



2
CRUCIAL FARMER-GOVT MEET TO END STALEMATE TODAY



11
CHINA'S MILITARY GETS STRICTER, COMBAT-FOCUSED RULES



16
GANGULY BACKS GAMBHIR FOR PICKING RAHUL BEFORE PANT

Centre: India committed to safety of all Int'l students

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Following the death of a 20-year-old Nepali student at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) University in Odisha, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal on Friday expressed deep sorrow and extended condolences.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to the safety and well-being of all international students.

"We are deeply saddened by the tragic death of the Nepali student at the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology and convey our heartfelt condolences. The Government of India accords high priority to the safety, security, and well-being of all international

EVERY LANGUAGE IN INDIA IS MAINSTREAM, ASSERTS PM

There has never been any animosity among Indian languages, notes the Prime Minister at Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asserted that there has never been any animosity between languages of India since they influence and enrich each other.

He suggested staying away from misconceptions that create a rift based on language, saying that the government understands each language in the country as mainstream.

"There has never been any animosity among Indian languages. Languages have always influenced and enriched each other. Often, when efforts are made to create divisions based on language, our shared linguistic heritage provides a strong counter argument. It is our social responsibility to distance ourselves from these misconceptions and to embrace and enrich all languages. That is why today we are looking at all the languages of the country as mainstream languages," PM Modi said while addressing the gathering at the 98th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan at Vigyan Bhawan here.

He said the government was promoting education in all major languages, including Marathi. He emphasised the efforts being made by the government to change the mindset that divests talent due to a lack of English proficiency.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and NCP-SP MP Sharad Pawar light a ceremonial lamp at the 98th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

No imposing of Hindi in TN, concerns 'imaginary': Centre

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday came down heavily on Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of raising "imaginary concerns" driven by political motivations.

Addressing a press conference, Pradhan emphasised that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is not imposing any language on a state.

"One point I want to re-emphasise is that



the NEP is not recommending imposition of any language on the respective students of a state. That means, in no way the NEP is recommending imposition of Hindi in Tamil Nadu," Dharmendra Pradhan asserted.

"Through social media,

I came to know that Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin has written a letter to PM Narendra Modi. He has not written the letter in good spirit. He has mentioned few imaginary concerns through that letter and his letter is full of political motivation and looking into his own political convenience, he has written that letter," Pradhan said.

He emphasised that the primary essence of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is to bring global standards to education, and simulta-

AGENCIES P3

Respect all languages: Mamata

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday said people should show as much respect to other languages as he respects his mother tongue. Speaking at a function here to celebrate International Mother Language Day, she said Bengali is the fifth most spoken language in the world, and every Bengali should be proud of it. "There is bound to be a sentimental attachment with Bengali language for the people whose mother tongue is Bengali but one must be equally respectful to other languages.

AGENCIES

3-language policy is unacceptable: Udhayanidhi

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on Friday reiterated DMK's stand and said that the state will never accept the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the three-language policy. "We are asking for our financial rights, which are to be given to the people of Tamil Nadu. We are asking for funds for Tamil Nadu students.

DETAILS P4

Kailash Yatra, direct flights at centre of India-China discussions



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar meets CPC Politburo member and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, in Johannesburg on Friday. (ANI Photo)

AGENCIES
JOHANNESBURG

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met with his Chinese counterpart FM Wang Yi on Friday on the sidelines of the ongoing G20 meeting in South African capital city Johannesburg and reviewed developments in bilateral ties with a focus on direct flights and the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.

Jaishankar expressed satisfaction over meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. "I am glad that we could meet today on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting in Johannesburg. Such gatherings have provided an opportunity for our interaction even when our ties were going through a difficult phase," EAM said in his opening remarks during a meeting with Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi.

Jaishankar expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to engage in dialogue, highlighting the importance of international cooperation in a polarised global land-

scape. He acknowledged the efforts made by both countries to preserve the G20 as a vital institution, demonstrating their commitment to collaborative governance.

Separately addressing a weekly media briefing in New Delhi, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said "The two ministers reviewed developments in the bilateral relationship since their last meeting in November, specifically the management of peace and tranquility in border areas."

"The management of peace and tranquillity in border areas, the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, resumption of direct flight connectivity, and travel facilitation were discussed during the meeting.

There was also an exchange of views on G20 and the Shangai Cooperation Organization, the MEA spokesperson said.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri had visited Beijing on January 26-27 this year for a meeting of the Foreign Secretary-Vice Foreign Minister mecha-

Pak issues visas to 154 Indian pilgrims

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Pakistan High Commission in India said on Friday that it has issued visas to 154 Indian pilgrims to visit the revered Shree Katas Raj temples in Pakistan's Chakwal district.

The pilgrimage is scheduled to take place from February 24 to March 2, the High Commission said in a statement. Expressing his views on the occasion, Charge d' Affaires Saad Ahmad Waraich, wished the pilgrims a spiritually rewarding and fulfilling journey.

'Stunned' at Trump's expose of USAID funding: V-P

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

After US President Donald Trump again raised the issue of alleged US funding of USD 21 million for voter turnout in India and dubbed it 'kickbacks', India's Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Friday that he was "stunned" and said that the revelations of the Trump suggested that the "democratic process of



this country was sought to be modulated" and "manipulated" "... Recently, this revelation has come, I was

stunned to see it. What has been revealed by the President of the United States with full sense of responsibility is that the democratic process of this country was sought to be modulated, manipulated. To dent and taint the purity of our election system. I am sure it emanates from a person in authority. One thing is right because that is factual. The amount was given, and it is not a

Bhutan PM hails Modi's ability to nurture leaders

NEW DELHI: Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay has called School of Ultimate Leadership (SOUL) a "brainchild" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a testament to PM Modi's unwavering commitment to nurturing leaders and empowering them to serve India.

In his address at the SOUL Leadership Conclave in Delhi on Friday, Tobgay referred to PM Modi as his "mentor and elder brother".



"Prime Minister, my elder brother, every time I have the opportunity of meeting you, I am overcome with joy.

— Tshering Tobgay

Saini, Manohar Lal stranded on the road at night as a gate was locked for Mann security

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

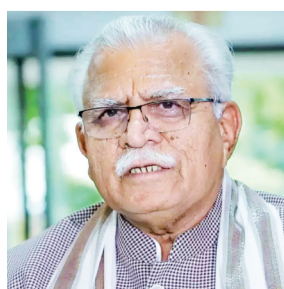
In an alleged security lapse, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and Union Minister Manohar Lal were forced to wait for over 15 minutes late Wednesday night in Chandigarh after their convoy was stopped due to a locked gate near Punjab Bhawan.

The incident occurred around 11 PM when the leaders were traveling from the Chief Minister's residence to Haryana Niwas in Sector 3. The road leading to Haryana Niwas, which passes in front of Punjab Bhawan, was unexpectedly blocked by a locked gate, causing an unplanned halt.

CM Nayab Saini called the incident a serious se-



curity lapse and pointed out that the closure was due to security personnel



deployed by Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's administration. He empha-

sized that such restrictions should not be imposed on roads frequently used for VVIP movement. Security personnel accompanying the convoy had to enter Punjab Bhawan, locate the watchman, and get the gate unlocked to allow passage.

Expressing his concern, Saini stressed the need for better coordination

It's official now, Indian-origin Kash Patel is FBI Director

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Dan Scavino, Assistant to the President and White House Deputy Chief of Staff on Thursday said that US President Donald Trump has officially signed

the commission to confirm Kash Patel as the ninth Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Scavino further said that President Trump signed Patel's commission in a ceremony at the Oval Office.

Sharing a post on X, Dan

Scavino, Assistant to the President and White House Deputy Chief of Staff, wrote, "Moments ago in the Oval Office. Congratulations to the Ninth Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Kash Patel."

He



Bharatnatyam artists pose alongside the display of vintage cars during the 11th edition of '21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance', at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

INDIA NEEDS LEADERS IN EVERY SECTOR TO ADDRESS GLOBAL ISSUES: PM MODI

The Prime Minister inaugurated the first edition of SOUL Leadership Conclave

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that India is emerging as a global powerhouse and needs world-class leaders to sustain this momentum across all sectors. He stressed on the need for energetic leaders in India who can navigate global complexities and address needs.

Speaking at the Inaugural Session of the School of Ultimate Leadership (SOUL) Leadership Conclave here in Delhi, the Prime Minister stated that India needs to prepare individuals who move ahead with an Indian mindset and understand the international mindset.

"Today, India is emerging as a global powerhouse. We need world-class leaders and international leadership to ensure that this momentum and speed are strong in every sector. Leadership institutions like SOUL can prove to be game changers in this. Such international institutions are not just our choice; they are our necessity. Today, India also needs energetic leaders in every sector who can find solutions to global complexi-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates the first edition of the SOUL Leadership Conclave at Bharat Mandapam, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

- 'SOUL CAN BE GAME CHANGER'**
- Today, India is emerging as a global powerhouse. We need world-class leaders and international leadership to ensure that this momentum and speed are strong in every sector. Leadership institutions like SOUL can prove to be game changers in this, the PM said
 - Such international institutions are not just our choice; they are our necessity. Today, India also needs energetic leaders in every sector who can find solutions to global complexities and needs," he said.
 - "We have to prepare such individuals who move ahead with an Indian mind and understand the international mindset. Those who are always ready for strategic decision-making, crisis management and futuristic thinking

need for leaders who prioritize national interests while engaging on the global stage. "We have to prepare such individuals who move

tional mindset. Those who are always ready for strategic decision-making, crisis management and futuristic thinking. If we have to compete in

need such leaders who understand international business dynamics. This is the work of SOUL, your scale is big, scope is big, and expectations

from you are equally high," he added.

PM Modi also drew parallels between India's freedom struggle and leadership development, saying that the movement produced leaders not just in politics but across various fields.

"When there is a shared purpose, an unprecedented feeling of team spirit guides us. When all people walk together as co-travellers of a shared purpose, a bond develops. This process of team building also gives birth to leadership. What better example of shared purpose can there be than our freedom struggle? Our freedom struggle created leaders not only in politics but also in other sectors. Today we have to relive the same spirit of the freedom movement. Taking inspiration from that, we have to move forward," he said.

Expressing optimism about SOUL's role in shaping future leaders, PM Modi called its establishment an important step toward "Viksit Bharat." He said that SOUL's large campus near the GIFT City would soon be operational and would also set benchmarks in architectural excellence.

'SOUL testament to PM Modi's commitment to nurture leaders'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay has called School of Ultimate Leadership (SOUL) a "brainchild" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a testament to PM Modi's unwavering commitment to nurturing leaders and empowering them to serve India.

In his address at the SOUL Leadership Conclave in Delhi on Friday, Tobgay referred to PM Modi as his "mentor and elder brother" and said that he is inspired to work even harder as a public servant when he meets him.

Tshering Tobgay said, "Prime Minister, my elder brother, every time I have the opportunity of meeting you, I am overcome with joy. Your Excellency, Prime Minister, my mentor, every time I meet you, I am inspired to work even harder as a public servant. Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, friends, I bring to you warm greetings of His Majesty the King of Bhutan. Today is an important day in Bhutan as it is the birth anniversary of His Majesty the King. I am delighted that I am celebrating this auspicious occasion in India among friends led by the Honourable Prime Minister and including all the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay at the first edition of the SOUL Leadership Conclave, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

distinguished guests here."

"I invite all of you to join me in offering our prayers and birthday greetings to our beloved monarch, King Jigme. To the leadership, management, faculty of the School of Ultimate Leadership, I congratulate you on your combined vision and dedication in bringing this important institution to life. The School of Ultimate Leadership is the brainchild of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and it is yet another testament to the Prime Minister's unwavering commitment to nurturing authentic leaders and empowering them to serve the great Republic of India," he added. Tshering Tobgay said that he has come here as a student and is excited to learn about leadership from PM Modi. Making some of his remarks

in Hindi, Tobgay called it an "ideal opportunity" as he will be learning about leadership from PM Modi and called him the "greatest leader" of the world. "I feel compelled to clarify right from the start that I do not have lessons to offer on leadership. I'm hardly qualified for that. Instead, I'm here as a student to learn. I am here today, myself, as a student and this student has been given the opportunity to learn this quality of leadership. This is an ideal opportunity because I will be learning about leadership from the greatest leader of the world, respected Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I am very excited to learn about leadership. In you, PM Modi Ji, I see in you the image of an elder brother, who always guides and helps me," he said.

Crucial farmer-govt meet to end stalemate today

Hopes pinned on Union Agri Minister Shivraj to make progress

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

Farmers are hopeful about Saturday's meeting as Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will meet representatives of the protesting farmers in Chandigarh. This is the second meeting in a week, following the February 14 discussions, which ended on a positive note. Farmers are eagerly waiting for a crucial meeting with Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Chandigarh on Saturday. This meeting is expected to be significant as farmers continue to push for their demand for a legal guarantee on Minimum Support Price (MSP) and other key issues.

This is the second meeting between the farmers and the government in a week. The last meeting, held on February 14, was attended by Union Minister Prahlad Joshi, who called it a positive discussion and confirmed that the next round of talks would be led



by Shivraj Chouhan.

The meeting is scheduled to be held at 6 PM at the Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration in Chandigarh. However, farmer leaders have requested the government to shift the venue to Delhi. Their concern is for farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on a hunger strike for 82 days and may face difficulties traveling to Chandigarh. The farmers have made it clear that they will strongly push for a legal

guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP), along with 12 other demands, including a loan waiver.

After the February 14 meeting, Union Minister Joshi had mentioned that the government listened to the farmers for over two-and-a-half hours and confirmed that the next meeting would be chaired by Chouhan.

The February 14 meeting was the first in over a year since the last talks were held on February 18, 2024. That

meeting had ended without any resolution, as the farmers rejected the government's proposal to purchase five crops—arhar, cotton, maize, lentils, and black gram—at MSP for five years. They insisted that the protest would continue until a law guaranteeing MSP for all crops was passed.

Since February 13, hundreds of farmers have been protesting at the Shambhu border on NH-44, one of India's busiest highways.

Deeply troubling: MEA on US information on funding in India

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India on Friday said that the United States' administration's information regarding funding in India is "deeply troubling" and has led to concerns regarding foreign interference in India's internal affairs.

Addressing a weekly press briefing on Friday, the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that relevant departments and agencies are looking into the matter and it would be premature to make a public comment at this stage.

Asked about President Donald Trump's remarks about the funding of USD 21 million for "voter turnout in India", Jaiswal said, "We have seen information that has been put out by the US administration regarding certain US activities and funding. These are obvi-



ously very deeply troubling. This has led to concerns about foreign interference in India's internal affairs. Relevant departments and agencies are looking into this matter."

"It would be premature to make a public comment at this stage. So, relevant authorities are looking into, and hopefully we can come up with an update on that subsequently," the MEA spokesperson said.

Addressing the FII PRI-

ORITY Summit in Miami, Florida on Thursday, Trump questioned the United States' allocation of USD 21 million for voter turnout efforts in India, comparing it to concerns over foreign interference in American elections while addressing

Highlighting the disparity in reactions, he stated, "21 million dollars in voter turnout - why do we need to spend 21 million for voter turnout in India? I guess they were trying to get somebody else elected. We have got to tell the Indian Government... Because when we hear that Russia spent about two thousand dollars in our country, it was a big deal. They took some internet ads for two thousand dollars. This is a total breakthrough."

Trump further pointed out India's strong economic position and high tariffs on US goods, stating, "They got a lot of money.

NIA chargesheets two aides of Khalistani terrorist Arsh Dala

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has charge-sheeted two key aides of Canada-based Khalistani designated individual terrorist Arshdeep Singh alias Arsh Dala in the terror-gangster syndicate case, the agency said in a statement on Friday.

The anti-terror agency filed the chargesheet on Thursday before a special court in Delhi against Neeraj Pandit alias Neeraj Faridpuria and Anil Singh in the case.

As per NIA investigations, Arsh Dala, a member of Khalistani Tiger Force (KTF), was funding a terror gangster syndicate in India, of which the two men were a part. NIA said its investigations have revealed that the two charge-sheeted accused were in continuous contact with Dala and various gang members of the Bambhiha gang.

This is a double-engine govt with no engine: Rahul hits out at BJP's UP govt

TDG NETWORK
RAEBARELI

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi on Friday launched a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party's 'double-engine government' in the state, saying that the government has "no engine" at all.

Addressing the Yuva Samvad in Raebareli, Gandhi targeted the BJP over the issue of unemployment and inflation and said that the UP government is a "failed government." "Sadly, I have to say that the UP government is a failed government. They don't know how to do any work and talk nonsense. The two most important issues are inflation and unemployment. Everyone knows that. This is a double-engine government with no engine. This is a failed government, they should be removed and the Congress party should be brought to power." Rahul Gandhi said.

Rahul Gandhi expressed



concern over the unemployment in the country and dubbed the Indian government's policy of demonetisation and GST as 'wrong.' He said that small and medium businesses need to be revived in order to generate more jobs.

"Why are you unemployed? Because Narendra Modi did demonetisation, implement wrong GST and ended all small businesses. Today you have no future because of Narendra Modi. If you want jobs, small and medium businesses must be revived and support-

and support for their concerns, particularly in the areas of education and livelihood. "He (Rahul Gandhi) asked me the importance of a disciplined captain. I said that a discipline captain provides discipline on the school campus. Then he told me that the discipline will make the path of success for me," said a school student.

Mohammad Ausaf Khan, the Manager at Human Public School in Raebareli, mentioned that they presented their school's needs to the Congress MP, who assured them of his support.

"We wanted to invite him (Rahul) to a program at our school because education has always been a concern for him, and we also believe that education is the backbone of any community. He has also offered to help us. We need some computer labs and a library. The children also spoke to him, and he assured us that whatever can be done in this regard, he will do," Khan said.

School students and other members of the community shared their experiences of the interaction, highlighting Rahul Gandhi's assurances

Maha Kumbh to bring more than Rs 3 lakh cr in UP's economy: CM Yogi Adityanath

TDG NETWORK
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday highlighted the success of the ongoing MahaKumbh, noting that this spiritual festival will bring more than Rs 3 lakh crore to the economy of the state.

Replying to a question asked by Samajwadi Party MLA Ragini Sonkar at the UP Legislative Assembly during the ongoing budget session, the Uttar Pradesh chief minister also said that the government has brought more than eight crore people out of the poverty line in the last eight years.

"We should be proud that under the leadership of PM Modi, in 10 years, we have been able to bring 25 crore people above the poverty line and in the last eight years, our government has brought more than six crore people



Devotees take a dip at Triveni Sangam ahead of 'Maha Shivratri' during the ongoing Maha Kumbh 2025, in Prayagraj on Friday. ANI

out of poverty. This shows that there have been changes in every sector... The country and the world are seeing the potential of Uttar Pradesh today, which can be seen associated with the organization of Maha Kumbh. The Maha Kumbh is going to bring a growth of more than Rs 3 lakh crore in the economy of UP," CM Adityanath said.

He also emphasized on the government initiatives to empower women, noting that 20 per cent of women have been recruited into the Uttar Pradesh Police.

"Work has been done for women empowerment. In UP Police, 20 per cent of the recruitments were of women. They got employment opportunities in every sector," CM

Adityanath said. The Uttar Pradesh CM said that under the double-engine government of BJP, the state has become the second largest economy in the country and is on its way to achieve the target of one trillion USD, becoming the largest economy in the country by 2029.

"UP was put in the category of BIMARU states of the country during Samajwadi Party government. It was made the 6th-7th economy of the country. Due to the efforts of the double-engine government of the last 8 years, it has become the 2nd largest economy, and in 2029, Uttar Pradesh will become a one trillion dollar economy and the largest economy of the country..." Yogi said.

Yogi also highlighted the success of Global Investment Summit held in February of 2023, saying that the state has become the best investment destination of the country.

THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON INDIA VS PAK MATCH: CHAMPIONS TROPHY

86% people are excited for India-Pakistan match

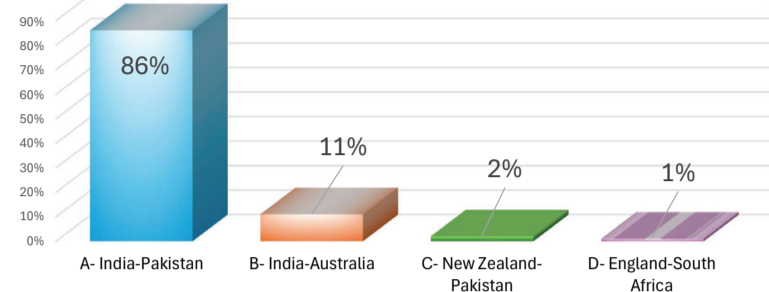
Rohit Sharma-led Team India may have more match-winners, but Yuvraj Singh believes Pakistan holds an edge in Dubai, where they've

played extensively. The must-win clash for Pakistan follows their loss to New Zealand, worsened by Fakhar Zaman's injury, with

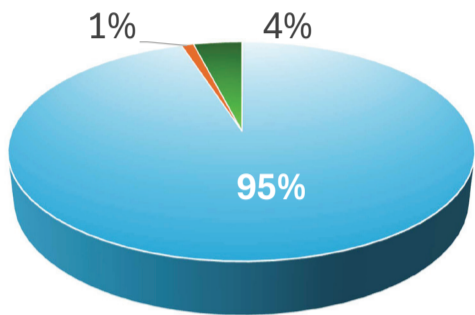
Imam-ul-Haq replacing him. A win secures India's semifinal spot. Pakistan played in UAE after the 2009 Lahore attack.

Q1.▶

Which two teams' clash in cricket excites you the most?



■ A- India
■ B- Pakistan
■ C- Can't say

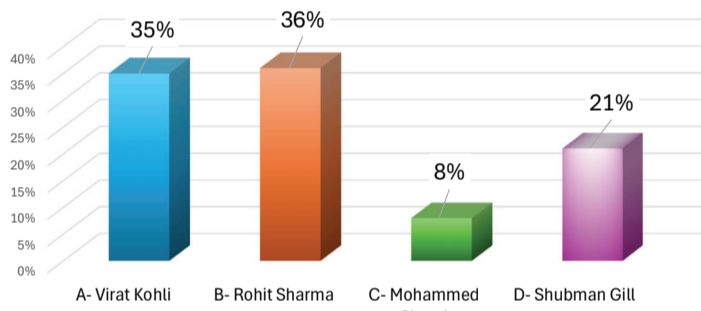
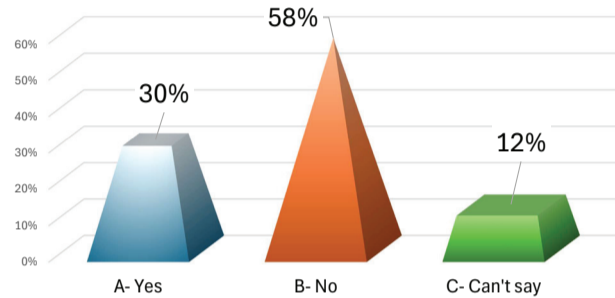


Q2.◀

Between India and Pakistan, which team do you find more balanced?

Q3.▶

The statistics of India-Pakistan clashes in Dubai favour Pakistan. Do you think this will affect Team India's morale in the match on 23rd February?



Q4.◀

Which Indian batsman will be the most crucial in the Champions Trophy match against Pakistan?

THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON INDIA-PAKISTAN FLAG MEET

56% believe cross-border infiltration will stop after flag meeting

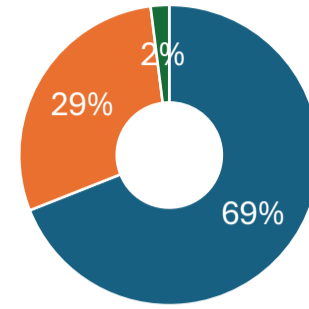
India and Pakistan held a 75-minute brigade-level flag meeting at Chakkan-Da-Bagh in Poonch to ease LoC

tensions after cross-border firing and an IED attack. Both sides emphasised peace and agreed to uphold the cease-

fire agreement. Ceasefire violations have been rare since the renewed pact on February 25, 2021, officials said.

Q1.▶

Flag meeting was held between Indian and Pakistani military officers. What will be the impact?

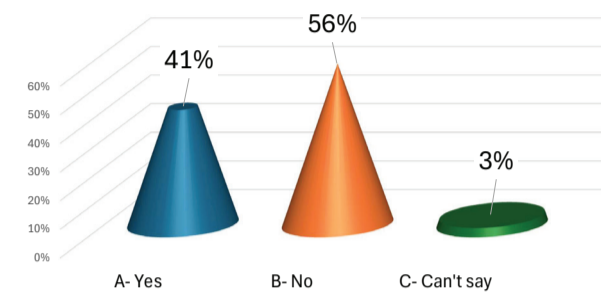


■ A- Pakistan will not improve
■ B- Tension on the LOC will reduce
■ C- Can't say

Q2.◀

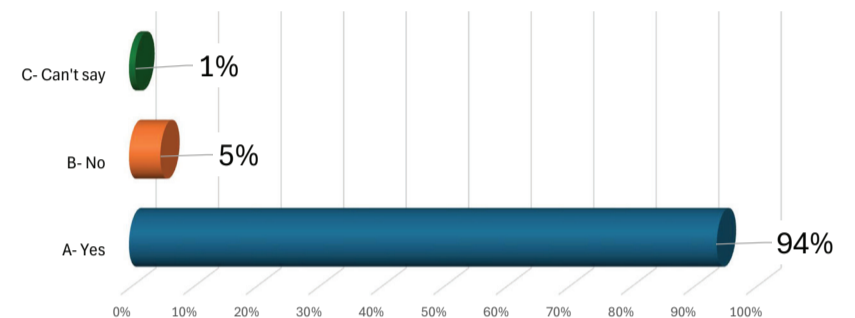
Q2.◀

After these meetings, will Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and cross-border infiltration stop?



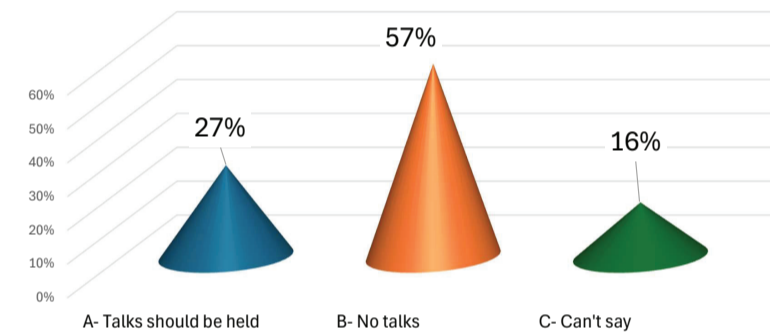
Q3.▶

Are Indian Army and security agencies fully prepared to deal with any situation on the Line of Control (LOC)?



Q4.◀

Jammu and Kashmir's Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said that after the terrorist attack on security forces, there should be no talks with Pakistan. What is your opinion?



'Every language is mainstream'

CONTINUED FROM P1

"We are promoting education in all major languages, including Marathi. The youth of Maharashtra can easily pursue higher education, engineering, and medical studies in Marathi. We have changed the mindset that overlooked talent due to a lack of English proficiency. We all say that literature is the mirror of society. It also guides society's direction. Therefore, literary conferences and institutions connected to literature play a very important role in the country," PM Modi said.

Speaking on the legacy of Marathi, the Prime Minister said that it had provided the

country with "rich" Dalit literature and other aspects, including science fiction, while in the past, people from Maharashtra made contributions to Ayurveda, Science and logical reasoning.

"In the country, the Marathi language has given us a very rich Dalit literature. Due to its modern thinking, Marathi literature has also created works of science fiction. In the past, people from Maharashtra have made incredible contributions to Ayurveda, science, and logical reasoning," he added. Remembering the many saints from Maharashtra renowned for their efforts to bring out social change, PM Modi said that

they used Marathi as their medium of communication to provide a new direction to society during the Bhakti movement.

"Many saints from Maharashtra provided a new direction to society through the Bhakti movement, using the Marathi language as their medium. During the long period of hundreds of years of slavery, the Marathi language became a symbol of freedom from invaders. Marathi warriors such as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Sambhaji Maharaj, and Bajji Rao Peshwa defeated their enemies and brought them to their knees," the Prime Minister said.

'Because of Sangh I connected with Marathi language and culture': PM Modi

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday praised Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which was celebrating its centenary, saying that it was because of Sangh that he got a chance to connect with Marathi language and culture.

The Prime Minister expressed gratitude that Marathi was granted classical language status during his tenure, for which, 12 crore Marathi-speaking people across the world were waiting.

"It is because of Sangh that I was able to connect to Marathi language and culture. A few months ago, Marathi was granted Classical Language status. There are over 12 crore people in the world who speak Marathi. I got the opportunity to grant clas-

sical status to Marathi, and I consider it as my good fortune," PM Modi said, addressing the gathering at the 98th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan at Vigyan Bhawan here.

Giving credit to the RSS for his learnings of Marathi culture and language, the Prime Minister said that the Sangh was indulged in performing a cultural 'yagna' to preach India's culture to its youth.

"This conference is being held as we complete 350 years of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's coronation.

I also remember a Marathi-speaking man who established Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh nearly 100 years ago. RSS is celebrating its centenary while also carrying out cultural yagna to preach India's culture to the youth, just like Vive-

kananda. I consider myself fortunate that, like millions of others, the RSS has inspired me to live for the nation," PM Modi said.

On the occasion of International Mother Language Day, remembering the renowned saint Dnyaneshwar.

"Today is the International Mother Language Day. At the invitation of Sharad Pawar, I am getting the opportunity to join this proud tradition.

When I think about Marathi, I remember Saint Dnyaneshwar's words when he said, 'Marathi is sweeter than nectar'.

Thus, I admire the Marathi language and culture. I am not as proficient in Marathi as you scholars, but I have constantly tried to speak Marathi, to learn new words of Marathi," PM Modi said.

'No imposing of Hindi in TN'

CONTINUED FROM P1

neously, it has to be rooted in India.

"It has to promote linguistic and cultural heritage from states like Tamil Nadu. The Government of India is conducting all the entrance examinations in all major 13 languages and one among them is Tamil also," he said.

The Union Education Minister stressed further that Prime Minister Modi's government is committed to glorifying Tamil Nadu's language and heritage.

"PM Modi announced India's first Thiruvallur cultural centre in Singapore to promote Tamil thoughts

globally. This is our commitment. Since 1968, successive governments have implemented a language formula in the education sector. By not implementing NEP 2020, we are depriving students, teachers and parents of the global opportunity. Education should not be politicized. Even many non-BJP states are implementing the NEP. They are taking all the co-operation from the Centre," Dharmendra Pradhan said.

"Tamil Nadu is losing Rs 5000 crore by not implementing PM Shri schools which is focused on scientific education, teaching methods in Tamil language

because NEP is being emphasized to teaching in mother tongue up to class eighth," he added.

Pradhan also appealed to Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin that the Centre is committed to developing all parts of the country.

"I appeal to the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu that the Government of India is committed to developing all parts of the country, and specifically, the Prime Minister is very proud of Tamil literature and language," he said. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin had written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi regarding the release of 'Samagra Shiksha' funds for the state.

Kailash Yatra, direct flights at centre of talks

CONTINUED FROM P1

nism between India and China on January 27.

A statement by MEA said that "As agreed between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at their meeting in Kazan in October, the two sides reviewed the state of India-China bilateral relations comprehensively and agreed to take certain people-centric steps to stabilize and rebuild ties". The two sides decided to resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in the

summer of 2025; the relevant mechanism will discuss the modalities for doing so as per existing agreements.

India organizes the KMY annually between June and September through the Lipulekh Pass (since 1981) in Uttarakhand and the Nathu La Pass (since 2015) in Sikkim.

Before the flights were suspended due to the pandemic and the Galwan clash in 2020, the two countries had 539 direct flights per month, with a total seat capacity of over 1.25 lakh.

Kash Patel is FBI Director

CONTINUED FROM P1

added, "President Trump has officially signed the commission. Follow Kash on his new X account: @FBI-DirectorKash.

The White House welcomed the confirmation of Kash Patel as the new FBI Director, describing it as an important step in executing President Donald Trump's agenda to restore integrity

and uphold the rule of law.

The White House further emphasised that the FBI will now refocus on its core mission of enforcing justice fairly and without bias.

Sharing a post on X, the White House wrote, "@FBI-DirectorKash Patel's confirmation as FBI Director is a crucial step in executing President Trump's agenda to restore integrity and uphold the rule of law."

Saini, Manohar Lal stranded on the road

CONTINUED FROM P1

between security agencies to prevent such disruptions in the future. He noted that incidents like this should not occur, as they hinder the movement of high-ranking officials. "We were traveling from the Chief Minister's residence to Haryana Niwas when we found the gate on the road in front of Punjab Bhawan locked. This road leads to Haryana Niwas, and it should not have been closed," Saini stated.

that there was some issue at Punjab Bhawan. This road sees frequent VVIP movement at all hours, and it should not have been shut. I was also told that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had ordered security deployment there."

Following the incident, authorities have decided to conduct quarterly reviews of security arrangements. Senior police officials will now report any such incidents to the Director General of Police (DGP) for further action.

'Committed to safety of Int'l students'

CONTINUED FROM P1

students in the country. The MEA has been in constant touch with the Odisha government and KIIT authorities since the matter and this situation came to light," Jaiswal said while addressing a media briefing in Delhi.

The MEA spokesperson added, "We have also

maintained close contact with the Nepalese authorities. We have taken several steps with the Odisha government along with the KIIT institutions. The Odisha government has made several arrests of the accused. Cases have been filed. The government of Odisha has also made a high-level fact-finding committee with which appropriate legal and ad-

ministrative action will be taken going forward."

"The Odisha government is also taking steps to facilitate the return of Nepali students and ensure their safety, security and participation in academic activities," he said. He further said that the Odisha police and local police in Bhubaneswar have also established a 24/7 number for Nepali students.

'Stunned at Trump's expose'

CONTINUED FROM P1

small amount," Dhankhar said while speaking at the second Global Conference of Meditation at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. "We must get to the roots of it. It must be eradicated from the root. We must find out who are those people who accepted this kind of invasion. We must expose them..." V-P Dhankhar added.

Trump, on Thursday (local time), again questioned the US government's allocation of USD 21 million for

voter turnout in India, calling it a "kickback scheme". He also spoke about the funding of USD 21 million for strengthening the political landscape in Bangladesh and USD 19 million for biodiversity in Nepal.

Addressing the Republican Governors Association (RGA) meeting, Trump said, "And USD 21 million for voter turnout in India. Why are we caring about India turnout? We got enough problems. We want our own turnout, don't we? Can you imagine

all that money going to India? I wonder what they think when they get it. Now, it's a kickback scheme. You know, it's not like they get it and they spend, they kick it back to the people that send it.

I would say in many cases, many of these cases, anytime you have no idea what we're talking about, that means there's a kickback because nobody has any idea what's going on there. USD 29 million to strengthen the political landscape in Bangladesh.

KERALA TAKING LEAP TOWARDS BECOMING INVESTMENT HUB: CM

Vijayan tells global investors, industry leaders at Global Investors Summit 2025 in Kochi.

TDG NETWORK
KOCHI

Kerala is set to transform into a major investment hub, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said at the Global Investors Summit 2025 in Kochi.

Addressing global investors, policymakers, and industry experts, he highlighted Kerala's evolving investment landscape and the state's efforts to build an investor-friendly environment.

He said, "Kerala is a state renowned for its natural beauty and has been an attraction for tourists from within the country and abroad. Kerala's investment scenario is on the cusp of history. We are witnessing progress and change for the better in our investment arena."

He added, "It is at this juncture that this Summit is taking place, bringing together global investors, visionaries in the field, experts and policymakers aiming to explore the investment potential of Kerala and

'INVESTMENT ARENA CHANGING FOR BETTER'

■ "Kerala is a state renowned for its natural beauty and has been an attraction for tourists from within the country and abroad. Kerala's investment scenario is on the cusp of history. We are witnessing progress and change for the better in our investment arena," says

■ "Kerala has become a noteworthy example of achieving a high score in human development indicators, is now taking a leap towards achieving the status of an investment hub. The government here considers that it has a great role to play as a facilitator and a catalyst," he added.



Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal with Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan during the Invest Kerala Global Summit 2025, in Kochi on Friday. ANI

witness our initiatives towards building an investor-friendly architecture in the state. The changes we have brought about now are not incremental but substantial."

He emphasized the government's role in creating a favourable investment climate, stating that Kerala's policies are designed not just for short-term gains

but for long-term economic transformation.

"Kerala has become a noteworthy example of achieving a high score in human development indicators, is now taking a leap towards achieving the status of an investment hub. The government here considers that it has a great role to play as a facilitator and a catalyst. We have taken a holistic

view and are paying equal attention to all matters from policy formulation to the last mile implementation," he added.

Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary, who also spoke at the event, stressed the importance of stability and long-term policy vision for investors. He praised Kerala for its focus on education and skill develop-

ment, which he described as critical factors in attracting global investments.

"People want the rule of law. People want rule-abiding citizenry, respect for the law, and respect for rules, and they want long-term visibility. Our Prime Minister is perhaps the best in goal setting. It is not just about the size and scale of announcements getting made," Chaudhary said.

He urged investors to take note of Kerala's commitment to nurturing a skilled workforce, which is crucial for industries such as technology, manufacturing, and services. "No longer can India be considered a back office. India is where the heart of innovation is beating and thriving, and that's where I invite you to pay attention to how Kerala has always been investing in educating and skilling its younger people. There's a recent report that says that the highest spending on higher education is happening in Kerala across all the states," Chaudhary said.

Union Min attacks Telangana Cong govt for not fulfilling promise on jobs

TDG NETWORK
PEDDAPALLI

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, on Friday slammed the Telangana government over its promise to fill two lakh jobs within a year, stating that while they issued a notification for 25,000 jobs, not a single one has been filled so far.

Bandi visited Peddapalli district headquarters as part of the MLC election campaign. Along with local leaders Gujjula Ramakrishna Reddy, district president Sanjeeva Reddy, and other party members, he addressed the media and strongly criticized the Congress government.

"The Congress government has completely betrayed unemployed youth, employees, and teachers. None of their promises have been fulfilled. The struggles of unemployed graduates from degree, PG, engineering, and MBA backgrounds are beyond description. Didn't they promise to



fill two lakh jobs within a year? They issued a notification for 25,000 jobs, but not a single one has been filled so far. The recruitment process is ongoing at various stages, yet they falsely claim to have filled 55,000 posts, which are actually from notifications issued by the previous government," he said.

"They also promised to provide Rs 4,000 monthly unemployment assistance to youth. After 14 months in power, Congress now owes Rs 56,000 per unemployed person. Due to the non-payment of fee reimbursement arrears, pending dues have

piled up to Rs 7,500 crore. As a result, educational institutions are unable to pay salaries to teachers and lecturers on time. Some ministers are reportedly saying that reimbursement bills will be cleared only if a 15 per cent commission is given. Could there be anything more corrupt than this?" he added.

He further said, "That's why I appeal to all graduates, employees, and teachers voting in the MLC elections... This election is between Congress's betrayal and BJP's fight for justice. The entire state is awaiting the verdict of these elections. Along with you, the common people are also waiting for your decision. I urge you to vote for the BJP-supported candidates and help them win."

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has scheduled MLC elections in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for February 27, from 8 AM to 4 PM, while the counting will be conducted on March 3.

Prakash Ambedkar seeks production of Sharad's documents in Bhima Koregaon case

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Prakash Ambedkar, the leader of the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) and a witness in the Bhima Koregaon case, on Friday filed an application before the Bhima Koregaon Inquiry Commission.

In the application, Ambedkar claimed that in 2020, NCP leader Sharad Pawar had submitted a set of documents to then-Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. These documents, according to Ambedkar, contained allegations that Devendra Fadnavis, the then CM, and the Pune police were responsible for the violence that took place during the Bhima Koregaon incident.

Ambedkar has requested the commission to produce these documents and, if necessary, summon Sharad Pawar to testify before the commission regarding the matter. According to Ambedkar, the documents submitted by Pawar, which included a complaint, were



forwarded to the Chief Minister's office in January 2020. Ambedkar believes that these documents are crucial for the inquiry into the incident and should be examined as part of the ongoing investigation.

Advocate Shishir Hiray, the Special Public Prosecutor for the Bhima Koregaon Commission, provided an update on the inquiry. He said, "We are at the last phase of the hearing on the inquiry commission set up for inquiring the incidents which occurred on the 1st of January 2018 at the Koregaon area, which is popularly known as the Koreg-

aon Bhima incident, which happened at the backdrop of the Elgaar Parishad and various investigation was carried out regarding the Elgaar Parishad and its link with the Koregaon incidents also." Hiray explained that the inquiry is now in its final stages and has been investigating the circumstances surrounding the January 1, 2018, violence, as well as the role of the Elgaar Parishad event in it.

He continued, "Today, Advocate Prakash Ambedkar, alias Balasaheb Ambedkar had filed one application before Honorable Commission and whereby he is seeking to call those all documents which were filed or which were submitted by Honorable Sharadji Pawar with then CM Uddhavji Thackeray and in that particular application as per the version of Mr. Ambedkar, certain allegations were made by Pawar Saheb regarding the nexus of then CM Devendraji Fadnavis and police mercenary in order to occurrence of the incident.

We will never accept three-language policy: Udhayanidhi

TDG NETWORK
CHENNAI

Following Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's assurance, Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on Friday reiterated DMK's stand and said that the state will never accept the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the three-language policy.

"We are asking for our financial rights, which are to be given to the people of Tamil Nadu. We are asking for educational funds for Tamil Nadu students. They were giving funds of rupees 2,150 crores for these many years but now they are saying we should accept NEP, three language policy," Udhayanidhi said.

"Tamil Nadu has always been against the three language policy. We have said clearly that we will never ac-



cept that," he asserted. The Deputy CM also pointed out that people have given their lives for language in a state like Tamil Nadu.

"What is there to do politics in this? I don't understand. Tamil Nadu is the state in which, for language rights, many have given their life. You can understand who is doing politics," Udhayanidhi said.

Ahead of the 2026 elections, the tussle between DMK and

BJP is getting fierce with debate over the language policy and allocating funds to Tamil Nadu.

Earlier today, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan strongly criticized Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of raising "imaginary concerns" driven by political motivations.

Addressing a press conference, Pradhan emphasized

that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is not imposing any language on a state.

"One point I want to re-emphasize is that the NEP is not recommending imposition of any language on the respective students of a state. That means, in no way the NEP is recommending imposition of Hindi in Tamil Nadu," Dharmendra Pradhan asserted.

He emphasized that the primary essence of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is to bring global standards to education, and simultaneously, it has to be rooted in India.

"It has to promote linguistic and cultural heritage from states like Tamil Nadu. The Government of India is conducting all the entrance examinations in all major 13 languages and one among them is Tamil also," he said.

Over 50 CPI(M) workers booked for locking up police officers in Kerala

TDG NETWORK
KANNUR

Thalassery Police on Friday registered a case against over 50 CPI (M) workers for allegedly locking up police officers and releasing an accused individual from custody on Thursday.

The accused, a CPI(M) worker, was wanted in connection with an assault on four police personnel during a temple festival the previous day.

As per police, "A case has been registered against over 50 CPI (M) workers for allegedly locking up police officers who were attempting to take into custody a person accused of assaulting police personnel a day ago amidst a temple festival near Thalassery."

ED attaches Rs 10.11 crore worth of properties of Kollywood director Shankar

TDG NETWORK
CHENNAI

Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Chennai Zonal Office has provisionally attached three immovable properties registered in the name of Tamil film director S. Shankar, with a total value of Rs.10.11 crore (approx.) under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

ED attached the properties on February 17. As per a release, ED initiated investigation on the basis of a complaint filed by Aarur Tamilnadan against S. Shankar before the 13th Metropolitan



Magistrate Court, Egmore, Chennai, on May 19, 2011.

The complaint alleges that the storyline of the movie Enthiran (Robot), directed by S. Shankar, was copied from a story titled Jiguba authored by Aarur Tamilnadan, thereby rendering

S. Shankar liable for violations under the Copyright Act, 1957, and IPC, 1860.

As per the release, "The investigation revealed that S. Shankar received a substantial remuneration of Rs. 11.5 crore for his multifaceted contributions to Enthiran, including story development, screenplay, dialogues, and direction. Furthermore, an independent report by the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) identified striking similarities between the story Jiguba and the movie Enthiran. This report, which examined narrative structure, character

development, and thematic elements, lends significant support to the plagiarism allegations against Shankar. The movie 'Enthiran' (Robot) featuring Rajinikanth and Aishwarya Rai as main lead grossed Rs. 290 crore worldwide, making it an all-time blockbuster at the time."

The release stated, "Based on the substantial evidence and records in hand, it has been determined that S. Shankar has violated Section 63 of the Copyright Act, 1957--a violation now classified as a scheduled offence under the PMLA, 2002."

NEP row: BJP's Annamalai demands statewide survey in govt schools on language preference

TDG NETWORK
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President K Annamalai on Friday demanded that a survey be conducted in government schools to determine the language students wish to learn. He said that the state government must appoint teachers on the basis of the survey results.

"A statewide survey should be conducted among government school students to determine which languages they wish to learn. Based on the results, teachers for those languages



should be appointed accordingly," Annamalai posted on X.

Hitting out at the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government in Tamil Nadu, Annamalai said that the state government responded vaguely to the letter written by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan that there were not

enough teachers.

"The Union Education Minister had written a letter to the Chief Minister MK Stalin asking them not to politicise the education of Tamil Nadu students. In response, the Tamil Nadu government, along with the usual vague excuses, has said that there are not enough teachers to teach languages other than Hindi," the BJP leader added.

He said that the Tamil Nadu government has acknowledged that the centre was not only introducing Hindi as the third language. However, Annamalai expressed his reservations

over the fast appointment of teachers, implying that the DMK government in the state would not immediately appoint them.

"First, we appreciate that the Tamil Nadu government has acknowledged that the Union government is not introducing only Hindi as the third language. Given that several teacher vacancies remain unfilled, no one familiar with the DMK government would expect it to appoint teachers for other Indian languages immediately. However, the state government can certainly initiate the process," he added.

Karnataka will continue to fight against Centre's 'injustices', says Siddaramaiah

AGENCIES
BENGALURU

Emphasising that Karnataka's economy is strong enough to withstand the BJP's alleged "betrayals", Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said, the state will continue to fight for its rights against the "injustices" of the saffron party-led central government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He also urged the opposition in the state to stop spreading lies and to join hands with his government in working for the welfare of Karnataka's people.

The Chief Minister said this in response to the allegations made by opposition leaders, including BJP State President B Y Vijayendra, former CM and MP Basavaraj Bommai, and others, regarding the state's financial situation, while noting

that they have claimed that the state's economy is declining, and that Karnataka is heading towards bankruptcy, and that the financial system has collapsed.

"The reality is that during the BJP's rule, the state's economy was pushed to the brink of collapse. Now, while sitting in the opposition, they are speaking as if they are great economists. Our government is working hard to bring the state's



economy back on track after the mismanagement and chaos caused by the BJP's irresponsible financial

policies. It is unfortunate that the BJP cannot accept or understand this," he said in a statement

"We are providing over Rs 90,000 crore annually directly to the people through DBT and subsidies, including Rs 10,400 crore for senior citizens, disabled persons, widows, and others," he said. The central government contributes only Rs 450 crore, the same as during former PM Manmohan Singh's tenure, he added.

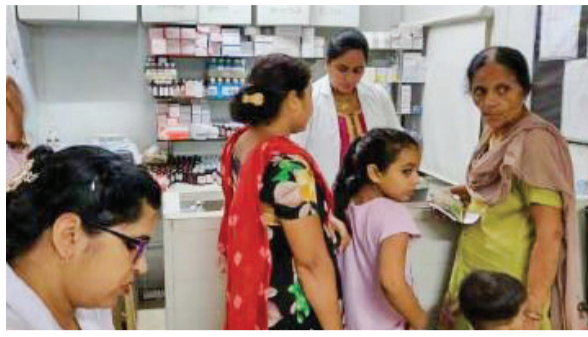
Karnataka's fiscal discipline is intact. The fiscal

deficit is below 3 per cent, and total liabilities are within 25 percent of GSDP, he further said that "during the BJP's rule, these were out of control. Our capital expenditure is better than neighbouring progressive states."

Alleging that PM Modi's economic policies have destabilised state finances, he said, in March 2014 all states' combined debt was Rs 25 lakh crore.

"Now, it has exceeded Rs 95 lakh crore, an increase of Rs 70 lakh crore in 10 years. States are suffering due to the central government's policies, and the central economy is also weakening," he added while alleging mismanagements by the BJP in the state while it was in power. The CM has also accused the Modi government of doing great injustice to Karnataka in tax devolution.

FIRST DAY IN OFFICE: MINISTERS SPELL OUT PLANS



Aarogya Mandirs' and digitisation are focus of new govt

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

With the formation of the BJP government in Delhi, an action plan has been prepared to introduce key reforms in the healthcare sector, which includes digitisation of health services, setting up of Aarogya Mandirs, filling up various vacancies of medical superintendents and completion of under-construction hospitals, officials said on Friday. They said that many state-run hospitals have been facing an acute shortage of medical superintendents (MS) and medical directors (MD), with some officials managing two hospitals simultaneously, which affects the functioning of health facilities. Addressing this issue is a priority, he said, adding that the government is expected to take steps to prevent disruptions in medical services and ensure that people continue to receive essential healthcare facilities without any hindrance. Along with that, the Health Information Management System (HIMS)

and the enforcement of the Clinical Establishments Act will also be reviewed, a health official said. "For the past year, we have been highlighting gaps in the health sector. Now that all departments have been directed to prepare a blueprint for the first 100 days of work, some key proposals are under consideration," the official added. He said that HIMS has been a long-standing demand of the Delhi government. "This system is a fundamental requirement for hospital management, and its implementation will significantly improve healthcare services," he said. HIMS, which is free of cost and helps curb corruption, is a government-to-government (G2G) web-based Monitoring Information System launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MHFW) in October 2008. It aims to provide key inputs for policy formulation and programme interventions but was not approved by the AAP government.

CM shakes up admin, scraps personal staff of ex-CM, ministers

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has terminated all co-terminus appointments made earlier in the offices of former Chief Minister and cabinet ministers.

According to the order from the Delhi Government's Service Department, the formation of a newly elected government warrants the fresh appointment of staff of all categories, as appointments automatically get terminated upon the resignation of the then-Chief Minister and Ministers.

"All the officers, officials and staff from various departments, organizations, corporations, boards, hospitals, etc. 'deployed in diverted capacity' in the offices of Chief Minister and Ministers shall be deemed to have been relieved from duties with immediate effect and shall report to their respective departments,

According to the order, the formation of a newly elected government warrants the fresh appointment of staff of all categories

Boards, Autonomous Bodies, Corporations, Hospitals, etc. with immediate effect," the order said. "Accordingly, the deployment and appointment of officers has to take place afresh after taking of oath and assumption of Office by the new Chief Minister," it said. The order mentioned that regular staff of DAN-ICS, DSS, Steno cadre will continue to work in their respective offices under the newly sworn-in, Chief Minister, Ministers till further orders.



No halt for free bus service

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A day after taking oath, Delhi's new Health and Transport Minister Pankaj Singh on Thursday assured that the free bus service for women will continue under the BJP-led government and directed officials to submit a detailed report on the functioning of Mohalla Clinics. Singh, who has been allocated the health, transport, and information technology portfolios, took oath on Wednesday along with five other cabinet ministers in the newly formed Rekha Gupta government.

"Public transport will remain free as promised. We are committed to improving facilities further," Singh said.

He assured that free public transport for women will not be discontinued and said that the government plans to improve introduce new benefits in public transport.

Singh, a 48-year-old debutant legislator and a prominent Purvanchali face in the new government, is a dental surgeon-turned-politician. Speaking about the Mohalla Clinics, Singh said, he has asked the Health Secretary to submit a report detailing their operations, including the total number of functional clinics, staffing, property ownership status, and the frequency of doctor visits.

The minister said that he has also inquired about clinics where doctors do not visit but bills are still being generated. He further claimed that, according to his assessment, 30 to 40 percent of Mohalla Clinics do not even open regularly.

Addressing the shortage of the clinics, he said inspections will be conducted, and necessary actions will be taken based on the results.

He assured that visible changes will take place within 100 days. Singh also sought a comprehensive report on pending healthcare projects, which is expected by February 27, following which further steps will be taken.

On the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme, he said, "We had sent the Ayushman Bharat file to the Centre. Now that it has returned, we will make all efforts to implement it by next week."

As a doctor himself, Singh stressed the importance of understanding the challenges faced by medical professionals and pledged to address their concerns. He also highlighted the government's focus on essential services like water supply and sewage management. "Discussions are underway to ensure Delhi residents get clean drinking water and air.



Fixing potholes and water supply priority too

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A day after its formation, the BJP-led Delhi government headed by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta directed a summer action plan for water supply and air quality, and sought a report on mohalla clinics. The government also discussed the scheme to provide subsidised cooking gas to the entitled people.

The chief minister and her council of ministers held meetings with the officials of the Public Works Department (PWD) and Delhi Jal Board (DJB) in the afternoon to review the status of roads and water supply in the city.

Gupta told reporters that the meeting assessed the condition of roads, many of which were potholed. She also said the benefits of the Ayushman Bharat health scheme approved in the first meeting of the cabinet on Thursday would soon be available to the people, including the elderly.

The BJP blamed the previous AAP government for the poor condition of roads, shortage of drinking water, supply of dirty water, sewer overflows and choked drains in the city in the run-up to the recently concluded elections. The chief minister and the ministers also held meetings with officers of their departments and reviewed the progress of ongoing works. The

buzzword was improving service delivery and strengthening basic amenities for the Delhi people, officials said.

Gupta called on President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar. Her cabinet colleague Parvesh Verma called on the vice president.

Delhi's Health and Transport Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh assured that the free bus service for women will continue under the BJP-led government, amid rumours on the social media.

He also directed officials to submit a detailed report on the functioning of the mohalla clinics by Thursday next week. Singh also sought a comprehensive report on pending healthcare projects.

The report is expected by February 27 following which further steps will be taken, he said.

He said many mohalla clinics in the city do not have doctors, medicines and other facilities. Some mohalla clinics run on rented land, he added. Singh said the people of Delhi were being "fooled" in the name of mohalla clinics for the last 10 years.

The mohalla clinics project was a flagship scheme of the previous AAP government in Delhi. Mohalla clinics built on the Delhi government's land will be converted into 'Ayushman Aarogya Mandir', he said.

'Focus on your party, many want to leave'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday hit out at the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), following their criticism of the newly formed government. She stated that her government has already taken key decisions within a day of assuming office. "The Congress ruled for 15 years and the AAP ruled for 13. Instead of looking at what they did, how can they raise questions on one day of ours?" she said. Highlighting her newly formed government's immediate actions, she added, "We had a cabinet meeting on day one, immediately after taking the oath, and we cleared the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, which was blocked by AAP. We gave a benefit of Rs. 10 lakhs to the people of Delhi on the first day. They don't have any right to question us."

leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "We will worry about Delhi now, and Delhi will get its rights under the leadership of PM Modi," she asserted. Taking a swipe at AAP & Congress, she further said, "They should look after their party; there are many people who want to leave... They are worried that when the CAG report will be tabled in the House, records of a lot of people would be exposed." She further said that the opposition had no right to question the BJP and that Delhi would now get its rights under the leadership of PM Modi. "The Congress ruled for 15 years and the AAP ruled for 13. Instead of looking at what they did, how can they raise questions on one day of ours?.. We had a cabinet meeting on day 1, immediately after taking the oath, and we cleared the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, which was blocked by AAP. We gave a benefit of Rs. 10 lakhs to the people of Delhi on the

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta calls on President Murmu

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Newly appointed Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday called on President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. The President's Office shared a picture of a meeting in a post on X.

"Chief Minister of Delhi, Smt Rekha Gupta called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan," it said in the post.

Gupta, who is Delhi's fourth woman chief minister, and her six ministers were sworn in at the Ramlila Ground on Thursday.

The 50-year-old chief minister, who took charge of her office at the Delhi

Secretariat on Thursday afternoon, is the only woman chief minister in the NDA and the second in the country after TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal. Goa Governor P S Sreed-



haran Pillai also called on Murmu. "Governor of Goa, Shri P S Sreedharan Pillai called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan," the President's Office said in another post.

will get its rights under the leadership of PM Modi... They should look after their party; there are many people

Why Rs 2,500 aid not approved in 1st Cabinet meeting?: AAP

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

Former Delhi CM and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Atishi on Friday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, questioning the BJP's commitment to its promises, particularly the Rs2,500 financial assistance scheme for women.

"If Modi ji's guarantee was real, the women's financial assistance scheme would have been passed in the first cabinet meeting. But on her very first day as Chief Minister, Rekha Gupta exposed Modi ji's false claims and proved that his guarantee is no less than 'Jumla'" Atishi said.

She further stated, "Modi ji repeatedly assured from every platform that women would receive Rs2,500, and even BJP President JP Nadada said in a press conference that the scheme would



I want to ask Rekha Gupta--will she once again prove Modi ji's guarantee to be false on March 8?" Atishi questioned.

be approved in the first cabinet meeting. However, this has not happened."

"Modi ji also promised that the Rs2,500 amount would be transferred to women's bank accounts by March 8. I want to ask Rekha Gupta--will she once again prove Modi ji's guarantee to be false on March 8?" Atishi questioned.

Her remarks come amid growing criticism from the opposition over the BJP-led Delhi government's delay in

implementing key welfare schemes. Atishi further clarified her role in the tabling of the CAG report in the Delhi Assembly, stating that it was a standard process. "I was the one who sent the CAG reports to the then Speaker Ram Niwas Goel when I was the Chief Minister. This is a routine procedure--whenever the CAG reports reach the Speaker, they are tabled in the upcoming session of the Assembly," she said.

Delhi Assembly's first session set for Feb 24

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The first session of the newly constituted Delhi Assembly will begin on Monday, officials said. The session will be held on February 24, 25 and 27, they said, adding 14 pending CAG reports on the performance of the previous AAP government will be tabled in the House. BJP MLA Vijender Gupta is likely to be the speaker of the 8th Delhi Assembly. He was the leader of opposition in the previous Assembly. Gupta said party MLA Arvinder Singh Lovely

In a post on X, Vijender Gupta said that he met Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and discussed the agenda of the upcoming Assembly session.

would be the Pro-tem Speaker of the House. The newly elected MLAs will be administered the oath of office on February 24-25. After a holiday for Shivratri on February 26, the CAG reports will be tabled by the BJP government. The session will begin with the appointment of the new

speaker and administering oaths to the new MLAs. Delhi LG V K Saxena will address the House and there will be a motion of thanks following his address, officials said. During the AAP rule in Delhi, the BJP had moved court seeking direction to the government to table the CAG reports.

The BJP had accused the erstwhile AAP government of stalling the report to hide its "corruption". In a post on X, Vijender Gupta said that he met Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and discussed the agenda of the upcoming Assembly session. "The CAG reports will be tabled on February 25," he said. Gupta had earlier said that he has been nominated as the party's candidate for the Assembly Speaker's post. The BJP defeated AAP in recent Assembly polls, winning 48 of the 70 seats. AAP has 22 MLAs.

Arvinder Singh Lovely to be Pro-tem Speaker of Delhi Assembly

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

BJP MLA and former leader of opposition (LoP) in Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta on Friday said Arvinder Singh Lovely would be the Pro-tem Speaker of the House. Pro-tem Speaker is a temporary Speaker who conducts House proceedings for a limited period and till the election of the full-time Speaker.

Gupta told reporters that the new government was in place with a new enthusi-



asm and a new passion. "Things are moving step by step in keeping with the enthusiasm and passion of the people of Delhi. A meet-

ing has been held with the CM in which some discussion has taken place on how further proceedings will proceed," Gupta said.

Asked who would be the Pro-tem Speaker, Gupta said the agenda would be issued by evening and Lovely would hold the post.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday formed a government in Delhi after over 26 years. Rekha Gupta was sworn in as the new chief minister of the national capital.

Six ministers also took oath at the event which took place in the iconic Ramlila Maidan. Vijender Gupta is likely to be the Delhi Assembly Speaker.

'WILL NEED TIME TO BRING DELHI BACK ON TRACK'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi minister Ashish Sood said the BJP government will fulfil all its poll promises but will need some time to bring everything "back on track". Sood, who was inducted into the newly formed Delhi Cabinet under Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, said ten years of corruption under the AAP had come to an end.

He also said the AAP deliberately did not implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Delhi and denied the people of the city its benefits.

"This marks the end of ten years of corruption. However, we will need some time to bring everything back on track in Delhi," he said.

Sood took oath as a minister on Thursday. He has



been assigned with six portfolios -- Education, Higher Education, Power, Urban Development, Home, and Training and Technical Education.

The minister said the Ayushman Bharat scheme, a key initiative of the central government, was approved in the first Cabinet meeting on Thursday. "Now, people of Delhi will also have the opportunity to avail its ben-

efits," he said.

The Delhi government will also sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the central government and ensure its full-scale implementation, the minister said. "The people have voted to end bad governance in Delhi. Now, it is the BJP government's responsibility to actualise PM Narendra Modi's guarantee... We will fulfil our

'Ayushman Bharat, Yamuna cleanup is our priority'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh on Friday emphasized that the top priority of the newly formed BJP government in the national capital is to fulfil all the promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Singh said that the government is dedicated to bringing Ayushman Bharat to Delhi as soon as possible.

He stated that treating and discarding polluted water, potholes, transportation, and hospitality are also the government's priorities.

"We have a lot of priorities. Fulfilling the promises made by PM Modi and in our manifesto is our priority. We are dedicated to bringing the Ayushman Bharat to Delhi as soon as possible. Treating



and discarding polluted water, potholes, transportation, and hospitality are our priorities..." the Delhi Minister said.

Further reiterating the party's promise to clean the Yamuna River passing through Delhi, he said, "I can promise that I will take a holy dip in the Yamuna in the next Chhath."

He exuded confidence about winning Bihar's legislative assembly election due later this year. "We

will see clean and pure water of Yamuna in the next Chhath... I can guarantee that the people in Bihar will vote for us because the BJP does what it says... We will win Bihar with a huge margin," he said.

Meanwhile, a day after assuming office, the new BJP-led government has terminated all co-terminus appointments made earlier in the offices of the former chief minister and cabinet ministers.

Delhi to implement Ayushman Bharat

TDG NETWORK
PATNA

An MoU between the Delhi government and the National Health Authority (NHA) for the implementation of the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) in the national capital will be signed soon, officials said on Friday. The newly-formed Delhi Cabinet approved the implementation of the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme in the capital at its maiden meeting on Thursday.

"The previous government had stalled the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi implemented it across the country, and now we have approved it for Delhi," Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who was sworn-in on Thursday, said.

Under the scheme approved by the Cabinet, Rs 10 lakh health cover will be provided to each beneficiary, with the Centre and Delhi government contributing Rs 5 lakh each.

Kiran Gopal Vaska, joint secretary and mission director (ABDM), National Health Authority, said that training of field-level workers for generating Ayushman cards and also of the different IT, medical and finance personnel for claim process handling has commenced.

"The scheme guidelines and compliances for the formation of various committees for grievance redressal, empanelment of hospitals and anti-fraud activities have already been shared with the Delhi government.

The work for establishing the organisational structures has started," Vaska said.

1984 riots case: Court reserves order against Sajjan Kumar

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday reserved for February 25 the order on the quantum of sentence against Congress leader Sajjan Kumar in a murder case relating to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Appearing before special judge Kaveri Baweja, the complainant, whose husband and son were killed by a mob allegedly instigated by Kumar, sought the maximum punishment of death penalty for Kumar.

"The accused being the leader of the mobs instigated others to commit a genocide and crime against humanity and cold-blooded murders, and he deserves nothing less than capital punishment," submitted senior advocate H S Phoolka, representing the complainant.



The prosecution had also sought capital punishment for the former Congress MP. The court asked the counsel appearing for Kumar to file his written submissions within two days.

"Put up for order on the quantum of sentence on the next date of hearing," said the judge.

Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh were killed on November 1, 1984. The court on February 12

convicted Kumar for the offence and on Friday it sought a report from Tihar central jail on his psychiatric and psychological evaluation in view of a Supreme Court order asking for such a report in cases attracting capital punishment.

Kumar is currently lodged in Tihar jail.

The minimum punishment for murder is life imprisonment whereas the maximum is death.

DPIIT reviews issues affecting 17 infra projects

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has reviewed as many as 21 issues affecting 17 infrastructure projects in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Delhi, and Jharkhand, an official statement said on Friday. The meeting chaired by DPIIT Secretary Amardeep Bhatia was attended by senior officials from central ministries, state governments, and project proponents.

"In the meeting, 21 issues across 17 significant projects were reviewed, including nine projects under Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, with the total cost of all projects exceeding Rs 13,501 crore," the commerce and industry ministry said.

'BJP swearing-in held with no public funds'

TIKAM SHARMA
NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, while addressing the media on Friday, emphasized that the formation of a government is not just a political event but a significant message to the public. He highlighted that with the BJP assuming power in Delhi after a gap of 27 years, a strong statement was made—that not a single rupee from the public treasury would be squandered on glorifying the government, the Chief Minister, or the party itself.

The BJP has built its reputation on good governance, and Delhi got its first taste of this commitment with the party's return to power. This demonstration of BJP's governance approach has brought into sharp contrast the inefficiency and mismanagement of the previous administrations, including the Aam



The BJP has built its reputation on good governance, and Delhi got its first taste of this commitment with the party's return to power.

Admi Party (AAP). Delhi residents still recall how, in 2015 and 2020, during the oath-taking ceremonies of Arvind Kejriwal's AAP government, substantial public funds were utilized for excessive advertising, flooding the streets and media with promotional campaigns leading

up to the event. In stark contrast, the BJP's swearing-in ceremony yesterday was conducted without spending even a single rupee from government funds. Sachdeva underscored that all expenses related to advertisements, hoardings, and invitations for the "De-

veloped Delhi" oath-taking event were borne entirely by the BJP itself.

Highlighting the extravagance of the previous AAP government, Sachdeva stated that in 2020, Arvind Kejriwal's administration spent crores of rupees from taxpayers' money on self-promotion. Official records indicate that during the formation of his third government in 2020, Kejriwal allocated a staggering ₹4.5 crore per day on advertisements. In comparison, the BJP government incurred zero expenditure from the public treasury for its swearing-in event. Furthermore, Sachdeva pointed out that under Kejriwal's leadership, the agency responsible for handling government advertisements operated without transparency and was involved in the misuse of public funds.

Four dead, one injured as their car rams into stationary truck

TDG NETWORK
GHAZIPUR

Four people were killed and one was injured when the car they were travelling in rammied into a stationary truck on the Gorakhpur-Varanasi Expressway here, police said on Friday. Station Officer Birnon Balendra Kumar said that the accident occurred on Thursday night near Prithvipur village in the Birnon police station area.

According to the police, the deceased have been identified as Dr. Soni Yadav (32), Gayatri Devi (60), Deepak Jha (21), and driver Mohammad Salauddin (40). All of them hailed from Purnia in Bihar.

Another passenger Vipin (28) sustained injuries and is receiving treatment at the Medical College in Ghazipur.



Upon receiving the information, police and district administration officials rushed to the accident site.

Police added that Yadav, Gayatri Devi, Vipin, Salauddin, and Deepak Jha, left on Wednesday and reached Prayagraj on Thursday to take part in the Kumbh bath.

After staying there, they were returning home late on Thursday night when their car collided with a truck parked on the side of the

road in front of Prithvipur village at around 11:00 pm on the Gorakhpur-Varanasi Expressway. Upon receiving the information, police and district administration officials rushed to the accident site. The bodies of the deceased have been sent for post-mortem examination, the SO added.



Yamuna River cleanup process underway by using a weed-harvester, in New Delhi. ANI

Man fakes kidnapping to extort money

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has traced a 26-year-old man who faked his own kidnapping to extort money from his family, officials said on Friday. Pankaj Mandal was reported missing on February 17 after his sister in West Bengal received some distressing photos and videos via social media demanding ransom money for his release. "Police launched a probe after lodging a missing person complaint at the Kishangarh police station. The photos and text sent to Mandal's sister in West Bengal, his native place, were found to be doubtful," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest), Surendra Choudhary, said.

"A closer analysis of the photos made the police suspicious that Mandal was faking his own kidnapping to extort money from his family.

'CAG report should be tabled in Parliament, not only in BJP's states': Pawan Khera

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Pawan Khera on Friday responded to the CAG report and Ayushman Bharat scheme.

Congress leader Pawan Khera said, "The difference between the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports tabled during our (Congress) government and the current government should also be seen. The CAG report should also be tabled in Parli-

ment, not only in states where it suits them (BJP)." He further added that despite the launch of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, there has been no noticeable difference, the situation remains unchanged. He said that in comparison the Chiranjeevi scheme started by former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot in the state was far better. Notably, the CAG report revealed a significant revenue loss of Rs 2,026 crore due to irregulari-



ties in the Delhi government's excise policy. The

report's findings stated that there were deviations

Additionally, the exemptions granted to the zonal licenses led to a loss of Rs 941 crore. Delhi's new chief minister, Rekha Gupta, announced the tabling of CAG reports, which had not been tabled by the AAP government.

from the objectives of the policy, a lack of transparency in pricing, and violations in issuing licenses that were not penalised. Of the losses amounting to

Rs 2,026 crore to the state exchequer, Rs 890 crore resulted from the government's failure to re-tender the surrendered licenses before the policy period

concluded, according to the report.

Additionally, the exemptions granted to the zonal licenses led to a loss of Rs 941 crore. Delhi's new chief minister, Rekha Gupta, announced the tabling of CAG reports, which had not been tabled by the AAP government. "In the first Cabinet meeting, we discussed and passed two agendas - to implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Delhi with Rs 5 lakhs top up and

tabling of 14 CAG reports in the first seating of the Assembly. We will fulfil all the commitments that we have made to the people." Rekha Gupta said. Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Vijender Gupta, BJP's nominee for the post of Delhi Assembly Speaker, on Friday, said that the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) will be tabled on February 25 during the three-day session of the Legislative Assembly.

RBI GOVERNOR MALHOTRA HIGHLIGHTS BUDGET'S POSITIVE IMPACT ON PRICE STABILITY

Budget 2025 prioritises non-inflationary growth through careful fiscal management.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The budget proposals on agriculture and the commitment to fiscal consolidation, among others, are positive for price stability and would help to anchor inflation expectations over the medium term, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said on Friday, as per the minutes of the latest monetary policy review meeting.

Presenting the Union Budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1 pegged the fiscal deficit target at 4.4 per cent of GDP for the financial year 2025-26. The government has been constantly focusing on reducing fiscal deficit glide path.

The difference between total revenue and total expenditure of the government is termed the fiscal deficit. It is an indication of the total borrowings that the government may need. Budget 2025 prioritises non-inflationary growth through careful fiscal management, with the government's entire borrowing

KEY POINTS

- Budget 2025 targets a 4.4% fiscal deficit, focusing on non-inflationary growth via capital spending, aiding price stability.
- RBI cut the repo rate to 6.25%, the first in 5 years, as inflation is set to ease to 4.2% in 2025-26.
- India's GDP is projected at 6.3%-6.8% in 2025-26, with investment, consumption, and industry driving recovery.
- RBI stresses growth-inflation balance, amid global risks, using strong policy frameworks for resilience.



RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra addresses a press conference in presence of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, at RBI in New Delhi. ANI

to be channelled exclusively into capital expenditure.

"These would provide greater impetus to disinflation of headline CPI and its eventual alignment with the target rate in FY 2025-26. CPI inflation for Q4 is projected at 4.2 per cent and that for the financial year 2025-26 at 4.2 per cent," the RBI Governor said, as per the minutes.

The RBI governor said that in a world order dominated by continuing geopolitical

tensions and elevated trade and policy uncertainties, monetary policy, as the guardian of macroeconomic and financial stability, is traversing a challenging time.

"It has to balance a multitude of pressure points and continuously evolving policy trade-offs. Stronger policy frameworks and robust macro fundamentals remain the key to resilience and fostering overall macroeconomic stability," the minutes quoted RBI Governor.

Domestically too, there is a need to preserve the high growth momentum, while maintaining price stability, necessitating monetary policy to use various policy instruments to maintain the inflation-growth balance.

Headline inflation, after moving above the upper tolerance band of 6 per cent in October, has moderated in November and December.

"Going forward, food inflation pressures are likely to see significant easing on ro-

bust kharif harvest arrivals, winter season correction of vegetable prices and a promising rabi crop outlook," he said, as per the minutes.

"The food inflation outlook is turning decisively positive," he argued.

The real GDP growth for the current year is estimated at 6.4 per cent, a softer expansion after a robust 8.2 per cent growth last year.

Even though, the GDP growth is expected to recover in the second half of 2024-25 and 2025-26 from 6.0 per cent recorded in the first half of 2024-25, the growth rate projected by various forecasts for 2025-26 vary from 6.3 to 6.8 per cent.

"This will be supported by healthy rabi prospects and an expected recovery in industrial activity. From the demand side, consumption and investment are also expected to improve," the RBI Governor said.

The Economic Survey 2024-25 tabled on January 31 asserted that India needs to grow around 8 per cent for a decade or two to achieve its Viksit Bharat dreams.

Mahindra Group partners with US-based Anduril Industries

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a significant move to enhance regional security, multinational conglomerate Mahindra Group has announced a strategic partnership with US-based defence technology company Anduril Industries.

Anduril Industries, Inc. is an American defence technology company that specializes in advanced autonomous systems.

The collaboration aims to jointly develop and produce future-proof military technologies, focusing on autonomous and counter-unmanned aerial systems.

As per a statement, the partnership will concentrate on creating Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs) designed for rapid deployment in security, survey, and reconnaissance missions.

Additionally, the alliance will focus on developing advanced Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (CUAS) technologies capable of detecting and neutralizing drone threats, thereby bolstering defenses against unmanned aerial systems.

The announcement of



Vinod Sahay, Group Executive Board Member, Mahindra Group

This collaboration combines our deep engineering expertise with Anduril's innovative solutions to deliver cutting-edge capabilities that enhance security and address emerging threats.

this strategic partnership comes shortly after the Modi-Trump bilateral meetings in Washington DC, where defence cooperation was a top priority.

Vinod Sahay, Group Executive Board Member, Mahindra Group, expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration, stating, "Partnering with Anduril Industries

marks a significant milestone in Mahindra Group's commitment to developing advanced security and autonomous technologies. This collaboration combines our deep engineering expertise with Anduril's innovative solutions to deliver cutting-edge capabilities that enhance security and address emerging threats."

Greg Kausner, Senior Vice President of Global Defence at Anduril Industries, emphasized the importance of the partnership, asserting, "Global security forces face a rapidly evolving set of threats from both emerging unmanned systems and legacy manned platforms, and autonomy is key to maintaining credible protection."

Greg Kausner added, "Anduril is thrilled to announce our partnership with Mahindra -- we believe that our two companies together are well poised to bring cutting-edge autonomy-enabled capabilities to the Indian market."

This collaboration underscores a growing focus on enhancing security capabilities using next-generation technologies, paving the way for strengthened defense ties between India and the United States.

'India needs to become export-driven economy'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India must transition from a net importer to an export-driven economy in key sectors such as electronics, chemicals, and energy to achieve its goal of becoming a high-income, tech-driven nation by 2047, according to a new report by Bain & Company, a global consultancy firm.

The report outlined a roadmap to help India transform into a developed economy with a projected GDP of USD 23- USD 35 trillion by 2047.

It said "India will potentially need to make a critical shift, transitioning from a net importer to a globally competitive, export-driven economy, particularly in high-impact sectors such as electronics, chemicals, and energy".

To reach this milestone, the report also mentioned that India will need to maintain a strong annual economic growth rate of 8-10 per cent. This growth will be driven by changes in major sectors, advancements in technology, and a skilled workforce ready for future demands.

Crucial for this transformation is making India more competitive in global markets. Currently, India



The report highlighted the need for India to strengthen its position in global trade by focusing on high-impact sectors such as electronics, chemicals, and energy.

imports more than it exports in several key sectors.

The report highlighted the need for India to strengthen its position in global trade by focusing on high-impact sectors such as electronics, chemicals, and energy. Increasing exports in these areas will be critical in reducing dependency on other countries and boosting economic strength.

The report also emphasizes the role of technology in this journey. India has the potential to become a global leader in artificial intelli-

gence (AI), quantum technology, and digital manufacturing. These advancements could help the country move up the value chain and create new opportunities for businesses and workers.

India's large and growing workforce is another advantage. By 2047, around 200 million people are expected to enter the job market. Creating high-value jobs and increasing women's participation in the labour force to 40-50 per cent will be key to achieving the country's economic goals.

The report identifies five key sectors -- electronics, energy, chemicals, automotive, and services -- that will play a major role in India's future growth. These industries align with global trends and can be scaled up to meet both domestic and international demand.

"By 2047, these sectors could potentially contribute significantly to the economy. Services are expected to account for about 60 per cent of GDP; manufacturing advancements could enable positioning India as a global hub" said the report.

With the right strategies and investments, India has the potential to become a global economic powerhouse by 2047, driven by technology, exports, and a skilled workforce.

'Awaiting Centre's nod on launch of satellite telecom services'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder and Chairman of Bharti Enterprises, reiterated on Friday that its satellite telecom service is ready for rollout in India and that it is now waiting for the Centre's greenlight.

Satellite telecom in India will help the country provide much-needed services to remote interior places where conventional telecom services tend to be costly.

"We are one of the leading players and are waiting for permissions. We are provid-

ing these services in many parts of the world already. So I think it's a great initiative, and we have already sought our permissions to launch," Mittal told reporters on the sidelines of SOUL Leadership Conclave here in the national capital.

"So as soon as we are given the green light, we launch our services," the telecom leader added. "There are lots of parts of the world and lots of people still living in those dark areas which need to be lit up. The only way it can be done is through satellite broadband connectivity."

He also responded to Elon



Musk's criticism of India's spectrum allocation process. Musk has applied for a satellite telecom license in India and is critical of the process.

Mittal reiterated Bharti's stance, emphasising that spectrum in rural and hard-to-reach areas should be al-

located on a shared basis.

"We are very clear for all the rural, hard to get to areas, the spectrum should be given on a shared basis. It's only in the area of urban areas. All that TRAI and DoT need to come (up) with a policy which doesn't discriminate against the terrestrial providers," he said.

Bharti Enterprises has argued that satellite companies should be required to pay licensing fees and acquire spectrum through auctions, just as traditional telecom operators do.

There has been a continued debate on the process

of spectrum allocation - administrative allocation or through auction. Elon Musk's Starlink and global peers like Amazon's Project Kuiper want an administrative allocation of spectrum for satellite services.

OneWeb has already launched 635 satellites and is providing services in other parts of the world. It has in the past argued that companies should be required to pay licensing fees and acquire spectrum through auctions, just as traditional telecom operators do. Bharti is the largest shareholder in Eutelsat OneWeb.

Aviation industry likely to post loss in FY25, FY26: ICRA

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Indian aviation industry is expected to report a net loss of Rs 2,000-3,000 crore in both FY25 and FY26, according to a report by ICRA.

This comes after the sector posted a net profit of approximately Rs 1,600 crore in FY24. The losses are primarily attributed to pressure on ticket prices as airlines aim to maintain healthy passenger load factors (PLF) despite high aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices. The industry is also expected to see a slow recovery in earnings due to its high fixed costs.

ICRA said "the Indian aviation industry to report a net loss of Rs. 20-30 billion in FY2025 and FY2026 compared to a net profit of Rs. 16 billion in FY2024 due to anticipated pressure on yields".

Another major challenge for airlines is rising borrowing costs. ICRA stated that the scheduled delivery of new aircraft will increase lease liabilities, adding to the interest burden.

ICRA noted that "The pace of recovery in industry earnings is likely to be gradual, owing to the high fixed cost nature of the business".

While the Indian aviation sector faces short-term profitability challenges, increasing air travel demand and careful financial management by airlines may help improve performance in the coming years.

However, the projected losses for the coming years are much lower than the Rs 23,500 crore and Rs 17,400 crore losses recorded in FY22 and FY23, respectively.

Despite financial challenges, the industry's debt levels are expected to remain stable, with an interest coverage ratio of 1.5-2.0 times in FY25. This suggests that airlines will still have some ability to manage their debt obligations.

ICRA noted that "The pace of recovery in industry earnings is likely to be gradual, owing to the high fixed cost nature of the business".

While the Indian aviation sector faces short-term profitability challenges, increasing air travel demand and careful financial management by airlines may help improve performance in the coming years.

ICRA noted that "The pace of recovery in industry earnings is likely to be gradual, owing to the high fixed cost nature of the business".

While the Indian aviation sector faces short-term profitability challenges, increasing air travel demand and careful financial management by airlines may help improve performance in the coming years.

ICRA noted that "The pace of recovery in industry earnings is likely to be gradual, owing to the high fixed cost nature of the business".

While the Indian aviation sector faces short-term profitability challenges, increasing air travel demand and careful financial management by airlines may help improve performance in the coming years.

TRAI allows DTH service providers to share telecom infrastructure

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has given big relief to direct-to-home (DTH) service providers.

In its recommendations for broadcasting services under the Telecommunications Act of 2023, it has proposed reducing the licence fee for DTH service providers to 3 per cent of AGR as against the current 8 per cent. It has also recommended no authorization fee after 2026-27.

TRAI has also recommended reducing the bank guarantee requirement for DTH and Headend-in-the-Sky (HITS) services, lowering the processing fee for HITS services from Rs1 lakh to Rs10,000, and extending the validity of HITS service authorization from 10 years to 20 years, with a renewal option every 10 years.

It has also recommended reducing fees and charges of other services to align with the Telecommunications Act of 2023.

The fee for radio broadcasting services will be 4 per cent of AGR, with a reduced 2 per cent fee for service providers in the Northeastern states, Jammu and Kashmir, and island territories during the first three years.

In the case of terrestrial radio services, TRAI has proposed introducing a renewal period of 10 years, which was previously not

available for FM radio operators. (ANI)

Other key recommendations of the telecom regulator include allowing voluntary infrastructure sharing between broadcasting service providers and telecom operators wherever technically and commercially feasible. This move is expected to reduce costs and improve service delivery across the industry.

To enhance consumer choice and reduce electronic waste, TRAI has also recommended that television channel distribution service providers should adopt interoperable set-top boxes (STBs). The Telecommunication Engineering Centre (TEC) will be responsible for setting standards for these STBs and television sets with inbuilt STB functionality.

For Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) services, TRAI has proposed removing the Rs100 crore minimum net worth requirement for Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

This change would align IPTV services with the authorisation rules for Internet Services under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), making it easier for smaller players to enter the market.

In radio broadcasting, TRAI has suggested making the terms and conditions technology-neutral, enabling broadcasters to adopt digital technology.

People selling old gold jewellery and booking profits: WGC

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Retail buyers in India are opting to exchange old gold jewellery for new, rather than making fresh purchases, at a time when gold prices are skyrocketing, World Gold Council (WGC) said in its latest India gold market update.

"Additionally, as gold prices surged past previous thresholds, many consumers are also taking the opportunity to sell old gold and lock in profits," WGC's India gold market update read.

The record-breaking surge in gold prices has dimmed the appeal of the retail jewellery demand. The drop



in gold imports in January also indicates the pullback in demand.

This slowdown in jewellery demand has left retailers reluctant to restock, as they face challenges in meeting payment terms with manufacturers.

"This has created a liquidity crunch within the industry. The subdued demand environment was reflected

in the widening spread between domestic and international prices. Since December, domestic gold prices have been trading at a discount to international prices, with the gap widening from an average of USD 3 per ounce in December to USD 23 per ounce," said the WGC report.

Notwithstanding the depressed jewellery demand,

investment demand interest (for bars and coins) has stayed the course, with investors anticipating further price increases, it asserted.

Amid uncertainty in stock markets, wealthy investors are parking their money in gold ETFs rather than buying physical gold. 2025 saw a strong interest in gold ETFs, marked by unprecedented inflows in January.

Quoting the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI), WGC said gold ETFs recorded net inflows of Rs 37.5 billion (USD 435 million) in January, significantly higher than the average inflows of Rs 9.4 billion (USD 112 million) over the previous 12 months.

IS DELHI PREPARED FOR FUTURE EARTHQUAKES?

OPINION

DR. GAURIKA CHUGH

Delhi woke up to a trembling sound in the early wee hours of 17th February. It was nothing short of a nightmare that shook everyone from their deep sleep with squawking sounds of birds and growling of dogs as if the earth is screaming out loudly to save itself from the pressures of human civilization. While the magnitude of the earthquake was 4.0, its intensity was so severe that it raises deep seated questions about whether we are prepared to save Delhi from the future rumbling of such earthquakes? It seriously raises questions about the governance of Delhi and its sprawling urban agglomerations and implementation of building bye laws raises concerns about the safety of Delhi.

The epicenter of the

earthquake was located in the Jheel Park area near Dhoola Kuan and the rumbling sound it made was due to its occurrence at a shallow depth of 5km which raises significant concerns and uncertainty about the future of such earthquakes. As per the preliminary report on the earthquake by the National Centre for Seismology it has revealed that there has been past seismic activity within a 50 square km radius of the epicenter and the last earthquake of such a high magnitude of 4.6 earthquake occurred on December 25, 2007. This reveals a normal pattern of seismogenesis in the past that underlines the prevalence of pre-existing stress conditions that makes it even more susceptible to future earthquakes. The re-

cent earthquake occurred due to normal faulting that led to hydrofracturing as captured in the Jheel Park where a giant tree was uprooted from its roots. There is also prevalence of two well-known regional faults, the Mathura fault and the Sohna fault which is located in close proximity to the epicentre.

Delhi lies in the seismic zone IV which is a highly vulnerable and earthquake prone area with extremely high seismic velocity where general occurrence of tremors is between 5-6 magnitude and may occasionally rise upto 7-8 magnitude. The region of Delhi has witnessed major earthquakes in the past and the frequency of the earthquakes indicates that Delhi lies in an extremely fragile and vulnerable zone extremely prone to the future trembling of earthquakes. Delhi has been receptive to earthquakes and its traces can be found in the old epic of Mahabharata. One such instance where the earth crumbled with fierce whirl-winds and roars of elephants was when Duryodhana made



The trend clearly shows that Delhi is vulnerable to earthquakes and this raises serious questions on the governance of Delhi about whether its sprawling urban growth and conglomerations are prepared to withstand such future shocks.

Bhishma commander of his force. In the recent past also there has been instances of earthquake, for instance, khurja earthquake in 1956 with 6,7 magnitude and subsequently in 1960 with 6.0 magnitude and in 1994 with 4.0 magnitude.

The trend clearly shows that Delhi is vulnerable to earthquakes and this raises serious questions on the governance of Delhi about whether its sprawling urban growth and conglomerations are prepared to withstand such

future shocks. Delhi suffers from a chronic problem of rampant and haphazard growth structures that makes it even more susceptible to the dangers arising from earthquakes. Delhi is an assemblage of archaic revenue laws and newer

municipal laws which makes its governance even more cumbersome and difficult to manage. There exists Lal Dora areas in Delhi which is an inheritance of the colonial system that referred to village abadi areas which were exempted from implementation of building bye laws and regulations of norms and property tax. To bring uniformity across all the areas and to bring them all our one single caveat of norms and rules and regulations, the committee of the Draft Regional Plan - 2041 has recommended that "it is necessary to repeal Delhi Land Reforms Act and to bring all the villages of Lal Dora and extended Lal Dora land under the planned development of DDA and thereafter under respective Urban Local Bodies". As per the Department of Urban Development, there are a total of 1642 unauthorised colonies under the jurisdiction of Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi. These unauthorised colonies are sprawling with rampant illegal construction flouting the building bye laws of Delhi Municipal

Corporation Act, 1957. In the hope of regularisation, these areas have come up with crowded structures thus flouting the fire and safety norms.

Apart from this, the ecosystem of Delhi also transcends within its boundaries and extends to the nearby NCR region which includes Gurugram, Noida, Greater Noida, Faridabad and Ghaziabad. There are sprawling structures coming in these areas reclaiming land over water bodies to build smart cities, metropolitan structures and IT parks. But the question arises are these structures really smart to withstand the trembling shocks? To make Delhi and its nearby NCR region sustainable and resilient to earthquakes, it is really important to fully implement the building bye laws and regulations, check haphazard growth of structures and implement early warning systems especially in high rise buildings that are even more prone to the vulnerability of earthquakes.

The author is Assistant Professor, TERI School of Advanced Studies

The fine line: Humour or harm?

OPINION

DR HASEENA KABEER

Humour has always been a powerful tool for sparking thought, provoking convention, and providing an outlet for social commentary. Comedians push boundaries, cross boundaries, and get us laughing in ways that sometimes make us squirm—and usually for good reasons. But the more the line between what is funny and what is offensive disappears, the question becomes: when does comedy cross that line?

Comedy, by its very nature, is a reflection of the society in which it exists. Comedians have long used their platforms to expose societal flaws, political failures, and human vulnerabilities. The best comedians, from Richard Pryor to George Carlin, have employed humour not only to make audiences laugh but to challenge power dynamics, question assumptions, and stimulate serious debate. To them, comedy was not just about getting laughs, it was a movement of resistance, a way of telling uncomfortable truths.

Comedy has been democratized in recent times by the likes of YouTube, Netflix, and stand-up specials. Comedians have millions of people to reach with a broad spectrum of comedy ranging from sharp, witty satire to shock humour, and sometimes obscene, tasteless humour. And with great power comes great responsibility, and never has the question of accountability been more relevant. The Fine Line: Humour or Harm?

While many comedians use their wit to open minds, others seem to blur the line between pushing boundaries and being outright of-

fensive. The current landscape of comedy often sees artists toeing a very fine line between humour that challenges societal norms and humour that reinforces harmful stereotypes or crosses into obscenity. A joke that challenges a social norm or exposes hypocrisy is one thing. But when humour relies on offensive stereotypes, degrades marginalized communities, or reduces complex issues to crude humour, it loses its power to elevate and instead serves only to alienate and hurt. Shock value can be a tool, but when it becomes the crutch upon which a comedian's career leans, it raises important questions about the ethics of humour.

Recent incidents involving popular comedians have sparked a national debate about where the line between humour and offense should be drawn. These situations highlight the tension between provocative comedy and what some perceive as unacceptable behaviour, raising important questions about freedom of speech, cultural sensitivity, and accountability in entertainment. One of the most recent controversies involved comedians who are facing multiple FIRs (First Information Reports) due to their controversial remarks on a popular show. Their comments were labelled offensive by many, leading to widespread backlash. This situation has drawn attention to the broader issue of how far comedians should go in their pursuit of humour. In this case, the backlash underscores a growing sentiment that certain forms of comedy, especially those seen as crass or in bad taste, can quickly

cross into problematic territory.

This is not the first time that comedians have faced legal or public scrutiny for their content. Another comedian faced public outrage and legal action after a show was cancelled over allegations that their jokes insulted religious sentiments. The incident sparked a larger conversation about free speech and the limits of comedy in a diverse society. The case raised important questions about whether comedians should be allowed to push boundaries without facing legal consequences and whether humour that challenges or critiques religious or cultural beliefs crosses a line.



Similarly, a comedian known for politically charged humour has repeatedly stirred controversy with jokes targeting politicians and political systems, sometimes crossing into territory that some find offensive. While many praise their intelligent critique and willingness to take on powerful figures, others argue that their humour sometimes goes too far, especially when it targets sensitive political issues in a manner that some consider disrespectful. This ongoing debate points to the complexity of balancing political satire with social responsibility.

Another comedian faced

massive outrage over a joke involving a public figure's family, leading to an apology. The incident was a stark reminder of the scrutiny public figures face, especially when their humour touches on sensitive or personal topics. This apology highlighted the delicate balance between humour that resonates with an audience and humour that can cause lasting damage to an individual's reputation or to public perceptions of respect. These incidents reveal the challenges faced by comedians in a world that is increasingly sensitive to issues of gender, religion, politics, and identity. In an age of heightened awareness, social media, and cancel culture, the tradi-

line between provocative comedy and offensive behaviour is delicate, and it's one that each comedian must navigate thoughtfully, taking into account the broader impact of their work on the audience and society at large. As the landscape of comedy continues to evolve, these incidents serve as a reminder that humour, while a powerful tool for social commentary, must be handled with care, especially in a world where public perception is constantly shifting.

The role of the audience cannot be overstated when it comes to determining the success or failure of a joke. What one group finds funny, another might find offensive. While comedy

often aims to challenge conventions, it is important to remember that context and intent matter. A comedian who uses their platform to critique systems or ideas in a way that promotes thoughtful discussion is playing a crucial role in shaping public discourse. However, when humour relies solely on shock tactics—without the depth of intelligence or purpose behind it—the line between comedy and obscenity becomes much easier to cross. The comedian's responsibility lies not only in making their audience laugh but also in ensuring that their humour doesn't perpetuate harm or reinforce negative

stereotypes. Comedy, like all forms of art, evolves with society. What was considered acceptable in the past may no longer be viewed as such in today's context. As societal values shift toward greater awareness of issues such as gender equality, racial justice, and religious sensitivities, comedians are increasingly being called upon to adapt their craft. This does not mean that comedians should shy away from difficult or controversial topics, but rather that they should do so with care. Comedy that provokes thought, pushes boundaries in meaningful ways, and exposes uncomfortable truths can still be incredibly powerful. However, when humour crosses the line into vulgarity or insensitivity, it no longer serves the purpose of sparking conversation or challenging norms. Instead, it risks becoming a form of entertainment that alienates and harms.

Comedy is a delicate balancing act, where timing, delivery, and wit come together to create moments that bring joy and laughter. It is meant to entertain, challenge, and sometimes provoke. But when it crosses into distasteful or offensive territory, it deserves to be called out. Shock value isn't the same as talent, and obscenity doesn't equate to humour. Comedians must remember that their work has the power to influence, and with that influence comes responsibility. As the boundaries of humour continue to evolve, so too must the conversations around what is acceptable. Comedy should always be a space for freedom of expression, but it must also be a space where respect, thoughtfulness, and care for others take precedence. The line between humour and offense may be fine, but it's one that must be navigated thoughtfully, for the sake of both the craft and the audience it seeks to entertain.

Dr Haseena Kabeer is a Freelancer Columnist.

CASHLESS ECONOMY: IS IT WORTH EMBRACING?



DR. BENAZIR PATIL

With the rise of UPI, digital wallets, and even cryptocurrencies, cash transactions are slowly becoming a relic of the past. From street-side chai stalls to luxury malls, QR codes now rule the payment landscape. Some nations are even pushing for fully cashless economies, promising efficiency and transparency. But is this shift truly practical for everyone? While digital payments offer convenience, they also pose significant challenges, especially for those who struggle with technology or are overly dependent on it.

One undeniable benefit of digital transactions is ease. No more hunting for exact change or queuing at ATMs—just scan, tap, and pay in seconds. This has been a game-changer for small businesses. Consider rickshaw drivers in India, who once battled the dreaded "Bhaiya, chhutta nahi hai" (I don't have change). Now, they simply flash their UPI ID and receive payments instantly. Digital payments have also fostered financial inclusion, bringing unbanked individuals into the economic mainstream.

However, not everyone finds digital transactions seamless. The biggest casualties of this shift are the elderly. For many senior citizens, navigating UPI apps and OTPs is intimidating. Imagine an 80-year-old grandfather struggling to buy vegetables because he can't scan a QR code or remember a PIN. Many older individuals fear pressing the wrong button or falling prey to cyber fraud, making them hesitant to adopt digital payments. In a society where technology is racing ahead, they risk being left behind.

On the flip side, young Indians have become so reliant on digital payments that they rarely carry cash. This dependency is great—until technology fails. Payment app outages have left people stranded at toll plazas, petrol pumps, and restaurants with no way to pay. A group of college students on a road trip, for example, found themselves in a remote village where UPI was not accepted. With not a single rupee in their wallets, they had to borrow money from a kind tea vendor just to buy snacks and fuel. While digital payments are efficient, they are useless without internet connectivity or electricity.

Beyond accessibility, security is a growing concern. While digital transactions reduce the risk of counterfeit currency, they open doors for cyber fraud. Scammers posing as bank officials trick people into revealing OTPs, wiping out their accounts within minutes. Even seasoned users can fall for phishing links or fraudulent payment requests. The loss is often irreversible. In contrast, cash, while not foolproof, cannot be hacked or drained from a bank account overnight.

So, is a cashless future ideal? The answer lies in balance. Digital transactions are undeniably the way forward, but eliminating cash entirely would create hardships, especially for the elderly and those in rural areas. A hybrid system is the best approach—one that promotes digital payments while keeping cash as a safety net. Governments must work toward financial inclusivity by simplifying digital processes, enhancing cybersecurity, and ensuring cash remains an option.

Ultimately, money should serve people, not the other way around. Whether you pay via UPI or a ten-rupee note, true progress lies in offering choices that empower everyone, not just those fluent in technology.

The author is the Chief Executive Officer of a non-profit organization called SCHOOL that works for ensuring good health & well-being.



In December 2023, Bengaluru's civic body ordered shop owners to install nameplates with at least 60% of the text in Kannada. (PTI)



For years, Ganesh Devy has led a survey of India's languages, documenting tongues—and ways of life—threatened by modernity. Photographs by Sohrab Hura / Magnum for The New Yorker.

INDIA'S LINGUAL FAULT LINES

Languages unite and divide. In India, they shape identity, fuel protests, unlock power, and decide who thrives. Words aren't just words here.

In the vast expanse of India, language is more than a means of communication; it is the essence of identity, culture, and power. The 2011 Census of India recorded 121 languages spoken by over 10,000 people each, with a staggering total of 19,569 dialects. This linguistic mosaic has been both a unifying force and a source of contention throughout the nation's history.

THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE DEBATE

Following India's independence in 1947, the question of a national language became a contentious issue. The Constitution designated Hindi and English as official languages, with an initial plan to phase out English by 1965 in favor of Hindi. This decision was met with resistance, especially from non-Hindi-speaking regions, which viewed it as an imposition threatening their linguistic and cultural identities.

In the 1960s, Tamil Nadu became the epicenter of anti-Hindi protests. The state's populace, led predominantly by students, vehemently opposed the mandatory imposition of Hindi, perceiving it as an affront to Tamil culture and autonomy. These protests were not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of linguistic movements across the country. Bengal and Assam witnessed resistance to Hindi dominance, Karnataka and Maharashtra saw protests emphasizing the primacy of Kannada and Marathi, and the Punjab Movement led to the formal recognition of Punjabi in the state.

The 1956 States Reorganization Act further shaped linguistic politics by re-drawing state boundaries along linguistic lines. This act played a crucial role in shaping regional identities and reducing inter-linguistic friction.

THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA

In 1968, the Indian government introduced the Three-Language Formula, aiming to promote national unity without undermining regional languages. This policy required students to learn:



The fourth phase of the anti-Hindi struggle erupted in 1965. In the front row (left to right) are K. A. Mathialagan, C. N. Annadurai, Rajaji, and M. Karunanidhi (Wikimedia Commons).



Jagannath Mishra is known for making Urdu the official second language of Bihar, a move that gained him popularity among Muslims. (Wikipedia)

- Hindi
- English
- A regional language (or an additional foreign/Indian language in Hindi-speaking states)

However, the implementation of this policy has been inconsistent. In many Hindi-speaking states, the emphasis on learning a third language has been minimal, leading to perceptions of linguistic hegemony. Conversely, non-Hindi-speaking states have often resisted the imposition of Hindi, advocating for the primacy of their regional languages in education and administration. For example, Tamil Nadu implements a two-language policy (Tamil and English), rejecting Hindi. West Bengal prefers Bengali and English, often sidelining Hindi. Northeastern states struggle to accommodate multiple tribal languages in addition to official languages.

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH

English, once a colonial legacy, has evolved into a neutral link language in India,



A protest took place at the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science on March 24, 2021, organized by the IACS Research Scholars' Association.



The demand for linguistic states found a passionate advocate in Potti Sriramulu, a prominent freedom fighter. In 1952, he embarked on a fast, ultimately sacrificing his life for the creation of a separate Andhra state. His sacrifice ignited widespread protests, leading to the Vishalandhra movement. On December 19, 1952, Prime Minister Nehru announced the formation of Andhra State, marking a significant milestone in India's linguistic reorganization.

facilitating communication between diverse linguistic communities. It is widely used in higher education, governance, and international business.

The prevalence of English has created a socio-economic divide. Urban elites and English-educated individuals often enjoy greater employment opportunities, while rural and non-English speakers struggle to access quality education and well-paying jobs. A 2014 study found that English speak-

ers in India earn 34% more than non-English speakers, highlighting the economic advantage of linguistic proficiency. This disparity underscores the role of English as a gatekeeper to socio-economic mobility.

MAITHILI AND BHOJPURI: THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION

Maithili and Bhojpuri are prominent languages spoken in Bihar and surrounding regions, each with

unique historical and cultural significance. Maithili, an Indo-Aryan language native to the Mithila region, was officially recognized in 2003 as one of India's 22 scheduled languages, granting it institutional support. It boasts a rich literary tradition and was historically written in the Tirhuta script, though Devanagari is now more commonly used.

CHALLENGES IN TRIBAL EDUCATION

Tribal communities in India often speak languages distinct from the dominant regional tongues. Traditional education systems, which primarily use regional or

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) programs. Odisha has implemented MTB-MLE in numerous schools across tribal regions, covering languages such as Santali, Saora, Kui, Kuvi, Koya, Kishan, Orom, Juang, Bonda, and Ho. Andhra Pradesh has taken a thematic approach, using a seasonal calendar reflecting tribal cultural contexts. Chhattisgarh has introduced learning materials in Gondi, Halbi, and Korku, ensuring better comprehension. Research suggests that students learn best in their mother tongue, improving retention and comprehension rates.

THE LINGUISTIC HIERARCHY IN EMPLOYMENT

Language in India often serves as a marker of socio-economic status, regional identity, and educational background. In professional settings, proficiency in certain languages, particularly English, can influence hiring decisions, career progression, and workplace dynamics. Employees from non-English-speaking backgrounds may face subtle biases, such as being overlooked for client-facing roles or leadership positions. A 2016 study found that job candidates with Indian-accented English were rated lower for customer-facing roles than those with American- or British-accented English, indicating discrimination against non-native English speakers.

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020

The NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction, especially in foundational schooling years. This policy aligns with research indicating that children learn best in their native languages. However, challenges persist in implementation. The diversity of languages in urban classrooms poses practical difficulties, and the aspirational value attached to English-medium education complicates the promotion of regional languages.

THE ASPIRATIONAL VALUE OF ENGLISH-MEDIUM EDUCATION

In contemporary India,

English has transcended its colonial origins to become a symbol of socio-economic mobility and prestige. Proficiency in English is often associated with better educational and employment opportunities, leading many parents to prioritize English-medium education for their children. Data indicates that 26% of children study in English-medium schools, while Hindi remains the largest medium of instruction, accounting for approximately 42% of total enrollment.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICIES

One significant obstacle is the logistical difficulty of catering to diverse linguistic populations, especially in urban areas where classrooms may comprise students speaking multiple mother tongues. Developing curricula and teaching materials in numerous languages requires substantial resources and coordination. Additionally, there is a shortage of trained teachers proficient in regional languages, which hampers effective instruction.

BALANCING MULTILINGUALISM AND ASPIRATIONS

The tension between preserving linguistic diversity and meeting the aspirational desires of parents and students presents a complex policy dilemma. While mother tongue instruction has clear educational benefits, the demand for English-medium education reflects broader socio-economic aspirations. Policymakers must navigate these competing interests to develop an inclusive education system that honors India's linguistic heritage while equipping students with global competitiveness.

One potential approach is the reinforcement of the Three-Language Formula, ensuring flexible implementation that respects regional linguistic identities. By embracing a multilingual approach that values all languages, India can strive towards an equitable and inclusive educational environment.

Compiled by Ruchira Talapatra

SUPREME COURT DISMISSES PIL TO ADD ARE-KATIKA COMMUNITY IN SCHEDULED CASTES CATEGORY: 'ONLY PARLIAMENT CAN CHANGE SC LIST'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Telangana State Are-Katika (Khatik) Sangh Versus Union Of India And Ors* observed and has refused to entertain a Public Interest Litigation, PIL filed seeking inclusion of the Are-Katika (Khatik) community in the Scheduled Castes, SC category all across India.

The bench comprising of Justice BR Gavai and Justice AG Masih was hearing the present matter.

The bench told the petitioner that the Courts do not have the power to make additions or alterations to the Scheduled Caste list.

The bench of Justice Gavai stated to the counsel appearing for the petitioner that, 'How such a petition tenable? The issue is so concluded by so many judgments of the Supreme Court. You should think at least...we can't even make an alteration...we can't direct a comma...'

The bench of Justice Gavai shot back that the High Court also does not have



jurisdiction to grant the relief sought.

The judge stated that, 'It is only the Parliament that can do it...so well settled...comma, entry nothing can be changed [by us].'

The bench of Justice Gavai also referred to the case of Manipur, where a 2023 High Court direction to the state to consider inclusion of the Meitei community in the Scheduled

In 2021, the petitioner sent a request to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt of India, and thereafter, several reminders, however its proposal was not approved.

Tribes list led to riots and unrest.

Later, pursuant to a review petition, the High Court direction was subsequently deleted.

In the present matter, the petitioner filed the Public Interest Litigation, PIL

wherein it is stated that the Are-Katika (Khatik) community, ie a community of Hindu butchers, holds a lower status in the caste hierarchy and due to the profession of them (slaughtering of sheep and goats, and selling of

mutton), the community members, who live near their slaughter houses, are isolated from mainstream society. However, in some states (northern), the community falls under the SC category, in others, it falls under the Other Backward Classes, OBC category. As per the petitioner, this results in a situation where if a community member transfers (due to marriage, profession, etc.) from a state that gives SC status to one that does not, the members lose their SC status and their children are deprived of the same.

The petition mentioned that the proposal for inclusion of the community in the SC Category was considered for the first time by Office of Registrar General of India in 2006, but not supported citing lack of proper ethnographic data. In 2021, the petitioner sent a request to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt of India, and thereafter, several reminders, however its proposal was not approved.

Accordingly, the court refused to entertain the petition.

Supreme Court Collegium Recommended Four Additional Judges Of Madras High Court As Permanent

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended making four additional judges of the Madras High Court as permanent.

The Supreme Court Collegium in its meeting held on February 20, 2025 has proposed the appointment of following judges as the permanent judges of Madras High Court:

1. Justice Ramasamy Saktivel
2. Justice P Dhanabal
3. Justice Chinmasamy Kumarappan, and

4. Justice Kandasamy Rajasekar

On May 19, 2023, the Centre appointed the four judicial officers as Additional Judges of the Madras High Court.

JUSTICE SAKTHIVEL

Justice Saktivel, who enrolled as an Advocate in 1998 joined the District Judiciary in 2011 through direct recruitment and held positions such as Additional District Judge in Thanjavur and Coimbatore, Administrator General and the Official Trustee, AGOT

of Tamil Nadu, Registrar General of Madras High Court, Principal District Judge of Coimbatore and Krishnagiri Districts.

JUSTICE P. HANABAL

Justice P. Dhanabal, who was serving as the Registrar General of the Madras High Court at the time of his elevation joined the District Judiciary in 2011.

Justice P. Dhanabal served as an Additional District Munsif and thereafter as Additional Sub Judge at Dharmapuri, and as III Additional Dis-

trict Judge, II Additional District Judge, PCR, and I Additional District Judge at Tirunelveli. Justice P. Dhanabal also served as Principal District Judge, Cuddalore and then as Chief Judge, Puducherry.

JUSTICE C KUMARAPPAN

Justice C Kumarappan, who also joined the District Judiciary as District Judge in 2011, served in Thoothukudi and Madurai Districts. Justice C Kumarappan also served in the Registry of Madras High

Court as the Registrar (IT-cum-Statistics) and Registrar General and was the Presiding Officer at the Principal Labour Court, Chennai at the time of his elevation.

JUSTICE K RAJASEKAR

Justice K Rajasekar, who became a District Judge (Entry Level) in 2011 served at Namakkal, Salem, Chennai, Tirunelveli, and Coimbatore before being elevated as the Additional Judge of the Madras High Court.

Supreme Court flags lack of opportunities for trial court lawyers: Senior designation cannot be monopoly of SC and HC advocates

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Jitender @ Kalla v. State (Govt.) of NCT of Delhi & Anr.* observed that one of the several concerns raised by the court about the present senior designation system is the lack of sufficient opportunities for trial court lawyers.

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

The bench in the case outlined certain concerns about the present 'point-based assessment system' to designate Senior Advocates, which has been evolved through the judgments delivered in the *Indira Jaising* case in 2017 and 2023.

The two-judge bench referred the present matter to the Chief Justice of India, CJI to take an appropriate decision on making a larger bench reference.

The Trial lawyers cannot gain points for 'reported judgments'.

The two-judge bench in the case observed that though there are many eminent lawyers practicing exclusively before the trial courts, they present guidelines do not give them sufficient opportunities for senior designation.

The bench in the case noted that the trial court lawyers do not stand to gain sufficient points for 'reported judgments', which is a criteria carrying 50 points in the 100-point



The bench in the case outlined certain concerns about the present 'point-based assessment system' to designate Senior Advocates, which has been evolved through the judgments delivered in the Indira Jaising case in 2017 and 2023.

assessment system. Only the judgments of the Supreme Court and the High Courts get reported in the accredited law reports.

The judgement stated that, 'There is one more serious area of concern. Whether the guidelines give sufficient opportunity to the advocates practicing in our Trial Courts to get designated. There cannot be any dispute that we have very eminent lawyers practicing exclusively before our Trial Courts who have the ability, standing and experience in law. They are outstanding public prosecutors and defence lawyers. In most cases, their arguments may not always have legal formulations, as

reflected in the judgments in cases wherein they appear. The submissions will necessarily be based on facts.

They will not have reported judgments to their credit. Such advocates do not stand to gain sufficient points against Sr. No. 2 in paragraph 73.7. We are of the view that designation under sub-section (2) of Section 16 cannot be the monopoly of the advocates who are practicing in higher Constitutional Courts like this Court and the High Courts. Chapter 6, in part VI of the Constitution of India, in a sense, gives the status of Constitutional Courts to our trial and district courts.'

Supreme Court issues notice on former West Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee's bail petition in CBI case over 'cash-for-jobs' scam

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Partha Chatterjee Versus Central Bureau Of Investigation, CBI* observed and has issued a notice wherein the petition is filed by former West Bengal Education Minister and now MLA Partha Chatterjee seeking bail in the CBI case arising out of the state's cash-for-jobs scam.

The bench comprising of Justice Surya Kant and Justice N Kotiswar Singh passed the order.

However, the West Bengal cash-for-jobs scam involved allegations of illegal

The court charged the accused under various sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act and PMLA for using their public offices for personal gain by demanding bribes in exchange for jobs at the department.

recruitment of Assistant Teachers under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education.

In 2022, a corruption case was registered which led to the arrest of Dr. Subires Bhattacharyya (the Chairman of West Bengal Central School Service Commission), Ashok Kumar Saha,

the Secretary of WBCSSC, Dr. Kalyanmoy Ganguly (President of West Bengal Board of Secondary Education), Dr. Santi Prasad Sinha, the Secretary of WBBSE and Partha Chatterjee, the Minister in charge of Higher Education and School Education Department, West Bengal.

The court charged the accused under various sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act and PMLA for using their public offices for personal gain by demanding bribes in exchange for jobs at the department.

However, Partha Chatterjee (and others) initially moved the Calcutta High Court seeking bail.

In November 2024, the division bench delivered a split verdict on the bail applications.

Therefore, one of the judges granted bail to all accused, the other denied bail to Partha Chatterjee and 4 other officials from

the education department (Subires Bhattacharyya, Kalyanmoy Gangopadhyay, Ashok Kumar Saha and Shanti Prasad Sinha). The present matter then came before the single bench, wherein the court denied bail to Partha Chatterjee and the 4 other officials. Chatterjee approached the Supreme Court, wherein challenging the above two orders (the split verdict order and the single bench order denying bail).

In December 2024, the Supreme Court had allowed him bail in the connected money laundering case with effect from February 1, 2025.

Supreme Court directs Union govt to file affidavits on establishment and functioning of Central and State Mental Health Authorities

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Gaurav Kumar Bansal Versus Union Of India And Ors* observed and has asked the Union Government for filing a detailed affidavit indicating the establishment and functioning of the Central Mental Health Authority, State Mental Health Authority and Mental Health Review Board under the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017.

The court passed the order wherein a writ petition is filed under Article 32, seeking certain directions with respect to the persons re-



quiring mental healthcare. Since January 3, 2019, the Supreme Court has been passing directions in this writ petition.

On February 7, the bench comprising of Justice PS Narasimha and Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra was informed that the Parliament enacted the Mental

Healthcare Act, which contemplates the establishment of these three authorities.

The court in its order stated that:

'Ms. Aishwarya Bhati, learned Additional Solicitor General appears on behalf of the Union. We direct that Union of India shall file a detailed affidavit indicating

On February 7, the bench comprising of Justice PS Narasimha and Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra was informed that the Parliament enacted the Mental Healthcare Act, which contemplates the establishment of these three authorities.

the establishment and functioning of the Central Mental Health Authority, State Mental Health Authority and Mental Health Review Board. The affidavit shall also indicate the statutory and mandatory appoint-

ments to the authority and the review board. The said affidavit may be filed by March 06, 2025.'

Accordingly, the court listed the matter for further consideration on March 21, 2025.

Supreme Court Collegium recommends appointment of five advocates as Judges of Patna High Court

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium in its meeting held on February 20, 2025 has approved the proposal for appointment of the

following Advocates, as Judges of the High Court of Judicature at Patna:

1. Shri Alok Kumar Sinha,
2. Shri Ritesh Kumar,
3. Smt. Soni Shrivastava,
4. Shri Sourendra Pandey, and

5. Shri Anshul @ Anshul Raj

TWO JUDICIAL OFFICERS SWORN IN AS JUDGES OF DELHI HIGH COURT

Two judicial officers sworn in as judges of the

Delhi High Court on February 21, 2025.

The name of two judges is:

- Renu Bhatnagar and Rajneesh Kumar Gupta
- The Central Government had notified the ap-

pointment of two judicial officer on February 19.

The Supreme Court Collegium had recommended the elevation of two judicial officers at a meeting held on February 05.

TOP OF THE DAY

HOSTAGE FAMILIES' FORUM DEMANDS RELEASE OF ALL HOSTAGES

TEL AVIV : Hostage Families' Forum of Hope issued a statement on Friday morning asserting that only the release of all hostages together, under an ultimatum, will save their lives while ensuring Israel's security. The forum demands that the Israeli government put an end to Hamas's extortion tactics and demand the release of the six hostages being held afloat by Saturday. Furthermore, the families insist that the remaining hostages should be freed by a specific deadline.

UAE'S MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ISSUES EMIRATI DAY

ABU DHABI : The UAE's Ministry of Education (MoE) has issued the Emirati Day for Education Celebration Guide, a unified frame of reference for all events and activities marking the occasion across all schools on 28th February 2025. The Ministry's guide defines Emirati Day for Education as a national occasion to highlight the role of education in the country's progress and showcase efforts to advance the education system in line with global standards.

BANGLADESH PAYS TRIBUTES TO HEROES OF MOVEMENT

DHAKA : Thousands of people on Friday paid their tribute to the people who laid down their lives during the historic language movement at the Central Shaheed Minar in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka. Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus paid tribute to them by placing wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar to mark International Mother Language Day. Walking barefoot to Dhaka's Central Shaheed Minar with wreaths and flowers singing "Amar Bhaiyer Rokte Rangano Ekushey February", people from all walks of life paid their respects to heroes. Manindra Kumar Nath, Acting General Secretary of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, said that people of Bangladesh sacrificed their lives against Pakistan for their language.

BLA CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATTACK IN BALOCHISTAN

ABU DHABI: Quetta: The Baloch Liberation Army has stated that it carried out coordinated attacks on multiple military checkpoints and personnel stationed in the Shaban region of Pakistan's biggest province - Balochistan. According to their spokesperson, Azad Baloch, BLA fighters set up blockades and launched simultaneous assaults on two military checkpoints, which were reportedly manned by Frontier Corps (FC) personnel. The operation, which also targeted a convoy of FC and police reinforcements arriving from Quetta, led to fierce clashes that lasted over two hours.

CHINA'S MILITARY GETS STRICTER, COMBAT-FOCUSED RULES

President signed orders to implement revised regulations on interior order, conduct, and military formation, effective from April 1.

AGENCIES
BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also the chairman of the Central Military Commission, signed orders to publish three regulations on interior order, code of conduct and military formation. The revised rules, which prioritise combat readiness as the main focus with a fundamental orientation of preparing for and engaging in warfare, will come into effect from April 1.

According to news agency Xinhua, the revised regulations are designed to transform China's military into world-class armed forces, focusing on combat readiness and addressing the concerns of the armed forces.

The revised rules aim to promote a more standardised order in war preparation, training, operations and daily life of the soldiers.

The regulations on the



NEW RULES

- Revised Regulations Aim for World-Class Military: China's new regulations focus on improving combat readiness and addressing the concerns of armed forces.
- Improved Personnel Management and Conduct: Changes include better management of appearance, conduct, leave-taking, and military training for soldiers.
- Detailed Codes for Military Parades: New guidelines cover military formations for parades on land, sea, dock, and air.

interior order of the military have been revised to improve the management of military person-

nel in matters related to appearance and conduct, leave-taking and military training of the soldiers. The revised military code of conduct refines the rules to award the those who excel in service, punish those violating rules and streamline relevant procedures.

"The revised regulations on military formation are added with detailed codes of practice concerning military parades on the land, in the sea, at the dock and in the air," the news agency stated.

Netanyahu orders crackdown in West Bank after terror attacks

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday ordered Israel's military to conduct operations in the occupied West Bank after three empty buses exploded, in a suspected terror attack, near Tel Aviv last night.

No casualties were reported and there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blasts, which occurred when explosive devices planted on the empty vehicles detonated in quick succession in the cities of Bat Yam and Holon, south of Israel's financial centre.

In Bat Yam, two bombs exploded on buses parked in a depot on Thursday night, authorities said. A third blast was reported in Holon from an explosive device

planted on a third bus.

CNN reported that Israel stepped up security and halted bus and train operations across the country following the blasts, which a statement from Netanyahu's office called an "attempt to perpetrate a chain of mass bus bombings." Netanyahu "ordered the IDF to carry out an intensive operation against centres of terrorism," in the West Bank, according to the statement.

"The Prime Minister also ordered the Israel Police and the Israel Security Agency to increase preventative activity against additional attacks in Israeli cities," it added.

Prior to Netanyahu's statement, Israel's Defence minister Israel Katz had said that he instructed the IDF to ramp up its operations in the West Bank.

"In light of the severe terror attack attempts [in the Tel Aviv area] by Palestinian terror organizations against the civilian population in Israel, I instructed the IDF to increase the intensity of the counterterrorism activity in the Tulkram refugee camp, and all the refugee camps in Judea and Samaria," he said in a statement cited by the Times of Israel.

The bus blasts came just hours after Palestinian militant group Hamas returned four bodies purported to be hostages held in Gaza since its October 7, 2023 attack.

The bodies were handed over as part of a ceasefire deal enacted last month that has appeared shaky in recent weeks as Israel and Hamas accused each other of violations.

Netanyahu slams wrongful delivery of body

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu criticised the "unspeakable cynicism" of Hamas after Israeli forensic authorities determined that the body handed over, which Hamas said was of Shiri Bibas, the mother of the two young children that were taken hostage, is not her, reported the Times of Israel.

"The cruelty of the Hamas monsters knows no bounds," Netanyahu said in a video statement.

"Not only did they kidnap the father, Yarden Bibas, but the young mother, Shiri, and their two small babies. But in an unspeakably cynical manner, they did not return Shiri alongside her young children, the little angels, and they put the body of a Gazan woman in the coffin," he added.

Yarden Bibas, husband of

Nepal PM Oli vows to protect freedom of speech

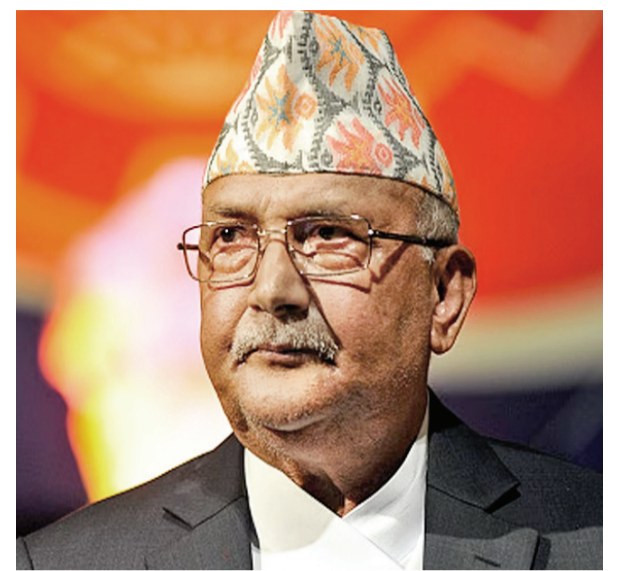
AGENCIES
KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli on Friday said that the government will not bring any law to curtail freedom of speech amid accusations from the opposition parties regarding a Bill related to regulating social media sites.

"We have come to power after fighting against the situation in which there was no freedom of expression, so the present government will not in any way suppress the people's power for free speech," Oli said while addressing a programme organised by the Nepal Chamber of Commerce to release a book.

Releasing the book titled "Rajesh Kaji Shrestha: Personality and Contributions", Oli, however, underlined the need to regulate the social media sites, which he said have become "irresponsible and abusive thereby creating chaos in the society".

Oli's remarks come at a time when a Bill related to regulating social media sites is being tabled in Parliament and has invited criticism from the opposition parties who claimed that the government intends to curtail free speech



"We, however, will not tolerate anti-national activities such as creating communal disharmony, disturbing peace and security and creating anarchy in the name of freedom," Oli said.

and press freedom.

"We had revoked the decision made by the previous government led by Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda', which had banned popular social media site TikTok," Oli recalled.

"We, however, will not tolerate anti-national activities such as creating communal disharmony, disturbing peace and security and cre-

ating anarchy in the name of freedom," Oli said.

On a different note, Oli said that the government is committed towards maintaining good governance so as to move the country towards economic prosperity.

He also dismissed media reports that accused him of depositing millions of dollars in the banks of Cambodia and Switzerland.

Pak Defence Minister says Imran's PTI will fade

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif forecasted on Friday that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), headed by former Prime Minister Imran Khan, will soon lose its significance due to its violence-driven politics.

Asif made the statement as the PTI plans to launch a fresh round of protests across the country to renew pressure on the government for the release of Khan, 72, who has been in jail since August 2023.

"Things will settle down soon and their [PTI] rel-



evance will end as will their politics of inciting violence," Asif told the media. Asif dismissed the PTI's conduct as anything but political and asserted that its actions had been exposed to the public.

He said the party's politics was just for one person. "The PTI's politics is for one individual as they have no concern for the country," Asif said, adding that the PTI after losing power was now "licking its wounds"

and resorting to conspiracies.

"The PTI founder wanted the army to become a subsidiary of his party," he alleged.

The minister also talked about the May 9, 2023, and November 26, 2024, incidents and claimed the violence was orchestrated for "nefarious purposes".

He said that attacks on national assets and the desecration of martyrs' memorials were undeniable realities.

Asif said that PTI, including Khan, used to have close ties with the army chief in the past.

Taiwan ready to welcome Chinese students, no response from Beijing

AGENCIES
TAIPEI

The Ministry of Education is considering discussions on inviting Chinese students to pursue their studies in Taiwan, but Beijing has not responded, said Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Minister Chiu Chui-cheng, as reported by Taipei Times.

Speaking at the National Conference for University Presidents in Taiwan, Chiu urged China not to use educational exchanges as a tool for

"united front" strategies. He was invited to discuss cross-strait relations and relevant policies, Taipei Times reported.

He said that since 2004, around 20,000 agreements have been signed between educational institutions across the strait, and educational exchanges have gradually stabilized following the COVID-19 pandemic, as reported by Taipei Times. Chiu mentioned that last year, approximately 2,000 Chinese students travelled to Taiwan for

short-term studies, and over 300 Chinese school administrators or vice presidents visited Taiwan for exchanges. However, he stated that China continues to regulate the number of Chinese students studying in Taiwan, Taipei Times reported.

In 2020, China imposed a temporary ban on its students enrolling in Taiwanese institutions due to the pandemic and political circumstances, resulting in only about 1,500 students remaining in Taiwan last year, he said.

Free Balochistan Movement representative urges UN to secure independence

AGENCIES
QUETTA

A representative of the Free Balochistan Movement (FBM) stated that Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) President Maulana Fazlur Rehman has been repeatedly speaking on the progress of the Baloch freedom movement in Balochistan and his statements reflect the failure of the narrative

presented by the Pakistani military and signal the conclusion of its violent aggression towards the Baloch people.

FBM representative urged the UN to take action in Balochistan by establishing United Nations Mission in Balochistan (UNMIB) and forcing the Pakistani occupying forces to retreat. Additionally, the FBM rep-



resentative expressed their intent to raise awareness among the international

community regarding the fact that Balochistan has been embroiled in conflict

for the past 70 years.

The FBM representative accused China of backing Pakistan's "occupying military" in its extensive military operations across Balochistan to facilitate its large-scale exploitation projects linked to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), including initiatives in the coastal regions of Gwadar. In Balochistan, Pakistan's ground and air forces are indiscriminately attacking Baloch civilians, with Pakistan's Air Force actively involved in aerial bombings and these airstrikes have resulted in a humanitarian crisis in several areas of Balochistan, according to FBM representative. The FBM representative said that hundreds of thousands of Baloch indi-

viduals have been forced to flee their ancestral homes, and thousands have disappeared against their will. Furthermore, despite its limited resources, Pakistan has budgeted billions of rupees to intensify its military actions in Balochistan. The Baloch nation remains resolute, fiercely defending its national dignity, identity, and homeland.

REFORM



Models Jacquelin Pangsepp (left) and Shanelle Banton wear a haute couture collection of Aldi's recycled plastic bins for London fashion week. (File Photo Agency)

Mitch McConnell won't seek re-election in 2026

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell announced Thursday that he won't seek reelection next year, ending a decades-long tenure as a power broker who championed conservative causes but ultimately ceded ground to the fierce GOP populism of President Donald Trump.

McConnell, the longest-serving Senate party leader in U.S. history, chose his 83rd birthday to share his decision not to run for another term in Kentucky and to retire when his current term ends. He informed The Associated Press of his decision before he addressed colleagues in a speech on the Senate floor. "Seven times, my fellow Kentuckians have sent me to the Senate," McConnell said, as



aides lined the back chamber and senators listened from seats. "Every day in between I've been humbled by the trust they've placed in me to do their business right here. Representing our commonwealth has been the honor of a lifetime. I will not seek this honor an eighth time. My current term in the Senate will be my last." The scramble for McConnell's

seat intensified soon after McConnell spoke.

Former state Attorney General Daniel Cameron, a Republican, said he's in the race to succeed his one-time mentor, having formerly worked as McConnell's legal counsel. Cameron lost the 2023 governor's race to Democratic incumbent Andy Beshear but has been planning a political comeback. Cameron said Thursday that his values align with Kentucky voters and touted his support for Trump.

"I'm going to be an 'America First' senator and it's time for a new generation of leadership," Cameron told the AP in a phone interview Thursday evening.

McConnell's retirement announcement began the epilogue of a storied career as a master strategist, one in which

he helped forge a conservative Supreme Court and steered the Senate through tax cuts, presidential impeachment trials and fierce political fights. Yet with his powerful perch atop committees, and nearly two years remaining in his term, McConnell vowed to complete his work on several remaining fronts.

"I have some unfinished business to attend to," he said. McConnell walked gingerly to the podium, sporting a walking boot. Senators from both sides of the political aisle seemed to listen most intently as he told them that while there are any number of reasons for pessimism, the strength of the Senate is not one of them.

"The Senate is still equipped for work of great consequence," he told them.

Vance criticizes Germany's free speech laws

AGENCIES
BERLIN

U.S. Vice President JD Vance has criticized Germany's free speech laws during an appearance at a conservative gathering outside Washington, linking the country's limits against hate speech to American troops stationed there. German law sets restrictions on free speech, including the long-standing ban on Holocaust denial and any glorification of the country's Nazi past.

She claimed proceeds from the app and her cookbook — published by a Penguin imprint — would be donated to charities and to the family of a child with cancer.

Only 2% of the total was donated and Gibson was found to have breached consumer law. A court ordered her to produce the remaining funds and barred her from making health claims. In a letter to the court, Gibson said she was in debt, didn't have a job and couldn't pay the costs.

"Consumer Affairs Victoria has continued to undertake actions to enforce the debt owed by Annabelle Natalie Gibson (Belle Gibson) under court order," said a statement from the agency that was supplied on Wednesday.

Apple Cider Vinegar, Netflix's dramatic retelling of Gibson's story released this month, doesn't recount what happened after it was revealed in 2015 that she wasn't sick. In real life, she never faced criminal charges.

But in 2017, Australia's federal court fined her 410,000 Australian dollars (\$261,000), which she had raised for charity and failed to donate. The consumer watchdog in the state of Victoria is still trying to recover the funds, a spokesperson told The Associated Press.

What was Belle Gibson charged with? Gibson's healthy recipe app, The Whole Pantry, had 200,000 downloads in one month from the Apple store in 2013.

Australia still pursuing wellness blogger Belle Gibson

AGENCIES
WELLINGTON

A decade after wellness influencer Belle Gibson admitted she didn't have terminal brain cancer, which she claimed was cured by the healthy lifestyle that made her famous, her story has inspired a new Netflix series — and fresh outrage in Australia about the case's lack of resolution.

Authorities said this week they're still pursuing the disgraced Instagram star for unpaid fines, fueling ongoing ire among Australians about one of the country's most brazen online scams — an episode that drew attention to the destructive harms of false health claims on social media.

TRUMP'S ATTACKS ON ZELENSKY SPARK SURGE IN UKRAINIAN UNITY

As Russia's invasion anniversary nears, Ukrainians remain tense, now facing broader concerns beyond their longtime enemy.

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Days before the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion, Ukrainians are as sombre and tense as they were right before Moscow launched the war. Only now, they aren't just worried about their longtime enemy.

Ukraine's stunning new threat comes from its once staunchest ally, the United States, whose support appears to be fading as US President Donald Trump echoes the narrative of Russian President Vladimir Putin while pledging to stop the fighting between the two countries.

Over three years of war, Ukraine's initial unity had started to wear thin, as old frictions and political spats reemerged.

But after Trump's false claims this week that Ukraine is led by a "dictator" who started the war with Russia, even some of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's harshest critics have rallied around him and feelings of unity have surged again. "Yes, he's not a perfect president, but he's not a dicta-

KEY POINTS

■ Trump's Criticism Sparks Unity in Ukraine: Despite harsh claims by Trump about Zelenskyy being a "dictator," even some of his domestic critics have rallied around the Ukrainian president, boosting national unity.

■ Ukrainians Feel Isolated Amid US Tensions: With Trump's stance aligning with Russian interests and tensions rising with the US, many Ukrainians feel abandoned, despite continued military support.



File Photo Agency

tor," said Kateryna Karaush, a 25-year-old tech worker from Kyiv who like many Ukrainians — and even some Republicans in Congress — is struggling to wrap her head around Trump's embrace of Russia, which represents a major about-face in US foreign policy. "It feels like the whole world is against us," Karaush said. Against long odds, Ukrainians — with massive military support from the US — have prevented Russia from overtaking their country, even if

roughly one fifth of it is now under Russia control.

A demonstrator holds a poster reading, "Real Americans Stand with Ukraine," during a rally to protest President Donald Trump's policies on Presidents Day, Monday, Feb. 17, 2025, in Los Angeles. But after three years of war, both civilians and soldiers are exhausted. Hundreds of thousands have been killed or wounded, tens of thousands are missing, and millions have fled the country. The mood only became gloomier in re-

cent days as Trump signalled his desire to rapidly bring the fighting to a close on terms that Zelenskyy and many in the West say are too favourable to Russia. After Trump falsely called Zelenskyy a "dictator" — for legally postponing an election last year — and as reports emerged of US and Russian officials meeting in Saudi Arabia to discuss a possible ceasefire without input from Ukraine, even some of Zelenskyy's domestic opponents have begun defending him.

Kash Patel, new FBI Director, connects to India

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Indian-American Kash Patel, confirmed by the US Senate to head the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), traces his roots to Bhadrans village in Gujarat's Anand district, from where his family migrated to Uganda 70 to 80 years ago, his community members said on Friday.

New York-born Patel (44), who belongs to the Patidar community, has become the first Indian-American to lead the premier law enforcement agency of the United States.

Leaders of the Patidar community said all close family members of Patel are settled in foreign countries. They sold their ancestral houses in Bhadrans once they shifted to Africa.

Chh Gam Patidar Mandal, an organisation of the community based in Anand, maintains 'vanshavali' (family tree) of its members. "In the 'vanshavali' we have names of Kash Patel's father Pramod Patel and also his brothers and grandfather,"



said secretary of the organisation and Anand district BJP present Rajesh Patel.

Rajesh Patel told that though Kash Patel's name was yet to be added to the family tree, entry of 18 generations of his family is there in the 'vanshavali' and it is stored in their office along with all members of their community.

"As per our records the family used to live in Moti Khadki area of Bhadrans village and they migrated to Uganda some 70 to 80 years ago," he informed.

"The family sold their

ancestral house and land and all of his relatives are settled in foreign countries, especially in the USA. Now, when a family member of Kash comes back to India we will seek their permission to record their next generation's names, including his own name, in vanshavali," Rajesh Patel informed.

"We have not met Kash Patel as the family has not visited Anand in recent years. But many in our community know them as Patidar is a close-knit community," he said.

Rajesh Patel said as far as he knows, the family had returned for a brief time to India after their expulsion from the African country in the 1970s.

"Those Indians who were expelled from Uganda had come to India for a brief stay as they had applied for asylum in the UK, US or Canada. Kash Patel's family had also come here for a brief stopover and then moved to Canada once their applications were accepted," he said.

From Canada, they shifted to the US, where Kash Patel was born in 1980, Rajesh Patel maintained. Indians who migrated to Uganda were expelled from the African country by dictator Idi Amin who seized power in a military coup in 1971. In 1972, he ordered the Indian community to leave his country in 90 days.

Chh Gam Patidar Mandal is an organization of the Patidar community from six villages/towns of Anand district — Dharmaj, Nadiad, Sojitra, Bhadrans, Vaso and Karamsad. Sardar Vallabh Patel, the first home minister of the country, hailed from Karamsad.

The new FBI chief served as the former Chief of Staff to Acting Secretary of Defence Christopher Miller. He was responsible for leading the Secretary's mission at the Department, including his executive staff and providing counsel to him on all matters concerning its operations, the US Department of Defence's short biography on Kash Patel said.

THE WEEK OF DIALOGUES & DIPLOMACY

This week, the world fixated its eyes on the meeting of the representatives of the two different worlds. On one hand, the Emir of Qatar visited India this week. On the other hand, Russia and the US reached an agreement to initiate efforts aimed at concluding the war in Ukraine and enhancing their diplomatic and economic relations. Qatar and India formalized their relationship by establishing a strategic partnership, marked by the exchange of official documents between the two nations.

This development followed a meeting in New Delhi between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani. The discussions encompassed a wide array of subjects, including trade,

investment, technological collaboration, energy, food security, education, and the enhancement of interpersonal connections. Furthermore, the leaders considered the potential for a free trade agreement and set an ambitious target to double their trade volume within the next five years.

Another important aspect of their discussions was financial cooperation, with both parties agreeing to implement measures to prevent double taxation and fiscal evasion concerning income taxes. An agreement addressing this issue was also exchanged. In addition to bilateral matters, the two leaders engaged in discussions regarding regional and global issues of shared interest. Qatar also pledged to invest USD 10 billion in India across a range of sectors, as stated

WORLD RECAP

ANSHU JOSHI



in a joint announcement by the two countries.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi described his meeting with the Emir of Qatar as very productive. This visit marked the first by a Qatari Emir to India in a decade. The joint statement indicated that the investment will focus on areas such as infrastructure, technology, manufacturing, food security and more. Additionally, both nations aim to increase their annual trade over the next five years and are considering the establishment of a free trade agreement. This week, Russia and the US reached an agreement

to initiate efforts aimed at concluding the conflict in Ukraine and enhancing their diplomatic and economic relations, marking a significant shift in the American foreign policy under President Donald Trump.

The US Secretary of State Marco Rubio also stated that both the parties broadly agreed on reinstating personnel at their embassies in Washington and Moscow, establishing a high-level team to facilitate peace negotiations regarding Ukraine, and investigating opportunities for closer relations and economic collaboration. He also pointed

out that the discussions, which included his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, were very significant, and both the sides are committed towards ending the war.

Notably, no Ukrainian officials were in attendance at the meeting, which comes as Ukraine continues to struggle against a larger Russian force in a conflict that has dragged on for almost three years. President Zelenskyy has already made it clear that Ukraine wouldn't agree to any results from this week's talks without their involvement. While the US represents the voice of NATO, many European nations (read: NATO) have their own differing views. Marco Rubio had already articulated the foreign policy framework for the second Trump administration during his confirmation hearing for

the position of Secretary of State. Rubio has already highlighted an 'America First' strategy that emphasizes prioritizing US interests, minimizing reliance on foreign countries, and tightening fiscal allocations for international assistance.

His agenda reflects the Trump administration's emphasis on domestic issues and a reassessment of international obligations. He highlighted the importance of ensuring that American taxpayer funds are directed exclusively towards promoting US interests. This indeed indicates towards Trump's commitment of ending the wars. This looks like a major turning point since the relationship between Russia and the US has hit rock bottom during the war. Both embassies have taken a big hit with many diplomats being

expelled over the years, and the US along with its European partners imposed a bunch of sanctions on Russia. This war has definitely had a huge impact on the global economy, peace, and security that we can hardly imagine. Wars just lead to chaos and destruction, and that something everyone understands. So, why do they keep happening?

The involvement of additional nations in any conflict then potentially escalates into a global war. A thorough analysis reveals that we are already experiencing a scenario akin to a world war, as NATO is indirectly engaged in this perilous conflict.

Maintaining global peace and security is critically needed at the moment. It remains a critical question as to when leaders will come to this realiza-

tion. Many criticise such dialogues and call them a fallacy, but I think these dialogues provide a much-needed breathing space to the leaders and nations in the global politics. These dialogues work as refreshing disruptions where the leaders can at least discuss various geopolitical issues and plausible solutions. These dialogues are becoming a vital vehicle of strengthening and promoting bilateral as well as multilateral relations. In this multi-dimensional world of complex interdependence, these dialogues make the leaders understand each other's needs leading them towards a win-win situation for both the sides. Hope the humanity wins through these dialogues and diplomacy!

The author is Professor, School of International Studies, JNU

PICTURE PERFECT



Kareena Kapoor Khan poses for her social media. (Instagram)

RAJKUMMAR RAO WILL PLAY GANGULY IN CRICKETER'S BIOPIIC

TDG NETWORK
BARDHAMAN

Former Indian cricket team captain Sourav Ganguly opened up about his biopic and shared that Bollywood actor Rajkumar Rao will portray him in the film.

While speaking to the media, he said, "From what I've heard, Rajkumar Rao will play the role (the titular role)...but there are issues of dates...so it will take more than a year to hit the screens."

The former skipper played 113 Tests and 311 ODIs for India. The left-handed batsman scored 18,575 runs across all formats in his international career. The Prince of Kolkata later went on to become the



president of the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) and later was appointed as the president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in October last year.

He had led India to 21 Test wins and the final of the 2003 World Cup. The southpaw also served in BCCI's technical committee and was also a member of the

Cricket Advisory Committee along with Indian greats Sachin Tendulkar and VVS Laxman. Ganguly called time on his international career in 2008 and he ended up with more than 18,000 international runs.

Talking about Rajkumar Rao's work front, he will be seen in 'Bhool Chuk Maaf', also starring Wamiqa Gabbi.

The makers recently unveiled the teaser of the film.

The teaser begins with Rajkumar and Wamiqa's families fixing their wedding dates. Everything seems normal until the Haldi ceremony, where Rajkumar's character gets smeared with turmeric. But the next day, he realizes it's still the 29th, and the Haldi preparations are happening again. The day keeps repeating in a mysterious time loop, leading to confusion and laughter.

However, the highlight of the teaser was the use of the song 'Chor Bazaari' from Deepika Padukone and Saif Ali Khan starrer 'Love Aaj Kal' (2009) in the background. Interestingly, Wamiqa Gabbi had a minor role in that film.

Kangana's 'Emergency' will stream on Netflix from March 17

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Actor-politician Kangana Ranaut on Friday announced that her film "Emergency" will be available for streaming on Netflix from March 17.

The film, which courted controversy over its censor certificate and allegations that it misrepresents the Sikh community, released in theatres on January 17 after several delays.

Also directed and produced by Ranaut, the film portrays the Emergency months and features the actor in the role of former



prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Ranaut shared a still from the film on Instagram alongside an old image of Gandhi. She captioned it, "17th March releasing on @netflix."

Ranaut, the BJP MP from Himachal Pradesh's Mandi, documents the 21 months of Emergency imposed in 1975 by the then prime minister in the film.

Following its release, "Emergency" was not screened at cinemas in Punjab after protests by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and Sikh organisations.

'Mother India', 'DDLJ' to be screened at Academy Museum, LA

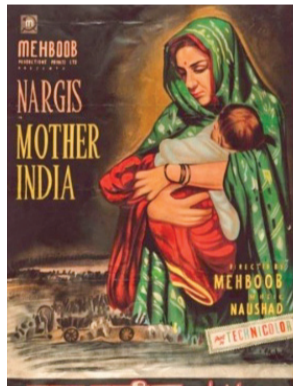
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Indian iconic films such as 'Mother India', 'Amar Akbar Anthony', 'Devdas', and 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge' will be screened at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles.

The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles will present "Emotion in Colour: A Kaleidoscope of Indian Cinema," a curated selection of 12 iconic films from India, running from March 7 to April 19, 2025, read a statement.

The program explores the evolution of colour in Indian cinema and its transformative role in shaping visual storytelling and emotional resonance.

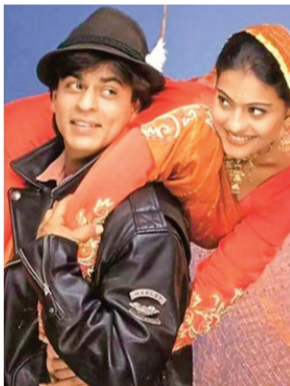
The series aims to emphasize the vast richness and diversity of Indian cinema, spanning decades, regions, languages, and genres. Featured films encapsulate the grandeur of period dramas, the defiant voices of feminist narratives during colonial rule, and the hopes of a



newly independent nation.

The eclectic selection includes celebrated masterpieces such as 'Mother India', 'Manthan', 'Amar Akbar Anthony', 'Ishanou, Kummatty', 'Mirch Masala', 'Devdas', 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge', 'Jodhaa Akbar', 'Kanchenjunga', 'Maya Darpan' and 'Iruvar', each offering a unique lens into Indian cinema's extraordinary relationship with color, culture and storytelling.

Speaking about it, Shivenra Singh Durgapur stated, "In India, color is inextricably woven into the fabric of our culture and artistry, and this is



profoundly evident in our cinema. When the Academy Museum invited me to curate a program of Indian films, I saw a rare opportunity to present the unparalleled diversity and vibrancy of Indian cinema in color to a largely unfamiliar audience."

He added, "Beyond Hindi cinema, India boasts five major film industries - Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Bengali - that collectively produce over 2,000 films annually, alongside a multitude of productions in other languages and dialects from every corner of the country.

BRAIN PICKING



The purpose of an actress is not to just look beautiful and strut around like a peacock but act, too.

— RAVEENA TANDON
(Indian Actress)

'America's Next Top Model' producer David St. John dies at 56

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

'America's Next Top Model' producer David St. John has passed away.

According to Variety, David, who worked on popular reality shows, died on December 19 in Seattle after battling pancreatic cancer. However, his death was only recently announced. He was 56.

He began his career at MTV, where he worked on the show 'Tail Daters'. He started as an assistant and worked his way up to story producer. Later, he became a key part of America's Next Top Model, co-executive producing more than 100 episodes of the hit show.



As per Variety, while remembering John, Drew Tappan, Head of Unscripted Development at the Oprah Winfrey Network, said, "To be in David St. John's orbit meant that you were witness to an astonishingly bright light... all the time. He made everything better. And he made YOU feel better.

Simply put, he just made us all better."

Jazz Jennings's family also shared a statement, calling him more than just a producer. "David was more than just the executive producer of I Am Jazz -- he was family, and we loved him deeply. In our most challenging moments, he lifted our spirits with his warmth, reassured us that everything would be okay, and gave us the strength to share our family's journey. His kindness, infectious laughter, and unwavering belief in our story will forever be woven into the heart and legacy of I Am Jazz and remain a cherished part of our lives," the statement read.

Martin Scorsese's crime drama to star Dwayne Johnson, DiCaprio

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Martin Scorsese-directed crime drama is set to feature Dwayne Johnson, Leonardo DiCaprio and Emily Blunt, reported Deadline.

The untitled film will revolve around the story of a world of organised crime in Hawaii, based on a real-life crime boss who fought



to control the underworld during the 1960s and 70s.

Written by Nick Bilton, the story follows a powerful and ruthless Hawaiian mob leader, similar to Robert De Niro's character in Goodfellas, who battled rival factions and mainland corporations to dominate Hawaii's criminal empire, according to Deadline. The film will depict his rise to

power, his violent struggles, and his fight to protect his ancestral land.

Meanwhile, this also marks another major collaboration between Scorsese and DiCaprio, who have worked together on films like The Departed, Gangs of New York, and Killers of the Flower Moon. Johnson and Blunt are also reuniting after their work on Jungle Cruise.

REVIEW: CONCLAVE *****

CONCLAVE

PRAVEEN NAGDA

Religious leaders and their lives have always caught the attention of the public in general. Much of this comes from the controversies with which they are associated, sometimes arising genuinely from their darker side dealings or sometimes from rivals after getting caught up in the struggle for power. Edward Berger directed Conclave is a compelling narrative

built around the Vatican City and its process of selecting the Pope by the Cardinals from across the world. With an excellent screenplay, powerful dialogues, and commendable acting of the lead characters, the film keeps you spellbound throughout its 1 hour and 58 minutes of screen time.

Set in the Vatican City environment, the film brings alive the systems & processes of the Vatican, the lives & times, and challenges & insecurities of the Cardinals.



The film opens with the death of the current Pope and now Cardinal Thomas Lawrence (Ralph Fiennes) is in charge of organizing the conclave that will decide the next Pope based on the voting in the Cardinals who have come from different parts of the world.

Peter Draughan delivers a strong script with many layers uncovering as the story unfolds. Cardinal Lawrence himself is not keen to become the Pope is also an open-minded person, detached from the old archaic system of Churches. He has to manage the ideological conflicts

between the traditional hardliner Cardinal Goffredo Tedesco (Sergio Castellitto) and a neo-liberal Cardinal Bellini (Stanley Tucci) and others.

As the story develops Cardinal Lawrence tries to strike a balance between the extreme views of various cardinals including the liberals and the conservatives. In the process Lawrence discovers a lot of historical pasts of many including one of the most popular ones running for the Pope's position, the Cardinal Adeyemi (Lucian Msamati) from Africa. In the conclave, there is a high drama during the dinner on

the 2nd day of the conclave where Cardinal Adeyemi is confronted by a Sister, with whom Adeyemi had secretly fathered a child, and this makes him ineligible for becoming the Pope. It's revealed as the layers uncover, that this Sister Shanumi (Balkissa Souley Maiga), was present at the Conclave as her relocation from Nigeria to Vatican City was engineered by Cardinal Tremblay (John Lithgow), who wanted the image of Cardinal Adeyemi to be tarnished, as he was among the frontrunners for the Pope's position.

The climax moves towards

an open-minded and tolerant choice for the Pope, The Archbishop of Kabul in Afghanistan, Cardinal Benitz (Carlos Diehz). Lawrence had earlier inducted him in the candidacy based upon the letter of authority from the earlier Pope, surprising every other Cardinal present at the conclave.

Cardinal Benitz talks of humanity over anything else wins the hearts of all the Cardinals present and makes it to the choice of a new Pope. However, a secret is revealed about him from a Switzerland clinic exploring Laparoscopic Hysterectomy, again rais-

ing the question of whether he will even be eligible to be a Pope or not.

Conclave also takes you through the superb Roman architecture, making you feel its grandness. The film also gets you to experience the corridors of religious power (literally). Stéphane Fontaine, as Director of Photography, is as brilliant with his close ups as he is with large canvas shots in the film. Conclave an interesting watch for the cinema aficionado!

Praveen Nagda is Festival Director of KidzCINEMA and CultureCinema Film Festivals



WHAT IS LOVE



NAMRATA KOHLI

WOMAN WISE

It's the season of love—the month of Valentine's. However, the madness was palpably missing this year on 14 February at least in the capital city for some strange reason. While on my way to attend a fireside chat with Karan Johar at New Delhi's luxury hotel known for its old-world charm (as part of the Indian Chambers of Commerce (ICC) centenary celebrations) I was wondering if the old-world charm of "love" has worn away by the visibly thanda looking Dilli roads. I was still registering the general lack of Valentine's Day fervour, when the host introduced KJo saying- "I want to thank Karan for taking out time even on a Valentine's Day" to which KJo replied in his characteristic witty style - "which, by the way, doesn't speak volumes about my love life." The man who taught the world how to love through his romantic movies said he was happiest being single and skipping marriage for kids- "In my personal life I was smart and skipped that part to the best part of having children. Being single, you have zero baggage, no drama and multiple options, what's not to celebrate?? Happy Valentine's Day".

That set me thinking about the changing concept of love.. and how there is almost a "love churn" in our society.

Today, self-love is prioritized before romantic love. People believe in healing, setting boundaries, and leaving toxic relationships instead of staying out of obligation. And relationships are more fluid—people recognize that not all love lasts

forever, leading to an increase in breakups, divorces, and second marriages. Concepts like situationships, open relationships, and conscious uncoupling are becoming mainstream.

Earlier in traditional societies, love was secondary to marriage, which was based on family, duty, and social status. Arranged marriages and societal expectations dictated relationships. But from duty to choice, love is now about personal fulfilment, emotional

connection, and compatibility. People prioritize self-growth and happiness in relationships, often leading to delayed marriages or non-traditional partnerships. Why is it that people are not getting married easily? They are taking time to figure out their love, their life, their partner.

Earlier love was tied to commitment, ownership, and exclusivity. Jealousy and being possessive were often seen as a sign of love. It was about finding the one

to "complete" you. Sacrifice was seen as proof of love. Women often lost themselves in relationships. Now women want a love that complements, not completes them.

Love in 2025 certainly goes beyond traditional roles. Earlier relationships followed rigid gender expectations—men were providers, women were nurturers. But today, love is a choice, not compulsion.

So what kind of love is today's woman seeking?

The modern woman's expectations from love and relationships have evolved significantly. Unlike previous generations, where love was often linked to security, duty, or societal norms, today's woman seeks partnership, growth, and emotional fulfilment. Today's woman seeks a love that liberates, not restricts. She desires a

partner, not an authority. Support, respect, and emotional depth matter more than labels and societal expectations. A love that feels like freedom, not a cage.

Earlier, a woman was expected to prioritize her relationship over her career and ambitions. But today's woman seeks love that allows her to thrive profes-

Love in 2025 certainly goes beyond traditional roles. Earlier relationships followed rigid gender expectations—men were providers, women were nurturers. But today, love is a choice, not compulsion.

sionally, personally, emotionally. She wants someone supportive of her career, respects her space and individuality and encourages personal growth. A relationship where both partners cheer for each other's success rather than competing or controlling. So, a love that allows you to blossom into a better human being in every whichever way— that's what today's woman wants.

A modern woman prioritizes mental health over staying in a draining relationship just for the sake of love. A woman today would rather be single and happy than trapped in a forced relationship.

Also commitment to one partner does not mean divorce from other relationships. A good romantic relationship allows you to

thrive in all your other ones as well. Then, be it your girlfriends, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and of course parents and siblings. Like they say, it takes a village to complete a person. Your life is your life and your relations are your relations and your partner is not expected to be present on all occasions and pretend that he is enjoying even though he may be sulking inside. Romance is about letting your partner be the best version of herself and be the wind below her wings.

Love is no longer one-size-fits-all. The idea of love may keep evolving in every decade of your relationship. But what should not change is mutual care, understanding and the bond of friendship that you share with your partner.



SHIVRATRI MATTERS TO THE WHOLE WORLD



B.K. SURYA

In Indian mythology, night is associated with several divine figures, including Shiva (Mahashivratri), Brahma (Brahma's day and night), and the goddesses worshipped during the Navratri festival. Mahashivratri, which will be celebrated on February 26 this year, is the most significant of these nights as it commemorates the divine incarnation of God Shiva.

Among all the members of the Hindu pantheon, Shiva is referred to as the Supreme Soul, while the others are called deities. This is reflected in the prayer, 'Brahma decaya namah, Vishnu decaya

namah...' (Salutations to the deities Brahma and Vishnu). Shiva, on the other hand, is referred to as the Supreme Soul, as in the prayer, 'Shiv paramatmane namah'. Sanyasis and spiritual seekers say 'Shivoham' (I am Shiva) to affirm the idea of the self being one with the divine; they do not refer to any of the deities to make this affirmation.

The deities are the highest creations of God and are worshipped alongside Him by virtue of their divine qualities, but they take birth in the corporeal world while God never does so, since He is beyond the cycle of birth and death. For this reason, Shiva is depicted in the incorporeal form of the lingam, unlike the deities, who are worshipped in the form of idols.

Shiva and Shankar are separate entities. Shankar is a deity shown in human form, often seated in a meditative state, with a Shivaling before him. He is one of the creations of the Creator, God Shiva. Notably, Shivratri is never called Shankar-ratri,



The light of spiritual knowledge imparted by God Shiva dispels the darkness of ignorance that prevails in the world.

because Shiva and Shankar are two different figures.

God Shiva incarnates Himself in this world when it is enveloped in the darkness of evil and ignorance, when unrighteousness prevails, to re-establish a righteous world order. He

does this by reawakening human souls to their true identity - that they are immortal souls, not perishable bodies - and their filial bond with Him. He teaches them Rajyoga meditation - loving remembrance by which they can connect with Him

mentally, draw His powers, become whole and healthy again, and overcome their weaknesses.

The light of spiritual knowledge imparted by God dispels the darkness of ignorance that prevails in the world. Self-realisation,

the renewed connection with God, and rediscovery of their virtues and powers transforms the thinking, outlook, and behaviour of souls. This change of consciousness is the basis of turning Brahma's night, which is another name for

Kaliyug, or the Iron Age, when the world is akin to hell, into Brahma's day or Satyug, the Golden Age,

thinking and behaviour are discarded and replaced by an enlightened world view, leading to the eventual dawn

God Shiva incarnates Himself in this world when it is enveloped in the darkness of evil and ignorance, when unrighteousness prevails, to re-establish a righteous world order. He does this by reawakening human souls to their true identity - that they are immortal souls, not perishable bodies - and their filial bond with Him.

which is remembered in various religious traditions as paradise, or heaven.

When a critical number of souls recognise the truth of their spiritual identity and begin to live according to God's teachings, the world begins to change, whereby selfish and harmful ways of

of the Golden Age. In this process of change, all souls are liberated from their sorrows. Shivratri thus holds meaning for people of all faiths across the world.

B.K. Surya is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Mount Abu, Rajasthan.

Nurturing self-compassion



SARAH EAGGER

"When the sunshine of loving kindness meets the tears of suffering, the rainbow of compassion arises"
- A Myanmar saying

Learning to be kind to oneself is a very deep and important aspect of our spiritual journey. We often feel not good enough, not loveable, or end up always trying to please others, so treating the self with compassion is vital. Being kind to oneself encompasses the vital energy of healing and is an intrinsic part of spiritual growth. Once we understand the dynamics and importance of self-compassion,

it makes us stronger, more independent, and opens our hearts.

"Know yourself" is a philosophical maxim inscribed on the Temple of Apollo in the ancient Greek precinct of Delphi, and it holds a profound spiritual truth. When I deeply realise that I am a spiritual being and not the physical body I inhabit, I become aware that the core energy of my being is love. I realise, I am love; I have love within me. It is part of my core identity, my spiritual DNA.

The word compassion means 'to suffer with'. It is not that we suffer with others, because it is much more complex than that, but it is about our relationship with suffering and pain and sorrow and how we relate to those moments in life, which we all encounter.

Paul Gilbert, a British clinical psychologist, defines compassion as the...

"Deep awareness of the suffering of oneself and other living beings coupled



Compassion is a powerful energy—something we can all give to others and to ourselves.

with the wish and effort to alleviate it".

Compassion is a powerful energy, and it is something we can all give to others and to ourselves. Compassion includes:

Attending - paying attention to the other - **noticing**

Understanding - having an empathic response to the distress of others

Empathising - taking a thoughtful and appropriate action to help relieve the suffering of another (Atkins and Parker 2012)

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE ACTIVELY KIND TO ONESELF?

"For someone to develop genuine compassion towards others, first they

must have a basis upon which to cultivate compassion - that basis is the ability to connect to one's own feelings and to care for one's own welfare... caring for others requires caring for oneself."

The Dalai Lama, 2012
However, being kind to oneself is something most of us are not very good at. Kristen Neff is an

associate professor in the department of Educational Psychology, at the University of Texas, Austin, USA. She says that there are three components to self-compassion:

1. Mindfulness - 'notice' - we have to know where it hurts to be able to respond to our self. We have to feel it so we can heal it.

2. Common humanity - We are not alone. There are eight billion of us on the planet, so the chances are we are sharing the same feelings as billions of others at any given moment.

3. Self-kindness - Treat ourselves as we would a dear friend - holding a hand, softening the tone of the voice, taking care with the words we speak. All of this requires courage and wisdom.

One of the reasons that most of us are not very good at self-compassion is that many of us spend most of our time feeling angry, stressed, and anxious. We are out of balance, and are releasing too much

adrenaline (response to fear) or dopamine (addicted to 'doing') into our bodies. We need to spend more time in a safe, connected space where we release more oxytocin and endorphins, the hormones of love and calmness. This is why meditation is a way of bringing ourselves back into balance. In meditation, we connect with our real self, the soul, and to the higher Universal Source of love and peace. In so doing, we trigger, via our thoughts and feelings, the physiological response of calmness and kindness - the compassionate response. When we practise self-compassion, we are authentically reflecting our true spiritual nature of love and peace.

Dr. Sarah Egger, a long-time practitioner of Rajyoga, is Chair of the Janki Foundation and a retired consultant psychiatrist formerly at Imperial College, London. Her book, 'Stillness in the Storm - 7 tools for coping with fear and uncertainty', was published recently.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Feelings and thoughts have their roots in past experiences. Frightening things have happened to each of us. When frightening events happen in the world, these old fears are activated in the me. They burst into the screening room of my mind, overriding self-control. I have also experienced compassion, love, and safety. Throughout the day, when I see living examples of these qualities they feed the compassion that dwells eternally in my heart. Today let me activate my positive qualities to face and conquer fear.

Building one global family



B.K. GEETA

Often when there is talk of world peace and unity, it is said that humanity is one big family sharing a common abode, planet Earth. Similarities in culture, values, feelings, and aspirations are cited to highlight the commonalities among all people. Similarly, the rich diversity in culture, traditions, and even the physical appearance of people from different countries is celebrated during international events such as the Olympic Games and youth festivals. However, the bonhomie witnessed during such events has not stopped conflicts based on differences of religion, nationality, and ideology around the world.

Feel-good slogans and talk do not bring people closer together. Even institutionalized measures to remove barriers among nations and foster integration do not erase the feeling of 'us' and 'them', which is at the root of a lot of ill will among people from different backgrounds.

The fundamental reason for such divides is people's lack of awareness of their true relationship with their fellow humans, which in turn is the result of ignorance of their spiritual identity.

Most of us have heard or read that we are souls. But this piece of information remains just that, and it is mostly relegated to the back of the mind. Very few people are conscious of this fact while going about their daily lives, and fewer still make the effort to think, speak, and act with this awareness all the time.

What difference does it make, one might ask. It makes all the difference.



Universal peace can be realised only when we recognise our spiritual identity and relate to each other as brother souls.

The soul is a tiny, sentient point of light that is the source of life in a living being. It is when a soul takes birth in a human body that it comes to be called a human being. Though it resides in a perishable body, the soul is imperishable. It cannot be destroyed and it does not die. The soul has

no nationality, race, caste, or gender. It acquires these labels according to the circumstances of its birth and its later life. Peace is the eternal religion of all souls, and their eternal relationship is that of brotherhood, in a spiritual family. Purity, love, and happiness are the soul's innate qualities.

But most of us have forgotten our spiritual identity, qualities, and mutual relationship. Instead we identify each other by the labels we have created: of gender, nationality, religion, and more. The result is feelings of mistrust, fear, rejection, and hostility towards the 'others' who do

not have the same labels as 'us'.

National boundaries and social divisions are the creation of these feelings, which cause people with the same labels to band together to protect what they see as common interests. Most conflicts in the world can be traced to these negative

feelings. Peace talks between people who harbour hatred and suspicion for each other may produce a political compromise and cessation of hostilities, but they cannot build a happy future for those involved as long as they carry poison in their minds for each other.

Universal peace, happiness, and prosperity can be realised only when all people recognise their spiritual identity and relate to each other on that basis. When we see each other as brother souls, as children of one Father, the Supreme Soul, our feelings for others are kinder and more amenable. At the same time, knowing that each soul has a unique role helps us appreciate differences of opinion, inclination, and lifestyle. When we interact with others with this knowledge, we are able to create harmonious relationships where everyone can express their unique qualities and is accepted and respected unconditionally.

Such an enlightened way of life is not a fantasy - it is the reality in spiritual communities where people from different backgrounds engage in learning that fosters respect for all souls. They practise Rajyoga meditation, which helps them rediscover and use the positive qualities latent within them and enables them to develop strength of character and create new attitudes and responses to life.

Such transformed individuals are in turn bringing positive change in communities across the world, by helping people to overcome damaging habits of thought, feeling, and reaction, and create a better life for themselves. This silent, inconspicuous process is the only way we can build a world of lasting peace and happiness, fulfilling the deepest yearning of every soul.

B.K. Geeta is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Abu Road, Rajasthan.

CHAMPIONS TROPHY: SOUTH AFRICA BEAT AFGHANISTAN BY 107 RUNS

Afghanistan fails to chase formidable 316 runs put up by Proteas with Ricketlon's maiden ton

AGENCIES
KARACHI

A fighting knock by Rahmat Shah could not eclipse Ryan Ricketlon's century and a fine effort from South African pacers as Afghanistan went down to Proteas in their ICC Champions Trophy opener at Karachi on Friday.

Chasing 316 runs, Afghanistan lost wickets at regular intervals. However, Rahmat kept fighting, trying to reduce the gap of defeat to the shortest margin possible and perhaps pull off a miracle. However, SA was too good and Afghanistan succumbed to a 107-run loss.

In the run-chase of 316 runs, Afghanistan was dealt a massive blow when the opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz (10), their most consistent batter, was removed by Lungi Ngidi just after conceding a boundary. A top-edge landed into Keshav Maharaj's hands at short fine



South Africa's Ryan Ricketlon celebrates after reaching his century during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 - Group B match against Afghanistan, at National Stadium in Karachi on Friday. ANI

BRIEF SCORES

South Africa: 315/6 in 50 overs (Ryan Ricketlon 103, Temba Bavuma 58, Mohammad Nabi 2/51) vs **Afghanistan:** 208/10: (Rahmat Shah 90, Rashid Khan 18, Kagiso Rabada 3/36).

leg. Afghanistan was 16/1 in 3.2 overs.

Kagiso Rabada laid Ibrahim Zadran's (16) middle

stump flat, removing both openers at a score of 38 in 9.4 overs.

Sediqullah Atal and skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi could not rebuild for Afghanistan, getting dismissed by the time the score hit 50

in 14.4 overs.

Azmatullah Omarzai and Rahmat Shah gave Afghanistan a temporary moment of relief, finding some boundaries. However, their 39-run stand ended with Omarzai getting caught behind by Ricketlon on a Rabada delivery for 18 in 27 balls, with three fours. Afghanistan lost half their team for 89 runs in 23 overs.

Afghanistan reached the 100-run mark in 25.1 overs.

All-rounder Mohammed Nabi was the sixth wicket to fall, with Afghans failing to stitch yet another big stand. Marco Jansen left the veteran for eight and left Afghans at 120/6 in 29 overs.

Gulbadin Naib joined Rahmat and found some boundaries against Jansen.

Rahmat reached his half-century in 62 balls, with four boundaries. However, he found himself running out of partners, with Ngidi cleaning Gulbadin for 13 in 19 balls, with two fours.

Ganguly backs Gambhir for picking Rahul before Pant



AGENCIES
KOLKATA

Former captain Sourav Ganguly believes KL Rahul's "fantastic" statistics in ODIs could be the underlying reason behind head coach Gautam Gambhir preferring him over the explosive wicketkeeper batter Rishabh Pant in India's Champions Trophy playing XI.

The foreshadowing of Rahul keeping the wickets ahead of Pant was all over the place during India's 3-0 series triumph over England at home. After India took an unassailable 2-0 lead, reports flooded social media, suggesting that Pant would take over Rahul's duties for the final clash before the Champions Trophy.

However, the reports from the rumour mill turned out to be untrue when India's playing XI confirmed Rahul had retained his spot.

The decision to bench Pant before the Champions Trophy led the fan base divided.

The versatile batter continued to don the gloves for the Men in Blue in the Champions Trophy campaign opener against Bangladesh.

Rahul continued his red-hot form with a composed 41* from 47 deliveries, laced with a sole four and two towering maximums as India sailed to a comfortable six-wicket victory.

Ganguly weighed in on India management's decision to back Rahul ahead of Pant. According to him, Rahul's searing form in the format could be the reason behind his selection.

"India is such a strong side in batting. Rishabh Pant is very good, and KL Rahul is very good. KL Rahul's numbers on One Day are fantastic. So, I think that is why Gautam Gambhir has gone with KL Rahul. There is very little to choose from

because both are exceptional," Ganguly said during an event in Kolkata.

In 81 matches, Rahul has garnered 2,944 runs, averaging 48.26 while striking at 87.74, including seven centuries and 18 fifties. On the other hand, Pant, in 31 matches, has 871 runs to his name, at an average of 33.50, at a strike rate of 106.2, featuring a sole century and five fifties. Given Rahul's experience in the format and his staggering record against Pakistan, he could be the top contender for Sunday's high-voltage clash against the defending champions.

In three appearances against India's bitter rival, Rahul has amassed 187 runs at a stunning average of 187.00 while striking at 87.79. Apart from the wicket-keeping conundrum, India has been waiting for its stalwart Virat Kohli to find his rich vein of form.

Team with better balance will have edge: Inzamam

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Former captain Inzamam-ul-Haq weighed in on the factors that could influence the outcome of the blockbuster Champions Trophy clash between India and Pakistan.

A new chapter of the fierce rivalry between India and Pakistan will unfold in Dubai on Sunday. The pressure will be high, especially after the defending champions, Pakistan, faced a 60-run defeat against New Zealand in Karachi.

With Pakistan facing a do-or-die situation and the



pressure of high-stakes rivalry, their encounter on Sunday promises to be a gripping and nerve-racking affair.

"There is always pressure. When you play just one match a year, that pressure is amplified. Nowadays,

with so much cricket being broadcast, players watch each other closely. Earlier, we approached it as a team game; whichever team had the better balance had the upper hand," Inzamam said on a special episode of JioHotstar.

Inzamam admitted that India has had a far stronger squad in recent years than Pakistan. The former batting maestro believes that India's possessing quality all-rounders like Ravindra Jadeja and Hardik Pandya can make a huge difference in such high-profile games.

"India has had a strong team in recent years, especially with all-rounders like Ravindra Jadeja and Hardik Pandya providing balance in the lower order. In subcontinent conditions, having such players makes a huge difference. Even now, the team with better balance will have the edge," he added.

Shahid Afridi reminisced about the days when he used to play against India in some of the jaw-dropping matches.

"For a cricketer, an India-Pakistan match is a golden opportunity, especially for youngsters. It was always my dream. Before a match, I couldn't sleep at night—I would think about my performance and how I couldn't afford to miss this chance. Even if I hadn't performed in the last five or six matches, if I did well in an India-Pakistan game, everything would be forgiven. That's how big this rivalry is," Shahid said.

Watson backs Maxwell to shine in ICC Champions Trophy for Australia

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE

Ahead of his nation's campaign opener in the ICC Champions Trophy against arch-rivals England, former Australian all-rounder Shane Watson has backed experienced all-rounder Glenn Maxwell to shine in his team's success at the tournament.

Australia's ICC Champions Trophy campaign will kickstart on Saturday at Lahore against arch-rivals England, followed by matches against South Africa (February 25) at Rawalpindi and Afghanistan (February 28) at Lahore.

Maxwell might be 36 years old and boast more than 250 international caps across three formats, but his form in the Big Bash - where he was one of two Players of the Series - has convinced Watson his best cricket is still to come. During the tournament, Maxwell had made 325 runs in nine matches at an average

of 54.16 and a strike rate of 186.78, with three fifties and also took a wicket.

However, his recent international outings do not inspire much confidence, despite the inconsistencies that are natural with his role as an attacking all-rounder. In the last seven innings and eight matches, he has only scored 56 runs and taken five wickets. One of Australia's biggest match-winners remains in the "bust" phase of his "boom-or-bust" batting.

Australia head to Pakistan as the reigning world champions in the 50-over format and sit second in the men's ODI team rankings.

But with just one win from their last five ODI matches and key bowlers Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc all missing from the squad - questions have been raised about

their ability to claim the trophy in Pakistan.

However, Watson, the two-time ICC Men's Champions Trophy winner and one of four Event Ambassadors for the 2025 edition, insists they will be a tough team to beat, especially if their explosive all-rounder fires.

India will play well: Ganguly on India's CT 2025 campaign



TDG NETWORK
BARDHAMAN

Former India cricket team captain and ex-BCCI chief Sourav Ganguly expressed confidence in India's performance in the ICC Champions Trophy, stating that the team will play well.

"India will play well (in Champions Trophy)," Ganguly told reporters. India started their Champions Trophy campaign on a strong note with a six-wicket victory against Bangladesh.

Electing to bat first, Bangladesh top order imploded and was at 35/5, until a 154 run stand between Towhid Hridoy (100 in 117 balls, with six fours and two sixes) and Jaker Ali (68 in 114 balls, with four fours) powered them to a decent 228/10.

In the run chase, India had a fine 69-run opening stand with skipper Rohit (41 in 36 balls, with seven fours) leading the way. India stumbled to 144/4 and from there, Shubman Gill (101* in 129

balls, with nine fours and two sixes) and KL Rahul (41* in 47 balls, with a four and two sixes) sealed the game for India. Gill won the 'Player of the Match' award.

Ganguly, who played 113 Tests and 311 ODIs for India, was one of the most influential left-handed batters in Indian cricket history. He amassed 18,575 runs across all formats in his international career. Known as the 'Prince of Kolkata,' he later took on administrative roles, first becoming the president of the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) and subsequently the president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

During his tenure as captain, Ganguly led India to 21 Test victories and guided the team to the final of the 2003 ICC Cricket World Cup. His contributions extended beyond the field, as he also served on BCCI's technical committee and was a member of the Cricket Advisory Committee.

Difficult after you make a comeback: Shami after fifer against B'desh

AGENCIES
DUBAI

Following his match-winning five wicket haul against Bangladesh in the ICC Champions Trophy opener, Indian pacer Mohammed Shami opened up on his comeback to international set-up after more than a year.

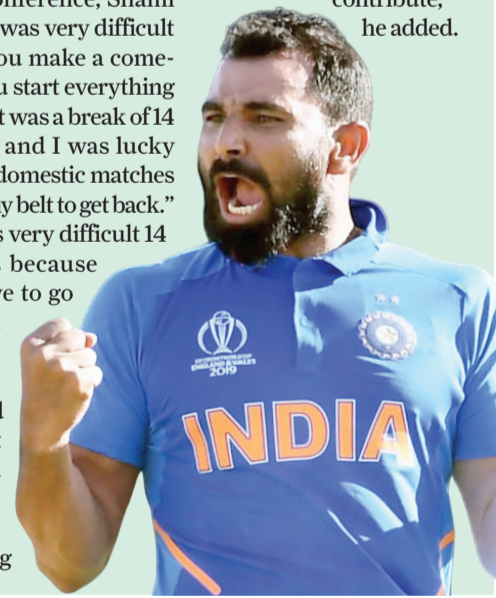
After some white-ball games against England, Shami was visible during the CT campaign opener as he picked figures of 5/53 and completed 200 ODI scalps. This comeback came after a toil in domestic cricket across all formats for Bengal in the Ranji, Syed Mushtaq Ali

and Vijay Hazare Trophy tournaments.

During the post-match press conference, Shami said, "It was very difficult when you make a comeback you start everything afresh. It was a break of 14 months and I was lucky to have domestic matches under my belt to get back."

"It was very difficult 14 months because you have to go through the entire process and it is not easy. In close matches sitting

at home you miss being with your team and feel like I wish I was there to contribute," he added.



Kerala, Vidarbha to meet for title clash in Ranji Trophy

TDG NETWORK
AHMEDABAD

Kerala made history in Ahmedabad, securing their first-ever appearance in the Ranji Trophy finals after a win on the basis of first innings lead against Gujarat on Friday. On the other hand, Vidarbha outclassed defending champions Mumbai to secure an 80-run win in Nagpur.

For Kerala, this run till the Ranji final has been a dream run achieved by the barest of margins. Kerala made it to the semifinals because they had an extremely narrow but difference-making one-run lead over Jammu and Kashmir that helped them move ahead despite the drawn match.

In the semifinals, on the final day of the match against Gujarat, they kept their first innings lead intact by two runs before drawing the match.

Coming to Kerala's match at Nagpur, they had won the toss and opted to bat first. Having lost half their side for 206 runs despite skipper Sachin Baby (69 in 195 balls, with eight fours) half-century, a memorable century from Mohammed Azharuddeen (177* in 341



Vidarbha's players celebrate after winning the Ranji Trophy Semi-Final 2 against Mumbai by 80 runs, at VCA stadium in Nagpur on Friday. ANI

balls, with 20 fours and a six) and a half-century by Salman Nizar (52 in 202 balls, with four boundaries and a six) took them to 457 runs, with a 149-run stand between Nizar and Azharuddeen putting Kerala

ahead.

Arzan Nagwaswalla (3/81) and Chintan Gaja (2/75) were the pick of the bowlers for Gujarat.

Gujarat responded well, with experienced batter Priyank Panchal (148 in 237 balls, with 18 fours and a six) putting his team along with important contributions from Jaymeeth Patel (79 in 177 balls, with two fours) and Aarya Desai (73 in 118 balls, with 11 fours and a six). However, on the final day, the equation went down to Kerala needing a wicket and Gujarat needing three runs to take the lead. Arzan's catch went into skipper Sachin's hands, giving Aditya Sarwate (4/111) the prized wicket that sealed Kerala's spot in the final.

Later, Kerala ended the match at 114/4, with Jalaj Saxena (37* in 90 balls,

with seven fours) and Ahammed Imran (14*) staying unbeaten. Kerala managed to win the match because of their first innings lead.

Shifting the action to Nagpur, featuring a star-studded Mumbai, Vidarbha won the toss and elected to bat first. The fifties from Dhruv Shorey (74 in 109 balls, with nine fours), Danish Malewar (79 in 157 balls, with seven fours and a six) and Yash Rathod (54 in 113 balls, with six fours) took Vidarbha to 383, with Shivam Dube's figures of 5/49 standing out among bowlers.