly topped the polls in the first round of the Romanian presidential vote on November 24, despite being a huge outsider, plunging the European Union and NATO country into unprecedented turmoil.

issues he wants to address if he wins the presidency, he said, span tackling high poverty rates, organised crime, and drug use in schools.

"Our children are dying from drug use," he said. "It's unimaginable." Georgescu is also a self-professed Donald Trump supporter and says the incoming US president "knows what he wants, he loves his people, he put America first, just like I put Romania first ... we have the same ideology."

His success has left Western allies on edge. In the past, Georgescu — who declared zero campaign spending — praised Russian President Vladimir Putin as "a man who loves his country" and called Ukraine "an invented state." Still, he claims not to be pro-Russian. He has also courted controversy for describing Romanian fascist and nationalist leaders from the 1930s and 1940s as national heroes.

Australia is banning social media for people under 16

AGENCIES
SYDNEY

It is an ambitious social experiment of our moment in history — one that experts say could accomplish something that parents, schools and other governments have attempted with varying degrees of success: keeping kids off social media until they turn 16. Australia's new law, approved by its Parliament last week, is an attempt to swim against many tides of modern life — formidable forces like technology, marketing, globalisation and, of course, the iron will of a teenager.

And like efforts of the past to protect kids from things that parents believe they're not ready for, the nation's move is both ambitious and not exactly simple, particularly in a world where young people are often shaped, defined and judged



Snapchat and Instagram have become so ingrained in young people's lives that going cold turkey will be difficult.

by the online company they keep. The ban won't go into effect for another year. But how will Australia be able to enforce it?

That's not clear, nor will it be easy. TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram have become so ingrained in young people's lives that going cold turkey will be

difficult. Other questions loom. Does the ban limit kids' free expression and — especially for those in vulnerable groups — isolate them and curtail their opportunity to connect with members of their community? And how will social sites verify people's ages, anyway? Can't kids just get

around such technicalities, as they so often do?

This is, after all, the 21st century — an era when social media is the primary communications tool for most of those born in the past 25 years who, in a fragmented world, seek the common cultures of trends, music and memes. What happens when big swaths of that fall away?

Is Australia's initiative a good, long-time-coming development that will protect the vulnerable, or could it become a well-meaning experiment with unintended consequences? Platforms will be held liable. The law will make platforms including TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram liable for fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (\$33 million) for systemic failures to prevent children younger than 16 from holding accounts.

TAYLOR SWIFT LAUDS BEYONCÉ'S BILLBOARD HONOUR AS GREATEST POP STAR OF CENTURY



AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

After Beyoncé was named the greatest pop star of the 21st century by Billboard, singer and songwriter Taylor Swift showed her support and happiness for the pop icon, reported Page Six. "Taylor will always support strong female artists and thinks Beyoncé is so deserving of this honour," as per the sources cited by the publication.

Swift knows that her fans are upset with the fact that she was not given the top

Swift knows that her fans are upset with the fact that she was not given the top honour and is the runner-up, but she is fine with it.

honour and is the runner-up, but she is fine with it. "Taylor appreciates all the fan support she's received but she knows Beyoncé is a legend in the music industry and Taylor's honoured to have landed in the number two spot next to her," according to the sources.

"Taylor is proud of what she's accomplished regardless of what spot she holds." Last week, Billboard reported that the staff ranked Swift as the second-best

pop star of the twenty-first century.

"While Taylor Swift is the century's biggest pop star by the numbers, Beyoncé tops our staff-chosen editorial list based on her full 25 years of influence, impact, evolution," Billboard explained of their decision.

Swift and Beyoncé have a long history of supporting one another. Their friendship began in 2009 when the 32-time Grammy winner invited 19-year-old Swift back onto the stage at the MTV Video Music Awards after Kanye West stormed

the stage and protested Swift's best female video win for "You Belong with Me." Since then, the pair have been public supporters of each other, such as when the "Red" singer claimed she loved Beyoncé "more than the normal amount" in 2015.

Swift released her Eras Tour concert film in October, while Beyoncé debuted her "RENAISSANCE: A Film By Beyoncé" the following month, reported Page Six.

KARAN AUJLA IN INDIA FOR HIS TOUR, FANS EXCITED



TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Indo-Canadian singer Karan Aujla arrived in Mumbai on Wednesday, ahead of his India tour.

He was snapped by the shutterbugs at the airport. Aujla looked extremely excited as he greeted paps with full swag.

The tour is slated to kick off on December 7 in Chandigarh followed by Bengaluru on December 13, Delhi NCR on December 15, 17, 19, and the last stop being Mumbai on December 21. The tour also marks the 27-year-old singer-songwriter and rapper's debut arena showcase in India.

Excited about the tour, Aujla reflected that his musical journey began in India, and his debut tour coming here completes a 'full circle.'

He added that through this tour, he wants to celebrate

the music connecting them and create an "unforgettable experience."

"This tour is more than just a concert; it's a celebration of our connection. Returning to India for my debut tour feels like coming full circle. It's where my musical journey began, and to be able to share this moment with my fans here is incredibly special. Through this tour, I want to celebrate the music that connects us all and create an unforgettable experience where I can get up close and personal with the people who have supported me from day one. Together, we'll embark on a musical journey that celebrates our roots and the power of human connection," he stated in a press note.

Earlier this year, Karan Aujla created waves with his hit 'Tauba Tauba' from 'Bad Newz'.

PICTURE PERFECT

Tamannah Bhatia and Bhumi Pednekar snapped at Film City, in Mumbai on Wednesday. (Instagram)



KAREENA KAPOOR GEARS UP TO CELEBRATE 100TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF RAJ KAPOOR

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Raj Kapoor, one of India's most legendary filmmakers, has left an indelible mark on global cinema. As his 100th birth anniversary approaches, Kareena Kapoor Khan has shared the centenary celebration poster of 'India's Greatest Showman' to honour his legacy.

Taking to Instagram on Wednesday, Kareena invited fans to join her in a screening of Raj Kapoor's most iconic films.

Remembering her grandfather's illustrious career, she wrote: "His legacy lives on. We are so proud to celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of my grandfather, India's Greatest Showman, Raj Kapoor. Join us from Dec



13-15, 2024, on a nostalgic journey through his most iconic films, screening in 40 cities and 135 cinemas. #RajKapoor100"

A total of 10 films starring Raj Kapoor will be screened across 40 cities and 135 cinemas from December 13 to 15, marking the occasion. The screenings, to be held

at PVR-Inox and Cinepolis cinemas, aim to offer audiences a memorable tribute in state-of-the-art venues nationwide.

As a special gesture, movie tickets will be priced at just Rs100 across all participating cinemas.

Earlier, actor Ranbir Kapoor highlighted the col-

laborative efforts behind the restoration of Raj Kapoor's films. At IFFI 2024, he shared that the restoration is a joint initiative by the National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC), the National Film Archive of India (NFAI), and the Film Heritage Foundation.

'The Roshans': Docu-series to showcase legacy of Roshan family

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

A docu-series titled 'The Roshans' is all set to explore the story of actor Hrithik Roshan, his father Rakesh Roshan, musician uncle Rajesh Roshan and his late grandfather and music maestro Roshan.

The series will provide an in-depth look into the lives of the Roshan family and showcase their significant contributions to Hindi cinema.

Taking to his Instagram handle, Hrithik shared an update about the documentary series.

"A profound journey through legacy and love with the family that brought music, magic, and unforgettable moments to Hindi cinema. Watch The Roshans, coming soon, only on Netflix. #TheRoshansOnNetflix @hrithikroshan @rajeshroshan24 @rakesh_roshan9 @



shashiranjans3010," reads the caption. "We are incredibly excited to partner with Netflix and share previously untold stories that shaped our lives," said the Roshan family in a statement shared in the press release. "The platform allows us to reach viewers from across the globe, and it's an honour to showcase our journey to the audience."

Director Shashi Ranjan shared his experience of making the series and said, "Directing this docu-series has been an incredibly rewarding journey. Being invited into the Roshan family's world and entrusted with their legacy is a privilege I am grateful for. It is an honour to bring their story of creativity, courage, and commitment to the world, and having Netflix house

the legendary movie family's stories was undoubtedly the only way to go."

Earlier, Rakesh Roshan dropped pictures with superstar Shah Rukh Khan. Taking to Instagram, the director shared a couple of pictures which he captioned, "Thank you Shahrukh for your love, warmth & contribution to 'The Roshans'."

Ricky Kej meets Emmanuel Macron, highlights India's global rise

AGENCIES
RIYADH

Three-time Grammy Award-winning musician Ricky Kej recently met French President Emmanuel Macron at a lunch organised in his honour in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He opened up about his meeting with him and clicked a selfie with the French President.

In a conversation with ANI, Kej shared, "I'm very honoured to be a goodwill ambassador with the United Nations, in particular with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). So the UNCCD is organising their COP16, that is the



Conference of Parties 16 in Saudi Arabia this year. I'm currently in Saudi Arabia to attend that conference and also to film a music video and documentary about land degradation and land desertification and create awareness of all the problems that we are facing

when it comes to the environment."

He continued, "I'm in Riyadh for the formal events of the COP16 and President Macron is also in town now. I reached out to him and he invited me for lunch."

While recalling his meeting with the French Presi-

dent, he added, "We both hugged each other, and the lunch was beautifully organised by the Saudi government, and also President Macron introduced me to the honourable Minister of Culture for Saudi Arabia His Highness Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud and we discussed ways to collaborate between India and Saudi Arabia through music and our ancient cultures, and we came up with some ideas. During the lunch, President Macron, me and Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud, the three of us took a selfie together, in fact, President Macron took the selfie with my phone."

BRAIN PICKING

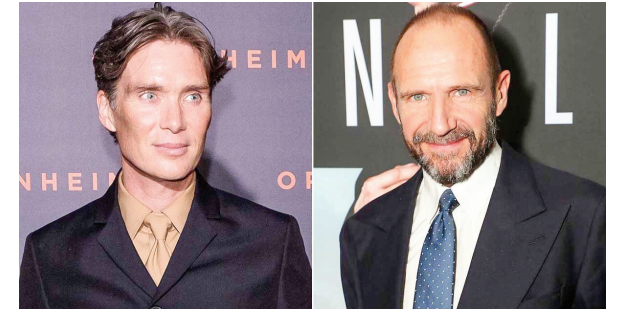


I don't know what I am doing tomorrow. But I know one thing for sure: the day I stop enjoying my work, I will pack up and leave.



-SONAKSHI SINHA
(Indian Actress)

RALPH FIENNES SUPPORTS CILLIAN MURPHY AS VOLDEMORT IN HARRY POTTER TV SERIES



AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Actor and film producer Ralph Fiennes, who played the villain, Voldemort in the Harry Potter film series, talked about the rumours that Cillian Murphy could take over the role in the upcoming TV series based on JK Rowling's novels, reported People.

"Cillian is a fantastic actor," said Fiennes, adding, "That's a wonderful suggestion. I would be all in favour of Cillian. Yeah."

The Conclave actor made starred in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (2005). He also appeared in Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2007), Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (2009), and the two-part adaptation of Harry Pot-

ter and the Deathly Hallows (2010-2011). In November 2022, Fiennes stated that "of course", he would portray Voldemort again if requested.

The news that HBO and Warner Bros. were planning to create the Harry Potter series for TV was originally revealed in April 2023. Francesca Gardiner is writing the series, which will be directed by Mark Mylod.

In June, Rowling said that she spoke with Gardiner and Mylod, who will also serve as executive producers, "Both have a genuine passion for Harry Potter, and having read Francesca's pilot script and heard Mark's vision, I'm certain the TV show will more than live up to expectations," Rowling stated.

BRITNEY SPEARS REVEALS MOVING TO MEXICO ON 43RD BIRTHDAY



AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Pop icon Britney Spears shared on her 43rd birthday that she'd made the decision to move to Mexico to get away from the paparazzi, reported E! News.

"It really kind of hurts my feelings," Britney shared in an Instagram video, "that the paparazzi make my face look like I'm wearing, like a white Jason mask. It doesn't even look like me."

She added that the paparazzi have "always been incredibly cruel to" her and that while she knows she is "not perfect at all by any means," she said that the way they have treated her is "extremely mean and cruel."

"And that's why I've moved to Mexico," she added.

Spears has entered her 43rd year of life with a significant legal milestone. On December 2,

2024, the pop icon was officially declared legally single, marking the end of her marriage to Sam Asghari, according to E! News. This event comes seven months after the couple reached a divorce settlement in May. Although the divorce had already been settled earlier this year, it was on her birthday that the legal status of her singlehood was officially recognised.

Legal documents obtained by E! News confirmed that December 2 was the final date of the couple's marriage dissolution. The divorce was described as uncontested, meaning both Britney and Sam, who legally goes by Hesai Asghari, came to a mutual agreement regarding the division of their property and marital rights, including any support obligations. The settlement was submitted to the court, bringing an end to their three-year marriage, as per E! News.

FACT-CHECK: Is Ultraviolette F99 really the Fastest Indian? Or is it a Marketing Gimmick?

Is Ultraviolette's, or even TVS Racing's, bettering local tuners' drag race times even worth celebrating?

SYED SHIRAZ SHAH

Ultraviolette, an electric motorcycle maker in India, shared a press release today stating that its F99 superbike (yet to be launched) has broken the previous official (approved/certified by FMSCI) "Fastest Quarter Mile for an Indian Motorcycle" record at The Valley Run, held at Aamby Valley on the 1st of December this year. The release mentions that the Ultraviolette F99 achieved a time of 10.712 seconds for the quarter mile "to better the previous record set in 2022" [sic]. However, it didn't mention anything about that previous record.

The release also mentions that this (its quarter mile record) is the first of two records that Ultraviolette intends to set in the next few weeks. The second one would be an attempt to break the 'Highest Top Speed for an Indian Motorcycle' record. But, there is a problem with these claims—the FMSCI regulations.

FMSCI TWO-WHEELER TECHNICAL REGULATIONS, DRAG RACING, 2024

The Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI), in its Two-Wheeler Technical Regulations for Drag Racing, 2024 (clause number 2.1.3) mentions an "Indian Two-Wheeler" as "a two-wheeler manufactured in India and is available for sale to the public through the normal commercial outlets of the manufacturer in a minimum of two hundred (200) numbers of identical examples within a period of twelve (12) consecutive months. The two-wheeler may be wholly or partially manufactured and/or assembled in India from Indian and/or imported components."

However, forget selling 200 units, the Ultraviolette F99 hasn't even been launched yet. Therefore, it doesn't meet any criteria of the aforementioned FMSCI clause. I asked the Ultraviolette's PR agency about it, but didn't get a proper clarification from them at the time of filing this story. I will, of course, follow up with a second story with Ultraviolette's clarification, if I receive any.

THE PREVIOUS (2022) RECORD

In all probability, the 2022 quarter mile record Ultraviolette is claiming to have shattered is TVS Racing's 11.523-second time the latter managed to achieve on its beautifully modified RR 310 superbike. However, unlike Ultraviolette, TVS Racing had provided all the technical details of that "drag specific" RR 310—it even had a turbocharger.

Ultraviolette has not even mentioned whether its drag bike was a bone-stock unit or an "enhanced" version. The company has provided the following details though, and, from the way the press release has been



The release also mentions that this (its quarter mile record) is the first of two records that Ultraviolette intends to set in the next few weeks. The second one would be an attempt to break the 'Highest Top Speed for an Indian Motorcycle' record. But, there is a problem with these claims—the FMSCI regulations.

phrased, it appears that these are the stock bike's specifications, and not the drag bike's.

F99 specifications mentioned in the press release:

- Full carbon fibre exoskeleton*
- Carbon fibre battery pack*
- Torque: 972 Nm at the wheel*
- Power: 120 hp (90kW)*
- 400V Battery Architecture*
- Liquid-cooled drivetrain*
- Weight: 180 kgs*

I also highly

doubt Ultraviolette's claim of "972 Nm of torque at the wheel." For reference, the most powerful variant of the BYD Seal produces a claimed 530 PS of

power, while its claimed peak torque figure is 670 Nm. It weighs over two tonnes, and my best 0-100 km/h time in it was 3.5 seconds (BYD claims 3.8 s)...

IF at all the good folks at Ultraviolette do give me a test unit (I know they won't), then I will try to get

THE ORIGINAL QUARTER MILE RECORDS

Attaullah Baig, a well-respected name in the Indian two-stroke community and also in the drag-race circuit, posted a time of 11.951 seconds in 2021's edition of The Valley Run on his drag-bike—a Yamaha RD350 built by him. Yes, he built AND raced that drag bike. He has been doing that for at least over a decade now. In fact, this year, he further im-



proved his time to 11.718 seconds. That compels me to wonder why TVS Racing, with all their might and resources, went against a local tuner-cum-racer at the drag-strip? That too to just better his time by less than half a second? I obviously know that every

millisecond counts in drag racing, but I expected better from the manufacturer

TVS Racing quoted Baig's record as the benchmark when Baban Khan's record of 11.486 seconds on his Yamaha RD350 has still not been

zuki Hayabusa ridden by Hemanth Muddappa of Mantra Racing, because, going by the aforementioned FMSCI clause, the 'Busa qualifies as an Indian motorcycle as it's assembled right here in India (for over eight years now). Just for the record, Muddappa's quarter mile times have always been under 10 seconds in the last over ten years.

Moreover, while FMSCI has quite stringent rules and restrictions for motorcycles with internal combustion engines, I couldn't spot any such mention for electric motorcycles.

Now, like many other journalists, even I would have congratulated Ultraviolette for achieving this feat, but only if the company had first sold a few units of the bike. For now, at best, the Ultraviolette F99 can be considered the fastest electric motorcycle in a quarter mile in India, but the fastest In-



peak

it on a dyno. In the meantime, it would help Ultraviolette if they can themselves have multiple units of the bike run on several third party dynos available in the country.

that otherwise, since its inception, has made immense contribution to Indian motorsports. Also, I don't know why

broken by an "Indian motorcycle." Of course, you may consider it broken by the Su-

dian motorcycle in a quarter mile? No, it's definitely NOT. Not by a mile, or a quarter mile.

FUTURE-PROOF YOUR BUSINESS WITH TOP TECHNOLOGY TRENDS IN 2025



THE NEXT
ABHISHEKANAND

December has arrived and another year is coming to an end. The dawn of 2025 is bringing an array of transformative technologies that businesses cannot afford to ignore. From augmented reality (AR) to generative AI and the rise of the physical world, embracing these trends can be the difference between thriving or merely surviving in the marketplace. Check my todays article to stay ahead in 2025 in your competitive arena.

1. GENERATIVE AI: THE CREATIVE CATALYST

Generative AI is revolutionizing industries by enabling machines to create original content, from art and music to writing and software code. Businesses are leveraging these capabilities to:

- Enhance Creativity: AI tools like ChatGPT and DALL-E empower teams to brainstorm, draft, and visualize ideas faster.
- Personalize Customer

Experiences: Generative AI can craft hyper-personalized marketing campaigns, creating a stronger connection with audiences.

- Optimize Operations: By automating repetitive tasks, generative AI frees up human talent to focus on strategic initiatives.

For example, companies in design, content creation, and software development are using generative AI to reduce production time while maintaining high-quality outputs.

2. AUGMENTED REALITY: BLURRING THE REAL AND THE DIGITAL

AR technology is no longer just a novelty; it's becoming integral to customer engagement. As AR devices become more affordable and accessible, businesses are tapping into its potential to:

- Enhance E-commerce: Virtual try-ons for clothes, accessories, and even furniture bridge the gap between online shopping and

in-store experiences.

- Revolutionize Training and Education: AR-powered simulations allow employees to learn complex tasks in an interactive environment, reducing errors and increasing efficiency.

- Elevate Marketing Campaigns: Immersive AR campaigns captivate audiences, turning advertisements into memorable experiences.

Retail, real estate, and healthcare are just a few sectors leading the AR adoption race.

3. PHYGITAL: THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

The phygital (physical + digital) approach integrates digital experiences into the physical world. With consumers seeking seamless transitions between online and offline interactions, businesses are finding innovative ways to merge these realms:

- Hybrid Stores: Brands are creating digitally enhanced physical stores where customers can browse products using touchscreens or AR displays.
- Phygital Events: Conferences and exhibitions now offer both physical atten-



dance and digital participation, increasing accessibility and reach.

Connected Devices: IoT-enabled gadgets are bridging physical interactions with digital ecosystems, creating smarter, more personalized experiences.

- The phygital revolution caters to the increasing demand for convenience and customization.

4. AI IN DECISION-MAKING: DATA MEETS INTUITION

As businesses collect un-

precedented amounts of data, AI is stepping in to analyze it for actionable insights. Machine learning algorithms are enabling:

- Predictive Analytics: Anticipating customer behavior and market trends to stay one step ahead.
- Enhanced Supply Chain Management: AI streamlines operations, identifying inefficiencies and suggesting improvements.
- Human-Centered Design: By analyzing user feedback and behavior, businesses can create prod-

ucts and services that resonate deeply with their target audience.

5. THE METAVERSE: BUILDING VIRTUAL SOCIETIES

Although still in its infancy, the metaverse is shaping up to be a key frontier for businesses. With immersive virtual spaces, companies can:

- Host Virtual Meetings: Collaborative environments that go beyond traditional video calls.
- Create Brand Experiences: Immersive environ-

ments where customers can interact with brands on a deeper level.

- Monetize Virtual Goods: Digital assets, from NFTs to virtual real estate, offer new revenue streams.

6. SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Consumers are increasingly favoring brands that prioritize sustainability. Technology is enabling businesses to align with this demand by:

- Optimizing Resources: IoT sensors and AI-driven analytics reduce waste in manufacturing and logistics.
- Developing Green Products: Innovations in materials science and energy efficiency help create eco-friendly products.
- Promoting Transparency: Blockchain technology ensures ethical sourcing and production, building trust with consumers.

As 2025 unfolds, the convergence of AR, generative AI, the phygital revolution, and other cutting-edge technologies promises to redefine industries. The key to staying ahead lies not just in adopting these tools but in integrating them strategically to create meaningful, memorable experiences for customers.

The future is here—are you ready to lead?

PREPARING FOR 2025 AND BEYOND

The future belongs to those who embrace change and adapt swiftly. Here's how businesses can prepare:

- Invest in R&D: Allocate resources to explore and adopt

emerging technologies.

- Upskill Teams: Equip employees with the knowledge and tools to leverage these advancements.
- Collaborate with Tech Experts: Partner with specialists who can guide implementation and innovation.
- Stay Agile: Continuously evaluate and refine strategies to keep pace with market shifts.

As 2025 unfolds, the convergence of AR, generative AI, the phygital revolution, and other cutting-edge technologies promises to redefine industries. The key to staying ahead lies not just in adopting these tools but in integrating them strategically to create meaningful, memorable experiences for customers.

The future is here—are you ready to lead?

This article is authored by Abhishek Anand, Founder of Skill Bud Technologies Pvt. Ltd., a company specializing in CGI Ads, Social Media and other related services including Web-site Development, AR, Web 3.0, Metaverse, and Digital Marketing. Abhishek is also an Author, Speaker, and Mentor, helping businesses grow through technology.

TECHNOLOGY AS A GAME-CHANGER FOR BRANDS FACING HIGH RETURN RATES

AJAY RAO

As e-commerce continues to grow, so does a problematic trend that impacts brands' bottom lines: returns. Without the tactile, in-store shopping experience, customers often resort to "bracketing"—ordering multiple sizes or styles and returning the ones that don't work for them. While this practice makes sense from a consumer standpoint, it poses significant challenges for retailers. E-commerce return rates average 15-30%, nearly three times higher than in-store returns, which are around 8-10%. In 2022, the cost of online returns amounted to a staggering \$212 billion, marking a significant financial drain on brands.

Returns can be essentially impactful for direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands, particularly startups operating on tight margins and limited resources. High return rates also affect third-party logistics (3PL) providers, amplifying costs, lowering customer satisfaction, and complicating operational efficiency. As returns increasingly threaten profitability and contribute to environmental waste through added packaging and transportation, technology has emerged as a crucial solution. Leveraging technology at every stage of the order and return process enables brands to streamline returns, reduce costs, and foster

customer loyalty. Here's how:

1. SMART CHECKOUT OPTIONS FOR ACCURATE ORDERS

The checkout process is an often-overlooked stage where technology can significantly reduce returns. By incorporating automated address prefill and address validation tools, brands can ensure accurate customer details are entered before dispatch. Such tools prevent common delivery issues like failed deliveries and missed addresses, which are frequent contributors to returns. When checkout is streamlined and accurate, customers receive what they ordered without unnecessary hitches, minimising the potential for dissatisfaction and the need for returns.

2. COD ORDER CONFIRMATION PROTOCOLS

For brands offering cash-on-delivery (COD) options, Address Confirmation on COD (ACOC) protocols can reduce return rates by verifying addresses prior to dispatch. This extra layer of confirmation is particularly valuable in regions where COD is popular and can result in high return rates due to failed deliveries or buyer's remorse. By verifying delivery details at the outset, brands can significantly lower the likelihood of COD-related returns, thereby cut-



ting down on costly logistics and wasted resources.

3. PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS FOR RETURN RISK

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are now making it possible for brands to predict which orders are more likely to be returned. By calculating Return to Origin (RTO) scores, brands can assess the probability of an order being returned based on customer behaviour and past data. This predictive approach allows companies to proactively reach out to high-risk customers, offer addi-

tional support, or verify order details, reducing the chances of returns.

4. EFFICIENT QUALITY CONTROL (QC) FOR STREAMLINED RETURNS

Direct exchange options, combined with high-resolution imaging and AI-driven tools, allow brands to confirm product condition at both pickup and upon warehouse arrival. This process enables faster exchanges, reduces delays, and builds customer trust. Detailed image and video documentation of product condition also supports brands in filing claims with market-

places or courier partners within the crucial 48-hour window, reducing disputes and minimising costs associated with reprocessing.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR MINIMISING RETURNS

- In addition to the logistics chain, brands can employ various tech-driven strategies to enhance customer experience and reduce return rates:
- Enhanced Product Descriptions and Visualisation: By offering detailed product descriptions, videos, and high-quality images, brands can set accurate expectations and reduce the

likelihood of returns due to product mismatches.

- AI-Powered Fit and Sizing Tools: Fit-related returns are particularly common in apparel and footwear. With AI-powered sizing tools, customers can choose the most suitable product based on their unique measurements, leading to fewer fit-related returns. For instance, brands like H&M use past purchase data to recommend sizes, minimising returns.

Blockchain for Transparent and Trackable Returns: Blockchain technology can streamline the return process by providing customers with real-time updates on their return status. This transparency builds trust, reassuring customers that their return is being handled efficiently and accurately. Advanced Customer Support: AI-driven chatbots and customer support tools offer customers immediate assistance with return-related questions, allowing brands to manage return requests quickly and effectively. This improves customer satisfaction and creates an opportunity to resolve issues without necessitating a return.

By adopting technology across every step—from the initial order to post-return processes—brands can successfully reframe returns from a logistical burden into an opportunity for operational efficiency, cost savings, and customer loyalty.

The author is the Founder & CEO of Emiza.

AI voicebots as a virtual quality control assistant for remote teams

SARVAGYA MISHRA

The present and the future belongs to AI Voicebots, as clearly reflected in its growing adoption. As per a report by Grand View Research, the global market for artificial intelligence is expected to grow at a CAGR of 22.6% between 2023 to 2030. This clearly underscores the growing demand for automation for improving the customer experience. Furthermore, as per Juniper Research, in the next 5 years, AI voice assistants are expected to take care of 70% of all customer interactions.

However, the growing prominence of voicebots is not just limited to automation and customer interactions. In fact, it has branched out to further take care of quality control and assurance, especially for the growing remote teams.

The recent few years have seen a steep increase in the number of remote teams. In their bid to grow and expand operations, businesses are deploying remote teams, especially for taking care of the support functions. The same has created unprecedented demand for maintaining consistent

quality in customer interactions. To the same end, AI-powered voice agents are stepping up to serve as quality control assistants for virtual and remote teams. Here's taking a deep dive to understand how AI Voicebots are serving as virtual quality assistants for remote teams:

MINIMISING THE SCOPE OF ERRORS THROUGH AUTOMATION

To begin with, AI voicebots reduce the scope of human error due to fatigue or boredom. By taking care of repetitive customer queries, it frees up the human agents to take care of more complex and creative problems. Thus, AI voicebots ensure that human agents focus their problem-solving on the top quartile of customer queries, without getting derailed or distracted by customer queries.

ADVANCED REAL-TIME MONITORING FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Leveraging machine learning (ML), Natural Language Processing (NLP)



and Natural Language Understanding (NLU), AI-powered voicebots are going beyond simply automating addressing customer queries. These advanced AI models are also stepping up to review and quality check conversations taking place between human

agents and customers and analyse the same for:

- Factual correctness: AI voicebots can check the factual correctness of the information that the human agent has shared with customers.
- Wait Time Analysis: AI voicebots can

highlight areas where the response time can be further improved to enhance the overall customer experience.

Checking the overall tone & flow of the conversation: as per the business requirement, AI Voicebots can check whether the various required parameters of the conversation were duly followed. The bot can analyse if important parameters like proper greetings, no interruptions mid-conversation, proper speaking rate etc w within the ideal range or not.

With such deep-rooted analysis, AI Voicebots provide data-driven insights on how the remote teams are performing in addressing customer queries. The data-driven insights further assess the specific training needs, to help remote teams perform more optimally and efficiently. Organisations can know which remote team needs to be oriented into process flow, and which team should be trained to be more empathetic in their conversations.

This has opened doors for organisations to drive unprecedented growth & efficiencies. The collaboration be-

tween AI voicebots and human agents makes it easier for the organisations to continuously and proactively ascertain the training needs and upskill their human resources. The process is made much simpler and cost-effective, owing to the data-driven insights shared by AI voicebot in real-time. Thus, it's proving to be a great way for organisations to scale operations, without compromising on the quality of the conversations.

As remote work continues to become more of a norm, AI voicebots are going to be indispensable for organisations to ensure quality and efficiency. By not only addressing the gaps but also by providing actionable insights, AI voicebots ensure optimal performance of remote teams in support functions. Altogether, organisations can benefit with improved automation and human ingenuity, thus creating impetus for a new dawn of growth, where optimum quality and efficiency seamlessly co-exists.

The author is the Co-founder & Director Superbot.

BGT: TEAM INDIA SHIFTS FOCUS TO 'HIGH-OCTANE FIELDING SESSION'

AGENCIES
ADELAIDE

Ahead of the Adelaide Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia, Team India shifted focus to fielding, having taken a 1-0 lead in the series.

The Adelaide Test, starting on December 6, sees India entering with both a mental and physical edge, following a dominant performance in the first Test led by Jasprit Bumrah's bowling and captaincy.

However, the visitors will also aim to exorcise the memories of the infamous 2020 Adelaide pink-ball Test, where they were dismissed for their lowest Test score of 36 runs. On that occasion, Pat Cummins (4/21) and Josh Hazlewood (5/8) dismantled the Indian batting line-up, giving Australia a straightforward target of 90 runs to chase.

The official social media handle of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) shared a video of the fielding session.

In the video, it was seen Harshit Rana, Prasidh Krishna, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli and other team members took part in the session along with the fielding coach T Dilip.

Ahead of the session T Dilip explained the training and said, "We will start off having a team fielding in covers, mid-off, mid-on, short mid-wicket. So I will be hitting the ball to covers and the mid-on fielder will back up and return the ball to Nuwan."

"Hitting the target. Reflex catching. Celebrations. Ener-



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gy levels running high! Here's a sneak peek into Team India's high-octane fielding session with Fielding Coach T Dilip ahead of the Pink Ball Test in Adelaide," BCCI wrote on X while sharing the clip. India are currently 1-0 up in the BGT series following their record-shattering 295-run victory in Perth. The second Test will be played in a day-night format in Adelaide, beginning from Friday.

Australia squad (for second Test): Pat Cummins (C), Scott Boland, Alex Carey (WK), Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labus-

chagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitch Marsh, Nathan McSweeney, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Beau Webster.

India squad: Rohit Sharma (C), Jasprit Bumrah (VC), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Devdutt Padikkal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep, Prasidh Krishna, Harshit Rana, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar.

Reserves: Mukesh Kumar, Navdeep Saini, Khaleel Ahmed, Yash Dayal.

Perth triumph fuels India's confidence: KL Rahul

AGENCIES
ADELAIDE

India wicketkeeper batter KL Rahul reflected on his side's win over Australia in the Perth Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and said that they have taken a lot of confidence from the victory.

The Adelaide Test, starting on December 6, sees India entering with both a mental and physical edge, following a dominant performance in the first Test led by Jasprit Bumrah's bowling and captaincy.

However, the visitors will also aim to exorcise the memories of the infamous 2020 Adelaide pink-ball Test, where they were dismissed for their lowest Test score of 36 runs. On that occasion, Pat Cummins (4/21)

Team India bans open nets after crowd distracts players

AGENCIES
ADELAIDE

Team India on Wednesday banned open net practice sessions after more than 5000 spectators came to the Adelaide Oval to watch the side, according to a report from The Age.

According to the report, the tourists felt uncomfortable during the open net session amid a carnival atmosphere on the ground. However, Australia's sessions will be open to the fans.

A Cricket Australia spokesperson said that India expressed their preference for the remaining training sessions, and wants it to be under closed doors to minimise



potential noise or distractions.

"India have expressed a preference for their remaining training sessions not to be open to the public to minimise potential noise or

distractions," a CA spokesperson was quoted by The Age as saying.

With India ramping up its preparations for the second Test, players engaged in fierce throwdown sessions and

bowlers took on star players on Tuesday. The highlight of the entire session was the moment when Kohli stepped up to face Bumrah at the other end.

The battle started with Kohli letting a couple of balls go away. Then Bumrah upped the ante as Kohli, who was covering his stumps, saw the ball go past the off-stump.

Kohli showed his class with an impeccable back-foot punch, showcasing how switched on he was while going up against India's ace quick.

One of the most notable things throughout the training session was the movement off the pitch Bumrah was able to generate.

Lyon backs Marsh ahead of pink-ball Test

AGENCIES
ADELAIDE

Australia's seasoned spinner Nathan Lyon has backed Mitchell Marsh to play a role with the pink ball in Adelaide during the second Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India, beginning on Friday.

Marsh's fitness has been a point of concern for Australia during the build-up to the second Test of the much anticipated clash against India. Uncapped all-rounder Beau Webster was added to the squad for the second Test as a potential cover for Marsh.

Marsh's essence to the



Australian squad is reflected in his batting average of 40 since he returned to the side in last year's Ashes.

With his impact with the bat playing a major part in his selection, Lyon is expecting Marsh to have his say with the ball as Australia look to bounce back.

"I honestly think we'll see Mitch Marsh bowl.

I'm not concerned about Bison's fitness if I'm being honest. He's been brilliant for us since he's come back in. He came [back] in that game in Leeds during the Ashes and [has] really dominated, so got full confidence in Bison. Happy to bowl his overs," Lyon said on Wednesday, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

In recent times, Lyon has played alongside Marsh and Cameron Green, even with both on some occasions. On the other hand, he has been a part of an Australian side that lined up without a genuine all-rounder and played with four frontline bowlers.

PCB accepts hybrid model for CT 2025, seeks similar ICC terms for India

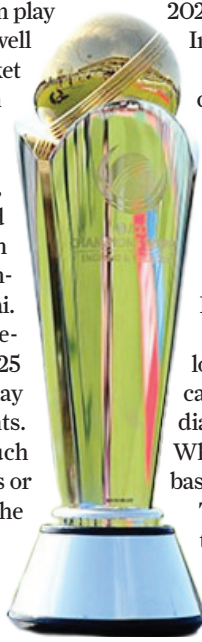
AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has accepted the hybrid model for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 to be hosted by them, but has put forward a condition to let them play their games under a hybrid model as well whenever a global International Cricket Council (ICC) tournament is held in India, reported ESPNcricinfo.

Though discussions on the matter are ongoing and the situation stays fluid, as per ESPNcricinfo, PCB put forward their proposal during the weekends in meetings with ICC and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in Dubai.

PCB was seeking a long-term agreement that would go beyond the 2025 CT, with provisions for Pakistan to play outside India during ICC tournaments. However, it is yet to be decided if such provisions are for the next three years or till 2031, which will mark the end of the current rights cycle.

Till 2031, India is supposed to host three major men's tournaments, the 2026 T20 World Cup with Sri Lanka



in February, the 2029 ICC Champions Trophy in October and the 2031 ICC Cricket World Cup along with Bangladesh from October-November. In women's cricket, they will host the 50-over women's World Cup next year.

The next Asia Cup, scheduled for October 2025, is also scheduled to be held in India.

Previously on Sunday, PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi said that, "We will do what's best for cricket. It is definitely not a hybrid formula, but if a new formula is formed, it will be an equal one," Naqvi told reporters, as quoted from a video posted by PCB media on X.

"A one-sided arrangement is no longer acceptable. It cannot be the case that we continue to go to India, but they do not visit Pakistan. Whatever happens must be on the basis of equality," he added.

Though BCCI stays tight-lipped, there are indications that it would not accept a hybrid model for the tournaments hosted by the team.

Klaasen to lead South Africa during T20I series

TDG NETWORK
JOHANNESBURG

Batter Heinrich Klaasen will lead South Africa in the three-match T20I series against Pakistan from December 10 onwards, with regular captain Aiden Markram busy in the two-match Test series against Sri Lanka.

Markram, who will feature in the second Test from December 5 onwards and has been rested due to the tight schedule between the third Test and the T20Is. Besides Markram, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Kagiso Rabada, and Tristan Stubbs will also miss the T20I series as they are also involved in the ongoing Test series. Despite the absence of key players, South Africa's T20I squad boasts plenty of firepower.

Pakistan announce XI for third T20I

AGENCIES
BULAWAYO

Saim Ayub has been dropped from the Pakistan's Playing XI for the final T20I match of the series against Zimbabwe, and Sahibzada Farhan has been named as his replacement.

Pakistan named its playing XI on the eve of the third T20I of the series with a couple of changes. Along with other changes, Haris Rauf, Abrar Ahmed and Irfan Khan Niazi have also been rested for the final T20I of the series.

Qasim Akram, Arafat Minhas and Mohammad Hasnain have been included as their replacements for the third T20I against Zimbabwe. Qasim, 22, has represented Pakistan in three T20Is and has yet to make a major impact in the international circuit.



Saim Ayub, Haris Rauf, Abrar Ahmed and Irfan Khan Niazi have been rested for the final T20I of the series.

Arafat, a 19-year-old left-arm spinner, also has three T20I appearances to his name, with four scalps to his name.

Mohammad Hasnain holds a fair amount of experience, with 27 T20I appearances under his belt and 25

wickets in his kitty.

Salman Ali Agha will continue to lead Pakistan in the absence of Mohammad Rizwan. Omair Yousuf, Usman Khan, Tayyab Tahir, Jahandad Khan, Abbas Afridi and Sufiyan Muqeem have retained their spots in the playing XI.

Pakistan took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series after sealing a thumping 10-wicket win in the second T20I on Tuesday.

Zimbabwe succumbed to a meagre total of 57, their lowest T20I total. Young ball twacker Muqeem was the architect behind Zimbabwe's downfall, which left the hosts "hurting."

Muqeem's success was attributed to his exceptional pace variation, along with his effective use of top spin and googly, which left Zimbabwe's batting line-up in crumbles.

In his remarkable 2.4-over spell, Muqeem claimed a five-wicket haul, giving away just three runs.

Pakistan's tour of Zimbabwe will conclude on Thursday, and after that, they will shift their focus to the South Africa tour, which will begin on December 10.

India reach final with 3-1 win over Malaysia in Men's Junior Asia Cup

AGENCIES
MUSCAT

The Indian Junior Men's Hockey Team took on Malaysia in the semi-final of the Men's Junior Asia Cup on Tuesday in Muscat and defeated them 3-2 to advance to the Final, as per a release from Hockey India.

Dilraj Singh (10'), Rohit (45') and Sharda Nand Tiwari (52') found the back of the net for India in the tie while Kamaruddin Azimuddin (57') scored a consolation goal for Malaysia towards the end of



the game.

Malaysia started the game on the front foot, quickly earning a penalty corner. However, the Indian defence stood firm. Moments later, Captain

Che Nur Aqilrullah forced India's goalkeeper Bikramjeet into action with a powerful shot.

The growing pressure resulted in another penalty corner for Malaysia,

but once again, Kamaruddin Azimuddin's flick was saved. India looked to transition quickly from defence, and in the 10th minute, Arajjeet Singh Hundal found Dilraj Singh in the shooting circle. Dilraj turned around and, while off balance, bypassed the Malaysian goalkeeper Mohamad Rafaizul with a powerful shot to grant India the lead.

Malaysia didn't show any signs of discouragement as they took the pitch in the second quarter and maintained their grip in

the game, earning a couple of penalty corners but India bayed their advances and continued to threaten Malaysia with frequent counterattacks. Indian forwards Arajjeet and Gurjot Singh were at the end of significant goalscoring opportunities but failed to capitalise and the first half ended 1-0 for India.

India pushed forward to double their lead in the third quarter but Malaysia closely marked all Indian players and fought for every loose ball to keep the tie within their reach.

Shreyas Gopal registers joint-most hat-tricks by Indian bowler in T20s

AGENCIES
INDORE

Karnataka spinner Shreyas Gopal levelled with compatriot Amit Mishra to register the most hat-tricks by an Indian bowler in T20 cricket.

Gopal reached this accomplishment during his side's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy match against Baroda on Tuesday.

During the game, while defending a total of 170 runs set on the back of a fine half-century from Abhinav Manohar (56 in 34 balls, with six sixes), Karnataka seemed to be in trouble with Baroda at 102/1 in 10 overs. Gopal, bowling his second over, turned the game on its head by removing Shashwat Rawat for 63



in 37 balls, with seven fours and two sixes. It was followed by him getting scalps of Pandya brothers, Hardik and Krunal for golden ducks, which earned him a hat-trick and his team a chance to win the game.

Gopal's figures of 4/19 ultimately went in vain as wicketkeeper-batter Vishnu

Solanki remained unbeaten on 28 to guide his team to a four-wicket win with seven balls left.

Gopal now has the second-most hat-tricks by any bowler in T20 cricket, tying with Mishra. One of his hat-tricks was during the 2019 edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) when playing for Rajasthan Royals (RR) against Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), he removed Virat Kohli, Marcus Stoinis, and AB de Villiers. He also has a hat-trick against Haryana from the 2018-19 season.

The most hat-tricks by a bowler in T20s are by star Afghanistan spinner Rashid Khan, who has a total of four hat-tricks in T20s.