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NAME OF NEXT CEC FINALISED BY PM MODI-LED COMMITTEE

Panel comprising Home Minister Amit Shah and LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi recommended name to President Droupadi Murmu

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi met here this evening and is learnt to have recommended the name of the next chief election commissioner (CEC) to the President, sources said.

Besides PM Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi are part of the three-member panel to select the CEC. The committee met here at the Prime Minister's Office in South Block and recommended the name to President Droupadi Murmu.

The sources in the government said the notification announcing the name of the next CEC could be issued "in the next few hours".

Incumbent CEC Rajiv Kumar demits office on Tuesday on attaining the age of 65.

As a matter of precedent, the senior-most Election Commissioner (EC) used



Matter pending in court, govt should have put off meeting: Cong

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress said on Monday that the government should have postponed the meeting of the committee to select the next Chief Election Commissioner in view of the petitions pending before the Supreme Court.

The Congress held a press conference on the day party leader Rahul Gandhi attended the committee meeting and said that the Act, which constitutes this committee, "creates a partisan and non-neutral mechanism for the selection of Election Commissioners".

Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi said

the government wants "only control but not credibility," and the most important aspect for the Election Commission is "credibility."

"Removing or trying to keep the Chief Justice out of the appointment (of CEC) process as an independent entity, the government has made it

P3

to get elevated as the CEC following the retirement of the incumbent.

However, a new law on the appointment of the CEC and ECs came into force in 2023 under which a search committee shortlists five names from among secretary-level officers for consideration and finalisation by the prime minister-led panel.

This law has been challenged in the SC and the next hearing is scheduled on February 19.

After Rajiv Kumar, Gyanesh Kumar is the senior-most election commissioner. His tenure as Election Commissioner is until January 26, 2029.

If Gyanesh Kumar is approved as the next CEC, a new EC could also be appointed to fill the vacancy created by his elevation.

According to sources, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was learnt to have asked the government to defer its decision on the new CEC till the Supreme Court hearing on February 19 on a petition challenging the composition of the selection panel.

Deposit cover limit likely to be raised

MUMBAI: The government is actively considering raising the deposit insurance scheme limit beyond Rs 5 lakh, said the secretary at the Department of Financial Services, M Nagaraju, on Monday. "As and when the government approves, we will notify it. This is under the consideration of the government," the top official told reporters at a press conference in Mumbai when asked to respond to the crisis-hit New India Cooperative Bank.

The secretary reiterated that increasing the insurance deposit insurance is under active consideration.

Deposit insurance, as we know it today, was introduced in India in 1962.

REPORTS P7



Prime Minister Narendra Modi shares a warm hug with the Amir of the State of Qatar, Tamim Bin Hamad AL Thani on his arrival for his second State visit to India, in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

Odisha varsity takes back Nepali students after diplomatic intervention

Students were allegedly forcefully evicted from campus after protest over death of student under suspicious circumstances



Nepali students forced to leave Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) after tensions flare up following the alleged suicide of a female student from Nepal, in Cuttack on Monday. (ANI Photo)

Nepali students staged protests, leading to a harsh crackdown by university authorities. Many were forcibly removed from their hostels and left stranded at railway stations.

Nepal Prime Minister wrote on his Facebook account in Nepali that it has come to his attention through media and social media that a student from Nepal had died in the hostel of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology

(KIIT) University in Odisha and that Nepali students have been forcibly evicted from the hostel.

Oli said that his government is working on this matter through diplomatic channels and is in contact with the relevant authorities in India.

The Nepali Embassy has also called for an independent and impartial investigation into Lamsal's death. The university has reportedly assured full cooperation in

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No paper leak, CBSE warns of action against fake news

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Monday rejected claims of question paper leaks in the ongoing Class 10 and 12 board examinations, terming them as "baseless" and as an attempt to create panic among students and parents.

The CBSE board exams began on February 15, with over 42 lakh students appearing at more than 7,800 centres across India and abroad. According to board officials, a total of 24.12 lakh Class 10 students are taking exams in 84 subjects, while over 17.88 lakh Class 12 students are appearing for exams across 120 subjects.

In an official statement, CBSE said, "It has come to the Board's attention that certain unscrupulous elements are spreading rumours on YouTube, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and other social media platforms regarding paper leaks or claiming access to the 2025 examination question papers. These claims are baseless and are intended to create unnecessary panic."

The Board assured that it has implemented strict measures to ensure a smooth and fair examination process. It also warned

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Delhi shaken by early morning earthquake

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

An earthquake measuring 4.0 on the Richter scale hit Delhi-NCR early Monday at a depth of 5 km, according to the National Centre for Seismology (NCS).

The strong tremors were felt at 5:36 AM. The sudden jolts prompted residents to rush out of their homes in panic.

At New Delhi railway station, a vendor Anish said, "Everything was shaking...customers started screaming..."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged residents of Delhi and surrounding areas to stay calm and follow safety protocols.

In a post on X, the Prime Minister also advised everyone to remain alert for



A 20-25-year-old tree at Jheel Park gets uprooted following an earthquake of 4.0-magnitude with its epicentre at Dhaula Kuan, in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI Photo/Shrikant Singh)

potential aftershocks.

"Tremors were felt in Delhi and nearby areas. Urging everyone to stay calm and follow safety precautions, staying alert for possible aftershocks. Authorities are keeping a close watch on the situation," PM Modi said.

A 20-25-year-old tree was uprooted at Jheel Park in Dhaula Kuan, lo-

cated at the epicentre of this morning's 4.0-magnitude earthquake. Caretakers of the park confirmed the damage caused by the tremors.

Director of the National Centre for Seismology (NCS) Dr OP Mishra assured residents of the national capital that there is nothing to worry about as after-

P3

Twist in Lipsy murder case, police says husband, girlfriend plotted killing

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

In a twist to the murder of Lipsy Mittal, her husband and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Anokh Mittal and his 24-year-old friend woman friend Pratiksha have been arrested by Ludhiana police on Monday for orchestrating the murder.

The Police have also ar-

rested four contract killers hired by the duo—Amritpal Singh alias Balli (26), Gurdeep Singh alias Manni (25), Sonu Singh (24) — all residents of Nandpur, and Sagardeep Singh alias Teji (30) from Dhandari Kalan. Another key accused, Gurpreet Singh alias Gopi, remains absconding.

The crime took place



on Saturday night when Lipsy and Anokh were returning home after attending a party at a resort in Pohir village, along the Ludhiana-Malerkotla highway. As they stopped at a deserted stretch on the Dehlon bypass, the hired assailants, armed with sharp weapons, attacked Lipsy and killed her.

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SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA

Four BJP legislators in West Bengal, including Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari and the party's state general secretary Agnimitra Paul, were suspended from the West Bengal Assembly for 30 days for allegedly tearing up official documents and throwing them at the Speaker while staging a protest in the House. Bankim Ghosh and Biswanath Karak were the other two BJP MLAs to be suspended for alleged un-

ruly behaviour during the ongoing Budget session of the House. This is for the fourth time that Adhikari has been suspended.

Speaker Biman Banerjee suspended the four BJP MLAs till the end of this Budget session or for 30 days, whichever is earlier.

While the Trinamool Congress bristled with outrage, the BJP alleged that this "drama was a conspiracy to ensure that the Leader of the Opposition could not attend the House tomorrow when the Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

was supposed to give her speech."

Suwendu Adhikari alleged that it was he alone who had walked into the well of the House and that Agnimitra Paul had only read out a statement after receiving the Speaker's permission. "Our MLA Biswanath Karak was not even present in the House. This is a conspiracy to exclude our members who are vocal about the mis-governance of Mamata Banerjee Government," he alleged.

The

P3

CONG DISTANCES ITSELF FROM SAM PITRODA'S STATEMENTS ON CHINA

Not the view of INC, says party General Secretary Jairam, reminds BJP of PM Modi giving clean chit to China; BJP slams statements

ANAND SINGH
NEW DELHI

Congress on Monday again distanced itself from the views expressed by Indian Overseas Congress chairman Sam Pitroda, who stirred a hornet nest with his remarks that the threat from China is often blown out of proportion and suggested that India needs to stop considering the neighbouring country as an enemy.

In a post on X, Ramesh said, "The views reportedly expressed by Sam Pitroda on China are most definitely NOT the views of the Indian National Congress."

He said, "China remains our foremost foreign policy, external security, as well as economic challenge. The INC (Indian National Congress) has repeatedly raised questions on the Modi government's approach to China, including the Prime Minister's public clean

'CHINA FOREMOST CHALLENGE'

- China remains our foremost foreign policy, external security, as well as economic challenge, says Jairam Ramesh
- The INC has repeatedly raised questions on the Modi Govt's approach to China, including the PM's public clean chit to it on June 19, 2020., Jairam wrote on X.
- Sam Pitroda has openly revealed the Congress party's agreement with China, says BJP's national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi



chit to it on June 19, 2020. Our most recent statement on China was on 28th January, 2025."

"It is also extremely regrettable that Parliament is being denied an opportunity to discuss the situation and express a collective resolve to meet these challenges effectively," the Congress leader added.

In an interview from US, Pitroda, who is not new to controversies, while speaking on how Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump would be able to control the threats from China stirred a new controversy with his comments giving fresh ammunition to the BJP.

The Indian Overseas Con-

gress chairman said, "I don't understand the threat from China. I think this issue is often blown out of proportion because the US has a tendency to define an enemy. I believe the time has come for all nations to collaborate, not confront. Our approach has been confrontational from the very beginning, and

this attitude creates enemies, which in turn garners support within the country. We need to change this mindset and stop assuming that China is the enemy from day one."

However, soon Congress distanced the party from his comments and also said that China remains India's foremost foreign policy, external security as well as economic challenge.

Earlier, BJP's national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi lashed out at Congress over Sam Pitroda's statement on China saying that his statements are an "insult" to the soldiers who lost their lives in Galwan.

"Sam Pitroda has openly revealed the Congress party's agreement with China. The serious thing is that the kind of thing Sam Pitroda has said is a very deep blow to India's identity, diplomacy and sovereignty" Trivedi said.

Congress's Gaurav Gogoi takes a jibe at Assam CM on allegations against his wife

TDG NETWORK
GUWAHATI

The issue of Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi's wife's alleged links to a Pakistani national as claimed by Assam CM Himanta Sarma has snowballed into a major controversy. On Monday the Congress MP attacked the CM on the allegations saying said that something was bothering the CM and it is natural because he is scared.

Addressing a press conference, Gogoi said that the CM kept 'changing' his stand every day out of fear. He stated that he is in fear about the elections and knows that he will lose his post.

"People of Assam saw the CM's face yesterday. Look at his eyes, it was clear that something was amiss. There is something that is bothering the CM and it is natural because he is scared. He changes his stand every day out of fear...Congress' stand is clear. If they have to investigate anything, they can. We stand firm," Gogoi said addressing the conference.

"The fear among them is due to the elections that will be held 12 months from now. Their defeat is imminent in those elections and he knows this. He knows that



he will lose his post. So, he is scared for his own future when the Congress govt will be formed in Assam in future. He is worried..." Gogoi further added.

The Congress MP also questioned the CM's work done in the last 10 years for the people of Assam.

"For 10 years, people of Assam questioned the state government. But they did not get even one reply. In the last 4 and a half years, people of Assam have been questioning Himanta Biswa Sarma. But he did not answer even one question. But he will have to answer after the 2026 elections. So, he has doubts in his mind today," he further stated.

Gogoi also exuded confidence in the upcoming state elections and said that the

people would go to Congress with a united front to raise their issues.

"In these 12 months, Congress will go to the people with a united front and raise their issues. At the end, people of Assam will win," he said.

Assam's Congress President Bhupen K Borah assured Gogoi that the whole party was with him. He also threatened the probing police officers in that their power would not remain permanent and they would face harsh consequences if Congress came to power.

Meanwhile, the Assam Police registered a case against the Pakistani national Ali Tauqeer Sheikh whom the CM had alleged to be linked to Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi's wife.

USAID was 'funnelling' money into India to instigate protests: BJP MP

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Monday claimed that organisations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) were "funnelling" large sums of money into India to instigate protests.

Chandrasekhar alleged that certain political figures and groups within the country are acting as tools of external forces to hinder India's progress and that they had become weapons in the hands of countries and people who don't want to see India rise.

The BJP leader further called for a united front against these alleged elements and urged citizens to demand accountability.

"Every Indian should come together and ask for these types of people and traitors to be exposed and prosecuted because anybody who is becoming a weapon in the hands of foreign forces is certainly working against the interests of India and Indians," he said.

In a self-made video on X, Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, "This shocking revelation

that organisations like USAID were funnelling Crores of Rupees to organisations in India confirm that all of these protests that we were seeing over the last several years were foreign-funded. They were being instigated and puppet-mastered from across the border and there are people in India, including political leaders, dynasts who have essentially become weapons in the hands of countries and people who don't want to see India rise."

"I have said this before and I am saying it again, India's rise, and transformation over the last 10 years under PM Narendra Modi has not been to the happiness and satisfaction of many people and forces around the world. They are trying their very best to undermine India and slow India's rise," he stated in the video. Adding further, he said, "There are people in India who have become the tools of these types of forces. So, my appeal is, that every Indian should come together and ask for these type of people and traitors to be exposed and them to be prosecuted because anybody who is becoming a weapon in the hands of foreign forces.

PIL in SC seeks guidelines to prevent future stampede

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court in the wake of the recent stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station, seeking to constitute an expert committee to frame guidelines and suggest measures to prevent such incidents in the future.

The PIL sought direction from the Union and State governments to collectively constitute an expert committee to frame guidelines and measures to prevent the incidents of stampedes.

The plea filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari sought direction from Indian Railways to take measures for the safety of passengers at railway stations and platforms by widening corridors, constructing broader overbridges and platforms, and ensuring easy access to platforms through ramps and escalators. During peak hours, any changes to arrival or departure platforms should be strictly avoided.

"Utilising barriers, ropes, and crowd control gates to



manage passenger flow is essential and not to distribute tickets at a time above the number of passengers who may gather and accommodate on a railway station as per to the space available," the plea stated.

The petitioner also sought directions to the Union and the states to implement the report made by the National Disaster Management Authority in 2014 titled "Managing Crowd at Events and Venues of Mass Gathering."

The stampede occurred due to a last-minute change of the departure platform of the train to Prayagraj, said the petitioner, adding that such incidents have also occurred previously as well at

railway stations. "These recurring tragedies highlight the urgent need for enhanced crowd management and safety measures at significant transport hubs such as New Delhi Railway Station," submitted the plea. It further stated, "The government and railway ministry are very well aware that when Maha Kumbh is going on and lakhs of people are boarding from the railway stations from all states. Then the railways should have made adequate arrangements and safety measures. There have been many videos on social media and news reports that show the chaotic condition at the railway stations where the people are suffering.

Akhilesh urges to extend Maha Kumbh, slams UP govt for 'bad' facilities, chaos

TDG NETWORK
KANNAUJ

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday urged the Uttar Pradesh government to extend the dates for Mahakumbh, saying that many devotees have not visited the holy congregation because of "bad" facilities and recent incidents.

Yadav also accused the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath-led government of 'hiding' the death toll of the stampede that happened in Prayagraj on January 29. Speaking to press, Yadav



said, "As per the information received nowadays from people who have returned from there, the facilities there are really bad. CM had said that they are making arrangements for 100 crore people but that many

people haven't even gone, only a few crores have gone but still, all the facilities have gone down the hill, stampede happened, till now, the actual death toll has not come out."

"People spent hours on the road during night due to long traffic jams, so many people lost lives in various accidents. I demand that the time of Kumbh should be extended," Yadav added.

30 people reportedly lost their lives at the stampede that occurred on the occasion of the Mauni Amavasya bathing ritual on January 29.

THE MAHA KUMBH 2025



Devotees gather to take a dip at Triveni Sangam during the ongoing 'Maha Kumbh Mela 2025', in Prayagraj on Monday. As Prayagraj continues to witness a huge footfall of devotees gathering at Maha Kumbh, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that so far, 53 crore devotees have taken a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam and this process will continue for the next nine days. ANI

How Cong's new team is focused on Rahul's narrative to provide leadership to underprivileged

ANAND SINGH
NEW DELHI

Even as Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge carried out a major reshuffling in the grand old party amid back-to-back setbacks in three assembly polls, the party has towed the line of party leader Rahul Gandhi as he has been echoing the sentiment of providing their share as per the population.

Rahul Gandhi has been echoing the voice for providing equal opportunity to the youths as per their population share across the country.

He has also been voicing for the caste-based census across the country.

With the new list, where the party appointed two new general secretaries and nine in-charges, the party has tried to present a balance of caste and religion in the party, which Rahul Gan-



dhi has been advocating for last two years.

The party made former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, an OBC face and Congress Rajya Sabha MP Syed Naseer Hussain, a Muslim face as general secretaries of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh respectively.

Similarly, the party also appointed nine in-charges with three Brahmin face and rest from the SC, OBC and backward and tribal

community.

The party appointed Meenakshi Natrajan as Telangana in-charge, Krishna Allavaru as Bihar in-charge and Girish Chodankar as Tamil Nadu and Puducherry in-charge, all three Brahmin faces and Rajani Patil, a Kunbi Maratha OBC face has been made the in-charge of Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh.

Meanwhile, K Raju, a Dalit face coming from SC community has been made the in-charge of Jharkhand, while BK Hariprasad also an OBC face has been given the charge of Haryana.

Similarly, Ajay Kumar Lallu, who is also the party's OBC face has been given the charge of Odisha while Harish Chaudhary, also an OBC face has been made the in-charge of Madhya Pradesh.

Meanwhile, Saptgiri San-

kar Ulaka, a tribal face from

Odisha has been made the in-charge of Nagaland, Manipur, Sikkim and Tripura.

Similarly, Rajani Patil has been made the in-charge of Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh in the fresh reshuffling in the party.

Even, interestingly, when Rahul Gandhi was appointed General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) as in-charge of the party's two important frontals - Indian Youth Congress and the National Students Union of India (NSUI) in 2007, Natrajan, Allavaru, Chaudhary, Lallu and Raju groomed under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi.

The new reshuffling carried out by Kharge to continue party's General Secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal has made him more stronger as he has cemented his position in the party.

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

There has been ongoing debate within the Congress party over recent organizational changes made by Rahul Gandhi, which include both appointments and removals. These decisions have sparked discussions among leaders and workers, with many questioning the rationale behind these changes. A prevailing concern is whether Rahul Gandhi no longer trusts his North Indian leaders, as he seems to be assigning more significant roles to leaders from South India. A worker from Kota, Rajasthan, has provided an insightful analysis, suggesting that these changes may reflect a shift in strategy or trust. This analysis has resonated with several party members and seems to hold some merit. If Rahul Gandhi himself were



to evaluate this internal debate, he might recognize that the changes may not have been received as he intended. The uncertainty surrounding these decisions could have implications for party cohesion and leadership dynamics moving forward.

There has been considerable discussion and debate within the Congress party regarding the recent appointments and removals made by Congress Nation-

al President Mallikarjun Kharge and other senior leaders. Kharge, hailing from Karnataka, has made several key appointments that have sparked questions about the party's direction. The second most significant position in the party, that of Organization General Secretary, is held by KC Venugopal from Kerala. In a series of moves, Kharge has appointed several South Indian leaders to important roles, leading to speculation that the Congress may be shifting its focus toward southern leadership.

For instance, Kharge has elevated his supporter Syed Nasir Hussain, also from Karnataka, to the position of National General Secretary, entrusting him with the responsibility of Jammu and Kashmir.

Additionally, Kharge has brought back veteran Con-

gress leader BK Hariprasad from Karnataka to manage Haryana. Similarly, Krishna Allavaru, another Karnataka leader, was made the national in-charge of Bihar. These moves have raised questions among Congress workers, with many wondering if this is a strategy to safeguard the Karnataka government or if Kharge and Rahul Gandhi have lost faith in their North Indian leaders.

One of the points of contention is the appointment of Krishna Allavaru, a non-Hindi speaking South Indian, as the in-charge of Bihar, a state with its own unique political landscape. This decision is viewed by many as unusual, especially given that just a few months ago, Mohan Prakash from Rajasthan was assigned the responsibility of Bihar but was removed shortly after.

THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON PAKISTAN AIRSTRIKE ON AFGHANISTAN

77% believe TTP attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will rise post-airstrike.

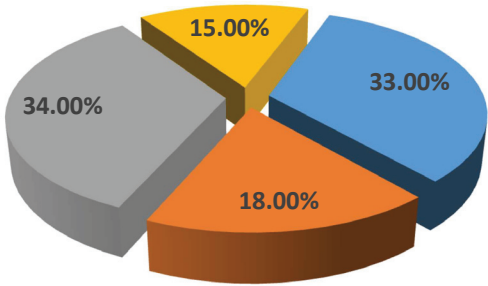
The survey on Pakistan's airstrike in Afghanistan reveals strong opinions. 77% believe TTP attacks will rise, while 76% think Pakistan

struck civilian areas. 74% see Pakistan's army as weak against TTP. Reactions to Taliban's response vary, with 34% expecting retaliation.

The results highlight concerns over escalating regional tensions.

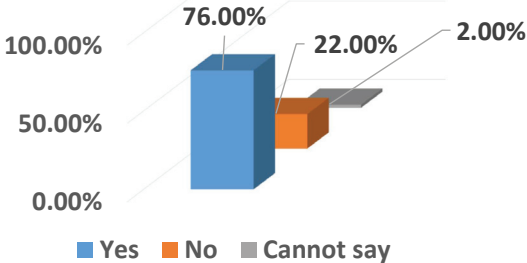
Q1.▶

Pakistan conducted an airstrike on TTP in Afghanistan using F-17 and JF-17 AM fighter jets. What will the Taliban do?



Strongly condemn it
Wait for the right opportunity
Attack Pakistan directly
Cannot say

Q2.◀

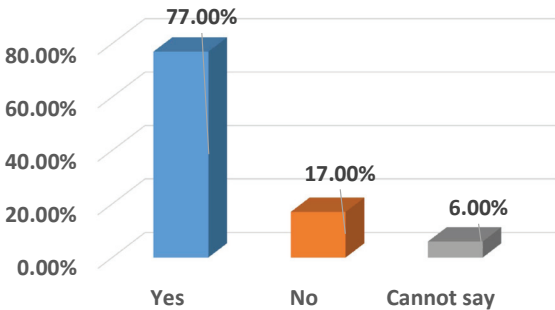


Q2.◀

Afghanistan claims that Pakistani airstrikes killed civilians. Did Pakistan attack civilian areas in Jalalabad?

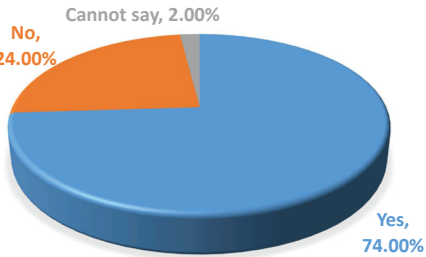
Q3.▶

After this airstrike by Pakistan, will TTP attacks increase in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?



Q4.◀

Does the Pakistani army appear weaker against TTP in tribal areas?



THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON DELHI EARTHQUAKE

75% of respondents felt strong tremors this morning.

An earthquake measuring 4.0 on the Richter scale hit Delhi-NCR early Monday at a depth of 5 km, according to the National Center for Seismology (NCS).

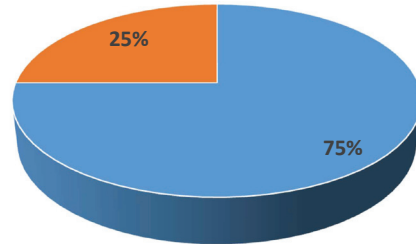
The strong tremors were felt at 5:36 AM. The sudden jolts prompted residents to rush out of their homes in panic. "Earthquake of Magnitude:4.0, Oc-

curred on 17-02-24, 5:36 AM IST, Lat: 28.59°N & Long: 77.16°E, Depth: 5 Km, Location: 9km E of New Delhi," NCS posted on X.

Q1.▶

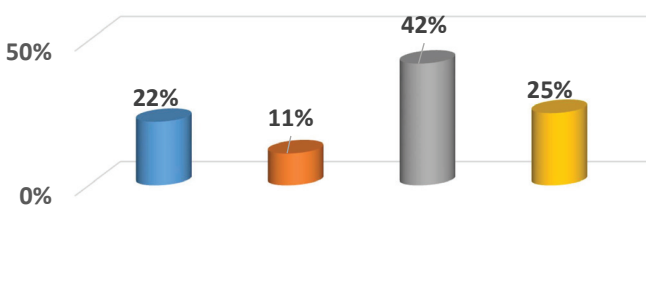
Did you feel the strong tremors this morning?

Yes
No



Q2.◀

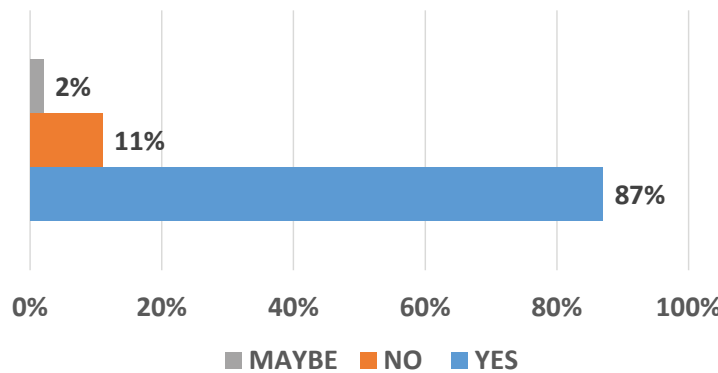
What was your immediate response to the earthquake?



Didn't move in shock
Hid under a table
Rushed out of my home
Didn't feel the quake

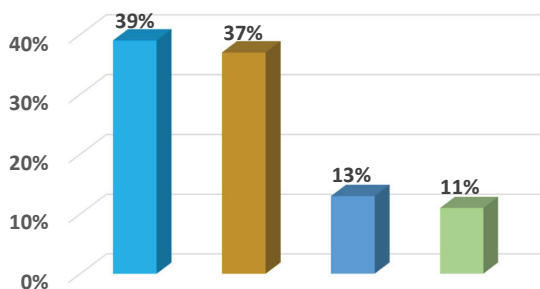
Q3.▶

Are you aware of the steps that should be taken during an earthquake?



Q4.◀

Is the govt prepared for earthquake management in delhi?



Yes
No
Maybe
Can't say

Matter pending in court: Congress

CONTINUED FROM P1

clear, they want only control but not credibility. The most important thing for the Election Commission is credibility," he said.

Party leader Ajay Maken said the meeting of the panel should have been postponed.

"Today, a meeting related to the election of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) was held. The Congress party believes that since the Supreme Court had said that the matter would be heard on February 19th and a decision would be given on what the constitution of the committee should be like. In such a situation, today's meeting should have been postponed," he said.

Singhvi said the Chief Election Commissioner and the Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Office, Terms of Office), Act 2023, creates "a partisan mechanism" for the selection of Election Commissioners.

"At the outset, we cannot ignore that this Committee is in clear and direct violation of the Supreme Court's

Judgement of March 2nd, 2023 where a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India declared that the CEC and the EC's should be appointed by a Committee comprising of the PM, the LOP and the CJI," he said.

Singhvi said the Court, highlighting the need for the independence of the Committee that appoints Election Commissioners, had said "the executive alone being involved in the appointment, ensures that the Commission becomes and remains a partisan Body and a branch of the executive. The independence of the Commission is intimately interlinked with the process of appointment".

"The Election Commissioners, including the Chief Election Commissioner blessed with nearly infinite powers and who are to abide by the fundamental rights, must be chosen not by the Executive exclusively and particularly without any objective yardstick," Singhvi said, quoting the court order.

"Para 119. In order to allow independence in the

functioning of the Election Commission as a Constitutional body, the office of Chief Election Commissioners as well as the Election Commissioners have to be insulated from the executive interference," he said.

Singhvi said the committee constituted by the government, "which has been purposefully balanced, or unbalanced if we may say so," with a two-third vote being given to the Centre, "directly offends these clear and precise caveats of the Supreme Court of India" and is "therefore neither bona fide in its purpose or constitution".

He said the case challenging the Act is currently pending before the Supreme Court which has issued notice.

"The matter is listed for February 19, 2025 i.e. in less than 48 hours. It is our suggestion that the Central Government adjourn this meeting until after the hearing and instruct its counsels to appear and assist the court so that the hearing may be an effective one. Only then, can a decision be taken in earnest," he said.

Delhi shaken by earthquake

CONTINUED FROM P1

shocks of lesser magnitude are "natural" and will heal by the earthquake of magnitude 4.0 that had struck Delhi early Monday.

Mishra stated the epicentre of the earthquake was in Dhaula Kuan, which falls under a seismic zone.

"Delhi has been experiencing minor earthquakes. This earthquake occurred in Dhaula Kuan. In 2007, an earthquake of 4.7 magnitude had occurred there.

No paper leak, says CBSE

CONTINUED FROM P1

against engaging with such misinformation, stating, "Students found involved in such activities will face consequences under CBSE's Unfair Means rules and relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)." CBSE is closely monitoring the situation and work-

ing with law enforcement agencies to take action against those responsible for spreading false information. "CBSE will pursue legal action against anyone found responsible for spreading misinformation to uphold the integrity of the examination process," the statement added.

The Board urged students, parents, and schools to rely only on official communications available on the CBSE website (www.cbse.gov.in) and verified public channels. It also advised parents to guide their children against believing or engaging with unverified news

There is nothing to worry about. It is a seismic zone there," Mishra said.

Elaborating on the cause of the earthquake, the NCS Director said, "The earthquake occurred due to in-situ material heterogeneity... After 4.0 magnitude, the aftershock will be less by 1.2 magnitudes; it is natural as it will heal it."

Hours after the earthquake hit Delhi, tremors were felt in Bihar at around 8.02 am on Monday, and it originated from just 10 km under the Earth's surface.

Bengal BJP cries conspiracy

CONTINUED FROM P1

BJP leaders were protesting against alleged attempts to stall Saraswati Puja in various educational institutions in the State. An adjournment motion was brought by the BJP to highlight alleged intimidation at some places in the state over organising Saraswati Puja earlier this month.

"The way the Leader of the Opposition and some MLAs behaved today is condemnable. They tore official documents and threw them to the Speaker's chair. Trinamool Congress chief whip Nirmal Ghosh brought a motion to suspend them for 30 days. The motion was put to vote. The MLAs voted for this, and it was carried. Accordingly, they (BJP legislators) have been suspended for 30 days or till the end of the session,

whichever is earlier," Biman Banerjee, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, told media persons.

He said that he had repeatedly warned the MLAs against unruly behaviour. "I told Adhikari, being the Leader of Opposition, if you behave like this, you will face punishment." However, Adhikari along with other BJP MLAs continued to protest. After this, they staged a walk-out. Banerjee stressed that if they walked out, then they may face punishment but the MLAs ignored his warning.

Senior Trinamool leader and Minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay alleged that BJP MLAs, led by Adhikari entered the well of the House and raised slogans after the Speaker refused to hold a discussion on the adjournment motion brought by Paul.

"The way attempts were

made to stall Saraswati Puja in various educational institutions this year, was unprecedented. Even the British didn't do this before 1947. BJP women legislators brought an adjournment motion following business rules of the House. BJP MLAs staged a protest and raised slogans against this anti-Hindu government for around 10 minutes. We disregarded the business of the House, tore the papers and threw them. We staged a walk-out," Adhikari later told reporters.

In January this year, the Calcutta High Court had to order the police to provide security for Saraswati pujas inside a college campus in Kolkata.

BJP leader Agnimitra Paul said: "Mamata Banerjee Government is anti-Hindu. Everyone knows it. The Hindus are being cornered in West Bengal.

Twist in Lipsy Mittal murder case

CONTINUED FROM P1

Initially, Anokh told police that unidentified miscreants had attacked the couple, looted their car, mobile, and jewellery before fleeing. However, investigations revealed that he was the mastermind behind the murder.

Police officials stated that Anokh conspired with Pratiksha, with whom he was allegedly having an extramarital affair. The duo hired five contract killers for Rs 2.50 lakh, paying Rs 50,000 in advance, with the rest to be paid after the murder.

Odisha varsity takes back Nepali students

CONTINUED FROM P1

the matter.

Later, Nepal Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba held a telephonic conversation with Indian Ambassador to Nepal over the issue. Deuba stated that she held a telephonic conversation with Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Naveen Srivastava regarding the issue.

"After the news of Nepali student Prakriti Lamsal's death in the hostel of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) University in Odisha, India, and then the Nepalese student being shifted to hostel, came to the media, we immediately took this issue seriously and started diplomatic initiatives. Regarding this incident, I have been contacting the concerned body this morning.

This morning I instructed the Nepali Ambassador to India, Dr. Shankar Sharmalai, to understand the reality of the incident and take necessary action regarding the problem faced by Nepali students. He is working accordingly and has recently published a communique from the Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi," Deuba said in a post on X. Fur-

ther adding, "Similarly, this afternoon I also had a phone call with the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Mr. Navin Srivastava. He has also informed about the necessary initiatives and coordination measures for the safety of Nepali students. The Ministry of External Affairs is taking initiative in this matter and would like to provide information about the latest situation."

Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, issued a release announcing that it has agreed to allow over 700 Nepali students to return to their hostels and resume their studies.

The Nepali Embassy in New Delhi issued a statement, confirming that KIIT had agreed to provide hostel accommodations and continue classes for Nepali students. "The embassy requested the university to ensure the safety of Nepali students and make arrangements for them to stay in hostels while continuing their studies," the statement read. "In response, the university has agreed to these requests and assured that classes will be conducted as usual."



School students of Visva-Bharati University dance during 'Basanta Abahan' (to welcome spring), at Santiniketan in Birbhum on Monday. ANI

NEP ROW: TAMIL NADU DEPUTY CM ACCUSES CENTRE OF IMPOSING HINDI

Centre is attempting Hindi imposition on state, alleges Udhayanidhi

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leader Udhayanidhi Stalin on Monday hit out at the BJP-led Union government, which he alleged was attempting a Hindi imposition on the Southern state. "The Union Government has not allotted funds to us in the union budget and even Tamil Nadu's name is not there in the budget. After the cyclonic disaster happened in Tamil Nadu, we asked for funds from the central government to release funds, but they still have not allotted it; only SDRF funds were given to us. Tamil Nadu people are watching their actions and when the time comes, they

'OUR CHIEF MINISTER WILL NOT ACCEPT IT'

- "Education was in the state list before and it is in the concurrent list now. The Union government is trying to impose Hindi and our Chief Minister will not accept it, the deputy chief minister of Tamil Nadu said.
- DMK leader Saravanan Annadurai also hit out at Tamil Nadu BJP chief K Annamalai for supporting Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's statement on the New Education Policy (NEP).
- DMK MP Kanimozhi said, "All those in the BJP should understand the difference between taking a language as a preferred language and studying it when there is no other way and when there is a need to study it."



will reply to them," Stalin said.

"Education was in the state list before and it is in the concurrent list now. The Union government is trying to impose Hindi

and our Chief Minister will not accept it. The Union government is trying to impose Hindi on us and please don't impose Hindi on us," the deputy chief minister of Tamil Nadu

UNION GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING NEP: UNION MIN PRADHAN

New Delhi: Following the allegations of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government of language imposition and funds not been released for the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) in Tamil Nadu, Union Education Minister Dharmendra said that the Central government is committed to implementing National Education Policy. Dharmendra Pradhan said, "To create competition among students, to create a level-playing field, we have to come to a common platform. NEP is the new aspirational common platform. I respect all languages. This NEP, envisioned by PM Modi is giving emphasis to the mother tongue." He further said that though Tamil was one of the oldest languages there was nothing wrong if students in Tamil Nadu receive a multilingual education. "Tamil is one of the oldest languages of our civilisation. But what is wrong if a student in Tamil Nadu will learn multilingual aspect in education? It can be Tamil, English and other Indian languages.



said.

DMK leader Saravanan Annadurai also hit out at Tamil Nadu BJP chief K Annamalai for supporting Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's statement

on the New Education Policy (NEP) and refused the need to study Hindi.

Annadurai alleged that Annamalai was made the chief of Tamil Nadu BJP so that he could be a "puppet".

YSRCP accuses TDP of using 'intimidation tactics' during municipal bypolls

TDG NETWORK
AMARAVATHI

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders TJR Sudhakar Babu and Kasu Mahesh Reddy, former MLA, have strongly condemned the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)'s alleging "undemocratic actions" and "intimidation tactics" in the ongoing municipal by-polls.

Addressing the media separately, they alleged that TDP is undermining democracy through violence, coercion, and false cases, particularly in the context of municipal elections. They warned of the severe consequences of such actions for the state's democratic health.

TJR Sudhakar Babu accused TDP for using force and intimidation to manipulate municipal elections, including securing vice-chairperson positions de-



spite lacking a majority. He highlighted how TDP leaders "resorted to violence against YSRCP councillors, including kidnappings, house demolitions, and threats, to ensure their hold on power."

He further emphasized the complicity of local police, who failed to intervene, allowing illegal activities to continue unchecked. He expressed concern that these tactics represent a dangerous disregard for constitutional principles.

He warned that the people of Andhra Pradesh would soon deliver a fitting verdict

against TDP's undemocratic practices.

Kasu Mahesh Reddy echoed similar sentiments, criticizing TDP for its "hypocrisy" and descent into "regressive" politics. He recalled the 100 per cent victory YSRCP achieved in municipal elections under the leadership of former Chief Minister YS Jagan, contrasting this with TDP's failure to uphold democratic principles.

Mahesh Reddy specifically highlighted the incidents in Pedakurapadu, where TDP leaders orchestrated attacks on YSRCP councillors, including the kidnapping and intimidation of councillors and even the ransacking of one councillor's house. He praised the resilience of 29th Ward Councillor Munira and her family for standing firm with YSRCP despite facing intimidation and threats.

Andhra CM reviews GBS situation after state reports first death

TDG NETWORK
AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday held a review meeting at his residence in Undavalli to assess the situation concerning Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) in the state.

A woman in Andhra Pradesh has succumbed to Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS), marking the first reported death due to this rare condition in the state. The deceased, identified as Kamamma, was undergoing treatment at Guntur Government General Hospital (GGH) and passed away on Sunday.

The woman, a resident of Komarolu Mandal in Prakasam District, was diagnosed with the syndrome. She developed high fever and experienced paralysis in her



legs.

As her condition worsened, her family rushed her to Guntur Government General Hospital (GGH), Guntur.

The patient, identified as Kamamma, passed away on Sunday. Superintendent of Guntur Government General Hospital (GGH), Dr SSV Ramana spoke to ANI about the case.



"A lady from the Prakasam district named Kamamma, aged 55 years, succumbed to Guillain-Barre syndrome yesterday evening. She had a cardiac arrest because of the GB syndrome affecting the respiratory and cardiac muscles."

"She was admitted to the hospital on February 3 and treated for three days. On February 10, she was given

ventilatory support after which she was provided with haemoglobin. Her condition, however, became unstable and she later succumbed to cardiac arrest due to her syndrome," he said. He said another patient named John is on the ventilator after also being diagnosed with Guillain-Barre syndrome, but appears to be in a stable condition.

Karnataka Dy CM hits out at LoP for criticising his city rounds for inspection

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday lashed out at the Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly and BJP Leader R Ashoka for criticising his rounds for inspecting road construction in the city and questioned if BJP Chief Ministers conducting rounds in Bengaluru are for photo shoots.

"When BJP CMs were doing city rounds, R Ashok accompanied them. Was all that a gimmick? Was it for photo shoot? BJP is jobless, and hence it is nitpicking," he said while speaking to reporters at his Sadashivanagar residence.

He was replying to R Ashok's social media post alleging that his city rounds

were a photo shoot rather than genuine inspection.

"We are doing our job. Whitetopping is a big-budget project. It is imperative for us to ensure that the project is progressing well and hence I wanted to I oversee it personally. We would like to complete the Rs 1700 crore project on time," he said.

He said that the aid under Anna Bhagya and Gruhalakshmi schemes had been pending for three months and would be released soon. "We walk the talk," he said. Earlier in a post on X, R Ashoka asked DK Shivakumar if taking photos in the name of whitetopping work solves Bengaluru's problems.

"As the Minister for Bengaluru Development, if you truly care about Brand

Bengaluru, you have a lot of work to do. Despite spending Rs 660 crore, thousands of potholes are still open across Bengaluru city. The summer season, from March to April, is a good time to close potholes and repair roads. If the government does not wake up now, it is guaranteed that potholes will once again become death traps for the public in the next monsoon season," R Ashoka said in the post.

"Last year, you colluded with the tanker mafia and extorted people. Are you taking any action to ensure that the people of Bengaluru do not suffer for water during the summer season this year, or are you leaving the people to the mercy of the tanker mafia?" he further asked.

He said that Dy CM Shivakumar should take precautions this year to prevent water from flowing into Tamil Nadu from the KRS network.

"No matter how much water is released, it is guaranteed that the people of Tamil Nadu will take it. Prepare for a legal fight now. Get ready to present a strong argument in favour of Karnataka. By the way, you were nowhere to be seen as Deputy Chief Minister in the pre-Budget meetings held by CM Siddaramaiah. Did you even make an effort to convince the Chief Minister about what projects Bengaluru city needs in the Budget and how much funding will be required for them, or did you forget your duty in the tussle for a chair?" he asked.

Man sentenced to life for rape-murder of British-Irish national in 2017

TDG NETWORK
MARGAO

A sessions court in Goa sentenced Vikat Bhagat to life imprisonment for the rape and murder of a British-Irish national who was found dead near a beach in Goa in 2017.

Reacting to the imprisonment, investigating officer Inspector Filomeno Costa said, "The main part of the investigation was that we cordoned off the area and called the forensic team and we collected scientific evidence...we had many challenges. As the investigating officer, I was present in court at every hearing...today the court has given its verdict and the accused has been

sentenced to life imprisonment."

Advocate Vikram Varma, representing the victim's family, said that the police have done a very good job in this case.

He further said that tourism will suffer if the police in any country protect criminals.

"...If the police in any country try to protect criminals, tourism will suffer. But here the police have done a very good job in showing that if a crime takes place, they will take action," Varma said.

Bhagat was found guilty of murder, rape, robbery and destruction of evidence. The victim, was discovered dead in an isolated field in Canacona, Goa in 2017.

BJP alleges anti-national conspiracy after Hamas' leaders' posters seen in Kerala fest

TDG NETWORK
PALAKKAD

The photos of Hamas leaders were found displayed at the top of elephants during a cultural festival in Kerala's Palakkad. The regional festival which is called 'Thirithala' by the locals and is organised every year. As per the locals the event is a yearly fest which is organised by the people of the Thirithala panchayat.

The organisers claimed that these photos were put by some of the groups which participated in the festival. The closing ceremony of the festival was celebrated on Sunday and several groups came up to become a part of it.

BJP Kerala president K Surendran alleged that anti-



national organisations and radical elements are working in the state of Kerala. He added that all the activities are being done by the support of incumbent CPI(M) government for the purpose of vote bank politics. Surendran said that only BJP is against the anti-national and terror activities in Kerala.

BJP Kerala president K Surendran alleged that anti-national organisations and radical elements are working in the state of Kerala.

Surendran said while speaking to media on Monday, "Radical elements and anti-national organizations are working in Kerala with the support and help of the CPI-M government. The tragic incident happened to criminal radical elements for vote bank politics. So, only the BJP in Kerala is working against the anti-

national and terror organizations."

Earlier in his post the BJP leader posted a video of the event and said, "One year ago, when BJP warned against a rally in Kerala where a Hamas leader virtually participated, the LDF govt took no action. Now, in Palakkad, at a Urus festival, terrorists who killed thousands were glorified-pictures of Ismail Haniyeh & Yahya Sinwar were paraded on elephants, where a Communist Minister and a former Congress MLA were also present." "What message is being sent here? Why is Pinarayi Vijayan silent again? If he has even an ounce of spine left, take action! If not, just resign and accept that you are a total 'Parajayan'".

Three women killed, eight injured as bus collides with autorickshaw in Guntur

TDG NETWORK
GUNTUR

Three women were killed and eight others were injured after an Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (AP-SRTC) bus collided with an autorickshaw in Guntur district, police said on Monday.

The accident occurred in Chebrolu mandal area of the district.

The deceased were identified as Aruna, Nacharamma, and Seetharavamma -- all residents of Shuddapalli village in Chebrolu mandal.

According to officials, the accident occurred when an RTC bus collided with an autorickshaw carrying labourers to work in a chilli field in Neerukonda village.

The three women labourers travelling in the autorickshaw died on the spot.

Five others, including the auto driver, were injured in the accident and were rushed to Guntur General Hospital for treatment.

The Chebrolu police have registered a case and are investigating the circumstances surrounding the accident.

Andhra Pradesh Transport Minister Mandali Ramprasad Reddy expressed shock and grief over the incident and directed officials to provide better medical treatment to the injured at Guntur General Hospital (GGH).

He also conveyed his condolences to the families of the deceased agricultural labourers.

No Marathi school will be shut, assures Maharashtra CM Fadnavis

TDG NETWORK
JALGAON

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis reaffirmed the government's commitment to preserving Marathi education, stating that no Marathi school would be closed.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, CM said, "We have constantly given instructions that no

Marathi school should be closed. Secondly, we have made it compulsory to teach Marathi in schools, be it Marathi or Hindi schools. And we are setting up a mechanism to ensure that this instruction is followed properly..."

Ahead of this, speaking about the Maharashtra government forming a committee against 'love jihad', Chief Min-



ister Devendra Fadnavis said that these incidents were "very serious and action must be taken."

CM Fadnavis said, "The Supreme Court has also shown the reality of love jihad in its decision and endorsed it. And even in a state like Maharashtra, we are constantly seeing that such cases are increasing.

First of all, we all should understand that

it is not wrong for a person of one religion to marry a person of another religion. But marrying someone by lying and showing false identity is wrong. These incidents that are happening are very serious, action must be taken on this."

The Maharashtra government has set up a seven-member committee to explore legal

options for a potential law against forced religious conversions and 'love jihad'. A panel led by the Director General of Police (DGP) includes senior officials from key departments such as women and child welfare, minority affairs, law and judiciary, social justice, special assistance, and home affairs to probe the matter.

The committee will

review similar laws in other states and suggest legal provisions to address complaints related to forced conversions and love jihad.

Earlier, Union Minister Ramdas Athawale and other BJP leaders on Saturday welcomed Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis' decision to form a committee to address the issue of 'love jihad'.

BJP SHOULD DECIDE IF THEY ARE RUNNING GOVT OR NOT: ATISHI

Atishi criticised BJP for having no clear plan for Delhi’s development.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Former Delhi CM and AAP leader Atishi has criticized the BJP for its lack of clarity on governance in the capital, questioning whether the party is running the government.

In a statement, Atishi said, “I want to ask the BJP to decide whether they are running the government or not. When there are power cuts, the BJP people say that Atishi is the caretaker CM, she is responsible for this, but when the machine comes to Yamuna, they say that the BJP and LG are running the government. They should decide whether they are running the government or not...”

She went on to accuse the BJP of not having any vision or plan for Delhi.

“BJP cannot run the government in Delhi, Narendra Modi knows that not even one of his 48 MLAs can run the government.

DELAY IN APPOINTING A CM

- Atishi pointed out the BJP’s failure to appoint a Chief Minister despite having 48 MLAs.
- She accused BJP councillors of corruption during their 15 years in the Delhi Municipal Corporation.
- AAP spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar said the BJP’s delay in forming a government shows their inability to govern.
- BJP won 48 seats in the Delhi election, while AAP’s seat count dropped to 22.



He can only loot the money of the people of Delhi,” she remarked.

Atishi further criticized the BJP for failing to appoint a Chief Minister, despite their 48 selected legislators.

“Even after 10 days, PM Modi can’t trust the 48 selected legislators, and make one of them a CM,” she added. Atishi also referred to BJP’s years in power at the Delhi Municipal Corpora-

tion, accusing its councillors of corruption.

“After being in power for 15 years in the Delhi Municipal Corporation, all the BJP Councillors looted the people and the MCD,” she claimed.

Chief National Spokesperson AAP of AAP, Priyanka Kakkar, also from AAP, weighed in, “Why should the people of Delhi be worried about the internal strife of BJP? When BJP is taking

10 days to give a Chief Minister and cabinet, imagine how much time they will take to take any decision for the people of Delhi?”

The BJP won a historic mandate in Delhi polls, returning to power in the national capital after 27 years by ousting AAP. It secured a two-thirds majority bagging 48 out of 70 seats, while AAP’s tally saw a massive drop at 22 from its previous tally of 62.

AAP slams BJP’s CM delay, says party has ‘no face’ to run govt

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Launching a fresh attack on the BJP over its delay in announcing the chief minister and the cabinet for Delhi, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday said the saffron party has “no face” to run the government. Addressing a press conference, senior AAP leader and Delhi’s acting Chief Minister Atishi accused the BJP of lacking a credible leader to govern the national capital.

“It’s been ten days since the election results were announced. People thought that the BJP would declare its chief minister and the cabinet on February 9 and begin developmental works immediately. But it is now clear that they have no face to run Delhi,” she said.

BJP readies for Delhi govt formation by 20th February

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

The suspense continues over who the BJP high command will announce as the new Chief Minister of Delhi. The decision will be made on Wednesday, 11 days after the election results. This delay in selecting a Chief Minister is not new for BJP-ruled states, as similar delays have occurred in the past.

The swearing-in ceremony is scheduled for 20 February at Ramlila Maidan, where several key leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Chief Ministers from 20 states, will be present. The event is being prepared to be a grand occasion. However, there is still uncertainty about whether Prime Minister Modi will address the gathering.

The names of observers for the BJP Legislature Party meeting on Wednesday are expected to be announced soon. If there is no further delay, the Chief Minister’s name is likely to be revealed on 19 February when the party holds a meeting with its MLAs. The Chief Minister will also announce the



There is much speculation about who will be chosen as Chief Minister. Names such as State President Subhash Sachdeva, Vijendra Gupta, Rekha Gupta, Shikha Rai, Mohan Singh Bisht, Ashish Sood, Pravesh Verma, and Manjinder Singh Sirsa are being discussed.

names of the other ministers in the cabinet. The cabinet will include the Chief Minister and up to six other ministers.

There is much speculation about who will be chosen as Chief Minister. Names such as State President Subhash Sachdeva, Vijendra Gupta, Rekha Gupta, Shikha Rai, Mohan Singh Bisht, Ashish Sood, Pravesh Verma,

and Manjinder Singh Sirsa are being discussed. Some sources suggest that BJP may even bring in a completely new face for the position, similar to what happened in Rajasthan. In addition to the Chief Minister, several winning MLAs from other parties are hoping to be appointed as ministers. The new government is expected to be formed by 26 February.

‘Sewage flow to Yamuna in Delhi to be stopped in 2 years’



TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will make all the sewage treatment plants in the city, including six that are being newly set up, fully functional to completely check the flow of sewage and industrial effluents into the Yamuna in the next two years, and clean the river by December 2027, Additional Chief Secretary Navin Chaudhary said on Monday. During a visit to oversee the work to clean the Yamuna, Chaudhary, who is in charge of the irrigation and flood control department, said commitments have been made at the highest level for cleaning the river in three years.

The entire 57-km stretch of the Yamuna in Delhi, from Haryana where it enters the city to the Uttar Pradesh border where it exits, will be cleaned, he said.

Addressing a celebratory gathering over the Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) victory in the recent Delhi Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said the Yamuna, suffering from heavy pollution, will be cleaned no matter how much effort or time it takes.

Chaudhary said three-

four things, including the removal of trash and weed, and checking the flow of untreated sewage and industrial effluents through fully-functional sewage treatment plants (STPs), need to be ensured to clean the river.

“Seven machines have been deployed to remove solid waste, water hyacinth and weed from the river and this work will go on for the next few months,” he said.

Parallely, the target is to modernise and reboot around a dozen STPs and complete the construction of six such plants by the end of 2026, he told reporters.

“Strict action will be taken if any untreated sewage is found discharged into the Yamuna when all the STPs are fully functional by December 2026,” Chaudhary said.

Concrete steps will be taken to check the flow of industrial effluents into the river, for which the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the industry department will work together, he added.

“Industrial units releasing untreated effluents into the Yamuna will have to shut down,” the additional chief secretary warned.

Delhi could again see 3 BJP CMs in next five years, says Rai

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Taking a dig at the BJP over its delay in selecting a chief minister for the national capital, senior AAP leader and former Delhi minister Gopal Rai on Monday predicted that Delhi could again see three different CMs in the next five years like before. Addressing a press conference, Rai said the BJP despite its decisive victory is struggling to choose a leader, reflecting deep internal divisions within the party.

“Even after 10 days, they are not able to choose a CM, which shows they do not have a face. The reality is that history could repeat itself and we may see three chief ministers in the next five years just as it happened during the last BJP govern-



ment in Delhi,” he said.

Rai reiterated that the AAP would act as a strong opposition and ensure the BJP fulfils its promises to the people of Delhi.

“The BJP used all its tactics during the campaign in collusion with the Election Commission. Despite all their power, the people of Delhi stood with us and we are thankful for that. In terms of seats, there is a difference, but we have decided that AAP will stand with

people and raise their voices against the BJP,” he said.

The AAP leader also accused the BJP of internal power struggles, suggesting that whoever becomes the CM will face resistance from other factions within the party.

“The indecision over the CM’s post shows how many power groups are working within the BJP. No matter who is chosen, the other groups will try to disrupt their leadership and history will repeat itself,” he said.

With the BJP yet to finalize its CM candidate, Rai announced that AAP would begin working on strengthening its ground-level support. “We were waiting for the BJP to make its decision before finalizing our plan, but we have run out of patience.

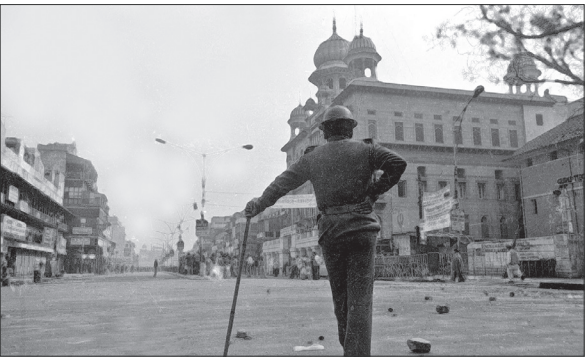
1984 riots: SC directs Centre, Delhi to file SLPs in 6 acquittals

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Union and the Delhi government to file Statutory Leave Petitions (SLPs) in connection with six cases in which various accused persons of the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots had been granted acquittals.

The appeals against various acquittals in the anti-Sikh riots cases had earlier been dismissed by the Delhi High Court.

In today’s hearing, the court was told that out of a total of eight acquittal cases, SLPs have been filed in two, while six are yet to be filed. Further, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Aishwarya Bhati informed the Court that the State has already asked the prosecution to file



SLPs in those six remaining cases.

After considering the States’ submission, a bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan directed the Union and Delhi governments to file SLPs in such cases within a time of six weeks.

The top court also directed the Delhi High Court’s registry to submit a status report on certain other anti-Sikh riot

cases in which the High Court had earlier taken suo moto cognisance.

The court has listed the matter to be heard next on March 17. The Court was hearing a 2016 plea filed by one Gurlal Singh Kahlon that had prompted the top court to form a Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by Justice SN Dhingra for the re-examination of 186 reopened

cases in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots that took the lives of many.

Last week, the top court had said that appeals challenging the acquittals of accused persons in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots cases need to be filed seriously by prosecution agencies and not just for the sake of it. Further, it had also criticised prosecution agencies for having failed to pursue the cases (in appeals) in a serious manner.

Today, after considering submissions of the petitioner, the court directed the State to file SLPs before it in connection with the concerned riot cases within six weeks.

The petitioner was represented through Senior Advocate HS Phoolka, Advocates Amarjeet Singh Bedi, Gaganmeet Singh Sachdeva and Varun Chugh.

CRPF deployed at New Delhi station after stampede

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Delhi Police were deployed on Monday at the New Delhi Railway station to manage the crowd situation.

CRP will also be cooperating with the Delhi Police for additional help, as per official sources. Inspection is being carried out at the station by senior officers of CRP.

This comes after a stampede took place at the New Delhi Railway station and claimed 18 lives leaving several injured.

As per Delhi Police, the confusion happened because of the announcement of the

trains having the same initial name starting with ‘Prayagraj’.

Police further said that the announcement of the Prayagraj Special arriving at Platform 16 led to confusion because Prayagraj Express was already at Platform 14.

BJP MP Dinesh Sharma expressed his deep concerns over the loss of lives and urged the opposition to refrain from seeking political gains.

“I would say that it is a very sad incident. The government is concerned about this issue. The railway department, as well as the central government, has done relief work, and whatever help could be given, they are also doing it,” Sharma said.

BJP tops income list of national parties for FY 2023-24 with Rs 4,340.47 cr: ADR

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The BJP reported the highest income among national parties in the financial year 2023-24, declaring total earnings of Rs 4,340.47 crore, according to poll rights body ADR. The amount accounted for 74.57 per cent of the total income of six national parties during the period under review, the report by Association of

Democratic Reforms (ADR) said.

“The BJP declared a total income of Rs 4,340.47 crore during FY 2023-24 but spent only 50.96 per cent of it, amounting to Rs 2,211.69 crore. The total income of Congress was Rs 1,225.12 crore, while its expenditure for the year was Rs 1,025.25 crore or 83.69 per cent of its total income,” the report said.

A large portion of the



income for national parties came from donations through electoral bonds.

While the BJP received the

highest amount, securing Rs 1,685.63 crore, the Congress received Rs 828.36 crore, and the Aam Aadmi

Party (AAP) Rs 10.15 crore.

Collectively, these three parties raised Rs 2,524.1361 crore -- ₹43.36 per cent of their total income -- through the electoral bond scheme, which the Supreme Court struck down as “unconstitutional and manifestly arbitrary” in May last year.

As per the data shared by the State Bank of India in response to an RTI application filed by the ADR,

Rs 4,507.56 crore worth of electoral bonds were redeemed by various political parties in the 2023-24 fiscal. The national parties accounted for 55.99 per cent -- Rs 2,524.1361 crore -- of this amount.

The report said the maximum expenditure by the Congress was made towards election-related expenses, amounting to Rs 619.67 crore, followed by Rs 340.702 crore spent on

administrative and general expenses.

In comparison, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) spent Rs 56.29 crore on administrative and general expenses and Rs 47.57 crore on employee costs.

Among the national parties, six declared receiving a total of Rs 2,669.87 crore from donations and contributions.

The report also noted that

out of these six parties, only Congress (Rs 58.56 crore) and CPI(M) (Rs 11.32 crore) declared receiving a total income of Rs 69.88 crore from the sale of coupons.

The audit reports of CPI(M), Congress and BJP were submitted with delays ranging from 12 to 66 days.

The most common expenditure among national parties was on elections and administrative expenses, the report said.

'NEVER EXPERIENCED SUCH TREMORS', RESIDENTS JOLTED AS QUAKE HITS CITY

The 4.0-magnitude quake hit Dhaula Kuan at 5:36 am, 5 km deep.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Many Delhi residents were startled by strong jolts after a 4.0-magnitude earthquake struck the national capital 5.36 am and adjoining regions on Monday morning. The strong tremors triggered by the earthquake prompted several residents of Delhi to rush out of their homes. It originated just 5 km below the earth's surface.

Anil Kumar, a resident of Sita Ram Bazar, said he never experienced such tremors before.

"I felt a strong vibration and got scared. My wife and I immediately woke up our child and rushed outside," Kumar said.

"I am a heart patient, so I panicked even more," he added.

The epicentre of the quake was in the Jheel Park area of Dhaula Kuan and there were some reports of people hearing a loud sound as the ground shook.

Another Sita Ram Bazar resident, Sundar Lal, initially mistook the noise for monkeys on the terrace.



A 20-25 year old tree at Jheel Park gets uprooted following an earthquake of 4.0-magnitude with its epicentre at Dhaula Kuan, in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

"At first, we thought there were monkeys on our terrace making noise but then we realised it was an earthquake, so we all ran outside," he said.

"It was a very strong earthquake, and we were all terrified. But thankfully it didn't last long," he added. The National Center for Seismology said the earthquake struck at a focal depth of five kilometres at 5:36 am. There were no immediate reports of any damage or injuries.

A CCTV footage from the Budh Vihar area showed that as soon as the earthquake struck, a car's horn honked on its own.

Deepa, a resident of West Delhi, said she was jolted

by the tremors and the loud sound.

"A similar earthquake occurred in 2012 but this one felt more intense. We were all very scared," she said.

Anil, a resident of Nehru Nagar, said that the moment he felt the tremor, he ran out of his house with his two-year-old daughter.

"There was a loud sound and strong jolts. My wife and I were very scared. The first thing we did was pick up our daughter and rush outside," he said.

In a post on X, Delhi Police said, "We hope you all are safe, Delhi!"

Meanwhile, Director of the National Centre for Seismology (NCS), Dr OP Mishra, on Monday assured



NDRF team during a mock drill to test their preparedness to handle earthquake, in New Delhi

residents of the national capital that there is nothing to worry about as aftershocks of lesser magnitude are "natural" and will heal by the earthquake of magnitude 4.0 that had struck Delhi early Monday.

Strong tremors were felt in Delhi and its surrounding areas at 5:36 am today after a 4.0-magnitude earthquake jolted the national capital. It originated just 5 km below the earth's surface.

Mishra stated the epicentre of the earthquake was in Dhaula Kuan, which falls under a seismic zone.

"Delhi has been experiencing minor earthquakes. This earthquake occurred in Dhaula Kuan. In 2007, an earthquake of 4.7 mag-

nitude had occurred there. There is nothing to worry about. It is a seismic zone there," Mishra said.

Elaborating on the cause of the earthquake, the NCS Director said, "The earthquake occurred due to in-situ material heterogeneity... After 4.0 magnitude, the aftershock will be less by 1.2 magnitudes; it is natural as it will heal it."

Hours after the earthquake hit Delhi, tremors were felt in Bihar at around 8.02 am on Monday, and it originated from just 10 km under the Earth's surface. No casualties or damage have been reported so far.

It also urged citizens to call on the emergency 112 helpline for emergencies.

SC slams MCD over illegal construction in Chandni Chowk

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday slammed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) for its failure to crack down on the alleged illegal and unauthorised commercial construction in Chandni Chowk here.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh indicated directing a CBI probe into the alleged illegal and unauthorised commercial construction in the area. "We are inclined to (direct) CBI to investigate... in Chandni Chowk. Builders construct like that and you shut your eyes?" asked Justice Kant from the counsel representing the MCD.

The apex court asked MCD to respond as to why a deeper probe should not be ordered and posted the matter for hearing after a week.

During the hearing when the MCD counsel told the apex court that the alleged unauthorised construction was removed pursuant to orders passed by the Delhi High Court, the bench remarked whether the Corporation is being run by builders.

The top court is hearing a petition challenging two orders of the Delhi High Court relating to the removal of unauthorised construction in the Chandni Chowk area.



The revised budget estimate for 2024-25 was also tabled for discussion before final approval today.

Meanwhile, recently, MCD Commissioner Ashwini Kumar on Thursday presented an estimated budget of Rs 17,266 crore for the financial year 2025-26 during a special budget meeting, as per a press release.

The revised budget estimate for 2024-25 was also tabled for discussion before final approval today.

Highlighting key initiatives, the Commissioner emphasised waste management efforts, stating that Delhi generates approximately 6,000 tonnes of construction waste daily.

To tackle this, MCD has set up plants with a total capacity of 5,000 tonnes at Bakkarwala, Ranikhera, Shastri Park, and Burari, with another plant under construction in Tehkhand.

Additionally, bio-methanisation plants, with a capacity to process 200 metric tonnes of organic waste daily, are expected to be operational by March 2025, as per the release.

In the sanitation sector, Kumar noted that MCD has regularised 4,553 sanitation workers and established 308 EV charging stations, with plans to introduce 262 more. The corporation has also removed 105 illegal dumping sites, converting them into clean spaces. A "tree ambulance" initiative has been launched for tree maintenance, with 222 diseased trees treated so far.

HC asks Satyendar Jain to respond to ED's plea to delay PMLA trial

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court issued a notice on Monday, seeking a response from Aam Aadmi Party leader Satyendar Jain regarding the Enforcement Directorate's plea to defer the trial court hearing in money laundering case related to disproportionate assets.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) stated that since the CBI recently filed a supplementary chargesheet indicating a higher quantum of money involved than previously probed, the ED may also file a supplementary prosecution complaint soon.

Therefore, the ED requested the trial court hearing in the money laundering case be deferred. The ED was represented by special counsel Zoheb Hossain.

Acknowledging the submission, Justice Vikas



Mahajan scheduled the hearing for March 3, 2025. During the hearing, Senior Advocate N Hariharan, representing Satyendar Jain, indicated that he would clarify his stance in his written response.

Earlier, Satyender Jain moved the Delhi High Court for deferment of trial court hearing stating that the investigation in the case is still ongoing and has not yet concluded.

Jain through a plea sub-

mitted that the investigation is continuing, and, thus, it would be in the interest of justice that arguments on charge are heard only once the investigation is complete.

If the investigating agency has material that may exculpate the accused in any manner, the court is bound to consider such material at the time of forming a prima facie view.

It was further stated that as per the status report of the CBI in the predicate offence, further investigation regarding multiple transactions by collection of records from numerous departments and examination of witnesses from different strata of society is to be conducted and it involves voluminous records.

The outcome of the further investigation would be significant concerning the proceeds of the crime.

Delhi sees second-warmest day of season at 29°C

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi experienced the second-hottest day of the season on Monday, with temperatures reaching 29°C, 4.6 degrees above the usual levels for this time of year, as reported by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The hottest day so far in the season occurred on February 11, when the mercury hit 29.7°C.

The IMD has forecast mist for Tuesday, with temperatures expected to range between 28°C during the day and a cooler 11°C at night. Despite the warm temperatures, humidity levels in the city fluctuated significantly between 84% and 45%.

In addition to the high temperatures, the air quality on Monday was recorded as "moderate," with the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaching 183 at 7 pm. Earlier in



the afternoon, at 4 pm, the AQI was in the "poor" category, registering a reading of 231, indicating a decline in air quality. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), an AQI reading between 101 and 200 falls under the "moderate" range, and readings above 200 are considered "poor."

The air quality index is an important indicator of the cleanliness of the air, with scores ranging from 0 to 50 considered "good," 51 to 100 "satisfactory," and 101 to 200

"moderate." Anything above 200 falls under the "poor" category, signaling potential health concerns for sensitive groups. Despite the warm weather, Delhi residents are advised to take precautions due to fluctuating air quality and to stay updated on the weather conditions.

As the city continues to experience above-average temperatures, authorities and residents alike remain on alert for further shifts in weather and air quality in the coming days.

Toddler killed in celebratory firing in wedding procession

TDG NETWORK
NOIDA

A two-and-a-half year old boy was killed after a man allegedly opened celebratory fire during a wedding procession here, police said on Monday.

A case has been registered against the accused and efforts are on to arrest him, officials said.

The incident occurred around 10 pm on Sunday in Agahpur village when a wedding procession was underway at the residence of Balveer Singh, police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Ram Badan Singh said during the procession a man, Happy, claiming to be from the groom's village opened fire.

Police said that Vikas Sharma and his family were watching the wedding procession from their balcony when a bullet struck his child. The boy was taken



A case has been registered against the accused and efforts are on to arrest him, officials said.

to a hospital where doctors declared him dead during treatment, the DCP said. He said that a case has been registered against the accused and police teams have been formed to nab the accused.

Woman killed, son injured in Dharampura hit-and-run

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A 55-year-old woman was killed and her son sustained serious injuries in a hit-and-run case near northeast Delhi's Dharampura on Monday afternoon, an official said. The incident occurred around 12:44 pm when an unidentified vehicle struck their motor-



cycle on the main road near the flyover, he said.

According to the police, a

PCR call reporting the accident was received at the Seelampur Police Station.

"Upon reaching the spot, officers found the injured mother and son, who were immediately rushed to JPC Hospital. However, the woman was declared brought dead, while her son is undergoing treatment," said the police officer.

BJP accuses Mayor of misusing funds for Basant Utsav

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor on Monday wrote a letter to the commissioner of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) alleging that the fund for children's day was misused by Mayor Mahesh Khichi to organise Basant Utsav. In his letter to MCD Commissioner

Ashwani Kumar, Kapoor said, "With annual examinations approaching, Mayor Mahesh Khichi misused the funds allocated for Bal Utsav to organise Basant Utsav instead on February 25."

He further said that the MCD organises a Bal Utsav every year on November 14, but in 2024, it was not held, apparently because the then Mayor showed no interest

due to a power struggle over the Mayorship.

Kapoor also urged the commissioner to seek a report from the MCD Director of Education regarding the alleged misuse of funds, especially with annual exams just eight days ahead.

However, there was no immediate reaction from MCD and Aam Aadmi Party over Kapoor's allegation.

Delhi police solves armed robbery, arrests two 'Baba' gang members

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has claimed to have solved an armed robbery case at a currency exchange shop in southwest Delhi with the arrest of two members of the "Baba" gang, officials said on Monday. The accused, Gaurav (20) and Dipanshu (21), were apprehended with a pistol, three country-made firearms, 10 live rounds,

and Rs 20,000 of the stolen cash, police said.

On February 14, at 11 am, three armed robbers stormed into the currency exchange shop in Mahipalpur, firing shots before fleeing with Rs 1.5 lakh in cash and foreign currency worth Rs 6 lakh, they said.

A PCR call alerted the police, and a case was registered following which investigation was launched. Deputy Commissioner of



Police (Southwest) Surendra Choudhary said CCTV footage analysis led investigators to a car rented by Bhola Shankar, who is suspected to be the gang leader.

Police teams tracked mobile numbers leading them to multiple locations, including Gurgaon, Rohtak, Sonapat and Haridwar, in search of the suspects, he

said.

The accused Gaurav and Dipanshu were arrested on a stolen motorcycle despite their attempt to flee, Choudhary said.

Interrogation revealed that the two were part of the "Baba" gang, led by Bhola Shankar. The gang was planning a series of armed robberies to fund their activities, he said.

The officer said that Dipanshu, a former kabaddi

player, had multiple criminal cases in Haryana, while Gaurav, a defense aspirant, was lured into the gang with promises of quick money.

The mastermind, Bhola Shankar, remains absconding. He has a history of violent crimes and is suspected to be involved in multiple robberies, he added.

Efforts are underway to trace and arrest him, the DCP said.

GOVT ACTIVELY CONSIDERING RAISING DEPOSIT INSURANCE LIMIT BEYOND RS 5 LAKH

Eligible depositors are entitled to receive deposit insurance claim amounts of their deposits up to a monetary ceiling of Rs 5 lakh from the DICGC after due verification.

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The government is actively considering raising the deposit insurance scheme limit beyond Rs 5 lakh, said the secretary at the Department of Financial Services, M Nagaraju, on Monday.

“As and when the government approves, we will notify it. This is under the consideration of the government,” the top official told reporters at a press conference in Mumbai when asked to respond to the crisis-hit New India Cooperative Bank.

The secretary reiterated that increasing the insurance deposit insurance is under active consideration.

Deposit insurance, as we know it today, was introduced in India in 1962. India was the second country in the world to introduce such a scheme, the first being the US in 1933. Banking crises and bank failures worldwide underscored the need for depositor protection.

Further, the secretary refrained from commenting on the status of the Mum-

KEY POINTS

- Govt considering raising deposit insurance beyond Rs 5 lakh, says DFS Secretary M Nagaraju. Approval awaited.
- Board superseded for 12 months over governance lapses; withdrawals, loans, and new deposits frozen.
- Thousands rush to Mumbai branches after RBI curbs. Bank assures locker access, but withdrawals barred.
- Introduced in 1962; India second after the US. Limit raised from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh in 2020.



Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju. Credit: X/ @DFS_India

bai-headquartered bank, which is in deep stress. “RBI is seized of the matter... we are not going to comment on that,” he said.

Eligible depositors are entitled to receive deposit insurance claim amounts of their deposits up to a monetary ceiling of Rs 5 lakh from the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) after due verification.

With effect from February 4, 2020, DICGC raised the limit of insurance cover for

depositors from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh.

The depositors of New India Cooperative Bank have been advised to contact bank officials for further information. Details can be accessed on the DICGC website.

On February 14, a day after it imposed several restrictions on the lender, the Reserve Bank of India superseded the Board of Directors of New India Cooperative Bank Ltd, Mumbai, for a period of 12 months.

The action was necessitat-

ed “due to certain material concerns emanating from poor governance standards observed” in the Mumbai-headquartered New India Cooperative Bank Ltd.

Customers had gathered in thousands outside Mumbai-headquartered New India Co-operative Bank Limited branches to withdraw their hard-earned savings, soon after the Reserve Bank of India imposed several restrictions on the lender. Panicky account holders converged outside the bank branches

spread across Mumbai city, worried over the fate of their bank savings and lockers.

The people said that bank officials have assured them access to their lockers.

On February 13, the RBI directed New India Co-operative Bank Limited, Mumbai, that it shall not, without prior written approval of the central bank, grant or renew any loans and advances, make any investment, incur any liability, including borrowing of funds and acceptance of fresh deposits, disburse or agree to disburse any payment whether in the discharge of its liabilities and obligations or otherwise, enter into any compromise or arrangement and sell, transfer or otherwise dispose of any of its properties or assets except as notified by the RBI.

Considering the cooperative bank's present liquidity position, the RBI has directed not to allow the withdrawal of any amount from savings bank or current accounts or any other account of a depositor but is allowed to set off loans against deposits subject to RBI conditions.



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and MoS Finance Pankaj Chaudhary in a group picture during the International Customs Day 2025 celebrations, at Nhava Sheva port in Mumbai on Monday. ANI

Govt not shifting focus from capex: Sitharaman

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday clarified that the massive income tax relief given in Budget 2025 doesn't mean that the government has shifted focus to consumption from capital expenditure.

Keeping people earning up to Rs 12 lakh annually out of the income tax ambit has triggered a debate that the government has shifted focus to boosting consumption after the two consecutive quarter GDP figures showed tepid growth.

At a post-budget interaction with stakeholders in Mumbai, finance minister Sitharaman said there is no reason for people to think that the emphasis has shifted from capital expenditure to consumption, as she spelt out the consistent rise in capital spending provisions over the past few years.

She supplemented that the broad picture is that the government's emphasis since COVID remains on public expenditure for building capital assets.

This time, the capex provisioned in the Budget 2025 is over 10.2 per cent higher at about Rs 16 lakh crore, including the PSUs capex spending. The government itself has Budgeted Rs 11.21 lakh capex for 2025-26.

The effective capital expenditure is projected at 15.48 lakh crore as against 13.18 lakh crore in the revised estimates of 2024-25. Effective capital expenditure includes core capital outlays and the grants in aid to states for creation of capital assets. Though the grants in aid for creation of capital assets is accounted in Budget as revenue expenditure, they go for creating capital assets in the states.

“And therefore, I would think the emphasis, or any reason for people to think that the emphasis has shifted from capital expenditure towards consumption, is not right,” she said.

She added that the government has enhanced the capital expenditure budget and simultaneously given some concessions through a reduc-

tion in tax, particularly personal income tax, for people who would want to spend or save or invest.

She thanked the prime minister “for being absolutely considerate” about taxpayers and rewarding the taxpayers from the big tax relief.

She said the prime minister readily agreed that the Budget should propose tax relief up to Rs 12 lakh rupees.

“And that is why today probably (it) is giving a picture, that we have shifted emphasis for consumption boosting, rather than for capital asset building, which has been the feature all the way,” she said. Sitharaman, recently at a press conference, asserted that income tax relief provided for in the Union Budget coupled with RBI repo rate cut put together will boost recovery in consumption in the economy.

In Union Budget for 2025-26 income tax exemption limit has been extended from Rs 7 lakh to Rs 12 lakh, providing significant relief to taxpayers, especially the middle class.

Exports surge \$74.97 bn in Jan from \$68.33 bn, trade deficit rises

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India's overall exports, comprising both merchandise and services, rose to \$74.97 billion in January 2025, marking an increase from \$68.33 billion in January 2024, according to data released by the Commerce Ministry.

However, the country's trade deficit too widened to \$2.67 billion from \$0.39 bn as imports surged to \$77.64 billion, compared to \$68.72 billion in the same month last year.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal highlighted the robust export performance during April 2024 to January 2025, stating, “Our exports during April-Jan has seen a growth of 7.21 percent. During April-Jan we have witnessed \$46 bn Dollar increase from the last year same period. During the same period our Merchandise exports earned \$5 bn Dollar.”

“Our non-petroleum exports in January alone increased 14.47 per cent which is very high. This reflects that we are doing very good in Merchandise and Services exports,” he added.



However, the country's trade deficit too widened to \$2.67 billion from \$0.39 bn as imports surged to \$77.64 billion, compared to \$68.72 billion in the same month last year.

Among key sectors, rice exports saw an impressive jump of 44.61 per cent, reinforcing India's dominance in global rice trade. Additionally, gems and jewellery exports witnessed a revival, growing by 15.9 per cent in January, marking a significant recovery in the segment.

Despite ongoing geopolitical conflicts and tariff challenges, India's exports have remained resilient, reflecting the strength of the country's trade policies and global market demand.

As of January 15, India's

exports witnessed a 6.03 per cent growth during April-December 2024, reaching an estimated \$602.64 billion, compared to \$568.36 billion in the same period of 2023.

Merchandise exports for the first nine months of FY2024 stood at \$321.71 billion, reflecting a modest 1.6 per cent rise from \$316.65 billion in the previous year. Notably, non-petroleum exports in December 2024 surged by 5.05 per cent, reaching \$33.09 billion, up from \$31.50 billion in December 2023.

RIL surpasses Apple, secures No. 2 spot in global FutureBrand Index 2024

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The US no longer dominates the top of the FutureBrand Index, in a landmark achievement, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has been ranked No. 2 in the FutureBrand Index 2024, surpassing global technology giant Apple.

This marks the first time an Indian company has entered the top three of this prestigious global ranking, showcasing the growing influence of Indian corporations on the world stage.

According to the FPI Global Ranking 2024, Reliance made a remarkable leap from No. 13 in 2023 to No. 2 in 2024, reflecting its strong brand positioning, consumer trust, and strategic growth across multiple industries, including energy, telecommunications, and retail.

The FutureBrand Index, which evaluates companies based on brand perception rather than financial performance, has witnessed a major shift over the past decade.

In 2014, seven of the top ten brands were from the United States, but by 2024, the list has become more diversified, with only four US brands making

the top ten, while five brands hail from Asia-Pacific (APAC) and the Middle East.

The Index highlights how APAC and the Middle East have significantly invested in brand development, particularly in B2B sectors, matching the brand-building momentum traditionally seen in the US and Europe.

However, not all brands have maintained their dominance. Major players like Boeing (#12 in 2014) and Volkswagen (#17 in 2014) have completely fallen out of the rankings, highlighting the evolving nature of brand perception and consumer trust.

Samsung secured the No. 1 position, climbing from No. 5 in 2023, thanks to its strong focus on personality, storytelling, and innovation.

The brand's high scores in authenticity, thought leadership, and well-being have reinforced its position as a trusted global leader.

Meanwhile, Apple, which was ranked No. 1 in 2023, slipped to No. 3 but the company maintained a benchmark for brand loyalty and seamless customer experience, with strong scores in consistency, customer engagement, and thought leadership.

Stock market rebounds at close; Sensex gains 57.65 pts

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Indian stock market recovered from early losses and ended Monday's trading session in positive territory.

The BSE Sensex closed 57.65 points higher at 75,996.86, while the NSE Nifty gained 30.25 points, settling at 22,959.50.

Among the Nifty 50 stocks, 34 recorded gains, whereas 16 declined. Leading the gainers were Adani Enterprises, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, Power Grid, and Adani Ports. On the losing side, Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M), Bharti Airtel, Infosys, TCS, and ICICI Bank saw declines.

Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research at Kotak Securities, noted that despite

a weak opening, the markets saw an intraday recovery.

“Today, after a weak open market that witnessed intraday recovery, the Nifty ends 30 points higher while the Sensex was down by 58 points. Among Sectors, Healthcare and Pharma indices gained over 1 percent, whereas the Defence index lost the most, showing nearly 3 per cent,” he said.

Chouhan highlighted key technical levels, stating that as long as Nifty remains above 22,800 and Sensex above 75,500, the pullback rally may continue, with potential upside targets of 23,000-23,075 for Nifty and 76,200-76,500 for Sensex.

However, a fall below 22,800/75,500 could lead to

further correction towards 22,650-22,725 for Nifty and 75,000-75,300 for Sensex.

VLA Ambala, Co-Founder, Stock Market Today, said, “On the market front, Nifty is currently sitting near a crucial support trendline, influencing overall sentiment, by forming a Death Cross pattern on 13th February 2025, by closing at its 50-week EMA. Notably, this trend highlights a sell-on-rise possibility, and we can expect its monthly RSI at 57.” She added, “According to the market analysis, the ideal strategy for market participants would be to sell on the rise to capitalize on this movement, with 22,800 acting as a critical support level.

APEDA's first-ever sea shipments of pomegranates to Australia

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) in collaboration with AgroStar and Kay Bee Exports successfully completed India's first-ever commercial trial shipments of premium Sangola and Bhagwa pomegranates respectively to Australia via sea.

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, this marks a major breakthrough in expanding market access for Indian fresh produce.

After getting the market access for export of Indian pomegranates to Australia, a work plan and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the export of pomegran-



ates to Australia were signed in February 2024.

The first air shipment took place in July 2024, following the successful market access facilitation by APEDA and National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO). The air shipment helped assess market demand, which led to follow-up sea shipments to optimize cost efficiency.

The first-ever sea-freight shipment departed from India on December 6, 2024 and arrived in Sydney on January 13, 2025 with 5.7

metric tons (MT) of pomegranates sourced from the Solapur region of Maharashtra, packed into 1,900 boxes, each containing 3 kg of premium fruit.

Another commercial sea shipment carrying 1,872 boxes (6.56 tons) of Bhagwa variety arrived in Brisbane, Australia, on January 6, 2025.

The use of bulk sea shipment ensured competitive pricing, benefiting farmers and creating sustainable trade opportunities.

Both shipments were integrated into ANARNET, India's traceability system, ensuring transparency and building consumer confidence in international markets. This successful export not only underscores India's capabilities in meeting global quality standards but also provides a significant boost to Indian farmers by opening up new revenue streams.

Upon arrival, the pomegranates received an overwhelmingly positive response in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. The strong demand has already led to immediate requests for additional shipments, showcasing the growing potential for a profitable and sustainable trade relationship between India and Australia. The shipment's timing was strategically aligned with Australia's

non-producing season, maximizing market opportunities for Indian exporters. Abhishek Dev, Chairman APEDA, emphasised “India's agricultural export landscape is growing at an unprecedented pace, with fresh fruit exports surging by 29 per cent year-on-year. Pomegranates alone have seen a 20 per cent growth, demonstrating the immense potential of this segment.”

He added, “The successful shipments of premium pomegranates to Australia marks India's ability to supply high-quality fresh produce to discerning international markets. Through advanced traceability systems like ANARNET, we ensure that Indian agricultural products meet the highest global standards, enhancing consumer trust worldwide.”

ATTACK ON CULTURE THROUGH SEX!

Ranveer Allahbadia’s shameful comment on parents’ private relationship is just an example...



DR VIJAY DARDA

If I say that our culture is under attack through sex, it might sound strange to you. Some of you might even call it an exaggeration, but this is the reality. The kind of shameful remarks made by YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia on Samay Raina’s YouTube show ‘India’s Got Latent’ is just a glimpse of a larger issue. The truth is that in the name of freedom of expression, the Internet has become a dumping ground for vulgarity, abuse and mental filth. A well-orchestrated conspiracy is at play, cunningly designed to fill the minds of our youths with impurity. Before understanding this conspiracy, let’s talk about the show ‘India’s Got Latent’.

We are all familiar with the popular TV show ‘India’s Got Talent’. By replacing ‘Talent’ with ‘Latent’, Samay Raina cleverly created a YouTube channel. While ‘Talent’ is a commonly understood term, ‘Latent’ is not. ‘Latent’ means hidden, concealed or dormant which signifies something that exists but is not openly expressed. This word was likely chosen carefully to ensure that legal loopholes could be exploited while serving up sexual content. They can argue that the topics discussed may not be openly spoken about, but they do exist! This show includes everything from obscene abuses to explicit discussions about male and female body parts. While this is vulgarity for us, for people like Ranveer Allahbadia and Samay Raina, it is a way to make money. YouTubers who use profanities on their podcasts earn millions because they have massive followings. Platforms like YouTube don’t care about the content being served. All that they are concerned about is the number of hits and subscrib-

ers. Whoever meets this criterion will fill their pockets! This time the controversy has become even more serious. Moving beyond just vulgar language and obscene descriptions of body parts and relationships, Allahbadia asked a contestant a question so repulsive that I cannot write it here verbatim because our conscience is still alive. However, I must explain it in the most decent words possible. He asked the contestant whether they would rather watch their parents engage in sexual relationships for their entire life or participate once and end it forever. The contestant laughed, but as I watched and listened, my blood boiled! What kind of ‘latent’ discussion is this? Who doesn’t know that intimacy is a natural act essential for the continuation of life? Does that mean we should start expressing it publicly? Today, almost all Internet platforms have become hubs of obscenity. Abuses are used so frequently that they would make even the listener embarrassed. Even young girls casually use profanities related

There is a very old saying that if you want to destroy a nation, destroy its culture. This is exactly what is happening today.

to women’s honour. Discussions about body parts happen as if people are talking about electronic gadgets. Stand-up comedians making sexual jokes attract audiences who pay thousands of rupees for tickets and those who cannot afford it get access to their videos on social media. These videos receive millions of likes, bringing in huge profits! Are you aware that Indian youths spend an average of 2.5 hours daily surfing various social media platforms, with approximately 40 minutes dedicated to watching reels? While good quality reels do exist, sexually explicit content is also rampant. Naturally, young people are more attracted to such content. And here, I am not even talking about

pornographic films or clips. Recently, I was reading a research paper on the Internet industry and I was shocked to learn that India ranks first in the world for watching porn, with the US coming in second. Now, some Indians have also started producing porn films. Some names from the film industry have already surfaced for creating and selling soft porn abroad. Some might argue that ‘Masturbation’ stories were available in the market earlier, and now they have simply taken the form of videos. But I do not agree with this argument. Those erotic stories served as a private escape and were read in secrecy. But what is happening today is a direct attack on our culture. It’s hard to say who to blame. A large section of people defends social sites by calling it ‘media’. Several prominent politicians have even appeared on Allahbadia’s shows, though those episodes did not contain profanities. But the question is why should such individuals be given legitimacy in the first place? There is an old saying: If you want to destroy a nation, destroy its

culture. This is exactly what is happening today. Recently, a report was published that I must mention. The American intelligence agency CIA has established an organisation called Internets Network, which has trained around 9,000 so-called journalists in 30 countries over the past four years under the guise of ‘keeping democracy alive’. Out of these, 7,500 journalists are from India! They have also been generously funded. Doesn’t this raise suspicion in your mind? And doesn’t it make you wonder as to who is funding those attacking Indian culture through sex? Our government should also reflect on this! It is possible that some countries are frustrated because their citizens are coming to attend Maha Kumbh Mela and embracing Hindu culture. But our immediate concern is what are we doing? We are blindly following Western trends and burning in the fire of cultural destruction. The author is the chairman, Editorial Board of Lokmat Media and former member of Rajya Sabha.

Historical roots of contemporary conflicts in the Levant region



PROF. JAWAID IQBAL

The Levant refers to the eastern Mediterranean region consisting of modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel/Palestine, and parts of Iraq and Turkey. In the contemporary world order, the Levant is in turmoil. The genocide in Gaza has led to the explosive entry of Palestine on the scene of global politics, highlighting the settler-colonial character of Zionism and questioning the moral legitimacy of Israel. The Lebanese Shia political party and paramilitary group carried out a 14-month long conflict with Israel to pressure it into ending the killings in Gaza. In Syria, Bashar al-Assad, the country’s president since 2000, was toppled by the Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in December 2024. Given these rapid developments in the Levant, it is essential to look into its history.

OTTOMAN RULE

For over 400 years, from 1516 to 1918, the Levant was governed by the Ottoman empire. The Ottoman system was characterized by adaptability: 1) it gave a degree of political autonomy to local notables; and 2) due to Islamic principles of toleration and realistic assessments of feasibility, it allowed the non-Muslim subjects to preserve their religious customs, educational structures, and community leadership. The Ottoman system soon suffered a decline due to its inability to confront the West. Under Ottoman rule, surplus agricultural product was either shipped to the capital or appropriated by

the local notables. No organized attempt was made to use this output for productive investments. As a result, manufacturing continued to stagnate in the stage of small-scale artisanal and handicraft production, without industrialization. When European trade reached the eastern Mediterranean, the local, small-scale Ottoman industry, encountering increasing costs and rigid price regulation, found itself incapable of competing with the cheap manufactured goods of Europe. This economic unevenness made the Ottoman empire dependent on European countries, laying the ground for its eventual collapse.

FRANCO-BRITISH IMPERIALISM

In 1916, the Sykes-Picot agreement between Britain and France envisioned the post-Ottoman restructuration of the Middle East into British and French spheres of influence, based on the certainty that the Ottoman empire would be defeated in World War I. Two years later, this plan transformed into reality when the Ottoman Empire surrendered and signed the Armistice of Mudros, formally bringing the termination of Ottoman rule in the Levant. After the San Remo Conference (April 1920), the League of Nations gained legal control over former Ottoman territories. These territories were held to be unprepared for independent rule, so they were placed under the governance of Britain and France. Rather than being annexed directly, ex-Ottoman lands were categorized as “mandates,” which meant that the European powers would be functioning as temporary guardians rather than permanent rulers.

The paternalistic and civilizing goals of European nations masked their imperialist objectives. Britain’s mandates included Palestine, Iraq, and Transjordan. Palestine was a key land bridge linking Egypt (Suez Canal) to British-controlled

Iraq and India. Iraq had large oil reserves, particularly in Mosul and Kirkuk, which were crucial to British energy requirements. Furthermore, British control over the Iraqi port of Basra provided it with access to the Persian Gulf, allowing it to manage the Gulf shipping routes. Finally, Transjordan created a buffer zone between Palestine, Iraq, and French-controlled Syria. France’s mandate of Syria and Lebanon included its support for Maronite Christians. For French politicians, an empire in the eastern Mediterranean was an integral objective of the Francophone civilizing mission. Based upon mythic narratives of Frankish Crusaders, Catholic missionaries, the belligerent colonial army, and business interests, France presented a strident defense for the creation of a French Mediterranean empire. Given the imperialist concerns of European countries, they created structures of powers that created and exacerbated religion and ethnic divisions within the Levant.

LEBANON

Before the establishment of the French Mandate, Mount Lebanon was an autonomous province under Ottoman rule with a largely Maronite Christian population. In 1920, French High Commissioner General Henri Gouraud expanded Mount Lebanon into Greater Lebanon, incorporating the Muslim-majority regions of Akkar (Sunni-majority, north), Beqaa Valley (Shia-majority, east), Jabal Amel (Shia-majority, south), and Tripoli and Sidon (Sunni-majority coastal cities). There were three major reasons for the expansion: 1) Mount Lebanon didn’t have substantial agricultural land; and 2) the French required a port city like Beirut. Given that France aimed at creating a Christian-dominated state, it unleashed conflicts between Maronites and Muslims. In order to manage religious diversity, the French insti-

tutionalized sectarian power sharing in the 1926 Lebanese Constitution by allocating political positions along religious lines: the President would be Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister would be Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament would be Shia Muslim. By giving the powerful post of President to Maronites, France continued its agenda of Christian domination. Even though the Muslim population increased over time, the political system favored Christians. This power-sharing arrangement was reinforced by the National Pact of 1943 – the year Lebanon gained independence. The colonial legacy of religious division ultimately led to Lebanon’s 15-year long civil war (1975-1990).

SYRIA

The French Mandate in Syria (1920–1946) was driven by a divide-and-rule policy using sectarian, ethnic, and regional divisions. France tried to weaken Arab nationalism by fragmenting Syria into small states: the State of Damascus, the State of Aleppo, the Alawite State (Latakia), the Jabal al-Druze, and the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Sunni Arab leadership was enfeebled through the separation of Damascus and Aleppo – the two largest Sunni-majority cities. Furthermore, the French sharpened the communal boundaries of Alawites and Druze to reinforce sectarian divisions. They were recruited into the French military in large numbers, thus making the Sunni majority resentful. This division would later influence the structure of the Ba’athist regime under the Assad family, where the Alawite-dominated military would play a central role in governance.

The French mandate also manufactured ethnic divisions. France used the displaced communities of Kurds and Armenians to undermine Arab nationalist unity. The Sanjak of Alexandretta, a region with a mixed

population of Arabs, Turks, and Armenians, was given over to Turkey in 1939, creating the basis for future Arab-Turkish antipathies. There were also regional divides. A separation emerged between the urban Sunni elites in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama, who led the anti-colonial resistance, and the rural minorities, who were regarded as French collaborators.

JORDAN

In 1921, the British government established Transjordan – originally part of the Palestine mandate – under the leadership of Abdullah I, who belonged to the Hashemite family. After gaining full independence in 1946, Jordan has acted as a regional actor loyal to the West. This is evident in its key role in the *Palestinian question*, supporting imperialist interests rather than Palestinian self-determination. In the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, King Abdullah’s *Arab Legion* (trained by the British) moved into Palestine, seizing and later annexing the *West Bank* in 1950. By integrating the West Bank into his monarchy, Abdullah weakened the territorial foundations for a future Palestinian state. After losing control of the West Bank to Israel in 1967, there was an influx of Palestinian guerilla fighters into Jordan. The growth of Palestinian militancy in Jordan led to the Black September conflict in 1970: the Hashemite monarchy killed thousands of Palestinian fighters and civilians in order to maintain its power. This event showed how the colonial legacy of monarchical, centralized power functioned as a strong hindrance to the revolutionary aspirations of the Palestinian movement.

ISRAEL

The origins of Israel lie in the British mandate for Palestine, established in 1922. Britain’s handling of Palestine was driven by the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which had promised to cre-

ate a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. While the League of Nations’ Covenant under Article 22 recognized the need for the eventual independence of mandates like Iraq and Syria, it didn’t consider Palestinians as a people with national rights. Meanwhile, the mandate supported the Zionist movement. The Jewish Agency was recognized as the official body of the Jewish community, whereas no such body was created for Palestinians. British Mandate rule enabled Jewish immigration, land acquisition, and settlement in Palestine, particularly in strategic and fertile areas. As a result, the Jewish population grew from 6% of the population in 1917 to 30% by 1939. In essence, Britain built a parallel Zionist administration that regulated central structures of governance. These colonial efforts helped in the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the displacement of 750,000 Palestinians.

CONCLUSION

If there is anything that the history of the Levant demonstrates, it is that external interventionism can never guarantee stability. However, this is what we continue to see even after the cessation of the genocide in Gaza. President Donald Trump has said that the US will “take over” and “own” Gaza after expelling Palestinians from the territory. This, he adds, will eventually turn the enclave into “the Riviera of the Middle East”. From the history of the Mandates system that governed the Levant, it is clear that the colonial fantasy of paternalistic control can never benefit the colonized. Rather, it treats a certain group of people as the object of a strong benefactor’s efforts, thus curtailing their democratic ability to take decisions on their own. It remains to be seen how the battle for democratic power unfolds in the Levant. The author is Vice-Chancellor, Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University, Rajouri, Jammu

PERSPECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA CONTROVERSY

CONTENT CREATION: LET THE VIEWER DECIDE

The recent controversy surrounding obscenity on social media is being fuelled by overreaction by both sides of the divide—the divide that comes between so-called modernity and conservatism. While one side is adding the cover of “freedom of speech” to basically obscene and outrageous content, the other side is resorting to extreme action as a counter. What was on display in the viral clip featuring some young and massively popular social media influencers was crass and vulgar. Given that the “jokes” made were based on some western comedy shows and were intended to shock, although apparently in a closed door programme, proves that the makers of such shows lack the ability and creativity to think independently, or even adapt such western shows according to Indian tastes and mores. At the best they can copy-paste content they have lifted from the West. They think it’s all very modern to follow the West blindly, forgetting their own cultural moorings. In reality, they are nothing but deracinated. At the same time, however much they want to belong, they will never be a part of the western “creative” milieu, simply because they are Indian.

As for the argument that it is about freedom of speech—in India, freedom of speech is not absolute and comes with “reasonable restrictions”. As Indians, content creators will have to follow Indian laws, so there is no point crying about how “illiberal” India is.

Crossing certain sacrosanct familial boundaries may be a practice in a minuscule section of the western “creative” environment, but in India, anything like this will be taken as a sign of a perverted mind. There is a reason why pornography, and that too in a sacrosanct space, is not normalised in civilized societies—for that matter, even in the West. It is because of this that there is sheer fury at these youngsters’ actions. What they said was not a slip of tongue, it was said deliberately with the intention to shock and offend. And they knew that they were crossing boundaries, else they wouldn’t have said such things behind closed doors, in front of a select audience. There is apparently much unhappiness in the influencer community over the incident, not because what they said was obscene, but because the video clip got leaked and went viral. Apparently, they are wondering if the leak is a conspiracy by OTT platforms because their shows are diverting the OTT viewer to their YouTube channels. Instead, shouldn’t have they wondered why they felt the need to cross the deep red line to appeal to a select audience? What is the difference between pornography websites and such influencer channels, if the content that such channels dish out cannot be made public except to a handful of people? If the argument is that in India consumption of pornography is high and thus to object to the influencers’ obscene content is hypocrisy, then the counter argument is, they might as well start labelling themselves as pornographic channels and not influencer channels.

As for the argument that it is about freedom of speech—in India, freedom of speech is not absolute and comes with “reasonable restrictions”. As Indians, content creators will have to follow Indian laws, so there is no point crying about how “illiberal” India is.

Now about the reaction to this controversy. No one should be sent to jail for being degenerate and foolish. Action should stop with a warning, and should not be taken to the level of hounding them to the extent where they start fearing for their lives. It must be recognised that social media has opened up a new career path of content creation for many people—young and old. Although this phenomenon may not last long as newer technologies and modes of communication catch audience fancy. But, for the time being, to spite these content creators their moment in the sun may come across as jealousy. Instead, content creation should be celebrated for it is a means for many people to earn a decent living. Fear should not come to dominate the sector, for that is one certain way to kill it. Exemplary punishment for suffering from verbal diarrhoea is not prison time. The punishment is unsubscribing from such channels, or simply switching channels. A loss in viewership is the only way of disciplining such content creators. It should be left to the viewer to decide the fate of such content creators. The audience is discerning enough to distinguish between good and obscene content. There is no need for the State to get involved in this and hound these content creators.

JOYEETA BASU

ENDURING LEGACY OF WARRIOR MONKS

For centuries, India's Akharas have been the guardians of Hindu tradition, blending martial discipline with deep spiritual practice.

Akharas, the traditional monastic orders of Hindu ascetics, have played a pivotal role in preserving and shaping Hindu traditions for centuries. These institutions, deeply rooted in spiritual practice, martial discipline, and community organization, have evolved over time, adapting to societal changes while maintaining their core values. Their resurgence, particularly evident during events like the Kumbh Mela, underscores their enduring significance in contemporary Hindu society.

ORIGINS
The term "Akharas" originates from the Sanskrit word "Akhada," meaning a place of practice or training. Historically, akharas served as centers for spiritual learning, martial training, and the preservation of religious teachings. Their establishment is often attributed to the 8th-century philosopher Adi Shankaracharya, who sought to unify and protect Hindu dharma during a period of religious and political upheaval. Adi Shankaracharya founded several major akharas, including Mahanirvani, Niranjani, Juna, Atal, Avahan, Agni, and Anand Akhara. These institutions were designed to foster spiritual growth and prepare ascetics to defend their faith.

However, the history of akharas predates Shankaracharya. Ancient Indian texts mention warrior-ascetics, known as Parivrajakas and Vratyas, who engaged in both meditation and military exercises. By the medieval period, these ascetics had organized themselves into structured groups, forming the basis of modern akharas.

One of the first mentions



wattpad.com

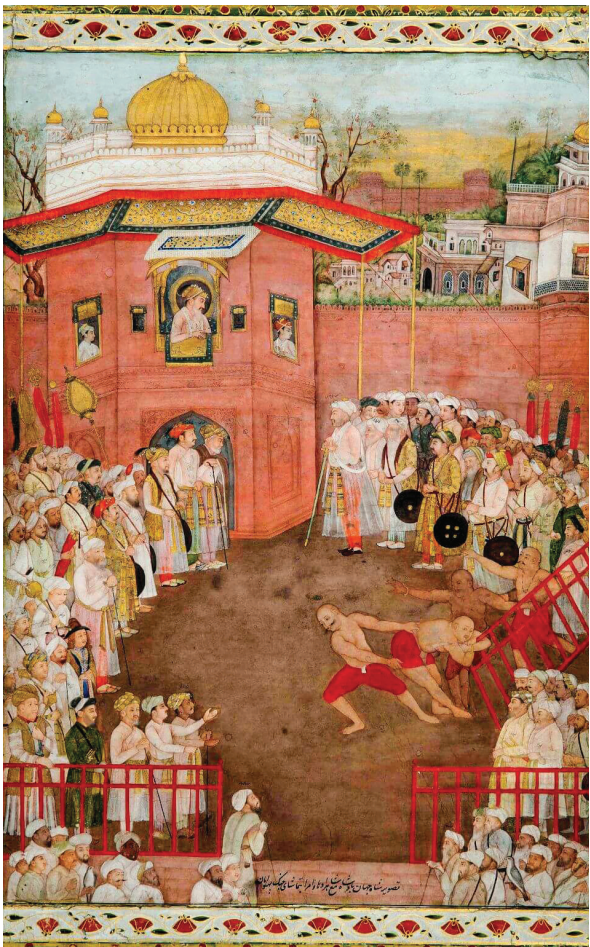
of organized akharas appears in the writings of Hiuen Tsang (7th century CE), who recorded the presence of militant monks in India. He described ascetic orders who had significant influence over religious and social matters, often receiving patronage from local rulers.

During the Mughal period, particularly under Akbar (1542-1605 CE), akharas played an instrumental role in resisting Islamic conversions. The rise of warrior-saints known as Naga Sadhus can be traced to this period, as they took up arms to defend Hindu temples and traditions from external threats. Some scholars have drawn parallels between the Akhara system and military orders like the Nihang Sikhs and Rajput war clans, highlighting the strategic role these ascetic warriors played in the socio-political landscape of medieval India.

Guru Ram Das, one of the revered Sikh Gurus, expressed a metaphor that can also be applied to the spiritual and martial discipline of akharas:

"The vast ocean is filled with treasures containing jewels and pearls. This is attainable by such [people] as are devoted to gurbani." (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 2)

In this context, the "ocean" is akin to the spiritual and philosophical depth that



The emperor Shah Jahan watching a wrestling match, attributable to Mir Kalan Khan, Delhi or Lucknow, CIRCA 1750 Sothebys. enroutetohindiahistory.com

ascetics in akharas strive to explore. Those who dedicate themselves to deep reflection and rigorous discipline, much like the followers of Gurbani, uncover great spiritual wealth. This insight reflects the path of akharas, where discipline, devotion, and spiritual insight converge.

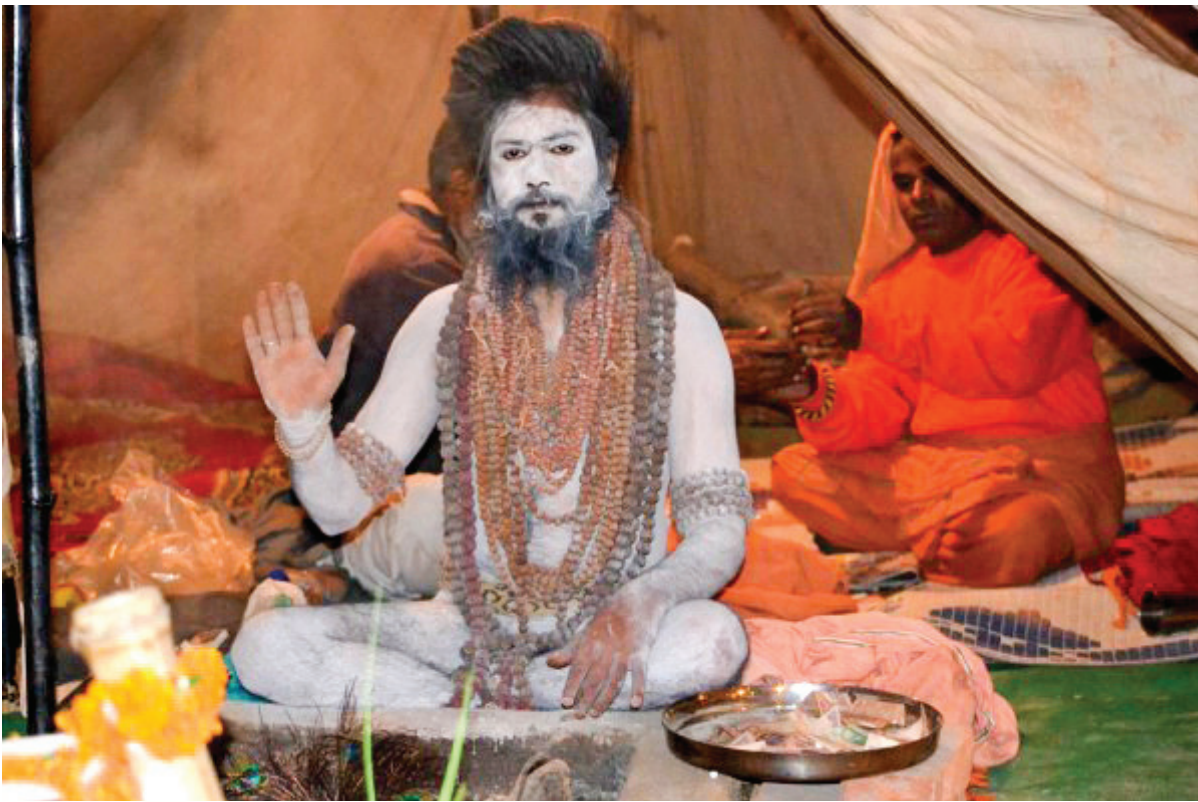
THE STRUCTURE

Over the centuries, akharas underwent significant transformations. Initially established as centers for spiritual and martial training, they evolved into organized monastic communities with distinct administrative structures. The leadership hierarchy typically includes positions such as Mahamandaleshwar (spiritual chief), Mandaleshwar (regional heads), and Mahant (local leaders). This structure ensures the effective governance and dissemination of spiritual teachings within the akhara.

Each akhara also follows a strict regimen of celibacy, ascetic practices, and rigorous training. The emphasis on martial arts and weaponry—using swords, spears, and maces—remains an essential component of their tradition, especially among



[KRISHNA AND BALARAMA FIGHT THE EVIL KING KAMSA'S WRESTLERS: PAGE FROM A DISPERSED BHAGAVATA PURANA, 1650, THE MET MUSEUM]. enroutetohindiahistory.com



Shri Nirvani Ani Akhara - Ayodhya. walkthroughindia



Shri Panchayati Akhara Naya Udaseen-Haridwar. walkthroughindia

the Naga Sadhus.

CONFLICTS IN THE EVOLUTION OF AKHARAS

Much like emergent communities in other spiritual traditions, akharas have faced struggles in defining their identity, particularly in the modern era. As scholars have noted in the study of Sikh traditions, religious communities often seek to establish clear-cut boundaries to assert their legitimacy and distinction from external influences. This process has parallels in the world of akharas, where internal debates about tradition, modernization, and socio-political roles have led to occasional rifts and conflicts.

In the same way that Bhai Gurdas observed in Sikh philosophy:

"In the same way [that the ocean is filled with riches], all treasures are contained in gurbani. Whatever one seeks from it, the same will one attain." (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 3)

A parallel can be drawn to akharas, where seekers may approach their teachings in different ways—some engaging deeply in the discipline, while others may remain at a surface level,

engaging only in rituals without fully grasping the deeper spiritual meaning.

AKHARAS-GOVT RELATIONSHIP

The Kumbh Mela, one of the largest religious gatherings globally, showcases the prominence of akharas in Hindu culture. During this event, akharas lead the Shahi Snan (Royal Bath), a ceremonial immersion in sacred rivers believed to purify the soul. The processions of sadhus (holy men) from various akharas, often adorned with ashes and minimal clothing, are a significant attraction for pilgrims. These rituals not only reinforce the spiritual significance of the festival but also highlight the akharas' role as custodians of ancient traditions.

GOVERNMENT

The relationship between akharas and the government has evolved significantly in modern India. During large-scale events like the Kumbh Mela, the government collaborates with akharas to ensure the smooth organization of the festival, providing infrastructure, security, and logistical support.

Moreover, the current political climate in India,

particularly under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, has seen a resurgence of interest in Hindu traditions and institutions. This environment has provided akharas with increased visibility and influence. The government's emphasis on promoting Hindu cultural heritage has led to initiatives that support the activities of akharas, including the allocation of resources for their preservation.

CHALLENGES

Despite their enduring significance, akharas face several contemporary challenges:



Shri Panchayati Akhara Mahanirvani-Allahabad

- Modernization vs. Tradition: Balancing traditional practices with modern societal norms requires adaptability and openness to change.

- Internal Conflicts: Disputes over leadership and practices can lead to fragmentation within akharas, affecting their unity and public perception.

- Political Dynamics: While political support can bolster akharas' prominence, it also risks aligning them with specific political agendas, potentially compromising their spiritual objectives.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Akharas have been integral to the preservation and propagation of Hindu traditions for centuries. Their ability to adapt to changing societal contexts while maintaining their core values underscores their resilience. As they navigate contemporary challenges, akharas continue to serve as vital pillars of spiritual guidance, cultural preservation, and communal identity within Hindu society.

Much like Pashaura Singh's observation on Sikh traditions:

"No single group can afford to monopolize the debate on any single issue... We must explore new ways of knowing the past and complement historical data with ethnographic study that can illuminate the lived experience."

This principle applies equally to the study of akharas, where historical narratives, ethnographic research, and contemporary realities must converge to provide a holistic understanding of these enduring institutions.

Compiled by Ruchira Talapatra.



Shri Panchdashnaam Juna Akhara - Varanasi. walkthroughindia

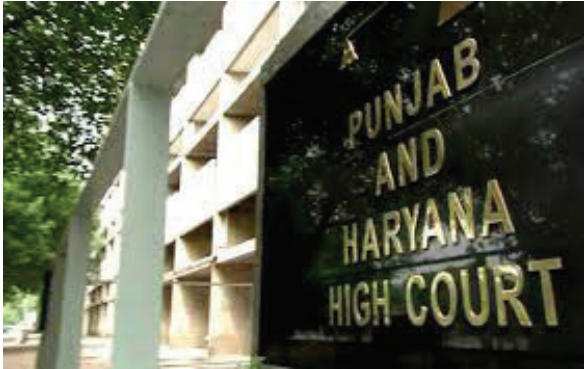
CONSTABLE RECRUITMENT: PUNJAB AND HARYANA HIGH COURT SAYS HARYANA GOVT CANNOT ASK FOR FRESH BACKWARD CLASS CERTIFICATE AT SECOND STAGE OF SELECTION

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Punjab and Haryana High Court in the case Naven and others v. State of Haryana and Others observed and has made it clear that the Haryana Staff Service Commission, HSSC cannot ask for latest Backward Class, BC certificate at the second stage of selection process when the certificate is filed at the time of Common Eligibility Test, CET.

The bench headed by Justice Jagmohan Bansal in the case stated that, 'In the absence of particular date in the rules or advertisement, last date prescribed for filing application for the advertised post is cut-off date. In the instant case, cut-off date for limited purpose i.e. to upload documents, was last date notified for filing application. The said date had no bearing with the date of BC certificate.'

The court stated that, 'BC-A or BC-B certificate filed at the time of CET is valid for all intent and purposes. The respondent could not ask for fresh latest BC certificate at the 2nd stage of selection process. Therefore, the



three financial years came to involved in view of peculiar facts and circumstances, thus, BC certificates filed at the time of CET are valid.'

The court in the case stated that, no candidate could be transposed from BC category to general category on account of non-submission of fresh latest BC certificate at the second stage.

In the present matter, the court was hearing the petitions filed by the candidates appearing for police constable recruitment whose application for the reserved BC category was rejected because they submitted caste certificates issued before April 1, 2023.

The petitioners had applied for 5,000 posts of male constable and 1,000 posts of female constable (General Duty) advertised by HSSC in

2024. Later, the recruitment was re-advertised through a public notice issued in June stating that the candidates had already cleared the CET for Group-C posts, which was a prerequisite for applying.

The court observed that the candidature of many applicants were rejected in BC Category and they were shifted to General Category. Thus, the ground of transposing candidates from BC Category to General Category was that they had submitted BC certificates issued on a date which is prior to cut-off date i.e. April 1, 2023.

The candidates argued before the court that they had initially submitted valid caste certificates linked to the Parivar Pehchan Patra, PPP system while filing their applications.

However, after the selection process began, HSSC arbitrarily introduced a requirement that only certificates issued after April 1, 2023, would be considered valid and many candidates who are unaware of the said change, were subsequently disqualified.

It was also submitted before the court that The recruitment advertisement had not prescribed any specific cut-off date for certificate submission and their caste status was permanent and did not change annually, unlike financial status, which determines eligibility under the creamy layer criteria.

The court in the case noted that it is no one's case that BC certificate was not uploaded. The dispute is confined to year of the certificate. There being no judgment where condition of obtaining data from PPP was existing and under consideration of the Court.

The bench headed by Justice Bansal highlighted that by way of bunch of petitions more than thousand candidates have approached the court.

The court observed that, 'Mistake or negligence may

be on the part of one or few but cannot be on the part of large number of candidates. Thus, it shows that there was mis-communication which led to filing of BC certificates of dates other than expected by respondent.'

Adding to it, the court stated that merely because of some mis-understanding, candidates who are more meritorious should not be deprived from the post. The petitioners after all are going to hold public post and selection of less meritorious candidates would be prejudicial to the interest of public at large.

Further, the court rejected the argument of the petitioner that they should be permitted to file BC certificates without any cut-off because respondent has made correction in the advertisement after last date for filing application.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that the respondent for the sake clarity and without prejudice to the interest of candidates may remove doubts or carry out small repair.

Accordingly, the court quashed the notification setting the cut-off date.

Advocates Harmeet Singh Grewal and Deepinder Singh Nalwa sworn in as Additional Judges of Punjab and Haryana High Court

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Advocate Harmeet Singh Grewal and Advocate Deepinder Singh Nalwa were sworn in as Additional Judges of the Punjab and Haryana High Court on February 17, 2025.

The Union Law Ministry in its official notification dated February 12, 2025 stated that in exercise of the power conferred by the Constitution of India, the President, after consultation with Chief Justice of India, CJI is pleased to appoint them as Additional Judges.

The Supreme Court Collegium recommended the names of five advocates for appointment as additional Judges of the Punjab and Haryana High Court in October 2023.

The name of five advocates for appointment as additional Judges of the Punjab and Haryana High Court are:

Harmeet Singh Grewal, Deepinder Singh Nalwa, Sumeet Goel, Sudeepti



Sharma and Kirti Singh.

In November 2023, all the above advocates were appointed as Additional Judges, except advocates Harmeet Singh Grewal and Deepinder Singh Nalwa.

The Supreme Court Collegium in November 2024 stated that, 'On April 21, 2023, the Chief Justice of the High Court of Punjab and Haryana in consultation with his two senior-most colleagues recommended the elevation of the above Advocates as Judges of that High Court. The Chief Ministers and the Governors for the States of Punjab and Haryana have concurred with the recommendation.

The Collegium for

Harmeet Singh Grewal, stated that two of the three consultee-judges have unanimously given a positive opinion on his suitability as a Judge of the High Court.

The Collegium stated that, 'All the three consultee-judges have unanimously given positive opinion on the suitability of Deepinder Singh Nalwa as a Judge.'

Adding to it, the Collegium stated that Nalwa has extensive practice which is reflected in a substantial number of reported judgments delivered in the cases in which he appeared or argued.

The number of judges with their appointment will go up to 53 against the sanctioned strength of 85.

Rajasthan High Court quashes FIR against daughter registered after father in criminal case transferred her some money; no vicarious liability

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Rajasthan High Court in the case Bharti Sharma v State of Rajasthan & Anr observed and has quashed an FIR against a daughter i.e., the Petitioner who was charged in a case of cheating, which being of the fact that she received some money from her father that was alleged to be received by him under dishonest inducement from the complainant with whom he had entered into an agreement to sale.

The bench headed by Justice Farjand Ali held that the rule of vicarious liability did not apply here and neither there was any allegation of criminal conspiracy by the Petitioner with her father. She was not even alleged in the First Information Report, FIR or the statement of the complainant.

As per the First Information Report, FIR the complainant had entered into an agreement to sale with the Petitioner's father for which an amount was delivered, allegedly under dishonest inducement, to the father.

The court observed that as per the prosecution, after around two years, some of this amount was transferred to the Petitioner's account based on which she was booked as an accused in the case, since the amount was relatable to the one that was given by the complainant to the father.

The court while considering the submissions held that in the presence of the petitioner is nowhere alleged either in the FIR or in the statement. There is no whisper or even tissue of evidence to array her as an accused...The rule of vicarious liability is not applicable

here. Thus, the allegations are for committing offence under Section 420, Section 467, Section 468 of the Indian Penal Code, IPC. There is no allegation of hatching criminal conspiracy by the petitioner with her father or any connivance with regard to giving inducement to the complainant and causing loss to him.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has opined that a father could transfer some money to his daughter.

Accordingly, the court set aside the FIR against the daughter-petitioner.

The counsel, Mr. Nishan Bora appeared for the Petitioner.

The counsel, Mr. Neeraj Kr. Gurjar, AAG; Mr. Vikram Singh Rajpurohit, Dy.G.A; Mr. C.S. Kotwani; Ms. Represented the Respondent.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Shankar Lal Sharma Versus Rajesh Koolwal And Ors observed and has raised concerns about the rising cost of litigation, which prevented persons without adequate financial means from accessing justice.

The court voiced its concerns that that justice is becoming unaffordable for persons from lower economic strata.

The court stated that the legal profession, once regarded as a service-oriented profession, has now fallen prey to 'rapid commercialization and competition.'

The bench comprising of Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case commented about the 'trend'



whereby litigants have to shell out humungous amounts in the name of professional fee, even their matters do not progress much in the Court.

The court commented that in order, to justify the professional fee, the lawyers hand over the "Record of Proceedings" to the party, even though there is no substantial relief.

The court in the case stated that the litigants who are located in far corners of this country have to shell out

humungous sums of money in the name of professional fees for engagement of top echelons of the legal profession, particularly when the matters do not progress on a particular day. In lieu of the expectations of them for the constitutionally guaranteed right to justice at the hands of the said Court, they are often handed over a document that reads on top as 'Record of Proceedings' and which acts as a means of justifying the professional fees, without there being any substantial

relief for the party concerned.

The court in the case stated that such trends send out a message that 'hearing in this Court is available only to those who have the wherewithal and can withstand the financial pressure arising from their litigation apart from the uncertainty of the result and that the doors of justice may be inaccessible for others who can ill-afford to pay such high fees to lawyers.'

The court stated that, "There was a need to break the "misconception" that the Supreme Court was accessible only for the rich.

The court also urged the members of the bar that, "The persons from all classes, etc. who wish to approach this court with their grievance must be provided with necessary assistance by the responsible members of the bar, without increasing the cost of litigation for the party or unnecessarily delaying the

process.'

Adding to it, the court stated that the duty to provide ease of access to justice rests upon every member of the legal profession and the requisite message needs to be disseminated from the portals and corridors of this Court in the first instance in both letter and spirit.

The court made the said comments while lauding a young lawyer, Mr. Sanchar Anand, for acting as an amicus curiae to represent a senior citizen, who was appearing as party-in-person.

However, the court lauded the lawyer for his legal service, which was rendered "dedicatedly" even though there was no fees forthcoming, as the litigant was a person of limited means.

Further, the court stated that the example set by the lawyer was a "welcome change" from the general trend witnessed in the Courts.

Supreme Court raises concerns about rising cost of litigation: It prevents persons without adequate financial means from accessing justice

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Tapas Kumar Palit Versus State Of Chhattisgarh observed that the accused has a fundamental right of speedy trial as enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The court in the case granted bail to an accused charged under the UAPA who has been under custody for over five years.

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

The bench in the case observed and has granted bail to the accused who was arrested by the Chhattisgarh Police on the allegations of carrying articles ordinarily used relating to the Naxalite Activities.

In the present matter, the accused has been under custody since 2020, and the prosecution intends to examine 100 witnesses of which 42 were examined.



The court while questioning the need to examine 100 witnesses of which the majority of the 42 witnesses have deposited similar testimonies noted that no purpose would be served if 100 witnesses were examined to establish one particular fact.

The court relied on the case of Malak Khan vs. Emperor, wherein the court stated that, 'where the number of witnesses is large, it is not, in our opinion, necessary that everyone should be produced.'

Delayed Trials Hampers Overall Life Of Accused

The court in case noted that

an accused spending significant time in jail as an undertrial violates their right to a speedy trial under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The court observed that the long trials cause significant stress, financial loss, and social stigma.

The court stated that without compensation, acquitted individuals have to rebuild their lives after losing jobs, relationships, and legal expenses.

The court in the case stated that if an accused is to get a final verdict after incarceration of six to seven years in

jail as an undertrial prisoner, then, definitely, it could be said that his right to have a speedy trial under Article 21 of the Constitution of India has been infringed. Thus, the stress of long trials on accused persons - who remain innocent until proven guilty - can also be significant. Therefore, the accused persons are not financially compensated for what might be a lengthy period of pretrial incarceration. They may also have lost a job or accommodation, experienced damage to personal relationships while incarcerated, and spent a considerable amount of money on legal fees. If an accused person is found not guilty, they have likely endured many months of being stigmatized and perhaps even ostracized in their community and will have to rebuild their lives with their own resources.'

Judicial Delays Harm Accused, Victims, and Justice System

This court would say that

the delays caused are bad for the accused and extremely bad for the victims, for Indian society and for the credibility of our justice system, which is valued. Th judges are the masters of their Courtrooms and the Criminal Procedure Code provides many tools for the Judges to use in order to ensure that cases proceed efficiently.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has set aside the impugned order of the High Court wherein the court refused to grant him bail.

Accordingly, the court allowed the appeal.

The counsel, Mr. Sameer Shrivastava, AOR Ms. Yashika Varshney, Adv. Ms. Palak Mathur, Adv. Dr. Sangeeta Verma, Adv. appeared for the Petitioner(s).

The counsel, Mr. Abhishek Pandey, Standing Counsel, Adv. Mr. Prashant Kumar Umrao, AOR represented the Respondent(s).

SC: Filing of fresh bail application after rejection of earlier bail plea or cancellation of bail is a matter of right

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Vipin Kumar vs State of UP observed that a High Court cannot dismiss a bail application which being solely on the ground that the Apex Court had not permitting the filing of a fresh application.

The court in the case reiterated that the filing of a fresh bail application, after the dismissal of an earlier bail application or the cancellation of the bail granted, was a right.

The bench comprising of Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice SVN Bhatti was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case observed that, 'Filing a fresh bail application, once an earlier bail application has been rejected or if granted and thereafter cancelled is a matter of right and solely which being on the ground



that the Apex Court had not permitted filing of the fresh bail application, thus, the High Court was not justified in dismissing the bail application.'

In the present matter, the court granted the bail to the petitioner. Later, the Supreme Court cancelled the bail, thus, while cancelling the bail granted by the High Court, it had not given any liberty to the appellant to file a fresh bail application.

The High Court in the case refused to entertain the sec-

ond bail application.

The Supreme Court, while disapproving the approach of High Court stated that there being no prohibition in filing a fresh bail application after the earlier was rejected or cancelled, if granted. The said Court in cancelling the bail application has not taken away the right of the appellant to apply for bail afresh, if the circumstances permit.'

Accordingly, the court set aside the matter and has remanded the matter for fresh consideration.

TOP OF THE DAY

PAK JOURNALIST
EXPRESSES CONCERN
OVER RISING
DISAPPEARANCES

ISLAMABAD : Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir expressed his deep concern about the rising cases of enforced disappearances in the country on Monday. His response came after a post from the official account of Voice of Baloch Missing Persons, which highlighted a troubling incident in Gwadar’s tehsil Pasni. According to the post, five individuals were arrested by security forces and taken to an unknown location. Since their detention, they have been missing, raising serious concerns.

INFLATION IN
KARACHI INCREASES
AHEAD OF RAMADAN

KARACHI :As the month of Ramadan approaches, residents of Karachi are facing a surge in inflation; with prices of essential commodities soaring, it is increasingly difficult for common people to celebrate in a carefree manner. Locals express their concerns over the rising cost of living, which seems to contradict the global trend of price reductions during the festive seasons.

IDEX AND NAVDEX
2025 KICK OFF IN
ABU DHABI

ABU DHABI: Under the patronage of President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the International Defence Exhibition (IDEX) and the Naval Defence Exhibition (NAVDEX) 2025 commenced today at the ADNEC Centre. Organised by ADNEC Group in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence and the Tawazun Council until February 21, the 17th edition of IDEX and the 8th edition of NAVDEX bring together leading global companies and experts in the defence industry to showcase the latest technologies and solutions in the sector, aimed at enhancing international peace and security.

TIBET AWARENESS
DAY ORGANISED
IN PARIS

Paris: The Bureau du Tibet in Paris, one of the offices of the official representation of the 14th Dalai Lama, organised a successful Tibet Awareness Day on Saturday under the guidance of Representative Rigzin Choedon Genkhang. According to information from the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the event gathered 33 enthusiastic young Tibetans from different educational backgrounds. The goal was to help them better understand the Tibetan cause, history, and the ongoing Sino-Tibet conflict. The day began with an informative presentation by Thupten Tsering, the coordinator of the Bureau du Tibet in Paris. Using a detailed PowerPoint, Tsering explained the structure of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and its crucial role in advocating for Tibet’s freedom and preserving Tibetan identity.

XI PROMISES POLICY STABILITY IN
MEETING WITH BUSINESS LEADERS

Xi emphasized that the government’s approach to the private sector is part of China’s socialist system.

AGENCIES
BANGKOK

China’s President Xi Jinping met with private sector business leaders on Monday, offering them assurances that policies regarding the private sector would not change, state media reported, as government officials work to revive an economy disrupted by a pandemic, regulatory crackdowns and a real estate crisis.

Among those present was Alibaba founder Jack Ma, who was the first to have been the focus of a crackdown on the tech industry in recent years.

Xi told the audience that the Communist Party and the government’s approach towards the private sector has been incorporated into “the socialist system with Chinese characteristics,” which is how the Party describes its governance, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

“They cannot and will not change,” said Xi.

The president also said

KEY POINTS

- Xi assures private sector stability, emphasizing socialist governance and legal protections for businesses.
- Jack Ma, once targeted in the tech crackdown, attends meeting with other business leaders.
- Xi encourages private businesses to promote common prosperity, with major companies like Alibaba and Tencent pledging support.



the government would “sincerely protect the legal rights of private businesses and entrepreneurs, according to the law.” But, “at the same time, we must realize that our country is a socialist country ruled by law, and any type of illegal activities by enterprises cannot avoid investigation and punishment.”

The words of assurance were made after Beijing launched a crackdown on the tech sector in 2020 to break down monopolies and implement strict data

regulations.

One of the most public faces of that crackdown was Ma, who founded e-commerce firm Alibaba in the 1990s and was once China’s richest man. He has kept a low profile with few public appearances in recent years after he publicly criticized China’s regulators and financial systems during a speech in Shanghai.

Other business leaders at Monday’s meeting in Beijing were Zeng Yuqun, the chairman of battery developer CATL, Wang Ch-

uanfu, chairman of electric cars manufacturer BYD, and Pony Ma, the CEO of Tencent, which owns WeChat, according to a video of the meeting from state broadcaster CCTV and a state media report.

Xi said he hoped private businesses will continue to “get rich first, and then promote common prosperity,” a reference to a program to encourage development and close the wealth gap. Alibaba previously pledged \$15.5 billion to the cause, while Tencent pledged \$7.7 billion.

Israel sends negotiators to Cairo

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has instructed negotiators to depart for Cairo on Monday to discuss the continued implementation of the first stage of the deal.

Israel Prime Minister’s Office said on Sunday that the decision has been taken in coordination with with US Presidential Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff. According to the statement, the negotiation team will receive instructions of the negotiations regarding the second stage following Security Cabinet discussion scheduled to take place on Monday.

In a statement shared on X, Israel’s Prime Minister’s Office stated, “In coordination with US Presidential Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff, Prime Min-



Israel PM also took a veiled swipe at the Biden administration, The Times of Israel reported.

ister Benjamin Netanyahu has instructed the negotiations team to leave for Cairo tomorrow in order to discuss the continued implementation of the first stage of the deal.”

In another post on X, it wrote, “Following tomorrow’s Security Cabinet discussion, the team will receive

instructions for the continuation of the negotiations regarding the second stage.” Meanwhile, Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu said that he and his US counterpart Donald Trump are working in “full cooperation and coordination.” The Times of Israel reported. While addressing the opening of

the weekly cabinet meeting, Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu emphasised that he and his US counterpart Donald Trump are in lockstep on the future of Gaza and what to do regarding Hamas. He made these remarks shortly after emphasising the same point during his joint press statement along with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Netanyahu said, “I cannot go into all the details -- but we have a joint strategy, including when and how the gates of hell will open if all of our hostages, all of them, are not released and do not return home.”

He stressed that both leaders have same goals. He said, “Not only the release of the hostages, the elimination of Hamas, and of course ensuring that Gaza will not again be a threat to Israel, plus the president’s plan that says that Gaza will be completely different.”

Bangladesh seeks India’s support to revive SAARC

AGENCIES
DHAKA

Bangladesh’s interim government’s Foreign Affairs Advisor Touhid Hossain has sought India’s backing to revive the SAARC at a meeting with External Affairs S. Jaishankar at the sidelines of a multi-lateral conference in Muscat.

“Hossain sought to initiate discussions for the renewal of the Ganges Water Treaty signed in 1996 and emphasised the need for convening the SAARC Standing Committee meeting and requested New Delhi’s support on the matter,” a Bangladesh foreign ministry statement

Eyal Zamir appointed as
IDF Chief of Staff

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

The Israeli government gave its approval for the appointment of Maj. Gen. (res.) Eyal Zamir as the next Israel Defense Forces chief of staff on Sunday.

Zamir will replace Lt.-Gen. Herzi Halevi, who announced on Jan. 21 he would resign over the military’s October 7 failures.

Halevi is due to step down on March 5. Zamir, 59, was born and raised in Eilat. He would become the Chief of Staff to begin his career in the Armored Corps.

After joining the army in 1984 he became a tank commander, gradually climbing the ranks. He was eventually appointed as Netanyahu’s military secretary from 2012-2015. From 2018 to 2021, he was deputy chief of staff before becoming a visiting research fellow at the Washington-based Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Zamir was also considered for the Chief of Staff in 2018 and 2022. In 2023, he was appointed Director General of the Defense Ministry.

He also has degrees from Tel Aviv and Haifa Universities and is a graduate of Wharton University’s Gen-



They may include personal recommendations about individuals under investigation, though the government is not bound to act on the recommendations.

eral Management Program.

The IDF Chief of Staff serves for three years with the possibility of a one-year extension. The last time chief of staff to leave the post before the end of his term was Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz, who resigned in 2007 over IDF failures during the Second Lebanon War of 2006.

There have been growing calls for the government to appoint an independent

commission of inquiry to investigate political and military failures. Such commissions have broader authority to summon witnesses and collect evidence and are headed by a senior Supreme Court justice. They may include personal recommendations about individuals under investigation, though the government is not bound to act on the recommendations.

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the governing coalition say an independent commission should only be appointed after the war.

The last state commission of inquiry, which investigated Israel’s worst civilian disaster -- a stampede that killed 45 people at a holy site on Mount Meron -- held Netanyahu personally responsible for the tragedy in a report released in April.

China plays its
Trump card

AGENCIES
HONG KONG

As newly installed President Donald Trump pursues his personal agenda in the White House, Chairman Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) elites must be rubbing their hands with glee. Trump and his senior officials are alarming or snubbing one country after another, thus providing China multiple opportunities to advance its own authoritarian cause. With regularity, the almost buffoonish actions of Trump are lowering respect for the USA around the world. Whether it is threats to seize control of the Panama Canal or Greenland, Trump is making a mockery of the rule of law. In language reminiscent of China’s leaders, the American second-term president has not ruled out the use of force to “re-take” the Panama Canal.

The human rights body also informed that the teenager’s family had been a target of the Pakistani Army for long, with even their homes being burnt by the military.

said after the two leaders met during the 8th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) in Muscat, Oman, on Sunday. Bangladesh’s new interim government led by Muhammad Yunus has been insisting on the revival of the South Asian regional grouping SAARC which has been suspended for a long time due to the India-Pakistan conflict. Jaishankar in a post on X af-

ter the meeting did not mention SAARC. “Met Foreign Affairs Adviser Md. Touhid Hossain of the Interim Government of Bangladesh. The conversation was focused on our bilateral relationship, as also on BIMSTEC,” Jaishankar posted on X. 40 arrested in Bangladesh after violence, vandalism at Awami League leader’s house 40 arrested

in Bangladesh after violence, vandalism at Awami League leader’s house. Bangladesh protesters torch ousted PM Hasina’s father’s home Bangladesh protesters torch ousted PM Hasina’s father’s home Bangladesh will replace Thailand as chairman after the 6th BIMSTEC summit scheduled to take place in Bangkok from April 2 to 4 this year.

“Both sides recognised the challenges the two neighbours are facing in terms of bilateral relations and discussed the necessity to work together to address those,” the statement said.

Nepal FM Deuba discusses KIIT issue with Indian Ambassador

AGENCIES
KATHMANDU

Nepal Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba held a telephonic conversation with Indian Ambassador to Nepal over the issue of arising situation at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT).

Deuba stated that she held a telephonic conversation with Indian Ambassador

to Nepal, Naveen Srivastava regarding the issue. “After the news of Nepali student Prakriti Lamsal’s death in the hostel of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) University in Odisha, India, and then the Nepalese student being shifted to hostel, came to the media, we immediately took this issue seriously and started diplomatic initiatives

Further adding, “Similarly, this afternoon I also had a phone call with the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Mr. Navin Srivastava.

Regarding this incident, I have been contacting the concerned body this morning. This morning I instructed the Nepali Ambassador to India, Dr. Shankar Sharma, to understand the reality of the incident and take

necessary action regarding the problem faced by Nepali students.

He is working accordingly and has recently published a communique from the Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi,”

Deuba said in a post on X. Further adding, “Similarly, this afternoon I also had a phone call with the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Mr. Navin Srivastava. He has also informed about the necessary initiatives and coordination measures for the safety of Nepali students. The Ministry of External Affairs is taking initiative in this matter and would

like to provide information about the latest situation.” Late on Sunday evening, the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, issuing a release announced that it grees to allow over 700 Nepali students to return to their hostels and resume their studies. Earlier, the university had forcibly evicted these stu-

dents, using police force and baton charges, after they protested the mysterious death of Nepali student Prakriti Lamsal.

Following diplomatic intervention, the Nepali Embassy in New Delhi issued a statement on Monday, confirming that KIIT had agreed to provide hostel accommodations and continue classes for Nepali students.

BLISS



Two children take a tumble in the snow while sledding.(Agency)

Austria: Stabbing attack suspect reportedly inspired by ISIS

AGENCIES
VILLACH

One person was killed and five others were injured in stabbings on Saturday in the centre of the town of Villach, with a man from Syria being arrested at the scene, the New York Times reported.

Citing the officials, the New York Times reported that the Syrian asylum seeker who killed a teenager and injured five other people in a knife attack, was inspired by the Islamic State militant group.

The man, who was detained after the attack on Saturday, had become radicalized online, said Austria's interior minister, Gerhard Karner. The police said they believed that the victims were chosen randomly.

Citing the Interior ministry, the New York Times said



that the suspect is 23 years old, came to Austria from Syria in 2020 and was later given asylum, according to the Interior ministry.

The attack in Villach, happened around 4 PM on Saturday when a man started stabbing random people with a folding knife, the police in Villach said.

By the time police reached the place in seven minutes, after getting the first call

and the time he was apprehended, the man killed a 14-year-old and injured five other people.

The attack was eventually stopped by a 42-year-old Syrian national who saw the violence unfolding, according to the authorities.

"A witness saw the event and decided to intervene -- he rammed the perpetrator with his car and thus probably prevented worse things

from happening," said Michaela Kohlweiss, the state police director who is in charge of the investigation, New York Times reported.

Two officers were able to restrain and then arrest the suspect immediately afterward. The police said on Sunday the suspect did not have a police record and neither had been monitored by the domestic intelligence. During the search of his apartment, however, police found clear evidence of "Islamist thought" and Islamic State flags hanging on the walls, they said, but no weapons or explosives, New York Times noted.

The police said they were still investigating the suspect's background and motivation, and that it appeared he had become radicalized online in a very short period.

Anti-Musk protest movement expected to intensify during recess

AGENCIES
NEW YORK

Donald Trump is the president, but billionaire Elon Musk is the focus for thousands of Democratic activists launching a protest campaign this week to fight the Trump administration's push to gut federal health, education and human services agencies.

Hundreds of protests are scheduled outside congressional offices and Tesla dealerships, with organizers hoping to send a pointed message to members of Congress who are on recess this week.

The backlash still hasn't approached the intensity of protests during and after Trump's first inauguration



eight years ago. But a loose coalition of Democrats and progressives is coalescing around Musk's rise as Trump's top lieutenant and his purge of the federal bureaucracy.

"He's a major weak link in the MAGA coalition," Ezra Levin, co-founder of the pro-

gressive group Indivisible, said of Musk. "I can't think of something that polls worse than the richest man in the world is coming after your Social Security check or your Meals on Wheels or your Head Start."

Indivisible, which claims

more than 1,300 local chapters nationwide, is encouraging members to protest at the offices of their members of Congress, regardless of political party. The group also offered a step-by-step guide for protesting at dealerships for Tesla, Musk's electric vehicle company.

The memo encourages protesters to stay on sidewalks and public spaces and to avoid any actions that might directly interfere with business operations, such as blocking entrances or trespassing on private property. It also calls for Tesla protesters to stay on message: "This is about Musk's political takeover, not Tesla, SpaceX, or X as companies."

Congolese citizens demand withdrawal of Burundi, foreign troops

AGENCIES
KIGALI

DR Congo citizens on Monday, February 17, took to the streets in a wave of fresh protests demanding the immediate withdrawal of foreign military forces, including MONUSCO, the Burundi National Defence Forces (FNDB), and the SAMIDRC troops.

The demonstrators, who flocked the streets of Goma -- the provincial capital of North Kivu -- say that the continued presence of these troops is exacerbating insecurity rather than curbing the vice and protecting in-

nocent civilians.

Hundreds of protestors were seen on the streets of Goma -- recently captured by the M23 -- chanting slogans and holding banners inscribed in French and Swahili that called for the departure of foreign forces. "Is the government waiting for them to take over other towns to take action? It's cowardice," he said.

The rebels marched to the governor's office over the weekend. Bernard Byamungu, a leader of the group, stood in front of the office and promised to change the status quo. "We are going to clean up the

disorder left over from the old regime," Byamungu said to a small cheering crowd, telling them they had been living in a "jungle".

M23 is one of more than 100 armed groups fighting Congolese forces in the mineral-rich eastern DRC. It says its objective is to safeguard the interests of the Congolese Tutsi and other minorities, including protecting them against Hutu rebel groups who escaped to the DRC after taking part in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda that targeted Tutsis. The DRC, the US and other countries have all

accused Rwanda of backing M23, which the Rwandan government denies. UN experts say Rwanda's army is in "de facto control" of the group.

The Burundian army had been supporting the Congolese army to protect Bukavu. M23's capture of the city marks an unprecedented expansion of territory by the militia since it resurfaced in 2022. It also further risks escalating the conflict into a regional war.

Almost 3,000 people were killed and a similar number injured in the fight for Goma.

Fighting this year has

US: NINE DEAD IN KENTUCKY, GEORGIA STORM

Strong winds in multiple states caused flooding, submerging vehicles, toppling trees, and inundating homes in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia

AGENCIES
KENTUCKY

At least eight people have died after a powerful storm swept through Kentucky, resulting in flooding that inundated roads and homes, Governor Andy Beshear announced on Sunday. An official said one person died in Georgia, CNN reported.

Beshear said emergency responders are in search and rescue phase and have conducted more than 1000 rescues in over 24 hours. He called the storm as "one of the most serious weather events we've dealt with in at least a decade."

Video footage from multiple states showed vehicles submerged in floodwaters, toppled trees and inundated houses with reports about flooded roads, businesses and homes in Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia.

According to officials, water levels have reached historic highs in Kentucky as the storm gained momentum on Saturday. Beshear on Sunday stressed that it had "massive" impact to the state and mentioned about

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

Alexei Navalny's widow, Yulia Navalnaya, has accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of hiding the truth about Navalny's death in light of his first death anniversary, Al Jazeera reported.

Al Jazeera noted that Alexei Navalny's death was officially attributed to natural causes, in an Arctic

SEVERE STORM

- Historic flooding in Kentucky, causing multiple fatalities and hundreds of water rescues.
- Power outages affect thousands, with evacuations and significant damage reported in several states.
- Flash flood emergencies issued in multiple states, with winter storm warnings extending through Monday.



"hundreds of water rescues" and "multiple fatalities," CNN reported.

In a post shared on X, Andy Beshear stated, "We need Kentuckians to remain alert. There are more than 300 road closures, with @KYTC leaders saying the statewide impact is historic. From mudslides in the east to snow in the west, the situation is dangerous. Please plan ahead, avoid travel and stay safe, Kentucky." Kentucky Governor said that the deaths include at least one child. He said, "We believe this number is going to grow."

He urged people of Kentucky to stay off the roads and said motor vehicle accidents were behind several of the death.

Beshear declared a state of emergency for Kentucky ahead of the storm on Friday. He thanked US President Donald Trump for giving approval to federal disaster declaration, making federal aid funding available to affected regions.

On Sunday, Kentucky Emergency Management Director Eric Gibson said that the severe weather event will "continue for several more days." Beshear

warned of continued flooding in coming days. He said that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is on site in Kentucky, along with 146 soldiers and airmen from the Kentucky National Guard.

Evacuation has been prompted due to intense rain and flooding. In addition, hundreds of thousands of customers across several states faced power outages. Flash flood emergencies and warnings have been issued for parts of West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Arkansas through Sunday morning.

Yulia Navalnaya accuses Russia of 'hiding truth' about Alexei Navalny's death

penal colony last February. Supporters of the late leading Russian opposition leader are commemorating the one-year anniversary of his death by visiting his grave in Moscow, Al Jazeera reported.

"I am grateful to everyone who remembers Alexei, who talks about him, writes about him, who comes to the cemetery. I am grateful to those who have been supporting me this whole

year. Your letters, your hugs when we meet, this is what does not let me forget why Alexei did this and why I'm doing this. If so many good people are on one side, we cannot help but win", Yulia Navalnaya said in a video message as shared by Al Jazeera.

She further said in the video message, "Even now a year after his death he (Russian President Vladimir Putin) is trying to erase

Alexei's name from our memory to hide the truth about the murder, to make us come to terms, but he will not succeed."

"The pain we feel makes us stronger and this year has shown that we are stronger than we thought ourselves", the video message added.

Alexei Navalny was Russia's high-profile opposition leader who died on February 16, 2024.

UK Prime Minister offers troops for Ukraine peace deal

AGENCIES
LONDON

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Monday said the UK is "ready and willing" to put troops on the ground in Ukraine in pursuit of a peace deal with Russia amid a "generational challenge" to the country's security.

Ahead of travelling to Paris for an important informal summit with European leaders to discuss US President Donald Trump's talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the conflict between Moscow

and Kyiv, Starmer penned a column in The Daily Telegraph to warn that Europe faces an "existential threat" and must "step up" to enhance defence and security measures for the continent. His Downing Street spokesperson also confirmed a planned visit to Washington next week to hold bilateral talks with Trump, with the Russia-Ukraine conflict featuring heavily.

"We're facing a generational challenge when it comes to national security, Starmer told reporters during a tour of a diagnostic

centre in Bristol, southwest England, on Monday morning. Obviously, the immediate question is the future of Ukraine, and we must continue to put Ukraine in the strongest possible position whatever happens next and to make sure that if there is peace, and we all want peace that it is lasting," he said.

Writing in the newspaper column, Starmer notes that securing a lasting peace in Ukraine that safeguards its sovereignty for the long term is essential if "we are to deter Putin from further aggression in the future".

"As European nations, we must increase our defence spending and take on a greater role in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation]. Non-US NATO nations have already increased defence spending by 20 per cent in the past year, but we must go further," he writes.

"The UK is ready to play a leading role in accelerating work on security guarantees for Ukraine. This includes further support for Ukraine's military, where the UK has already committed GBP 3 billion a year until at least 2030.

48 dead in Mali goldmine collapse

AGENCIES
MALI

At least 48 people have been killed in the collapse of an illegally operated goldmine in western Mali, authorities and local sources have said.

Mali is one of Africa's leading gold producers, and mining sites are regularly the scene of deadly landslides and accidents. Authorities have struggled to control unregulated mining of the precious metal in the country, which is among the world's poorest.

Terence Holohan British mining executives held in Mali freed after \$160m deal to settle tax dispute

Authorities have struggled to control unregulated mining of the precious metal in the country, which is among the world's poorest.

Read more "The toll at [6pm] today [Saturday] is 48 dead following the collapse," said a police source.

"Some of the victims fell into the water. Among them was a woman with her baby on her back." A local official confirmed the cave-in, while the Kenieba goldminers' association also put the death toll at 48.

The search for victims was ongoing, the head of an environmental organ-

isation said.

Saturday's accident took place at an abandoned site formerly operated by a Chinese company, sources told AFP. In January, a landslide at a goldmine in southern Mali killed at least 10 people and left many others missing, most of them women. Just over a year ago, a tunnel collapsed at a goldmining site in the same region as Saturday's landslide, killing more than 70 people.

PICTURE PERFECT



Camila Cabello look for London's Royal Festival Hall for BAFTA. (INSTAGRAM)

VICKY KAUSHAL-STARRER 'CHHAAVA' EARNS OVER RS 150 CRORE

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna-starrer historical drama "Chhaava" has become the highest grossing Hindi film this year by earning Rs 164.75 crore at the worldwide box office in its opening weekend.

The film has surpassed the collection of Akshay Kumar-starrer "Skyforce", which made over Rs 140 crore worldwide in the first three days of its release last month.

According to trade tracking website Sacnilk, the film's total global box office collection is Rs 164.75 crore. The movie's gross India collection stands at Rs 139.75 crore and its nett earnings are at Rs 116.50 crore. The



film made over Rs 25 crore overseas.

Directed by Laxman Utekar of "Mimi" fame, "Chhaava" released on the big screen on February 14. It is produced by Dinesh Vijan of Maddock

Films.

The period drama is based on the life of Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, essayed by Kaushal. Mandanna plays his wife, Yesubai.

"Chhaava" marked another collaboration for Kaushal and Utekar, who have previously worked on the romantic comedy "Zara Hatke Zara Bachke" (2023) opposite Sara Ali Khan.

BAFTA: 'All We Imagine As Light' loses to 'Emilia Perez'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The 78th British Academy Film Awards, also known as the BAFTA Awards was held on Sunday, February 16 at the Royal Albert Hall in London. BAFTA is one of the most prestigious award shows and it celebrates global cinema across various categories including directing and acting among others.

Despite controversy surrounding its lead star Karla Sofia Gascon's old tweets, which were viewed as Islamophobic and racist, "Emilia Perez" won the award at Sunday's ceremony in London with film's



second lead Zoe Saldana taking home the BAFTA in the Supporting Actress segment.

"Emilia Perez", a French film directed by Jacques



Audiard, follows four remarkable women in Mexico, each pursuing their own happiness. Cartel leader Emilia (Gascon) enlists Rita (Saldana), an

unappreciated lawyer, to help fake her death so that she can fake her death so that she can finally live authentically as her true self.

Maha Cyber Cell summons Ranveer Allahbadia

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Cyber Cell has summoned YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia to appear before it on February 24.

The Cyber Cell is investigating the case registered against Ranveer Allahbadia and others after he triggered an uproar with his offensive remarks on the show 'India's Got Talent.'

Comedian Samay Raina has also been asked to appear before the cyber cell tomorrow.

Multiple FIRs being registered against Allahbadia, Raina, and other participants of the show following the backlash after Allahbadia asked a contestant, "Would you rather watch your parents... or join in once and stop it forever?"

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has also investigated the matter and has issued summons to Allahbadia, Raina, and others.

However, many of those summoned failed to appear before the commission today, citing concerns about their personal safety, prior foreign travel commitments, and other logistical challenges.



The Commission said that Ranveer Allahbadia had informed it that he was receiving death threats and requested a new hearing date after three weeks. The Commission has accepted his request and rescheduled the hearing for March 6.

Apoorva Mukhija has communicated that she fears for her safety and can only attend the hearing virtually. Her lawyer, in an email said that Mukhija will attend in person once the situation stabilizes. The Commission has accepted her request and rescheduled the hearing for March 6.

The Commission said it has accepted Jaspreet Singh's request. Singh said he is on tour in Paris and will return

to India by March 10, 2025, at which point he will cooperate with the Commission's inquiry. The NCW has rescheduled the hearing for March 11.

Ashish Chanchlani did not attend the hearing in person; instead, his advocate appeared on his behalf and stated that Ashish was unwell. The Commission has accepted his request and rescheduled the hearing for March 6.

Tushar Poojari, the producer of "India's Got Talent," and Saurabh Bothra have failed to respond to the Commission's notice. NCW strongly condemned their lack of seriousness and issued a resumption for them for March 6, 2025.

BRAIN PICKING



I am a difficult person to cast. — SIMI GAREWAL (Indian Actress)

Zakir Khan excited about his show 'Love Life Lafde'

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Stand-up comedian Zakir Khan has come up with a new show titled 'Love Life Lafde'.

As per Zakir, the audience will get a chance to hear some "real conversations" on the show.

"The OG Sakht Launda is back, bigger, funnier,



Kate Winslet to make directorial debut with 'Goodbye June'

AGENCIES
LOS ANGELES

Hollywood star Kate Winslet, best known for her performances in 'Titanic', 'Quills' and 'Hamlet', is now all set to don the hat of a director.

As per The Hollywood Reporter, Kate has come on board to direct feature film titled 'Goodbye June' for Netflix.

The Oscar winner will also produce and act in the movie, which will star Toni Collette, Johnny Flynn, Andrea Riseborough, Timothy Spall and Helen Mirren. Joe Anders, Winslet's son with ex-husband Sam Mendes, wrote the screenplay and Kate Solomon will produce



with Winslet.

Netflix describes Goodbye June as a "touching, yet humorous" drama, "which sees a fractured group of siblings pull together under duress and trying circumstances."

The film will go on floors

soon in the U.K.

Solomon also produced Winslet's most recent feature, the Lee Miller biopic Lee about the model-turned-World War II photographer, which included Riseborough among its cast, as per The Hollywood Reporter.

Rekha's reunion with Hrithik, Rakesh reminds fans of 'Koi... Mil Gaya'

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Sunday night turned out to be special for Bollywood fans as they witnessed a gamut of stars under one roof.

On February 16, the makers of the documentary series, "The Roshans" hosted a success bash for the Netflix project in Mumbai. The event was attended not only by Hrithik Roshan and his family members but renowned dignitaries such as Rekha and Anupam Kher, too, marked their gracious



presence.

Several pictures from the success bash surfaced online. However, it was Rekha's presence that stole everyone's attention. She arrived at the event in full

stylish mode.

She even posed with Hrithik and Rakesh Roshan, and her reunion with the father-son duo reminded fans of 'Koi... Mil Gaya'. In the block-

Celebs like Neetu Kapoor, Pashmina Roshan, Jeetendra, Alka Yagnik, Jackie and Tiger Shroff, Vaani Kapoor, Siddharth Anand, Udit Narayan, David Dhawan and many others attended the event.

buster film, Rekha essayed the role of Hrithik's mother and wife of Rakesh Roshan.

Celebs like Neetu Kapoor, Pashmina Roshan, Jeetendra, Alka Yagnik, Jackie and Tiger Shroff, Vaani Kapoor, Siddharth Anand, Udit Na-

rayan, David Dhawan and many others attended the event.

After attending the bash, Siddharth took to Instagram and shared a picture with his 'War' team including Hrithik, Tiger and Vaani.

Kriti Sanon starts shooting for 'Tere Ishk Mein'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

"Crew" star Kriti Sanon on Monday said she has begun filming for Anand L Rai's upcoming movie "Tere Ishk Mein", also featuring Dhanush.

Sanon will play the character of Mukti alongside Dhanush's Shankar in the film. It is produced by Rai's Colour Yellow Productions.

The actor shared the work update on her Instagram Stories.

"Day 1. Let's go! @aanandlrai @dhanushkraj @



cypplofficial Such a good feeling being back on set... Doing what I love the most!" she captioned a picture of the film's clapboard.

"Tere Ishk Mein" marks a third collaboration between Dhanush and Rai after 2013's "Raanjhanaa" and "Atrangi Re" (2021). The upcoming movie is slated to be released in theatres on November 28.

Sanon was last seen in "Do Patti", which also marked her debut as a producer.

BEYOND THE USUAL FLU: WHY PREVENTION MATTERS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The pandemic etched images of chapped hands and isolated homes into our collective memory. But as the world adapts, new challenges arise. While the flu often feels like a common ailment, the emergence of viral strains that mimic its symptoms has increased post-pandemic, bringing fresh concerns. Studies from the National Institute of Health reveal that the long-term psychological and social impacts of the pandemic continue to cast a shadow, leaving behind lingering fear and unease. Prevention remains our strongest ally. Early recognition of symptoms, maintaining hygiene, and vaccination can significantly reduce risks. In a world where the

ordinary flu could mask extraordinary threats, staying prepared is key to safeguarding health. Recognizing Flu Symptoms: What You Should Know Flu symptoms can vary, but early recognition is key to managing the condition effectively and preventing further spread. Here's what to look for:

- Symptoms in Young Children - Look for fever, runny nose, and cough. Severe symptoms like wheezing or difficulty breathing may require medical attention.
- Impact on Healthy Adults - Expect mild cold-like symptoms—sore throat, fatigue, and nasal congestion. While most recover quickly, older adults and those with underlying conditions may face more severe symptoms.



KEEP SAFE AND HEALTHY DURING FLU SEASON

Flu season brings an increased risk of infections as viruses spread through respiratory droplets or contaminated surfaces. Close contact with infected individuals further heightens this risk. Taking proactive measures can significantly reduce transmission and keep you healthy. Good hygiene and a strong immune system are your best defenses. A healthy body is better equipped to fight infections. Follow these essential steps to stay protected:

- Maintain proper hand hygiene. Regularly wash your hands with soap or handwash to minimize the spread of germs. Using a handwash like Savlon Deep Clean Handwash, formu-

lated to effectively eliminate 99.9% of germs* and is also made of 90% natural origin content*. The handwash is enriched with orange essence and has an easy wash off formula to remove tough dirt & grime.

- Avoid close contact with sick individuals and maintain social distancing.
- Strengthen your immune system with a balanced diet and regular exercise.
- Prioritize prevention to minimize the impact of flu season on your health and well-being.

This season, regular handwashing can be a helpful step in maintaining overall hygiene and is the first step to prevent flus and infections.

(*Basis lab study on sample microbes. Washes away germs. #Basis applicable standards.)

NOURISHING MUSCULOSKELETAL HEALTH: THE POWER OF FOODS AND NUTRACEUTICALS

TDG NETWORK

Maintaining musculoskeletal health becomes essential as we age to preserve mobility, balance, and overall quality of life. The aging process can lead to a decline in bone density and muscle strength, making it essential to focus on nutrition. Research has shown that specific foods and nutraceuticals play a significant role in supporting bone and muscle health, particularly for older adults, helping them stay active and reduce the risk of falls and fractures. Several micronutrients are essential for maintaining bone density, muscle strength, and physical function:

- **Calcium:** Adequate calcium intake helps prevent osteoporosis, a condition characterized by weak and brittle bones. Dairy products, leafy greens, and fortified foods are sources of calcium.
- **Vitamin D:** Essential for calcium absorption, vitamin D supports bone density and reduces fracture risk. It can be obtained from fatty fish, egg yolks, and fortified foods. Supplementation may be necessary for those at risk of deficiency.
- **Magnesium:** Magnesium contributes to bone structure and muscle function. It helps regulate calcium levels and aids muscle repair. Sources include nuts, seeds, whole grains, and leafy vegetables.
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** These anti-inflammatory fats, found in fish, flaxseeds, and walnuts, are beneficial for joint health, especially for osteoarthritis. Omega-3s can reduce inflammation and support overall musculoskeletal function.

Nutraceuticals, concen-



The aging process can lead to a decline in bone density and muscle strength, making it essential to focus on nutrition.

trated bioactive compounds derived from food, provide higher doses of essential nutrients.

- **Vitamin K2:** Supplementation has been shown to enhance bone health, particularly in postmenopausal women, by improving bone mineral density.
- **Collagen Peptides:** These supplements may help improve joint health and reduce the symptoms of osteoarthritis.
- **Curcumin:** Known for its anti-inflammatory properties, curcumin from turmeric can help reduce joint pain and inflammation.
- **Glucosamine and Chondroitin:** These compounds are often used in combination to support cartilage

health and alleviate osteoarthritis symptoms. Functional foods provide additional health benefits beyond basic nutrition. For musculoskeletal health, consider adding this to your diet:

- **Bone Broth:** Rich in collagen, gelatin, and amino acids, bone broth supports joint and bone health.
- **Leafy Greens:** High in calcium and magnesium, greens like kale and spinach help support bone health.
- **Fortified Foods:** Many foods are now fortified with calcium, vitamin D, and omega-3s, providing an easy way to meet daily requirements.

Incorporating specific foods and nutraceuticals into your diet is essential for maintaining musculoskeletal health, especially as we age. A balanced intake of nutrients like calcium, vitamin D, magnesium, omega-3s, and vitamin K2 can support bone and muscle function, improving overall well-being. Before adding new supplements to your regimen, always consult with a healthcare professional to ensure safety and efficacy.



Childhood cancer: A growing concern - What you need to know



DR INTEZAR MEHDI

Childhood cancer is a topic that many of us may shy away from, but it's an issue that continues to grow and affect families worldwide. While cancer is often associated with older adults, children are not immune to this life-altering disease. Early detection and understanding the signs can make a difference in outcomes. As we approach International Childhood Cancer Day on February 15, it serves as a reminder to raise awareness, support research, and stand in solidarity with families impacted by childhood cancer. Let's take a closer look at the key facts about childhood cancer, its common types, and how you can help raise awareness.

WHAT IS CHILDHOOD CANCER? Childhood cancer refers to cancers that occur in children under the age of 18. It is different from cancers typically seen in adults, and it requires specialized treatment due to the child's developing body. While childhood cancer remains rare compared to adult cancers, the numbers are growing steadily.

COMMON TYPES OF CHILDHOOD CANCERS There are several types of childhood cancers, but the most common include:

1. **Leukemia:** Leukemia, a cancer of the blood and bone marrow, is the most prevalent form of childhood cancer. It accounts for about 30% of all childhood cancer diagnoses. The two main types are acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and acute myeloid leukemia (AML).
2. **Brain and Spinal Cord Tumors:** These tumors are the second most common type of childhood cancer. They affect the brain and spinal cord and can cause symptoms like headaches, nausea, vomiting, seizures, visual problems and changes in coordination.
3. **Lymphomas:** Lymphomas affect the lymphatic system and can be classified as either Hodgkin lymphoma or non-Hodgkin lymphoma.
4. **Neuroblastoma:** This cancer develops in nerve tissue and often affects children under the age of 5. It can occur in the adrenal glands, neck, chest, abdomen, or pelvis.
5. **Wilms Tumor:** A type of kid-



Childhood cancer refers to cancers that occur in children under the age of 18. It is different from cancers typically seen in adults, and it requires specialized treatment due to the child's developing body. While childhood cancer remains rare compared to adult cancers, the numbers are growing steadily.

ney cancer that primarily affects children under the age of 5, Wilms tumor is treatable with a good prognosis if caught early.

6. **Bone Tumors:** Bone tumors, such as osteosarcoma and Ewing's sarcoma, primarily affect children and adolescents. These tumors typically cause pain, swelling, and sometimes fractures in the affected bone, often in the arms, legs, or pelvis.

SYMPTOMS TO WATCH OUT FOR Early detection is key to improving survival rates in childhood cancer. While many symptoms can be associated with other illnesses, it's important to be aware of the signs and seek medical advice if you notice anything unusual. Some common warning signs include:

- Unexplained weight loss or loss of appetite
- Persistent pain, especially bone or joint pain
- Fatigue and weakness
- Headaches, often accompanied by vomiting
- Swelling or lumps in the abdomen, neck, or elsewhere
- Frequent infections or fevers
- Changes in behavior, balance, or coordination

CAN CHILDHOOD CANCER BE PREVENTED? While the exact causes of childhood cancer are not always clear,



there are some steps that can potentially reduce the risk. Unfortunately, many childhood cancers cannot be prevented because they are often caused by genetic mutations or unknown environmental factors. However, there are ways to reduce certain risks. For example, avoiding exposure to harmful chemicals, radiation, and second-hand smoke during pregnancy can help reduce the risk of some cancers in children. Ensuring a healthy pregnancy with proper prenatal care and nutrition can also be important. Additionally, encouraging healthy habits in children, such as a balanced diet, regular exercise, and avoiding known carcinogens, may have long-term health benefits. Early screening and regular check-ups are essential for detecting any potential issues as early as possible.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DIAGNOSIS While childhood cancer can be frightening, advancements in treatment have significantly im-

proved the survival rate for many childhood cancers. According to the American Cancer Society, the overall survival rate for childhood cancer has increased to over 80%. Early diagnosis and treatment are critical for improving outcomes, so parents and caregivers must stay informed and proactive. Childhood cancer is undoubtedly a serious issue, but it's one that we can address by staying informed and supporting ongoing research and awareness efforts. Early diagnosis, cutting-edge treatments, and a network of dedicated individuals working together can help improve the lives of children diagnosed with cancer. Remember, knowledge is power, and by understanding the signs and advocating for childhood cancer, we can help make a difference in the lives of countless families.

Dr Intezar Mehdi, Senior Consultant, Director and HOD Pediatric Hematology, Oncology and BMT, HCG Cancer Center, Bangalore, Karnataka

A DIP INTO ANTIQUITY



ANJALI KALIA

Thick walls, nearly 1.5 feet wide, bear the weight of time. The scent of old paint, incense, and the fervent chants of the chaupai from the Ram-charitmanas drift toward my ears, warming my soul like the sun's rays on a cold winter morning. Their lyrical symmetry invokes a profound sense of bhakti—devotion and reverence.

As I ascend the steep steps of Varanasi's ghats, the sheer antiquity of this land seeps into my consciousness. These ramparts hold centuries of history—the Ram Ram Ram inscribed in unwavering devotion, vermillion-smeared alcoves and doors, and the vast expanse of Maa Ganga stretching beyond the windows, transport me to a simpler, purer time.

I envision Tulsidas ji, seated in deep dhyān, composing his timeless ver-

sion of the Ramayan, his unwavering devotion to Hanuman ji coming alive before my eyes. What must his dincharya—his daily routine—have been like? Waking to the chants of seers praying at the ghats, bathing in the holy waters, offering oblations to Surya Dev, and then settling down to write after a simple meal. It must have all happened here.

A small Hanuman ji temple, where Tulsidas ji's wooden khadau and a piece of his boat are preserved, stands as a testament to his faith. On another floor, his gaddi—a humble seat in a quiet corner—faces a shrine adorned with the idols of Shri Ram, Sita Mata, and Lakshman ji. The setting is perfect for both dhyān and creativity.

Standing in these intimate spaces, I traverse five centuries in mere moments. Tulsidas ji feels alive; his presence is tangible giving me a message that life is ephemeral and fleeting—our only chance to leave a mark that will outlive us.

Outside, on the ghats, life unfolds. Tourists float past in boats, gawking at the sacred and the mundane. But amidst this transient spectacle, Maa Ganga remains—eternal, unyielding.

She is satya, the truth. She is Sanatan Dharma itself—an unbroken way of life, rooted in the precise laws of nature and the profound connection between humanity and the divine. A deep sense of gratitude swells within me—pride and humility intertwining as I reflect on the privilege of being born in this great land -- Bharat.

Earlier in the day, we took the customary boat ride, where we witnessed an amusing sight—a group of visitors from Siberia relishing namkeen—savoury Indian snacks—offered by eager tourists. Only, these 'visitors' were migratory seagulls! With each handful of spicy sevaiyya tossed into the water, they swooped down eagerly. Why only McDonald's or Domino's? Even the seagulls adapt to Indian flavours in India!

Our next stop was the Kumbh city at Prayagraj—a vast expanse of tents and well-lit streets. Though this was my second visit, the experience felt entirely new. This time, we were 'glamping'—staying in a luxurious Maharaja tent on the banks of the Sangam, the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the invisible Saraswati.

The customary snan, bath was the highlight of



the journey. Our boatman, young yet wise, greeted us with enthusiasm, agreeing to row us to the confluence. He seamlessly wove in the famous Shri Ram-Kewat Samvaad, recalling the boatman who ferried Shri Ram across the river and sought a divine promise in return—to be guided across the river of existence. In that moment, our boatman became part of the unbroken cultural lineage of Bharat—his words carrying echoes of ancient wisdom.

As we drifted toward the Sangam, my sister hesitantly asked if the 'water' was clean. Offended, he corrected her—"Not water, amrit!" He scooped up a handful and splashed it over himself, his reverence

palpable. This is the greatness of our culture—where divinity infuses every element of existence.

The contrast between Maa Ganga and Maa Yamuna was striking, their meeting point clearly visible. They merged eagerly, becoming one—a life-giving force, unquestionable in its divinity.

With a deep sense of surrender, I took the sacred three dips. The air resounded with chants of Har Har Gange. Something within me shifted—an inexplicable lightness, a transformation of consciousness. These are not mere rituals; they are conduits to profound spirituality.

As my mentor, Meena Om ji, often says—nothing is without purpose. The body

is purified by Ganga, the mind by Yamuna, and the soul by Saraswati. This sacred confluence represents creation, preservation, and dissolution—Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh; and the three gunas of rajas, tamas, and sattva. Only when we transcend these aspects do we experience true divinity.

Thus, the Triveni Sangam is more than a confluence of rivers—it is the confluence of life's essence, guiding us toward moksha, ultimate liberation.

Anjali Kalia is a design professional with 30 years of experience and a trustee of Pranam Foundation, a movement based on practical spirituality and sanatan, eternal principles of truth love karm - action and light.

Depression & your birthdate: Numerology's path to healing & mental peace



JYOTSNA G BANSAL

Life moves fast, and depression often sneaks in without warning. The pressure to succeed, emotional setbacks, constant comparisons, money problems, unstable relationships, unfulfilled dreams can lead to stress, anxiety and a lingering sense of emptiness.

Depression affects individuals differently. It may appear as persistent fatigue, mood swings, frustration or a loss of interest in things we once enjoyed. Sometimes, it feels like overthinking, self-doubt, exhaustion, feeling unappreciated, overwhelmed or disconnected from our true selves. Even simple tasks start feeling hard. Some people struggle with ego battles, emotional instability, while others face aggressive mood swings. We often ignore these signs, thinking it will pass, but over time, it drains energy

and joy.

The key is to recognize the cause—whether emotional, mental or life-related. What we often don't realize is that our birthdate holds clues to how we experience and react to depression. Each number (1-9) carries unique personality traits, emotional patterns which influence how we handle stress, depression.

Self-awareness is the first step to breaking free from depression and living a balanced, happy life. Recognizing our number-based tendencies helps us understand and find the right path to healing.

With small lifestyle changes, self-awareness and holistic remedies, we can break free from depression. Let's understand the relation of our birthdate & related depression types.

BIRTH NUMBER-1 (BORN ON 1, 10, 19, 28) EGO-BASED DEPRESSION

They feel depressed when their leadership or authority is challenged.

Symptoms: frustration, irritability, arrogance, insomnia, headaches due to overthinking, self-doubt, withdrawal due to loss of power.

Holistic Measures:

- Practice humility and acceptance; let go of the need for control.
- Set realistic goals, break them into smaller achievements.
- Surya-Namaskar daily to balance ego and vitality.
- Sunlight Therapy – Spend time in morning sunlight to enhance mood.

BIRTH NUMBER-2 (BORN ON 2, 11, 20, 29) EMOTIONAL DEPRESSION

Highly sensitive, they experience depression due to emotional setbacks or betrayals.

Symptoms: excessive crying, mood swings, overthinking, struggle with self-worth, insomnia, digestive issues, social withdrawal.

Holistic Measures:

- Express emotions through journaling, talking to a trusted friend.
- Avoid overindulging in nostalgia; practice mindfulness to stay present.
- Need to overcome self-doubt and mood swings to avoid excessive energy drain.
- Moon-Gazing for emotional balance.
- Bathing in saltwater or visiting water bodies for calmness.

BIRTH NUMBER-3 (BORN ON 3, 12, 21, 30) EXISTENTIAL DEPRESSION

They feel depressed when their knowledge, wisdom or guidance is ignored.

Symptoms: overanalysis, lack of purpose, weight fluctuations, liver-related issues due to stress, self-doubt, loss of enthusiasm.

Holistic Measures:

- Engage in learning new skills or expanding knowledge to regain motivation.
- Mantra Chanting (Om Guruvē Namah) to strengthen wisdom and clarity.
- Sandalwood and Yellow Color Therapy for mental stability.
- Teaching to channel wisdom constructively. Must curb arrogance.

BIRTH NUMBER-4 (BORN ON 4, 13, 22, 31) ANXIETY-DRIVEN DEPRESSION

They may feel depressed, isolated or misunderstood due to their unconventional thoughts, from unexpected changes or failures despite hard work. Symptoms: paranoia, nervous system disorders, migraines, digestive problems, restlessness, obsessive thinking.

Holistic Measures:

- Focus on structured planning and setting small, achievable goals.
- Need to manage unpredictability, reduce overthinking by logic-based decision-making.
- Grounding Techniques—walking barefoot on grass.
- Breathwork (Pranayama)

BIRTH NUMBER-5 (BORN ON 5, 14, 23) BURNOUT DEPRESSION

Depression stems from mental exhaustion due to overstimulation, constant change.

Symptoms: lack of focus, indecisiveness, overwhelmed, prone to nervous breakdowns, skin issues, digestive irregularities, lose motivation suddenly, sudden withdrawal.

Holistic Measures:

- Reduce multitasking, focus on one thing at a time.
- Need mindfulness and structured routines with breaks to maintain mental balance
- Set designated "technology-free" hours to avoid mental exhaustion.
- Mudra Therapy to enhance mental clarity.

(BORN ON 6, 15, 24) RELATIONSHIP-BASED DEPRESSION

Heartbreak, failed relationships or a lack of appreciation can be the reasons for Depression. Symptoms: self-pity, emotional eating, hormonal imbalances, diabetes, skin disorders, overindulgence.

Holistic Measures:

- Practice self-love, creative expression. Avoid seeking external validation, overindulgence.
- Focus on creativity, artistic expression to release emotional energy like Dance-Music.
- Heart Chakra Healing through rose quartz, green foods.

BIRTH NUMBER-7 (BORN ON 7, 16, 25) SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION

They may feel lost in life's purpose, experiencing a strong sense of loneliness, disconnection from reality.

Symptoms: extreme introversion, sleep disorders, hallucinations, autoimmune issues, irritability, detachment, lack of motivation.

Holistic Measures:

- Engage in real-world activities to avoid excessive detachment and isolation.

- Balance intuition with logical thinking to prevent delusions.
- Meditation and deep visualization.

BIRTH NUMBER-8 (BORN ON 8, 17, 26) CHRONIC DEPRESSION

Due to prolonged struggles, failures and burdens of responsibility, they feel stuck in life, often experiencing guilt, shame, a fear of loss.

Symptoms: hopelessness, arthritis, joint pains, slow recovery from illnesses, fatigue, a sense of isolation.

Holistic Measures:

- Develop patience, faith and long-term vision instead of expecting quick results.
- Let go of past regrets, focus on present efforts.
- Saturn Remedies (lighting mustard oil lamp on Saturdays).
- Disciplined Yoga Practice

BIRTH NUMBER-9 (BORN ON 9, 18, 27) AGGRESSIVE DEPRESSION

Depression manifests as anger, frustration and violent outbursts.

Symptoms: impulsive reactions, feeling

trapped, experiencing restlessness, a need to escape, blood pressure issues, inflammatory diseases, accidents, reckless behavior, difficulty controlling emotions.

Holistic Measures:

- Channel energy into constructive physical activities. Martial arts, jogging or high-energy sports
- Learn anger-management techniques, patience-building practices.
- Cooling Diet – Coconut water, cooling herbs, sattvic foods.
- Avoid excess red Color to balance aggression.

Disclaimer: This information is for general wellness purposes & information only. Always consider personalized medical advice for health-related decisions. Please consult a medical professional before starting any health regimen. Information & the views expressed in this article reflect the author's personal understanding, learning and interpretation.

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THE THIEF

MYSTIC MUSING

RAJESSH M. IYER



Bankei Yotaku's monastery would usually be quiet. However, that day, there were hushed talks all around, breaking the silence. Young monks formed groups to discuss animatedly and in expectation of how their master would respond to the latest development. The previous night, one of the new entrants into the monastery had been caught stealing. Bankei heard the accusation and only said 'Okay' before asking the disciples to start meditating. It was odd! How could the master ignore a crime being committed in his monastery? Since no one came forward to question the master, the matter was soon forgotten. But that wasn't the end.

Next month, there was another burglary and this time too it was the

same thief. Bankei heard the entire sequence of events that transpired and how the thief was caught red-handed. However, much to everyone's shock, he nodded his head thoughtfully and said, 'Okay' before sitting down for meditation. It was too much for the disciples. They were upset more by the master's inaction than by the thief's action. Confronting Bankei, they demanded to know why he didn't take action, which he must, since he was aware of the culprit.

Bankei was thoughtful for a moment, before he spoke, 'You're right. I must take action. Okay, all of you may

leave the monastery immediately,' and pointing towards the thief, he added, 'while you remain.' Everyone was flummoxed. It was insane! It made no sense. The other disciples demanded to know what the master was up to. Bankei explained, 'Since you're aware of what's right and wrong, there's no point of being in the monastery. This poor man is yet to understand this concept. It's imperative that he stays behind, so I can teach him.'

Bankei's decision points of compassion towards those who err. Likewise, it also speaks of how life has different plans for those who are filled with hu-

bris that they already know, show no compassion and judge without analysing the pros and cons.

When life eventually teaches them a lesson, it invariably turns out to be severe. So to let life guide us seamlessly, we must keep the doors of our hearts and minds open. And for that, all kinds of pretence must be dropped, accept that we don't know yet, absorb all the facts and carefully analyse them with a compassionate heart. We must come to a conclusion only after knowing the how, when, where and why of any matter. Then life enters in all its splendour.

Life teaches lessons in a hard way to those who are filled with hubris that they already know, show no compassion and judge without analysing the pros and cons. So to let life guide us seamlessly, we must keep the doors of our hearts and mind open.

SACHIN BABY STANDS TALL WITH UNBEATEN 69

AGENCIES
AHMEDABAD

Veteran Sachin Baby steadied Kerala's innings with a resolute unbeaten half-century, guiding his team to 206/4 against a probing Gujarat attack on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy semi-final here on Monday. The 36-year-old southpaw occupied the crease for two full sessions, crafting an unbeaten 69 off 193 balls (8x4) that kept their maiden final hopes alive. He found an able ally in Mohammed Azharuddeen, who remained unbeaten on 30 off 66 balls (3x4) after surviving a last-ball LBW scare as DRS overturned the decision, denying Gujarat a breakthrough right before stumps. Trapped LBW by Chintan Gaja, the Kerala keeper-batter was given out by the on-field umpire, sparking celebrations in the Gujarat camp.

However, the batter immediately reviewed the decision, and ball-tracking confirmed it was sliding down the leg side as Kerala heaved a sigh of relief, ending the day without further damage.

Their unbroken fifth-wicket stand of 49 runs kept Kerala afloat against Gujarat's relentless bowling attack, which deployed seven bowlers, though only Arzan



UNBEATABLE PERFORMANCE

- **Sachin Baby's Resilience:** Unbeaten 69 off 193 balls (8x4), anchoring Kerala's innings for two sessions.
- **Mohammed Azharuddeen's Support:** Unbeaten 30 off 66 balls (3x4), surviving a last-ball LBW scare overturned by DRS.
- **Key Partnership:** 49-run unbroken fifth-wicket stand between Baby and Azharuddeen, stabilizing Kerala.
- **Slow Scoring Rate:** Kerala crawled to 200 in 86.3 overs, consuming 470+ dot balls.
- **Gujarat's Strategy:** Held back the second new ball until the 86th over, but no further breakthroughs.

Nagwaswalla (16-4-39-1), Priyajitsing Jadeja (12-0-33-1), and leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi (15-2-33-1) managed breakthroughs.

With Kerala looking to build on their total, the first session on day two will be crucial, and Baby's innings will hold the key.

On the other hand, the hosts, seeking their first final appearance since their

maiden Ranji Trophy triumph in 2016-17, will look to seize control early.

Opting to bat, Kerala started well, but none of the top-order batters could convert their starts into a big knocks.

While wickets fell regularly, Baby stood firm, bringing up his 28th first-class fifty.

The scoring rate, however, remained sluggish

throughout the day as Kerala crawled to 200 in 86.3 overs, consuming over 470 dot balls.

Gujarat toiled hard, and the crucial strikes and low-scoring run rate from Kerala kept them in the contest.

With four wickets down, an early breakthrough on day two could tilt the balance in favour of the home side. Kerala looked to be

settling in when left-arm pacer Nagwaswalla broke a promising fourth-wicket partnership, worth 71 runs, cleaning up Jalaj Saxena.

Attempting a late cut off a back-of-a-length delivery, Jalaj only managed to drag the ball onto his stumps. The wicket came just a delivery after he had survived an LBW review.

Baby was highly disciplined in his approach, displaying excellent judgment outside the off-stump and rarely flirting with deliveries in the fourth-stump channel.

The experienced left-hander took his time, grinding out a patient innings against a Gujarat attack that bowled with discipline.

Azharuddeen, Kerala's second-highest run-getter this season, took 11 deliveries to get off the mark but provided solid support to Baby.

Left-arm spinner Sid-dharth Desai exploited the rough patches outside off-stump, but Baby remained unperturbed, watching the ball closely and countering spin with a solid defence.

Despite the second new ball being available, Gujarat refrained from taking it, preferring to persist with Desai and Bishnoi in the closing stages of the day, with close-in fielders crowding the batters.

They finally took the sec-

ond new ball in the 86th over but did not taste any success.

Earlier, Kerala made up a solid start with openers Rohan Kunnummal and Akshay Chandran negotiating the new ball spells of Chintan Gaja and Nagwaswalla without any trouble.

The duo put up a 60-run stand, showing patience against the Gujarat bowlers while capitalising on loose deliveries.

However, Gujarat struck back before the lunch break when a mix-up led to Chandran's run out for 30 off 71 balls (5x4).

Within four overs, Gujarat struck again when Kunnummal was trapped leg-before by Bishnoi for 30 off 68 balls (5x4) after an unsuccessful DRS review. Kerala, from a steady 60/0, found themselves at 63/2.

The left-right combination had looked comfortable, but the two dismissals came against the run of play, leaving Kerala with two new batters at the crease.

Varun Nayanar's tentative stay ended at 10, edging Jadeja behind, reducing Kerala to 86/3.

From there, Baby and Jalaj steadied the innings with their cautious partnership, frustrating the Gujarat attack.

Gujarat lost a review when Bishnoi's appeal against Jalaj was turned down.



1,476 para-athletes to vie for honours at National Para Athletics C'ship

AGENCIES
CHENNAI

Nearly 1,500 para-athletes from across India will showcase their skills when the 23rd National Para Athletics Championship begins at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on Tuesday. This historic event, marking Chennai's first-ever hosting of the championship, will feature a record 1,476 para-athletes competing in 155 events by 30 teams, making it one of the largest para-athletics gatherings in the country. Among the prominent athletes set to participate are Sumit Antil (Javelin), Manoj Sabapathy (Wheelchair Racing), Manoj Singaraj (Shot Put), Mariyappan Thangavelu (High Jump), Muthu Raja (Shot Put), Hokato Sema (Shot Put), Navdeep Singh (Javelin), and Yogesh Kathuniya (Discus), among others. "We are confident that this championship in

Chennai will set new benchmarks for para-athletic competitions in India," Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) president Devendra Jhajharia said in a release. "With an impressive 1,476 para-athletes competing in 155 events, this tournament reflects the rapid growth and increasing competitiveness of para sports in the country. With world-class facilities and a commitment to inclusivity, we are witnessing a new era for Indian para-athletics." The event is being supported by the Tamil Nadu government and organised under the guidance of deputy chief minister Udhayanidhi Stalin, who also serves as the state minister for sports. Tamil Nadu Para Sports Association president Chandrasekar Rajan said, "The unwavering support from the Tamil Nadu Government has been instrumental in making this event a resounding success.

France's Kyrian Jacquet secures men's singles title days after triumph in Chennai



AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Frenchman Kyrian Jacquet prolonged his superb Indian spring by adding the Delhi Open 2025 singles title to his trophy cabinet on Monday, mere days after he had claimed the Chennai Open 2025 crown.

Jacquet, unseeded, beat second seed Billy Harris 6-4, 6-2 at the DLTA Complex Centre Court on Sunday to lay claim to the championship, as per a press release from Delhi Lawn Tennis Association (DLTA).

Organised by the All India Tennis Association (AITA) and the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association, the Delhi Open

2025 was an ATP Challenger 75 tournament played on hard courts with USD 100,000 as prize money on offer. By winning the singles event, Jacquet raked in 75 crucial ATP points.

Building on the momentum of his triumph over top seed Vit Kopriva in the semi-final, Jacquet, World no. 204 at the time of writing, raced off the blocks in the final, breaking World No. 116 Harris at the first time of asking to take a 3-0 lead. The Briton, however, responded in kind, breaking his counterpart and holding his serve to restore parity at 3-3. Jacquet, though, broke again in the eighth game, before sealing the first set on his opponent's serve, 6-4.

WPL: RCB wins by 8 wickets

AGENCIES
VADODARA

Defending Women's Premier League champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru registered a second consecutive win in the third season of the tournament. After thumping Gujarat Giants in the opening contest, the Smriti Mandhana-led franchise went past Delhi Capitals by 8 wickets in WPL 2025.

Chasing 142 runs, Mandhana (81) and Danni Wyatt-Hodge (42) added 107 runs for the opening wicket. The remaining task was easily completed in the end.

Earlier, DC were bowled out for just 141 runs in 19.3 overs. Jemimah Rodrigues (34) and Sarah Bryce (23) were good with the bat. For RCB, Georgia Wareham and Renuka Singh claimed three wickets each.

Kim Garth and Ekta Bisht added two wickets each to their bowling figures. It was Delhi's second straight defeat.

An excellent bowling performance from RCB, led by Renuka Singh and Georgia Wareham's three-



wicket hauls bowled DC out for just 141 in 19.3 overs. Jemimah Rodrigues stood tall with a solid 34 (22) but couldn't convert it into a big knock, on a pitch that had something for every kind of bowler.

Teams: Meg Lanning (c), Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Annabel Sutherland, Jess Jonassen,

Marizanne Kapp, Sarah Bryce(wk), Shikha Pandey, Radha Yadav, Arundhati Reddy and Minnu Mani.

RCB : Smriti Mandhana (c), Danielle Wyatt-Hodge, Ellyse Perry, Raghvi Bist, Richa Ghosh (wk), Kanika Ahuja, Georgia Wareham, Kim Garth, Ekta Bisht, Joshitha VJ and Renuka Thakur Singh.

'Happy that cricket will be an Olympic sport': Nita Ambani

AGENCIES
BOSTON

Nita Ambani, an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member and the founder and chairperson of Reliance Foundation, expressed her feelings on the inclusion of Cricket in the upcoming 2028 Olympics, which are set to take place in Los Angeles, California, US.

In October last year, as an example of Indian cricket and its star batter Virat Kohli's global status as the face of the sport, a mention of the former Indian skipper was made during the International Olympic Committee (IOC) 141st session, during which the decision to include the sport in Olympics was taken.

"India is a sport-loving nation. For the Tokyo Olympics, the maximum viewership for the Olympic channel came from India, so imagine what would happen if we added cricket to it. So that's the time when my mind started ticking as to how do I convince the committee members to



have cricket as an Olympic sport. Now, they were still in the belief that cricket is a five-day long cricket match...

I informed them and this is going to be a win-win situation if you have cricket as an Olympic spot and you'll have the backing of probably two billion people. So I think that is the plug that I used and I'm so happy that now cricket will be an Olympic sport," Nita Ambani said during the keynote address at the Harvard India Conference on Indian Business, Policy & Culture.

Cricket will be a part of the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 2028 and will make its return after 128 years to the

multi-sport extravaganza, announced the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Monday.

The 2028 event will also include sports like baseball/softball, lacrosse, squash and flag football. The proposal from the Organising Committee of the Olympic Games Los Angeles 2028 to include these games in the programme was accepted at the ongoing 141st IOC session being held in Mumbai.

Cricket made its sole appearance at the 1900 Paris Olympics, in which Great Britain defeated France in the final. However, it is also played in the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

FIH Pro League: Indian Team eyes winning momentum

AGENCIES
BHUBANESWAR

After a mixed start to their FIH Pro League 2024-25 campaign, the Indian Men's Hockey Team, led by Captain Harmanpreet Singh, is ready to take on Germany in its upcoming matches at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium here.

Having bounced back from a 3-1 loss to Spain in their opener with a commanding 2-0 win in the second game, India are eager to continue their winning momentum against the German side, as per Hockey India press release.

With three points from two games, India currently sit in eighth place in the standings and will be looking to climb higher.

One key area of focus for the team is improving their penalty corner conversion



rate. Despite winning seven penalty corners across their two games against Spain, India failed to convert any of these opportunities into goals. The hosts will aim to sharpen their execution in set-pieces as they prepare for the challenge ahead.

Dilpreet Singh, Mandeep Singh, and Sukhjeet Singh have each netted a goal for the Men in Blue so far in the tournament and will be looking to add to their tally against Germany.

Germany, who will be playing their first match of the India leg, are placed just above India in seventh place with four points from four games and they will be determined to turn their fortunes around. Although they have won only one match in the tournament so far, their attack has been spearheaded by Raphael Hartkopf, Gonzalo Peillat, and Thies Prinz, who have each scored two goals. Germany will aim to turn around their strug-

gling campaign and secure vital points in this closely contested fixture.

The two sides last met during a two-match Test series in New Delhi in October 2024, where Germany won the first game 2-0, but India bounced back in the second with a thrilling 5-3 victory. However, Germany went on to claim the series through a shoot-out win, adding extra intensity to this latest match-up in the FIH Pro League.

Speaking on the upcom-

ing matches, India captain Harmanpreet Singh stated as quoted by Hockey India press release, "We are looking forward to our games against Germany. They are a quality team, and we know we need to bring our best performance to the field."

"After the positive result against Spain, our confidence is high, but we know there's still work to be done. One of our main focuses is improving our penalty corner conversion, as it's crucial to make the most of those opportunities in tight matches. The team is motivated and ready to build on the momentum from our last game. We've learned from both the win and the loss, and we're determined to bring our best performance to the field. Playing at home is always special, and we want to deliver for our fans," he concluded.



Gold in Women's Doubles, Silver in Women's Team Event (X)