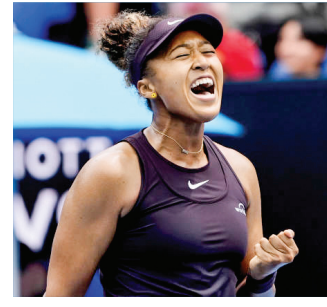




**2 FARMERS' PROTEST: SC QUESTIONS PUNJAB'S CLAIM ON DALLEWAL'S HEALTH**



**11 GAZA CEASEFIRE STILL ELUSIVE AS NEGOTIATORS TRY TO HAMMER OUT DEAL**



**16 OSAKA TRIUMPHS IN COMEBACK WIN IN AUSTRALIAN OPEN**

## RAHUL RAISES STORM, SAYS 'FIGHTING INDIAN STATE'

Attacking BJP and RSS for 'capturing every institution' in India, Rahul said Cong fighting not only BJP, RSS but also Indian state

ANAND SINGH  
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday stirred controversy after he said that the grand old was not only fighting the BJP and its ideological mentor RSS, but the "Indian state" as well.

The Congress leader made these comments after the inauguration of party's new headquarters at Kotla Marg in New Delhi.

Rahul said that the party is fighting a civilisation war with these people who are attacking the ideology that we believe in.

He further said that only this organisation (Congress) people in this room and millions of workers of this or-



Congress MP and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi addresses the inauguration of 'Indira Bhawan', the new headquarters of the party, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

ganisation have the courage and capability to stop them.

Rahul said: "Do not think we are fighting a fair fight. There is no fairness in this. If you believe that you are fighting a political organisation the BJP and the political organisation called the RSS then you have not understood what is going on. The

BJP and the RSS have captured every single institution of the country. We are fighting the BJP, RSS and Indian state itself."

He said in the last Congress Working Committee (CWC) he had highlighted that there is something in Maharashtra elections. P3

## BJP tears into Rahul

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri lashed out at Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi over his statement on "fighting the Indian State" and said that the Congress MP need to do some "serious introspection."

The Union Minister said, "How can he fight the Indian State?...Either its derailment of mental coordinates or it's the Soros toolkit. But how can any Indian say that he is against the Indian State? I think the several times re-launched leader, young at the age of 54 needs to do some serious intro-



Congress MP needs to do some serious introspection: Puri

spection. I think there is going to be hell to pay for any political leader who says that I am against the Indian State."

BJP spokesperson Gaurav P3

## 'India gaining strength in both space, deep sea'

PM Modi dedicates to nation three frontline warships

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that today India is increasing its capabilities in both space and deep sea as both sectors carry important significance in the future.

The Prime Minister dedicated three "Made in India" frontline naval combatants INS Surat, INS Nilgiri and INS Vaghsheer to the nation.

Addressing the event, PM Modi emphasised the government's focus on developing faraway islands and enhancing maritime power.

"We have also focused on our faraway islands. Regular monitoring of those islands where no one lives is also being done. Not only this, a new identity of the islands is also being created. They are being given new names...We all know how important both the infinite space and the deep sea are in the future. Therefore, today

India is increasing its capabilities in both space and deep sea," he said. Speaking about the Samudrayaan project, he noted that it will take scientists to a depth of 6,000 meters in



PM Narendra Modi waves to the gathering during the commissioning of three frontline naval combatants INS Surat, INS Nilgiri and INS Vaghsheer to the nation, at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai on Wednesday. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi is also seen. ANI

"We have also focused on our faraway islands. Regular monitoring of those islands where no one lives is also being done...We all know how important both the infinite space and the deep sea are in the future." PM Modi said.

the sea, a feat achieved by only a few countries.

"Our Samudrayaan project is going to take scientists to a depth of 6000 meters in the sea where only a few P3

## Kejriwal files papers, urges people to vote on work

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party Chief and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday filed his nomination for the New Delhi seat for the Delhi Assembly Polls, scheduled on February 5.

Kejriwal is in the electoral fray against BJP candidate Parvesh Verma and Congress' Sandeep Dikshit. After filing his nomination, Kejriwal asserted that a lot of work still left to be done in the national capital.

"I have filed the nomina-



AAP National Convener and party candidate for the New Delhi constituency Arvind Kejriwal files his nomination in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

tion. I would like to tell the people of Delhi that please vote for work, on one side there is a party that works

and on the other side, there is a party that abuses... So vote for work, education, P3

## 'Why help BJP?': TMC as I.N.D.I.A bloc allies back AAP in Delhi polls

TDG NETWORK  
SOUTH 24 PARGANA

After the Samajwadi Party, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) has extended its support to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for the upcoming Delhi elections. TMC General Secretary and MP, Abhishek Banerjee, on Wednesday, said: "Why should we help the BJP by not supporting AAP?"

Earlier on Wednesday, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav extended support to AAP, saying it is stronger than the Congress P3

ties are strong, let them take the fight against BJP. For example DMK in Tamil Nadu, JMM in Jharkhand. So in Delhi, who do you think can beat the BJP? It's AAP. So why shall I not support the party that can defeat the BJP? Ultimately that's the cause. Why shall we help the BJP by not supporting AAP?"

Earlier on Wednesday, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav extended support to AAP, saying it is stronger than the Congress P3

## SC notice to Centre, ECI against election rules amendment

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued notice to the Centre and poll panel on a plea of All India Congress Committee (AICC) Secretary Jairam Ramesh challenging amendments made to the Conduct of Election Rules of 1961.

The amendment prevents public inspection of electronic documents, including



CCTV footage, webcasting recordings and video footage of candidates.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice PV Sanjay Kumar sought responses from the Central government and

Election Commission of India and asked them to file it before the week commencing on March 17.

Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for the Congress leader, questioned the reasoning behind the amendment saying, "One of the reasons given in the press is, we have taken away CCTV, video because the identity of the voter is revealed." P3

## Delhi liquor scam: ED gets MHA grant to prosecute Kejriwal, Sisodia



TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has authorised the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to initiate prosecution against former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) for their alleged involvement in money laundering linked to the liquor scam case, official sources said on Wednesday.

The sanction order against these Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders were received earlier this month in a fresh development to the case per-



tains to the alleged irregularities in the now-scraped Delhi liquor policy for 2021-22.

The move comes as the two leaders are out on bail in the case as the Supreme Court in September last year ordered Arvind Kejriwal to be released on regular bail as well as Manish Sisodia a month ago in August in cases linked to the alleged Delhi liquor policy scam.

The development is significant as a special PMLA court in Delhi had delayed the framing of charges against Arvind Kejriwal after he challenged the trial court's decision to take cognizance of the chargesheet in the ab-

## Haryana BJP chief draws Opp ire over gang-rape allegations

NEERAJ MOHAN  
CHANDIGARH

A day after Haryana BJP chief Mohan Lal Badoli was named in a gang-rape FIR registered in Kasauli last month, opposition parties and political leaders have intensified their demands for his immediate resignation and arrest. The allegations have sparked a political

storm, with strong reactions from leaders across the spectrum.

Haryana Power Minister Anil Vij termed the allegations against Badoli "very serious" and expressed confidence that the BJP high command would take appropriate action. Speaking to reporters, Vij said, "The allegations of gang rape P3

## NEW TWIST: WITNESS CLAIMS ALLEGATIONS FALSE

A woman, identified as a friend of the alleged victim, held a press conference in Panchkula, denying the allegations and calling them false. The woman, who claimed to be a Delhi resident and a friend of the complainant, P3

## Maha Kumbh global appeal: 10-nation team to take holy dip today

TDG NETWORK  
PRAYAGRAJ

Mahakumbh 2025 is going global, with a 21-member delegation from 10 countries arriving in Prayagraj to experience the spiritual essence of the Sangam. They will take a sacred dip at the sacred Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers on Thursday, according to an official statement from the Uttar Pradesh government. The delegation, invited

by the External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, will take a sacred dip at Triveni Sangam on January 16. The visiting group includes representatives from Fiji, Finland, Guyana, Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This showcases the global interest in this spiritual event, which is a sym-



Foreign devotees take a dip at Triveni Sangam on the occasion of 'Makar Sankranti' during the ongoing Maha Kumbh 2025. ANI

bol of India's rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

During their visit, the delegation will participate in a heritage walk to explore the rich cultural and historical legacy of Prayagraj. They will also enjoy an aerial view of the Mahakumbh area during a helicopter ride. Dinner and rest arrangements have also been made at the tent city for their convenience. The statement noted that the Mahakumbh, organised under the leadership

of the Yogi government, has drawn global attention this year. Their accommodations have been arranged at the Tent City in Arail, an initiative by the Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation.

The group is scheduled to arrive on Wednesday and will tour the Mahakumbh Mela area.

Maha Kumbh, which began on January 13, will continue until February 26.



# FARMERS' PROTEST: SC QUESTIONS PUNJAB'S CLAIM ON DALLEWAL'S HEALTH

The apex court directed the Punjab government's chief secretary to submit Dallewal's latest health reports to the court registrar by the end of the day.

NEERAJ MOHAN  
CHANDIGARH

Expressing concerns over the deteriorating health of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on an indefinite hunger strike for over 49 days, the Supreme Court has sought his medical reports to be evaluated by the AIIMS medical board.

During the hearing a bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh questioned the Punjab government's submission that Dallewal's health is "improving," despite his prolonged fast. "How can someone's health parameters improve after nearly 50 days of fasting? Where are the latest test results?" the bench remarked. The apex court directed the

## COURT INTERVENTION

- Supreme Court concerned over farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal's health after 49+ days of hunger strike.
- Court orders Punjab government to submit Dallewal's medical reports for AIIMS evaluation.
- Bench questions improvement claims, demands latest test results.
- Punjab government sets up makeshift hospital near protest site, but Dallewal refuses medical aid.



Punjab minister and AAP's state unit chief Aman Arora, ministers Gurmeet Singh Khudian, Dr Balbir Singh and Kuldeep Singh Dhalwal meeting farm leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal at Khanauri on 25 December 2024. File Photo

Meanwhile, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the Punjab government, informed the court that a makeshift hospital had been set up just 10 meters from the protest site, and progress had been made in persuading Dallewal to shift there. However, on the behalf of Punjab government, he reiterated that Dallewal had refused medical aid offered by the state government. Dallewal, the convener of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) (non-political), began his hunger strike on November 26 last year at the Khanauri border, where hundreds of farmers from Punjab were camping since February 13 since they were not allowed by Haryana police to enter Haryana halting their Delhi march.

Punjab government's chief secretary to submit Dallewal's latest health reports to

the court registrar by the end of the day. The registrar was instructed to forward the

reports to the AIIMS director for an expert opinion on Dallewal's condition.

## Kharge jabs Bhagwat over independence remarks

ANAND SINGH  
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday slammed Rashtriya Swamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat's 'true Independence' remark, warning him that if he continues to make such statements, it will be difficult for him to move around the country.

Kharge while addressing the gathering after the inauguration of party's new office said, "Many divisive forces,

dom. Therefore, I condemn the statement of Mohan Bhagwat ji," he said.

And if he (Bhagwat) continues on giving such statements then it will be tough for him to roam freely in the country, he added.

Kharge also said that this Congress headquarters will become the centre to fight against those forces which are working against the Constitution and democracy and asserted that he hoped that you are all ready for this.



who had no contribution in the freedom struggle, later opposed the Constitution, the tricolour, the Ashoka Chakra and even the laws being made for the progress of the society."

Taking a pot shot at Bhagwat, Kharge said, "RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said that when Ram temple was built, the country got independence. Whereas Narendra Modi feels that when he became the Prime Minister in 2014, the country got freedom."

"This is a shame," the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha said, adding that the people of RSS-BJP do not remember Independence Day because they did not contribute to the independence of the country.

"Congress remembers independence because our people sacrificed their lives, suffered and left their homes for free-

"We should remember all the presidents and heroes from the first session in Mumbai under the chairmanship of Vyomkesh Chandra Banerjee ji on 28 December 1885 till now," the Congress leader said.

He said that the year 2024 is the 75th year of the adoption of the Constitution and is also the centenary year of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, becoming the Congress President.

"As president, Gandhiji connected every section of the country including common man, women, farmers, laborers to Congress.

Social problems like untouchability were also included in the political agenda and due to this reason, many poor people are associated with Congress today," he pointed out.

## Air India issues advisory for travel to and from Delhi ahead of Republic Day

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Air India on Wednesday issued an important advisory for its passengers about to travel to and from Delhi, in view of the upcoming Republic Day (January 26) celebrations in the national capital, urging them to maintain a buffer in their commute time and check the status of their flights before leaving for the airport.

"Important Update Passengers travelling to and from Delhi between 19 & 26 Jan 2025, are requested to allow themselves more time and check the status of their flights before heading to the airport, due to Republic Day restrictions," the airline said in a post on social media platform X (formerly known as Twitter).

"For any further assistance, connect with our contact centre," it added. In another travel advisory posted earlier in the day, Air India had said,



Several planes of Air India on the tarmac at the Indira Gandhi International Airport amid fog. File Photo

"Poor visibility due to dense fog and airport congestion may affect flight operations in Delhi and some other cities today."

The advisory came as a thick layer of fog covered parts of Delhi early in the morning, significantly reducing visibility across the city. The city is experiencing cold waves, which are contributing to elevated levels of air pollution.

The Air quality in the national capital plummeted to the 'very poor' category. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB),

the AQI was recorded at 344 in Delhi today at 7 am. Yesterday, at the same time, it was 252. According to CPCB data, Lodhi Road recorded an AQI of 287 (IITM) and 291 (IMD).

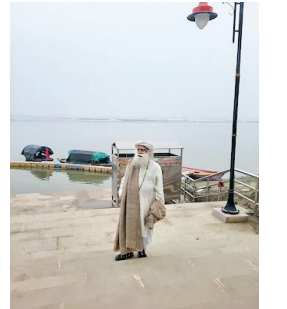
Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium reported 368, Mandir Marg 378, Mundka 372, and NSIT Dwarka 242. Najafgarh recorded 255, Narala 377, Nehru Nagar 394, and North Campus, DU 382 (IMD). Okhla Phase-2 reported an AQI of 380, Patparganj 390, and Pusa recorded 355. RK Puram reported an AQI of 373, Rohini 399, Shadipur 313, and Sirifort 360.

## 'Maha Kumbh greatest event on planet': Spiritual leader Sadhguru

TDG NETWORK  
PRAYAGRAJ

Spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev on Wednesday said that the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj is the 'greatest event on the planet' and that he will be attending his third Purna Kumbh for a two-day visit.

"This is the 3rd Purna Kumbh I'm attending, 2000, then 2012. Being a 'bharatiya,' how can you avoid Maha Kumbh? It's the greatest event on the planet," said



Spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev reached Prayagraj for 'Mahakumbh' on Wednesday. ANI

Sadhguru. "This is the only place, the

only civilization, where these many people aspire for 'mukti,' for liberation. They're not wanting to go to heaven or looking for the pleasures of heaven, they're just looking for freedom. This is the most fantastic thing. They should inspire the whole world in this direction. I'm here for 2 days," he added.

Devotees continued to take holy dip at Triveni Sangam on the third day of the 45-day-long Maha Kumbh that began on January 13.

## Congress' new building: Fresh start or just another landmark

AJIT MAINDOLA  
NEW DELHI

After a prolonged wait, Congress finally inaugurated its long-awaited permanent headquarters on Wednesday, a significant event marked by the presence of Sonia Gandhi. The headquarters, set to house various departments and front organizations, will soon see a relocation from the current office at 24 Akbar Road. Despite the cold winter, Congress hosted a grand ceremony to celebrate this momentous occasion.

The foundation stone for this building was laid during Sonia Gandhi's tenure as Congress President, with the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh officiating the ceremony. The inauguration was attended by key figures, including current National President Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, his sister Priyanka Gandhi, and several other



Sonia Gandhi inaugurates Congress' new Kotta Road headquarters in New Delhi on Wednesday. Agency

prominent party leaders from across the country.

While Congress leaders expressed joy and enthusiasm over this achievement, there remained a lingering sense of uncertainty among party members. The question on everyone's mind was when the party's fortunes would improve and whether the new headquarters would spark a revival of Congress's fortunes. There was a sense of anticipation about what change this new phase might bring, with many wondering if this new beginning would be the key to rejuvenating

the party's fortunes.

The formal beginning of Congress's new headquarters has been made, with the office set to fully function in a few months. Once operational, it will be interesting to see how the space influences the party's future. Located at 9A Kotta Road, the new office has been named Indira Gandhi Bhawan, with the story behind the name offering a unique insight into Congress's approach. Initially, the area was known as Rouse Avenue but was later renamed Deen Dayal Upadhyay Road.

## Violence drops in J&K, recent polls certify it: Army Chief

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Indian Army Chief Gen Uppendra Dwivedi addressing the 77th Army Day said that violence has witnessed a downfall in Jammu and Kashmir and peaceful completion of Assembly polls, Lok Sabha Polls and Amarnath Yatra shows the same.

"On Northern borders, the situation is normal but sensitive as well. Our Army is fully ready to tackle any kind of situation. Special attention is being paid to developing modern and critical infrastructure on Northern Borders. On the LoC of Western borders, the ceasefire is maintained but attempts of infiltration are being made."

"In the hinterland of Jammu and Kashmir, as a result of the continued stringent efforts of the security forces, violence has reduced considerably and the completion of Assembly polls, Lok Sabha Polls and Amarnath Yatra in a peaceful environment shows better-



Chief of Army Staff General Uppendra Dwivedi. File Photo

ment in the situation," said the Army Chief.

Talking about advancements as part of army's ongoing commitment to operational excellence and self-reliance, the chief said, "...Today, our country is standing on the threshold of a new era and is progressing smoothly towards the goal of a developed India. For our country to move ahead on the path of progress and development, a stable and secure environment is necessary, in which the Indian Army plays an important role... I am confident that we will continue on the path of progress to make the Indian Army a Modern, Agile, Adaptable.

## SC grants interim protection from arrest to former IAS trainee

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered that no coercive steps be taken against Former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) trainee officer Puja Khedkar, accused of forging her documents to obtain eligibility for the 2022 Union Public Service Commission test.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma issued notice to the Delhi government and others on the plea of Khedkar challenging the Delhi High Court order rejecting her anticipatory bail plea.

The bench posted the matter for hearing on February 14 and granted interim protection from arrest till the next date of hearing.

"Till next date of hearing, no coercive steps to be taken against petitioner (Khedkar)," stated the apex court.

## 'Congress will join us, help us win': SP's Awadhesh Prasad on Milkipur bypoll

ANAND SINGH  
AYODHYA

Samajwadi Party MP Awadhesh Prasad exuded confidence in winning the Milkipur by-elections saying that support from party workers along with party workers of Congress will help in ensuring victory.

Speaking to the media on Tuesday, Awadhesh Prasad said, "It should have been conducted earlier but the Election Commission has announced it now and we have welcomed it. On January 15, our candidate Ajit Prasad will file his nomination - leaders and supporters of our INDIA alliance will be there at his nomination. All our party workers along with party workers of Congress will join us and help us win."

The Milkipur bypoll is scheduled for February 5 and votes will be counted on February 8.

On Tuesday, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) announced Chandrabhan Paswan as its candidate for the assembly by-poll to Uttar Pradesh's Milkipur seat in Ayodhya district.

Speaking to the media, BJP Candidate for Milkipur

by-elections, Chandrabhan Paswan expressed gratitude to the top party leadership.

"I thank the people of Milkipur, leaders of BJP, Yogi Adityanath, and PM Narendra Modi who expressed faith in me and I will serve the people day and night. The focus will remain on the issue of development and serving the public with the blessings of the people and Lord Ram. I will work to win the seat for BJP," said Paswan.

The Samajwadi Party has fielded Faizabad MP Awadhesh Prasad's son Ajit Prasad for the by-poll to the seat. Awadhesh Prasad was the MLA of Milkipur before he got elected to the Lok Sabha.

The Congress has decided not to field its candidate and instead support the nominee of the Samajwadi Party (SP), a constituent of the INDIA bloc.

Earlier, the Samajwadi Party submitted a memorandum to the Chief Electoral Officer of Uttar Pradesh, demanding web-casting of all 414 polling stations in the Milkipur assembly by-poll scheduled on February 5.



Flower petals being showered on devotees gather to take a dip at Triveni Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh 2025, in Prayagraj. (ANI Photo)

## 'Meta apologised for Zuckerberg's remarks on India's 2024 elections'

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

Parliamentary Committee on Communications and Information Technology Chairman and BJP MP Nishikant Dubey on Wednesday said that the social media giant 'Meta' has apologised for Zuckerberg's remarks about the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and India.

Zuckerberg in a podcast with American TV host Joe Rogan has earlier claimed, "The reaction to COVID probably caused a break-

down of trust in a lot of governments around the world. 2024 was a big election year around the world, and there are all these countries, India, just like a ton of countries that had elections and the incumbent lost every one of them." BJP MP Dubey took to social media post on X and said that Meta's Indian official has finally apologized for Zuckerberg's 'mistakes' and called it a "victory" for the common citizens of the nation.

"The Indian Parliament and Government have the blessings and public trust

of 140 crore people. @Meta The Indian official has finally apologized for his mistakes. This is the victory of the common citizens of India. By making Hon'ble Prime Minister Modi Ji @narendramodi the Prime Minister for the third time, the people have introduced the country's strongest leadership to the world. Now the responsibility of our committee ends on this issue. We will call these social platforms in the future on other issues. Forgiveness suits the cobra who has poison.



## THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON BANGLADESH & PAKISTAN FRIENDSHIP

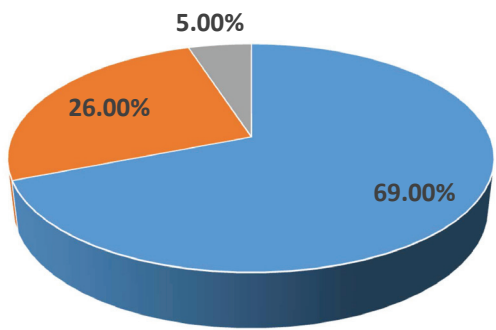
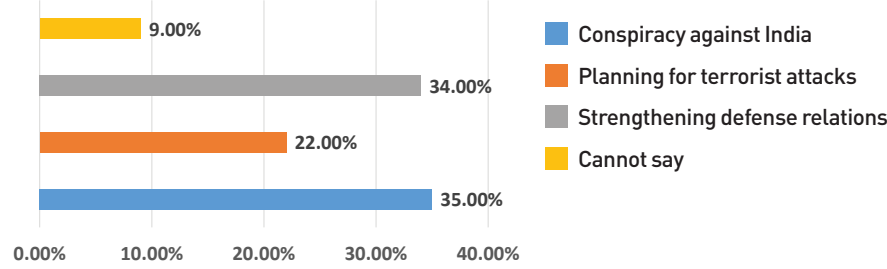
**India should stay cautious as 92% see Bangladesh-Pakistan ties as a concern.**

A survey on Bangladesh-Pakistan relations reveals key insights: 92% believe India should stay cautious about their growing ties, while

77% suspect Pakistan's ISI is behind India-Bangladesh border disputes. Additionally, 69% blame Bangladesh's 1971 government for

Pakistani Army atrocities, and 35% view military visits as conspiracies against India.

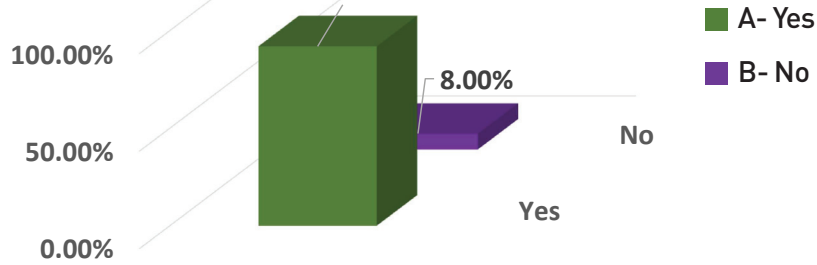
**Q1.** How do you view the visit of Bangladesh's Lieutenant General meeting Pakistan's Army Chief?



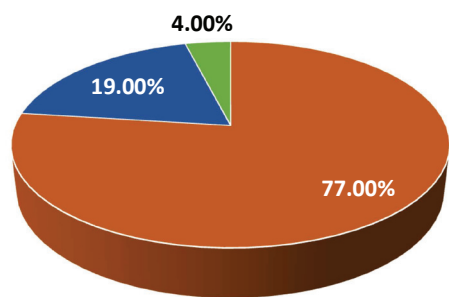
**Q2.** Was the genocidal government of Bangladesh in 1971 responsible for the atrocities by the Pakistani Army?

A- Yes B- No C- Cannot Say

**Q3.** Should India stay cautious due to the growing friendship between Bangladesh and Pakistan?



A- Yes B- No C- Cannot Say



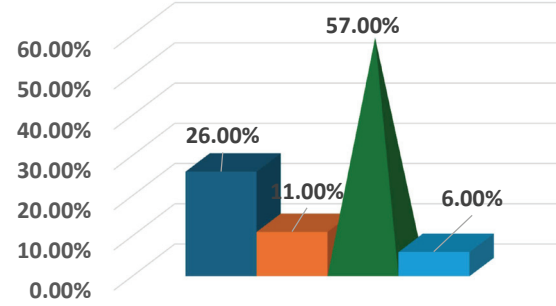
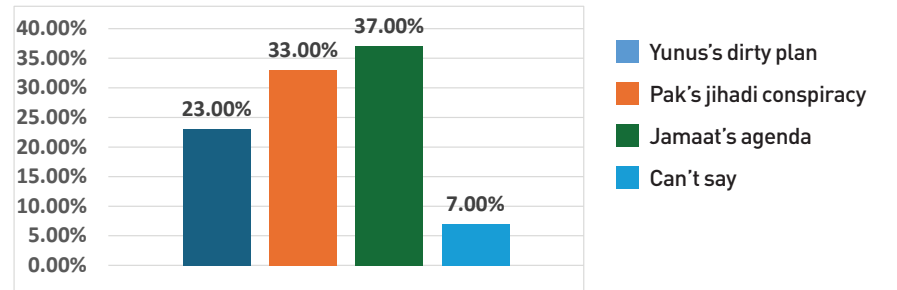
**Q4.** Is Pakistan's ISI behind the border dispute on the India-Bangladesh border?

## THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON ACTION AGAINST BANGLADESHIS, ROHINGYAS

**89% believe India should deport illegal Bangladeshis and Rohingyas**

In Bangladesh, Islamic radicals have threatened to kill Hindus and destroy ISKCON temples, with thousands of jihadi protesters demanding the beheading of devotees. Hindus are labelled as pro-Modi agents. Despite rising tensions, the interim government, led by Chief Adviser Mohammed Yunus, remains silent. Attorney General Asaduzzaman has called for removing "secularism" from the Constitution, citing Bangladesh's 90% Muslim population.

**Q1.** Bangladeshi maulvi stated to wage Islamic Jihad against India, your opinion?

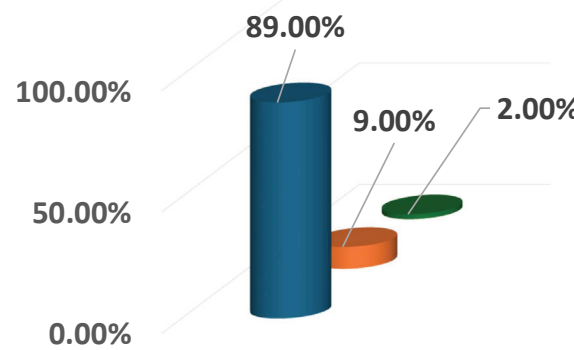
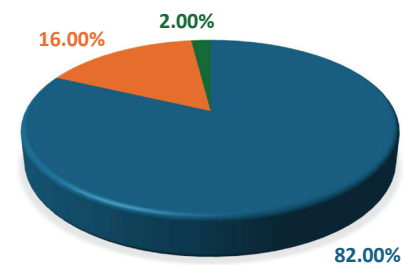


**Q2.** What should India do in response to the threat posed by Maulana organisations in Bangladesh that are perpetrating massacres of Hindus?

Discuss with the Bangladesh government Demand a ban on Jamaat Issue a strong warning Can't say

**Q3.** Do you think Islamic radical groups are conspiring to weaken India by uniting?

A- Yes B- No C- Cannot Say



**Q4.** Should India deport illegal Bangladeshis and Rohingyas living in the country?

A- Yes B- No C- Cannot Say

## Kejriwal files papers...

CONTINUED FROM P1

health, electricity, water, roads, vote for these things. A lot of work has been done. There is still a lot of work left to be done, so I hope that people will vote for hard work. They (BJP) have neither a CM nor vision and narrative," he said.

The AAP Chief has been holding the New Delhi Assembly seat since the 2015 elections. In the 2015 Assembly polls, Arvind Kejriwal defeated BJP candidate

Nupur Sharma by a margin of more than 35 per cent. In the 2020 polls, Kejriwal got 46,758 votes, defeating BJP's Sunil Kumar Yadav by a vote margin of more than 30 per cent.

Reacting to Kejriwal's nomination, AAP MP Sandeep Pathak said, "The question is not only about this seat but there is a very good atmosphere in favour of AAP in the whole of Delhi... the public is fully aware that if BJP comes, all the good work being done here will be stopped."

## 'Why help BJP?': TMC

CONTINUED FROM P1

"The regional party fighting against the BJP should be supported by the leaders of the INDIA alliance. AAP and Congress are fighting against each other in Delhi. AAP is strong and we have decided to stand with them. The question is about Delhi and our goal is that the BJP gets defeated. Congress and AAP have the same goal too," said Akhilesh Samajwadi Party supremo also clarified that the INDIA alliance is intact. "The INDIA alliance is intact. I remember when the INDIA alliance was formed, it was decided that wherever a regional party was strong, the alliance would extend support to them," he said.

NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena (UBT) have also offered support to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Earlier, Communist Party of India General Secretary D Raja admitted that the INDIA bloc "stands divided" post-Lok Sabha election 2024.

## Haryana BJP chief draws Opp ire over...

CONTINUED FROM P1

and criminal intimidation are grave. I am sure the BJP high command will take note of this and act soon."

Congress MP Deepender Hooda launched a scathing attack on the BJP, accusing the party of failing to uphold its claimed moral high ground. "The FIR against the state president of the BJP exposes the true face of a party that frequently claims to uphold high moral standards. These allegations are horrifying, and the BJP must apologize to the women of this country," Hooda stated.

Hooda further demanded a high-level investigation into the case, adding, "When the BJP's key face in Haryana is implicated in such serious allegations, it tarnishes the image and ethical standards of the organization."

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) state secretary also demanded the arrest of Badoli and co-accused Rocky Mittal, a former Haryana publicity adviser and singer. CPI(M) state secretary Prem Chand criticized the BJP for keeping the FIR under wraps for over a month and a half.

## New twist: Witness claims...

CONTINUED FROM P1

refuted the accusations during the press conference. "I am not a witness, and this is a lie. Nothing like this happened," she said. She revealed that on July 3, 2023, she, along with her friend and her friend's boss, met Rocky Mittal during a trip. They stayed in the same room, went to bed early, and left early the next morning. "I came to know about these allegations through social media. It is all false. I did not witness anything like this," she added. The woman also stated that she was repeatedly summoned for questioning but did not attend. Dismissing claims that she had seen Mohan Lal Baroli at the hotel, the woman said, "I did not see Baroli at the hotel. The statements made about me are untrue. While we interacted with Rocky Mittal, the accusations linking Baroli are baseless." The case, filed by the complainant in Solan, has named both Mohan Lal Baroli and Rocky Mittal as accused, with the woman claiming to have been made a witness in the matter.

## 111 farmers join fast with Dallewal...

CONTINUED FROM P1

but the government remains silent, neither initiating talks nor fulfilling our demands."

Doctors monitoring Dallewal's health have expressed alarm, stating that his body is no longer accepting water and his condition is critical. His ketone lev-

els are dangerously high, and muscle mass has significantly decreased. Medical teams and ambulances have been stationed at the protest site, with a makeshift hospital set up nearby.

Despite these efforts, the farmers claim Dallewal refuses medical intervention, worsening his health. "Farm-

ers are emotional and have decided to follow Dallewal by starting their own indefinite fast," Kohar said.

Punjab Minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian recently urged Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to intervene and hold talks to resolve the crisis.

## Liquor scam: ED gets MHA grant...

CONTINUED FROM P1

against Arvind Kejriwal under the Prevention of Corruption Act, received the necessary sanction for prosecution in August of last year.

This decision follows the Supreme Court's ruling on November 6, which mandated that the ED must also obtain prior sanction for prosecution under Section

197(1) of the Criminal Procedure Code (now Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita) in money laundering cases, similar to the requirement for the CBI.

countries have been able to reach. Our government is leaving no stone unturned in working on any possibility of the future. It is very important that we get rid of the symbols of slavery and our Navy has shown leadership in this too. The Navy

## Rahul raises storm, says 'fighting Indian state'

CONTINUED FROM P1

"I had said very categorically that I am uncomfortable with how the election commission is holding election," he said.

However, the Congress leader's comments drew sharp reactions from the BJP.

Earlier, he also attacked RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat for his comments on the

Constitution and independence and dubbed it as a treason. He said, "I think it is quite symbolic that yesterday, the RSS chief said that India never achieved Independence in 1947."

Taking a jibe at the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) chief, the Congress leader said that he (Bhagwat) said "true independence" was achieved when the Ram Mandir was built.

Hitting out at Bhagwat for his comments, the Congress leader said, "The Constitution was attacked by Bhagwat yesterday when he said that it was not a symbol of our independence."

The Congress Lok Sabha MP from Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh said, "Mohan Bhagwat had the courage to tell the country what he thinks about the Independence movement and Constitution.

"In fact, what he said yesterday is treason as he stated that our Constitution is invalid," he said.

Rahul Gandhi further said that in any other country he (Bhagwat) would be tried for his comments.

"To say India did not get independence in 1947 is an insult to every Indian and we need to stop listening to this," the Gandhi scion added.

## BJP tears into Rahul

CONTINUED FROM P1

Bhatia also trained guns on Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi after his "India State" remarks and said that India deserves a more responsible, faithful LoP. Addressing a press conference, Bhatia pointed out that Rahul Gandhi is the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, yet he says that he is fighting against the Indian State.

"The nation feels hurt and led down by an irresponsible LoP Rahul Gandhi. India deserves a more responsible, faithful Leader of the opposition. Truly, it is our misfortune that we have a part-time and immature LoP who also happens to be guided by forces like George Soros and forces that are against the integrity of our country," he said.

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey also slammed the leader

of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi who has been in the eye of the storm over his remarks on "fighting the Indian state". The BJP leader accused the Gandhi family of dividing the country.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a post on X, "The LoP, who was sworn in by taking oath on the Constitution, is now saying, "We are now fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian State itself."

"So, @INCIndia and @RahulGandhi, what are you carrying a copy of the constitution for in your hand?" she questioned in the post.

BJP President JP Nadda said Congress party has a history of working with forces that want a weak India.

"Congress has a history of encouraging all those forces who want a weak India. Their greed for power meant compromising the

nation's integrity and betraying the trust of the people. But, the people of India are wise. They have decided that they will always reject Mr. Rahul Gandhi and his rotten ideology," the BJP President said.

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said, "Rahul Gandhi's Congress is not working. Rahul Gandhi ruins Congress wherever he goes. He has already ruined Congress in Delhi. If corruption-free governance is needed in Delhi, then a double-engine government will be formed. BJP is coming to Delhi under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi." Rahul Gandhi's remarks have now ignited an all-out fight with the BJP who has criticised the remarks. With campaigning for the Delhi election entering a decisive phase the fight is expected to get bitter.

## SC notice to Centre...

CONTINUED FROM P1

The Centre recently amended the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, based on the recommendations of the poll panel.

The Central government amended Rule 93 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, to limit public access to certain electronic documents with the purported aim of preventing the misuse of electronic election records. It amended Rule 93(2)(a) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, to restrict the type of "papers" or documents open to public inspection.

According to Rule 93, which has now been amended, all "papers" related to elections shall be open to public inspection. However, the amendment inserts "as specified in these rules" after "papers".

## 'India gaining strength in both space, deep sea'

CONTINUED FROM P1

has linked its flag to the glorious tradition of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj," Prime Minister Modi added.

The commissioning of three major naval combatants marks a significant leap forward in realizing India's vision of becoming a global leader in defence manufacturing and maritime secu-

INS Nilgiri has been designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau and incorporates advanced

features for enhanced survivability, seakeeping, and stealth, reflecting the next generation of indigenous frigates.

INS Vaghsheer represents India's growing expertise in submarine construction and has been constructed in collaboration with the Naval Group of France.



# PM MODI INAUGURATES ISKCON TEMPLE

Modi honours late ISKCON chairman Gopal Krishna Goswami for his vision

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple at Kharghar area of Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra on Wednesday.

PM Modi expressed his gratitude in getting to be part of the inauguration of the temple named Sri Sri Radha Madanmohanji Temple.

"Sri Sri Radha Madanmohanji Temple is being inaugurated on this great land of knowledge and devotion, with the efforts of ISKCON. I am fortunate that I am getting the blessings of playing a role in this divine inauguration," the PM said.

The PM also admired the form of the temple reflecting the tradition of spirituality and knowledge

"I was just seeing that the outline of the Sri Sri Radha Madan Mohan Ji Mandir Parishad, the idea behind this temple, its form, reflects the entire tradition of spirituality and knowledge. Various forms of God can

## TEMPLE INAUGURATION

- Modi admires the temple's design, which reflects spirituality and knowledge, and sees it as a center for faith enrichment.
- Praise for Srila Prabhupada: The PM praises Srila Prabhupada for spreading Ved, Vedant, and Gita teachings, strengthening ISKCON's mission.
- Government Welfare Initiatives: Modi emphasizes ongoing government efforts, such as providing basic services and promoting the 'Krishna circuit' across India.



be seen in the temple. I am confident that this temple complex will become a holy centre for enriching the faith as well as the consciousness of India. I congratulate all the saints and members of ISKCON and the people of Maharashtra for this noble work," he said.

PM Modi further remembered former ISKCON chairman Gopal Krishna Goswami, who passed away on May 5, 2024.

"Today, on this occasion, I am also emotionally remembering the most revered Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaj. His vision is attached to this project. His blessings are associated with his immense devotion towards Lord Shri Krishna. Today he may not be here in his physical body, but we are all feeling his spiritual presence."

Mentioning how the followers of ISKCON are 'tied by the thread of devotion' to Krishna, he praised Srila Prabhupada Swami, the founder of ISKCON.

"During colonialism, Srila Prabhupada took forward the importance of 'Ved, Vedant and Gita'. He did the ritual of linking Vedant to the consciousness of people.

the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMUDA) to pay huge sums of money to a foreign company.

"Whether the petitioner directed the said payments with a dishonest intention to cause gain to himself or third parties is required to be investigated. The allegations when read together make out a prima facie case of wrongdoing and misappropriation of funds of the HMUDA," said the high court order.

The investigating agency should have a reasonable opportunity to investigate and collect evidence, and the court cannot "haste and thwart" the probe, it added.

## Formula E race case: SC refuses to examine KTR's plea against FIR

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to examine a plea filed by BRS working president K T Rama Rao against the order that refused to quash an FIR against him in the Formula E race case.

After a bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Prasanna B Varale said it was not inclined to interfere with the high court order, Rao's counsel withdrew the appeal and the matter was dismissed as withdrawn.

On January 7, the high court refused to quash the FIR against him in the case, removing the protection



from arrest given to him.

On December 31, 2024, the high court reserved its orders on the plea filed by Rao after hearing the arguments of the state government and his counsel in the case registered by the state anti-corruption bureau (ACB).

The ACB alleged autho-

rised payments to the tune of Rs 55 crore, mostly in forex, were made to Formula E Organisation without necessary approvals.

The high court in its order said the allegations indicated Rao without any approval from the state cabinet or the finance department directed

## Shah inaugurates Rs 194 cr projects in Kalol

TDG NETWORK  
GANDHINAGAR

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah inaugurated 19 developmental works and laid the foundation stone for eight projects of worth Rs 194 crore in Kalol, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, an official statement from the Ministry of Home Affairs said on Wednesday.

In his address, Shah said that during the previous government, even small developmental works required significant effort to be completed. However, now, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, developmental works worth Rs 194 crore are being carried out smoothly in a single day and within the same area.

He mentioned that work has been done to reduce travel distances by constructing underpasses at several locations in the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency. Shah also stated that dilapidated school buildings in every village have been demolished to build new classrooms. Additionally, today, the foundation stone was laid for the construction of a six-lane major road connecting Kalol and Sanand,



the release said.

Amit Shah said that today, under Gandhinagar taluka, various activities took place, such as distributing nutritious laddoos to pregnant women in every village, providing new clothes to Anganwadi girls, and giving musical instruments to Bhajan mandals.

He mentioned that these developmental works were made possible because, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his party's government has been working here for a long time. Shah further stated that this new culture of development was initiated by Narendra Modi during his tenure as the Chief Minister of Gujarat, as per the ministry.

Union Home Minister said that Prime Minister Modi has done what he prom-

ised to the people of the country.

He highlighted that the construction of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya was carried out by Modi Ji. He also stated that it was Narendra Modi who uprooted terrorism and Naxalism from this country. He highlighted that on August 5, 2019, Gujarat's son, Shri Narendra Modi, revoked Article 370 from Jammu & Kashmir.

Shah emphasized that this decision sent a message worldwide that for the people of India, the respect for Mother India is paramount. He pointed out that at the Lal Chowk in Kashmir, where previously army security was needed to hoist the national flag, today, the Shri Krishna Janmashtami procession takes place peacefully.



the ICG posted on X on Wednesday.

All the 54 passengers who were hours ago rescued by the Indian Coast Guard

(ICG) have been handed over to the Lakshadweep Administration authorities at Kavaratti Island, as per an official statement.

## Shah: Modi brought water to parched north Gujarat

TDG NETWORK  
GANDHINAGAR

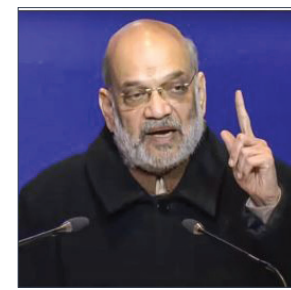
As chief minister, Narendra Modi brought water to the parched regions of Gujarat by implementing various schemes, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday.

He was speaking after inaugurating or laying foundation stones of various projects worth Rs 241 crore at Ambod village in Mansa taluka of Gandhinagar district.

The schemes launched by Prime Minister Modi during his tenure as Gujarat CM helped raise groundwater levels and improve the quality of drinking water in north Gujarat, Shah said.

Among the projects launched on Wednesday was an artificial lake at Mahakali Mata temple at Ambod, a check dam and a barrage.

"After becoming Gujarat chief minister, Narendra bhai worked to quench the thirst of Gujarat. When I became MLA for the first time in 1997, all the MLAs of north Gujarat



would seek permission for borewells, which was not granted because of the region being a dark zone where groundwater levels had dropped below 1,200 feet," he said.

Modi also successfully dealt with the obstacles created by Congress in the completion of the Narmada dam project, Shah claimed. "Modi struggled and overcame the hindrances created by Congress to complete the Narmada scheme. And after he became prime minister, the work to install gates on the Narmada dam was also completed, and today its water has reached every household," he said.

Modi also worked to conserve rain water that flowed into the sea and channeled it to 9,000 lakes in Gujarat. He conceived of

the 'Sauni Yojana' to take water to every village of Saurashtra, Shah added.

People in north Gujarat were worried about the water situation, and Modi brought in the Sujalam Sufalam Yojana to provide succour to the region, the BJP leader said. By channeling excess water of the Narmada into lakes and creating 14 dams on the Sabarmati river, he helped raise groundwater levels in north Gujarat, Shah further said.

A river and lake filled with water help groundwater levels to go up by 40-50 feet. North Gujarat started getting drinking water without excessive fluoride after these schemes were implemented, he said.

The check dam at Ambod will bring about a change in the lives of local farmers and children who suffer due to high fluoride levels in drinking water, the Union minister said.

The Gujarat government will also develop the 550-year-old temple at Ambod to give a boost to tourism in the region, he said.

## BJP-RSS did not have any role in freedom struggle: KC Venugopal on 'Indian state' remark

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

A political slugfest has broken out between the leaders of the BJP and the Congress over the "Indian state" remarks of the leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi in the run-up to the Delhi assembly elections.

Notably, while inaugurating the party's new headquarters 'Indira Bhawan,' hitting out at the BJP, Rahul Gandhi alleged that the Congress and other opposition parties were not just fighting the BJP but "the Indian state itself." BJP hit back, accusing the Gandhi family of "dividing the country."

Coming out in defence of Rahul Gandhi, Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal criticized BJP-RSS leaders for their lack of involvement in the freedom struggle, stating that Rahul Gandhi has attacked this sentiment and criticized their anti-national actions. The Congress party plans to



take this issue to the people of the country.

He also criticised RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat's reported remarks about not considering August 15, 1947, as the day of independence. Venugopal emphasized that thousands of Indians sacrificed their lives for the country's freedom, and Bhagwat's statement undermines their contributions.

"Mohan Bhagwat's statement is quite anti-national. You know thousands of Indians sacrificed their lives for the Indian freedom struggle. Mohan Bhagwat yesterday said that India did not gain independence in 1947. He has insulted

the martyrs of the Indian freedom struggle including Mahatma Gandhi. It was an anti-national statement," the Congress MP said.

The Congress MP alluded that Rahul Gandhi's remarks were directed against RSS Chief.

"Rahul Gandhi attacked this sentiment. BJP-RSS leaders did not have any role in the freedom struggle. Rahul Gandhi criticised their anti-national action. We will take this issue to the people of the country," Venugopal said.

Rahul's statement is now getting sharp criticism from BJP leaders.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a post on X, "The LoP, who was sworn in by taking oath on the Constitution, is now saying, 'We are now fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian State itself.'"

"So, @INCIndia and @RahulGandhi, what are you carrying a copy of the constitution for in your hand?," she questioned in the post.

Responding to the statement Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri asked Rahul to undergo a medical checkup.

"Tell him to go get his mental stability checked," said Puri.

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said, "Rahul Gandhi's Congress is not working. Rahul Gandhi ruins Congress wherever he goes. He has already ruined Congress in Delhi. If corruption-free governance is needed in Delhi, then a double-engine government will be formed. BJP is coming to Delhi under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

Rahul Gandhi's remarks have now ignited an all-out fight with the BJP who has criticised the remarks. With campaigning for the Delhi election entering a decisive phase the fight is expected to get bitter.

Delhi goes to polling on February 5 and the counting of votes will take place on February 8.

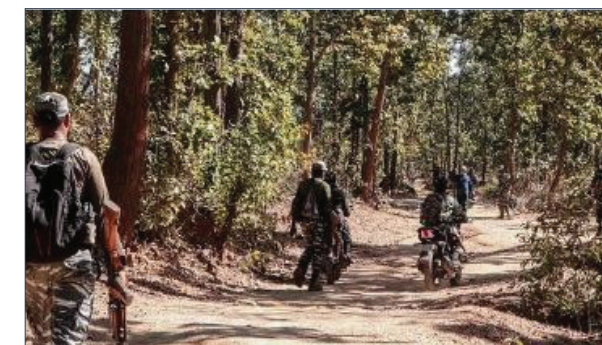
## 7 Naxalites arrested in Sukma district

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Seven Naxalites, aged between 20 and 55 years, have been arrested in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, police said on Wednesday.

The cadres, belonging to lower ranks, were apprehended from a forested hill near Duled village under Chintagufa police station area by a joint team of security personnel, a police official said.

Personnel belonging to



the 203rd battalion of CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action — an elite unit of CRPF), and District Force had launched an anti-Naxal operation on

January 13 based on inputs about movement of Naxalites in forests of Chintagufa area, he said.

During the operation, the patrolling team rounded up

the seven cadres, all male and aged between 20 years and 55 years, when they tried to escape on sensing the presence of security personnel, the official said.

They were wanted in connection with an incident of torching a mini goods vehicle carrying ration and other commodities for Duled police camp after looting it last year, he said.

Last year, as many as 925 Naxalites were arrested in the Bastar region comprising seven districts including Sukma.

## Indian Coast Guard ship rescues 54 passengers from Lakshadweep island

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship rescued 54 passengers including 22 women and 23 children from a missing boat in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep.

The boat was enroute from Kavaratti to Suhelipar Island.

The ICG launched a swift operation after receiving a distress call from the Lakshadweep regarding missing boat with 54 persons on

board.

"Responding to a distress call from #UTLAdministration, #Lakshadweep regarding missing boat Mohammad Kasim-II with 54 persons onboard (03 Crew, 09 men, 22 women and 23 children) enroute from #Kavaratti to #Suhelipar Island. @IndiaCoastGuard swiftly launched #SAR operation! IFB was located via #CoastalSurveillanceSystem and at 1600hrs #ICG ship rescued 54 passengers safely back to #Kavaratti,"



the ICG posted on X on Wednesday.

All the 54 passengers who were hours ago rescued by the Indian Coast Guard

(ICG) have been handed over to the Lakshadweep Administration authorities at Kavaratti Island, as per an official statement.

As per the release, on 14 January, at about 1430hrs, Indian Coast Guard (Lakshadweep), Kavaratti, received distress alert from the Lakshadweep Administration about a missing boat with about 54 passengers and 03 crew.

The vessel had departed Kavaratti at 12:15 AM on Wednesday for Suhelipar Island and was expected to reach by 9 AM.

Upon receiving the information, the Indian Coast Guard promptly launched a Search and Rescue (SAR) mission for the overdue boat through the Remote Operating Station (ROS) at Kavaratti and located the missing boat. It was ascertained that the boat had suffered engine failure and was stranded mid-ocean. Communication was successfully established with the stranded boat and the details were relayed to Indian Coast Guard ship, which was diverted to the boat's position at maximum speed to assess the

situation and provide assistance, it added.

At approximately 4.30 pm, ICG ship reached the adrift boat, located about four nautical miles off Suhelipar Island. The ship's boarding team assessed the situation and safely embarked all 54 passengers onboard for further transfer to Kavaratti Island. The passengers were reassured and were provided with emergency care. At around 9 AM on January 15, the passengers

were safely handed over to the Lakshadweep Administration authorities at Kavaratti Island, the release stated.

It added that the District Headquarters at Kavaratti emphasized to Lakshadweep Administration that Search and Rescue (SAR) operations at sea can be significantly more effective if boats adhere to safety protocols, primarily refraining from overloading beyond rated capacity and carriage of life saving equipment.



# BIG GUNS FILE NOMINATIONS FOR DELHI POLLS

Arvind Kejriwal, Parvesh Verma, and Ramesh Bidhuri filed nominations for the February 5 Delhi polls.

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Several prominent leaders of the BJP and AAP, including Arvind Kejriwal, Parvesh Verma, Ramesh Bidhuri, Kailash Gahlot and Satyendar Jain, on Wednesday filed their nomination papers for the February 5 Delhi polls, intensifying the political battleground. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convenor Kejriwal, who is locked in a triangular fight against BJP's Parvesh Verma and Congress' Sandeep Dikshit from the high-profile New Delhi constituency, filed his nomination. On the BJP front, heavyweight Parvesh Verma, a former MP and son of former Delhi chief minister Sahib Singh Verma, filed his papers accompanied by prominent party leaders, including Bajjayant Jay Panda and MP Sudhanshu Trivedi.



BJP candidate from the New Delhi Assembly seat, Parvesh Sahib Singh files his nomination in New Delhi on Wednesday.



AAP candidate from Shakur Basti constituency Satyendar Jain files his nomination, in New Delhi.



Kailash Gahlot submitted his nomination as the BJP candidate for the Bijwasan constituency, New Delhi. ANI

According to Verma's office, before filing his nomination, he embarked on a spiritual journey, seeking blessings from several revered temples. He first visited the Gauri Shankar temple in Chandni Chowk followed by the Hanuman Mandir in Connaught Place. He finally made his way to the Maharishi Balmiki Mandir. Verma led a three-km padyatra, starting from Windsor Place and concluding at Jamnagar House. He was joined by

his supporters, his office said, adding that the rally was a "stunning display of unity and energy, reflecting Verma's strong connection with his constituency". During the march, Verma was seen holding a 'trishul' (trident) while standing atop his car with a large crowd of supporters cheering him. Ramesh Bidhuri, who is contesting from Kalkaji against Delhi Chief Minister Atishi and Congress' Alka Lamba, also filed his nomination papers on

Wednesday. Bidhuri was accompanied by Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri and Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva. Bidhuri also held a rally after filing his nomination and said, "After the BJP government is formed in

Delhi on February 8, drug addicts, goons and people stalwarts, including Vjender Gupta from Rohini, Dushyant Kumar Gautam from Karol Bagh and Kailash Gahlot from Bijwasan also filed their nominations. Gupta was accompanied by Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar, whereas Gautam was accompanied by Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini.

## AAP replaces Narela, Hari Nagar candidates days before polls

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

With just weeks to go for the Delhi assembly polls, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday changed its candidates for Hari Nagar and Narela constituencies. The party replaced the outgoing Hari Nagar MLA Rajkumari Dhillon, who was fielded again by the party from the seat, with Surinder Setia. Dinesh Bharadwaj, fielded from

Narela, was replaced by Sharad Chauhan. The changes came almost a month after the AAP announced its candidates for all 70 assembly seats in Delhi. The AAP shared the revised list of candidates from its X handle. Chauhan, a two-time AAP MLA from Narela, was dropped this time and Bhardwaj was named in the first list of candidates announced in December last year.



AAP supporters welcome party's National Convener Arvind Kejriwal as he leaves the party office to file his nomination for Delhi Assembly polls, in New Delhi, ANI

## FIGHT FOR CAPITAL DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2025

## BJP is biggest danger to jhuggi clusters in Delhi: Manish Sisodia

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Delhi assembly elections, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidate from Jangpura, Manish Sisodia on Wednesday launched a scathing attack against the Bharatiya Janata Party alleging it to be behind the deteriorating law and order condition in the national capital. Further, he alleged that the BJP is the biggest threat to slum dwellers in Delhi. "I am getting a lot of love and support from the people of Jangpura. It is a big day for me today. Poor law and order, rapes, chain snatching, gang wars- BJP is behind all this. BJP has not been able to handle law and order here, so why should we give education and hospitals to them?... Today, the BJP is the biggest danger to jhuggi clusters in Delhi. If they come to power



Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and party candidate from Jangpura Assembly constituency Manish Sisodia holds a roadshow ahead of filing his nomination papers for the Delhi Assembly elections. ANI

all jhuggis will be razed. We are the only ones... who lie down in front of bulldozers to prevent such actions," said Sisodia while speaking to ANI during his roadshow in Jangpura. Meanwhile, after the Centre granted the ED the nod to prosecute him and Manish Sisodia in an alleged liquor scam case, AAP Chief Arvind Kejriwal said that they (BJP) are contesting the Delhi Assembly Polls this way. On being asked by the reporters outside the party office when he was enrooted

to file his nomination, Kejriwal said, "Woh uss tarah see chunav lad rahe hain, hum is tarah see chunav lad rahe hain." The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has authorized the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to initiate prosecution against former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) for their alleged involvement in money laundering linked to the liquor scam case.

## BJP is misusing power to target Kejriwal before polls: AAP

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The AAP on Wednesday said the home ministry granting sanction to prosecute Arvind Kejriwal was a "misuse" of power by the BJP and an attempt to defame the ruling party ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls. The Union Home Ministry has granted sanction to the Enforcement Directorate to prosecute the former Delhi chief minister in the excise policy-linked money laundering case, officials said. The federal agency filed a chargesheet against the 56-year-old politician before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court here last year after arresting him in March. The Aam Aadmi Party said the excise policy case registered in November

2022 was "unprecedented" as Kejriwal was arrested without any "sanction". "What we are witnessing is an unprecedented case in the country's history where the then chief minister, and convener of a national party ruling in two states, was jailed without a sanction, only to be granted bail by the courts," the AAP, which is in power in Delhi and Punjab, said in a statement. Kejriwal has been made an accused in his personal capacity as well as in the capacity of being the national convener of his political party, the AAP, it said. The Supreme Court had "remarked" that the ED-CBI were being used like "caged parrots" while the PMLA court "clearly noted" that there was "no evidence" against Kejriwal, said the party.

## Kejriwal losing polls, resorting to diversionary tactics: BJP

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal is resorting to diversionary tactics to hide his failures, the BJP said on Wednesday, citing his multiple claims, including about the likely arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Atishi and BJP declaring Ramesh Bidhuri as its CM candidate. In an apparent tit for tat counter, BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia cited "reliable sources" to claim that Kejriwal is considering Amanatullah Khan and Naresh Balyan as the Leader of Opposition as the BJP is set to get a majority in the Delhi assembly polls. Khan "hates" Hindustan and "supports" Rohingyas, Bhatia alleged, claiming that this is why Kejriwal likes him. The AAP chief prefers Balyan due to the MLA's



involvement in "extortion", the BJP spokesperson said. He said Kejriwal has nothing to show for the AAP government's work in Delhi as he has failed to fulfil promises of piped water supply to every house, cleaning Yamuna, and building roads, schools and hospitals. That is why he has resorted to diversionary tactics of making big claims like Atishi is expected to be arrested, and the BJP is distributing gold chains among voters, Bhatia said. The former Delhi CM is

set to lose from the New Delhi constituency, Bhatia claimed. Kejriwal should tell who is going to be the Leader of Opposition, the BJP leader said, claiming the former Delhi chief minister cannot hold the position himself because of the bail conditions imposed by the Supreme Court in the excise case. Bhatia accused Kejriwal of insulting a woman chief minister like Atishi by calling her a "temporary CM". Kejriwal also got Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal beaten up at his residence, the BJP spokesperson alleged, claiming that the AAP has been anti-women. At the press conference, another BJP spokesperson, Shazia Iimi, accused AAP MLA Vinay Mishra of threatening and beating up a Dalit woman.

## Gahlot pledges development, inclusive growth

TIKAM SHARMA  
NEW DELHI

Former Delhi Transport Minister and senior BJP leader Kailash Gahlot today filed his nomination for the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections from the Bijwasan constituency in South West Delhi. The nomination rally witnessed a large turnout of enthusiastic supporters, joined by prominent leaders including Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Member of Parliament from New Delhi, and councillors Jaiveer Rana (Bijwasan), Inderjeet Sehrawat (Mahipalpur), and

Sunita Ramniwas Phelwan (Dwarka C). Addressing his supporters and the media, Kailash Gahlot reaffirmed his commitment to development and effective governance. He stated, "Bijwasan deserves a representative who truly prioritizes the needs of its residents. The Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi Government has neglected this constituency for far too long, resulting in inadequate water supply, poor drainage and sewage systems, crumbling infrastructure, deteriorating roads, and a lack of basic amenities.

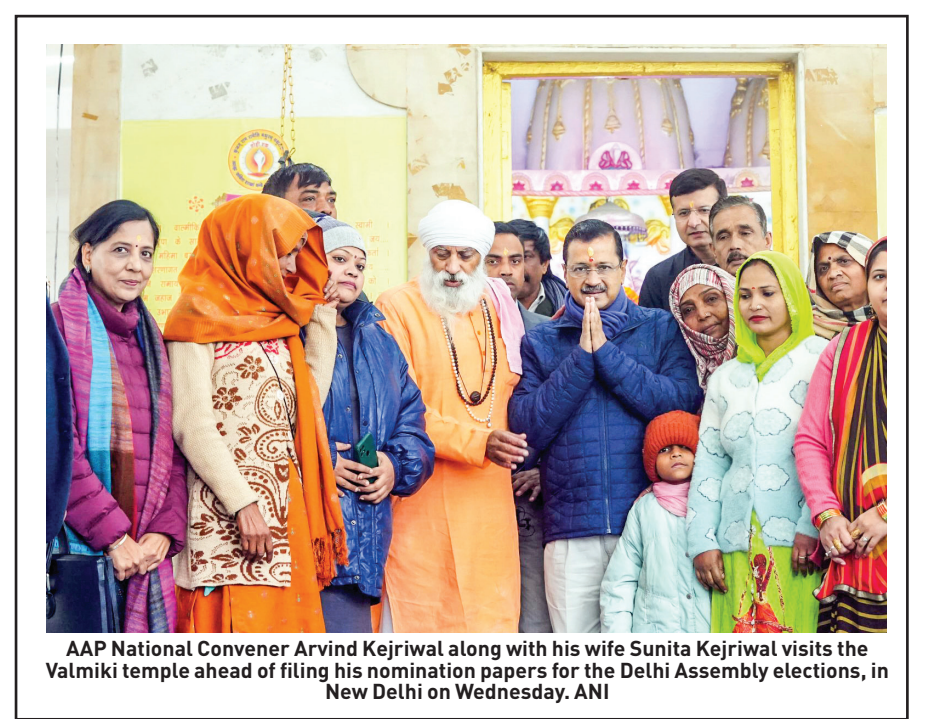
## Yadav vows to serve as 'Son of the Soil' for public welfare

TIKAM SHARMA  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav, accompanied by Jharkhand Minister for Panchayati Raj Dipika Pandey Singh, AICC national spokesperson Abhay Dubey, and Mumtaz Patel, daughter of the late AICC treasurer Ahmed Patel, along with thousands of Congress workers and local residents, filed his nomination papers for the Badli Assembly seat today at the SDM office in Model Town. Devender Yadav expressed gratitude to the people of

Badli for consistently showing him immense love and trust by electing him four times to represent them. He emphasized that he had always honored their faith by implementing numerous development projects in the constituency. Referring to himself as "your son, your brother," Yadav urged the people to elect him once again with a historic margin so that he could continue working towards their development and welfare. He criticized an "imposter" who appeared in Delhi 11

years ago, claiming to be an Income Tax commissioner and promising free water, electricity, education, and healthcare. Yadav alleged that instead of fulfilling these promises, the city was left with unfit drinking water, polluted air, dilapidated hospitals, non-existent Mohalla Clinics, and broken public services. He accused the AAP government of failing to provide adequate ration cards, pensions for the elderly, and maintaining law and order, while opening liquor shops in every corner.



AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal along with his wife Sunita Kejriwal visits the Valmiki temple ahead of filing his nomination papers for the Delhi Assembly elections, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

## 'Dushyant and I will work together for Karol Bagh'

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

After Bharatiya Janata Party candidate from Karol Bagh assembly constituency Dushyant Gautam filed his nomination for the upcoming Delhi polls, party MP Bansuri Swaraj on Wednesday appealed to voters to back the BJP assuring them her party will work to repair broken roads and remove problems of dirty water and air pollution. She further said that she along with Gautam will work for the development of Karol Bagh. "... I am very happy that today Dushyant Gautam has filed the nomination from



Karol Bagh and I request the respected people of Karol Bagh to vote for BJP on February 5, as it will be a day of freedom from broken roads, dirty water, and air pollution... I and Dushyant Gautam will work together for the development of Karol Bagh..." she said. Gautam was accompanied by Haryana Chief Minister

Nayab Singh Saini as he filed the nomination for the Delhi Assembly election. Saini exuded confidence that the BJP government will be formed with a huge majority in Delhi and alleged the AAP government of not fulfilling its promises. "... Dushyant Gautam is filing his nomination from Karol Bagh from BJP... Arvind Kejriwal took votes in the name of honesty and work, but the truth is in front of the people... People of Haryana formed the BJP government and I also want to thank the people of Delhi for their huge contribution in this... And in Delhi too, the BJP government will be

formed with a huge mandate... People of the country have Ayushman cards, through which they can get treatment up to Rs5 lakh in a year, but the people of Delhi do not have this facility, because the government here only takes care of itself," said the Haryana Chief Minister. "The man who had said that he would not take any bungalow or car has built his house in place of the poor's house... He had made three promises - cleaning of the Yamuna, clean water in every house and roads like in Europe, but in 10 years no one got clean water; the condition of the Yamuna and roads can be seen...

## 'Kejriwal submerged in corruption after ED prosecution approval'

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Stepping up her attacks on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal, Congress leader Alka Lamba on Wednesday said that former Delhi CM Kejriwal is submerged in corruption. Lamba who is taking on incumbent CM Atishi is Kalkaji said that Kejriwal should refrain from filing for nomination if "he has ethics." This came after the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) authorized the Enforcement Directorate



(ED) to initiate prosecution against former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) for their alleged involvement in

money laundering linked to the liquor scam case. Lamba told ANI, "...Arvind Kejriwal is submerged in corruption. I think he does not even have the right to file his nomination. He should apologise. If he has ethics, he should not file his nomination..." Senior Congress leader Parthap Singh Bajwa also took on Kejriwal alleging that the AAP had indulged in a similar scam in Punjab "I think the permission has come a bit too late. They should also look at a similar scam done by AAP in Punjab. The liquor scam in Pun-

jab by the AAP is on a larger scale than that in Delhi. I think this is the right step that has been taken. I think they should proceed and take the same step in Punjab as well," he said. Congress MP Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa said, "... There are so many cases against him, now one more will be there. He has been to jail, and he talks of honesty..." AAP spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar defended her party leader claiming that this was the latest in a series of false cases filed against the AAP leader.



# KEJRIWAL FACES PRO-KHALISTAN THREAT

Intelligence warns of a pro-Khalistan group planning to attack Kejriwal during Delhi polls.

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

A mid intelligence reports that a pro-Khalistan group is plotting an attack against AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, the former Delhi chief minister said on Wednesday that "God will save him" and he is destined to live as long as his "lifeline" allows. Addressing reporters after filing his nomination for the February 5 Delhi Assembly polls from the New Delhi seat, Kejriwal responded to a question on the alleged threat to his life, saying "uparwala bachayega...."

Before filing his nomination, Kejriwal offered prayers at the Prachin Hanuman temple at Connaught Place and told reporters, "Jako Rakhe Saiyan Mar Sake Na Koye (those protected by God cannot be killed by anyone). God is with me."

"One lives as long as his lifeline allows. The day one's lifeline ends, God

## PRO-KHALISTAN THREAT

- Kejriwal remains confident, saying "God will save him" and his life will last as long as his "lifeline."
- Authorities are boosting Kejriwal's security, with 63 personnel and CAPF support.
- The Home Ministry authorizes the ED to prosecute Kejriwal in a money-laundering case related to the scrapped Delhi excise policy.



calls him up," he said, when asked about the reported threat to him from a pro-Khalistan outfit.

Sources in the Delhi Police said they will review Kejriwal's security arrangements as there is speculation regarding a threat to his life.

Intelligence reports indicate that a hit squad of

two to three operatives, last tracked in Punjab, may be en route Delhi to target Kejriwal during the upcoming Assembly polls in the capital, the sources said.

"This is based on human intelligence and further details are being investigated," one of the sources added.

The sources said a pro-

Khalistan group, allegedly backed by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), is behind the plot, which aims to disrupt harmony and law and order in Delhi and Punjab.

Kejriwal, a Z-plus protectee, has a comprehensive protection detail comprising 63 personnel, including a pilot, escort teams, close

protection staff and search-and-frisk units.

Additionally, 15 uniformed personnel from the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) are deployed for his protection.

The recent threat has prompted authorities to maintain round-the-clock surveillance to avert any potential attack, the sources said.

Meanwhile, the Union home ministry has granted sanction to the Enforcement Directorate to prosecute Kejriwal in a money-laundering case linked to the Delhi excise policy, officials said on Wednesday.

The federal agency filed a chargesheet against the 56-year-old politician before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court here last year, after arresting him in March.

# BJP releases star campaigner list for assembly elections

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Delhi assembly elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday released a list of star campaigners who will be participating in the poll campaign.

All the party's top leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP chief JP Nadda, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, etc., have been mentioned in the list.

Other star campaigners include Union Ministers Piyush Goyal, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Nitin Gadkari,



Devendra Fadnavis, Himanta Biswa Sarma, Mohan Yadav, Pushkar Singh Dhami, Bhajan Lal Sharma, and Nayab

Singh Saini have also found mention in the list released today. Other party leaders who have been named include Virendra Sa-

chdeva, Baijyant Jay Panda, Atul Garg, Dr. Akla Gurjar, Harsh Malhotra, Keshav Prasad Maurya, Prem Chand Bairwa, Samrat Chaudhary, Dr. Harshvardhan, Hans Raj

Hans, Manoj Tiwari, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Yogender Chandolia, Kamaljeet Sehrawat, Praveen Khandelwal, Sushri Bansuri Swaraj, Smriti Irani, Anurag Thakur, Hema Malini, Ravi Kishan, and Dinesh Lal Yadav (Nirahua), and Sardar Raja Iqbal Singh. As the election approaches, the triangular fight between the Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress and the ruling Aam Aadmi Party has intensified against each other.

Arvind Kejriwal, AAP's national convener and former Delhi Chief Minister filed his nomination from the New Delhi seat for the Delhi Assembly Polls.

## FIGHT FOR CAPITAL DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2025

# Bidhuri targets Atishi again, calls her 'Hirni' in streets

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

BJP candidate Ramesh Bidhuri on Wednesday again targeted Delhi chief minister and his rival from Kalkaji seat Atishi, saying she was running around like a "hirni" (doe) in the streets of the constituency ahead of assembly polls after doing little for the people for years.

Bidhuri, who has often courted controversies with his uncouth remarks, had recently drawn flak for his comments on Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra after which he had expressed regret.



At a BJP rally in Rohini earlier this month, he had accused Atishi of changing her surname from "Marlena" to "Singh" and went on to add that she "changed her father". Hitting back, AAP had said that the BJP would face consequences for "insulting" women and Atishi broke down into

tears during a press conference over the unseemly remarks by Bidhuri.

The senior BJP leader, before filing his nomination papers from the Kalkaji Assembly seat on Wednesday, gave a speech in which he targeted the chief minister and AAP for the alleged shortage of water and poor condition

of roads in the area.

"People are living in hell for four years. For four months before the polls, Atishi has been running around in the streets like a doe roams around in the jungle," Bidhuri said.

He claimed there was an outcry in Delhi over drinking water as not a single water treatment plant was installed in 10 years of AAP rule. The condition of the streets in Govindpuri was also poor, he claimed in his speech.

He said that Atishi was "clinging" to any woman she came across in the streets like she was "meeting a sister separated at Kumbh Mela".

# HC dismisses PIL against Sisodia's residence in govt bungalow

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday dismissed a PIL seeking action against Chief Minister Atishi for allegedly allowing AAP leader Manish Sisodia to use the official residence allotted to her. A bench of acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela refused to pass any direction on the plea and said the authorities were fully competent to take action in case of any illegality.

"We don't consider it apposite to pass any such orders. In case there any rules are being violated, the authorities concerned are fully competent to take action as required."

# HC directs EC to address voter list duplication

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the Election Commission to address the issue of duplicate voter entries in Delhi's voter list.

This comes after a petition filed by Rashtarvadi Adharsh Mahasangh claimed that lakhs of duplicate voters have been enrolled, which undermined the integrity of the democratic process.

However, the bench, led by Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru, responded, "Such matters arise before every election." The Court also asked the Commission to explore technological tools that could help eliminate

such duplication in future electoral rolls.

During the proceedings, the petitioner's counsel stated that the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections would conclude before the Election Commission could address the issue. On this, the bench emphasized that while there is a process for the revision of the electoral roll, it could not be undertaken at this stage given the timing of the elections.

Advocate Sidhant Kumar, representing the Election Commission, argued that the petition failed to provide any specific instances of alleged duplication in the vote that the Commission had already initiated the required procedures for revising the

electoral rolls, and that the issue had been previously addressed by the Supreme Court.

The court noted that the petitioner claims the electoral roll contains numerous duplicate entries and that no steps have been taken to remove them. He further mentioned the availability of two technological tools to address the issue and requested directions for their use to eliminate these duplicates. In response, the Election Commission stated that the necessary procedures had been followed to revise the electoral roll and technological tools had already been employed to remove duplicate names, thereby rendering the grievance moot.

# Court grants custody parole to riots accused Tahir Hussain to file nomination

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Delhi's Karkardooma Court on Wednesday granted custody parole to Tahir Hussain for January 16 to file a nomination for Delhi assembly election.

Hussain is contesting Delhi State assembly elections on the ticket of the AIMIM party.

Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Sameer Bajpai granted custody parole to Hussain. The court has also directed to take Tahir Hussain to the

office of SDM Karawal Nagar for nomination on January 16, and again on January 17 if in case his nomination is not completed on January 16.

He was granted custody parole by the High court in Ankit Sharma murder case on Tuesday. His interim bail plea was dismissed by the High court.

Meanwhile, Karkardooma Court has also granted custody parole to Shifa Ur Rahman to file election nomination on the same dates. He is also contesting Delhi State assembly election on the

ticket of AIMIM.

His plea seeking interim bail has been kept pending for hearing on January 21 by the court. His counsel Bilal Anwar Khan said.

On Tuesday sureties bonds furnished for former AAP MCD Councillor in eight criminal cases in which he has already been granted bail.

In view of this, Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai Karkardooma court on Tuesday adjourned hearing on his other interim bail application till Wednesday.

# Court rejects bail plea of Naresh Balyan in MCOCA case

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Rouse Avenue Court on Wednesday dismissed the bail application of AAP MLA Naresh Balyan in the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) case.

Balyan is in judicial custody after his arrest on December 4 in the MCOCA case linked to Gangster Kapila Sangwan alias Nandu.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja dismissed the bail application.

The Rouse Avenue court has issued notice to Delhi police on a plea moved for AAP MLA Naresh Balyan.

He has sought permission to sign documents to open a bank account and other documents required to contest Delhi Assembly elections.

The Rouse Avenue court has issued notice to Delhi police on a plea moved for AAP MLA Naresh Balyan. He has sought permission to sign documents to open a bank account and other documents required to contest Delhi Assembly elections.

In a strategic move, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has nominated Pooja Balyan, wife of current MLA Naresh Balyan, as their candidate for the Uttam Nagar Assembly



seat. Notably, Naresh Balyan will file nomination as a proxy candidate.

The court on January 9 reserved an order on the bail plea. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja after hearing the arguments by the counsel for the accused and Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) for Delhi police had reserved the order.

*The Rouse Avenue court has issued notice to Delhi police on a plea moved for AAP MLA Naresh Balyan.*

SPP Akhand Pratap Singh filed judgment on the point of fulfillment of ingredients for invoking MCOCA.

Delhi police on January 8 had opposed the bail of AAP MLA Naresh Balyan and said that in his disclosure statement has disclosed his nexus

and association with Kapil Sangwan alias Nandu.

Based on the confessional statement of co-accused Ritik alias Peter and Sachin Chikara, Delhi police in its reply have also said that Naresh Balyan is the facilitator and conspirator in the organised crime syndicate of Nandu. He also provided money to one of the members of the syndicate.

Delhi Police had filed a reply and stated that the co-accused had confessed that accused Naresh Balyan was facilitator/ conspirator in the organized crime syndicate of Kapil Sangwan alias Nandu.

# GRAP 4 curbs imposed in Delhi-NCR as AQI dips

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR's air quality on Wednesday invoked curbs under stage 4 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) amid a sharp dip in air quality due to unfavourable meteorological conditions, according to an official order. Calm winds, low temperatures and foggy conditions allowed accumulation of pollutants in the region, with the air quality index soaring from 275 on Tuesday to 396 at 6 pm on Wednesday.

The India Meteorologi-



A pedestrian on a road amid dense morning fog, in New Delhi. PTI

cal Department and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology predict-

ed that AQI may breach the 400 mark soon.

Accordingly, the Com-

mission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) directed authorities in Delhi-NCR to "straightway invoke" all actions under stages 3 and 4 with immediate effect.

Stage 4 curbs include a ban on all construction activities, entry of non-essential polluting trucks into Delhi, and mandatory shifting of school classes, except for classes 10 and 12, to hybrid mode.

Non-essential diesel trucks are prohibited from entering Delhi, while Delhi-registered BS-IV and older diesel-run heavy goods vehicles are banned, except for

essential services under Stage 4.

During winters, the Delhi-NCR region enforces restrictions under GRAP, which categorizes air quality into four stages Stage 1 (Poor, AQI 201-300), Stage 2 (Very Poor, AQI 301-400), Stage 3 (Severe, AQI 401-450), and Stage 4 (Severe Plus, AQI above 450).

Unfavourable meteorological conditions, combined with vehicle emissions, paddy-straw burning, firecrackers, and other local pollution sources, lead to hazardous air quality levels in Delhi-NCR during winters.

# City witnesses season's first intense fog spell, IMD issues orange alert

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Dense fog engulfed parts of the national capital on Wednesday, marking the season's first intense fog spell lasting three hours, which disrupted the schedules of over 100 flights and 26 trains due to low visibility.

The fog significantly reduced visibility during the morning hours, improved slightly in between and then once again shrouded the city as evening approached.

"Delhi experienced very dense fog on the morning of January 15, with visibility dropping to zero at Safdar-



Dense fog in Delhi disrupts 100+ flights and 26 trains, in New Delhi PTI

jung and IGI Airport from 8:30 am, persisting until 11:30 am," the IMD stated.

"This was the season's first instance of dense fog, and CAT-III operations extended beyond 9:30 am, with RVR at IGI Airport runways ranging between 75-300 meters during the peak fog period," it added.

By 12:30 pm, visibility had slightly improved to 250 meters at Safdarjung and 400 meters at IGI Airport (Palam), with moderate fog prevailing at that time.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert for Delhi, with dense to very dense fog reported in several areas.

An orange alert is issued for bad weather that can disrupt rail and road services.

The minimum temperature dropped to 6 degrees Celsius, 1.4 degrees below normal, while the maximum temperature was recorded at 18.1 degrees Celsius, 1.8 degrees below normal.



# US-INDIA TAX FORUM'S BUDGET REFORMS

## Rationalizing TDS, concessional tax rates, GIFT City to boost growth

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

As India gears up for the Union Budget 2025-26, the US-India Tax Forum—a specialized Tax Policy Forum under the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF)—has presented an ambitious set of recommendations aimed at bolstering the nation's global economic standing.

Comprising around 200 member companies, the Forum serves as a platform for dialogue on critical tax policy issues, connecting Government of India policymakers, global tax experts, and the business community to champion innovative and forward-thinking tax reforms.

In response to invitations from the Ministry of Finance, the Tax Forum conducted multiple consultations and presented its recommendations on three occasions. These proposals are designed to attract fresh investments, simplify tax structures, and position India as a global growth leader.

Tarun Bajaj, Chairperson of the US-India Tax Forum and former Revenue Secretary, said, "The Union Budget 2025-26 comes at a



Tarun Bajaj, File Photo

critical juncture for India's economic trajectory. As global headwinds persist, it is imperative for India to prioritize reforms that foster investor confidence, simplify the tax regime, and provide targeted incentives for sectors with transformative potential."

He added, "Recommendations like rationalizing TDS structures, extending concessional tax rates for greenfield manufacturing, and supporting GIFT City as a global financial hub address systemic challenges while opening avenues for sustainable growth."

One of the central recommendations focuses on rev-

*"As global headwinds persist, it is imperative for India to prioritize reforms that foster investor confidence, simplify the tax regime, and provide targeted incentives for sectors with transformative potential," Tarun Bajaj, Chairperson of the US-India Tax Forum and former Revenue Secretary, said.*

olutionizing direct taxation. The Forum suggests simplifying the Tax Deduction at Source (TDS) structure to just two or three rates, reducing compliance burdens and enabling businesses to prioritize growth.

To enhance India's competitiveness, it proposes aligning tax rates for foreign bank branches with domestic banks and introducing a concessional 10 per cent tax rate on dividend income for Foreign

### KEY POINTS

- US-India Tax Forum presents key reforms for Union Budget 2025-26.
- Proposals include simplified TDS, greenfield manufacturing tax breaks, GIFT City focus.
- Sectoral incentives target renewable energy, electric vehicles, and healthcare.
- Reforms aim to streamline tax, attract investments, and boost economic growth.

Portfolio Investors (FPIs) to attract capital inflows.

Furthermore, the Forum advocates for tax exemptions on dividends and financial transactions within GIFT City to transform it into a global financial hub.

The expansion of Safe Harbor Regulations (SHR) and a more efficient Advance Pricing Agreement (APA) process were also highlighted as critical measures for creating a predictable and transparent tax environment.

Sectoral growth is another priority area. The recommendations include extending concessional tax rates for greenfield manufacturing projects beyond March 2024, targeting high-growth sectors like

renewable energy, semi-conductors, and electric vehicles.

To strengthen the industrial ecosystem, the Forum also proposes introducing a reduced 15 per cent tax rate for Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) firms.

In the healthcare sector, reducing tariffs on critical life-saving drugs and extending exemptions for certain medicines under Patient Assistance Programs (PAP) are emphasized to ensure equitable access to essential treatments.

Additionally, targeted incentives for renewable energy manufacturers and measures to facilitate electric vehicle adoption were recommended to drive sustainability and innovation.

The Forum also suggests overhauling indirect taxation by simplifying the customs tariff structure to a three-tier system with rates of 0 per cent, 5 per cent, and 10 per cent.

This alignment with international standards is expected to attract investments in key sectors such as electronics manufacturing. Recognizing the growing significance of digital economies, the Forum proposes introducing refund mechanisms for the Equalisation Levy (EL) in cases of revised tax liabilities and simplifying tax return forms for foreign companies without permanent establishments.

The USISPF's recommendations are not limited to immediate reforms but also chart a roadmap for India's sustained economic growth.

Simplifying tax structures, fostering sectoral advancements, and reducing compliance hurdles are seen as vital steps toward achieving the government's vision of becoming a USD 5 trillion economy. With the world's fastest-growing major economy, India is poised to leverage these reforms to solidify its position as a global leader.

## Webapp for Maha Kumbh Mela pilgrims

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Esri India has launched a Webapp to assist pilgrims navigating the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. The app, available in both Hindi and English, offers vital information such as accommodation, snan ghats, live traffic updates, weather, entry and exit points, lost and found centres, and locations for e-rikshaws, police stations, fire stations, and hospitals. Pilgrims can also track events, programs, and notable places like temples via ArcGIS Story Maps.

The Maha Kumbh Mela, running from January 13 to February 26, 2025, is expected to draw over 40 crore visitors. On day one alone, more than 1.65 crore devotees participated in the holy dip at Sangam. Managing Director of Esri India, Agendra Kumar, highlighted that the Webapp is designed to improve pilgrims' safety and enhance their experience by providing all key information in one place. The app doesn't require login or downloads, ensuring ease of access. Using GIS technology, the app helps worshippers navigate crowded sites with real-time maps, making their journey more efficient and spiritually enriching.

## International brands will have edge in restaurant sector

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Indian restaurant industry is witnessing a steady recovery and growth momentum, with December marking a notable acceleration in activity, according to a report by Macquarie Equity Research.

This resurgence is driven by a mix of rising discretionary spending, evolving demographics, and increased participation of women in the workforce.

Key trends such as rising per capita incomes, smaller household sizes, and a declining dependency ratio are creating a ripe environment for growth in the restaurant space.

Macquarie highlights the increasing importance of value offerings and cost control, which have helped stabilize same-store sales and improve profitability across the sector.

International brands have a significant edge in

India due to their broad appeal and ability to sustain operations in areas with lower rental costs, such as secondary streets. This enhances their unit economics compared to regional players, especially in high-traffic zones like high streets.

The report stated, "We believe these conditions and the nascent nature of consumer adoption of eating out give international brands a strong edge in the restaurant industry. This is because their broader appeal allows international brands to attract consumers even for stores which are not in high street areas." Elevated rental costs in India, especially in high street areas, and the regional nature of food services have meant that brands find it difficult to replicate success across micro-markets and across cities.

Macquarie anticipates that the upcoming Union Budget may provide further impetus to the sector.

## AI autonomous agents set for 2025 breakthrough: Moody's Ratings

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Autonomous AI agents capable of planning, executing, and adapting tasks with minimal human intervention are expected to make significant strides in 2025, according to Moody's Ratings.

These systems could revolutionize industries by driving operational efficiencies and supporting AI adoption across diverse sectors.

While the broader economic benefits of AI may take years to fully materialize, the ongoing competition among AI developers is already creating a wave of accessible and capable products. As industries increasingly integrate AI, the technology's potential to enhance productivity and innovation appears limitless.

The race to dominate artificial intelligence (AI) is entering a new phase in 2025, as competition among



*The race to dominate artificial intelligence is entering a new phase in 2025, as competition among foundation model developers drives innovation in features and usability rather than just scaling data and computational power.*

foundation model developers drives innovation in features and usability rather than just scaling data and computational power.

Major AI research labs are reaching comparable performance levels, with industry leaders pushing boundaries to deliver bet-

ter, user-friendly products tailored to diverse use cases. The performance of leading foundation models has converged in benchmarks assessing accuracy and task diversity. Open-source models have added to the competitive pressure, offering affordable and flexible

alternatives to proprietary systems. These innovations aim to integrate seamlessly into workflows, accelerating adoption across industries like finance, media, and automotive.

The exponential scaling of AI models is hitting diminishing returns, with high-quality datasets becoming scarce and additional computational resources yielding smaller performance gains.

As a result, developers are turning to synthetic data, which mimics real-world scenarios to address data shortages. While promising for structured domains like cybersecurity and healthcare, synthetic data has limitations in handling complex, unstructured tasks such as natural language processing.

## High manufacturing cost led to surge in WPI inflation in Dec: Report

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The reason for the surge in wholesale inflation in the country in December is due to an increase in manufacturing inflation, according to a report by ICICI Bank.

The report highlighted that inflation in manufactured products reached a 23-month high of 2.14 per cent YoY in December. Out of 22 manufacturing sub-components, 18 recorded positive inflation, while only three categories reported negative inflation. Core WPI, which excludes volatile food and fuel prices, also edged up slightly to 0.65 per cent YoY.

The report said, "Wholesale inflation rises led by manufacturing, December marks the third consecutive month of 9 per cent+ manufactured food inflation. Manufactured food inflation is now at a 32-month high of 9.7 per cent YoY."

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation rose to 2.37 per cent year-on-year (YoY), higher than market estimates of 2.18 per cent. This marks a significant jump from November 2024's WPI inflation of 1.89 per cent.

On the other hand, the report pointed out that the lowest inflation levels were observed in non-metallic mineral products (-3.0 per cent YoY), basic metals (-1.4 per cent YoY), and fabricated metal products (-1.3 per cent YoY).

Within non-metallic mineral products, the decline was mainly due to cement, which recorded negative inflation of -6.8 per cent YoY. In the basic metals category, inputs for steelmaking, steel products, and metallic iron contributed significantly to the decline.

The report also warned of potential upward risks to inflation in the coming months.

## DPIIT joins hands with ITC

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The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has entered into a strategic partnership with ITC Limited, one of India's leading diversified conglomerates.

This collaboration charts a shared vision to accelerate startup growth and technological advancement besides creation of viable market opportunities for startups across the country.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) sets the tone for a dynamic partnership where ITC's vast experience and expertise with an extensive market network will complement DPIIT's initiative for supporting startups across the country.

### STARTUP CORNER



Under this partnership, ITC is looking to deploy startup solutions in key areas such as digital platforms for Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES), integrating renewable energy opportunities for manufacturing locations, energy storage systems, etc.

Highlighting this startup initiative, Joint



Anil Rajput, President, ITC Corporate Affairs with Sanjiv, Joint Secretary, DPIIT. Image Credit: ANI

Secretary, DPIIT Sanjiv said, "It aligns closely with the Government of India's flagship programs, including Startup India, Make in India, and AatmaNirbhar Bharat. Moreover, it is also a key step in contributing to Vi-

sion 2047 by promoting inclusive and sustainable growth through innovation-led entrepreneurship."

"We look forward to fostering scalable solutions and transformative growth to ensure a con-

ducive environment for Startups," added Sanjiv.

Briefly outlining the perspective of this strategic collaboration, Director, Startup India, Dr Sumeet Kumar Jarangal said, "It reflected an unwavering commitment to ensure hassle-free market access to Startups in terms of unbound opportunities to work out viable solutions as per business requirements of the organisation through ITC's extensive network and rich experience."

Meanwhile, Anil Rajput, President, ITC Corporate Affairs mentioned, "The MoU will create value for both the startups and ITC. It will focus on digital for increased future-ready and operational excellence in manufacturing, and in the area of renewable energy to expand ITC's sustainability.

## TARUN DAS GETS SINGAPORE'S HONORARY CITIZEN AWARD

NEW DELHI: Singapore awarded the Honorary Citizen Award to Tarun Das, former Director General of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), for his significant contributions to Singapore and Singapore-India relations. The award was conferred by President Tharman Shanmugaratnam at a ceremony in New Delhi. This prestigious recognition is given for exceptional contributions in areas such as business, science, technology, education, health, arts, and more. Das, a strong advocate for Singapore in India, played a key role in enhancing bilateral ties, notably leading the first Indian industrialist delegation to Singapore in 1993. He spearheaded initiatives like the CII Core Group visits and the India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue,



strengthening economic and people-to-people connections. Das expressed his pride in the award, recalling his 31-year journey with Singapore. He is also a founding trustee of the Ananta Centre and Ananta Aspen Centre and has made substantial contributions to youth, academic, and private sector collaborations between the two nations.

## FUTUREX FOR STUDENT INNOVATORS

NEW DELHI: Google Cloud India and Campus Fund have launched FutureX, a national platform designed to foster student-led startups in frontier technologies. This initiative aims to bridge the gap between academic research and commercial success by leveraging the expertise of Google Cloud and Campus Fund. Building on Campus Fund's history of supporting pioneering student ventures like Digantara and Sarla Aviation, FutureX seeks to identify innova-

tive solutions across a range of fields, including AI, robotics, quantum computing, and clean tech. Key dates include application opening on January 15, 2025, regional rounds in March-April 2025, and the Demo Day on May 30, 2025, at Google's Bengaluru office. The platform offers up to \$1 million in investment, Google Cloud credits, and access to workshops. The panel of industry leaders includes figures from Vedanta, Koo, Google Cloud India, and InMobi.



# UNITY IN DIVERSITY MUST CONTINUE TO BLOOM IN BHARAT

## OPINION

RAGHAVENDRA P. TIWARI



Human civilizational discourse is privy to multiple instances signifying unity and togetherness of not only humans but of other creatures as well. A well-known English idiom 'birds of a feather flock together' signifies this. The phrase has been originally attributed to the ancient Greek storyteller Aesop, both directly in his fable "The Four Oxen and the Lion" and indirectly in "The Bundle of Sticks". Plato's Republic mentions that "Men of my age flock together". Many other cultures, namely, Russian, Japanese, Swedish, German and Chinese have proverbs having similar intent. The implication of these idioms may mean that people befriend those with whom they can serve common purpose or cherish common values of life. Unity amongst tiny ants and fishes, depicted during their movement, are also excellent examples for humans to emulate.

Similarly, the phrase 'United we stand and divided we fall' finds its reference in the biblical phrase from New Testament translated into English from the historic Greek as "And if a house

be divided against itself, that house cannot stand". This implies that every kingdom or house divided against itself cannot withstand the complexities of the prevailing world order. This phrase is extensively used by many politicians in many different contexts, most often to promote unity, collaboration and cooperation. The proverb was also commonly used in India to garner support during freedom struggle, especially by A.C. Majumdar at the 1916 Lucknow session of Congress. The core concept of this proverb lies in the collective notion that if individual members of a certain group with common life values become selfish and work at the cross purposes at the cost of national interest, they are bound to fail as a civilization and will liable to be doomed.

The history of India's freedom struggle, both with the Mughals and the British imperialism, is plagued with several instances where disunity amongst Indians have either led to the defeat of the Kings attenuated the impact of the freedom struggle. Disunity amongst various Kingdoms, especially during the latter part of ancient India and in entire medieval period, has taken toll not only to the territorial integrity of Indian Subcontinent but also to its economy, social fabric, education and value system and helped develop a western culture alien to its roots.

The lack of a united front against the Mughals and Britishers helped foreign powers to exploit disjunc-

ture and prevented a strong and focussed resistance. It is worthwhile to cite a few instances to corroborate this view. Ambhi Kumar, the King of Taxila in the 3rd Century AD is considered one of the biggest betrayers in the ancient history of India as he welcomed Alexander to India and gave up his territory to him. Had he kept the personal rivalry aside and joined forces with other kingdoms, Alexander would not have even dared to enter the Indian Subcontinent. Vijayanagar King lost to Mughal invaders in the battle because of the treachery of the two Muslim generals, Gilani brothers, who backstabbed and defected to the enemy camp with the army commanded by them. Prithviraj Chauhan, betrayed by his own father-in-law, Jaichand, lost to Mohammad Ghori at the battle of Terrain whom he had defeated several times in previous wars. Prithviraj Chauhan's defeat led to the establishment of the Sultanate in India. Mir Jafar, the commander of Siraj-ud Duhla, the last Nawab of Bengal, is considered the biggest traitor in the Indian history. He betrayed Siraj-ud Daulah, in the battle of Plassey, as he sided with Robert Clive for the greed of power. His betrayal led to the beginning of British imperialism in India. Robert Clive succeeded at the battle of Plassey, because Mir Jaffar betrayed his master Siraj-Ud-Daulah in the lure to become the Nawab. The fate had it and Mir Jaffar was replaced by Mir Qasim. Mansingh, a prominent Rajput king of the Kachwaha clan from Amber (present-day Jaipur, Rajasthan), was a trusted general in the Mughal Empire under Akbar and played a significant role in the defeat of Maharana Pratap in the battle of Haldighati that led to the expansion of Mughal influence in Rajasthan



*While dealing with the enemies of humanity, India should engage itself with the real politics, instead of relying on soft power. Even Lord Krishna taught us that one has to do adharma to save the dharma, should the need arise. We need to cultivate unity, solidarity and mutual respect amongst different communities for ensuring safety of the citizens and territorial integrity of India and also for realising the Vision for Viksit Bharat@2047.*

and beyond. Mir Sadiq, betrayed Tipu Sultan during the Siege of Srirangapatana in 1999, paving the way for a British victory. Although the invading English troops were starving during the siege, Mir Sadiq withdrew his troops, facilitating British to launch a fresh attack on the fort. He also engineered the trapping of Tipu Sultan behind locked doors and subsequently to his capturing and killing.

Britishers used divide and rule policy, a political strategy, both for gaining and retaining power by capitalising on the disunity among potential opponents in India, most often by favouring individuals or groups while punishing those who succumb to their pressure. Terrified by the unity among the Indians during the revolt of 1857, and sensing that their dominance

on Indian Subcontinent is at stake, Britishers used divide and rule policy to create gulf amongst the Indians on the basis of identities and sub-identities, and lured them with power and wealth. Besides, they incited identity sentiments amongst various communities to create gulf and to keep them separated, and even fuelled quarrels between them for ensuring longevity of their rule over Indian Subcontinent.

Unfortunately, divide and rule policy is still practiced in India by some political outfits, even after the lapse of nearly eight decades of gaining freedom. Divisive forces are proactively pursuing this policy to dissect Indians on the basis of caste, sub-caste, creed, community, region and religion. It seems as if the British were replaced by a

leadership with extreme form of self-centric approach whose members still have the DNA of a colonial power. This leadership still induct intellectuals not by merit but by mere capacity to hatch conspiracies to divide and rule the country. In this deadly game plan, the pseudo-intelligentsia is engaged in creating false narratives and trying to weaken and divide our great historic civilisation. This pseudo-intelligentsia not only tries to balkanise the country for their own gains, but also try to influence the minorities, be it by caste or religion to act against each other and against the nation. It is a deadly game and many have seen through it. These kinds of desperate attempts are aimed at remaining relevant in the game of politics for power, and more so,

an attempt to destroy the country.

How unfortunate it is that the Bharat, the pious land where the concept of 'Vashudhaiv Kutumbakam' and 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah' were promulgated for ensuring world order and global peace, is falling prey to the poachers of the unity of India and Indians, and in the larger context, also of the humanity. Debates and discussions based on ideology, a hallmark of healthy democratic practices, are altogether missing from the political discourse, within and outside the temples of democracy, the Parliament, which embodies the dreams and aspirations of nearly one and a half billions of Indians. It seems, the sole purpose of a few power hungry political parties is to disrupt the proceedings of the Parliament, and it is taking toll on the working hours of the Parliament. Important bills aimed at public good are not allowed to be debated and passed. Such acts of some political outfits are not only splitting the society but also acting as deterrents to the dawn of a self-reliant India as it evolves into a developed nation.

Those of patriots who are sloganeering for the unity and territorial integrity of India, are mocked upon and are branded as anti-nationals. In my opinion, slogans with such content and intent are devised for cementing together diverse sections of the society and to pose united front against all external and internal efforts to deconstruct the country, politically, economically and socially, and to stop further division of India. And, such slogans are to be evaluated in this contexts. Moreover, barring a few instances, diverse sections of Indian society lived together happily with co-existential frame of mind, even in harsh living conditions owing to the scarcity

of resources. Consequently, it should be our bounden duty to honour the great sacrifice of our forefathers and make all efforts for ensuring safety and territorial integrity of our beloved country and countrymen.

Although India cannot undo the past mistakes, she has to definitely take hard lessons from it to ensure better future for coming generations. As is evident, we are facing serious threats from within and outside, especially from deep state, Bharat must not make the mistake of what several Indian rulers did in the last thousand years. Failing which, the fate of Bharat would be same as was in the past. Further, as India aims to become a superpower again, it must keep it in mind that 'no nation, whether in history or contemporary world, became superpower by being goody-goody. National interest and national security are of paramount importance and are to be pursued on sustained basis. All privileges that we enjoy as citizens of India, including identity, prestige and honour, will vanish if safety and territorial integrity of India is compromised with. Therefore, protecting the nation is the first and foremost duty of both, the rulers and the ruled. While dealing with the enemies of humanity, India should engage itself with the real politics, instead of relying on soft power. Even Lord Krishna taught us that one has to do adharma to save the dharma, should the need arise. We need to cultivate unity, solidarity and mutual respect amongst different communities for ensuring safety of the citizens and territorial integrity of India and also for realising the Vision for Viksit Bharat@2047.

*The author is Vice Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda*

## Working class bearing burden of 'revdi' at top and bottom

## OPINION

SEEMA SINDHU



Larsen & Toubro Chairman SN Subrahmanyam's statement "how long you can stare at your wife" reminds one of an anecdote of Ram Jethmalani who unapologetically had two wives. PM Morarji Desai would often reason Ram's lifestyle for not making him law minister. In return, Ram once quipped: Morarji bhai, had my wife looked like Gajrabehn, I would have turned celibate

at eighteen." His statement also goes against Mohan Bhagwat's advice to people who recently said that Kutumbh is integral part of society and couples must have at least three children now since total fertility rate is 2.1 which is an indication towards population lapse in times to come. On a serious note, people have house to maintain, do errands, tender to young kids and aged parents at home besides staring at wife.

Coming back to the core issue, Subrahmanyam's statement coercing employees to work 90 hours a week, followed by Infosys founder Naryana Murthy's 70 hour a week supported by Ola's Bhavish Aggarwal, seems no less than madness, given the trolling Murthy's statement

gathered. But there seems to be a method in this madness. Is the India Inc trying to justify the toxic work culture it has built over decades in absence of a law governing managerial and above positions by sparking a debate on inhuman work hours?

Legal Vacuum: They are able to say it with impunity because there is a complete legal vacuum on governance of managerial and above jobs. While labor, wagers and skilled and unskilled workers are governed by Factories Act 1948, Minimum Wages Act 1948, state-level Shops and Establishment Act, respectively; workers in managerial and above jobs are subject to exploitation of corporate greed in the absence of a law governing their working hours and conditions. Workers below managerial jobs are paid twice the wages of regular wage for overtime, and get compensatory leaves, but white collared employees are deprived of these benefits in the absence of a law. Even the Industrial Disputes Act 1947 keeps white collared employees'



*Workers below managerial jobs are paid twice the wages of regular wage for overtime, and get compensatory leaves, but white collared employees are deprived of these benefits in the absence of a law.*

dispute out of its purview. They only have the support of long arm of law in civil courts based on the terms

of employment agreement which are dictated by the employer - being in position of dominance.

India Inc is in more anxious situation than before post Covid period since this was the time when Govt intervened and stipulated norms for Work From Home and this has shaken the typical Lala Baniya mindset of Indian Inc which is obsessed by quantity and control over quality and flexibility. As soon as the country recovered from ripples of Covid, most India corporates

mandated five day physical office not realizing that going forward we need to have flexi work hours and hybrid office culture considering the traffic and climate rigours in present and future.

Right To Disconnect: Contrary to India Inc work culture, countries like France, Portugal, Ireland, Spain, Australia, Germany etc have some or the other form of Right to Discon-

nect law which forbids bosses to send mails and seek work after closing hours, saving emergency situations. Most of these countries passed these laws post Covid. In India, however, even during Covid and the slump during 2009-10, the corporate world's profit may have gone down but it didn't take a cut on profit margin and pink slipped employees heartlessly. Such is the greed! While the world is moving towards work-life balance, it must lie well with India Inc to think about its sadistic work culture and coercive policies of requiring employees to work beyond 48 hours without additional pay.

Still, if India Inc finds it tough to deal with the work pressure, hire more employees and redistribute the work. Don't we have a great unemployment crisis? Let India Inc contribute to "Rashtra Nirman" by employing more people if there's abundant work requiring one to work beyond 48 hours a week.

*Seema Sindhu is Delhi-based Lawyer. X @SeemaSindhu*



# IMPERATIVE FOR CLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY IN AI SYSTEMS

*In 2025, AI advancements may enable attackers to bypass biometric security, posing significant threats to data protection according to the Data Security Council of India (DSCI), set up by Nasscom.*

Artificial intelligence (AI) is driving technological revolutions across sectors like healthcare, transportation, law enforcement, and finance. However, as AI systems become integral to these domains, the issue of accountability arises, especially when autonomous systems malfunction or contribute to harmful outcomes. India, as a rapidly growing technology hub, faces the challenge of creating a robust legal and ethical framework to regulate AI effectively.

AI technologies—from machine learning algorithms to deep learning systems—rely on complex data sets to make autonomous decisions. As these systems integrate into daily life, it becomes crucial to assign responsibility for their actions. Accountability is key to ensuring AI's benefits are maximized while mitigating risks such as privacy violations, discrimination, and criminal activity facilitated by AI.

## THE "BLACK BOX" PROBLEM

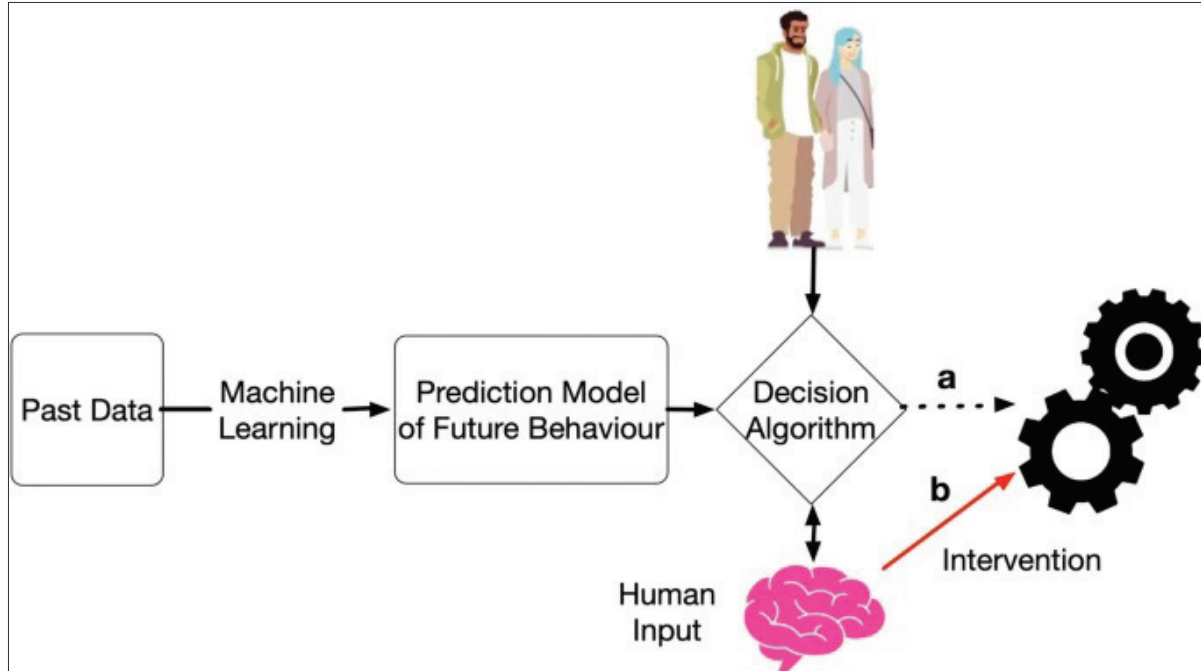
A major challenge in AI accountability is the "black box" nature of many systems, particularly those based on neural networks. These systems can produce outputs that are difficult to trace back to their reasoning, complicating liability assignment when harm occurs. This opacity exacerbates the challenge of holding developers, operators, and users accountable.

## THE GAP IN CRIMINAL LIABILITY

Traditional criminal liability concepts, like mens rea (guilty mind), do not apply to AI, which lacks intent or consciousness. This gap calls for a rethinking of how accountability frameworks can evolve to address AI's unique characteristics.

## AI AS A LEGAL ENTITY?

Some propose granting legal personhood to AI systems, similar to corporations. This would allow AI systems to hold rights and liabilities, but it risks undermining human accountability. Developers, operators, and users still play crucial roles in programming and deploying AI, and the focus should remain on their re-



An algorithmic decision-making/-aiding system. nature.com

## TDG EXPLAINER

sponsibilities.

### AI'S GROWING ROLE

India is at the forefront of AI-driven transformation, with initiatives like the National AI Strategy and policies promoting AI adoption across sectors. From diagnosing diseases to automating judicial processes, AI is

However, without specific provisions on AI liability, existing laws risk falling behind the rapidly advancing technology.

### AI AND CRIMINAL LIABILITY

AI systems in India are increasingly implicated in cybercrimes like identity

theft and fraud. Deepfakes create realistic but false representations, posing a challenge in investigations and trials. Authenticating such content requires expertise in digital forensics.

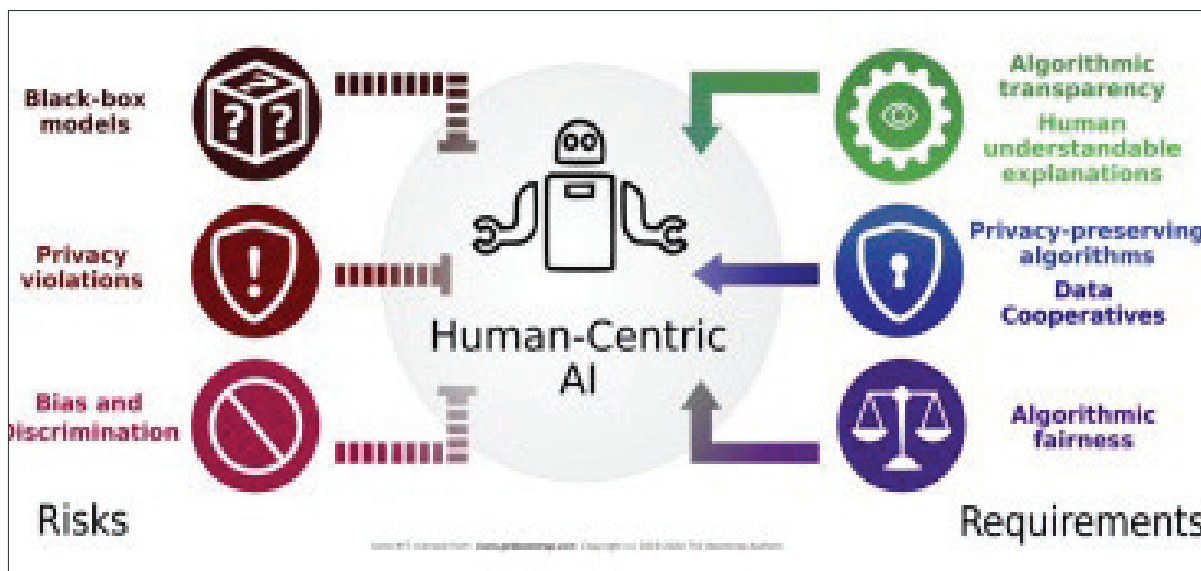
### ETHICAL CHALLENGES

AI applications in law enforcement, like predictive policing, hold great potential but also inherent risks. Biased training data can lead to unfair targeting of specific communities, em-

AI technologies.

- **Transparency:** AI systems should be transparent and explainable, with audit trails and decision-making processes that are open to scrutiny. This will help ensure AI systems are operating responsibly and ethically.

- **Dedicated AI legislation:** A legal framework tailored to AI should address gaps in the current system. Key elements could include ethical guidelines, legal personhood considerations, and



becoming central to India's social and economic development.

### CURRENT LEGAL LANDSCAPE

India currently lacks a dedicated legal framework for AI governance. Efforts are underway to replace the Information Technology Act, 2000, with the proposed Digital India Act, which seeks to address emerging technologies, including AI.

theft and fraud. These technologies enable criminals to exploit data analysis for targeting vulnerabilities. Holding operators accountable—whether developers or users—presents unique challenges under the existing penal code.

### MANIPULATION OF EVIDENCE

The rise of AI-generated content, such as deepfakes, threatens the integrity of ju-

phasing the need for fairness in AI development.

### ADDRESSING AI LIABILITY

To ensure accountability, India could consider several measures:

- **Strict liability:** Holding developers and operators accountable for harmful outcomes regardless of intent. This approach encourages responsible development and deployment of

mechanisms for detecting and mitigating bias.

- **Strengthening data privacy:** As AI systems depend on vast amounts of data, strengthening data protection laws is crucial. Complementing the Digital Personal Data Protection Act with cybercrime regulations will safeguard citizens from AI-driven data exploitation.

- **Collaboration across sectors:** Collaboration between academia, industry,

## Call for Expression of Interest on SAFE & TRUSTED AI PROJECTS

*Balancing Innovation with Ethics for a Better Tomorrow*

**SUBMIT NOW**

**For more information, click on the link in the caption**

IndiaAI invites Expression of Interest (EoI) from innovators and organizations to lead transformative Safe & Trusted AI Projects that champion accountability, promote fairness, and mitigate harm from AI. officialindiaai Instagram

*In 2016, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) initiated discussions on the ethical integration of AI in the financial sector, recognizing the need for a structured approach to AI adoption.*

and government is essential to develop a comprehensive regulatory framework for AI. Educating developers and users about legal and ethical responsibilities will foster a culture of accountability.

## GLOBAL AI GOVERNANCE

Nations worldwide are grappling with similar issues. The European Union's AI Act, for example, emphasizes high-risk applications and stringent compliance requirements. India could adapt such frameworks to address local challenges while contributing to global discussions on AI ethics and governance.

## HOW DID FINANCIAL SECTOR IN INDIA BECOME SO AI DEPENDENT?

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into India's financial sector has been a transformative journey, marked by significant milestones that have reshaped

the industry. In the early 2000s, the Indian banking sector began embracing digital technologies, laying the groundwork for future AI integration. Initiatives like the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) were established to promote digital payment systems. Between 2010 and 2015, the rise of FinTech startups introduced AI applications in areas such as fraud detection, customer service automation, and personalized financial services. Banks started exploring AI to enhance operational efficiency and customer engagement.

In 2016, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) initiated discussions on the ethical integration of AI in the financial sector, recognizing the need for a structured approach to AI adoption. The RBI formed a committee to develop guidelines for the ethical use of AI in financial services, aiming to ensure responsible implementation.

By 2019, public sector banks accelerated AI adoption, focusing on areas like credit risk assessment and customer service chatbots. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 expedited digital transformation, with financial institutions leveraging AI to manage increased online transactions and provide remote services.

In 2021, the Indian government approved over Rs.10,300 crore (approximately \$1.24 billion) for the IndiaAI Mission, aiming to build AI infrastructure and foster innovation across sec-

tors, including finance. The RBI's committee on AI integration submitted its final report in 2022, providing a blueprint for the ethical integration of AI technologies into the Indian financial system.

By 2023, AI adoption in India's financial sector reached new heights, with over 90% of businesses integrating AI technologies into their operations, particularly in banking, telecommunications, and media. India's AI landscape flourished in 2024, with sectors like healthcare, finance, and logistics leading the way. The deployment of AI-driven automation in public services and private enterprises grew significantly.

AI systems operate based on algorithms and data inputs, lacking consciousness or intent. This absence of "mens rea" (guilty mind) complicates the attribution of criminal liability. In traditional legal contexts, liability often hinges on the presence of intent or knowledge of wrongdoing. However, AI systems function without such mental states, making it challenging to apply conventional liability principles.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has initiated discussions on the ethical integration of AI in the financial sector, recognizing the need for a structured approach to AI adoption. In 2017, the RBI formed a committee to develop guidelines for the ethical use of AI in financial services, aiming to ensure responsible implementation.

Compiled by Ruchira Talapatra

## AI Ethics

Instant Loan Platforms in India	
<p>The proliferation of AI-driven instant loan platforms in India has improved credit access for financially stressed individuals. These platforms utilize algorithms to assess creditworthiness based on non-traditional data sources, like mobile usage and social media activity. However, this approach raises concerns about transparency, algorithmic bias, and decision errors, all of which impact AI accountability.</p>	<p><b>Algorithmic Transparency:</b> Users should be able to understand how loan decisions are made. Mechanisms for transparency will allow users to contest unfair outcomes and build trust in AI systems.</p>
<p><b>Bias Mitigation:</b> Regular audits of algorithms and the use of diverse data sets will help reduce discriminatory practices and ensure equitable access to credit.</p>	<p><b>User Education:</b> Educating users about their rights and the risks associated with instant loan platforms will empower them to make informed decisions and avoid exploitation.</p>



# SUPREME COURT ISSUES NOTICE ON PLEA TO INCLUDE RAJASTHANI LANGUAGE AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN RAJASTHAN SCHOOLS

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Padam Mehta and another v. The State of Rajasthan and others observed and has issued notice wherein the petition is filed seeking to include Rajasthani as a language to impart education to children in schools. The petition filed also seek directions to include Rajasthani Language in the examination syllabus of Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teacher. The bench comprising of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta was hearing the present matter. The bench in the case observed and has issued notice to the State of Rajasthan, the Principal Secretary of the Education Department and the Co-

ordinator of REET returnable within four weeks. In the present matter, the Special Leave Petition was filed against the judgment of the Rajasthan High Court which rejection the petition of petitioners. The High Court in the case held that it cannot issue a writ of mandamus to include Rajasthani as a language for education since it was an educational policy matter. The court observed that although the official language of the State is Hindi as per the Rajasthan Official Language Act of 1956, the petitioners point out that Rajasthani is widely spoken by about 4.36 Crores people as per the 2011 census. In 2021, the State Board of Education issued a notification stating that the medium of instruction



in schools will be Hindi/English/Sanskrit/Urdu/Punjabi/Gujarati. The petitioners in the case are aggrieved by the exclusion of Rajasthani. They also refer to Article 350A of the Constitution of India which impose an obligation on the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minorities.

It has also been argued before the court that 'Rajasthani' speaking people constitute a 'linguistic minority' in terms of Article 350A of Constitution of India. The court also referred to Section 29(2)(f) of the Right of Children for Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 which state that the "medium of instructions shall, as far as practicable, be in child's mother tongue."

*The petitioners also emphasised that the issue is also a matter of preservation of cultural rights. It has also been highlighted before the court that the Rajasthani language has a rich literary and cultural heritage which needs protection.*

Further, the National Education Policy also states that the medium of instructions for the children at least till Grade-V or preferably till Grade-VIII will be the mother tongue or local language wherever possible. The petitioner in the plea also points out that the High Court had, in May 2024, directed the State to explore the possibility of inclusion of Rajasthani

in the forthcoming REET Examination. In November 2024, the notification was issued for REET, Rajasthani was not included. The petitioners also emphasised that the issue is also a matter of preservation of cultural rights. It has also been highlighted before the court that the Rajasthani language has a rich literary and cultural heritage which needs pro-

tection. It has also been argued before the court that the children speaking 'Rajasthani' as 'mother tongue' are suffering from discrimination in as much as the languages which are spoken far less spoken as 'mother tongue' are included in the REET Examination whilst the predominant language of 'Rajasthani' is not included in the REET Examination. The petitioner in the plea argue that the High Court erred in not issuing a mandamus to the State when there was a failure on its part to discharge its obligations under Article 350A of the Constitution of India and when there was a clear case of discrimination against Rajasthani speaking population, the High Court ought to have intervened, the petition-

ers argue. The freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India would include the right of a child to be educated in medium of instructions of her choice, and the medium of instruction till the Age of 14 (middle school) should normally be in 'mother tongue'. It was also argued before the court that the State being a duty bound to impart education in the mother tongue of the child, especially when the imparting education till 14 years is the duty enjoined on the State by virtue of Article 21-A of the Constitution of India. The counsel, Dr. Manish Singhvi, Senior Advocate and Advocates Apurv Singhvi, Shalini Haldar and DK Devesh, AOR appeared for the Petitioners.

## Section 113B of Evidence Act application: Supreme Court says dowry death cannot be presumed without clear evidence of incessant harassment

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Ram Pyarey Versus The State Of Uttar Pradesh acquitted an accused of cruelty and abetment of suicide, wherein observed that to apply Section 113B (Presumption as to dowry death) of the Indian Evidence Act, clear evidence for incessant harassment is essential. The court in the case stressed that in the absence of such evidence, it cannot straightaway invoke the said provision. The concerned portion of section 113 B read as: 'Section 113B: The presumption as to dowry death - When the question is whether a person has committed the dowry death of a woman and it is shown that soon before her death



*The court in the case stressed that in the absence of such evidence, it cannot straightaway invoke the said provision.*

such woman had been subjected by such person to cruelty or harassment for, or in connection with, any demand for dowry, the Court shall presume that such person had caused the dowry death. The present appellant was the brother-in-law of the deceased. It being the case of prosecution that there was harassment at the end of the husband, in-laws and the appellant. Thus, the deceased doused herself with

kerosene and set herself on fire. The Trial Court convicted him under section 306, Abetment of suicide and Section 498-A, Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty of the Indian Penal Code, IPC and under the Dowry Prohibition Act. The said order was affirmed by the High Court. Thus, the present appeal. The bench comprising of Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice R. Mahadevan was

hearing the present matter. The bench in the case observed and has pointed out that there is 'practically no evidence' against the appellant for abetting the suicide. The Court also drew a distinction between Section 113 A (presumption as to abetment of suicide by a married woman) and Section 113 B of the Evidence Act. The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that, 'It being relevant to note that under Section 113B, the Court may presume unlike Section 113A where the statute says that Court shall presume. This is a vital difference between the two provisions which raises presumption as regards abetment of suicide. When the Courts below want to apply Section 113B of the Evidence Act,

the condition precedent is that there has to be first some cogent evidence as regards incessant harassment. In the absence of any cogent evidence as regards harassment or abetment in any form like aiding or instigating, the court cannot straightaway invoke Section 113B and presume that the accused abetted the commission of suicide.' Accordingly, the court allowed the present appeal and has set aside the impugned orders. The counsel, AOR Mr. Bharat Bhushan and Advocate Mr. Keshav Bansal appeared for the Appellant. The counsel, Senior Advocate Mr. K. Parmeshwar, AOR Mr. Shaurya Sahay, Advocates Mr. Aditya Kumar and Ms. Ruchil Raj represented the Respondent.

## Supreme Court expresses inclination to transfer petitions against CLAT 2025 to Punjab and Haryana High Court

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Consortium Of National University Versus Master Aditya Singh, Minor observed and has expressed the inclination to transfer to the Punjab and Haryana High Court the petitions filed in other High Courts wherein challenging the results of the Common Law Admission Test-2025, CLAT-2025 held in December 2024 for admissions to undergraduate and post-graduate law courses in various National Law Universities. The bench comprising of Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice PV Sanjay Kumar was hearing the present matter. The bench in the case observed and has issued notice in the transfer petitions filed by the Consortium of National Law Universities wherein it seeks the consolidation of all the petitions and their transfer either to the Supreme Court or to any particular High Court. At present, the petitions are pending in the High



*In December 2024, the Supreme Court had refused to entertain a petition filed challenging the answer keys of the CLAT-PG 2025 exam and asked the petitioners to approach the High Court.*

Court of Delhi, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab & Haryana against the results of the CLAT-2025 test held in December 2024. The Consortium Of National University seeks the consolidation of all the pleas and their transfer either to the Supreme Court or to any particular High Court. The bench comprising of Justice Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice PV Sanjay Kumar will hear the petition. In December 2024, the

Supreme Court had refused to entertain a petition filed challenging the answer keys of the CLAT-PG 2025 exam and asked the petitioners to approach the High Court. In December 2024, a single judge of the Delhi High Court found that two answers of the CLAT-UG 2025 exam were wrong and asked the Consortium to revise the results of the petitioners. The Division bench remarked that they prima facie did not find any error in the decision of single bench.

## Allahabad High Court stays criminal proceedings against fashion model booked over 'controversial' poster with Shiva Linga

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Allahabad High Court in the case observed and has stayed the criminal proceedings stayed against Varanasi-based fashion model Mamta Rai in a 2022 case wherein it alleged that she promoted enmity between different groups on the grounds of religion and race and committed intentional insult by posting a picture showing her offering flowers on a Shivalinga with the caption " ( I am Kashi)". The court observed that the alleged image, displayed across the city on posters or

*The counsel, Advocate Mohak Agarwal, argued before the court that the essential ingredients as enunciated under Section 153A, Section 504 and Section 506 of Indian Penal Code, I.P.C. are not attracted in the facts and circumstances of the case.*

banners, depicted a Shiva Linga along with the image of Rai where she is welcoming people to the city of 'Baba Vishwanath' on the grand festival of Sawan. Therefore, the alleged posters had sparked controversy, which led to the lodging of the First Information Report, FIR by the Akhil

Bhartiya Kshatriya Mahasabha leader Vikrant Singh. In the present case, the police submitted a chargesheet against Rai under Section 504, Section 506, and Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code, IPC, and the Fast Track Court (J.D.)-I, Varanasi, took cognizance of the chargesheet

in 2023. Rai moved the High Court wherein challenging the chargesheet and the entire criminal proceedings. The counsel, Advocate Mohak Agarwal, argued before the court that the essential ingredients as enunciated under Section 153A, Section 504 and Section 506 of Indian Penal Code, I.P.C. are not attracted in the facts and circumstances of the case. On the other hand, the opposite party no.2 i.e., Singh contended before the court is an active member of the Bharatiya Janta Party, and hence, by using his influ-

ence within the ruling party, he succeeded in lodging the impugned FIR against the applicant on false and frivolous allegations. It was also submitted before the High Court that Article 19 and Article 21 of Constitution of India grant the applicant a right to speech and expression, and therefore, it was stressed that the allegation that only by watching the posters of the applicant, the religious feelings of the opposite party no.2 hurt, is not tenable. The bench headed by Justice Dinesh Pathak issued a notice to the opposite party no.2 i.e., Singh.

## Supreme Court issues directions to ensure toilet facilities in court premises for women, disabled and transgender persons

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Rajeeb Kalita Versus Union Of India And Ors observed and has issued a set of directions for the construction of toilet facilities especially for women, specially-abled persons and transgender persons in Court premises and tribunals across the country. The bench comprising of Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice R Mahadevan was hearing the present matter. The bench in the case pronounced the judgement wherein the writ petition is filed by Rajeeb Kalita in 2023. The bench headed by Justice Mahadevan orally pronounced the operative part that, 'This court have given enough number directions for the construction and maintenance of toilets and all other facilities for women, physically disabled persons, transgen-

*The bench in the case pronounced the judgement wherein the writ petition is filed by Rajeeb Kalita in 2023.*

der persons, etc. thus, the State Governments and of toilets and Union Territories shall allocate sufficient funds for the construction, maintenance and cleanliness of toilet facilities within the court premises, which shall be periodically reviewed in consultation with a committee constituted by the High Courts and a status report shall be filed by all the States, UTs and High Courts within a period of four months. The copy of the judgment has been directed to be forwarded to the Chief Secretaries of all States or UTs and Registrar Gener-

als of High Courts for strict compliance. The bench headed by Justice Pardiwala orally remarked that contempt action will be taken in case of any default. The bench reserved the judgement in November 2024, and has expressed disappointment at the fact that even lady judicial officers were not having private washrooms in many courts. The Supreme Court through an order dated May 08 sought the following directions from the High Courts:

1. The availability of toilets for men, women, and transgenders;
2. The steps which need to be taken for maintenance of toilets;
3. Whether separate toilet facilities are made available to litigants, lawyers and judicial officers; and
4. Whether adequate facilities for sanitary napkins dispensers are made available in women's toilets.

## Delhi High Court rejects PIL against CM Atishi for allowing Manish Sisodia to use govt bungalow

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case Sanjeev Jain v. UOI & Anr observed and has dismissed the Public Interest Litigation, PIL filed seeking action against Chief Minister Atishi for allowing senior AAP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and his family members to use the government allotted bungalow. The Division bench com-

prising of Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela was hearing the present matter. The bench in the case rejected the Public Interest Litigation, PIL filed by Sanjeev Jain, wherein he claimed to be a social worker and an RTI activist. The court stated that if any of the Rules are violated in the matter, the authorities are fully competent to take action as and when required. The court stated

that, 'This court do not consider it apposite to pass any orders in the petition. If any Rules are violated, the concerned authorities are fully competent to take action as and when required. Dismissed.' The petition filed refers to the government bungalow which was allotted to Manish Sisodia but was later in March 2023, it was allotted to Atishi after the former was arrested in relation to the liquor policy case. The Public In-

terest Litigation, PIL filed alleged that Manish Sisodia was sent behind jail in March 2023, yet his entire family continued to reside in the government bungalow, even after he resigned from his post. The plea filed states, 'That it is also very surprised that when the above-mentioned bungalow has been allotted to Ms. Aathishi Merlena in the Month of March, 2023 and she was living in the area of Jangpura, New Delhi and she

never raised any objection of living Mr. Manshi Sisodia's family in the above mentioned bungalow.' It was also alleged before the court that the action of the Chief Minister in allowing Sisodia to reside in her Government Bungalow is a 'clear-cut misuse of Government Property'. The PIL states that the same was a "sharp violation" of settled Rules and Regulation for allotment and vacation of the Government Property.



TOP OF THE DAY

TIKTOK ALLEGES FORCED OATH TO SUPPORT CHINA

BEIJING: A former TikTok executive has claimed that she was required to sign an oath supporting China's "socialist system" and national interests, according to a lawsuit and documents obtained by the Daily Caller News Foundation. The Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party has also condemned this act on X and stated, "BREAKING: Documents And Recordings Reveal How TikTok Forced Staff To Swear Oaths To Uphold China's 'Socialist System' 'TikTok's supposed independence is a fraud... ByteDance directly manages TikTok's internal functions from China."

INDIA, OMAN TO SEAL MEGA TRADE DEAL SOON

MUSCAT: India and Oman are looking at sealing a broad trade and investment pact this year that will cut tariffs on each other's goods and boost the overall trade basket in line with renewed vigour in the relations, especially in the economic sphere. The negotiations for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) gained new momentum after Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tarik travelled to India over a year back. Omani Commerce Minister Qais bin Mohammad Al-Yousef told PTI that Muscat is hopeful of concluding the ambitious trade pact with India this year that is expected to significantly expand the two-way trade and investment ties between the two countries.

23 TERRORISTS ARRESTED IN PAK'S PUNJAB

LAHORE: Law enforcement agencies have arrested 23 terrorists, including seven members of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Punjab province of Pakistan, police said on Wednesday. The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab Police in a statement said that it foiled a major terrorist plan in Punjab especially in Lahore by arresting the 23 terrorists in the province during the last one week. "Seven terrorists of Fitna-ul-Khawarij (TTP) are among the arrested ones. The seven TTP militants have been arrested from Lahore along with explosives and a map of an important educational institution," the CTD said.

UAE, UZBEKISTAN DISCUSS BILATERAL RELATIONS

ABU DHABI: Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, today discussed cooperation between the two countries, along with several matters of mutual interest. The discussions took place during UAE President's reception of the President of Uzbekistan at Qasr Al Shati in Abu Dhabi. President Mirziyoyev is currently on an official visit to the UAE, during which he is participating in Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week.

GAZA CEASEFIRE STILL ELUSIVE AS NEGOTIATORS TRY TO HAMMER OUT DEAL

Officials from mediators Qatar, Egypt, US, Israel and Hamas said that the truce pact in the besieged Palestinian enclave and the release of hostages was closer than ever.

AGENCIES  
DOHA

Negotiators were trying to hammer out the final details of a complex, phased ceasefire in Gaza on Wednesday after marathon talks in Qatar aiming to end a conflict that has inflicted widespread death and destruction and upended the Middle East.

More than eight hours of talks in Doha had fuelled optimism. Officials from mediators Qatar, Egypt and the U.S. as well as Israel and Hamas said on Tuesday that an agreement for a truce in the besieged Palestinian enclave and the release of hostages was closer than ever.

But a senior Hamas official told Reuters late on Tuesday that the Palestinian group had not yet delivered its response because it was still waiting for Israel to submit maps showing how its forces would withdraw from Gaza.

During months of on-off talks to achieve a truce in the devastating 15-month-old war both sides have previously said they were close to a ceasefire only to hit last-minute obstacles. The broad outlines of the current deal have been in place since mid-2024.

If successful, the planned phased ceasefire could halt fighting that has decimated Gaza, killed tens of thou-

DEAL IN PROGRESS



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, January 15, 2025. Agency

- White House says Biden, Sisi agreed on urgent need for deal
- Hamas says it is waiting for Israel to submit withdrawal maps
- All sides say negotiations are in final stages
- Israel continues military strikes despite talks

Israel attacks Gaza, kills 62 in a day

TEL AVIV: Israeli forces have intensified their attacks on Gaza, targeting a school-turned-shelter and several homes, resulting in at least 62 deaths in the past 24 hours, Al Jazeera reported on Wednesday. This escalation comes despite reports of a potential ceasefire agreement being imminent. According to Al Jazeera, mediators, including US President Joe Biden and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al Sisi, issued a joint call on Israel and Hamas to conclude the deal. However, the situation remains volatile, with thousands of Israelis rallying in Tel Aviv calling for a deal that would secure the release of captives held in Gaza, while hundreds of others marched in Jerusalem, demanding a continuation of the war.

sands of Palestinians, made most of the enclave's population homeless and is still killing dozens a day. That in turn

could ease tensions across the wider Middle East, where the war has fuelled conflict in the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq, and raised fears of all-out war between Israel and Iran.

Israel launched its assault in Gaza after Hamas-led fighters stormed across its borders on Oct. 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking more than 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Since then, Israeli forces have killed more than 46,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to health officials in the enclave.

Japan 'gravely concerned' about maritime tensions

TDG NETWORK  
MANILA

Japan is gravely concerned about actions in the South China Sea that are raising tensions, and strongly opposes any unilateral attempt to change the status quo, its foreign minister said on Wednesday.

Speaking during a visit to the Philippines, Takeshi Iwaya also said Japan would continue to provide development and security assistance to Manila and support for its maritime security, adding a trilateral mechanism that also includes the United States would be strengthened when a new administration takes over in Washington.

Iwaya's visit follows a virtual call between Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden where the three leaders affirmed their "trilateral arrangement" in deepening economic, security and technology cooperation in the face of growing tensions in the region.

Graft case: Bangladesh's court acquits former PM Khaleda

AGENCIES  
DHAKA

Bangladesh's Supreme Court acquitted former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in a 2008 corruption case on Wednesday, clearing the way for the ailing leader to fight parliamentary elections in the troubled South Asian country.

The verdict is the latest judicial victory for Khaleda and her family, one of two main groups that have dominated the country's politics.

A five-judge panel led by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed acquitted Khaleda, her son Tarique Rahman and others, overturning jail sentences handed down by the high court in 2018.

At the time Bangladesh was ruled by Khaleda's rival, Sheikh Hasina, who was ousted as prime minister in August, when mass protests forced her to resign and flee to neighbouring India.

The case, dating from 2008, accused Khaleda and others of stealing 21 million taka (\$173,000) in foreign donations for an orphanage trust set up when she was last prime minister, from 2001 to 2006.

"The case was so vile that both those who appealed



A supporter of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) holds a picture of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia while joining in a rally, days after the resignation of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Agency

*The verdict is the latest judicial victory for Khaleda and her family, one of two main groups that have dominated the country's politics.*

Last week, Khaleda, who has battled health issues such as liver cirrhosis and heart problems, was flown to London for treatment.

Last month, a high court acquitted Rahman and others of a 2004 grenade attack on a rally of Hasina. Rahman is the acting chairperson of Khaleda's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and has been in exile in London.

and those who couldn't appeal have all been acquitted," defence lawyer Zainul Abedin said after the verdict. In November, Khaleda, 79, was acquitted in another corruption case in which she had been accused of misappropriation of 31.5 million taka from another trust in 2005.

Since August, Bangladesh has been ruled by an interim government led by Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus.

The BNP has called for general elections to be held by August in the greater interest of the country, citing growing political and economic instability.

Sri Lankan President holds talks with Chinese counterpart Xi

AGENCIES  
BEIJING

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake Wednesday held talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping here and discussed steps to deepen bilateral ties.

Dissanayake, who arrived here on Tuesday on a four-day visit a month after travelling to India on his first overseas trip since assuming office in September, was given a ceremonial welcome at the Great Hall of People ahead of his meeting with Xi.

Sri Lankan officials earlier said that the two sides are expected to sign agreements after the Xi-Dissanayake talks during which they will discuss steps to deepen bilateral ties.

During the State Visit, Dissanayake is scheduled to participate in several key engagements and undertake field visits focused on technological and agricultural development, as well as initiatives aimed at poverty alleviation.

The visit also includes high-level business meetings and discussions, the President's Office in Colombo said.

The visit to China will further strengthen the longstanding ties between the two countries, the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry



Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake (in Left) and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. File Photo

said earlier. A host of issues, including permitting Chinese research vessels, regarded as spy ships by India; Sri Lanka's debt commitments to China, stated to be Colombo's largest creditor, and expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments are expected to figure in Dissanayake's talks with Xi.

Sri Lanka expects the visit would result in the digitisation of its two state TV channels - Rupavahini and ITN.

Sri Lanka would also seek Chinese assistance to complete the central expressway, which has been stalled for over a decade, the media division of the Sri Lankan President's said in a press release earlier.

The talks would also cover the Chinese industrial zone around the southern port of Hambantota. Qin Boyong, a top Chinese official who visited Dissanayake im-

mediately upon his return from Delhi in December, said the Chinese companies were eagerly waiting to set themselves up for business at Hambantota.

Dissanayake, once a bitter critic of India, chose Delhi for his first visit abroad. During his visit to India in December, where he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Dissanayake assured New Delhi that Colombo would not permit its territory to be used "in a manner that is detrimental to the interest of India," in an apparent reference to China. China expanded its strategic ties with Sri Lanka during the rule of pro-Beijing leader Mahinda Rajapaksa, his brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Ranil Wickramasinghe with the acquisition of Hambantota port for 99 years lease as a debt swap followed by the development of Colombo Port City project.

Palestinian Authority must run Gaza after war, PM says

AGENCIES  
RAMALLAH

The Palestinian Authority must be the sole governing power in Gaza after the war, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa said on Wednesday, as expectations grew that a deal to halt fighting and start returning Israeli hostages was near.

Who will run Gaza after the war remains one of the great unanswered questions in the negotiations, which have focused on an immediate ceasefire and exchanging hostages still held in the enclave for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Speaking at a conference in Norway, Mustafa said pressure must continue to agree the ceasefire in Gaza and allow in more humanitarian aid for more than 2 million people facing a severe humanitarian crisis after 15 months of war.

Only the Palestinian Authority is legitimately placed to assume governance in the Gaza Strip after fighting ends and there should be no attempt to split Gaza off from the occupied West



Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa

Bank as part of a Palestinian state, he said.

"While we are waiting for the ceasefire, it is important to stress that it won't be acceptable for any other entity to govern the Gaza Strip but the legitimate Palestinian leadership and the government of the state of Palestine," he told the conference, according to the text of his speech.

He said Norway's recognition last year of a Palestinian state under the Palestinian Authority was an important step towards the two-state solution backed in principle by most of the international community. Israel has rejected any involvement by Hamas, which ran Gaza before the war, but it has been

almost equally opposed to rule by the Palestinian Authority, the body set up under the Oslo interim peace accords three decades ago that has limited governing power in the West Bank.

Israeli officials accuse the PA of supporting attacks against Israel and say that broad support for Hamas among Palestinians outside Gaza means that any Palestinian state would inevitably be taken over by the Islamist group.

The PA, dominated by the Fatah faction created by former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, also faces opposition from rival faction Hamas, which drove the PA out of Gaza in 2007 after a brief civil war.

Pak PM orders probe into scandalous post by PIA

AGENCIES  
ISLAMABAD

After widespread backlash, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered an inquiry into a controversial post by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on its official X handle, celebrating the resumption of Europe flights after a four-year break, Geo News reported.

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar criticised the post while quoting the country's chief executive during his address to the upper house of



Pakistan International Airlines. File Photo

the parliament, as per Geo News.

In a post on X, PIA shared an image of a plane heading towards the Eiffel Tower with the French flag appearing in

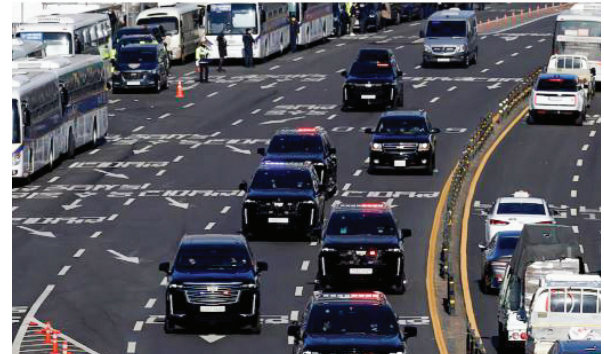
the background. "Paris, we are coming today," read the caption. The social media post was criticised online due to its resemblance to the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States.

S Korea's Yoon likely to be held in a solitary cell

AGENCIES  
SEOUL

South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol was arrested on Wednesday as part of an investigation into alleged insurrection, and in between being questioned the suspended leader is expected to be held in a solitary cell at a detention centre.

While he is the first incumbent president to be arrested in South Korea, other high-profile figures including former President Park Geun-hye and Samsung Electronics Chairman Jay Y. Lee have also spent time in the Seoul Detention Centre.



A motorcade believed to be carrying impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol following his arrest drives down a road, in Seoul, South Korea, January 15, 2025. Agency

The following is what is expected to unfold for the former prosecutor-turned-president in coming days.

Yoon has been taken to the offices of the Corruption In-

vestigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) that is leading the investigation into his role in declaring martial law on Dec. 3.

The CIO is an independent

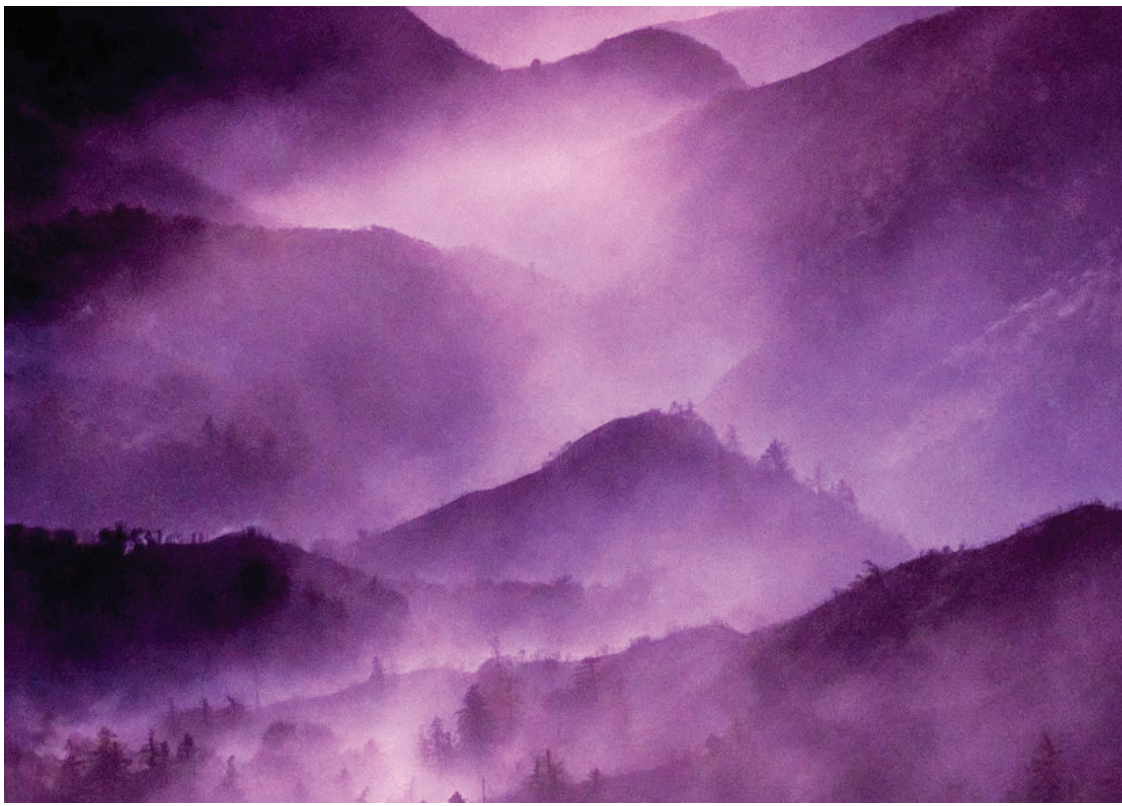
agency launched in 2021 to investigate high-ranking officials including the president and their family members but it does not have authority to prosecute the president and must refer any case to the prosecutors' office for further action.

The office is located in a sprawling government complex in Gwacheon which borders the capital Seoul, about 10 minutes by police motorcade from the president's official residence.

The CIO prepared a questionnaire of more than 200 pages for Yoon. Although authorities had prepared for the questioning to be video recorded.



MOUNTAINS OF ANGELES



Smoke from the Eaton fire lingers above the mountains of Angeles national forest in California in Altadena, US. Source: Etienne Laurent

## 'Soul of America' still at stake in farewell letter as President: Biden

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

Joe Biden has said the "soul of America" is still at stake in a valedictory message implicitly admitting that the national divisions that spurred him to run for the White House remain unbridged at end of his four-year presidency.

The acknowledgment came in a farewell letter issued ahead of a televised speech from the Oval Office on Wednesday evening, when he will deliver his final address as president before being replaced by Donald Trump next week.

"I ran for president because I believed that the soul



U.S. President Joe Biden answers questions from the media at a briefing on the federal response to the wildfires across Los Angeles, in the Oval Office, White House in Washington, U.S., on January 10, 2025. Agency

of America was at stake. The very nature of who we are was at stake," Biden wrote in what is likely to be a theme reprised in his speech. "And, that's still the case."

The admission was an oblique recognition that Biden's legacy – touted in a long catalogue of claimed achievements at the end of the letter – is overshadowed

by the impending return of Trump, who will be inaugurated on Monday after his election victory over Vice-President Kamala Harris in November.

Biden made it explicit when he was campaigning for the presidency in 2020 that he was motivated by a desire to defeat Trump and cast the contest against him as a battle for America's "soul".

He returned to the theme in a speech in Philadelphia's Independence Hall in 2022, in which he cast Trump as a "threat to this country" and said he and his Maga (make American great again) followers did not respect the US constitution.

## Canadian minister steps back from Liberal Party leadership race

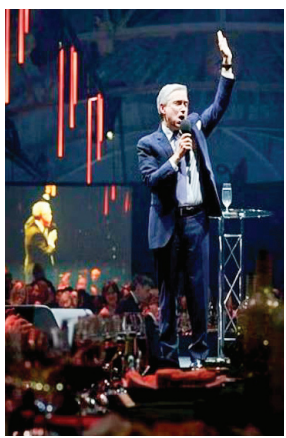
AGENCIES  
OTTAWA

Francois-Philippe Champagne, Canadian Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry said that he will not be seeking the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada in the upcoming race.

He described the decision as difficult and expressed gratitude to Canadians, colleagues, and organisers across the country.

Sharing a post on X, he said, "I won't be seeking the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada in the upcoming race."

"A difficult decision but one I take with Canada at heart. Thanks to Canadians, colleagues and organiz-



Francois-Philippe Champagne, Canadian Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. Courtesy: Instagram

ers from across the country who share the vision of a proud, ambitious and prosperous Canada," the post

added. Earlier, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly announced her decision not to run for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada, citing the need to focus on addressing international challenges, including economic pressures and tariff threats from the President-elect of the US, Donald Trump. Champagne's announcement follows Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's declaration that he would resign as leader of the Liberal Party and as Prime Minister as soon as a new candidate is found for the post. He also said that the Canadian Parliament would be prorogued or suspended until March 24.

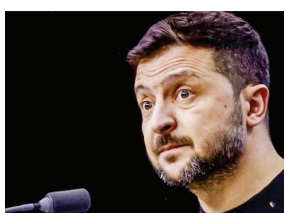
## Zelensky visits Poland after progress in World War II dispute

AGENCIES  
WARSAW

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was visiting Warsaw on Wednesday, following what Poland has called a breakthrough in a historical dispute about wartime exhumations that has stood between the allies.

The issue of securing the exhumation and proper burial of victims looks set to be important in a May presidential election in which a conservative historian who heads the National Remembrance Institute (IPN) is running as the main nationalist opposition candidate.

Although Poland has been one of Ukraine's staunchest backers since Russia invaded in 2022, ties between



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

the neighbours have been strained for generations by the Volhynia killings that took place from 1943 to 1945.

The issue has become even more heated in recent years, and Polish Deputy Prime Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz said in October that Ukraine would have to resolve it in order to join the European Union. Ukraine, which faces a new Russian push along front lines, also plans to discuss its requests for more weaponry.

## 2020 poll case: Trump would've been convicted

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

US Special Counsel Jack Smith said that evidence from the 2020 election interference case was enough for President-elect Donald Trump's conviction, but his victory in last year's presidential polls made it impossible to do so. In an over 130-page report published on Tuesday, Smith concluded that Trump engaged in an "unprecedented criminal effort" to retain power after he lost to Joe Biden five years ago.

The Special Counsel also detailed how Trump tried to overturn the election results and accused him of plotting to obstruct the collection and certification of votes.

## Michelle Obama to skip Trump's inauguration

AGENCIES  
LONDON

Former US first lady Michelle Obama will not attend US President-elect Donald Trump's swearing-in ceremony on January 20, her office announced on Tuesday, without sharing explanation for her decision, CNN reported.

A statement from the Office of Barack and Michelle Obama said, "Former President Barack Obama is confirmed to attend the 60th Inaugural Ceremonies. Former First Lady Michelle Obama will not attend the upcoming inauguration."

## Irish parties secure 'comfortable majority' for new government

AGENCIES  
DUBLIN

Talks between Ireland's two historically dominant centre-right parties and independent lawmakers have reached an agreement that will give a new coalition government a "comfortable majority," a negotiator for



Ireland's Tanaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and leader of Fianna Fail, Micheal Martin smiles as he arrives at the Cork South Central count centre, during Ireland's general election, in Cork, Ireland, November 30, 2024. File Photo

# RUSSIA TARGETS UKRAINE'S GAS INFRA IN NEW MISSILE BARRAGE

Ukraine uses gas stored over the summer months to use in winter, when daily production does not cover consumption.

AGENCIES  
MOSCOW

Russia launched a new barrage of missiles and drones at Ukraine on Wednesday, targeting gas infrastructure and other energy facilities in western regions in the latest strike on the country's hobbled power system as it approaches mid-winter.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said that the Russian forces launched over 40 missiles during the morning attack and used more than 70 drones overnight. Ukrainian air defences shot down at least 30 missiles, he said.

"Another massive Russian attack. It's the middle of winter, and the target for the Russians remains unchanged: our energy infrastructure," Zelenskiy said in a social media post on X platform.

"Among their objectives were gas and energy facilities that sustain normal life for our people."

The capital Kyiv also came under attack, with hundreds of residents taking shelter in underground metro stations across the capital, sleeping on yoga mats and sitting on folded chairs with their pets.

The governor of Ukraine's western Lviv region said two energy facilities, in the Drohobych and Stryi districts, were damaged. In neighbouring Ivano-Frankivsk, the governor said air defences were fending off Russian attacks on facilities.

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICTS



People take shelter inside a metro station during a Russian military strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine January 15, 2025. Agency

- Over 40 missiles and 70 drones used in morning and overnight strikes.
- Zelenskiy confirms air defences downed at least 30 missiles.
- Kyiv and western regions targeted, causing damage to energy facilities.
- Hundreds of Kyiv residents sheltered in metro stations during attacks.
- No reported injuries in Lviv or Ivano-Frankivsk regions.

Both said no injuries had been reported.

Ukrainians use natural gas mainly for heating homes and cooking. The country uses gas stored over the summer months to use in winter, when daily production does not cover consumption.

Ukraine's underground gas storage facilities are located in the western part of the country, including in the Stryi area. Their role has grown since Kyiv refused to extend a gas transit agree-

ment with Russia. Russia has stepped up its bombardments of Ukraine's power sector and other energy infrastructure since March 2024, knocking out half of the available generating capacity and forcing long, rolling blackouts across the country.

Ukrainian cities, businesses, and residents rushed to install new generating capacities, including solar panels, batteries, generators, and other equipment to increase their energy in-

dependence and survive the critical cold months.

Zelenskiy, who visits neighbouring Poland on Wednesday, reiterated his pleas to Kyiv's Western allies to strengthen Ukraine's air defence.

"We have also discussed licenses for the production of air defence systems and missiles for them, which could serve as one of the effective security guarantees for Ukraine. This is both realistic and necessary to implement."

## Musk highlights Trump's affair with Diet Coke

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

Tesla CEO Elon Musk on Wednesday called the inventor of Diet Coke a 'genius' as his love for coke is well known.

Musk shared an image of US President-elect Donald Trump with Coca-Cola CEO James Quincey as the latter gifted him a custom commemorative bottle of Diet Coke. "The inventor of Diet Coke is a genius," the post read.

Trump's Deputy Director of Communications Margo Martin also shared a photo of the glass bottle and a note accompanying it. The glass bottle features a unique label showcasing an image of the White House along



US President-elect Donald Trump (in Left) with Coca-Cola CEO James Quincey. Courtesy: X

with the slogan. "The Inauguration of the President of the United States Donald J. Trump."

A note beside the bottle reads, "Founded 126 years ago in Atlanta, Georgia, The Coca-Cola Company takes great pride in producing

hundreds of brands that people enjoy. Along with our 60+ independent bottling partners, the Coca-Cola system generates \$58+ billion in U.S. economic activity annually and supports more than 860,000 jobs in the United States.

## Biden gov't removes Cuba from US terrorism list

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

The Biden administration announced on Tuesday that it will remove Cuba from the US state sponsor of terrorism list, reversing a designation made by Donald Trump's administration in 2021.

The White House in a press release 'Certification of Rescission of Cuba's Designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism' quoted US President Joe Biden as saying, "Pursuant to the Constitution and the laws of the United States, and consistent with sections 1754(c) and 1768(c) of the National Defence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (50 U.S.C. 4813(c) and 4826(c)), I hereby certify with respect to the rescission of the determination of January 12, 2021.

## LA braces for more fire evacuations

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

As forecasters warn of another "particularly dangerous weather situation" across northern Los Angeles, residents braced for new wildfire evacuation orders, even as the official death toll from last week's fires in Altadena and the Pacific Palisades was expected to rise.

Los Angeles, and parts of Ventura county to the north, faced "extreme fire risk" warnings through Wednesday, with officials warning of "significant risk of rapid fire spread" due to the Santa Ana winds – which have gusts of up to 75mph –. The "particularly dangerous weather situation" designation is used very rarely, and was designed by meteorologists to signal "the extreme of the extremes". The winds were predicted to reach near hurricane-force in some areas.

## Irish parties secure 'comfortable majority' for new government

AGENCIES  
DUBLIN

Talks between Ireland's two historically dominant centre-right parties and independent lawmakers have reached an agreement that will give a new coalition government a "comfortable majority," a negotiator for

one of the parties said on Wednesday. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, who led the outgoing coalition, have been in talks since they fell one seat short in a Nov. 29 election of the 87 needed to govern. The new deal is set to continue their previous high spending economic policy.

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## LUV RANJAN AND ANKUR GARG DEBUT IN MARATHI CINEMA WITH 'DEVMANUS'



AGENCIES  
MUMBAI

Luv Films' Luv Ranjan and Ankur Garg renowned for their successful contributions to Hindi cinema, are venturing into Marathi films with their upcoming project, 'Devmanus'. Taking to his Instagram handle on Wednesday, trade analyst Taran Adarsh confirmed the news.

"#Devmanus, a multi-starrer, features #MaheshManjrekar, #RenukaShahane, #SubodhBhave and #SiddharthBodke in pivotal roles. Directed by #TejasDeoskar and produced by #LuvRanjan and #AnkurGarg, the filming of #Devmanus is now complete... Arrives in \*theatres\* on 25 April 2025," the caption further read. The film, which has just

*'Devmanus' is a multi-starrer featuring an ensemble cast, with prominent Marathi actors like Mahesh Manjrekar, Renuka Shabane, Subodh Bhave, and Siddharth Bodke playing crucial roles. The film is helmed by director Tejas Deoskar.*

In his post, he shared a picture of the cast and crew of the film holding the clapperboard.

He captioned the post as, "LUV RANJAN - ANKUR GARG VENTURE INTO MARATHI FILMS... 'DEVMANUS' SHOOT COMPLETE... 25 APRIL 2025 RELEASE... #LuvFilms, the powerhouse behind #Hindi films like #TuJhoothiMainMakkaar, #DeDePyaarDe and #SonuKeTituKiSweety, now ventures into #Marathi cinema with #Devmanus."

completed its shoot, is set to hit theatres on April 25, 2025. Known for their blockbuster Hindi films like 'Tu Jhoothi Main Makkar', and 'Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety', the duo is making entry into the Marathi film industry.

'Devmanus' is a multi-starrer featuring an ensemble cast, with prominent Marathi actors like Mahesh Manjrekar, Renuka Shahane, Subodh Bhave, and Siddharth Bodke playing crucial roles. The film is helmed by director Tejas Deoskar.

## PRIYANKA CHOPRA'S MOTHER SHARES HEARTWARMING POST FOR MALTI MARIE'S BIRTHDAY



AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI

Actor Priyanka Chopra's mother, Madhu Chopra, has shared a heartwarming post for her granddaughter Malti Marie on the occasion of her third birthday. Malti, the daughter of Priyanka and Nick Jonas turned three on January 15 this year and

Marie May your birthday be as magical as you are!"

Fans were quick to leave adorable comments on the post.

One fan wrote, "Happy Birthday MM Congratulations to the sweetest, cutest and most beautiful toddler."

Another wrote, "Happy birthday little angel." Malti Marie was born

*One fan wrote, "Happy Birthday MM Congratulations to the sweetest, cutest and most beautiful toddler."*

her 'nan' (maternal grandmother) marked the occasion with a touching post on social media.

To celebrate the day, Madhu posted a delightful reel filled with heartwarming photos and videos of the young one with her parents, Priyanka and Nick, and herself.

Alongside the reel, Madhu wrote, "Happy birthday to the light of our lives, Malti

through surrogacy to Priyanka and Nick Jonas on January 15, 2022. Since her birth, Priyanka has often shared glimpses of her motherhood journey, balancing her career with her new role as a mother.

On the professional front, Priyanka Chopra is currently working on the second season of 'Citadel' and has recently completed shooting for 'The Bluff'.

### PICTURE PERFECT

Urmila Matondkar snapped at 'Satya' screening. (Instagram)



## SRAM & MRAM GROUP AND PARADIGM PICTURES ANNOUNCE MAJOR ENTERTAINMENT MERGER

TGD NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

In a move set to reshape the entertainment industry, global conglomerate SRAM & MRAM Group and renowned film production company Paradigm Pictures AD Ltd have officially announced their merger at an exclusive event held at London's prestigious Warren House. This partnership is poised to revolutionize the global entertainment landscape by merging luxury, cutting-edge technology, and creative storytelling, with a particular focus on the entertainment market in India and beyond.

Dr Sailesh L. Hiranandani, Chairman of SRAM & MRAM Group, and Arvind Dharmaraj, Chairman of Paradigm Pictures, were present at the event to cel-



brate the merger. The collaboration marks SRAM & MRAM Group's strategic entry into the high-end entertainment sector, a move that further solidifies the group's commitment to innovation and sustainable growth across multiple in-

dustries, including technology, healthcare, agriculture, and hospitality.

SRAM & MRAM Group has earned global recognition for its technological advancements and sustainable practices. Now, with this merger, the company

is setting its sights on the film industry, combining its technical expertise with Paradigm Pictures' creative storytelling to create a unique platform for film production.

"Our vision is to create a world-class film city, blending cutting-edge technology with elite talent from Europe and the US to redefine the standards of storytelling and production excellence," Dr.Hiranandani said, outlining the ambitious future of the partnership.

A key highlight of the merger is the development of a state-of-the-art 50-acre film city, which will begin construction soon. The film city is envisioned as a global benchmark for film production, offering a comprehensive ecosystem designed to streamline the filmmaking process.

## BTS' J-Hope announces his first-ever solo world tour

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

K-pop sensation J-Hope, a member of the global music group BTS, is officially set to embark on his first solo world tour, "Hope on the Stage." The 30-year-old rapper will travel to 15 cities, including six in North America, marking the first time he steps into the spotlight as a solo artist in his career.

Hybe, the parent company of BTS' label BigHit Music, announced on Tuesday. Much to the excitement of fans, J-Hope also shared the news on his official Instagram handle. The tour will kick off with three nights in Seoul, followed by a highly anticipated North American leg. J-Hope, whose birth name is Hoseok Jung, will begin his U.S. performances on March 13 with two nights at New York's Barclays Center. Afterward, he will travel to Chicago, Mexico City,



San Antonio, and Oakland before concluding the North American portion of the tour at LA's BMO Stadium. The Los Angeles stop is expected to be a historic event, as it will mark the first time a Korean solo artist will be headlining a US stadium, as per The Hollywood Reporter. The tour will then continue through Asia, including

stops in the Philippines and Singapore, with more cities to be announced later.

This tour is J-Hope's first as a solo performer, although he is no stranger to solo performances. In 2022, the rapper made history as the first Korean artist to headline the flagship Lollapalooza festival in Chicago. J-Hope's fans, known as

ARMY, can also look forward to live-streamed performances from the Seoul leg of the tour. The three nights at Seoul's venue will be available to stream on Hybe's fan platform, Weverse. It has not yet been confirmed whether any other stops will be live-streamed, as per The Hollywood Reporter.

## Priyanka Chopra joins Jonas brothers for upcoming holiday movie

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

Priyanka Chopra is set to join her husband Nick Jonas and his brothers, Joe and Kevin Jonas, for an upcoming holiday film. The project, which is expected to premiere on Disney+, brings the Jonas family together for a memorable 2025 holiday season, as per E! News.

Filming for the untitled movie began on January 13 in Toronto. As per E! News, Priyanka was spotted on the set alongside her husband Nick and the Jonas brothers. The 'Citadel'



actress was spotted wearing a black hoodie and a long black coat with grey and white stripes, while Nick, donned a dark puffy jacket, with his hood pulled over to shield him from the snow, as per E! News. The set atmosphere was filled with festive cheer as Priyanka shed her winter coat to reveal a holiday-inspired look, featuring a cream-coloured long-sleeve top paired with a red floor-length skirt. Her brother-in-law Joe, embraced the cold in a teal cardigan and dark-wash jeans, maintaining a casual yet stylish appearance.

### BRAIN PICKING



We have our moments of emotional vulnerabilities as any other human being, and my greatest fear gnawing away at me is losing my loved ones.



— PARINEETI CHOPRA

(Indian Actress)

## GERARD BUTLER RECALLS ON-SET INJURIES, NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES, AND ACCIDENTS WITH CO-STARS



AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

Actor Gerard Butler recalls the challenges faced during the filming of Zack Snyder's directorial '300' and how many of his co-stars were taken to the hospital due to injuries, reported People magazine. Gerard Butler starred as the King of Sparta in the film. He was accompanied by actors Lena Headey, David Wenham and Dominic West. In a conversation with People, Gerard remembered the difficult days during the making of '300' and called it 'insane' while describing the injuries of his co-stars. "I remember every day

somebody was getting taken to the hospital. You'd be doing a fight, you turn around, there's a guy down there, a spear went in his eye. Another time, you turn around, there's a guy over there who just fell, broke his ankle. I mean, it was insane," said Gerard Butler as quoted by People.

This Zack Snyder's period action film is considered one of Hollywood's best action films. The sequel of the film was released in 2014 and was directed by Noam Murro.

Gerard Butler has had encounters with near-death situations during the shooting of several films throughout his career.

## DAVID SCHWIMMER RECALLS SERVING DIVORCE PAPERS TO SINGER ROD STEWART



AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

'Friends' fame actor David Schwimmer recalled his early jobs before making it big in Hollywood. The actor on a humorous note remembered the time when he served a divorce notice to singer Rod Stewart, reported The Hollywood Reporter. David Schwimmer was a guest on 'The Late Show With Stephen Colbert' when Stephen asked the actor about the 'unique' jobs that he did before becoming famous in Hollywood.

While talking about his job on the show, David recounted the time when he served divorce papers to singer Rod Stewart as a part of his job.

"One summer after my freshman year in college, I was just looking for work, and my mom said, 'Well, you can be a process server for me.

My mom was a divorce lawyer, and I was the guy who would pop out of the bushes and serve you divorce papers."

"Once, oh man, thank goodness I've never run into him since, but I served Rod Stewart. I don't even know if he knows. I don't think he knows," said David Schwimmer as quoted by The Hollywood Reporter.

To this, Colbert jokingly responded, "He knows now. Change your locks, man. He's vengeful," adding, "You could theoretically run into Rod Stewart sometime and now he knows to punch you." quoted The Hollywood Reporter.

However, the 'Friends' actor didn't reveal the name of the woman to whom the singer was divorcing at that time. Stewart tied the knot with model Rachel Hunter in 1990, however, they split nine years later.



# CITROEN BASALT TURBO PETROL MANUAL & AT REVIEW | TESTED OVER 1000 KM

SYED SHIRAZ SHAH

Yes, as mentioned in the heading above, I did test the manual and automatic versions of the Citroen Basalt for over 500 km each. And I concluded that the majority of reviewers have got almost everything wrong about the car. In fact, not just the reviewers, even Citroen has gotten a few things wrong, especially with the categorisation of the car as you'll learn below.

## DESIGN AND CATEGORISATION/PLACEMENT

A journalist's job is to ask questions. A journalist, who's also a reviewer, needs to ask those questions a bit more sternly. Therefore, I wonder why no one is even asking Citroen that why call the Basalt an "SUV Coupe" when it's actually a sedan, and the C4 a sedan when it's actually an SUV Coupe? Yes, you may check their international website where the C4 has been described as "a new generation sedan"; "a reinvented aesthetic, and an eco-responsible vehicle"; and as a car "with a raised posture on large wheels..." Those descriptions (minus the large wheels...) suit the Basalt more than the C4.

So, yes, while the C4 (and even the C4 X) is indeed an SUV Coupe, the Basalt is more of a sedan with a bit of coupe/fastback design, and as such design-wise it's not competing with the Tata Curvv as has been incorrectly mentioned by almost every reviewer in the last few months. The C4 and C4 X would have, but not the Basalt. In fact, overall its only direct competitor would have been the



erstwhile Maruti Suzuki SX4 had it still been around. In its absence, the Basalt, design-wise, is closer to the new Amaze and Dzire than anything else, while price-wise it should be seen as an alternative to a lot of cars including the Nexon, Amaze, Dzire, Ciaz, Virtus (1.0), Slavia (1.0), Sonet, Venue, Kushaq (1.0), Taigun (1.0), and even the starting variants of the Creta, Seltos, Hyryder, Grand Vitara, Elevate, and Curvv. I won't get into the nitty-gritties of Basalt's design as a lot has been said about it already, and it's something you can see for yourself anyway. But I shall still tell you that it looks best in White, and also that Citroen should have given it bigger wheels...

## INTERIORS

The Basalt, just like the C3 and C3 Aircross gets no-nonsense, simple, but functional interiors. In fact, the interiors here are ergonomically better than the other two, and I am obviously referring to the correct placement of the power window switches. Hopefully, the C3 and C3 Aircross will see that change sometime soon as well.

The Basalt also gets auto climate control now, although like I had mentioned in my C3 Aircross review, I was absolutely okay with the manual HVAC system too. Nevertheless, it's a nice addition. The air-conditioning is as brilliant as ever and it's one of those few cars that could actually do without the rear vents. Yes, it's that good.

Speaking of comfort, the Basalt's party trick is the adjustable under-thigh support at the rear, but it's quite intriguing that you get that feature only in the Automatic and not in the Manual. However, the biggest miss still is the lack of cruise control. Otherwise, overall, it's a cabin that will appeal to most who value comfortable seats, sorted ergonomics, great air-conditioning, and lots of storage space.

## PERFORMANCE

This is where things start to get more interesting. The Basalt is available with a naturally aspirated petrol engine as well, but, for now, Citroen is providing only



Photos: Airah Khan &amp; Arina Haider.

the turbo-petrol cars to the media. However, since I had sampled the former at the C3 media drive in 2022, I am certain that it will do a fine job in the Basalt as well, and you must take a test drive of it if you're contemplating buying a Dzire or an Amaze.

Coming back to the turbocharged Basalts, both the manual and automatic have enough performance to keep you happy. And this is something I haven't seen the majority of other reviewers talking about. But, like always, you may trust me to give you a clearer picture. The best coincidence this time around was that I had the VW Vento 1.2 TSI DSG as well at the shoot, and I did the acceleration runs of the three cars to give you a better perspective.

I was pleasantly surprised to see the results. The Vento accomplished the 0-100 km/h run in 10.1 seconds; the Basalt automatic did it in 10.3 seconds, and I could achieve a time of 10.2 seconds in the Basalt manual. The 0-140 km/h times were, 19.9, 21.3, and 18.9 seconds, respectively. I will have to reiterate that it's the Basalt manual that decimated the other two here by posting the quickest (18.9 seconds) 0-140 km/h time. Even more impressive

was the braking test from 150 km/h. The Volkswagen came to a complete halt in 4.6 seconds, whereas the Basalt Automatic and Manual took just 3.8 and 4.0 seconds, respectively. That's phenomenal braking, ladies and gentlemen.

## RIDE QUALITY

This is where the Citroen Basalt just demolishes every other unibody vehicle available right now under 20-lakh rupees. The ride quality is simply outstanding. For perspective, let me share a real world example here as well.

On the way to our photoshoot location, there is a broken stretch (between Greater Noida and Noida Extension) of around 300 meters or so, and it has been like that for over ten years now. Honestly, I really pray it remains like that forever because it gives me a good opportunity to assess the suspension over bad roads of almost every vehicle I review, except the ones with low ground clearance and/or promiscuous front overhangs.

I fly over this section on adventure motorcycles, and even the ladder-frame vehicles are shown little mercy, but, I don't try to emulate Sebastien Loeb while driv-

ing most unibody cars over this stretch. However, with the Basalt, I was able to traverse the section faster than in any other unibody vehicle lately. I of course didn't gun it, because testing and breaking are two different things, often separated by a thin line, but the Basalt felt like it could push that line a lot further than any of its contemporaries...

## HANDLING

The Basalt handles almost as good as it rides. Before I elaborate, I must give you a masterclass on what all comprises handling. See, a car's handling characteristics are determined primarily by three things: chassis behaviour, steering response, and steering weight. In layman terms, how flat a vehicle remains while cornering is called chassis behaviour; how quickly and by what ratio the wheels turn at your steering inputs is called steering response, while steering weight refers to the resistance (artificial or real) engineered into the steering system to give you that all-important steering FEEL.

At present, the Skodas and VWs rule in chassis behaviour, followed closely by the Citroens, Hyryder/

cars, none of the Basalt turbos (manual and automatic) ever went down to single-digit fuel efficiency figures, irrespective of how I treated them. And when I treated them nicely, the city fuel efficiency hovered around 13-15 km/l for both, with the manual being a shade better than the automatic. On the highways, both cars will return above 16-17 km/l with a light foot on the throttle pedal.

## VERDICT

I have already told you everything about the car, and I won't summarise it here if you have been inattentive all this while. But I shall still tell you this: try to take a test drive of every car mentioned in this story back-to-back on the most broken roads you can find. Drive the Basalt at the end. Chances are, then and there, it's the Citroen that you would want to take home...



GV, and Elevate in the joint second place while all others would be in the third and subsequent places. The contenders in the second place snatch away the first place from the Skodas and VWs in the steering weight department while almost matching them in steering response. Overall, it's the Citroens, Hyryder/GV, and Elevate that have the best ride and handling balance of any car under 20-lakh rupees... And then, at the cost of repetition, it's the Citroens that still have the best ride quality even amongst this trio.

## FUEL EFFICIENCY

Unlike most turbo-petrol





# GENERATIVE AI IN 2025: TAKING YOUR BUSINESS FROM GOOD TO PHENOMENAL



**THE NEXT**  
ABHISHEKANAND

You're already dabbling in ChatGPT to draft emails or brainstorming visuals with DALL-E, right? Cool. But here's the thing—Generative AI is like a Swiss Army knife. What you're using now is just one blade; there are many more tools in the set to help you scale, innovate, and dominate in 2025.

In my today's article, let's explore how you can expand your use of Generative AI beyond the basics and take your business to the next level.

## 1. TURBOCHARGE YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY

Sure, you're using AI to draft content, but are you making it a seamless part of your content pipeline? Here's how you can up the game:

**AI for Content Repackaging:** Take that long-form blog you just wrote with ChatGPT and let AI tools turn it into snappy social media posts, a podcast script, or even an infographic.

**Hyper-Personalized Campaigns:** Use AI to create tailored messages for different audience segments. Platforms like Jas-

per can help refine tone and messaging based on demographics or preferences.

**Content Calendar Automation:** Automate your posting schedule with tools that integrate AI insights for timing and audience engagement.

*Pro Tip:* Combine AI with analytics tools to monitor how your content performs and optimize future strategies.

## 2. REDEFINE CUSTOMER SERVICE WITH AI

Chatbots are great, but let's go beyond basic Q&A:

**Emotionally Aware Interactions:** AI tools now analyze customer sentiment to provide empathetic, contextual responses. Think beyond answering questions—build meaningful conversations.

**AI for Ticket Prioritization:** Integrate AI to analyze incoming support tickets and assign priorities based on urgency, reducing resolution times.

**Customer Journey Mapping:** Use AI to predict customer needs based on their behavior and offer solutions proactively.

*Example:* An e-commerce brand used AI to recom-



**Highlight:** A fitness brand used AI-generated AR visuals to let customers "try on" workout gear virtually, boosting online sales.

## 4. POWER YOUR DECISION-MAKING

Data is everywhere, but are you truly leveraging it? AI can help you extract actionable insights in seconds.

**Predictive Insights:** Use AI to forecast sales trends or market shifts, helping you stay a step ahead.

**Scenario Testing:** Simulate "what-if" scenarios before making big decisions—like pricing changes or new product launches.

**Custom Dashboards:** Let AI summarize complex datasets into easy-to-read dashboards for quick decisions.

*Fun Use Case:* A SaaS company integrated AI analyt-

ics into its pricing model and increased annual revenue by identifying underpriced services.

## 5. INNOVATE FASTER WITH AI IN PRODUCT DESIGN

You're already aware of AI's ability to create, but let's go beyond prototypes:

**AI-Assisted R&D:** Use generative models to explore new designs, materials, or functionalities faster than ever.

**Collaborative Iteration:** Combine human creativity with AI's rapid execution to refine ideas in real time.

**Sustainability by Design:** Leverage AI to identify eco-friendly materials or energy-efficient product configurations.

*Example:* A startup in consumer electronics used AI to prototype a product in days instead of months, cutting R&D costs by 30%.

## 6. STREAMLINE OPERATIONS WITH AI

Efficiency isn't just a buzzword—it's a necessity. Let AI handle the grunt work so you can focus on strategy.

**AI for Inventory Management:** Predict demand, reduce overstocking, and cut waste with smarter supply chain tools.

**Logistics Optimization:** Use AI to refine delivery routes, saving fuel and reducing carbon footprints.

**Workflow Automation:**

Automate repetitive tasks like data entry, freeing up your team for creative problem-solving.

*Impact:* A logistics company optimized delivery schedules using AI, cutting fuel costs by 15% and improving on-time deliveries.

## 7. EXPAND INTO NEW FRONTIERS

If you think AI is just for text and visuals, think again. Explore these advanced uses:

**Virtual Products:** AI can create entire virtual catalogs for industries like fashion, real estate, or education.

**Metaverse Integration:** Build immersive, AI-designed virtual spaces to engage customers in new ways.

**Voice AI:** Create branded voice assistants or use AI to generate voiceovers for ads, tutorials, or product guides.

*Quirky Use Case:* A furniture brand used AI to build a metaverse showroom where customers could explore and customize designs virtually.

## HOW TO EXPAND YOUR AI ARSENAL

Already comfortable with basic AI tools? Here's how to deepen your AI integration:

**Audit Your Processes:** Identify bottlenecks where AI can add value.

**Explore Specialized**

**Tools:** Move beyond ChatGPT and DALL-E; try platforms like Synthesia for video creation or MidJourney for hyper-realistic visuals.

**Train Your Team:** Build in-house expertise to maximize AI's potential.

**Test and Iterate:** Start with pilot projects, measure results, and scale what works.

## FINAL THOUGHT: 2025 IS THE YEAR TO GO ALL IN

You've already dipped your toes into Generative AI, but the real magic happens when you dive in fully. From content to design, operations to customer service, AI isn't just a tool—it's the ultimate business partner.

So, let 2025 be the year you explore, innovate, and grow with AI. After all, you've already unlocked the door—now it's time to step through it and discover everything Generative AI has to offer.

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 **Website Development, AR, Web 3.0, Metaverse**, and **Digital Marketing**.

*Abhishek is also an Author, Speaker, and Mentor, helping businesses grow through technology.*

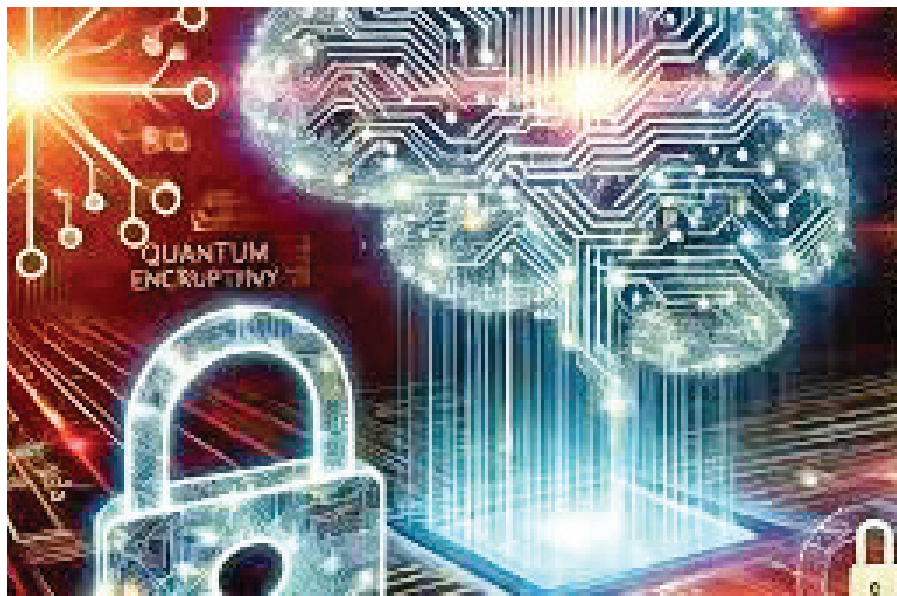
## AI-powered threat detection marks a quantum leap in cybersecurity



MR. RAHIL PATEL

The cybersecurity landscape is experiencing an unprecedented transformation, driven by the exponential increase in both the sophistication and frequency of cyber threats. Traditional security paradigms—relying solely on conventional firewalls and antivirus solutions—have become insufficient in addressing modern cyber challenges.

Recent data underscores this shifting paradigm. The financial sector, in particular, has witnessed a 50% surge in cyber incidents globally since the pandemic's onset. More alarmingly, major e-commerce platforms now face an astronomical one billion daily cyber threats, a tenfold increase from their 2024 baseline of 100 million



attempts.

Artificial Intelligence is revolutionizing threat detection and response capabilities through its advanced pattern recognition and automated decision-making mechanisms. This technology proves particularly crucial in identifying zero-day vulnerabilities and advanced persistent threats (APTs)—sophisticated attacks that often evade traditional detection methods. The integration of AI-driven systems significantly reduces inci-

dent response times while minimizing potential system damage, offering a proactive rather than reactive security posture.

The strategic implementation of AI in cybersecurity architectures enhances three critical dimensions: operational efficiency, scalable defense mechanisms, and comprehensive security coverage. These systems excel in countering prevalent threats such as spear-phishing campaigns and credential stuffing attacks through ad-

vanced algorithmic pattern recognition and automated threat response protocols.

As we advance toward a post-quantum era, the convergence of AI and cybersecurity becomes increasingly vital. Organizations must recognize that this technological synthesis represents more than an upgrade—it constitutes a fundamental shift in how we approach digital security. The future of enterprise protection lies in adaptive, intelligent systems capable of evolving alongside emerging threats.

The integration of AI-powered threat detection marks a pivotal advancement in our cyber defense capabilities, offering unprecedented protection in an increasingly complex threat landscape. As cyber risks continue to evolve, this technological convergence will become essential for organizations committed to safeguarding their digital assets and maintaining operational resilience.

*The author is the Chief Growth Officer at QNu Labs.*

## The AI Revolution in Supply Chains

SUMIT BHATIA

Imagine walking into a store and always finding what you need, or receiving your online order within hours, not days. Behind these seamless experiences lies Artificial Intelligence (AI), silently revolutionizing the supply chain.

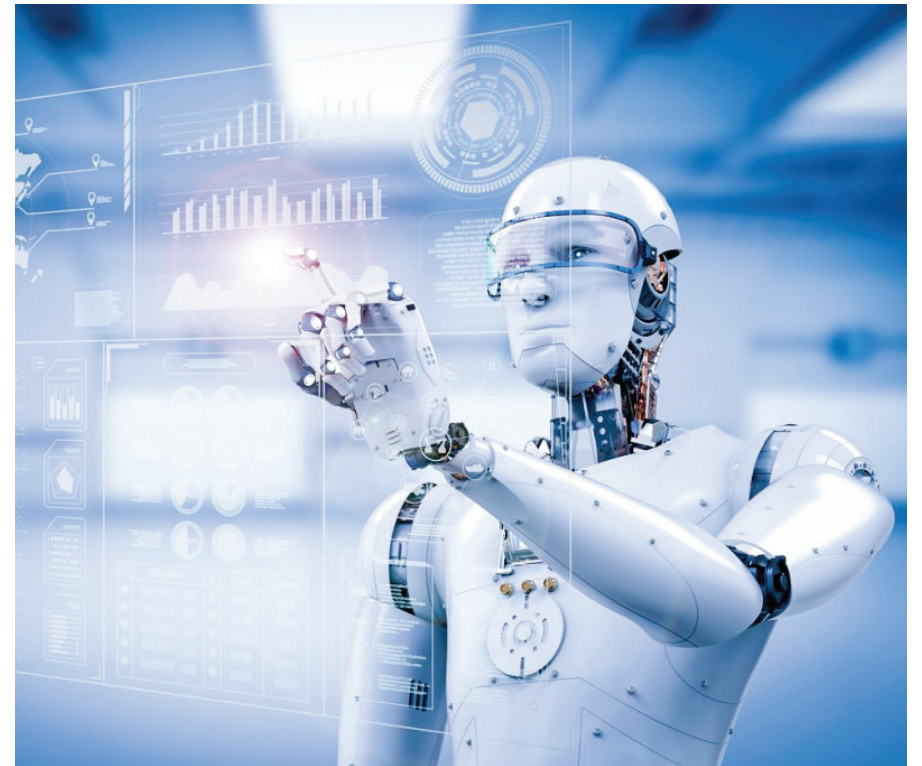
Traditionally, supply chains were complex, people-driven systems riddled with inefficiencies. Today, AI has turned them into agile, data-powered networks. From forecasting demand to optimizing delivery routes, AI is transforming every link in the chain.

One of AI's most impactful contributions is its ability to predict demand with precision. By analyzing past sales, market trends, and even social media chatter, AI ensures that businesses stock what customers want, when they want it. This minimizes the waste of unsold goods while keeping shelves full.

In warehouses, AI-powered robots are taking over labor-intensive tasks like picking and packing, improving speed and accuracy. Meanwhile, advanced systems equipped with computer vision ensure quality control by spotting defects that the human eye might miss.

AI also excels in managing inventory and procurement. It predicts demand shifts, automates stock replenishment, and analyzes supplier data to recommend the best partners. This helps businesses save costs and respond quickly to market changes.

For consumers, the benefits are obvious—faster deliveries, consistently available products, and personalized services tailored to their needs. For



businesses, the rewards are equally compelling: reduced costs, fewer errors, and the ability to adapt swiftly to disruptions.

But integrating AI into the supply chain isn't without challenges. High implementation costs, messy data, and a shortage of skilled professionals are common hurdles. There are also concerns about cybersecurity and resistance to change within organizations. Yet, forward-thinking companies are investing in solutions, from training programs to robust data infrastructure, to overcome these obstacles.

The results are already evident in how global companies are leveraging AI.

Amazon's supply chain is the gold standard in AI integration. From AI-powered demand forecasting to warehouse robots that sort and pack orders, Amazon has set the bar for efficiency. Algorithms predict consumer behavior, ensuring inventory is perfectly aligned with demand. Its delivery route

optimization tools analyze millions of data points to identify the quickest paths, cutting delivery times and fuel costs.

Global logistics giant DHL uses AI-driven robots in its warehouses to sort, pick, and pack items. These robots work seamlessly alongside human employees, speeding up operations and reducing errors. DHL also employs predictive analytics to anticipate shipping delays, rerouting packages in real time to avoid disruptions.

Shipping behemoth Maersk relies on AI to chart optimal shipping routes. Its AI systems analyze weather conditions, port congestion, and fuel efficiency to select routes that minimize costs and reduce carbon emissions. This not only saves millions of dollars annually but also supports sustainability goals.

In China, Alibaba's smart warehouses showcase how AI can revolutionize logistics on a massive scale. The company's automated systems use AI to sort packages, while self-driving

forklifts move goods across sprawling facilities. The result? Orders are processed and shipped at lightning speed.

Looking ahead, AI promises even greater transformations. Supply chains will become more sustainable as AI minimizes waste and improves resource efficiency. Fully autonomous operations, like driverless trucks and self-managing warehouses, are on the horizon. Combining AI with blockchain could make supply chains entirely transparent, fostering trust and accountability.

The integration of AI into the supply chain is more than a technological upgrade—it's a complete reimagining of how goods are moved, managed, and delivered. As AI continues to evolve, it will reshape the supply chain into a smarter, leaner, and more responsive system, benefiting everyone involved. The revolution has already begun, and its impact will only grow.

*The author is the Co-Founder of Aksum Trademart Pvt. Ltd.*





# OSAKA TRIUMPHS IN COMEBACK WIN IN AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Osaka began her 2025 WTA season at the ASB Classic in Auckland, where she reached her first tournament final since Miami 2022.

AGENCIES  
MELBOURNE

Two-time Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka staged an impressive comeback to defeat 20th seed Karolina Muchova 1-6, 6-1, 6-3 in the second round on Wednesday. After a thrilling opening-round victory over Caroline Garcia, Osaka overcame a sluggish start to topple last year's US Open semifinalist, advancing to the third round of a Grand Slam for the first time since her return from maternity leave.

"It means a lot," Osaka said on court, as per the official website of WTA.

"She's an incredibly difficult opponent for me to play. She crushed me at the US Open when I had my best outfit ever. I was so disappointed. I was so mad," she added.

"I'm glad I got my revenge. It's not a bad thing, revenge is competitive. She's one of the toughest opponents out there," she said.

Osaka began her 2025 WTA season at the ASB



Classic in Auckland, where she reached her first tournament final since Miami 2022. Reflecting on her journey, she emphasized the importance of understanding her game better to produce consistent results in major tournaments. So far, her performance in Melbourne is living up to her determination.

"I've said this for years," Osaka said in Auckland, as quoted from the official website of WTA. "I'm not the most talented player but I feel like

I work the hardest and that gives me a lot of confidence. But when you into a fistfight with another person, in the end, it's who wants it more," she noted.

"Last year it was really difficult for me to get that mindset and you could see that in a lot of my matches. I think the tennis was there throughout the whole entire year, but it was more of a mindset thing. I think now, here, I think I'm ready for the battle," she added. After edging out Gar-

cia in a three-set battle, Osaka avenged two losses against the French player from last year, including a first-round exit at the Australian Open. Her second-round opponent, Muchova, who eliminated Osaka at the US Open in 2024, seemed poised to repeat history when she dominated the first set.

"If you were to say 'turning the page', I would probably say that was in Auckland because I played really tough matches there in really tough conditions," Osaka said, as per quoted from the official website of WTA.

"I felt like even though the tennis wasn't necessarily the cleanest, I think it was like the mental side that got me through into the final. I was really happy about that. I think it continued on to this match because I don't feel like I played the cleanest tonight either," she said.

"Mentally I just really wanted to win a lot," she added.

The Czech outclassed Osaka early on, dictating play with precise shot-making and racing to a 5-0 lead.

However, Osaka showed resilience. By the end, she had flipped the script, finishing with 33 winners to 27 unforced errors, while Muchova tallied 27 winners and 29 unforced errors.

"After the first set, I just told myself, fight for every point," Osaka noted.

"If she beats me 6-1, 6-1, then she's the greatest player ever," she said.

In the third round, Osaka will face Belinda Bencic, who is making her own return after giving birth to her daughter, Bella. Bencic has historically been a challenging opponent for Osaka, holding a 3-2 record in their head-to-head encounters but Osaka has demonstrated a newfound focus and determination this season, and she'll be ready to face yet another familiar adversary in her quest for Australian Open glory.



AGENCIES  
MELBOURNE

Spanish tennis sensation Carlos Alcaraz continued his pursuit of a Career Grand Slam as he reached the third round of the ongoing Australian Open on Wednesday with a win over Yoshihito Nishioka.

In a stunning display of tennis, Alcaraz mixed power and touch to perfection as he overwhelmed Nishioka by 6-0, 6-1, 6-4. During the opening set,

he dropped just four points and also secured the win in his first nine games before dropping one finally. The match lasted an hour and 22 minutes. Speaking about the match as quoted by the official ATP website, Alcaraz said. "I think the less time you spend on the court at the Grand Slams, especially at the beginning of the other



tournament, I think it is going to be better, especially physically. I am feeling great. I just tried to be focused on spending as little time as I can."

Alcaraz extended his record against left-handed players at Grand Slams to 8-0 and hit 14 aces without facing a break point, as compared to four break points faced during the first-round win against Alexander Shevchenko. He was extremely happy with his serve, having worked on it since pre-season.

"I am really happy with the service today. This is something that I worked on in the pre-season. In the first

round I struggled a little bit, so I was not too happy with the serve. Yesterday I was more focused on practising the serve. I spent more time just serving with Juan Carlos Ferrero (his coach), with my team, and it is something that I really want to be better at. So I am just glad that today it worked pretty well. Hopefully, in the next round, it is going to be better," he said. After securing a 2-0 lead in ATP Head-to-Head record against Nishioka, Alcaraz's next challenge will be Nuno Borges in the third round as he pursues the record of becoming the youngest player to secure every Grand Slam title at the age of 21.

## BCCI to limit families' presence during Team India's tours: Report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is set to implement stricter protocols during Team India's tours, according to a report from ESPNcricinfo.

The report added that BCCI will limit the players' spending time with their families on tours. The players will also be barred from taking independent transport to commute during practice and matches.

For a tour of 45 days, the family members of the players can only be with them for not more than 14 days. Meanwhile, during shorter tours in foreign countries, the immediate family members of a player can stay up to a week.

According to ESPNcricinfo, Team India skipper Rohit Sharma, head coach Gautam Gambhir and chief selector Ajit Agarkar met the BCCI officials in Mumbai

last Saturday and were informed of the new protocols.

Team India conceded a disappointing 3-1 defeat to Australia in the recently concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2024-25 and lost the opportunity to qualify for the World Test Championship (WTC) Final at Lord's.

Skipper Rohit Sharma and star batter Virat Kohli came under fire for an underwhelming Border-Gavaskar Trophy campaign and overall a very disappointing 2024/25 season of Test cricket. Sharma (31 runs in three matches and five innings at an average of 6.20) and Virat Kohli (190 runs in five matches and nine innings at an average of 23.75 with a century) lacked big time with the bat. Virat fell for the outside-off-stump trap throughout the series, most notably by pacer Scott Boland who dismissed him four times.

## Mandhana smashes fastest ODI ton

AGENCIES  
RAJKOT

Indian batter and stand-in captain Smriti Mandhana made history on Wednesday, smashing the fastest ODI century by an Indian women's batter and becoming the first-ever Asian to smash 10 ODI centuries.

Mandhana reached these milestones during the third and final ODI against Ireland at Rajkot. She scored an explosive 135 runs in 80 deliveries with 12 fours and seven sixes. Her runs came at a strike rate of 168.75.

Her century in 70 balls is the fastest by an Indian women's batter in ODIs, outdoing her regular skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's 87-ball century against South Africa at Bengaluru last year. In men's cricket, the fastest ODI ton by an Indian is in the hands of star batter Virat Kohli, who reached there in just 52 balls against Australia in 2013.

Also, this is Smriti's 10th ton, making her first-ever Asian batter to reach this mark, with Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu (nine centuries) behind her.



Ahead of Mandhana are Australia's Meg Lanning (15 centuries), New Zealand's Suzie Bates (13 centuries) and England's Tammy Beaumont (10 centuries).

7 sixes hit by Smriti Mandhana today is the joint-most by an India Women batter in an ODI innings, alongside Harmanpreet Kaur, who had hit as many during her 171\* off 115 against Australia Women in the 2017 World Cup semi-final. Mandhana has also equalled Harmanpreet for most sixes for India in the format (52).

Since 2024, Mandhana has smashed 996 runs in 16 ODIs at an average of 62.25,

with a strike rate of above 105.06, with four centuries and five fifties. Her best score is 136. No other batter has aggregated 700 runs in this timeframe in the format.

Overall in ODIs, Smriti has made 4,209 runs in 97 matches and 97 innings at an average of 46.25, with 10 centuries and 30 fifties. Her best score is 136.

Coming to the match, India won the toss and opted to bat first. A partnership of 233 runs between Mandhana (135 in 80 balls, with 12 fours and seven sixes) and Pratika Rawal (154 in 129 balls, with 20 fours and a six), a half-century from

wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh (59 in 42 balls, with eight fours and a six) were the key as India reached 435/5 in their 50 overs.

This is India's highest score across both men's and women's ODIs, outdoing men's total of 418/5 against West Indies in 2011 in which Virender Sehwag hit 219 runs and total of 370/5 by India women in the second ODI of this ongoing series against Ireland, where they made 370/5 thanks to a century from Jemimah Rodrigues and fifties from Mandhana, Rawal and Harleen Deol.

## India's No. 1 female chess player returns to Norway Chess Women 2025

AGENCIES  
STAVANGER

India's top-ranked female chess player, Humpy Koneru, will return to compete in Norway Chess Women 2025. Currently ranked World No.6 in women's classical chess, Humpy aims to make her mark in the prestigious chess tournament.

Humpy Koneru's return to Norway Chess Women highlights her remarkable career, filled with significant milestones. In 2002, she became the first Indian woman to achieve the Grandmaster title, securing her place in chess history. Today, she remains India's No.1 in women's chess and a respected figure worldwide.

Her achievements include winning the World Rapid Championship title twice—in 2019 and 2024. She was also named BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year in 2020, recognizing her contributions to Indian sports. Her victories in the



Olympiad, Asian Games, and Asian Championships have further confirmed her status as one of the top female players in chess.

Norway Chess 2025 will give Humpy the opportunity to demonstrate her skills once again. As one of only two female players in chess history to cross the 2600 rating mark, she has consistently broken barriers and paved the way for women's chess. Her participation this year reflects her determination and drive to compete at the highest level.

"It's an honour to play in the prestigious Norway Chess Women tournament," said Humpy Koneru, as per a release from Norway Chess.

## Spiti Cup 2025 kicks off in Kaza, celebrating Ice Hockey in the Himalayas

AGENCIES  
KAZA

The second season of the Spiti Cup 2025 commenced on a high note with an inspiring opening ceremony at the Kaza Main Ice Hockey Rink in the picturesque town of Kaza, Spiti Valley.

Organized in collaboration with the Ice Hockey Association of Lahaul-Spiti (IHALS), the tournament showcases 4 teams - Center Zone, Pin Zone, Sham Zone, and Tod Zone - competing across Men's, Women's, and U-18 Boys categories. This initiative reaffirms IHALS's commitment to promoting Ice Hockey in the high-altitude regions of Himachal Pradesh.

The opening ceremony was graced by the revered Lamas of Spiti, who performed traditional prayers, invoking blessings for the success of the tournament and the well-being of the participants. Chief Guest Anuradha Rana, MLA of

Lahaul and Spiti, officially inaugurated the event by dropping the puck for the women's match between Sham Zone and Center Zone, marking the official start of an exciting five-day competition from 13th to 17th January 2025. Also present at the ceremony were Guests of Honours Shikha Simtia, ADM, Kaza and the President of IHALS; and H.S Rawat, Kumon Regiment, who joined as a special guest of the ceremony along with representatives from the Social Mission.

Speaking at the occasion, Anuradha Rana, MLA Lahaul & Spiti, said as quoted by an IHALS press release, "Ice Hockey and Winter Sports have always been followed and pursued with huge passion by the people of Himachal and especially in Spiti, it has always been an attraction for the locals and tourists. To continue this process, our focus remains on improving infrastructure and facilities, and

we are committed to building a stadium here to further this cause. Over the past five years, we have made significant progress in Ice Hockey, and we will continue to promote winter sports across smaller regions of this valley by developing more rinks and facilities for the youth and the community."

Commending the work done by the IHALS and others, she further added, "I am grateful to the local administration, the Ice Hockey Association of Lahaul Spiti, and everyone who has worked tirelessly to support the growth of Ice Hockey in this region. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all our sponsors and partners. I also want to thank the parents and young athletes for their enthusiastic participation. I am confident that in the coming years, players from this region will represent India at the Olympics and bring glory to our nation."

Shikha Simtia, ADM, Kaza



Spiti Cup Tournament 2024: Totzone vs. Pin Zone (Boys Category) - Royal Enfield Competition

and the President of IHALS also shared her views, "It's hard to sit even for an hour in this cold weather, which makes me all the more appreciative of the association, members, and players who work tirelessly to prepare this ice rink. Ice Hockey began in Spiti in 2019, and though it is still nascent, we have already achieved significant milestones, including winning multiple medals

in the national games. The youth here are showcasing incredible talent and dedication, in these sub-zero temperatures to excel at their game and improve. With the continued efforts of the coaches, players and the association, I am confident that Spiti will soon be recognized not only for Ice Hockey but for winter sports as a whole. I look forward to seeing players from this region repre-

sent Spiti not just in India but on the international stage."

Vigyat Singh, Director of Operations, Social Mission, said, "At Royal Enfield, we believe in fostering resilience and sustainable growth in Himalayan communities. The Spiti Cup exemplifies our vision by empowering local talent, providing access to world-class infrastructure, and inspiring a new generation of athletes. We are proud

to partner with the people of Spiti and the Ice Hockey Association of Lahaul-Spiti (IHALS) in building a legacy for Ice Hockey in the region and beyond."

Sham Zone and Tod Zone battled fiercely, with Sham taking an early lead through Ajay's first-minute goal. Tod responded swiftly as Abhimanyu scored twice to end the first period 2-1 in their favour. Tanzin Tashi extended Tod's lead in the second period, but Abhishek Rathore kept Sham in the game with a late goal. Amit's equalizer in the third period forced a penalty shootout, where Sham Zone triumphed 5-4, thanks to successful strikes from Tanzin Zangpo and Ajay in the penalty shootout.

Sham Zone women's team clinched a narrow 3-2 victory over Center Zone. Rigzy Dolma scored in the opening minute to give Sham the lead, but Tanzin Saldon equalized for Center. Tanzin Dolma's quickfire double in the second period made it 3-1 for

Sham, though Tanzin Saldon struck again to close the gap. A tense, goalless third period saw Sham Zone hold on to their lead and secure the win.

Tod Zone delivered a dominant performance, defeating Pin Zone 14-2 in the U-18 category. Tanzin Tashi led the charge with seven goals, supported by Phunchok Wanchuk and Lakpa, who added three and two goals respectively. Despite efforts from Mormal and Sonam Wanchuk, who scored for Pin Zone, Tod's relentless offence sealed the commanding win over Pin Zone.

Earlier matches on January 13 saw victories for the Men's Center Zone 6-2 against the Men's Tod Zone.

In the women's category, Pin Zone triumphed over Sham Zone 4-2 in a thrilling penalty shootout after a 2-2 draw in regulation time. In the U-18 category, Tod Zone edged out Sham Zone 4-2, while Center Zone dominated Pin Zone with a commanding 7-0 win.