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JAISHANKAR, RIJJU DEBUNK RAHUL'S REMARKS IN LOK SABHA

■ Rahul's lies damage the nation abroad: External Affairs Minister
■ LoP cannot make such unsubstantial statement: Kiren Rijju



TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday rejected the allegation made by Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi in Parliament that he was "sent to get an invite for our Prime Minister Narendra Modi" for Donald Trump's inauguration as US President.



Jaishankar said that Rahul Gandhi's lies damage India at an international level. "At no stage was an invitation in respect of the PM discussed. It is common knowledge that our PM does not attend such events. In fact, India is generally represented by Special Envoys," the minister said. Jaishankar further said that, "Rahul Gandhi's lies may be intended politically. But they damage the nation abroad."

'Make in India' has failed to revive production: Rahul

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Noting that production is the foundation of India's national security and is key to job creation, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged that the Modi government's 'Make In India' initiative has failed to revive it and share of manufacturing in GDP has come down from 15.3 per cent of GDP in 2014 to 12.6 per cent, which is lowest in the past 60 years.



Lok Sabha LoP and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi speaks in the House during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

working on batteries, robots, motors, and optics for the last ten years, and it has at least a ten-year lead on India in this space. "As the world stands on the brink of a technological and economic revolution, India needs a new vision for growth, production, and participation--one that directly addresses our two biggest challenges: the job crisis and the lack of opportunity for 90 per cent of Indians," Gandhi posted on X later.

IMA, Haryana resolve Ayushman Bharat row, services to continue

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

Following the intervention of Haryana chief minister Nayab Singh Saini, the long-standing dispute between the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Haryana government over delayed payments under the Ayushman Bharat scheme has been resolved after a meeting between the two sides.



Haryana threatened to withdraw from Ayushman Bharat from February 3, citing unpaid dues amounting to Rs 450 crore. The IMA had raised concerns over repeated delays and had accused the government of reimbursing only 10-15% of the claims, causing financial distress to hospitals treating poor patients for free.

has released Rs 195 crore in pending claims since January 1 and officials have assured that payments for claims submitted until March 10 will be processed by March 31. Furthermore, a separate budget of Rs 2,500 crore will be allocated in advance for the next financial year to ensure smoother operations under Ayushman Bharat.

Naidu meets 16th Finance Commission chairman

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav met the Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission, Arvind Panagariya, in Delhi on Saturday.

No proposal to increase working hours: Govt

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The government on Monday told Parliament that it is not considering any proposal to increase the maximum working hours to 70 or 90 hours a week.



Labour & Employment Minister Shobha Karandlaje in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

Ex-soldier shot dead by terrorists in J&K

AGENCIES
KULGAM (JAMMU & KASHMIR)

An ex-serviceman was shot dead by terrorists in Behibagh area of south Kashmir's Kulgam on Monday, Army said.

Firing at Moosewala's close aide's house

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

Two unidentified assailants opened fire at the residence of Pragat Singh, a close aide of the late singer Sidhu Moosewala, late Sunday night. The attackers, who arrived on a motorcycle, fired two shots before fleeing.

Rahul firm on no Cong support to AAP in case of hung House

RASHEED KIDWAI
NEW DELHI

The Congress in Delhi assembly polls has reportedly decided not to support the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Admi Party, should the February 8 verdict throw up a hung House in the national capital.

Rahul tells party leadership that he would not subject himself to "ridicule" by extending support to AAP after accusing them of corruption, misgovernance and involvement in an alleged liquor scam.

BJP MPs move privilege notice against Sonia

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

A group of BJP MPs from the tribal community moved a breach of privilege notice on Monday against Congress parliamentary party leader Sonia Gandhi for using "derogatory and slanderous" words against President Droupadi Murmu.



Parliament complex. "The poor lady, the President, was getting very tired by the end...she could hardly speak, poor thing," Sonia was heard saying in a video doing rounds on social media.

On Monday, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju said the Rajya Sabha chairman gave a patient hearing to the BJP MPs, took serious cognizance (of their grievance). "Sonia Gandhi used English words like poor lady and tired which means 'bechari' and 'thaki hui' in Hindi if you translate," Rijju told reporters.

USAID set to be shut: Musk

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

The US Agency for International Development is on the cusp of being shuttered, according to the Trump administration's billionaire adviser and Tesla CEO Elon Musk

who has been wrestling for control of the agency in recent days. Early Monday, Musk held a joint session on X Spaces, previously known as Twitter Spaces, and said that he spoke in detail about USAID with the president.

"He agreed we should shut it down," Musk said. In a post on X, Musk wrote, "USAID is a criminal organization. Time for it to die."



Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Edward visits the century-old CSMVS, in Mumbai on Sunday. ANI

Rupee hits record low of 87.29

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Indian rupee fell to a record low of 87.29 per dollar on Monday, weighed down by concerns over trade tariffs imposed by US President

Donald Trump and global market uncertainties. The rupee has already depreciated more than 1.5 per cent this year, and the latest decline is seen as a reaction to tariff measures imposed by the US government.

The rupee opened with a sharp gap-down of 43 paise and touched a low of 87.29 before recovering slightly to 87.13 following the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) intervention.

WHO SAID WHAT
IN PARLIAMENT

NO DECLINE IN UGC
GRANTS RELEASED
TO DU :

NEW DELHI: NEW DELHI: There has been no decline in UGC grants released to Delhi University in last five years, the Ministry of Education informed Lok Sabha on Monday. Responding to a written question in the Lower House, Minister of State for Education, Sukanta Majumdar said, the Ministry releases block grant to University Grants Commission (UGC) under the scheme "Grants to Central Universities".

CENTRAL
SCHEMES NOT
DELIVERING
RESULTS'

NEW DELHI: Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant on Monday said government schemes are not delivering positive results, saying there is always a gap between the Centre's words and deeds. "Pakka ghar, har ghar ja...kahan hai, kab hoga? (where are the pucca houses and water connection for all, when will it happen?)," Sawant said criticising the PM Awas Yojana and Jal Jeevan Mission during the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in Lok Sabha. "There is always a lot of difference between the government's words and deeds," the MP from Mumbai (South) said. Haryana.

LOK SABHA GETS
RS 903 CRORE,
RAJYA SABHA RS
413 CRORE

NEW DELHI: Lok Sabha has been allocated Rs 903 crore in the Union Budget, more than double the amount given to the Rajya Sabha. A sizeable allocation -- Rs 558.81 crore of the total Rs 903 crore -- has been assigned to the Lok Sabha Secretariat, which also includes Grants in Aid to the Sansad TV. Of the Rs 413 crore allocated to Rajya Sabha, Rs 2.52 crore have been assigned for salaries and allowances of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman in the Rajya Sabha Secretariat. "This is my estimate and if this is not right, you [government] should tell what is the truth," Mr Kharge said. "I did not say 'thousands' to blame anyone. But how many people died, give that information at least. I will apologise if I am wrong."

BILL SEEKING
TO SET UP CO-
OPERATIVE
UNIVERSITY
INTRODUCED IN
LOK SABHA

NEW DELHI: Seeking to create a qualified manpower for co-operative societies, the government on Monday introduced the Tribhuvan Sakkari University Bill in the Lok Sabha. According to the Bill, introduced by Minister of State of Cooperation Krishan Pal, the present education and training infrastructure in the co-operative sector is "fragmented and grossly inadequate" to meet the present and future demand for qualified manpower and capacity building of existing employees in co-operative societies.

MAHA KUMBH STAMPEDE: OPPOSITION
DEMANDS 'ACCOUNTABILITY'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

To mark the protest against the Uttar Pradesh government over the Mahakumbh stampede incident, opposition MPs from the Rajya Sabha raised slogans and walked out of the House for some time.

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP Manoj Jha demanded accountability from the government and said that the incident is a matter of concern and the entire country is worried about the loss of lives in the incident. "The matter of concern is that the entire country is worried about the people who have lost their lives...Kumbh used to take place even before them and Kumbh will take place even after them. Kumbh is a thing of continuity but political party is not...People want accountability...This should be discussed in the House," Jha told reporters.

Congress MP Pramod Tiwari



ashtriya Janata Dal MP Manoj Jha speaks in Rajya Sabha during the discussion on the 'Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India' in the ongoing Winter Session of the Parliament, in New Delhi on Tuesday. (ANI)



Congress MP Pramod Tiwari speaks in Rajya Sabha during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI)



Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Ram Gopal Yadav speaks in Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Thursday. (ANI)

questioned why the government is not releasing the list of 30 persons who were killed in the incident.

"...We walked out of the House for an hour. We will go back again and raise this issue. We are getting calls, people are crying, they are not able to meet their families. We want to know why the list of the 30 deceased persons has not been released...Our notices are being rejected continuously and the reason for it is also not known..." Tiwari said. Samajwadi Party MP Ram Gopal Yadav blamed the government

stating that the incident took place because of the mismanagement of the administration. "...The incident took place because of the mismanagement of the administration. The eye-witnesses say that thousands were killed in the stampede... Families are not getting bodies, no action has been taken against the officials...We have given notices here but they have been rejected..." As the ruckus was erupted in the Lok Sabha also, Congress Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi claimed that the government is trying to "hide" the answers and the

incident is a very serious subject to investigation.

Gogoi said, "Today the opposition demanded only one thing, that the government answer on the atrocities committed with the tourists and death of people at Maha Kumbh... The government is trying to hide the answers... The topic of Maha Kumbh is very serious and should be subjected to investigation and lapses by the Uttar Pradesh government should be revealed... We gave motion in urgent, but the speaker neglected it..." A political uproar erupted in both

the Lower House and Upper House of the Parliament disrupting the proceedings on the second day of the Budget Session.

Opposition MPs were continuously raising slogans against the government over the issue of the Mahakumbh stampede incident.

Slamming the opposition members, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said, "People of India elected you as MPs not for breaking tables, for sloganeering and disturbing House proceedings, but to hold discussions."

AAP has
turned Delhi
into 'dirty
slum': BJP

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

BJP Rajya Sabha member Kiran Choudhry on Monday accused AAP of turning Delhi into a "dirty slum", saying it was making excuses and blaming others for the bad state of affairs in the national capital.

Initiating the discussion on the motion of thanks on the President's address in the Rajya Sabha, Choudhry said AAP has lost the faith of the people of Delhi.

Without naming former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, she tore into AAP leaders for using "condemnable terms" like "water terrorism, genocide, poison in Yamuna being supplied to Delhi and equating it with the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki" during the campaign for Delhi assembly elections.

They seem to have "lost their senses" and are making these statements when they have realised that after ten years, the people of Delhi are fed up with them for their non-performance.

Alleging that the AAP government did not take up any developmental work in Delhi, Choudhry said they have not fulfilled the promises that they made to the people of Delhi, and it is shameful.

"Today, the condition of Delhi has gone from worse to the worst. The state of Delhi, the national Capital, is like that of a dirty slum," she claimed.

Further, she said that for the namesake, Delhi is the capital of the country, and the world only sees Lutyens' Delhi but a visit to the interior streets, outskirts and small colonies of Delhi presents the reality of Delhi, which is full of "dirty drainages, overflowing garbage dumps, overflowing sewers, and pol-



luted and stinking drinking water".

"They should also go there and see what is the condition of Delhi. They will hang their heads in shame," she asserted.

Termining the condition of the present Yamuna river a "cesspool of absolute dirt, toxic element" that the people of Delhi are made to drink, she asked AAP where has the Rs 6,000 crore that was supposed to be used in the cleaning of the Yamuna been used?

Delhi, under the AAP government, has the highest loss of processed water to the tune of 40-50 per cent. Nothing can be more shameful than this, she added.

Asserting that Haryana supplies pure drinking water to Delhi through an uninterrupted canal network with no room for contamination, Choudhry said, "I challenge the AAP leader to confirm if this is right or wrong".

Seconding the discussion, BJP member Neeraj Shekhar, without naming Kejriwal, wondered can a former CM make such statements that Haryana is sending poisonous water to Delhi.

He also asked the former CM to worry about his own future and not worry or comment about the future of the chief election commissioner, who would be retiring soon.

Om Birla welcomes Russian
parliamentary delegation led by
Vyacheslav Volodin in Lok Sabha



TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday extended a warm welcome to the Russian parliamentary delegation led by the Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly, Vyacheslav Volodin, to witness the proceedings of the Lower House.

The delegation is in India

as part of a significant visit aimed at strengthening India-Russia relations.

While addressing the Lok Sabha, Om Birla expressed his pleasure in welcoming the distinguished delegation, saying, "I am very pleased to inform all of you that in our distinguished box of honour, the Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Vyacheslav Volodin, is present.

Opposition MPs protest expunction
of dissent notes on Waqf Bill report

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Opposition Members of Parliament Kalyan Banerjee (Lok Sabha) and Md. Nadimul Haque (Rajya Sabha) have strongly protested the expunction of key portions of their dissent notes submitted to the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

In a letter addressed to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, the MPs alleged that their objections were removed arbitrarily without prior notice or explanation.

"To our dismay and utter surprise, we found that the following objectives and dissent notes have been deleted by the Chairman without informing us and without our consent," the MPs wrote in their letter dated February 3, 2025.

The dissent notes, submitted after the draft report of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill was approved with 14 members in favour and 11 against, criticized the committee's proceedings and recommendations. Banerjee and Haque alleged that the committee's conclusions were biased and predetermined. "The observations and/or recommendations are a glaring instance of pre-conceived motions and views of the Chairperson and the members of the ruling party," the letter stated.

They further claimed that the committee ignored stakeholder representations, witness depositions, and submissions made by opposition members.

"While making the observations and/or recommendations, not a single stakeholder's representation, deposition

of witnesses, or submissions made by the opposition members, including us, was taken into consideration," the dissent note read.

Banerjee and Haque also criticized the procedural lapses, alleging that the minutes of the meetings were manipulated. "The minutes were made as per the dictation of the Chairperson and do not point the true picture of the JPC meetings," they asserted.

Questioning the legitimacy of the expunction, the MPs argued that none of their comments were unparliamentary or inappropriate. "If your good self goes through the dissent notes submitted by us, you will find that not a single expression or phrase is unparliamentary, irrelevant, or otherwise inappropriate which gives the power to the Chairperson to delete or expunge," they wrote.

PIVOTAL MOMENTS



Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar stands for the National Anthem during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI)



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh interacts with Congress MP Jairam Ramesh at Parliament House during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI)



Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi at Parliament House during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI)



DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI)



Lok Sabha LoP and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, Party MPs KC Venugopal, Deepender Hooda, Imran Masood and others leave after attending the Budget Session, at Parliament House premises in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI)



BJP MPs stage a protest against independent MP Pappu Yadav over his alleged derogatory remarks on President Droupadi Murmu during the Budget Session, at Parliament House premises in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI)

Govt has 'Passenger Charter' for the
benefit of air travellers

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has issued 'Passenger Charter' in order to increase the awareness among air travellers of their rights in case of various exigencies including flight delays, cancellations, denied boarding due to over booking, refund issues, flight diversions, medical emergencies, lost/ delayed or damaged baggage etc, Parliament was informed on Monday

"The Passenger Charter is a comprehensive document about a passenger's rights and responsibilities while flying by air. The details regarding 'Passenger Charter' rights is available at <https://www.civilaviation.gov.in/ministry-docu->



Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma speaks in the House during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI)

ments/passengercharter-of-rights," Murlidhar Mohol, minister of state in the ministry of civil aviation, said in a written reply to Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma. The minister added that in order to ensure adherence of the flight schedules by the airlines and to mitigate flight delays, DGCA has issued Air Transport

Circular 05 of 2017, titled "Procedure to be followed to mitigate flight delays". As per Air Sewa Portal, during the period between January 1 2024 and to January 31 this, a total of 527 grievances have been received against airlines for staff/crew behaviour, of which, 523 grievances have been closed.

Over 8,300 mines were given
five-star rating: Minister

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Indian Bureau of Mines launched star-rating of mines in August 2016 as an effective implementation tool of the sustainable development framework and a total of 8,371 mines were given five-star rating during the period between 2014-15 to 2022-23, coal and Mines minister G Kishan Reddy said on Monday.

In a written reply to a question by Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma, Reddy said during last five field seasons, i.e., from FS: 2020-21 to 2024-25, GSI has taken up six mineral exploration programmes on REE- RM, base metals, tin, tungsten, copper in different parts of Haryana.

It is mandatory for the mine operators to maintain at least three star-rating in their leases on year-to-year

basis. The star-ratings is being awarded, based on evaluation of performance of mines on technological, socio-economic and environmental parameters based on objective reporting of their activities

The Government has given specific emphasis on sustainable development and eco-sensitive mining in the National Mineral Policy, 2019, he said.

THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON DELHI ELECTIONS

41% believe corruption is the biggest issue in the Delhi election.

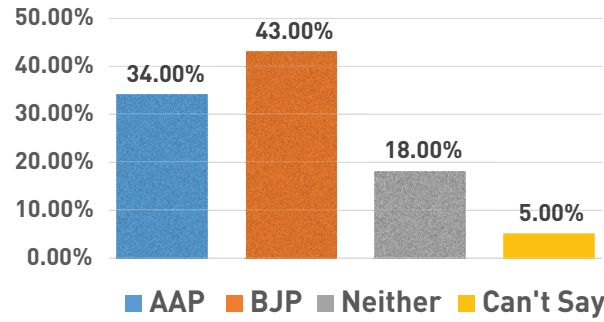
A recent Delhi election survey reveals key voter sentiments. 41% believe corruption is the biggest

issue, while 43% predict BJP's victory over AAP (34%). 61% say female voters could change the game.

The BJP vs AAP contest dominates (65%), and 48% see BJP's lack of a CM face as a disadvantage.

Q1. ▶

Are you with AAP or BJP? Who do you think is winning the Delhi election?

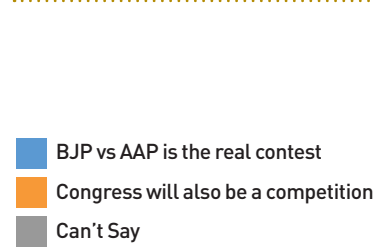
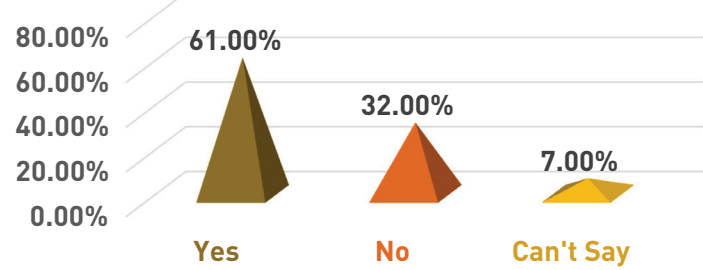


Q2. ◀

What is the biggest issue in the Delhi election?

Q3. ▶

Will the preference of female voters change the 'electoral game' in the Delhi election?



Q4. ◀

Will the direct contest between Arvind Kejriwal and Manoj Tiwari, along with Congress's entry, make the competition tougher?

THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON BANGLADESH POLITICAL CRISIS

46% believe Hasina's return to Bangladesh is doubtful

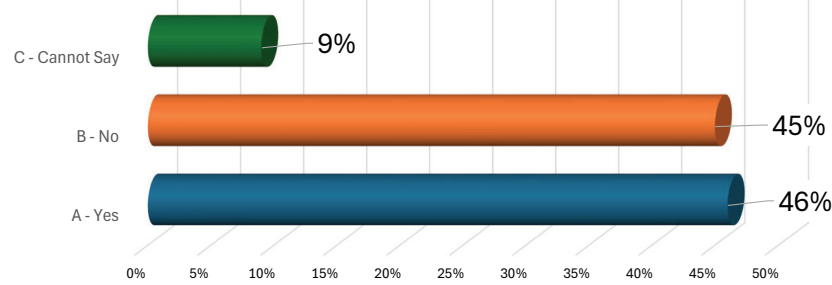
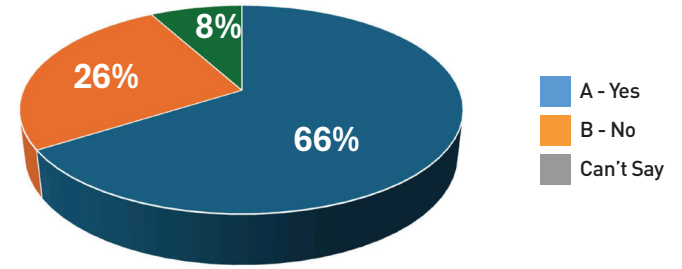
On Monday, Bangladesh's interim Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus extended greetings to Hindus on Saraswati Puja, emphasising the

nation's communal harmony. Calling Bangladesh a home for all, Yunus highlighted efforts by his government to improve lives and ensure equal

rights for all citizens, regardless of religion or caste. Hindus across the country celebrated Saraswati Puja on the same day.

Q1. ▶

The protesters in Bangladesh reached Mohammad Yunus's house, will his secret be revealed?

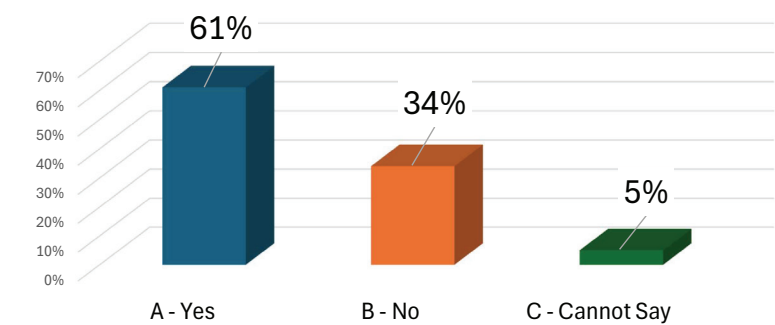
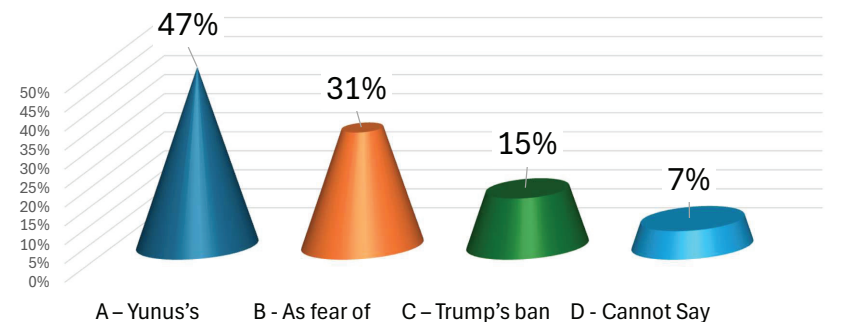


Q2. ◀

Is Sheikh Hasina's return to Bangladesh now doubtful?

Q3. ▶

Mohammad Yunus wished the Hindu community on Saraswati Pooja and gave them his blessings. How do you view this?



Q4. ◀

Will attacks against Hindus in Bangladesh increase now?

Jaishankar debunks Rahul's remarks

CONTINUED FROM P1

US did not invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi due to the lack of production system in India.

"When we talk to the United States, we would not send our foreign minister to invite our Prime Minister to his coronation...Because if we had a production system and if we were working

on these technologies, the American President would come here and invite the Prime Minister," he said.

BJP MPs led by Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju also took objection to Rahul Gandhi's remarks.

Rijiju said, "Leader of Opposition cannot make such serious unsubstantial statement. This is related to the

relation between two countries and he is making an unverified statement about the invitation of the Prime Minister of our country." Responding to Rijiju, Rahul Gandhi said, "I apologize for disturbing your peace of mind."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was seated in the Lok Sabha while Rahul Gandhi made his remarks.

'Make in India' has failed: Rahul

CONTINUED FROM P1

AI to bring these together. India must master a central role in this revolution, and boost production to give our youth hope for the future," he said.

"Although China is 10 years ahead, we can catch up - with the right vision. An INDIA government would realign education, enlist experts, widely spread finance, and align our trade and foreign policies. Production is also the foundation of our national security. In a world where wars are not fought between armies but between industrial systems, our dependence on Chinese imports like motors and batteries puts us at risk," he added.

Gandhi said India is fighting against inequality that is increasing social tensions by excluding the 90 per cent.

"We must conduct a caste census to understand where Dalits, Adivasis, OBCs and minorities stand today; and with the help of AI understand how best to ensure they have a fair share in the nation's wealth and opportunities. It is only these two tracks in parallel - production and participation - which will create a robust growth story for India and a bright future for all our youth," he said.

Slamming the government over President's address, Gandhi in his speech said it was the same laundry list of things that the government has done.

He said there are basically four technologies that are driving this entire change in mobility, electric motors, batteries, optics and then on top of one can apply AI.

Gandhi said the question came to his mind is "what type of address would a INDIA gathbandhan government deliver, how would that address be different than the address".

"A universal problem that we have faced is that we have not been able to tackle the problem of unemployment. No! neither the UPA government nor today's NDA government has given a clear-cut answer to the youth of India about employment. I don't think anybody in this room will disagree with me," he said.



Students of Medical College celebrate as they take the idol of Goddess Saraswati for immersion to Judges Ghat on the occasion of Saraswati Puja, at Babughat in Kolkata on Monday. ANI

IMA, Haryana resolve Ayushman

CONTINUED FROM P1

"We had been struggling with irregular payments and heavy deductions, which created financial difficulties for hospitals. However, the government has now taken concrete steps to clear dues and streamline payments. We appreciate this initiative," said IMA Haryana Secretary Dr. Dhinder K. Soni.

The IMA had earlier pointed out that payment delays began after the introduction of the Chirayu card in November 2022. In its letter to the government, the association had demanded the immediate clearance of dues, an end to deductions after pre-approved claims, a dedicated annual budget of Rs 2,000 crore, and compensation for delayed payments.

had sparked controversy with the opposition parties raised the issue in Delhi that the BJP government was unable to clear the dues of the hospitals pending for the past several years. Even during the Haryana assembly elections the IMA had threatened to stop treatment under Ayushman Card to build pressure for the pending dues of hospitals in the state.

CONTINUED FROM P1

ray - both in terms of poll strategy, campaign style and party's long-term objectives as a national level party. In this context, Rahul's "hands-off" policy towards AAP comes as a belated attempt to find some foothold in Delhi polls.

The Congress' Delhi strategy effectively marks an end of the I.N.D.I.A bloc and reduces the office of the Congress president, a piece of ornament. The 88th president of the AICC, Mananna Mallickarjun Kharge, may not be a great vote catcher in the national capital but his absence from the party's campaign video is a glaring omission. The campaign video also had a fleeting reference to Sheila Dixit who was Delhi chief minister for three consecutive terms.

Kharge had painstakingly contributed in building the I.N.D.I.A bloc since 2022 after assuming the office of the Congress president. Using his acumen and conciliation skills to a hilt, he had managed to rope in Nitish Kumar, Mamata Banerjee, Sharad Pawar, Arvind Kejriwal, Tejaswi Yadav, Uddhav Thackeray and range of maverick, mercurial regional satraps to

shape I.N.D.I.A bloc. The alliance did reasonably well in 2024 General Elections in spite of Nitish Kumar switching sides at a crucial juncture. The sight of Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav canvassing support for Arvind Kejriwal and almost every member of I.N.D.I.A bloc siding with AAP in Delhi polls must have saddened and dismayed Kharge.

After June 4, 2024 when Kharge planned to shape the I.N.D.I.A bloc as a permanent and proactive forum, something happened internally. Suddenly, there was a buzz of consolidating a 'Congress story' instead of combining the opposition's rainbow alliance following up its pre-poll efforts with a shadow cabinet, president and convenor of INDIA alliance and a full-time secretariat in Delhi.

Subsequently, the Congress exuberance for Haryana caught Kharge in a bind, weakening and eroding I.N.D.I.A unity. Post Maharashtra electoral setback, Kharge could sense growing disillusionment and disquiet within the I.N.D.I.A Parivar. However, internal party dynamics were such that Kharge could not save I.N.D.I.A

bloc disintegration. What is more intriguing and perhaps bizarre is the fact that while he continues to enjoy the confidence of both Sonia and Rahul Gandhi, machinations of some senior Congress functionaries are giving him little opportunity to save the alliance.

Rahul Gandhi is said to have bought party treasurer Ajay Mankan's recipe to target and isolate the Aam Admi Party even if it means BJP winning Delhi assembly polls. In Mankan's scheme of things, the Congress revival in Delhi now or in 2030 can only take place at the expense of AAP's downfall. While agreeing to Mankan's line, many Congress stalwarts are unsure of the efficacy of such an adventurous course. According to them, the Congress may fall between the two stools if AAP, under Kejriwal's leadership manages to retain Delhi with a reduced margin.

Rahul's camp is, however, buoyed by an internal survey conducted by poll strategist Sunil Kanugolu that predicts ten assembly seats for the party and eight per cent of votes. Both in terms of political logic, statistical analysis and

Ex-soldier shot dead

CONTINUED FROM P1

at Behibagh, Wuzur, Kulgam three innocent citizens Manzoor Ahmed Waghey (Ex Serviceman, 39), wife Mrs Aaina Akhtar (32) and niece Miss Saina Hameed (13) were shot at by terrorists. Manzoor succumbed to his injuries, while the others have been evacuated to District Hospital Anantnag," the Chinara Corps of Indian Army said in a post on X. The cowardly act of terror on unarmed citizens was perpetrated by the inimical elements who do not want peace and prosperity which defines Kashmir of today to flourish. In this dastardly act of terror even the innocent woman and child were not spared.

Moosewala's aide's house

CONTINUED FROM P1

an investigation. Preliminary inquiries revealed that he had been receiving extortion threats, with demands for Rs 30 lakh. The threats, issued in the name of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, warned of dire consequences if the payment was not made.

According to police sources, Singh received a WhatsApp message from a UK-based number around ten days ago, warning him to arrange personal security and bulletproof his Fortuner SUV. The sender, claiming to represent the Lawrence gang, later made calls from the same number, though no conversation took place.

Rahul firm on no Cong support to AAP

CONTINUED FROM P1

ground situation, the prospects of Congress netting ten seats appears a bit far-fetched.

Moreover, if Congress indeed manages to live up to Kanugolu's expectations, the vote percentage would certainly go up, much more than his prediction. In 2013, the Congress had bagged 24.6% votes while winning eight assembly seats. By 2020, the Congress vote share in Delhi assembly polls had come down to 4% in 2020 polls.

Makan's growing stature and proximity to Rahul has rattled a section of the Congress. Party leaders claim that Mankan has directly approached leading TV news channels and given them election campaign ads without consulting the AICC's communication department consisting of Jairam Ramesh, Pawan Khera and Supriya Shrinete.

Bizarre as it may sound, Mankan's purse did not discriminate between channels that Ramesh-Khera-Shrinete often accused of being godi media or belonging to a business house often singled out by Rahul Gandhi for allegedly being hand-in-glove with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

HARYANA MINISTER ANIL VIJ CONTINUES HIS TIRADE AGAINST PARTY LEADERS

Anil Vij criticizes Haryana leaders, demands Badoli's resignation, and conducts raid on overloaded trucks.

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Power and Transport Minister Anil Vij continued his tirade against his party leaders chief minister Nayab Singh Saini and Haryana BJP President Mohan Lal Badoli and demanded latter's resignation over the gangrape allegations against him.

On Monday, the seven time MLA from Ambala Cantt launched a fresh swipe against the chief minister Nayab Saini by sharing a post on his X account with a photograph of Ashish Tayal, who claims to be a close friend of Nayab Saini, claiming that Tayal has numerous pictures with Nayab Saini on his Facebook profile, the party workers who were seen with Ashish Tayal during the Assembly elections are now seen with Chitra Sarwara, who had contested assembly elections against Vij from Ambala cantt assembly constituency independently.

"What does this relation-

THE ALLEGATIONS

- Anil Vij criticizes CM Nayab Singh Saini and Haryana BJP President Mohan Lal Badoli.
- Vij demands Badoli's resignation over gangrape allegations; calls for adherence to party principles.
- Vij highlights Ashish Tayal's connection with rival candidate Chitra Sarwara, questions BJP's election strategy.
- No immediate response from CM Saini to Vij's allegations.
- Badoli and singer Rocky Mittal booked in December for gangrape; both deny charges.



ship signify? If Tayal remains a close friend of Nayab Saini, then the question arises: Who orchestrated the opposition to the BJP in elections", reads the post. Vij's post highlights a political scenario where Ashish Tayal, a self-proclaimed friend of Nayab Saini (likely a BJP leader), is seen associating with workers who are also supporting Chitra Sarwara, a rival candidate. The post was being circulated widely on the social media, however, there was no immediate

response to Vij's allegations by the chief minister.

Earlier on Sunday, Vij demanded the resignation of his party's state unit president, Mohan Lal Badoli, who has been booked in a gangrape case. "He is an accused under Section 376D of the Indian Penal Code, which pertains to gangrape," Vij was quoted as saying by the newspaper. "How can such a person preside over a meeting of women? To uphold the party's principles, he must step down immediately."

He further stated, "Even senior leaders like Advani Ji resigned when allegations were made against them. He is not above them."

Badoli and singer Rocky Mittal were booked in December in a gangrape case in Himachal Pradesh. Both have denied the allegations. On Monday, Vij conducted a surprise raid in Ambala's Baldev Nagar area to tackle the issue of overloaded trucks and other vehicles. The operation, carried out on the Baldev Nagar-Nara-

yangarh Highway, led to the seizure of multiple overloaded trucks.

During the raid, it was found that several truck drivers were operating without proper documentation. Minister Vij directed officials to take strict action against these drivers, resulting in the confiscation of their vehicles.

The raid saw the presence of RTA (Regional Transport Authority) police and other officials on the ground, ensuring the enforcement of transport regulations. This initiative underscores the government's commitment to improving road safety and curbing illegal transportation practices.

Minister Vij emphasized that such surprise inspections will continue across the state to ensure compliance with vehicle load limits and documentation requirements, aiming to reduce accidents and maintain order on highways. Last week Vij had launched a scathing attack on the Chief Minister, accusing him of being inaccessible and indifferent to governance.

Haryana launches Rs 564 crore plan to promote clean fuels

TDG NETWORK
CHANDIGARH

The Haryana government has announced Rs 564-crore initiative to help industries switch to cleaner fuels over the next five years. The move, part of the state's Clean Air Programme, aims to reduce pollution by promoting the use of piped natural gas (PNG) in industrial boilers and upgrading generator sets.

Officials said on Sunday that under this scheme, 1,000 biomass-based boilers will be converted to PNG. Industrial units making this transition will receive financial support of up to Rs 20 lakh per unit. The government has allocated Rs 200 crore for this phase of the plan.

Additionally, the state will assist 2,400 industrial units in adopting less polluting generator sets. Of these, 1,000 units will get incentives ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 20 lakh each for switching to hybrid or dual-fuel generators. The remaining 1,400 units will receive financial aid to purchase new, environmentally friendly generator sets. A budget of Rs 330 crore has been set aside for this purpose.

Officials believe this initiative will significantly



Representative Image

reduce industrial pollution and improve air quality in Haryana.

The "Haryana Clean Air Programme" refers to the "Haryana Clean Air Project for Sustainable Development (HCAPSD)", a state government initiative in Haryana, India, aimed at improving air quality and reducing emissions across the Indo-Gangetic Plain, primarily funded by the World Bank; it focuses on implementing air pollution control technologies, coordinating with neighboring states to reduce cross-border emissions, and enhancing the quality of life for Haryana residents through cleaner air.

The program targets various sectors contributing to air pollution, including transportation, industries, construction, road dust, biomass burning, and household pollution.

The project will be implemented in phases, with initial focus on districts within the National Capital Region (NCR) and later expanding statewide.

The project is primarily funded by the World Bank through its Programme for Results mechanism. The Haryana Department of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change will lead the project, with a three-tier governing structure overseen by the Chief Secretary.

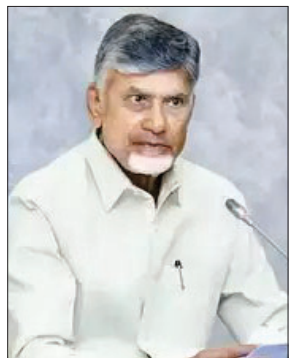
Andhra CM meets 16th Finance Commission Chairman in Delhi

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav met the Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission, Arvind Panagariya, in Delhi on Saturday.

While the agenda of the meeting was not disclosed, the discussion is seen as crucial given Andhra Pradesh's focus on securing financial aid and investment for rapid development.

The 16th Finance Commission, headed by Panagariya, is responsible for recommending the distribution of financial resources between



the central and state governments for the period 2026-31.

The commission's recommendations play a key role in determining how tax revenues are shared between the Union and the States.

It also sets principles for grants-in-aid from the central government to the states and suggests ways to

strengthen the financial resources of Panchayats and Municipalities.

Additionally, the commission is mandated to review the existing arrangements for financing disaster management initiatives and recommend appropriate measures. The recommendations will cover a period of five years, starting from April 1, 2026.

The commission has already requested the public, interested organisations and individuals to share their suggestions distribution of financial resources between the central and state governments.

Arvind Panagariya the current Finance Commission

Chairman was an economics professor at Columbia University and has held several important positions in the past. He was the first Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog and also served as the Chief Economist of the Asian Development Bank.

Naidu's meeting with the Finance Commission Chairman highlights his government's proactive approach in engaging with the central leadership to secure necessary financial support.

With Andhra Pradesh aiming for rapid infrastructure and economic growth, the state government is expected to push for a larger share of resources to meet its development goals.

Maha Kumbh celebrates blend of Israeli and Indian music

TDG NETWORK
PRAYAGRAJ

Shaktidham Ashram organized the 'Love Unites' event at the Maha Kumbh in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj, featuring performances by musicians from Israel and India, blending classical music, mantra chanting, and Hebrew spiritual verses. The combination of music and mantra recitation created a divine atmosphere. Famous musicians like Sandeep Mishra, Amit Mishra, Narayan Jyoti, Yaron Pe'er, and Maya Baitner gave their performances during the event. In this grand musical gathering, two classical musicians from Varanasi performed on traditional Indian instruments.

Modi's strategic moves to strengthen BJP for future elections

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is making significant decisions at the start of his third term.

Since the start of his third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made significant political moves, particularly in states like Haryana and Maharashtra. These two states were crucial for the BJP, and losing even one could have been disastrous. However, with the strategic leadership of Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, supported by the RSS, the opposition's chances were defeated.

The Congress, unable to manage its leaders and allies properly, ended up dividing itself and losing ground in these states. During this time, Modi began making major decisions. One of the first was pushing for the 'One Nation, One Election' initiative, followed by introducing the Wakf Board Bill in Parliament. Once the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) reviews it, the bill is likely to pass in both Houses, potentially sparking national debate. This bill could become a political issue, drawing accusations of Muslim appeasement toward Congress and other opposition parties,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

while bolstering the BJP's Hindutva agenda, similar to the impact of the Ayodhya issue.

Alongside these moves, the Modi government started focusing on farmers and the working middle class. The new Unified Pension scheme, which will be implemented in April, is seen as a major step in addressing the long-standing demand from government employees to restore the old pension system. Additionally, the announcement of the 8th Pay Commission is seen as a significant and decisive move, as government employees have often been perceived as opposed to the BJP.

The most surprising and impactful decision came in the Union Budget, where the government announced tax exemptions for individuals earning up to 12 lakh rupees annually. This is seen as one of the biggest moves aimed at benefiting the middle class, a major electoral constituency. While the opposition seems

unaware of this, they remain caught up in caste politics, lacking focus on other issues. Modi, learning from past mistakes, has already begun implementing key decisions to secure the next general elections.

During the 2024 election campaign, Modi had mentioned that he still had more major decisions to make, a statement many in the public didn't fully understand at the time. Influenced by caste politics, the public didn't back the BJP enough to secure a majority, but the party, under Modi's leadership, was able to form a coalition government. Despite the opposition's distractions, Modi's strategy and focus on important decisions could shape the political landscape leading up to future elections.

These decisions align with what Modi had promised during the 2024 general elections. While the opposition struggles to comprehend his strategies.

UP CM welcomes Bhutan's King in Lucknow

TDG NETWORK
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday extended a warm welcome to the King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, upon his arrival at Lucknow Airport.

The King's envoy was greeted with traditional music and dance, and CM Yogi Adityanath heartily welcomed him.

In a post on X (formerly



King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck receives a warm welcome from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on his arrival, in Prayagraj on Monday. (ANI Photo)

Twitter), Adityanath said, "Hearty welcome and greetings to His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck of Bhutan in Uttar Pradesh, the sacred land of valour, culture and cultural harmony!" Earlier, Wangchuck had visited Prayagraj to attend the Maha Kumbh. The Maha Kumbh 2025, which commenced on January 13, will continue until February 26. The event has already attracted millions of devotees from across the

country and around the world and is expected to set new records for attendance and participation. The Maha Kumbh Mela (the festival of the sacred pitcher) is anchored in Hindu mythology. It is the world's largest public gathering and collective act of faith. This congregation, primarily, includes Ascetics, Saints, Sadhus, Sadhvis, Kalpvasis and Pilgrims from all walks of life, as per the Kumbh website.

3 arrested over rape-murder of Dalit woman in Ayodhya

TDG NETWORK
AYODHYA

Three people were arrested in connection with an alleged murder of a Dalit girl in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya, the police said.

Earlier, Congress leader and Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi condemned the brutal murder of a Dalit girl in Ayodhya and accused the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Uttar Pradesh of being "anti-Bahujan," adding that the "heinous atrocities" have been on the rise in the state. Alleging that the adminis-

tration didn't pay heed to the victim girl's family's cry for help, Rahul questioned how many more families will have to suffer like this.

In a post on X, Rahul said, "The inhumanity and brutal murder of a Dalit daughter in Ayodhya is heart-breaking and very shameful. If the administration had paid heed to the cry for help of the girl's family that had been echoing for three days, perhaps her life could have been saved."

"Another daughter's life ended due to this heinous crime. After all, how many more families will have to cry and suffer like this?"



Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army, Lieutenant General Bato Tshering inspects the Guard of Honour, at South Block in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI Photo)

Mumbai cops bust illegal call centre, arrest 6 for cheating US citizens

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Mumbai Police's crime branch on Monday busted an illegal call centre and arrested six persons who prima facie cheated US citizens under the pretext of selling them drugs like Viagra, an official said.

The accused used to speak in the American accent to convince their targets, he said.

Police seized six hard discs, two mobile phones, a pen drive, and some documents after raiding the purported call centre



operated from a room in a building located in Sakinaka area.

Police found that the accused used VICIDial solution and made Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calls to bypass traditional

phone lines to target US citizens, an official said.

He said the accused used to call up their targets and asked them to send money online by offering to sell Viagra and other drugs.

High-voltage campaign draws to a close, three main contenders confident

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The high-voltage campaigning for Delhi Assembly polls came to an end at 5 pm on Monday, ushering in the mandatory silence period before voting on February 5. On the final day of campaigning, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has scheduled 22 roadshows and rallies across Delhi, intensifying its bid to reclaim power in the capital after more than 25 years.

On the other hand, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) remains confident of securing a third straight

term, banking on its governance model of free welfare schemes.

The Congress, which ruled the capital for 15 years until 2013, is striving to regain its lost ground after drawing a blank in the last two elections.

The fiercely-contested electoral battle has been defined by an unprecedented use of AI-generated spoofs, sharp political jibes, and high-decibel roadshows.

The Election Commission's Model Code of Conduct (MCC) mandates that all public meetings, election-related functions, and campaigning must cease



48 hours before the close of polling.

According to the poll body, any dissemination of campaign material via cinema,

TV, and print media is also prohibited during this period.

The elections have turned into an intense war of words,

with parties using catchy slogans and barbed attacks.

While the AAP branded the BJP as "Bharatiya Jhootha Party" (Indian Liar Par-

ty) and "Gali Galouch Party" (Abusive Party), Prime Minister Narendra Modi hit back by dubbing the AAP as "AAP-Daa" (disaster) and its chief Arvind Kejriwal as "Ghoshna Mantri" (Minister of Announcements).

The Congress, trying to claw back into Delhi's political corridor, labelled Kejriwal as "Farziwal" (Fake) and a "Chhota Recharge" (Small Recharge) of Modi.

With AI-generated memes and digital campaigns dominating the narrative, the battle for Delhi has reached new levels of political discourse this time.

According to the data of

Delhi Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), 1.56 crore voters are eligible to cast their ballots across 13,766 polling stations on February 5.

Among them, 83.76 lakh are men, 72.36 lakh women, while 1,267 are third-gender voters. To facilitate a smooth voting process, 733 polling stations have been designated for persons with disabilities.

The Election Commission has also introduced a Queue Management System (QMS) application for the first time in India, allowing voters to check real-time crowd levels at polling stations through the Delhi Election - 2025

QMS app.

Under the home voting facility for senior citizens and persons with disabilities, 6,980 out of 7,553 eligible voters have already cast their votes. This service, which began on January 24, will continue until February 4.

To ensure free and fair elections, 220 companies of paramilitary forces, 19,000 home guards, and 35,626 Delhi Police personnel will be deployed.

Additionally, 21,584 ballot units, 20,692 control units, and 18,943 VVPATs have been prepared, including provisions for dummy and Braille ballot papers.

AAP GOVT PRIORITISING ITS IMAGE OVER YOUTH'S FUTURE: PM MODI

PM Modi accused AAP of blocking weak students from Class 10 to protect its image.

TIKAM SHARMA
NEW DELHI

In an interaction with students in the national capital on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi strongly criticized the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, accusing it of prioritizing its image over the future of students.

PM Modi said that the AAP government allows only those students to go beyond class nine who secure good marks to protect its own image.

Hitting out at the AAP government in Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi denies students to take Class 10 exams if they perform poorly in Class 9 so that board exam results are not marred, and its image is protected. In an interaction with a group of students here, he said, "I have heard that in Delhi they do not promote students to Class 10 if they perform poorly in Class 9."

"They only allow those students in Class 10 who are guaranteed to clear the exam. They fear that if the results are poor, the image of their government will be tarnished," the PM said in the interaction, a short video

SLAMS AAP

- Modi called it a dishonest practice, harming students' future.
- Modi vowed a BJP-led "new spring of development" for Delhi.
- Rs 5 meals, Rs 10 lakh insurance for workers, and student aid.
- BJP claims AAP prioritizes image over real education reforms.

“

The enthusiasm I see is a clear indication that Kejriwal's journey will come to an end on the 5th Feb

”

JP Nadda

“

They [AAP] keep making excuses and fighting with the Centre like a cry baby

”

Amit Shah

“

This time the people of Delhi have decided to give a two-thirds majority to the BJP in Delhi.

”

Rajnath Singh

of which was shared by BJP leaders on social media.

On Sunday, addressing a public rally at New Delhi's

RK Puram, Prime Minister said that similar to the change of weather ushered in with the arrival of Basant

Panchami, Delhi will herald a "new spring of development."

"In a few days, a new spring

of development will arrive in Delhi. This time, the BJP government is about to form in Delhi. The 'AAP-da party' has wasted 11 years. My biggest request is that we should be given a chance to serve the people of Delhi. I promise to go to any length to remove every difficulty you face. A double-engine government will come to Delhi that will make the lives of every poor and middle-class family prosperous," he said.

He also guaranteed Rs 5 nutritious meals for people living in slums and announced the setting up of a welfare board for auto drivers and domestic workers, while assuring that no existing welfare schemes would be discontinued.

"A welfare board will be set up for auto drivers and domestic workers, providing them with insurance coverage of up to Rs 10 lakh. The BJP government will also assist with children's school fees.

I give another guarantee: these AAP-Da people are spreading falsehoods, but not a single slum in Delhi will be demolished. The welfare schemes for the public in Delhi will not be stopped," PM Modi asserted.

With just two days left for voting in the Delhi Assembly polls, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal said on Monday his party has distributed spy cameras and body cameras among people in slum areas to capture "wrongdoings" and "electoral malpractices" by the BJP and its "goons". In a video message released on the final day of campaigning for the February 5 polls, Kejriwal said the AAP is heading towards a historic victory and the BJP its worst defeat in its existence and that is why it is resorting to "unfair tactics".

"We have distributed spy cameras and body cameras among people living in slum areas to capture the misdeeds of BJP's goons. We have also formed multiple Quick Response Teams (QRTs) which will reach such locations within 15 minutes to prevent unconstitutional activities and ensure the perpetrators are arrested." the AAP chief said.

"The BJP will use its goons and Delhi Police extensively to win the elections. They will try to intimidate voters, especially those in slum areas," he claimed. There was no immediate reaction from the BJP to Kejriwal's allegations.



The former Delhi chief minister alleged BJP workers would attempt to bribe slum-dwellers by offering Rs 3,000-Rs 5,000 and marking their fingers with black ink to prevent them from voting on election day.

"Take their money, but do not let them put ink on your finger," he urged voters.

Cautioning them against the alleged BJP manipulations, Kejriwal claimed the party would demolish slums if voted to power. "Selling your votes would be like signing your own death warrant," he said.

Delhi goes to polls on February 5 and the results on February 8 will determine whether the AAP retains power or if Delhi sees a change in leadership.

On the final day of cam-

“

I have visited the entire Delhi. I think that we are going to win 55 seats. But if mothers and sisters push hard, we can win up to 60 seats.

”

Arvind Kejriwal

aigning, the BJP has scheduled 22 roadshows and rallies across Delhi, intensifying its bid to reclaim power in the capital after more than 25 years.

BJP headed to massive poll victory in Delhi: Goyal

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The BJP is headed for a massive poll victory in Delhi, similar to what happened recently in Maharashtra and Haryana, Union minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday. Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, Goyal accused the AAP government in Delhi of depriving the people of the capital of clean drinking water, air and failing to fulfil its promises, such as rejuvenating the Yamuna river.

"All sections of people have faith in (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi and his guarantees. February

5 is going to be a milestone for the BJP and a golden day for the people of Delhi," the Union commerce and industry minister said.

People now want a government that delivers and serves, rather than engaging in fights and obstructing development in Delhi, he added.

"Like the victories in Maharashtra and Haryana, the BJP is poised for a massive mandate in all the seats in Delhi, including those that were earlier considered tough for the party," Goyal said, citing the huge turnouts at the campaign rallies held by Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief J P Nadda.

BJP makes Delhi polls harder for AAP

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

In the final days of the election campaign, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) appeared to gain the upper hand over the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister Amit Shah, and other BJP leaders put in significant efforts to ensure their victory, bringing the race to a tight contest. Experts believe that this could lead to a shift in the results, with BJP possibly surpassing the majority mark on its own. If this happens, Congress will play a key role in the final outcome.

There are clear signs of a potential shift in the Delhi elections. While the ac-



tual results will only be revealed on election day, the political landscape in Delhi seems to be evolving in the final days of campaigning. This marks the first election where Congress has focused more on defeating AAP than securing its own victory. This strategy reflects the growing belief within Congress that AAP poses a bigger threat to the party than the BJP.

In the last stages of the campaign, Congress leaders such as Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and party president Mallikarjun Kharge concentrated their efforts on seats where AAP was strong, particularly those with large Muslim populations or rural areas. While doubts remain about Congress' ability to secure any seat, there is a possibility that the party could

increase its vote share compared to previous elections. Any increase in Congress' vote share is likely to harm AAP, potentially giving an edge to the BJP.

This shift could result in a tough battle for AAP, especially in constituencies like New Delhi, where Congress' Sandeep Dixit is seen making inroads into AAP's voter base. This could benefit the BJP. Many prominent AAP leaders are also facing challenges, as their campaigning efforts seem to lack the energy and enthusiasm seen in previous elections. In contrast, BJP has been strategically active, with its central government announcing key decisions that AAP has struggled to address.

EC bans exit polls on Feb 5

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission has issued a notification banning the conduct, publication or publicising of exit polls between 7:00 am to 6:30 pm on February 5 (Wednesday) when votes will be cast for the Delhi assembly and two bypolls in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

The notification issued on January 22, also made it clear that under the provisions of the Representation of the People Act, displaying any election matter, including results of any opinion poll or any other poll survey, in any electronic media would be prohibited during the 48-hour period ending with the time fixed for the conclusion of the poll.

Besides Delhi assembly polls, by elections to Milkipur assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh and Erode (East) from Tamil Nadu are



going for elections. "In exercise of the powers under sub-Section (1) of Section 126A of the R.P. Act, 1951, the Election Commission, having regard to the provisions of Sub-Section (2) of the said Section, hereby notifies the period between 7:00 am to 6:30 pm on 05.02.2025 (Wednesday) as the period during which conducting and publishing or publicizing exit poll by means of the print or electronic media or dissemination in any other manner whatsoever, the result of any exit poll in connection with the aforesaid general and bye elections, shall be prohibited."

'Votes earned by winning hearts, not by threatening'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

As the Delhi Assembly elections draw closer, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, during her roadshow in the Kalkaji assembly constituency on Monday, emphasised that votes are earned by winning the hearts of people and not by 'threatening' them.

Her statement comes in reaction to an anecdote she narrated, "An elderly woman told me that BJP's 'goons' had



come, asking her not to vote for 'Jhaadu'. She told me that she will see what happens when she goes to vote on February 5."

"Votes are earned by winning the hearts of the people, not by threatening them. The people of Delhi will vote for us on our work," Atishi said while expressing confidence that AAP would form the government with a huge margin. Speaking about the public response in her roadshow, Atishi said that the crowd gathered in such large numbers shows that people love Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

BJP candidate from the New Delhi Assembly constituency, Parvesh Verma, on Monday, claimed that the BJP would win the seat by a large margin and that AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal would lose his deposit and finish third.

"We will win by a margin of more than 20,000 votes. It could be 25,000-26,000. Arvind Kejriwal will lose his deposit here and will come



third," Verma said.

Earlier in the day, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey also claimed that Kejriwal would lose the New Delhi Assembly seat, stating that Delhi Police had controlled

his "goons" and that Purvanchal felt safer with the BJP due to provisions in the Union Budget.

"Delhi Police has controlled all of his (Arvind Kejriwal) goons. Arvind Kejriwal is going to lose. In the budget, FM Nirmala Sitharaman has given things for Purvanchal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh... Purvanchal is finding themselves safe with the BJP. This is the reason their (AAP) vote bank is going

away from them. He is going to lose from the New Delhi Assembly constituency," Dubey said.

Union Minister and BJP leader Piyush Goyal also criticized AAP, stating that the people of Delhi would be freed from false promises. He emphasized that the BJP, as a double-engine government, would focus on development and public welfare.

"The people of Delhi will get freedom from fake guarantees and get a good

government under the credible leadership of PM Modi, which is inspired by development works and public welfare... Every Delhi resident is now eager to elect a double-engine government in Delhi under the leadership of BJP. The victory of the BJP now seems almost certain. The Prime Minister has given a very big gift to the middle class in the budget... Almost the middle class has been freed from the burden of tax," Goyal said.

AAP WHO PROMISED TO END CORRUPTION NOW SITTING ON CAG REPORT: MAKEN

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Ajay Maken ahead of Delhi assembly elections said that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal was not releasing the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report because there are things in the report against him, further stating that the person who come to power Lokpal and bring an end to corruption in Delhi was sitting on the CAG report.

Speaking to ANI, Maken said that if the CAG report had been released in December, then a special session could have been called to make the report public.

"Kejriwal has not let out the CAG report because there are things in them against him. The CAG reports had come in December...Kejriwal had said that the Lieutenant Governor (LG) had told them pretty late about it, but what we are saying that it does not matter if it was late or early. If it had been said that it was released in December or even in November, then a special session could have



Lok Sabha LoP and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi greets the supporters during a roadshow in support of party candidate Alka Lamba in Kalkaji assembly constituency for the Delhi assembly elections, at Govindpuri in New Delhi. ANI

been called and the report should have been made public in that session... The same person who came to bring power to the Lokpal and to end corruption in Delhi is sitting on the report..." Maken said.

Further, he said that the CAG report mentioned that a scam worth Rs 382 crore had been done in the hospitals. He further added that the hospitals of Delhi were in bad condition with almost 70 per cent vacancies of doctors.

"Scams worth Rs 382 crore have been done in the hospitals alone. Hospitals are in a bad state here. There are X-ray machines in the hospitals which are not working. There are ultrasound machines and CT scan machines but are only working up to 10 or 20 per cent. There are around 70 per cent vacancies for the post of doctors. We even have vacancies for technical staff. Hospitals and 'mohalla clinics' are not working and there are no medicines..."

the Congress leader said.

Further, he said that the AAP had no right to sit on the CAG reports and were only misleading people.

"When all these things are there in the CAG reports and if they have come to power in the name of removing corruption, then they (AAP) have no right to sit on it... they are trying to mislead people..." he further stated.

When questioned on how Congress was receiving funds for Delhi polls consid-

ering they were only elected in three states, Maken said that the party's workers gave them money.

Maken also mocked the BJP government and said that even though the party had spent six times more the amount in the Lok Sabha elections as compared to Congress, they did not win six times the seats.

He also stated that AAP was using the government's money

for their advertisements and did not spend their own money.

"Our workers give money to us and we fight with less expenditure. BJP spent seven times more money than us in Lok Sabha elections but they did not get six or seven times more seats than us.

If we got 100 seats, they got nearly 240... They (BJP) spend more money on their advertisements. AAP is using government money for advertisements, their party is not spending money..."

Kejriwal's only trick is to give freebies: Sandeep Dikshit

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

On the last day of campaigning for the Delhi assembly election, Congress candidate from the New Delhi assembly constituency, Sandeep Dikshit, on Monday attacked the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal, saying that the former Delhi Chief Minister's only "trick" is to give freebies.

Speaking to ANI, Dikshit said, "Arvind Kejriwal has only one trick, which was

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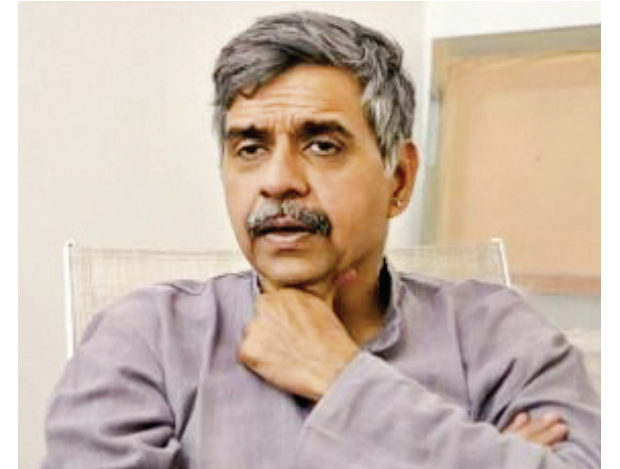
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bit Patra has fiercely criticised Kejriwal's handling of the city's water supply, accusing him of profiting from mafia-run water distribution networks. Speaking in Bijwasan, Patra raised questions about the adequacy and quality of water supplied to residents, claiming that Kejriwal's promises of free water were a facade.

"Aren't residents of this area our citizens? Do they not have the right to clean drinking water?" Patra asked, highlighting the ongoing struggles of Delhi's residents who, according to him, are forced to buy water from mafias. "Why are they forced to buy water from mafias?" he questioned further, arguing that Kejriwal

was making profits at the expense of citizens' access to clean water.

Patra went on to accuse Kejriwal of earning crores through these illegal networks. "Arvind Kejriwal is earning crores by supplying water in this way," Patra alleged. "You can see a private meter installed here," he said, suggesting that the installation of private meters was a clear indication of the involvement of illegal water distribution practices.

"The only difference between Venice and Kapashera is that water in Venice flows under us, while here it flows above our heads," Patra said, comparing the water crisis in Delhi to the well-known canals of Venice.

Atishi is temporary CM, about to retire: Alka Lamba

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

On the final day of campaigning ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, Congress candidate Alka Lamba expressed confidence in winning the Kalkaji assembly constituency. She took a jibe at Atishi, calling her a "temporary Chief Minister" who is "about to retire."

Speaking to ANI, Alka Lamba said, "My leader Rahul Gandhi came here to strengthen me. He saw tears in the eyes of Bhoomih-een camp residents. The permanent dwellings here were built under former CM Sheila Dikshit. I want to thank all the people of the constituency for their support. On February 5 Congress will win the polls. She (Atishi) is a temporary CM and she is about to retire.



Alka Lamba will become the next MLA of the Kalkaji assembly constituency."

Lamba further added that there is a wave in favour of Congress and the party is returning to power.

Earlier, on Monday, Sandeep Dikshit, a Congress candidate from the New Delhi assembly constituency, criticised the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal, claiming his only "trick" was giving away freebies.

Speaking to ANI, Dikshit said, "Arvind Kejriwal has only one trick, which was to give freebies... The people of Delhi look towards Congress for the things that they are agonising for."

Reacting to income tax exemption under Union Budget 2025 up to an income of Rs 12 lakh, he said, "... For the last many years they (central government) have not given any concession. They have given this (income tax) limit according to the inflation; this is not a concession.

The middle class understands this." Monday marks the last day of campaigning for the Delhi Assembly elections.

Delhi will go to the polls on Wednesday and the results of the election will be declared on February 8.

Sisodia accuses BJP of threats, hooliganism

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia on Monday hit out at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for allegedly using "threats" and "hooliganism" ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections.

Sisodia then claimed that the public would answer the BJP's actions through their votes and re-elect Arvind Kejriwal as Chief Minister.

"The public will answer BJP's hooliganism with their votes. Baba Saheb made the people (Public) the masters by creating a democratic system. Now BJP is threatening the people. They are threatening the workers and leaders of Aam Aadmi Party. Let me tell the BJP people, we are the disciples of Baba Saheb and Bhagat Singh.



Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi during a door-to-door campaign for the Delhi Assembly poll, at Jangpura in Delhi, PTI

GRAP stage-III curbs revoked as AQI improves

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

As the Air Quality Index (AQI) in the national capital shows improvement, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has decided to lift the restrictions imposed under Stage-III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) with immediate effect in Delhi and surrounding National Capital Region (NCR).

The CAQM's decision comes as the AQI in Delhi was recorded at 286 on February 3, 2025, which is 64 points below the 350



mark required to implement Stage-III measures, as per the Supreme Court's directives.

"The AQI of Delhi has been recorded as 286 for 03.02.2025 which is 64

points below the 350 mark to implement Stage-III as per the extant directives of the Supreme Court. Further, the forecast by IMD predicts very light rain/drizzle and favourable

wind conditions in the days to come," the order signed by the Director (Technical) RK Agrawal, who is also the member convener of the sub-committee on GRAP, stated.

"Owing to improvement in mixing height and ventilation coefficient and much favourable meteorological conditions for dispersion of pollutants, the AQI of Delhi has shown a significant improvement," the order further read.

However, the actions under stages I and II of the extant schedule of GRAP shall remain invoked and be implemented. All implementing agencies have been asked to keep strict vigil and intensify measures under the two stages of the extant schedule of GRAP.

Moreover, construction and demolition project sites etc. which have been issued specific closure orders on account of non-compliance with various statutory directions, rules, and guidelines under no circumstances shall resume their operations without any specific order to this effect from the commission.

BJP wants to end Delhi's public welfare schemes: Priyanka Kakkar

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

AAP Spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar on Monday, defended Arvind Kejriwal's governance model, asserting that Delhi saw significant improvements in public welfare, economic growth, and infrastructure under his leadership.

"It is BJP's job to make false accusations. Arvind Kejriwal has put forward such an ideology before the country which is very relevant for us... Delhi has the lowest inflation, 24-hour electricity



supply, lowest rates of electricity and free electricity up to 200 units, lowest level of unemployment, highest per capita income, highest minimum wages, and after all this, a revenue surplus budget...

BJP wants to put a stop to all public welfare schemes going on in Delhi..." he said.

Earlier today, Former Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convener Arvind Kejriwal accused the BJP of planning a conspiracy ahead of the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections. He alleged that the party would misuse the Delhi Police and that those affiliated with the party would deceive voters by posing as personnel from the Election Commission of India.

Several candidates with stint in jail contesting Delhi polls

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

From AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal to his long-time loyalist Manish Sisodia, riots accused Tahir Husain and Shifa-ur Rehman, several candidates in fray for Delhi Assembly polls have been to jail in connection with different cases, including corruption and riots. According to political experts, candidates having been to jail at some point, does not necessarily

affect their popularity as politicians. In some cases, if a politician does benefit in terms of public sympathy by being jailed, it does not necessarily translate into votes.

Former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal was arrested ahead of Lok Sabha polls last year in connection with a money laundering case related to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy.

While he got a brief bail to campaign for Lok Sabha



polls, he was granted an interim bail in the case in September last year with several conditions, including not accessing the CM office. Two days later, he

resigned as chief minister, saying he will only hold the post when the public declares him honest.

Party leader Atishi was then sworn in for the post,

becoming Delhi's third woman chief minister. Kejriwal has been maintaining during his Assembly poll campaign that he was arrested as the BJP wanted to project him as a "chor" (thief) but even his "fiercest enemy" believes he is not corrupt.

BJP, however, has been attacking him for wearing his stint in jail as a 'badge of honour'.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said at a pub-

lic meeting, "He is going around and proudly telling people about his stint in jail like he was jailed during the freedom struggle movement. He went to jail in connection with a liquor case, corruption case, he should be ashamed."

According to Abhishek Giri, a political science professor at Delhi University, going to jail does not necessarily affect the election outcomes of candidates.

"Many politicians have some or the other criminal

cases against them but not all of them have an impact on their electoral careers. In case of Arvind Kejriwal, he was seen as an anti-corruption crusader, so being jailed in a corruption case was definitely seen as a dent in his political image.

"However, I don't think so the fact that he was jailed will take precedence over the free water and electricity and other work done by AAP, when Delhiites vote in the upcoming elections," he said.

Azhar Mehboob, a political science scholar at Jamia Millia Islamia, said whatever image people make of a politician when he or she is jailed, is not always linked to voting patterns.

"Irrespective of any political party, the way people perceive political candidates going to jail has been somewhat similar in the past. Some politicians gain sympathy while some outrage but votes are polled mostly on the basis of other factors," he said.

RUPEE HITS RECORD LOW OF 87.29 AGAINST \$

The rupee hit 87.29 per dollar before RBI intervention, as US tariffs fuelled its slide.

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Indian rupee fell to a record low of 87.29 per dollar on Monday, weighed down by concerns over trade tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump and global market uncertainties.

The rupee has already depreciated more than 1.5 per cent this year, and the latest decline is seen as a reaction to tariff measures imposed by the US government.

The rupee opened with a sharp gap-down of 43 paise and touched a low of 87.29 before recovering slightly to 87.13 following the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) intervention. Analysts believe this sharp fall is primarily due to the tariff war initiated by the US against Canada, Mexico, and China.

KN Dey, currency expert told that "Rupee opened with a gap of 43 paise which was one of the high-

KEY POINTS

- Rupee hits record low: Falls to 87.29/USD amid US tariffs, global jitters.
- RBI steps in: Brief recovery to 87.13 after intervention.
- Tariff war impact: US levies on Canada, Mexico, China trigger slide.
- Global fallout: Dollar surge sinks major currencies, including yuan.



est gap opening, touched a new low of 87.29, but trading now at 87.13 on account of RBI intervention. This slide of the Rupee is purely on account of the Tariff war which started from February 1 with Canada, Mexico and China."

"Though Trump has been threatening BRICS countries also, it remains as to when he would press the button. This could be a knee jerk on the Rupee, but

The US imposed 25% tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and 10% on China, effective Tuesday.

it's better to wait and watch for couple of days" the expert said.

The situation remains uncertain as US President Donald Trump has also warned of potential tariffs on BRICS countries, including India. While the impact of such measures is

yet to be seen, the market is closely monitoring further developments.

The pressure on the rupee is part of a broader trend, as the US dollar strengthened against global currencies. On Monday, the Canadian dollar and Mexican peso fell to multi-year lows,

while China's yuan weakened to a record low.

The US government announced imposition of a 25 per cent tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico and a 10 per cent tariff on Chinese goods, which will take effect on Tuesday.

Market experts suggest that while this could be a short-term reaction, investors should wait and watch how the situation unfolds in the coming days.

BUSINESS AT A GLANCE

GOVT CALLS BUDGET NON-INFLATIONARY

Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said borrowings will fund capital expenditure, making the Budget non-inflationary. The Rs 15.4 lakh crore borrowing includes Rs 11.21 lakh crore capex and Rs 4 lakh crore grants to states. He stressed transparent accounting and fiscal consolidation, with the fiscal deficit pegged at 4.4% for FY26, down from 4.8% in FY25.

20 COUNTRIES TO ATTEND INDIA ENERGY WEEK

Energy ministers from over 20 countries, along with CEOs of Fortune 500 energy firms, will attend India Energy Week (IEW) 2025 from February 11-14 in New Delhi. The event, among the world's largest energy summits, will take place at Yashobhoomi, India's biggest convention center. Ministers from Tanzania and Djibouti, OPEC and IEF leaders, and top executives from Petrobras, Baker Hughes, BP, ADNOC, and Boeing will participate.

ADANI POWER TO EXPAND CAPACITY

Adani Power plans to increase its generation capacity by 1.7x to 30.7 GW by 2030, backed by secured land, financing, and coal supply. Jefferies projects a 2.2x EBITDA growth by FY30, with a peak debt-to-equity ratio of 1.4x in FY26-27. The firm sees a 30% upside, maintaining a 'Buy' rating on APL.

BSNL LAUNCHES BITV

BSNL, in partnership with OTTplay, has launched BitV, an Internet TV service for its mobile users, providing free access to 450+ live TV channels and multiple OTT platforms. After a pilot in Pondicherry, the service is now available pan-India. BSNL CMD Robert J Ravi called it a game-changer in digital inclusion, while OTTplay CEO Avinash Mudaliar highlighted its premium content library for users.

FEDEX RANKS NO. 20 ON FORTUNE'S LIST



FedEx remains the highest-ranked delivery company on Fortune's "World's Most Admired Companies" list, securing the No. 20 spot for the 25th consecutive year. CEO Raj Subramaniam credited the recognition to FedEx's 500,000+ team members and its commitment to innovation. The ranking evaluates companies on investment value, management, products, and social responsibility.

Power Grid shares dip 2%

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

On Monday, February 3, 2025, Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd. experienced a 2.09% decline in its share price, closing at Rs 283.90. This movement occurred amidst a broader market downturn, with the BSE SENSEX Index decreasing by 0.41% to 77,866.74.

Despite the decline, Power Grid's stock demonstrated relative resilience compared to its industry peers. Tata Power Co. Ltd. saw a more significant drop of 3.66%, ending the day at 354.90, while Gujarat Industries Power Co. Ltd. decreased by 4.28% to Rs 184.30.

The trading volume for Power Grid was notably higher than usual, with 1.0 million shares exchanged, surpassing



Despite the decline, Power Grid's stock demonstrated relative resilience compared to its industry peers.

the 50-day average of 656,009. Currently, the stock is 22.47% below its 52-week high of Rs 366.20, achieved on September 25, 2024.

In the broader market context, other major stocks also faced declines. NTPC Ltd.

shares fell by 2.05% to 311.15, while Tata Motors Ltd. experienced a 2.64% decrease, closing at Rs 687.45.

Overall, the day's trading reflected a challenging environment for the power sector and the market as a whole.

Tax relief to boost consumption for urban Indians: Goldman Sachs

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Multinational investment banking company Goldman Sachs said that the mega tax relief provided for in Budget 2025 will help the urban consumers boost their net household financial savings, besides partly boosting their consumption.

Goldman Sachs, in its India-focused report, noted further fiscal consolidation plans and a tilt towards the urban consumer in the budget.

"The net fiscal impulse drag on growth in 2025-26 will be smaller than in 2024-25," the report said.

Fiscal impulse is a parameter used to measure



the changing impact of the Budget on the overall economy.

The government announced in the February 1 Budget that no income tax will be payable on income up to Rs 12 lakh, providing significant relief to taxpayers, especially the middle class. Earlier, this limit was Rs 7 lakh.

One crore middle-income Indian taxpayers will be out

of tax net according to announcements in the Union Budget 2025 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday. As a result of the tax relief proposals, the government will forego revenue of about Rs 1 lakh crore in direct taxes and Rs 2600 crore in indirect taxes.

"Despite the tax revenue foregone, the government has budgeted income tax to

GDP at 4.0 per cent (from 3.9 per cent in 2024-25). This, in our view, assumes a significant improvement in tax buoyancy (net of tax foregone), absent which, spending cuts will be required to meet the fiscal deficit target," said the Goldman Sachs report.

The central government stuck to the fiscal consolidation path in the first full budget of its third term.

It targeted fiscal deficit at 4.4 per cent of GDP in 2025-26 from the revised estimate of 4.8 per cent in 2024-25.

The difference between total revenue and total expenditure of the government is termed as the fiscal deficit. It is an indication of the total borrowings that

may be needed by the government.

Further, capex allocation to states has been raised substantially this year. Goldman Sachs said this likely indicates that the government is passing the capex baton on to states.

According to the report, the Budget 2025 delivered three key messages -- government sticking to its fiscal consolidation path, commitment to keep the central government public debt on a declining path, and the re-adjusted income tax slabs.

The overall preference of Indian policymakers in recent years has been macro-economic resilience over chasing short-term spurts of growth, Goldman Sachs reiterated.

Manufacturing PMI at 6-month high on robust demand

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

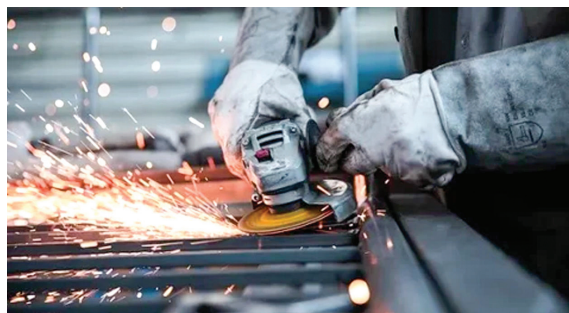
Following a moderation in growth during December, Indian goods producers kicked off year 2025 on a robust note.

With new orders rising at the quickest pace since last July, fuelled by the steepest upturn in exports in nearly 14 years, there was a stronger expansion in output, showed HSBC India Manufacturing PMI for January.

"India's final manufacturing PMI marked a six-month high in January. Domestic

and export demand were both strong, supporting new orders growth. The employment PMI suggested robust job creation in the manufacturing industry, as the index increased to its highest level since the series was created. Input cost inflation eased for a second month, relieving pressure on manufacturers to raise final output prices," said Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC.

Pressures emanating from costs retreated to their weakest in 11 months, but selling prices rose solidly amid buoyant demand and



business confidence having strengthened, the monthly PMI report said.

Rising from December's one-year low of 56.4 to 57.7 in January, the Purchasing Managers Index signalled a robust improvement in the

health of the sector. The rate of expansion was the quickest since last July and outpaced its long-run average

The indices vary between 0 and 100, with a reading above 50 indicating an overall increase compared to the

previous month, and below 50 an overall decrease.

Goods producers welcomed another substantial increase in new orders, which they attributed to better domestic demand and a pick-up in international sales. Total new business expanded at the fastest rate in six months.

International demand for Indian goods strengthened in January, with panellists noting gains from across the globe. Notably, the rate of expansion in new export orders was the best seen in just under 14 years, the PMI report noted.

Subsequently, manufacturers in India continued to scale up production volumes. The latest increase was substantial and the fastest since October 2024.

Companies turned more optimistic about output prospects, with nearly 32 per cent of firms forecasting growth and just 1 per cent expecting a reduction, the monthly survey found.

Robust sales gains and upbeat forecasts prompted companies to recruit additional workers at the start of the fourth fiscal quarter (January-March), it asserted.

Downside risks to India's growth in FY26 from external sector: Report

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

After the economic survey projects that the country's growth in FY26 is expected to remain in the range of 6.3 per cent to 6.8 per cent, a report by PwC stated that there are downside risks to the growth from the external factors.

The report noted that economic growth in the country facing challenge due to weak urban consumption, high food inflation, slow capital formation, and global uncertainties.

It said "The economic survey projects growth in the range of 6.3 per cent to 6.8 per cent in FY26. There are downside risks to the growth that emerge primarily from the external sector".

However, despite these hurdles, the report noted that the country is likely to remain the fastest-growing major economy in the world, driven by strong domestic demand, a rising working-age population, and stable macroeconomic fundamentals.

According to the first advance estimates, India's GDP growth is projected to slow down to 6.4 per cent in FY25, compared to 8.2 per cent in FY24. While domestic consumption and exports are expected to remain robust, a slowdown in urban demand and private investment could weigh on overall economic activity. The report pointed out that external risks pose a significant challenge to India's economic growth. Fac-

tors such as global economic slowdown, geopolitical tensions, and trade disruptions could impact India's exports and foreign investments. These risks need to be closely monitored to ensure that they do not derail the country's growth momentum.

It said "India's economic growth is expected to moderate to 6.4 per cent in financial year (FY) 2025 compared to 8.2 per cent growth in FY24, mainly due to slowdown in urban consumption, high food inflation, slow growth in capital formation and global headwinds".

On the inflation front, the report added that price pressures are expected to ease in the coming years. Inflation is projected to average 4.5% in FY26, aided by a favorable food inflation scenario, a good harvest, normal monsoon expectations, and lower global commodity prices.

Additionally, the exchange rate, which has been under pressure, is expected to stabilize as Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) flows become less volatile and crude oil prices soften, reducing India's import costs.

Despite these challenges, India is expected to retain its position as the fastest-growing major economy in 2025. While external risks remain a concern, factors like rural demand recovery, easing inflation, and continued government spending could help sustain growth in the coming years.

Startup founders hail Budget, call it a 'game-changer'

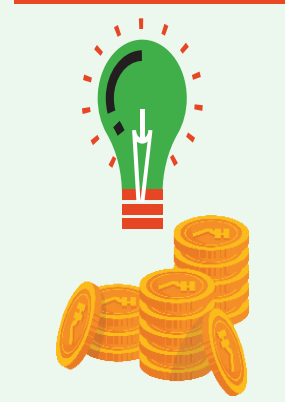
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Startup Policy Forum (SPF) members, comprising leading startup founders and CEOs, have hailed the Union Budget 2025 as a "game-changing catalyst" for the Indian economy and innovation ecosystem. They emphasized that bold measures, including tax relief for the middle class and enhanced credit access for MSMEs, will drive entrepreneurship, consumption-led growth, and global competitiveness.

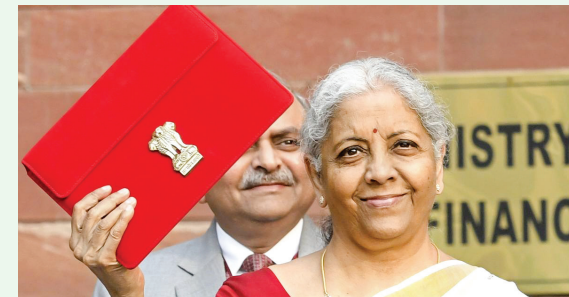
SPF FOUNDING MEMBERS SHARED THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON THE BUDGET:

Harshil Mathur, CEO & Co-Founder, Razorpay: "The budget strikes a balance be-

STARTUP CORNER



tween stimulating consumption and fiscal prudence. Significant tax cuts boost demand, while enhanced credit guarantees for MSMEs and a Rs. 30,000 UPI limit for



street vendors drive financial inclusion and employment."

Kunal Shah, Founder, CRED: "New tax limits could trigger a big jump in Gen Z spending."

Amrisha Rau, CEO, Pine Labs: "Returning Rs. 60-70K to middle-class earners will help invest in education, housing, and family care, boosting non-metro economic activity."

Lalit Keshre, CEO, Groww: "More disposable income empowers retail investors,

accelerating financialisation of savings."

Ritesh Agarwal, Founder, OYO: "We're shifting from celebrating valuations to creating value. The budget empowers AI researchers and small-town entrepreneurs, fostering an innovation-driven economy."

Varun Dua, CEO, Acko: "100% FDI in insurance unlocks global capital, driving market expansion."

Aloke Bajpai, CEO, ixigo: "Expansion of regional air

connectivity and new airports in Bihar will boost tourism. Spiritual travel demand has surged 100-150% YoY."

Bipin Preet Singh, MD, MobiKwik: "Expanded credit guarantees and a Rs. 10,000 crore Fund of Funds will empower startups and MSMEs."

Pallavi Shrivastava, Co-founder, Progecap: "The export promotion mission will help MSMEs expand globally."

Ramakant Sharma, Founder, Livspace: "Making income up to Rs. 12L tax-free will drive consumption and economic growth."

Shashank ND, CEO, Practo: "Strengthening medical tourism and adding 75,000 medical seats reinforce India's healthcare leadership."

Nalin Negi, CEO, BharatPe: "Higher disposable income encourages both spending and investment."

Sanket Shah, CEO, InVideo: "A historic budget—higher consumption will spur economic growth."

Anirudh Sharma, CEO, Digantara: "Lower customs duties on satellite components fuel space sector growth."

Vikram Chopra, CEO, CARS24: "Tax relief for 7 crore families makes car ownership more accessible."

Amit Jain, CEO, CarDekho: "EV ecosystem incentives, including tax exemptions on key materials, will drive e-mobility growth."

DEFENCE BUDGET: STRENGTHENING AUTONOMY & ADVANCING SELF-RELIANCE

OPINION

DR. NISHAKANT OJHA



Achieving Self-Reliance in Defence Amid Budget Constraints and Emerging Security Threats. As of February 2, 2025, India has allocated Rs 6.81 lakh crore for its Defence budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, reflecting a 9.5% increase over the previous year's initial estimates. This expenditure accounts for around 1.9% of the projected GDP for 2025-26. "India strategically balances fiscal discipline and Defence priorities, maintaining a robust security framework with a Defence budget close to 2% of GDP."

DECLINING DEFENCE SPEND AND SHIFT TO SELF-RELIANCE

India's Defence expenditure, which once consistently hovered around 2.3% of GDP, has seen a gradual decline in recent years. Between 2021-22 and 2024-25, this figure reduced to 2.1%, and for the first time in over a decade, it dropped below 2% in 2024-25. With the total allocation standing at Rs 6.2 lakh crore, concerns have emerged regarding military preparedness and

regional security.

Despite this, the government is actively pushing for self-sufficiency in Defence manufacturing. By FY29, it aims to increase domestic production to Rs 3 lakh crore while expanding exports to Rs 50,000 crore. However, India still faces critical last-mile dependencies in key Defence technologies, advanced weapon systems, and supply chain resilience. Addressing these gaps is crucial to achieving long-term strategic autonomy.

BALANCING FISCAL CONSTRAINTS AND STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

India's Defence sector is undergoing a transformation, balancing fiscal prudence with the need for military modernization and self-reliance. While the Defence budget has grown in absolute terms, its share of GDP has fallen below 2% for the first time in over a decade, standing at Rs 6.2 lakh crore in 2024-25. This reduction raises concerns about military preparedness and regional security challenges.

Despite this, the government is actively pushing for self-sufficiency in Defence manufacturing.

By FY29, it aims to increase domestic production to Rs 3 lakh crore while expanding exports to Rs 50,000 crore. However, India still faces critical last-mile dependencies in key Defence technologies, advanced weapon systems, and supply chain resili-

ence. Addressing these gaps is crucial to achieving long-term strategic autonomy.

DEFENCE BUDGET: KEY ALLOCATIONS AND TRENDS

Although the total Defence budget has increased, it has not kept pace with the overall economic expansion. The focus has shifted toward enhancing domestic manufacturing and reducing import dependency.

MAJOR ALLOCATIONS:

- Modernization & Infrastructure: Rs 1.8 lakh crore (+4.65%) for procurement and technological advancements.

- Operational & Personnel Expenses: Rs 3.11 lakh crore (+10.24%) for salaries, logistics, and training.

- Pension Payments: Rs 1.61 lakh crore (+13.87%) covering retirees and One Rank One Pension (OROP) revisions.

- Defence R&D: Rs 26,816.82 crore (+12.41%) to advance AI, robotics, and space warfare.

- iDEX Program: Rs 449.62 crore, reflecting a threefold increase in two years for fostering Defence innovation.

- Border Infrastructure: Rs 7,146.50 crore (+9.74%) for key projects in Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Rajasthan.

While these allocations support domestic industry growth, they may not fully address India's last-mile dependency on foreign suppliers for critical technologies.

KEY AREAS OF LAST-MILE DEPENDENCY

Despite India's push for self-reliance, it continues to rely on foreign suppliers for several strategic technologies and components:

1. Advanced Defence

Technologies & Weapon Systems

- High-End Jet Engines: India depends on the U.S. (GE), France (Safran), and Russia for fighter jet engines.

- Electronic Warfare & Radars: Foreign collaborations remain essential for next-generation radar systems.

- Hypersonic & Long-Range Missiles: While BrahMos-II and Agni-V are progressing, full independence is yet to be achieved.

2. Semiconductor and AI Infrastructure

- Military-Grade Microprocessors: Used in fighter jets, missile guidance systems, and communication networks.

- AI & Quantum Computing for Defence: India's ecosystem for AI-driven battlefield technology is still developing.

3. Advanced Materials & Metallurgy

- Stealth Coatings & Composite Materials: Essential for low-observable aircraft and warships.

- High-Strength Alloys: Critical for next-gen armored vehicles and hypersonic weapons.

4. Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) Dependencies

- Spare Parts & Software Upgrades: India relies on Russia, Israel, and the U.S. for key military spares and maintenance.

ROADMAP TO CUT LAST-MILE DEPENDENCY

To transform India from a major arms importer to a self-reliant Defence power, a multi-pronged strategy is essential.

1. Indigenous Development of Next-Gen Defence Technologies

- Boosting Domestic R&D Investment: Increasing DRDO's budget and encouraging private-sector research

in AI, space surveillance, and quantum encryption.

- Accelerating the Defence Semiconductor & AI Mission: Establishing semiconductor fabs and AI-based Defence applications.

2. Strengthening Private Sector Participation

- Encouraging Indian Defence Startups: Expanding initiatives like iDEX to support indigenous innovation.

- Strategic Public-Private Partnerships: Enabling technology transfer through joint ventures with global Defence leaders.

3. Expanding Indigenous Production of Critical Systems

- Jet Engine Manufacturing: Accelerating Safran-HAL and GE-HAL collaborations for localized production.

- Stealth & Radar Technology: Investing in new-generation AESA radars and electromagnetic warfare systems.

4. Enhancing Supply Chain Resilience

- Reducing Foreign MRO Dependency: Establishing dedicated military repair and overhaul hubs.

- Localized Production of Spares: Increasing domestic manufacturing of critical components for fighter jets, submarines, and armored vehicles.

NEED FOR INCREASED PREPAREDNESS

The evolving security landscape necessitates greater investment in military readiness:

- China's Infrastructure Expansion in Nepal: Poses strategic threats near the Siliguri Corridor.

- Border Tensions with Bangladesh & Myanmar: Increasing risks of infiltration and smuggling.

- Cyber Warfare & AI-Driven Conflicts: Demands higher investment in digital security and intelligence networks.

KEY AREAS OF STRENGTHENING:

- Force Expansion: Increasing the number of active personnel in the Army and Air Force.

- Modernization of Equipment: Accelerating procurement of advanced fighter jets, missiles, and surveillance drones.

- Infrastructure Development: Strengthening border roads, logistics hubs, and rapid deployment facilities.

- R&D Investment: Enhancing DRDO funding for next-generation weapons and AI-based Defence systems.

ALIGNING BUDGETARY PRIORITIES WITH LONG-TERM STRATEGIC GOALS

India's declining Defence spending as a share of GDP highlights the need for a recalibrated approach. While self-reliance initiatives are progressing, addressing last-mile dependency in key technologies is crucial for strategic autonomy.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY:

- Increase Defence R&D Spending: Enhancing investments in AI, quantum computing, and hypersonic weapons.

- Strengthen Indigenous Production: Expanding private-sector participation and technology transfer programs.

- Build a Resilient Supply Chain: Reducing foreign dependency in MRO and critical spare parts.

- Expand Military Readiness: Aligning force expansion and equipment modernization with emerging threats.

A well-calibrated Defence budget that prioritizes self-reliance and technological advancement will be key to ensuring India's long-term security and global military positioning

PERSPECTIVE MALIGN ORGANISATIONS

THE DISMANTLING OF USAID AND NED

Who would have thought that in less than two weeks of Donald Trump becoming the President of the United States, he would ensure the opening of a can of worms when it comes to agencies like the USAID—and NED—long considered arms of the deep state? USAID, established by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, had a clear cut mandate—to deliver civilian foreign aid and development assistance to the world. It is a different matter that it has been accused of using its work as a cover to interfere in the matters of sovereign countries and conduct regime change operations. This has been a long-standing accusation. But now it is becoming public that even domestically USAID's deeds read like that of a history-sheeter—full of corruption, including graft, unethical practices and even funding bioweapons research. In fact, Elon Musk, who is in charge of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), and is fulfilling Trump's order of downsizing government, has called USAID a "criminal organization" and asserted that "it's time for it to die". He said this after two USAID officers refused to share some top secret files with DOGE. Ever since, USAID's website has gone "bad" and its social media handles has disappeared. It's as good as dead, while wild tales of its misdeeds are flooding cyberspace. Confirmation of USAID being shut down came from Elon Musk on Monday, who said that Trump has agreed to shut USAID down: "You've got to basically get rid of the whole thing. It's beyond repair ... We're shutting it down."

The other organisation on the Trump administration's crosshairs is the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which Musk has described as a "scam". Along with USAID, the NED has been actively involved in regime change operations internationally. In fact, the latest of its success stories is believed to be Bangladesh, where the government of Sheikh Hasina was overthrown by a so called students' revolution. The protests against Hasina were funded and engineered by NED. To give an instance, Dhaka University professors with close links with NED were part of the NED-funded project, Confronting Misinformation in Bangladesh, which was used to brainwash the students against Hasina. Among many such activities, reports say that it is NED that has been in the forefront of creating a misperception about Indian democracy by funding the "Journal of Democracy", which has been carrying articles against India under the Narendra Modi government, thus triggering the narrative of the backsliding of democracy in India. It also should not come as a surprise that regime change specialist Victoria Nuland is a part of the NED board of directors. This has to be seen in the context of what Robert F. Kennedy Junior said about USAID in an interview with Tucker Carlson. "USAID is a CIA front that used \$5 billion in 2014 to ignite a Colour Revolution in Ukraine. Victoria Nuland picked the new government a month before the old government was overthrown..."

Organisations like the USAID and NED are primarily into influence operations, and getting the governments of their choice in place in the countries they are targeting, for which they function through several non governmental organisations. It is pertinent to mention India's case here. Several of billionaire businesswoman George Soros' NGOs work with USAID and NED across the globe. The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), for instance, received funding from Soros' Open Society Foundations, from the US State Department, and as well as from the USAID and NED. It was OCCRP that was in the forefront of all the reports attacking the Indian government, including on Pegasus. Curiously, all these reports would make an appearance just ahead of every Parliament session, giving ammunition to Rahul Gandhi in particular to stall Parliament almost every day. As many would have noticed, no such international reports on India made an appearance ahead of the budget session of Parliament this year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has noticed this and mentioned as much. It cannot be a coincidence that such controversial reports vanished as soon as Trump became President. It goes without saying that this sudden "normalization" of the situation has everything to do with bodies like that USAID and NED falling victim to Trump's determination to dismantle the deep state—the deep state that tried to "cancel" him by sending him to prison. Trump is dealing the deep state a body-blow from which it will find it difficult to recover.

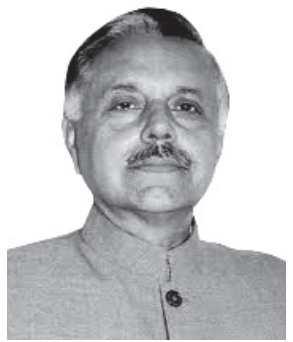
The obvious question is, why have some of our Opposition parties been working with the OCCRP and Soros' organisations, and hence with the US deep state? Why would a section of the Opposition in a sovereign democratic nation let itself be used by these deep state actors to try and topple an elected government? There is also some allegation that OCCRP has been funding some media organisations in different parts of the world, including in India. It appears that the can of worms that Donald Trump has exposed, will have deep repercussions in far-off shores too.

JOYEETA BASU

2025 : Rekindling intersocietal harmony

OPINION

LT GEN KAMAL DAVAR
(RETD)



The world currently is witnessing political instability, disruptions in myriad forms including kinetic conflicts and economic skirmishes as never before since the end of World War 2 in 1945. That India is located in one of the most volatile regions of the world is an acceptable fact. That currently with the transition in government in the globe's sole super power, the United States, the world awaits with bated breath their unpredictable President Donald Trump's handling of global affairs for his conduct in the next four

years is going to largely affect the geopolitics, geo-economics and thus peace and harmony of the world.

Flames from the nearly 2 years old Russian invasion of Ukraine, the 15 months old Israeli wars with the Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists in Gaza in the West Bank and Lebanon respectively, and the Iranian and Israeli long range missile exchanges and the violent change of the Syrian government among many kinetic disturbances at many other places also impacts our region too. India too faces, apart from its traditionally adversarial relations with China and Pakistan, earlier a pro-India Bangladesh and overnight, totally unexpectedly, becoming anti-India and anti-Hindu. Thus with Myanmar in India's north eastern region also in political turmoil, India's boundaries all around are a cause of significant security concerns to it. The nuances and causes of this

growing instability paradigm have to be analysed and course corrections undertaken where and when necessary.

"Conflict trajectories" have a habit of emerging out of nowhere—something India's security establishment has experienced many times in the past. But has it fully learnt from some of the avoidable debacles the country has experienced is a moot question. That South Asian nations are riven by religious considerations is an unfortunate truth which India needs to factor in its policies towards its neighbourhood.

Among the many factors which, since the beginning of time, has contributed to turmoil and conflicts in myriad forms is religion apart from in the same region multiplicity in languages, cultures, castes and creeds. That India is marked by mind boggling differences among its people is a unique characteristic of this ancient civilization albeit politically a young nation. That this unique diversity can be a source of conflict or a strength depends on how a nation, its people and, importantly, its government in power handles these wide differences. An aspect which any nation can forget only at its peril is that union in nation building, is sine

qua non for the well being and growth of a nation. All those countries which have attempted to sow divisions among their citizenry, for whatever reason, have had to pay dearly for practicing divisiveness. India has been known for its inclusiveness and secularism since its freedom struggle and its people understand that divisiveness will only harm its political integrity and development.

The world does look up to India for its universal outlook and a sense of tolerance towards all religions and we have to live up to these ideals for the good of humanity and ourselves. However, even some of our friendly nations have, in recent times, questioned India's current stance—some of their apprehensions and allegations are exaggerated—but we need to take cognizance of these observations nevertheless and ensure that India remains on the path of tolerance and equal respect for all religions.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, now in his unique third term as the nation's head, has to rein in all those, both in his party and others too who promote divisiveness in society by their actions for petty political gains. It is indeed encouraging to note the recent statement

of the chief of the staunchly pro Hindu organization, the Rashtriya Swyamsewak Sangh (RSS), Mohan Bhagwat, also exhorting his followers to stop looking for temples under all the mosques! The Centre and all state governments must sincerely observe the provisions of Section 4 of the Places of Worship Act 1991 which states that the religious nature of any place of worship as it was on August 15, 1947, will remain unchanged. Importantly, both the local Hindu and Muslim communities must come to mutually accepted solutions wherever contentious issues in the name of religion erupt. In their harmony lies their mutual welfare and the overall good of the nation.

In India it is not only communal problems arising from differences among the major communities but, at times, disharmony among various tribes in our North East region which is home to over 140 tribal communities who despite their differing ethnicity have, by and large, lived in peace over the years. The violent discord in Manipur state, since over a year, has caused major havoc in the lives of ordinary citizens among the Meities and Kuki communities leading to large scale arson, killings of

innocents and total disruption of day to day life. The Centre's inability to restore peace in this strategic region is a cause of dismay and further delays in resolving this problem will only ensure the embers of the Manipur state violence spreading to other states of our restive North East. Thus the Centre must use all its genius and resources to restore normalcy in this troubled state. With neighbouring Myanmar politically unstable and Bangladesh displaying a clear anti-India orientation, India cannot afford any internal disharmony in its border states.

Since decades India has endeavoured to harmonize its South Asian neighbourhood but with mixed results. As it continues to re-energise its "Neighbourhood First" policy, internal harmony within the nation is a prerequisite. As India yearns to be a "Vishwa Guru", all of us Indians must never forget the fact that every faith in India and abroad is a thread in the beautiful tapestry of humanity. And as we strengthen our collective identity as Indians, respecting all cultures equally, we will only then transcend to become true global citizens. Let us all thus embrace diversity as our eternal strength.

Cryptocurrencies have emerged as a transformative force in global finance, challenging traditional monetary systems and offering new avenues for digital transactions, investment, and innovation. While some nations have embraced digital assets, others have maintained a cautious approach due to concerns over volatility, financial crime, and regulatory control. India, a country with one of the highest numbers of cryptocurrency users, has had a fluctuating stance towards virtual assets. From initial skepticism and strict regulations to an ongoing reassessment of its position, India is now reviewing its cryptocurrency stance in light of shifting global attitudes, particularly following the United States' recent pro-crypto policy announcements.

This article explores India's evolving stance on cryptocurrencies, examining the influence of global regulatory changes, economic and technological considerations, and potential future scenarios for the country's digital asset landscape.



Donald Trump's 2025 inauguration as the 47th U.S. President may impact cryptocurrency markets. Key concerns include regulatory clarity, CBDCs, energy policies, and economic reforms. [binance.com](https://www.binance.com)

INDIA'S EVOLVING CRYPTO STANCE

India is reassessing its cryptocurrency regulations due to global shifts, notably the U.S.'s pro-crypto policies, aiming for a balanced approach.



RBI'S CRYPTO BAN

India's approach to cryptocurrency has undergone significant shifts over the years. In 2018, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a blanket ban on cryptocurrency transactions, citing concerns over financial stability, money laundering, and fraud. The move was met with resistance from industry stakeholders and investors, leading to legal battles that culminated in the Supreme Court of India overturning the ban in 2020. This marked a crucial turning point, allowing cryptocurrency exchanges and traders to operate legally once again.

CRYPTO TAXATION

In 2022, India took a decisive step towards regulating digital assets by introducing a 30% tax on cryptocurrency gains and a 1% Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) on crypto transactions. These measures significantly impacted trading volumes, as investors found the high tax rates discouraging. Despite this, the country witnessed continued interest in digital assets, with blockchain startups and Web3 projects growing in prominence.

The government's regulatory concerns have been reflected in recent enforcement actions. In December 2023, India's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) issued show-cause notices to nine offshore cryptocurrency exchanges, including Binance, for non-compliance with local financial laws. Binance was subsequently fined 188.2 million rupees (\$2.25 million) in June 2024, reinforcing India's firm stance on compliance.

GLOBAL INFLUENCES Policy Shift Under Donald Trump

One of the primary catalysts for India's reassessment of its crypto policy is the recent shift in U.S. regulations. In January

2025, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order titled "Strengthening American Leadership in Digital Financial Technology." This policy aims to regulate and promote the cryptocurrency industry while protecting individuals' rights to access blockchain networks, develop software, and participate in mining activities. Additionally, it prohibits the establishment of a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) in the U.S. and promotes dollar-backed stablecoins globally.

The executive order also establishes the President's Working Group on Digital Asset Markets, tasked with proposing regulatory reforms and exploring the creation of a national cryptocurrency stockpile. These developments indicate a major shift in the U.S. government's approach, transitioning from regulatory uncertainty to a structured framework supporting digital assets.

CRYPTO-FRIENDLY JURISDICTIONS

While the U.S. move towards crypto-friendly policies is significant, other countries have also played a role in shaping global attitudes towards digital assets: **El Salvador** became the first country to adopt Bitcoin as legal tender in 2021, positioning itself as a pioneer in national crypto adoption.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has created a regulatory framework that fosters innovation while ensuring compliance, attracting numerous blockchain-based businesses.

The European Union (EU) has introduced the Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA) regulatory framework, which seeks to create a unified set of rules for crypto transactions and exchanges within member states. Given these global devel-

The UAE is emerging as a crypto leader in the Middle East, with a 166% surge in traders, reaching 500,000 in 2024, and 72% investing in Bitcoin. theArabianpost.com.

opments, India's unilateral approach to crypto regulation may need realignment to remain competitive and attract digital asset investments.

ROLE OF CRYPTO IN INDIA'S DIGITAL ECONOMY

India has the second-largest internet user base in the world and a rapidly expanding fintech sector. Cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology can play a crucial role in financial inclusion, cross-border transactions, and decentralized applications (dApps). By adopting a well-defined regulatory framework, India could position itself as a hub for blockchain innovation, creating job opportunities and fostering economic growth.

CAPITAL FLIGHT

India's stringent tax policies and regulatory uncertainties have already led to a decline in crypto trading volumes, with many traders moving to offshore exchanges. Overregulation may further drive away crypto-based businesses, causing a loss of potential tax revenue and stifling innovation. A balanced regulatory framework is essential to retain domestic investments while ensuring compliance with security and financial laws.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

One of the key concerns of regulators is protecting retail investors from fraudulent schemes and financial losses. The cryp-

INDIA'S REGULATORY APPROACH TO CRYPTOCURRENCIES HAS EVOLVED SIGNIFICANTLY OVER THE YEARS:

February 1, 2018: Finance Minister Arun Jaitley declared that cryptocurrencies are not recognized as legal tender and emphasized eliminating their use in illegal activities, while supporting blockchain technology.

April 5, 2018: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a directive preventing banks from facilitating cryptocurrency transactions. This decision was later challenged in the Supreme Court.

March 2020: The Supreme Court overturned the RBI's 2018 directive, allowing banks to resume dealings with cryptocurrency exchanges.

February 2021: A government committee recommended banning private cryptocurrencies, except those issued by the state.

November 2021: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated in Parliament that there was no proposal to recognize Bitcoin as a currency and acknowledged the absence of data on Bitcoin transactions.

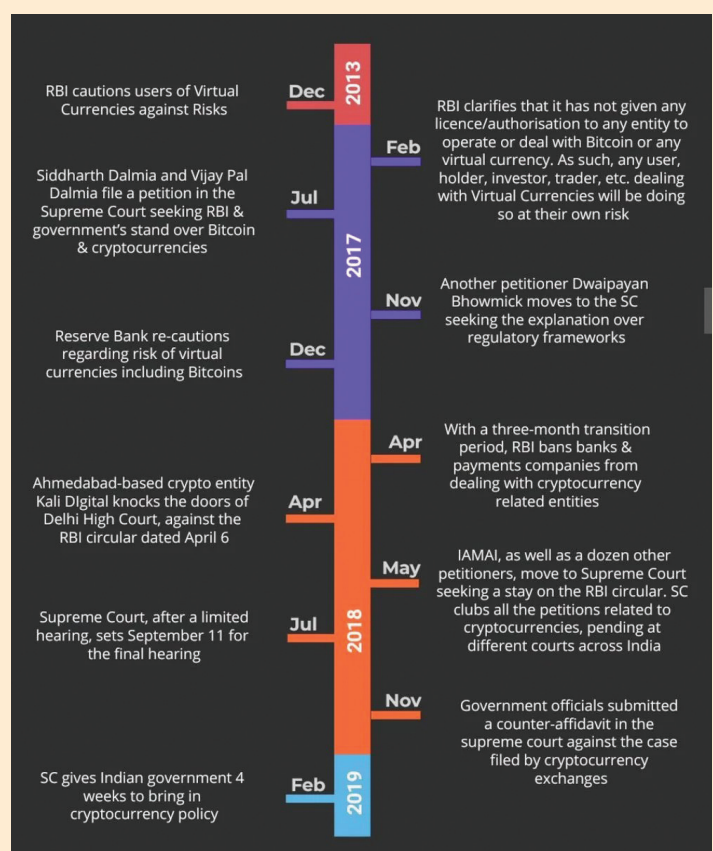
February 1, 2022: The government introduced a 30% tax on income from cryptocurrency transactions and a 1% Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) on such transactions, signaling a move towards formal taxation without a comprehensive regulatory framework.

July 2022: Sitharaman emphasized that an effective ban on cryptocurrencies would require international collaboration to assess risks and benefits.

January 2023: RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das advocated for a complete ban on cryptocurrencies, equating them to gambling.

September 1, 2023: G20 nations endorsed the Financial Stability Board's recommendations to regulate crypto assets and mitigate associated risks.

October 12, 2023: At a meeting in Marrakesh, Morocco, G20 finance ministers adopted a synthesis paper released by the International Monetary Fund and the Financial Stability Board, furthering international regulatory efforts.



"Bitcoin is a tool for freeing humanity from oligarchs and tyrants, dressed up as a get-rich-quick scheme."
— Naval Ravikant, former CEO of AngelList.

involvement in developing a regulated crypto ecosystem. India's reassessment of its cryptocurrency stance reflects a broader global trend of nations revisiting their digital asset policies. The recent shift in the U.S., along with evolving regulatory frameworks in the EU, UAE, and other jurisdictions, underscores the need for a balanced and progressive approach.

For India, the key lies in finding a middle ground that fosters innovation, attracts investment, and ensures financial security. The adoption of a structured regulatory framework could unlock significant economic benefits, positioning India as a leader in the global crypto space. As the government deliberates on its next steps, the outcome of this review will shape the future of cryptocurrency in one of the world's largest and most dynamic markets.

Compiled by Ruchira Talapatra



Bitcoin is accepted everywhere for goods and services in El Salvador, alongside the US dollar. On 24 January 2022, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged El Salvador to reverse its decision to make Bitcoin legal tender. bbc.com

CRYPTO TRADING VOLUME OF TOP 4 INDIAN EXCHANGES

	WazirX	CoinDCX	Bitbns	ZebPay	Total
November	65.13	48.38	117.64	18.91	250
December	100.55	75.45	61	22	259.02
January	81.06	65.41	18.1	38.29	202.88
% of change between Dec'23 and Jan'24	-19.38%	-13.30%	-70.32%	74.01%	-21.67%

Source: cryptotimes.io

Pros and Cons of Cryptocurrency

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separation from government authorities User anonymity Encrypted protection Accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of government regulation Irreversibility Potentially volatile investments Limited places of use
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Source: us.norton.com

ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT: HUSBAND'S RELATIVES WHO DO NOT EVEN LIVE IN SHARED HOUSEHOLD ARE IMPLICATED IN CASES FOR HARASSMENT

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Allahabad High Court in the case *Krishnawati Devi And 06 Others vs. State of U.P. and Another* observed that in many cases, to harass the family of husband or the person in a domestic relationship, the aggrieved party implicates relatives who have never lived with them in the shared household.

The bench headed by Justice Arun Kumar Deshwal in the case issued notice under section 12 of the Domestic Violence Act, thus, the courts must look into whether the person who is being implicated is living or ever lived with the aggrieved person in a shared household.

It has also been observed by the court that before issuing notice to individuals named as respondents in an application under the Domestic Violence Act, the concerned court needs to ensure that the following



conditions are satisfied:

"The respondent must be related to the aggrieved person in the manner as mentioned in Section 2(f) and he lived or has been living together with aggrieved person in a shared household and then commits domestic violence in the manner mentioned in Section 3 of Domestic Violence Act."

The single judge made the said observations wherein the court quashed the proceedings or complaints under Section 12 of the Domestic Violence Act against five accused (the married

sisters of the husband and the husband of one of the sisters), noting that they had not lived with the opposite party no. 2 (wife) in a shared household.

However, the court in the case refused to quash the case against applicant no.1 i.e., the mother-in-law, noting that she had been residing in a shared household and thus would fall within the definition of the respondent.

It was also alleged before the court that she harassed the wife for the demand of dowry and extended a

threat to evict her from the shared household.

The court also stressed that the proceedings initiated under the Domestic Violence Act can be initiated when the domestic violence, as mentioned in Section 3 of the Domestic Violence Act, is committed by the respondent who is living in a domestic relationship with the aggrieved person.

The court in the case noted that in the instant case, applicants nos. 2 to 6 are relatives of applicant no. 7 (husband) and they have been residing separately,

therefore, as per Section 2(q) of the Domestic Violence Act, they cannot be termed as respondents as they have not been residing in a shared household with the opposite party no. 2. Thus, quashing the case against applicants 2 to 6, the Court emphasized that in many cases, the aggrieved parties falsely implicate the husband's relatives, who had never lived with them in the shared household, merely to harass them.

The court stated that before issuing a notice under Section 12 of the DV Act, courts must verify whether the person being implicated actually lived with the aggrieved party in a shared household.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case clarified that the below would be free to proceed against applicants nos. 1 i.e., mother-in-law and 7 (husband) and decide the case against them expeditiously within a period of 60 days.

Centre allows private entities to Use Aadhaar for authentication, notifies Aadhaar Amendment Rules

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, MeitY has notified the Aadhaar Authentication for Good Governance (Social Welfare, Innovation, Knowledge) Amendment Rules, 2025 under the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016.

The said amendment enables both government and non-government entities to avail Aadhaar authentication service for providing various services.

However, any entity which is seeking Aadhaar authentication will be required to apply with the details of intended requirements to the concerned ministry or department of the Central or the State government in a format being made available on a portal for this purpose.

Therefore, the application will be examined by UIDAI and MeitY will issue the ap-



The said amendment enables both government and non-government entities to avail Aadhaar authentication service for providing various services.

proval based on the recommendation of UIDAI and the concerned ministry or department of the Central or State Government will notify the entity for Aadhaar usage after receiving confirmation from MeitY.

The MeitY said in X, with regards to the amendment that, 'Aadhaar Authentication expanded to government and private entities for providing various ser-

vices in the public interest boosting innovation knowledge, and public service enhancement.

The Amendments to enhance the scope for residents in availing many new services seamlessly w.r.t E-Commerce, Travel, Tourism, Hospitality, and Health Services

Amended Rules to promote the ease of living and livelihood!

Kerala court issues non-bailable warrant against Baba Ramdev after his non-appearance in objectionable ads case

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Kerala Court in the case *Drugs Inspector Palakkad v. Divya Pharmacy and others* observed and has issued non-bailable warrants against Baba Ramdev and Acharya Balakrishna following the non-appearance of them in the criminal case filed by Kerala Drugs Inspector against Divya Pharmacy over alleged misleading medical ads.

The court issued warrants to secure their presence on February 15.

Earlier, the court Judicial First Class Magistrate-II Palakkad) had issued bailable warrants to the accused for their appearance on February 1. Since they did not appear on February 1, the Court has now issued non-bailable warrants.



Divya Pharmacy is an affiliated company of Patanjali Ayurved.

In the present matter, the complaint has been filed by the Drug Inspector under Section 3, 3 (b) and 3 (d) of The Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954.

The section 3 prohibits the advertisement of certain drugs for the treatment of certain diseases and disorders.

The Section 3 (b) prohibits advertisements of drugs claiming maintenance or improvement of the capacity of human beings for sexual pleasure.

The Section 3 (d) prohibits advertisements of drugs that claim the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment or prevention of any disease, disorder or condition of diseases provided in the Rules made under the Act.

However, Divya Phar-

macy is the first accused, Acharya Balakrishna the second accused and Baba Ramdev the third accused in the case.

Background of the Case: Patanjali Ayurved products were under the scrutiny of the Supreme Court for publishing misleading advertisements against modern systems of medicines like Allopathy.

Later, the court in the case issued a contempt notice to Patanjali Ayurved for continuing to publish such misleading advertisements that disparage allopathy and make false claims about curing certain diseases.

The contempt cases were later closed by the Supreme Court accepting the public apology issued by Ramdev, Acharya Balakrishna and Patanjali Ayurved.

SC rejects refund claim for private out-of-court settlement: 'Court fee refund only if case settled through adr mechanism'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Jaga Ram Versus Ved Kaur And Ors* observed and has held that the litigants who resolve their disputes privately outside of court are not entitled to a refund of court fees.

The court in the case stated that the refund of the court fees is permissible only 'if the present matter is being referred to Arbitration, Conciliation, judicial settlement, including through Lok Adalat or mediation for settlement and the case is decided in terms of such a settlement and not otherwise.'

The bench comprising of Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah was hearing the present matter.

The court in the case was

The court in the case stated that the refund of the court fees is permissible only 'if the present matter is being referred to Arbitration, Conciliation, judicial settlement, including through Lok Adalat or mediation for settlement and the case is decided in terms of such a settlement and not otherwise.'

hearing the SLP where the petitioner was aggrieved by the High Court's refusal to refund the court fees paid by him in the trial court, first appeal and second appeal because the case was amicably settled on their own outside the court without an aid of Alternative Dispute Resolution, ADR mechanism.

The court in the case noted that because the second

appeal was decided not in reference to any of the ADR mechanism but on the settlement arrived between the parties, therefore no error was committed in the impugned decision in denying the refund of the court fees.

Further, the court noted that, 'The settlement in terms of which the second appeal was decided by the High Court is not on refer-

ence to any of the above authorities or for a rather it was an amicable settlement out of the court.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that, 'This court is of the opinion that the petitioner is not entitled to refund of the court fees and the High Court has not committed any error or illegality in refusing such a prayer.

The counsel, Mr. Rajinder Singh Kataria, Adv. Mr. S.P. Laler, Adv. Ms. Twinkle Kataria, Adv. Mr. Rameshwar Prasad Goyal, AOR appeared for the Petitioner(s).

The counsel, Mr. Deepak Thukral, AAG Mr. Samar Vijay Singh, AOR Ms. Sabarni Som, Adv. Mr. Aman Dev Sharma, Adv. Mr. Fateh Singh, Adv. represented the Respondent(s).

Supreme Court dismisses PIL challenging provisions of Dowry Prohibition Act

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Rupshi Singh Versus Union Of India And Ors* observed and has dismissed the Public Interest Litigation, PIL filed challenging validity of Section 2, Section 3, Section 4 and Section 8A of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 as "adverse to men".

The bench comprising of Justice BR Gavai and Justice K Vinod Chandran passed the order.

The counsel appearing for the petitioner submitted before the court that he was 'concerned about the invalidity of laws.'

Further, the petitioner submitted that the impugned provisions adversely affect men.

The bench of Justice Gavai probed as to who the petitioner was. The counsel replied to the same, saying "I am a public spirited person".

The bench in the case asked the petitioner to ap-



proach the Parliament.

In the present matter, the Public Interest Litigation, PIL was filed by one Rupshi Singh, impleading the Union of India as well as the Prime Minister.

It has been assailed that Section 2, Section 3, Section 4 and Section 8A of the Dowry Prohibition Act which deal with definition of dowry (Section 2), penalty for giving or taking dow-

ry (Section 3), penalty for demanding dowry (Section 4) and burden of proof in certain cases (Section 8A).

The Supreme Court in the case observed and has dismissed another Public Interest Litigation, PIL seeking a review of the anti-dowry laws and domestic cruelty judgments.

Following the tragic death of Atul Subhash, allegedly due to harassment by his

wife, the petitioner in this case approached the Court seeking to ensure that husbands (and their family members) are not harassed in false cases of domestic violence and under dowry laws.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has dismissed the petition, saying making of law is upto the Parliament.

SC: Plea filed for issuance of OBC certificates to children of single mothers without certificate from paternal side, notice issued

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Santosh Kumari Versus Government Of NCT Of Delhi And Ors* observed and has issued notice on the Public Interest Litigation, PIL filed seeking amendment in the guidelines for grant of OBC (Other Backward Classes) certificates to children of single mothers, so that the same can be issued based on OBC certificates of the single mothers, without insistence on certificates from the paternal side.

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

The bench in the case passed the order seeking the response of Delhi government as well as Union of India.

The petitioner, who be-



ing a retired teacher from MCD, claims that as per existing guidelines, caste certificates to children of single mothers from OBC category cannot be granted on the basis of the certificate of the mother and the applicant has to produce OBC certificate from a paternal blood relative - which includes father or grandfather or uncle.

The court observed that as the criteria excludes single mothers from OBC category - divorced

women, widows, women who have adopted - from applying for an OBC certificate for their children based on their own certificate, the petitioner asserts, it is discriminatory and violative of Article 14 and Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The petitioner in the plea highlighted that the children of single mothers belonging to Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes category are allowed to obtain caste cer-

tificates on the basis of their mothers, but not children belonging to OBCs.

It has been contended with regards to the violation of Article 21 of Constitution of India that the denial of OBC certificates on the above basis affects children of single mothers from OBC category socially and financially.

The court in the case also observed that because insistence on the OBC certificate of the father or paternal side by the respondents for issuing OBC certificate to the children of Single Mother (which includes Divorced mother, widow etc) belonging to OBC Category is totally against the rights of the children brought up by a single mother and also against the provisions of the Constitution of India.

The petition has been filed by AOR Vipin Kumar.

TOP OF THE DAY

ISRAELI POLICE INVESTIGATING STABBING ROW

TEL AVIV: Israeli Police are investigating the stabbing of a 40-year-old man in the Israeli-Arab town of Abu Ghosh outside Jerusalem on Monday morning. Magen David Adom emergency responders gave the victim initial treatment before evacuating him to the Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem. It isn't clear if the attack was criminal or terror-related. This stabbing comes amid a broader security climate in Israel, with rising incidents of violence between Israelis and Palestinians. Jerusalem, a city with deep religious and political significance, often finds itself at the heart of such tensions.

EARTHQUAKE JOLTS AFGHANISTAN

KABUL: An earthquake of magnitude 4.1 jolted Afghanistan on Monday, as per a statement by the National Center of Seismology. As per NCS, the earthquake took place at a depth of 10km, making it more susceptible to aftershocks. "EQ of M: 4.1, On: 03/02/2025 14:58:48 IST, Lat: 36.34 N, Long: 71.01 E, Depth: 10 Km, Location: Afghanistan," the NCS said in a post on X. Earlier on January 30, an earthquake of magnitude 4.2 jolted the region. "EQ of M: 4.2, On: 30/01/2025 02:15:26 IST, Lat: 36.26 N, Long: 70.84 E, Depth: 10 Km, Location: Afghanistan," NCS stated. Shallow earthquakes like this are generally more dangerous than deep earthquakes.

THAI OFFICIALS SEEK TO SECURE LAST HOSTAGE

TEL AVIV: A high-ranking delegation of Thai officials expressed gratitude and hope following the release of five Thai hostages from Hamas captivity during an emotional visit to Jerusalem's Western Wall on Monday. Thailand's Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa, Deputy Foreign Minister Russ Jalichandra and Royal Thai Army Chief of Staff Gen. Songwit Noonpackdee are visiting Israel to secure the release of one Thai hostage and the bodies of two others still in Gaza.

TAIWAN FINDS 21 CHINESE PLANES IN ITS TERRITORY

TAIPEI: Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) detected 21 Chinese aircraft 7 naval vessels, and 1 official ship operating around the island as of 6 am (UTC+8) on Monday. Among them, 14 aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's southwestern Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). Sharing a post on X, MND wrote, "21 PLA aircraft and 7 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 14 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. 1 PRC balloons were detected during this timeframe."

WAR-TORN PALESTINIANS SEEK SHORT-TERM SHELTER IN GAZA

Rebuilding could take 10-15 years and before that, Gazans will have to live somewhere, US envoy said.

AGENCIES
CAIRO/RAMALLAH

With fighting in Gaza paused, Palestinians are appealing for billions of dollars in emergency aid - from heavy machinery to clear rubble to tents and caravans to house people made homeless by Israeli bombardment.

One official from the Palestinian Authority estimated immediate funding needs of \$6.5 billion for temporary housing for Gaza's population of more than two million, even before the huge task of long-term reconstruction begins.

U.S. special Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff estimated last week that rebuilding could take 10-15 years. But before that, Gazans will have to live somewhere.

Hamas, the militant Palestinian group that has moved quickly to reassert control of Gaza after a temporary ceasefire began last month,

THE REFUGE



Palestinians transport aid supplies on an animal-drawn cart, amid a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, in Gaza City, February 3, 2025.

- Gaza needs \$6.5 billion in temporary housing aid, PA official says
- Hamas requests 200,000 tents, 60,000 caravans for displaced Gazans
- Impediments to importing medical and shelter equipment remain

says Gaza has immediate needs for 200,000 tents and 60,000 caravans.

In addition, it says there is urgent need for heavy digging equipment to begin clearing millions of tonnes of rubble left by the

war, both to clear ground for housing and to recover more than 10,000 bodies estimated to be buried there.

Two Egyptian sources said heavy machinery was waiting at the border crossing and was due to be sent

'DUAL USE' GOODS FACE IMPEDIMENTS

But he said there were still impediments to importing medical and shelter equipment which would be vital to sustain the population but which Israel considers to have potential "dual use" - civilian or military.

"This is a reminder to you that many of the items that are dual use need also to enter into Gaza like medical and also tents," he told reporters in Geneva. More than half a million people who fled northern Gaza have returned home, many with nothing more than what they could carry with them on foot. They were confronted by an unrecognizable wasteland of rubble where their houses once stood. "I came back to Gaza City to find my house in ruins, with no place else to stay, no tents, no caravans, and not even a place we can rent as most of the city was destroyed," said Gaza businessman, Imad Turk, whose house and wood factory in Gaza City were destroyed by Israeli airstrikes during the war.

"We don't know when the reconstruction will begin, we don't know if the truce will hold, we don't want to be forgotten by the world," Turk told Reuters via a chat app. Countries from Egypt and Qatar to Jordan, Turkey and China have expressed readiness to help, but Palestinian officials blame Israel for delays. Egypt and Qatar both helped broker the ceasefire that has, for now, stopped the fighting.

There was no immediate response from the Israeli military to a request for comment.

surged since the ceasefire and were already at two or three times monthly levels before the truce began.

World Food Programme official Antoine Renard said Gaza's food imports had

into Gaza from Tuesday.

Gazans in Egypt reject displacement, not know when to go home

AGENCIES
CAIRO

Weeks into the ceasefire in Gaza, thousands of Palestinians who left for neighbouring Egypt are grappling with the question of when they might go home, though they reject the prospect of a mass displacement proposed by U.S. President Donald Trump.

"A lot of people are torn, and I am one of them," said Shorouk, who earns a living selling Palestinian food in Cairo, going by the name Gaza Girl. "Do you choose to go back and sit in the destruction and a place that still needs to be reconstructed or stay and go back when it is reconstructed?"

Whether or not she is able to go home soon, she does not want people like her to be accepted as residents outside Palestinian land.



Many people have headed to the Rafah border crossing, which connects Gaza with Egypt, in hopes of fleeing the strip. File Photo

"We, the people of Gaza, can only live in Gaza," she said. "If they give us residencies, the cause will be lost."

A proposal by Trump that much of the population of Gaza be cleared out and residents sent en masse to Egypt and Jordan has been universally denounced across the Arab world as a form of ethnic cleansing. "You're talking

about a million and half people, and we just clean out that whole thing," Trump said. Asked if it would be a temporary or long term solution, he said: "Could be either."

Egypt says it will never participate in the mass displacement of Palestinians, which President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi described as an "act of injustice".

Israel claims 50 Palestinian terrorists killed in West Bank offensive

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Sunday (local time) claimed that it has killed 50 Palestinian terrorists since launching an offensive in the northern West Bank nearly a fortnight ago, as reported by The Times of Israel.

The IDF said that 35 gunmen were killed during operations in Jenin, Tulkarem, and the Tamun area, while 15 others were killed in drone strikes. The IDF also admitted to "mistakenly" targeting civilians, including a toddler, during these operations. The Times of Israel reported.

According to the IDF, it has detained 100 Palestinian terrorists and over 40 weapons have been confiscated. More than 80 explosives were also neutralised during the "Operation Iron

Car bomb kills 15 in northern Syria, deadliest since Assad toppled

AGENCIES
DAMASCUS

A car bomb killed at least 15 people in the northern Syrian city of Manbij on Monday, the second attack there in three days and Syria's deadliest since Bashar al-Assad was toppled from power in December.

There were no immediate claims of responsibility for the attack in Manbij, located some 30 km (19 miles) from the Turkish border. The civil defence rescue service identified the dead as 14 women and one man, and said another 15 women were wounded.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) condemned the car bombing, accusing Turkey-backed factions of using such bombings and violence to intimidate local residents. The victims

were agricultural workers and the death toll was likely to increase, a civil defence official said.

Manbij has changed hands numerous times during Syria's 13-year civil war, most recently in December when Turkish-backed groups captured it from the U.S.-backed SDF, which is led by the Kurdish YPG militia.

The SDF had taken Manbij from Islamic State militants in 2016. On Saturday, a car bomb in Manbij killed four civilians and wounded nine others, including children, the Syrian state news agency SANA reported. Assad was ousted from power on Dec. 8 after a lightning offensive by the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group, whose leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, was declared Syria's transitional president last week.



Syrian defense workers inspect the area of a car bomb attack on the outskirts of Manbij city, Syria, on Feb. 3, 2025. (Courtesy: Syrian Civil Defense White Helmets)

China renews threat to retaliate against US tariffs

AGENCIES
TAIPEI

U.S. President Donald Trump's trade war with Canada, Mexico and China is ramping up over the production and importation of the opiate fentanyl, along with trade surpluses and illegal border crossings by migrants from across the globe.

China has reiterated its threat to take "necessary countermeasures to defend its legitimate rights and interests" following Trump's decision to impose 10% tariffs on China for allegedly doing too little to stem the production of precursor chemicals for fentanyl.



The Foreign Ministry statement issued Sunday did not mention any specific retaliatory measures, but said "China calls on the United States to correct its wrongdoings, maintain the hard-won positive dynamics in the counternarcotics cooperation, and promote a steady, sound and sustainable development of China-U.S. relationship."

Fly Jinnah to operate Dhaka-Karachi flights soon

AGENCIES
DHAKA

Karachi-based airline Fly Jinnah is set to operate Dhaka-Karachi flights soon, Bangladeshi government officials said on Monday.

After the launch of a direct shipping line between Chittagong in Bangladesh and Karachi in Pakistan, a direct air link between the two countries will be launched soon, they said.

"Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAA) has approved a proposal of Fly Jinnah to operate direct flights between Bangladesh and Pakistan", said Abdul Naser Khan, Additional



Secretary to Bangladesh's Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism.

"We will sign a deal to resume Dhaka-Karachi direct flights", he told ANI, without elaborating.

Recently, Bangladesh signed a deal with Pakistan to import 50,000 tonnes of rice, the officials said.

Bangladesh's interim gov-

ernment had earlier lifted the visa restrictions against Pakistan.

In January, Bangladesh's High Commissioner to Pakistan Iqbal Hussain Khan said, "Now the relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh have started a new era. The relations are going to be strengthened in multi-dimensional ways.

10 Indian fishermen detained by Sri Lankan Navy in Gulf of Mannar

AGENCIES
RAMESWARAM

The Sri Lankan Navy has detained 10 Indian fishermen from Mandapam in Ramanathapuram district and seized their mechanised boats while they were fishing in the Gulf of Mannar. The fishermen were apprehended near the Mannar Lowlands and taken to the Mannar naval base for questioning, according to the Mandapam Fisherman Association. The detained fishermen have been identified as D Efran, S Dron of Thangachimadam, and Prasad, Muniyaswamy, Siva, Anthony, Payas, Sesu, and K Ravi from Mandapam



Representative Image

Gandhinagar. Officials have stated that after interrogation, the fishermen and their boat (IND TN 11 MM 258) will be handed over to the Sri Lankan Fisheries Department for legal proceedings. The incident has sparked unrest among the local fishing community, who have repeatedly raised concerns about such detentions.

North Korea unlikely to respond to Trump's overture soon

AGENCIES
SEOUL

In its first direct criticism of the Trump administration, North Korea lashed out at U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio for calling it a "rogue" state and warned Monday that such "coarse and nonsensical remarks" will never contribute to U.S. interests.

The statement is the latest in a series of North Korean signals that it's not interested in resuming diplomacy with the United States anytime soon, though Trump has said he'll reach out to its leader Kim Jong Un.

Many experts say that Kim, preoccupied with his deployment of troops to Russia, is likely concentrat-

ing on developments in the Russia-Ukraine war for now. But they say Kim would eventually seriously consider Trump's overture if he assessed he cannot maintain the current solid partnership with Russia after the war ends.

"Now, Kim Jong Un is desperate to maintain the unshakable alliance with Rus-



North Korea leader Kim Jong Un

sia but it remains to be seen whether Russia would do so as he wishes," said Moon Seong Mook, an analyst for the Seoul-based Korea Research Institute for National Strategy.

Here's a look at prospects for a possible restart of the Trump-Kim diplomacy:

Trump hints at return to negotiations with Kim

During his first term, Trump met Kim three times in 2018-19, becoming the first sitting U.S. president to hold a summit with a North Korean leader. The negotiations over North Korea's nuclear program eventually fell apart, but Trump's return spawned speculation that a fresh round of talks could begin soon.

THE IRONSERIES



Several competitors during the Ironseries Final at North Burleigh in Gold Coast, Australia. Source: Matt Roberts

'EU will stand up for itself in face of Trump tariffs threat'

AGENCIES
BRUSSELS

The EU will stand up for itself if its interests are targeted, Emmanuel Macron has said, as the bloc's leaders urged talks but a firm response if needed to Donald Trump's weekend threat to impose punishing tariffs.

"If our commercial interests are attacked, Europe, as a true power, will have to make itself respected and therefore react," the French president said as he arrived for an informal defence meeting with other leaders in Brussels on Monday.

The latest "choices and statements" by the new US president's administration were "pushing the EU to be more united and more active to respond to issues of collective security", he said.

Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz, said the EU was strong enough to react to any US trade levies but "the goal should be that things result in cooperation". The bloc's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, said there would be "no winners in a trade war".

Europe and the US needed each other, she said, while the Polish prime minister, Donald



France's President, Emmanuel Macron, speaks to the press as he arrives for an informal EU leaders' retreat at the Palais d'Égmont in Brussels. Photograph: File Photo

Tusk, said a trade war was "a complete mistake" and everything possible must be done to stop allies fighting "in the face of a Russian threat or Chinese expansion".

The Danish prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, said Copenhagen would generally "never support fighting allies", but "[if the Trump administration imposed] tough tariffs on Europe, we need a collective and robust response".

Trump imposed swinging tariffs on goods imported from Canada, Mexico and China on Saturday, sparking retaliation from all three countries. He said on Sunday night that new tariffs on the EU would "definitely happen".

goods from Republican states such as Harley-Davidson motorbikes, bourbon, denim and orange juice.

The European Commission said before Trump's latest threat that it regretted his decision to impose tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China.

"Our trade and investment relationship with the US is the biggest in the world," a spokesperson said on Sunday. "There is a lot at stake. Tariffs create unnecessary economic disruption ... and are hurtful to all sides," they said, but the EU would "respond firmly to any trading partner that unfairly or arbitrarily imposes tariffs on EU goods".

Leaders called for more dialogue with Washington. Ireland's prime minister, Micheál Martin, said the EU and US "need to work together constructively" on trade because protectionism would hurt citizens "wherever they reside".

Finland's prime minister, Petteri Orpo, also said Europe must negotiate with Trump on trade. "I am not going to start a war, I want to start negotiations," he said, adding that the biggest threat to Europe was Russia.

Mexico assures investors, claims ability to handle financial shocks

AGENCIES
MEXICO CITY

Mexico has enough resources to absorb financial shocks and navigate global challenges after the United States announced 25% tariffs on its goods, Finance Minister Rogelio Ramirez de la O said on Monday.

Ramirez de la O, speaking to investors earlier



Mexico's Finance Minister Rogelio Ramirez de la O speaks at the Congress in Mexico City, Mexico November 20, 2024. File Photo

in the day, aimed to ease market jitters saying that Mexico was not only resilient but also remained a strategic and trustworthy destination for investors.

Global financial markets fell on Monday following the tariffs imposed on Canada, Mexico and China by U.S. President Donald Trump, while world

leaders steeled themselves to respond to his next moves, with the European Union potentially next in line. The peso lost about 1.57% against the dollar and was trading at 21.0260.

Ramirez de la O said Mexico's flexible exchange rate was the cornerstone of the country's macroeconomic framework.

'ALARMING RISE IN RUSSIAN KILLING OF UKRAINIAN SOLDIERS'

The mission in Ukraine said it had received reports of 79 executions in 24 separate incidents since the end of August last year.

AGENCIES
KYIV

The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission has recorded an "alarming rise" in reported executions of Ukrainian soldiers captured by the Russian armed forces during the war in recent months, it said on Monday.

The mission in Ukraine said it had received reports of 79 executions in 24 separate incidents since the end of August last year. International humanitarian law prohibits the execution of prisoners of war and the wounded, and regards it as a war crime.

"Many Ukrainian soldiers who surrendered or were in physical custody of the Russian armed forces were shot dead on the spot. Witness accounts also described the killings of unarmed and injured Ukrainian soldiers," the mission said in a statement.

Commenting on the report, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said the Russian atrocities demanded urgent international action.

"Russia's horrific executions of Ukrainian prisoners of war demonstrate that Ukraine confronts true beasts," he said on X. "We

Ukraine Police pleads with reluctant residents to leave

TDG NETWORK
POKROVSK

When the elderly Ukrainian couple refused Hennadii Yudin's pleas for them to evacuate their war-torn eastern city of Pokrovsk, the sturdy police officer tried another tactic: calling their grandchildren.

"Come on, tell them they need to leave," he implored them over a mobile video call. "We're standing here - we came here just for them."

A short time later, Leonid and Yelena were smiling inside an armoured van as they sped away from Pokrovsk, a logistics hub currently under threat by advancing Russian forces.

Some 7,000 remain out of a pre-war population of 60,000, regional officials said last week, despite cuts to electricity, water and heating.

Australia imposes sanctions on right-wing online network 'Terrorgram'

AGENCIES
SYDNEY

Australia on Monday imposed sanctions on extreme right-wing online network "Terrorgram" as part of its efforts to combat a rise in antisemitism and online extremism, following similar moves by Britain and the United States.

WAR BRUTALITY

- 79 executions recorded in 24 separate incidents since August 2024.
- International humanitarian law prohibits the execution of prisoners of war and the wounded.
- Many victims were shot on the spot, including unarmed and injured soldiers.
- Ukraine's Foreign Minister calls for urgent international action and legal tools to hold perpetrators accountable.
- The Russian Defence Ministry has not yet responded to the report.
- UN mission analyzed videos, photos, and conducted witness interviews to document executions.
- Executions primarily occurred in areas of active Russian military operations.
- Some Russian officials have called for the execution and inhumane treatment of captured Ukrainian soldiers.



Graves of unidentified people killed by Russian soldiers during occupation of the Bucha town, seen at the town's cemetery outside Kyiv, Ukraine March 30, 2023. File Photo

need new and effective international legal tools, and concrete steps to hold the perpetrators accountable."

The Russian defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The UN body obtained and analysed video and photographic material published by Ukrainian and Russian sources showing executions

or dead bodies and conducted detailed interviews with witnesses.

It said the reported executions took place in areas where Russian offensive operations were underway.

Danielle Bell, head of the mission, said some Russian officials "have explicitly called for inhumane treatment, and even execution" of captured Ukrainian soldiers.

The mission said it also documented the execution of a wounded and incapacitated Russian soldier by the Ukrainian armed forces in 2024, but gave no details.

The Ukrainian prosecutor's office earlier said it was investigating dozens of cases of executions of Ukrainian military personnel by Russian forces.

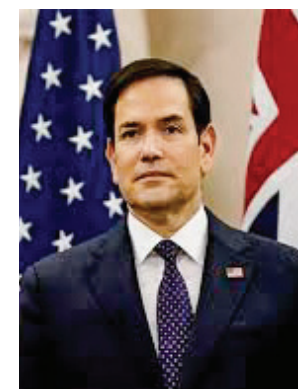
Limit Chinese influence or face 'necessary action': US to Panama

AGENCIES
PANAMA CITY

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio cautioned Panama about China's influence and control over the Panama Canal, calling the situation "unacceptable" and said that the US will take "necessary measures" if changes are not made.

During a meeting with Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino and Foreign Minister Javier Martinez on Sunday in Panama City, Rubio conveyed US President Donald Trump's concerns.

US President Donald Trump "has made a preliminary determination that the current position of influence and control of the Chinese Communist Party over the Panama Canal area is a threat," State Department spokesperson Tammy



Bruce said in a statement.

Rubio made it clear that the current situation is "unacceptable" and in the case of "absent immediate changes, it would require the United States to take measures necessary to protect its rights under the Treaty," concerning the Permanent Neutrality and Operation of the Panama Canal.

Rubio arrived in Panama on Saturday, marking his

first trip since holding the job as US top diplomat.

Rubio's choice to visit Central America - Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic - is intentional and meant to drive forward the Trump agenda by "paying closer attention to our own neighbourhood," CNN reported.

Trump in his inaugural address on January 20, claimed that China is "operating" the Panama Canal and US is going to "take it back" as the US has been treated "unfairly."

After being sworn in as the 47th US President at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, he said, "The United States, I mean, think of this, spent more money than ever spent on a project before and lost 38 lives in the building of the Panama Canal.

France's PM to risk confidence vote with second attempt to force through budget

AGENCIES
PARIS

The French prime minister, François Bayrou, is preparing to ignore threats of a no-confidence motion and force the 2025 budget bill through without a vote.

With no majority in the Assemblée Nationale, the centrist politician has little choice but to use the constitutional measure, known as the "49.3", on Monday to pass the legislation aimed at

reducing the country's soaring deficit.

The hard-left France Unbowed (La France Insoumise or LFI) has said it will lodge a confidence vote immediately afterwards, a move supported by the country's ecology party (EELV) and Communist party (PCF) but not by the Parti Socialiste (PS).

The far-right National Rally party (RN) is yet to announce whether or not it will throw its weight behind the move.



François Bayrou has only served as prime minister for a matter of months, having replaced Michel Barnier towards the end of last year. Photograph: Christophe Archambault/AFP/Getty Images

LFI and the RN lodged censure motions in December after the then prime minister, Michel Barnier, used the 49.3 to try to push through the 2025 budget bill, forcing his resignation and the collapse of the government after less than three months.

Bayrou, who was appointed shortly afterwards, presented his budget bill and the social security bill to the lower house on Monday afternoon after the text was approved by a cross-party committee last week.

If Bayrou uses the 49.3 to push through the bill, opponents have 24 hours to lodge a censure motion that must be voted on within 48 hours. If it succeeds, the bills are rejected, the government collapses and France returns to a political impasse.

The current deadlock was caused by the decision off the president, Emmanuel Macron, to dissolve parliament and hold a snap general election in June after his governing centrist party was defeated in European

elections.

In the subsequent general election, the Nouveau Front Populaire (NFP), a coalition of left-wing parties including the PS, LFI, PCF and EELV, won the highest number of seats.

The result left the lower house of parliament divided into three roughly equal blocs - left, centre and far right - none of which has an absolute majority. A new legislative election cannot be held until June.

On Monday, the governor of

the Bank of France, François Villeroy de Galhau, told FranceInfo radio that adopting the budget bill would be "a first step in the right direction" to end economic uncertainty.

"To begin to reduce that uncertainty, France needs a budget ... one that reduces the deficit," Villeroy de Galhau said adding that the priority was to get a grip on public spending.

If the budget bill is passed, it will come into effect in the second half of the month.

PICTURE PERFECT



Cardi B attends the 67th Annual #GRAMMY Awards.(X)

PRABHAS' FIRST LOOK AS RUDRA IN 'KANNAPPA' UNVEILED

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Monday kick-started on an exciting note for the fans of actor Prabhas as his first look as 'Rudra' was unveiled in the morning. The poster features him in the guise of a hermit, his matted hair flowing wildly, his forehead smeared with sacred chandan, gripping a crescent moon staff that hints at divine power and celestial energy. Sharing his look from the film, Prabhas on social media wrote, " (Om symbol) The Divine Guardian 'Rudra' (Om symbol) Unveiling my look as 'Rudra'. The embodiment of strength and wisdom as the unwavering



protector in #Kannappa . A timeless journey of devotion, sacrifice, and love. Join us on this epic adventure, coming to theaters on April 25, 2025!"

Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh, the film is scheduled for release on April 25, 2025, and marks Akshay Kumar's debut in Telugu cinema. The movie Kannappa is a mythological fantasy based on the story of Kannappa, a devotee of Lord Shiva, and is set to capture the grandeur and devotion of ancient times. Kannappa is produced by Vishnu Manchu's AVA Entertainment and 24 Frames Factory. Along with Akshay Kumar and Prabhas, the film stars Vishnu Manchu in the lead role.

CHENNAI-BORN CHANDRIKA TANDON WINS GRAMMY FOR BEST NEW AGE ALBUM

AGENCIES
LOS ANGELES

Chennai-born Indian-American businesswoman and musician Chandrika Tandon claimed a Grammy award at the 67th Annual Grammy Awards.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, Tandon, 71, won the coveted award in the Best New Age, Ambient or Chant Album category for her album 'Triveni', a captivating blend of ancient chants and world music.

The honour was announced at the 67th Grammy Awards, held at the



Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles on Sunday, (early Monday morning in India). Incidentally, Tandon is the elder sister of former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi.

'Triveni' is a seven-track album created as a meditative journey for listeners, aimed at promoting "inner healing."

The project is a collaboration with South African flautist Wouter Kellerman and Japanese cellist Eru Matsumoto, bringing together their distinct musical styles.

The album's name, "Triveni," symbolizes the confluence of three rivers, which metaphorically

represents the fusion of the artists' diverse traditions.

Music producer George Varghese took to his Instagram handle to congratulate Chandrika Tandon and the team for the big win.

Sharing a group picture from the Arena, he wrote, "And the winner is!!!! Wouter Kellerman Chandrika Tandon and Eru Matsumoto and my sister from another mother Tholsi Pillay!!" adding, "Congratulations to the Dream Team for winning the Grammy Awards for the BEST NEW AGE album for their Album 'TRIVENI' .

Lady Gaga, Bruno Mars win best pop duo/group performance at the 2025 Grammys

AGENCIES
LOS ANGELES

Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars added two more Grammy Awards to their collection on Sunday night when they won Best Pop Duo/Group Performance for their hit song "Die With a Smile," Billboard reported.

The duo celebrated their win over tough competitors, including Beyonce and Post Malone, Gracie Abrams and Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande with Brandy and Monica, and Billie Eilish with Charli XCX.

Mars, in his winning speech, expressed his joy and said, "Gaga, I'm so honored to be a part of this song with you. I'm so honored to have a small part in your giant musical legacy, and I truly believe that God gave us this song to sing together, so thank you so much."

Calling Mars a "beautiful human being and musician for the ages," Gaga also



shared an inspiring message for the LGBTQ+ community.

"It is a privilege to be a songwriter, a producer, and a musician. It's such an honor to sing for all of you. And I just want to say tonight that trans people are not invisible. Trans people deserve love. The queer community deserves to be lifted up. Music is love. Thank you," Gaga said.

Earlier in the night, the two performed the classic "California Dreamin'" by The Mamas and the Papas to honor the victims of the devastating Los Angeles

wildfires. Gaga also premiered her new song and video "Abracadabra" from her upcoming album Mayhem during a commercial break.

Shakira received the award for Best Latin Pop Album for Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran from Jennifer Lopez. The Colombian singer dedicated the honor to the immigrant community in the country. Rising hip-hop star Doechii won her first-ever Grammy Award, taking home Best Rap Album for her mixtape Alligator Bites Never Heal.

BRAIN PICKING



I am a workaholic. I am very restless, and I am always looking for good work. I don't act for the heck of it; I do it because I love it.

— DISHA PATANI
(Indian Actress)

Kanye West has surprise arrival at Grammys as wife Bianca Censori shocks with nude outfit reveal

AGENCIES
LOS ANGELES

Controversial rapper Kanye West returned to the Grammys on Sunday, and his arrival shocked onlookers before even heading into the venue. While walking the carpet, his wife, Bianca Censori, removed her fur coat to reveal a see-through slip that left her completely nude for cameras.

The pair arrived together at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles and quickly scandalized the red carpet once the barely-there garment was revealed. Meanwhile, Kanye was clad in black and black sunglasses.

Following the red carpet appearance, West and Censori were nowhere to be seen inside the venue. A report circulated online that the pair had been kicked out of the event and were not officially invited to attend. However, one source close to the Grammys disputed that rumor, saying



it was "not true" and that West simply "walked the carpet, got in his car and left."

West flamed out his career in a big way in December 2022 when he had an uninvited appearance on Alex Jones' now defunct "Infowars" talk show, in which the rapper praised Adolf Hitler and spewed antisemitic sentiments.

That said, he was still able to conjure a hit in 2024 with "Carnival," a collaborative single with Ty Dolla Sign, Rich the Kid and Playboi Carti,

which hit number one on the US Billboard Hot 100. The track, from his collaborative album "Vultures 1" with Ty Dolla Sign, is nominated for best rap song at tonight's Grammy ceremony.

West's most recent release was "Vultures 2," which he dropped in August with Ty Dolla Sign as part of their ongoing \$ collaboration. Last September, West announced during a concert in China that his next album would be named "Bully" and teased a new song called "Beauty and the Beast."

REVIEW: COLDPLAY, KUMBH, CHIQUITA

COLDPLAY, KUMBH, CHIQUITA

SHAIL DERASHRI

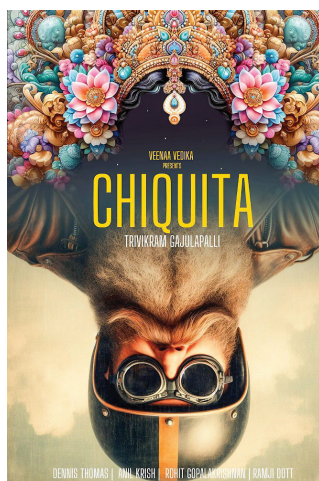
"Chiquita" A Cross-Cultural Film You Didn't Know You Needed

"Drink from Me" echoed through the Coldplay concert in Ahmedabad, India, as the song played: "When I was a river, dried up. You came to rain a flood..." The lyrics and video of this celebrated song capture the raw essence of India. The elements portrayed, thirsty souls flooded with life, elephants, sadhus, the celebration of colors, and the magic of India's dance forms, all carry a common thread of deep spiritual awakening. Isn't that why many

travel to India? To satiate their spiritual hunger? Isn't that why the West is drawn to India, chanting "BAM! BAM!?"

In the same context, "Chiquita", an independent film with cross-cultural understanding, seeks to do just that, satiate the spiritual appetite by singing "BAM! BAM!" as praise for the feminine divine. It's a poignant film that transcends geographical boundaries, speaking to the universal human experience. Just as millions gathered at the Maha Kumbh Mela seeking spiritual enlightenment, "Chiquita" invites viewers on an inner journey of self-discovery.

The story is set in Texas,



USA, following Charles, a disillusioned American biker grappling with the aftermath of a divorce. Played by Jody Dean, Charles embodies the quintessential American biker, and his captivating screen presence and mesmerizing voice make him a perfect fit for the role. The real twist

comes on a fateful night when Charles crashes into a valley and encounters a mysterious little girl, a moment that triggers a profound shift in his perspective. This unexpected encounter is the catalyst for the film's deeper transformation, both in its story and its treatment. (The less said about this mesmerizing scene, the better, it's one you'll want to experience yourself.)

Charles' interactions with his young neighbor, Freyja, played brilliantly by Cy Gan, peel back the layers of his transformation through a captivating non-linear editing technique. (A bit of a spoiler here.) Pat yourself on the back if you feel that Freyja is on a journey that mirrors Charles' own. In fact, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Chiquita's greatest

strength lies in its subtlety. Director Trivikram Gajulapalli masterfully employs this technique in several key scenes. Whether it's Charles' divorce or his misunderstandings with his family, the film never takes a clear stance on who is right or wrong. Instead, it leaves viewers to draw their own conclusions, based on their personal understanding of life's complexities.

Charles isn't perfect. It feels as though he's reliving the same emotional struggles, but this time, he emerges as a better version of himself. The dialogue is profound, reflecting the intricacies of human relationships and the universal quest for meaning in a chaotic world.

But how is this a cross-cultural film? Because Indian philosophy plays

a crucial role in Charles' transformation, and that's the exact element that distinguishes this film from every other cross-cultural film you've seen. What could have been a straightforward drama is elevated into an engaging cinematic experience, thanks to its fresh cultural perspective, strong screenplay, and especially the music. True to its cross-cultural essence, the film features songs in Spanish, Sanskrit, and English, with the English track during the end credits standing out as a highlight. The seamless fusion of music and visuals beautifully encapsulates the film's themes of transformation and hope.

The film skillfully avoids overt spiritual pronoun-

ments, allowing the profound to emerge organically. "Chiquita" serves as a reflection of your own spiritual journey, the deeper you are into the spiritual world, the more the film will resonate with you. You'll uncover subtle visual and intellectual clues that deepen the experience.

Like the ever-flowing Ganga, the film gently nudges us toward a deeper understanding of ourselves and the interconnectedness of all beings. "Chiquita" encourages viewers to question their assumptions, confront their inner demons, and embrace the unexpected.

This is a film experience you don't want to miss. Watch it on OTT soon. If you're a reviewer, reach out to the filmmakers at VeenaVedika@gmail.com for a special screening.

THE IMPACT OF EPILEPSY ON MENTAL HEALTH



DR. JYOTI KAPOOR

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder that affects millions of people worldwide. Characterized by recurrent seizures, it can have a significant impact not only on physical health but also on mental well-being. The relationship between epilepsy and mental health is complex, as individuals with epilepsy are at a higher risk for developing various mental health conditions, and conversely, mental health issues can influence the course and management of the disorder.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TOLL OF EPILEPSY

One of the most profound impacts of epilepsy is the psychological burden it places on individuals. The unpredictability of seizures can cause significant anxiety, particularly when a seizure occurs in public or without warning. People with epilepsy often live in fear of a seizure happening at an inopportune time, such as while driving or during social gatherings, which can lead to social withdrawal and isolation.

Moreover, the stigma associated with epilepsy can

exacerbate mental health struggles. Despite significant advances in understanding epilepsy, misconceptions about the disorder still exist. Many people associate epilepsy with intellectual disability or view individuals with seizures as "different," leading to social exclusion and discrimination. This societal stigma can have a lasting impact on self-esteem, contributing to depression and anxiety.

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY IN EPILEPSY

Depression is one of the most common mental health conditions among people with epilepsy. The risk of developing depression is higher in individuals with epilepsy compared to the general population, with studies suggesting that nearly 30-40% of people with epilepsy experience depressive symptoms. The constant fear of seizures, limitations on activities, and social isolation all contribute to feelings of helplessness and sadness.

Anxiety disorders are also prevalent in individuals with epilepsy. The stress of managing a chronic condition, coupled with concerns about seizure safety, can trigger or worsen anxiety. Seizures themselves can also be anxiety-inducing, as the fear of not knowing when the next one will occur can be overwhelming. In some cases, anxiety is compounded by the side effects of anti-seizure medications, which can include mood swings, irritability, and restlessness.

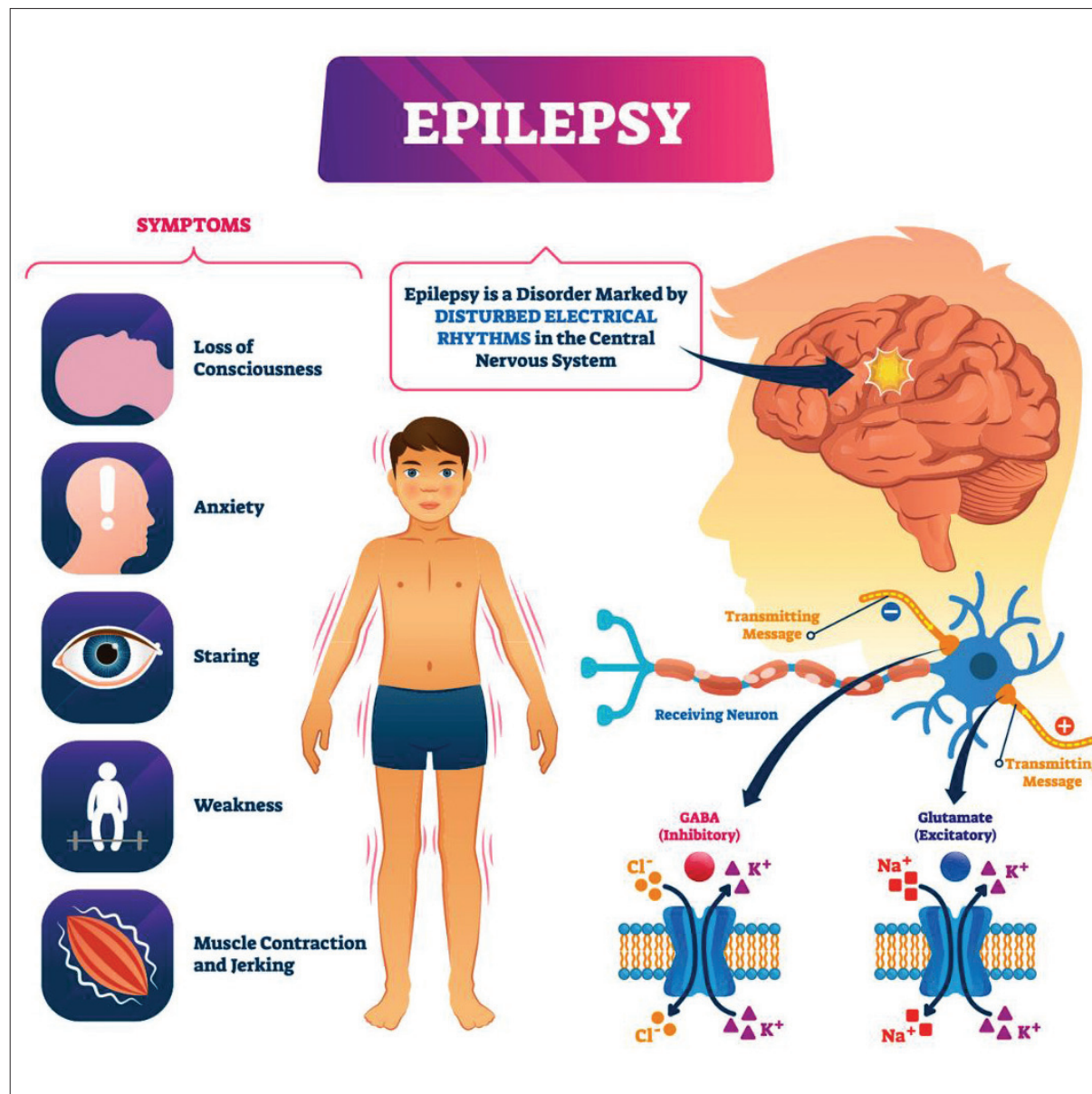
COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

Epilepsy can also affect cognitive function, leading to memory problems, difficulty concentrating, and impaired decision-making. These cognitive issues are often a result of the seizures themselves or the medications used to control them. Cognitive impairments can be frustrating and discouraging, leading to feelings of inadequacy or low self-worth. As a result, individuals may withdraw socially or feel less capable in professional or academic settings, further contributing to mental health struggles.

In addition to cognitive challenges, people with epilepsy may experience emotional instability. The emotional toll of living with a chronic, unpredictable condition can manifest as mood swings, irritability, or frustration. These emotional shifts can make it difficult to maintain stable relationships or engage in everyday activities, affecting one's quality of life and mental well-being.

THE BIDIRECTIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EPILEPSY AND MENTAL HEALTH

The relationship between epilepsy and mental health is bidirectional, meaning that mental health issues can also worsen the severity and frequency of seizures. Stress, anxiety, and depression are known triggers for seizures in some individuals with epilepsy. For example,



high-stress levels can lower the threshold for a seizure to occur, making it more likely that an individual will experience a seizure during periods of emotional distress.

Furthermore, the side effects of anti-seizure medications can also affect mood and mental health. Some

medications used to treat epilepsy can cause or worsen depressive symptoms, anxiety, or irritability.

As a result, finding the right medication regimen can be challenging, as doctors must balance seizure control with the mental health needs of the patient.

COPING STRATEGIES AND TREATMENT APPROACHES

Addressing the mental health impact of epilepsy requires an integrated approach that considers both the neurological and psychological aspects of the condition.

One of the most effective treatment strategies is a combination of medication management and psychotherapy.

For some individuals, antidepressants or anti-anxiety medications can be helpful in managing mental health symptoms. It is important,

however, for healthcare providers to carefully monitor medication interactions, as some anti-seizure drugs may have mood-altering side effects. Psychotherapy, particularly Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), can also be highly beneficial for individuals with epilepsy. CBT helps people identify and change negative thought patterns, improve coping strategies, and reduce anxiety and depression. Support groups and counseling can also offer valuable emotional support, helping individuals connect with others who understand their experiences and challenges.

CONCLUSION

Epilepsy's impact on mental health is profound and multifaceted. The psychological burden of living with a chronic, unpredictable condition, combined with the social stigma and cognitive challenges associated with epilepsy, can significantly affect an individual's emotional well-being. However, with the right combination of medical and psychological support, people with epilepsy can manage both their seizures and mental health effectively. By raising awareness about the connection between epilepsy and mental health, we can create a more supportive environment for individuals living with epilepsy, helping them lead fulfilling lives despite the challenges they face.

The author is the Founder-Director and Senior Psychiatrist at Manashali Wellness.

EASING NEUROPATHIC PAIN WITH NATURAL NUTRIENTS AND FOODS



FOOD IS MEDICINE
DR. ANISH DESAI

Neuropathic pain (NP) is a chronic and often debilitating condition caused by damage or dysfunction in the somatosensory nervous system. NP is associated with conditions like diabetic neuropathy (DN) and chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN). While traditional pharmacological treatments provide some relief, they often lead to adverse effects. Nutraceuticals and functional foods have emerged as promising alternatives for managing NP, offering natural, effective, and safer options.

Vitamin B Complex: Thiamine (B1), pyridoxine (B6), folate (B9), and cyanocobalamin (B12) support nerve repair, myelination, and pain reduction. Studies show that vitamin B supplementation can alleviate symptoms of DN and improve nerve conduction. Food sources: Whole grains, nuts, seeds, eggs, dairy, leafy greens, fish, and fortified cereals.

Vitamin D: Known for its role in calcium homeo-

stasis, vitamin D also has anti-inflammatory properties and supports neuroprotection. Studies suggest that vitamin D supplementation can help alleviate pain in both DN and CIPN. Food sources: Egg yolks, mushrooms, and sunlight exposure for natural synthesis. **Vitamin C:** A powerful antioxidant, vitamin C combats oxidative stress, a major contributor to NP. Studies have shown significant pain relief in DN patients supplemented with vitamin C. Food sources: Citrus fruits (oranges, lemons), strawberries, kiwi, bell peppers, broccoli, and spinach.

Curcumin: Found in turmeric, curcumin is known for its potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Studies indicate it can reduce thermal hyperalgesia and alleviate pain in both diabetic neuropathy and chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy.

Boswellia Serrata: This resin extract has anti-inflammatory

effects and inhibits pro-inflammatory cytokines such as TNF- α , making it a promising option for NP management. Boswellia serrata is not typically found in foods, but supplements are derived from the resin of the Boswellia tree.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Found in fish oils, omega-3 fatty acids have anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory effects. Studies show their efficacy in reducing the incidence and symptoms of CIPN. Food sources: Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines), flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, and hemp seeds.

α -Lipoic Acid: This antioxidant improves mitochondrial function and reduces oxidative stress, alleviating symptoms of DN. Food sources: Spinach, broccoli, tomatoes, Brussels sprouts.

Nutraceuticals and functional foods provide a holistic and safer approach to managing neuropathic pain. These natural compounds can be valuable adjuncts to conventional therapies, offering patients improved quality of life and long-term pain relief. Always seek guidance from a healthcare professional before starting any new treatment.



Achieve glowing skin and healthy hair in humid climates with expert care



DR. SWATI APTE

THE EFFECTS OF HUMIDITY ON SKIN AND HAIR

Humidity significantly impacts how our skin and hair behave. High levels of moisture in the air often stimulate the overproduction of oil in the skin, leading to clogged pores and acne. Sweating exacerbates this, potentially causing irritation or flare-ups for those with sensitive or acne-prone skin.

Similarly, hair fibers swell in response to moisture, resulting in frizz, lack of definition, and in some cases, greasy scalps. These issues can feel overwhelming, but understanding them is the first step in managing them effectively.

SKINCARE SOLUTIONS FOR HUMID WEATHER

Cleansing: Use a gentle, foaming cleanser to remove dirt, sweat, and excess oil without stripping your skin. For acne-prone individuals, a salicylic acid-based cleanser can help prevent breakouts.

Moisturizing: Opt for lightweight, gel-based moisturizers. Hydration is essential even in humid weather, and ingredients like hyaluronic acid or niacinamide can provide a non-greasy finish while supporting skin health.

Sunscreen: Sunscreen is a non-negotiable step. Use a broad-spectrum, non-comedogenic SPF 30 or higher to protect against UV damage, which can worsen pigmentation and dullness.

Targeted Treatments: If you have oily or acne-prone skin,



consider adding a serum with niacinamide to regulate sebum production or an exfoliant to keep pores clear.

Weekly Exfoliation: Incorporate a gentle exfoliating product once a week to remove dead skin cells, unclog pores, and maintain a bright complexion.

Minimal Makeup: Avoid heavy foundations or cream-based makeup, which can mix with sweat and clog pores.

Additionally, a monthly advanced facial or peel, tailored to your skin's needs, is essential for deep cleansing, exfoliation, and rejuvenation. It targets specific concerns, enhances radiance, and supports long-term skin health effectively. Regular sessions, guided by a dermatologist, ensure safe and effective results while complementing your daily skincare routine.

HAIRCARE STRATEGIES IN HUMIDITY

Haircare during humid weather focuses on managing frizz, maintaining hydration, and ensuring scalp health.

Hydrating Products: Use a sulfate-free, hydrating shampoo and conditioner to cleanse your hair without drying it out.

Frizz Control: Apply anti-frizz serums or leave-in conditioners to seal the hair cuticle and prevent moisture absorption.

Deep Conditioning: Use a deep conditioning hair mask once a

week to replenish moisture and strengthen your strands.

Scalp Health: Incorporate a clarifying shampoo occasionally to remove buildup caused by sweat, oil, and styling products.

Protective Styles: Opt for styles like buns, braids, or ponytails to keep hair manageable and reduce frizz.

Hot Towel Wraps: Wrap your hair with a warm, damp towel for a few minutes after conditioning to help seal moisture and control frizz.

Smart Washing: Overwashing can strip natural oils, leading to an overproduction of sebum. Strike a balance by washing your hair 2-3 times a week.

Targeted Hair Oil Use: Apply hair oil only on the strands (not the scalp) to avoid greasy buildup while maintaining smooth, hydrated lengths.

WHY EXPERT CARE MATTERS

Personalized care tailored to your skin and hair type is key to managing the challenges of humidity effectively. Consulting a dermatologist offers:

A deeper understanding of your unique needs and concerns. Recommendations for products specifically suited to your skin type and the local climate.

Access to advanced treatments like hydrating facials, chemical peels, or scalp detox therapies to boost your routine.

Dermatologists can also help identify underlying issues such as fungal acne or seborrheic dermatitis, which can mimic common concerns but require targeted treatment.

LIFESTYLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Hydration: Staying hydrated helps maintain your skin's natural barrier and keeps your hair healthy from the inside out.

Diet: A balanced diet rich in vitamins, antioxidants, and omega-3 fatty acids supports skin and hair health.

Managing Sweat: Excessive sweating can irritate the skin. Keep cool with breathable fabrics, air conditioning, and proper hygiene.

Humid climates don't have to take a toll on your skin and hair. With the right skincare and haircare routine, combined with professional guidance, you can embrace a radiant, and healthy appearance no matter the season.

Consistency and expert advice are the cornerstones of lasting results. If you're struggling to find the perfect routine or need tailored solutions, consult a dermatologist. Together, we can craft a plan to help your skin and hair thrive, even in the most challenging conditions.

The author is the Dermatologist and Medical Advisor at Kaya Limited.

UNDERSTANDING THE ENERGY EMANATING FROM THE SACRED RIVERS SARASWATI, YAMUNA, AND GANGA DURING KUMBH MELA



DR. SHRI KRISHNA KINKAR

Not everyone is afforded the opportunity and privilege to be able to attend an event that rolls around once in a lifetime. However, at the Maha Kumbh Mela in 2025, an event that every devotee has on their calendar, the three holy rivers intersect. The devotees assemble with a chance to take a dip at this confluence of the Saraswati, Yamuna, and Ganga. Celestial energy and auras are expected to be at their peak during this time, and these three rivers are considered particularly sacred. They are not just physical elements of nature, but are believed to represent stronger forces that connect the devotee to the divine. Purifying and uplifting the people who choose to bathe in these holy waters. To

deepen one's understanding of this energy that emanates from the rivers, we can turn to the teachings of Shri Krishna Charit Manas (Rasayan Mahakavya), written by Jagadguru Shri Priyadarshi Ji Maharaj.

First, the Ganga. One of the most famous rivers in the world, it is revered as the purifier of all sins. A dip in the Ganga can give one moksha, or freedom from rebirth. Second, the Yamuna holds a sacred place as the river where Lord Krishna spent his childhood. The Yamuna is enriched through his divine love and joy. Last but not the least, the Saraswati is the physical embodiment of knowledge and wisdom, flowing in and out through the conscious and the divine from the holy dips that sadhus and saints take.

Maha Kumbh 2025: Cosmically Aligned

The Maha Kumbh itself only comes around once in 144 years. It embodies a devotee's shared quest for renewal, self-discovery, and spiritual growth. It symbolises the victory of good over evil, resulting in a convergence of spiritual energies. According



to Hindu mythology, the four most important places for the Kumbh Mela are Allahabad (Prayagraj), Haridwar, Nashik, and Ujjain. These were places where drops from the pot, or kumbh, containing the elixir of immortality fell during the Samudra Manthan, or churning of the ocean. These are now the sites of the Kumbh Mela. The divine waters of the sacred rivers, at the precise moment of the Mela, are

believed to hold the celestial nectar—imbued with the power to cleanse the soul and connect the devotee with divine consciousness.

As per Shri Krishna Charit Manas, Lord Krishna's childhood stories and youth spent at the Yamuna reflect his deep connection with the river. It is the place he played his divine leelas (pastimes) on the banks of the Yamuna, allowing it to imbibe his sense of divine love and joy, which is said

to even carry on to today. The river Yamuna, where Krishna's divine play unfolded, symbolizes the flow of Bhakti (devotion) that takes one toward the realization of the Supreme.

During the Kumbh Mela, the Yamuna's waters are believed to carry this same flow of divine love and devotion. Bathing in these waters during the Mela is said to evoke the bliss and love of Krishna's presence, allowing the devotee to ex-

perience the ultimate union with God, just as the Gopis (the cowherd girls) experienced Krishna's love.

The river Ganga is the most sacred and is central to the Hindu understanding of purification. In Shri Krishna's Charit Manas, Jagadguru Shri Priyadarshi Ji Maharaj emphasizes the importance of Sankirtan (chanting the name of God) and the purifying power of water in a symbolic sense. The Ganga, in this context,

represents the grace of God that purifies the heart and soul of the devotee, washing away sins and worldly attachments.

Although the Saraswati River is no longer physically present at the Kumbh Mela sites, its spiritual essence remains deeply woven into the experience. In the Shri Krishna's Charit Manas, wisdom and knowledge are often portrayed as sacred pathways leading to the divine. Saraswati, as both the goddess of learning and the river of spiritual wisdom, plays a vital role in the journey of enlightenment. She represents the continuous flow of Jnana, or divine knowledge. During the Kumbh Mela, great saints and sadhus—imbued with spiritual power—immerse themselves in the sacred waters, and their Jnana flows into the river, becoming one with Saraswati. This sacred act symbolizes the transfer of wisdom from the divine to the seeker, creating a powerful channel of spiritual awakening. Its presence at the Maha Kumbh represent the awakening of spiritual wisdom. It is believed by pilgrims that meditating

on the sacred waters of the confluence of the Saraswati, that one can gain access to higher knowledge and a clearer understanding of the nature of reality, leading them to the ultimate realisation of the Supreme truth.

The sacred rivers of Saraswati, Yamuna, and Ganga during the Kumbh Mela provide a tangible connection to the divine energies described in Shri Krishna's Charit Manas. The waters of these rivers serve as channels for divine purification, love, and wisdom—an embodiment of the qualities of Lord Krishna himself. Bathing in this confluence is not just a physical act, but an act of deep spirituality, inviting the devotee to be one with the divine flow of energy that Krishna represents. These rivers are reflections of Krishna as the ultimate truth, and guide pilgrims and devotees toward their goal of liberation and eternally uniting with the divine.

The author is the Shri Krishna Charit Manas (Bhagavat) Kathavachak and Spiritual Orator.

Kumbh - The Triveni of gyan, bhakti and karm



MEENA OM

The human body is like a pot; whatever exists outside also resides within. All five elements of nature are present in the body. Whatever forms the Brahmand, the Universe, also constitutes us. The thoughts sent out to the Universe inevitably come back, creating a vortex of negative thoughts, information and energy, which boomerang.

The Mahakumbh is an occasion to cleanse the body, mind, and soul by fostering positive thoughts and generating higher energy. Many take a dip at the Kumbh to wash away sins, though bathing in the sacred river Ganga at any time has the same effect.

Usually, self-aware individuals make sankalps, pledges, during the Kumbh, offering their shortcomings, dishonesty or addiction to the holy rivers. Symbolic rituals, like discarding a small piece of gold, signified detachment from material obsessions.

However, the true significance of the Kumbh is to be on the path of gyan, by tasting gyan amrit, the nectar of self-realisation and wisdom which enhances one's unique individuality. The wisdom imparted by gurus and swamis at this



grand congregation elevates spiritual growth.

Prayagraj, the site of the Kumbh, uniquely hosts the sangam—the confluence of three sacred rivers of Bharat: Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, known as Triveni. Vedic texts

emphasise the harmony of the body, mind, and soul, each represented by these rivers. The Ganga purifies the body, the Yamuna heals the mind and the invisible Saraswati, enhances the soul. Saraswati, named after Maa Saraswati—

the goddess of wisdom and sad-buddhi, good senses—symbolises the flow of true knowledge, gyan. In Kaliyug, the age of machines, information abounds, but wisdom remains obscured. The river became lupt, hidden, as humanity prioritised indulgence over wisdom. The Saraswati might resurface, and society may collectively evolve by following the path of truth. The Yamuna, the sister of Yama, the god of death, and daughter of Surya, the Sun, removes fear and is sankat mochan, eliminator of obstacles.

Each yug, age, is governed by three symbolic divine powers. At the yug's onset, Maha Saraswati dominates, fostering wisdom, learning, and scientific progress. Saraswati thrives through sadhna, penance. As the age advances Mahalakshmi's influence grows, be-

stowing material prosperity. Over time, Lakshmi's dominance eclipses Saraswati, leading to societal decline as materialism takes precedence. When an imbalance arises, Mahakali force descends, destroying imperfections. This cycle of sambhavam yuge-yuge, manifesting according to time requirement, is nature's way of evolution. Mahakali acts through five elements—in the form of forest fires, volcanic eruptions, floods, earthquakes, global warming and wars. Although, global consciousness is awakening but the gap between information based knowledge and wisdom has widened. Unlived and unrealised knowledge often feeds ego. Humans must shatter the ego and false identities to realising, "I am nothing, just a medium for universal laws of truth, love,

karm, and light." Practising dhyan, meditation and contemplation daily aligns one with cosmic energies, enhancing personal growth. Working on the self, enables one to sow the seed for universal oneness and harmonious coexistence.

Though the Kumbh has its own relevance and significance, for those in constant communion with Parmeshwar, the Supreme entity; praying for the welfare of all jarh-chetan, matter and being; the saying of Saint Raidas 'Mann changa toh kathauti mein Ganga'—when the heart is pure, the Ganges is present even in a small wooden basin, conveys the simplest yet profound spiritual truth.

Meena Om is a spiritual mentor, master of sciences, healer, philosopher.

THE POWER OF DEVOTION

Before Krishna went to Hastinapur for peace negotiations with the Kauravs, he spoke to each Pandav and Draupadi individually to understand their feelings regarding the way the entire situation was unfolding. He finally met Sahadev and asked him what he felt about him representing the Pandavs as an emissary of peace.

Sahadev replied, "There are two possible ways of saving humanity from the calamitous war that looms large above us. One, give Karna the throne. After all, he's the eldest among us."

Krishna smiled. While other Pandavs still weren't aware of Karna's real identity, Sahadev knew. He, after all, was the knower of the past, present and future. Little wonder Krishna addressed him as "Trikaal Gyani." "And, what's the second way?" Krishna asked.

"Make sure you don't go to Hastinapur," Sahadev



MYSTIC MUSING

RAJESH M. IYER

replied, adding, "The fire behind frayed nerves will simmer down on its own. Besides, haven't we seen enough turbulence in life, each threatening to engulf us? In hindsight, those seem like mere footnotes. This problem too will pass. If only you could be stopped from going."

"That's shrugging off responsibilities. You can't run away from Karma, Sahadev. Besides, you think you can stop me?" Krishna wondered with a twinkle in his eyes. "You think I can't?" Sahadev countered, rather tongue-in-cheek.

Krishna was intrigued. However, he didn't say anything. Taking the lack

of response to signify disbelief, Sahadev sat down to meditate. Krishna wondered what the youngest Pandav was up to. In his meditative state, Sahadev created a mental image of a young Krishna with his mother Yashodha. Tired to listening to complaints about her naughty son and wanting to teach him a lesson, Yashodha tied Krishna up with a rope.

Standing in front of Sahadev, Krishna felt odd. He was unable to move his hands or feet. It was if he was tied up with a rope. Despite trying hard, Krishna stood rooted to the same spot. Krishna immediately realised his folly of

underestimating the pure devotion of a true devotee. With unadulterated love, a devotee can overpower the Divine, despite the latter being the source of that power. Krishna requested Sahadev to unshackle him from the invisible chain of devotion. Finally, Sahadev came out of meditation and released Krishna.

Remember that we have as much power as the Divine since inherently we aren't different. However, we can never become a true devotee unless we tap into the divine energy and allow it to permeate our inner being. It's time we dived deep within ourselves and discovered divinity.



We have as much power as the Divine since inherently we aren't different. However, we can never become a true devotee unless the divine energy is tapped into and we let that energy permeate our inner being.

ARSENAL THRASH MAN CITY TO BOOST TITLE CHALLENGE

TDG NETWORK
LONDON

Arsenal beat Manchester City 5-1 to keep their Premier League title hopes alive on Sunday, while Manchester United slumped to another meek 2-0 home defeat to Crystal Palace. In the battle between the top two for the past two seasons, the Gunners prevailed to move within six points of leaders Liverpool, who have a game in hand. "It is a great day for us, especially with the necessity that we had to win the game," said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta.

Arsenal were gifted the perfect start inside two minutes as Manuel Akanji lost possession and Kai Havertz squared for Martin Odegaard to open the scoring.

Erling Haaland headed in his 250th career club goal



early in the second half to bring City level.

But the defending champions are a pale shadow of their former selves this season and conceded within 105 seconds of the restart when Thomas Partey's shot deflected in off John Stones.

"It's happened all season, we are giving away

too many things," said City manager Pep Guardiola.

"You cannot lose the control, it's 95 minutes. You cannot finish in the way we played."

Myles Lewis-Skelly would have been suspended if his controversial red card in a 1-0 win at Wolves last weekend had not been

overturned.

The 18-year-old made the most of that reprieve by curling in Arsenal's third for his first goal for the club.

Havertz fired low and hard into the far corner with City cut open at will by the Arsenal counter-attack on 76 minutes.

And another Arsenal

teenager rounded off the rout when Ethan Nwaneri curled home in stoppage time.

Defeat leaves City still in fourth but now 15 points off the top and realistically dethroned after four consecutive seasons as champions.

Meek Man Utd

Jean Philippe-Mateta was Palace's hero with both goals in the second half as United suffered a fifth defeat in their last six home league games.

Victory takes the Eagles above the Red Devils in the table as Oliver Glasner's side climb to 12th.

Three consecutive wins for United had lifted the mood around Old Trafford but it was back to square one for Ruben Amorim after another home display lacking in creativity and riddled with defensive lapses.

4 Indian players named in Women's T20 World Cup Team of Tournament



AGENCIES
KUALA LUMPUR

Four India players namely Gongadi Trisha, G Kamalini, Aayushi Shukla and Vaishnavi Sharma have been included in the ICC Women's Under 19 T20 World Cup's Team of the Tournament, as per the ICC media release. Player of the Tournament Gongadi Trisha scored 309 runs at the top of the order, 133 more than anyone else.

Trisha was named Player of the Match in the final after she took three for 15 with the ball, and then hit 44 not out as India sailed to a nine-wicket win. She is joined in the team by fellow opener G Kamalini, who scored 143 tournament runs, and bowlers Aayushi Shukla and Vaishnavi Sharma. Sharma took two South Africa wickets at Bayuemas Oval to finish the tournament with 17, the most of

any player, while 17-year-old Shulka was second with 14. South Africa, who failed to progress from the Super Six stage two years ago, have two players named in the XI. Kayla Reyneke is named team captain after taking 11 wickets, while Jemma Botha - who hit a crucial 37 off 24 balls in the semi-final against Australia - is chosen to open alongside Trisha. Fast bowler Nthabiseng Nini is selected as the 12th player.

England, who were beaten by India in the second semi-final, have two players selected Davina Perrin - the tournament's second-highest run-scorer with 176 - and wicket-keeper Katie Jones. Australia's Caoimhe Bray is at number five, with the middle-order completed by Nepal's skipper and all-rounder Puja Mahato, who scored 70 runs and took nine wickets - including four for nine against Malaysia.

The team is competed by Sri Lanka bowler Chamodi Praboda, who also took nine wickets, including three for 16 against India.

The adjudication panel was comprised of commentators Julia Price, HD Ackerman, Raunak Kapoor, and Snehal Pradhan - ICC Manager: Women's Cricket. ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025 Team of the Tournament:

1. G Trisha (India)
2. Jemma Botha (South Africa)
3. Davina Perrin (England)
4. G Kamalini (India)
5. Caoimhe Bray (Australia)
6. Puja Mahato (Nepal)
7. Kayla Reyneke (c) (South Africa)
8. Katie Jones (wk) (England)
9. Aayushi Shukla (India)
10. Chamodi Praboda (Sri Lanka)
11. Vaishnavi Sharma (India)
12. Nthabiseng Nini (South Africa).

Virat, Rohit, Pant and others arrive in Nagpur ahead of first ODI against England

TDG NETWORK
NAGPUR

Indian cricketers Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant, Shreyas Iyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, and others arrived at Nagpur airport on Sunday evening ahead of the first ODI against England. India will play a three-match ODI series against England, beginning on February 6. The squad for this series remains the same as that for the ICC Champions Trophy, with one change - Harshit Rana replacing Jasprit Bumrah. India squad for three-match ODI series: Rohit Sharma (C), Shubman Gill (VC), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (WK), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja. On Sunday, Abhishek Sharma's all-round performance in the match guided the hosts India to a historic victory over England in the fifth and final match of the series at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. With this victory, India sealed the five-match series 4-1 after having already sealed the series. Recapping the match, England won the toss and decided to bowl against India in Wankhede. Abhishek Sharma (135 runs from 54 balls, 7 fours and 13 sixes) displayed a stupendous knock in the first inning and propelled India to 247/9. The youngster was the standout batter for the Men in Blue on Sunday. Brydon Carse led the England bowling attack with his three-wicket haul. Mark Wood also bagged two wickets. During the run chase, England opener Philip Salt (55 runs from 23 balls, 7 fours and 3 sixes) was the lone batter to stand up for the Three Lions, apart from him, other players failed to put up a show in the game. The Indian bowling attack showed a stupendous performance and successfully bundled out England to 97 with 9 overs remaining. Abhishek Sharma, Shivam Dube, and Varun Chakravarthy picked up three wickets each in their respective spells. Abhishek Sharma was named the 'Player of the Match'. While Varun Chakravarthy bagged the 'Player of the Series' award.

Aston Villa sign Marcus Rashford on loan deal from Manchester United

TDG NETWORK
MANCHESTER

England's star forward Marcus Rashford has made a significant move in his career after making a move from Manchester United to Aston Villa on loan until the end of the season, the club's official website stated. Aston Villa released a statement to announce the arrival of Rashford, which read, "Aston Villa is delighted to announce the loan signing of Marcus Rashford from Manchester United." "The England international, capped 60 times by the Three Lions, joins Villa on a deal until the end of the season," the statement added.



Rashford has netted 138 goals in over 400 appearances for Manchester United, having come through the ranks at Old Trafford. With the Red Devils, he has lifted the Europa League, two FA Cups and two League Cups. "I would like to thank Man-

chester United and Aston Villa for making this loan deal happen. I was lucky to have a few clubs approach me but Aston Villa was an easy decision," Rashford wrote on his Instagram post.

"I really admire the way that Aston Villa have been playing this season, and the managers' ambitions. I just want to play football and am excited to get started. I wish everyone at Manchester United all the best for the rest of the season," he added. Rashford was a prominent figure in the red side of Manchester, often a regular starter under various managers before Ruben Amorim's arrival.



India's Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill during a practice session ahead of the first ODI match against England, at VCA stadium in Nagpur on Monday. ANI

Badminton Asia mixed team preparatory camp to be held in Guwahati

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The five days preparatory camp for the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships to be played in Qingdao, China, from February 11-16 will be held at the National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati from Feb 4-8.

Two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu and Paris Olympics semi-finalist Lakshya Sen would be leading a 14-member Indian team, which had won the bronze medal in the last edition in 2023.

Apart from Sindhu and Sen, the team also boasts of the likes of Asian Games gold medalists Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty along with Olympian HS Prannoy, and



others.

"The NCE has been focusing on grooming the upcoming juniors since its inception and hosting a senior team camp here will also allow the juniors an opportunity to learn from the country's finest while also providing India's top talents to train together and create an ideal envi-

ronment of team bonding ahead of this big team event," said Badminton Association of India Secretary General Sanjay Mishra.

"In addition to the technical skills that will be imparted, the camp is designed to strengthen values of discipline, teamwork, and sportsmanship among the team members.

ICC concussion rule needs to be reviewed, teams can take advantage of this rule

There is a huge flaw in the concussion of the ICC rules 1.2.7.3 and 1.2.7.5 which all teams can take advantage of this rule in a wrong way. As soon as the ball hits a player's head, it is said that the medical team comes to the field and showers questions on that player.

For example, what's your name? Where are you at the moment and which team are you playing against? Question is that what is the guarantee that the affected player spoke the truth? Can't teams take undue advantage of this rule when he makes wrong statements?

In this entire scenario, match referee Javagal Srinath is being criticized a lot for this decision. Match referee Chris Broad, Kevin Pietersen and Sunil Gavaskar have taken him to task

COMMENTARY BOX

MANOJ JOSHI



for this decision.

Secondly, after being hit on the head, the player is not able to continue his game, he should return to the pavilion as soon as the ball is hit, but what happens

is that the player continues the game despite being hit on the helmet. If Shivam Dube gets hit on the helmet on the fifth ball of the 20th over, then he crossed run on the last ball (where he was

run-out), then what is the need of concussion in bowling for him.

Five years ago in Canberra, Mitchell Starc's ball hit Ravindra Jadeja's helmet, which led to his replacement in the bowling. Yuzvendra Chahal was his replacement who proved a match winner. The question is that even when Jadeja suffered a concussion, he did not leave the field. On the other hand, Washington Sundar's shot went for a run and then hit a boundary at long-on and then pulled for another boundary. One run off the last ball. That means your body and mind were working properly.

First concussion substitute in the test was Marnus Labuschagne who came in place of Smith in the

second inning in an Ashes test at Lords in 2019. In this match, Smith was hit on the helmet by Jofra Archer's ball, on which he left the field, but after about an hour, he returned to the field and hit three boundaries on Chris Woakes, but Labuschagne was played in the second inning in place of him. Labuschagne was also a concussion substitute for Cameron Green in the ODI against South Africa in Bloemfontein. That's understandable because Green retired hurt as soon as the bouncers came from Kagiso Rabada.

In Pune replaced Shivam Dube with Harshit Rana as his concussion substitute. When the rule talks about like-for-like replacement, then how can Harshit be his replacement.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A significant moment occurred in Wijk aan Zee on Sunday when R Praggnanandhaa defeated D Gukesh in the playoffs to win the Tata Steel Chess Masters 2025 title. Both grandmasters encountered difficulties in Round 13, facing losses in their individual matches. Arjun Erigaisi showcased exceptional performance, achieving a quick win over Gukesh in only 31 moves, while Vincent Keymer outlasted Praggnanandhaa in a grueling seven-hour battle.

In the blitz playoffs, Gukesh started strong by winning the initial game, but Praggnanandhaa made an impressive recovery, winning the subsequent two games to secure the title. The result left Gukesh visibly distraught, his feelings evident on his face. Although he was the defending champion and had been leading the tournament earlier, a series of unfortunate results resulted in a tie-breaker situation, culminating in a devastating loss in the playoffs.

The crucial tie-breaker game concluded in a tense manner as Gukesh ran out of time, leaving him in a state of shock. His reaction, filled with astonishment, was unexpected both for the audience and the 18-year-old himself. He reclined in his chair, gazing at the ceiling, while Praggnanandhaa ab-



sorbed the unexpected ending.

In the Challengers section, GM Thai Dai Van Nguyen claimed victory. During the third tie-breaker game, Praggnanandhaa chose the London System, a tactic previously employed by Ding Liren. Initially, Gukesh seized a pawn advantage, but he overlooked a critical winning move—30...Bd6!—which allowed Praggnanandhaa to regain the pawn. The game reached an even position with both competitors maintaining a knight and three pawns each. However, as the pressure increased, Gukesh ultimately ran out of time, committing a significant blunder that sealed his loss.

After obtaining his victory, Praggnanandhaa shared his reflections, stating, "When I came here, I wanted to win the event.