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RETAIL LOANS TO GET CHEAPER AS KEY RATE CUT 1ST TIME IN 5 YEARS

Monetary Policy Committee, headed by Reserve Bank of India governor Sanjay Malhotra, slashes repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25%

**TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI**

Interest rate on retail loans, including home and auto, is likely fall soon as the Reserve Bank of India under a new Governor on Friday cut the key benchmark rate for the first time in almost five years to spur a sluggish economy.

The Monetary Policy Committee, headed by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, slashed the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent. This was the first reduction since May 2020.

Repo rate is the rate at which the RBI lends to other banks.

In his first Monetary Policy announcement on Friday, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra stated that the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

had unanimously decided to reduce the policy rate by 25 basis points (bps) from 6.5 per cent to 6.25 per cent.

The RBI Governor said India can certainly achieve 7 per cent or above growth and that should be what the country should aspire for.

"These are difficult questions to answer, but nevertheless, I would like to stick my neck out and say that certainly India can achieve 7 per cent plus growth rate, and we should certainly aspire for," he said when asked whether 7 per cent or above growth rate is achievable at the post MPC press conference.

Banks welcomed the Reserve Bank's decision to cut the benchmark lending rate saying it will spur growth and complement the announcements made in the budget.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- RBI Governor sounded confident that India can achieve 7 per cent or above growth
- Indian Bank's Association's (IBA) chairman M V Rao said: Budget has proposed measures to propel domestic consumption and higher government capex, this rate reduction from RBI would further support growth,
- Economists said the repo rate cut of 25 basis points will give a long-awaited relief on interest rates and



support economic growth

- Real estate developers hailed the rate cut saying this will benefit existing home loan borrowers and also encourage the fence sitters to invest in residential properties.

"Since the budget has proposed measures to propel domestic consumption and higher government capex, this rate reduction from RBI would further support growth," Indian Bank's Association's (IBA) chairman M V Rao said in a statement.

The MPC began its three-day meeting to discuss and set the new interest rates on February 5, 2025.

During the previous MPC meeting in December 2024, the RBI announced a 50 basis point cut in the cash reserve ratio (CRR), making it 4 per cent. However, it kept the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent.

Economists said the repo rate cut of 25 basis points by the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the RBI will give a long-awaited relief on interest rates and support

PM Modi to visit US on Feb 12-13; energy, defence on agenda

**TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit United States on February 12-13 and hold a meeting with US President Donald Trump and interact with senior leaders of the US administration.

This will be the first visit of PM Modi to the US since the inauguration of President Donald Trump.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said at a special media briefing that Prime Minister's visit within three weeks of the new administration taking office shows the importance of the India-US partnership.

"At the invitation of US President Donald Trump, PM Modi will pay an official working visit to the US on 12th and 13th of February. This will be the first visit of Prime Minister Modi to the United States since the inauguration of the second presidential term of US President Donald Trump," he said.

"The fact that the Prime Minister has been invited to visit the US within barely three weeks of the new administration taking office shows the importance of the India-US partnership and is also reflective of the bipartisan support, that this partnership enjoys in the US," he added.

Answering a query, he said PM Modi and US President



The fact that the Prime Minister has been invited to visit the US within barely three weeks of the new administration taking office shows the importance of the India-US partnership

-MEA

Modi, Macron to co-host AI summit in France

**TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to co-chair the AI Summit with French President Emmanuel Macron and will address the India-France CEOs forum during his visit to France scheduled from February 10 to February 12.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in a press briefing on Friday, emphasised the growth of Artificial Intelligence and prioritised India's expectation from the

summit that AI applications should be designed, developed, deployed and used in safe humane responsible trust-worthy manner.

"PM will co-chair the AI Summit alongside President Macron of France. The PM will arrive in Paris in the evening of 10th of February. He will then attend the dinner that is be-

Rahul alleges irregularities in Maha voter list

**ANAND SINGH
NEW DELHI**

The Congress, Shiv Sena-UBT and NCP-SP on Friday trained guns at the Election Commission as it alleged irregularities in the voter lists of Maharashtra, claiming that a total of 39 lakh voters were added between the 2024 Lok Sabha and assembly elections in the state.

While addressing a joint press conference here, Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said that the

total number of voters added in Maharashtra was equivalent to the population of a state like Himachal Pradesh.

He also urged the Election Commission to provide them list of voters and come clean on the issue.

Rahul Gandhi said, "We at this table represent the entire opposition in the last Assembly polls in Maharashtra.

"We are going to bring some information about the election. We studied the details - the voters and the voting list. Our teams have



39 lakh voters added between 2024 LS polls and assembly elections
- Rahul Gandhi

been working, and we have found many irregularities," he said.

He said, "We have demanded for exact voter list of Vidhan Sabha 2024 and Lok Sabha 2024."

He said that 32 lakh voters were added between Maharashtra assembly polls in 2019 to Lok Sabha elections 2024.

"However, between Maharashtra Assembly polls 2024 and Lok Sabha elections 2024, 39 lakh voters were added in 5 months," Rahul

NEET-UG test on May 4

NEW DELHI: The medical entrance exam NEET-UG will be conducted on May 4, the National Testing Agency (NTA) announced on Friday.

The application process for the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)-UG began on Friday and will conclude on March 7. It is the largest entrance exam in the country in terms of the number of candidates appearing for the test. In 2024, a record more than 24 lakh candidates took the exam.

Centre committed to ensuring fair prices for farmers: Minister

**NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH**

In response to growing demands from farmers' unions to make Minimum Support Price (MSP) a legal right, the Union government has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring fair and guaranteed prices for farmers' produce.

In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha the Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Ram Nath Thakur, did

Implementing MSP as a legal right has challenges including budgetary constraints and operational complexities

not make any commitment to make MSP a statutory right, but claimed that multiple steps have been taken to strengthen the existing

system and make it more transparent and farmer-friendly.

The minister acknowledged the challenges of implementing MSP as a legal right, including budgetary constraints and operational complexities. However, the government remains focused on addressing these issues by enhancing the efficiency and transparency of the current system.

However, the number of beneficiaries of the MSP has

Travel agents under scanner as Punjab police begins probe into deportation

**TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH**

Two days after 104 illegal Indian immigrants were deported by US authorities, the Amritsar Rural Police have registered a case against a travel agent, Satnam Singh, on charges of cheating.

The complaint was filed by Daler Singh, a resident of Salempura village in Amritsar's Rajasansi, who was among the deported migrants. Daler alleged that Satnam Singh promised him

legal entry into the US with a valid visa but instead sent him through illegal means. As a result, he had to endure a perilous journey, including crossing treacherous trails in the Panama jungles.

Daler was eventually forced to cross the US border, where he was captured by US Border Patrol and detained on January 15 before being deported back to India. The police have launched an investigation into the case.

On the other hand, Pun-

jab Police has taken action regarding the recent deportation of Punjabi migrants from the United States. A thorough investigation has been ordered, and Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav has formed a four-member committee to probe the matter.

The committee will be headed by Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) NRI Affairs, Parveen Sinha, with ADGP Internal Security Shiv Verma, Inspector

Poaching charges invite trouble for Kejriwal

**TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI**

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Friday issued a notice to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal, requesting his presence for investigations into the allegations of bribes being offered to the party's MLAs.

According to the notice, deemed to be of a serious nature, prompting the ACB to intervene urgently in order to establish the truth.

The party's convener was



ACB team arrives at Arvind Kejriwal's residence amid 'Op Lotus' row.

also requested to make himself available and provide information.

The information required revolved around details of

the 16 AAP MLAs who were allegedly offered bribes, the contents of tweets posted by these MLAs, and the identities of the individuals who

made the bribery offers.

Additionally, the ACB has requested any other evidence that could support Kejriwal's claims about the bribe offers, that he and other party members have made on social media platforms. On Thursday, Kejriwal alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is trying to poach the candidates of AAP, offering them Rs 15 crore each. BJP has vehemently denied the allegations.

"Some agencies are show-

Delhi election results today; AAP, BJP have fingers crossed

**AGENCIES
NEW DELHI**

Counting of votes for the Delhi assembly polls will take place on Saturday to decide whether the AAP comes to power for a fourth term or the BJP forms a government in the national capital after more than 26 years.

The Congress is also looking for some gains after drawing a blank in the last two elections.



Bikaner Airport honours the first daily flight service from Bikaner to New Delhi with a water cannon salute, at the Airport in Bikaner on Friday. ANI

WHO SAID WHAT IN PARLIAMENT

PM MODI HAS 'CONG PHOBIA': CONG MP ON PM SPEECH

NEW DELHI: Congress MP Manickam Tagore on Friday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his attack on Congress during his address in the Rajya Sabha, saying that he has a "Congress phobia" and should get rid of this thinking and focus on serving the people of India instead. Tagore pointed out that Modi's speech was supposed to be about the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address, but instead, he targeted Congress. "We all know that it was on the Motion of Thanks to President's Address. Instead, Mr Modi was speaking on Congress. He always has a Congress phobia," said Tagore.

MINISTER HIGHLIGHTS 2ND ROUND OF PLI SCHEME BENEFITS

NEW DELHI: Minister of State for Steel and Heavy Industries, Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma informed the Rajya Sabha on Friday that multiple steps have been taken to ensure wider participation in the second round of Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for specialty steel. The second round of PLI schemes was launched on January 6, 2025. The information was given by the Minister of State for Steel and Heavy Industries, Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

'OVER 73.90 CRORE AYUSHMAN BHARAT HEALTH ACCOUNTS IDS CREATED'

NEW DELHI: The Government has launched Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) with a vision to create national digital health ecosystem, wherein to ensure participation of citizen, Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts (ABHAs) numbers that is a 14-digit Unique Health Identifier (erstwhile known as Health IDs) are created, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said in a press release. As on February 3, 2025, the number of ABHA IDs created are 73,90,93,095.

'ANGANWADI WORKERS EMPOWERED WITH SMART PHONES'

NEW DELHI: Poshan Abhiyaan, an overarching scheme for holistic nourishment was launched on 8th March 2018 to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescents, pregnant women and lactating mothers. Under Poshan Abhiyaan, the Incremental Learning Approach (ILA) was incorporated to build and strengthen the capacity of Anganwadi workers, according to a statement from the Ministry of Women and Child Development on Friday. Under the 15th Finance Commission, to address the challenge of malnutrition, various components like Anganwadi services.

LOK SABHA ADJOURNED TILL MONDAY AMID DIN

**TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI**

Lok Sabha has been adjourned on Thursday till February 10. The lower house of Parliament will meet at 11 AM, Monday.

Earlier today, around 30 National Democratic Alliance MPs felicitated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the budget announcements regarding the state, with Assembly elections scheduled for November this year, the state received significant attention in the Budget.

The premises of Parliament also saw several Opposition MPs protesting and raising objections to the detention of Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan authorities, and the treatment of Indians who were deported from United States. Multiple MPs from Tamil Nadu protesting on Parliament premises, demanding the repatriation of Indian fishermen detained by Sri Lankan forces. The parliamentarians held banners and raised slogans over



Proceedings of the Lok Sabha underway during the Budget Session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

their demand at the premises.

DMK MP Kanimozhi called on the central government to take urgent steps to secure the release of 97 Tamil Nadu.

"Justice has to be done. Boats which have been captured, we want that to be released. We want the Union government to speak to the Sri Lankan government and find a permanent solution for this," said Kanimozhi.

Samajwadi Party MP Akhilesh Yadav also criticised the Uttar Pradesh government outside the Parliament, for

the fires in Mahakumbh.

In a brief interaction with mediapersons, when asked about a fire that broke out at Maha Kumbh Mela Kshetra this morning, Yadav said, "Sachchai yeh hai ki BJP ne Kumbh mein aag lagadi, Kumbh ki hi aag lagadi... (Truth is that BJP has set Kumbh on fire)." As many as 20-22 tents were burnt in the fire, however, no injury or loss of life was reported and the blaze was subsequently extinguished.

Congress whip in Lok Sabha, Manickam Tagore also

moved an adjournment motion and demanded an immediate statement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the "inhumane treatment" of Indians nationals in the US.

"I rise to move an adjournment motion in the House to address a deeply concerning issue regarding the treatment of Indian nationals, particularly those deported from the United States, and to question the position of our Government on the same," the notice read.

Opposition MPs from TN demand repatriation of Indian fishermen from Sri Lanka

**TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI**

Opposition MPs from Tamil Nadu on Friday staged a protest at the premises of the Parliament, demanding to bring back Indian fishermen detained by Sri Lankan forces. The parliamentarians held banners and raised slogans over their demand at the premises.

The opposition earlier expressed disappointment over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reply in the Rajya Sabha to the motion of thanks on the President's Address, accusing him of remaining silent on issues such as inflation and unemployment.

Notably, there has been a series of confrontations between Indian fishermen



Opposition MPs from Tamil Nadu protest on Parliament premises demanding to bring back Indian fishermen caught by Sri Lankan forces, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

and Sri Lankan authorities.

Just last week, six Indian fishermen detained in Sri Lanka were released and returned to Chennai. Their return was facilitated by Fisheries Department officials, marking yet another chapter in the ongoing tensions over fishing rights in the Palk Strait.

The issue has been further exacerbated by a recent incident in the Jaffna Sea, where

two Indian fishermen from Karaikal sustained injuries after the Sri Lankan Navy allegedly opened fire, which drew strong objection from the Indian side.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has repeatedly urged External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and the Centre to take immediate diplomatic measures to secure the release of detained fishermen and their boats.

India moving towards self-reliance in fertiliser production: Nadda

**NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH**

The country is making significant progress toward self-reliance in fertilizer production, reducing its dependence on costly imports, Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers and Health and Family Welfare Jagat Prakash Nadda informed the Lok Sabha on Friday. In a written reply in a response to a question the minister told the House that a series of government policies and new investments have led to a substantial increase in both urea and phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilizer production.

The minister said that due to the government's New Investment Policy (NIP) for urea, introduced in 2012 and amended in 2014, has encouraged fresh investments in the urea sector. Under this policy, six new urea plants have been estab-



Union Minister JP Nadda speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

lished, adding a production capacity of 76.2 lakh metric tonnes per annum (LMT-TPA), he said.

According to the minister, these six plants, four were set up through joint ventures involving public sector units (PSUs) Ramagundam Fertilizer unit in Telangana and three units of Hindustan Urvarak And Rasayan Limited (HURL) in Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh), Sindri (Jharkhand), and Barauni

(Bihar). Two other plants were established by private companies Matix Fertilizers at Panagarh in West Bengal and Chambal Fertilizers' Gadepan-III unit in Rajasthan.

He said that each of these plants has a capacity of 12.7 LMT-TPA and is based on the latest energy-efficient technology. As a result, India's indigenous urea production capacity increased from 207.54 LMT-TPA in 2014-15 to 283.74 LMT-TPA in 2023-24. He said that the government approved a Greenfield urea plant with a capacity of 12.7 LMT-TPA at Talcher, Odisha, based on coal gasification technology. The New Urea Policy (NUP) 2015 further boosted production by maximizing output from 25 existing gas-based units, adding 20-25 lakh metric tonnes of urea production annually. As a result of these efforts, urea production soared from 225 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) in 2014-15 to a record 314.07 LMT in 2023-24. For P&K (Phosphatic and Potassic) fertilizers, the government implemented the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) Policy in 2010. This policy provides a fixed subsidy based on the nutrient content of fertilizers, encouraging manufacturers to produce or import fertilizers according to market demand.

'20% judicial posts vacant in lower courts'

**TDG NETWORK
CHANDIGARH**

India's lower judiciary is facing a serious shortage of judicial officers, with nearly 20 per cent of the sanctioned posts lying vacant. In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal revealed that out of the total sanctioned strength of 25,771 judicial officers, only 20,478 are in place, leaving 5,293 posts unfilled.

Among the states, Bihar tops the list with the highest number of vacancies 483 posts out of 2,019 sanctioned positions remain vacant. Uttar Pradesh follows with 996 vacancies out of 3,870 sanctioned posts. Other states facing notable shortages include Maharashtra (250), Odisha (200), and West Bengal (230, including Andaman & Nicobar).

Minister Meghwal clarified that filling these vacancies is the responsibility of the respective State Gov-

ernments and High Courts. As per the Constitution, Articles 233, 234, and 309 provide the framework for states to frame rules for appointing judicial officers in consultation with their High Courts.

He also cited a landmark Supreme Court order from January 2007 (Malik Mazhar Sultan case), which laid down timelines for recruiting judicial officers to speed up the process. However, recruitment of non-judicial staff such as

administrative and technical personnel falls outside the central government's purview, and no central data is maintained for these positions, reads the reply.

The minister informed the parliament in December last year that the situation in the country's High Courts is equally concerning. Nearly one-third or 31% of High Court judge posts are vacant. Out of a sanctioned strength of 1,114 judges across 25 High Courts, 350 positions remain unfilled.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being presented with a coffee table book on SVAMITVA Scheme by Union Minister of Panchayati Raj Rajiv Ranjan Singh during a meeting with Bihar MPs from BJP, JD(U), and NDA allies at Parliament, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

PARLIAMENT IN ACTION



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Bansuri Swaraj and others in the Lok Sabha during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI



Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) MP V. Sivadasan speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI



Congress MP Jairam Ramesh speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI



Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal speaks in the RS during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

Kartikeya Sharma introduces 'The Release of Mortal Remains by Clinical Establishments Bill, 2024' in RS

**TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI**

Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament Kartikeya Sharma on Friday introduced "The Release of Mortal Remains by Clinical Establishments Bill, 2024" in the Upper House.

In what would be a significant move to protect the rights of bereaved families, the landmark legislation addresses the critical issue of hospitals and clinical establishments withholding bodies of patients due to pending medical bills.

The bill prohibits clinical establishments from detaining mortal remains or making their release conditional upon payment of outstanding dues. It ensures that the next of kin or authorized representatives can claim and receive the deceased's



body with undue delay or harassment.

Key provisions of the bill include mandatory immediate release of mortal remains upon completion of medical and legal formalities, separation of billing disputes from the release process, establishment of grievance redressal mechanisms, and penalties for non-compliance by clinical establishments

Ever since his election to the Rajya Sabha in 2022, Sharma has been raising this issue in the Parliament

seeking relief for the thousands of families who are refused repatriation with the mortal bodies of their dear ones due to pending bills and disputes.

While speaking in the Rajya Sabha and raising this issue on Friday, Sharma said, "A report by Lancet commission on the value of death published in the year 2022, states that in a situation when the family is unable to pay hospital bills, hospital staff will often refuse to release the body until the payment is made. The Geneva convention and UN commission for Human rights make it legally binding to provide for explicit provisions relating to the proper management, dignified treatment and disposal of dead bodies as well as respect for the need of families."

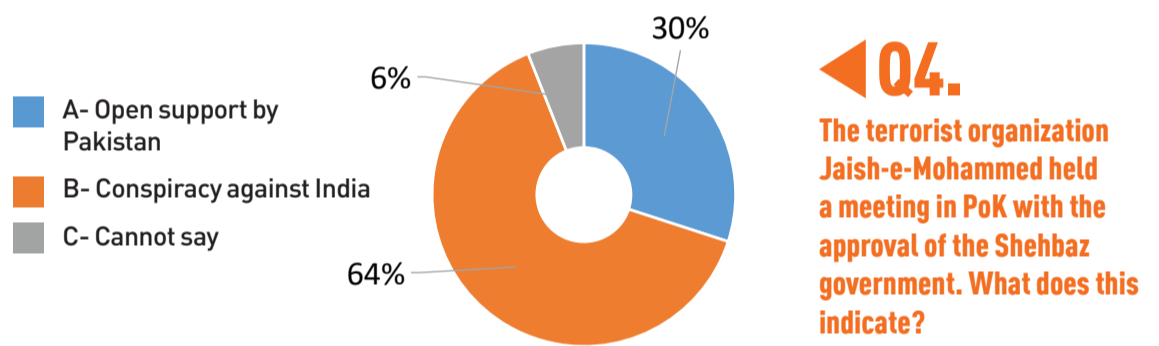
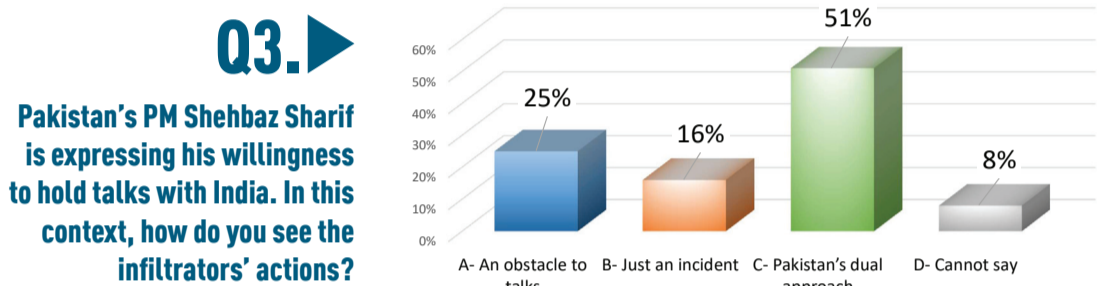
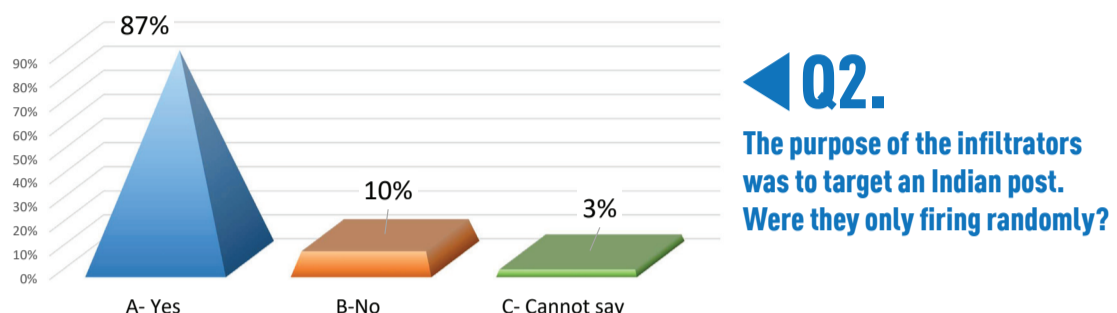
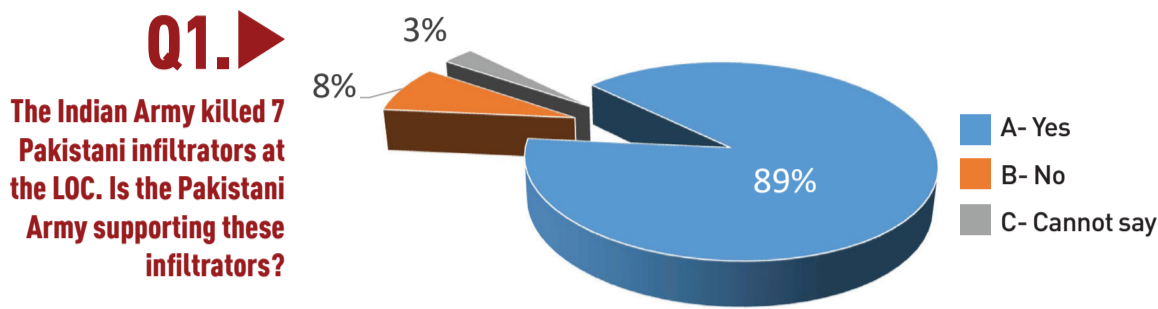
THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON LOC ENCOUNTER AT J&K

87% of people think that the purpose of the infiltrators was to target an Indian post

The Indian Army thwarted a Pakistani ambush at the LOC in Poonch on February 4-5, killing seven, including Al-Badr militants. The

attack coincided with Pakistan's 'Kashmir Solidarity Day.' Despite peace talks, meetings between JeM and LeT leaders in PoK highlight

contradictions. India asserts J&K's integral status, linking peace with Pakistan to a terror-free environment.



Calcutta HC rejects Bengal govt's plea in RG Kar rape-murder case

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Friday rejected the West Bengal Government's petition challenging the life sentence handed to RG Kar rape-murder convict Sanjay Roy by a CBI court but accepted a similar plea from the CBI. Both the CBI and the Bengal Government had filed appeals before the Calcutta High Court seeking a death sentence for Roy, a civic police volunteer.



Nyay Sanhita. He was sentenced to undergo Rigorous Imprisonment for life with fine of Rs 50,000/- and in default of payment of fine to undergo simple imprisonment for a further period of 5 months for the offence punishable under Section 64 of Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita.

challenge the ruling of the CBI court on grounds of inadequacy of punishment. "Law and order is under the state's jurisdiction," he had maintained.

A Division Bench of Calcutta High Court comprising Justices Debangsu Basak and Md Sabbar Rashidi said that since the CBI had conducted the probe, its petition was being admitted for hearing.

The Central Bureau of Investigation, raised objection to the appeal filed on behalf of the State of West Bengal. It submitted that since the investigation of the case was conducted by CBI and it conducted the trial as a prosecution agency, State of West Bengal is not authorized to present an appeal, specially, for enhancement of the punishment imposed, in accordance with the provisions of Section 418 (2) of Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.

In their order today, the Division Bench of Justices Debangsu Basak and Md Sabbar Rashidi said: "We are of the view that since the investigation of the case was conducted by the Central Bureau of Investigation,

Last month, a CBI court handed a life term till death to Sanjay Roy, a former civic volunteer with Kolkata Police, for raping and murdering a trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9 last year. The incident attracted nationwide attention due to the brutality of the crime, triggering widespread protests by healthcare professionals across the nation.

the Trinamool supremo said. "I have been seeking the death sentence from day one. If the case had remained with us, we would have ensured the death penalty. The CBI intentionally took the case away from us. Such criminals deserve to be hanged,"

The accused stood trial and upon conclusion of such trial, was found guilty of the offences under Sections 64/66/103(1) of Bhartiya

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, however, expressed her displeasure over the verdict, saying such a "heinous crime" warranted capital punishment.

Poaching charges invite trouble for Kejriwal

CONTINUED FROM P1

ing that the 'Gali Galoch party' (Referring to the BJP) is getting more than 55 seats. In the last two hours, 16 of our candidates have received calls

that if they leave AAP and join their party, they will make them ministers and will give Rs. 15 crores to each of them," Kejriwal said. "If his party is getting more than 55 seats then what is the need for him to call our candi-

dates? Obviously, these fake surveys have been conducted with the sole purpose of creating this atmosphere to break down some candidates. But you abusive people, not even one of our men will break down," he added.

Retail loans to get cheaper

CONTINUED FROM P1

economic growth, according to experts.

Chief Economist of Crisil Dharmakirti Joshi said that as expected, the MPC of the central bank cut rates for the first time on Friday since May 2020.

Joshi said the recent easing in consumer price index (CPI) inflation and the need to remain supportive of economic growth has moved

the RBI to act in this regard. Joshi expressed hope that the MPC would cut the repo rate to another 75 basis points to 100 basis points in the next financial year.

Real estate developers hailed the RBI's decision to cut the benchmark lending rate by 25 basis points, saying this will benefit existing home loan borrowers and also encourage the fence sitters to invest in residential properties.

Realtors' apex body CREDAI feels that the RBI's decision might have a "limited direct impact" on the sector and made a case for further reduction for "stronger impetus" to housing demand.

Another association Naredco said the RBI's move to slash the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent could lead to lowering of interest rates on home loans, which in turn will boost housing sales.

Travel agents under scanner

CONTINUED FROM P1

General of Police (IGP) Provisioning Bhupinder Singh, and Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Border Range Satinder Singh as its members. The committee will conduct an in-depth investigation, and strict action will be taken against those involved in illegal human trafficking.

The DGP has authorized the committee to include any additional officers required for the investigation. It will work in coordination with Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) and Police Commissioners. All officials have been directed to provide necessary support and basic facilities to the committee for a

smooth investigation.

So far, 31 individuals from Punjab who had entered the US illegally have been deported. Most of these cases involve migrants who were sent through the 'donkey route,' with agents charging between 40 to 50 lakh per person. Some victims claim that agents had assured them of legal travel but later sent them through illegal channels.

Punjab Police is now acting on complaints received from affected individuals. One such case has already been registered in Amritsar, where an immigration agent's office has been sealed. Authorities have assured strict measures against those running these fraudulent operations.

Modi, Macron to co-host AI

CONTINUED FROM P1

ing hosted by President Macron at Elysee Palace. On 11 February Prime Minister will co-chair the AI Summit alongside President Macron of France. AI is bound to have and

already having profound impact across all sectors of economy, polity, society and governance and therefore summit such as the AI Summit is both significant and timely," Misri said "We will be interested in AI applications that are de-

signed developed deployed and used in safe humane responsible trustworthy manner," he added.

Following the AI Summit, PM Modi will address the the India-France CEOs forum and will also travel Marseille.

PM Modi to visit US on Feb 12-13

CONTINUED FROM P1

will have discussions on areas such as energy and defence.

"Energy and defence, both of these are definitely be going to be on the table when the PM and President meets. On Tariffs, you have seen the announcement that have been made in the budget, some of those are already out there. We expect that there will be a more intense and continuing conversation with US on these matters," he said.

Misri informed that PM Modi will hold bilateral meeting with Donald Trump and key

US administration figures are also expected to call on PM.

"The PM will hold a bilateral meeting with Donald Trump in both restricted and delegation level format. The senior US administration figures are expected to call on PM during the visit. PM will also have the opportunity to interact with business leaders and members of Indian community," Misri said.

He said India's relationship with US has been "one of our strongest international partnership in recent years."

'Centre committed to ensuring fair prices for farmers'

CONTINUED FROM P1

come down to 1.52 crores in 2023-24 from 2.15 crores in 2019.

The Minister highlighted that every year, the government fixes MSPs for 22 mandated crops based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). Since 2018-19, the government has been following the policy of setting MSPs at 1.5 times the all-India weighted average cost of production. This ensures a minimum return of 50% over the cost of production for farmers growing Kharif, Rabi, and commercial crops.

To operationalise this,

agencies like the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state agencies procure paddy and wheat at MSP. Similarly, oilseeds, pulses, and copra are procured under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) of the PM-AASHA umbrella scheme when market prices fall below MSP. Cotton and jute are procured through the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) and Jute Corporation of India (JCI), respectively.

To make the MSP framework more effective, the government constituted a committee on July 12, 2022. The committee's mandate including reviewing the practicality of giving more autonomy to CACP and making it more scientific

and strengthening the agricultural marketing system to ensure higher value for farmers by taking advantage of both domestic and export opportunities.

The minister informed that the committee has held six meetings so far, and 39 sub-committee meetings have also been conducted to discuss various aspects of the MSP system.

Addressing concerns about the adequacy of current MSP levels and procurement processes, Thakur stated that farmers are free to sell their produce either to government procurement agencies at MSP or in the open market, depending on what is more beneficial for them.

Woman in visa 'reject list' creates 'tension'

CONTINUED FROM P1

sick. But rejected mine, literally saying my name is on a 'reject list'. And refusing to give explanation why," Sawant said on X.

"We're refusing to leave. They're threatening to call the police on us." Sawant staged a protest at the Seattle Indian Consulate, demanding answers and claiming that she was being targeted for her socialist views and criticism of the Indian government.

She alleged that her husband, Calvin Priest was granted an emergency visa to visit her ailing mother in Bengaluru, although her visa application was repeatedly rejected without explanation.

"A Consular officer said I'm being denied a visa coz I'm on Modi govt's 'reject list'. It's clear why. My socialist City Council office passed a resolution condemning Modi's anti-Muslim anti-poor CAA-NRC citizenship law. We also won a historic ban on caste discrimination," she posted on X.

Sawant, who has been a vocal critic of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), believes the visa rejection is politically motivated.

"Workers Strike Back members & I are still at Seattle Indian Consulate, doing peaceful civil disobedience, demanding explanation why my visa was rejected 3 times," she wrote on X.

She also urged people and media to support her. "Please come now: 3101, Western Avenue, Suite 700," she posted on X.

'Irregularities in Maha voter list'

CONTINUED FROM P1

Gandhi said.

He said we need the voter list of the Lok Sabha election. "We need the voter list of the Vidhan Sabha election. Because we want to understand exactly who these new additions are," he said.

He also pointed out that many voters were deleted or transferred to other booths.

He also alleged that many voters, particularly those belonging to Dalit, tribal, and minority communities, had been deleted or relocated to different polling booths. "There are many, many, many voters that have been deleted. Voters who are in one booth have been transferred to another booth.

The Congress Lok Sabha MP from Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareilly claimed the majority of the voters added had gone in the BJP's favour as the opposition parties had maintained their vote share in the assembly polls.

He also said that the adult population of Maharashtra is 9.54 crore as per govern-

No proposal to hike PM-Kisan assistance

The government has no current proposal to enhance financial assistance under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme or to extend its benefits to tenant farmers and agricultural laborers, Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ram Nath Thakur, informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. This clarification comes amid growing demands for increased support for India's farming community. The PM-KISAN scheme, launched in 2019, currently provides an annual financial aid of Rs 6,000 to eligible farmers, paid in three equal installments of Rs 2,000 each. Responding to a query about a possible increase in this amount, the minister stated, "At present, there is no such proposal under consideration."

The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee (DRPSC), in its recent report, recommended increasing the annual assistance provided under PM-KISAN from Rs 6,000 to Rs 12,000. The committee also suggested that seasonal incentives and benefits of the scheme be extended to tenant farmers and farm laborers, who currently fall outside its purview.

ment data while the voter population of the state is 9.7 crore.

There are more voters in Maharashtra than total adult population of the state, Rahul Gandhi alleged flanked by NCP-SP's Supriya Sule and Shiv Sena (UBT) Sanjay Raut.

He said if the poll panel does not provide the voter lists of the assembly and Lok Sabha polls in Maharashtra, it poses a serious question.

"We are now heading towards complete destruction of the Constitution. But, we are in the business of protections the Constitution," Rahul Gandhi said.

He further said that the next step would be to knock at the doors of the judiciary.

"It is surprising to me that the EC is not ready to give us voter lists and the only reason possible is that there is something wrong and they know it," he claimed.

He also said that we have made repeated requests to the Election Commission. "They have not answered

a Central agency, in pursuance of an order passed by this Court, Central Government is the appropriate authority to issue directions for presentation of an appeal against inadequate sentence.

In view of the words "Save as otherwise provided in subsection (2)", in the opening paragraph of Section 418 of BNS, the State Government cannot issue such directions so long as the Central Government or the CBI is willing to do so. For the aforesaid reasons, the appeal filed on behalf of the State of West Bengal cannot be admitted and entertained."

During the sentencing, the CBI court which had adjudicated the case said the case did not fall under the "rarest of the rare" category while justifying its reason for not imposing the death penalty on the convict.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, however, expressed her displeasure over the verdict, saying such a "heinous crime" warranted capital punishment.

"I have been seeking the death sentence from day one. If the case had remained with us, we would have ensured the death penalty. The CBI intentionally took the case away from us. Such criminals deserve to be hanged," the Trinamool supremo said.

AKHILESH SLAMS BJP FOR FIRE INCIDENTS AT MAHA KUMBH

Samajwadi Party chief alleges that the 'BJP ne Kumbh ki hi aag lagadi'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Making a staunch criticism after a couple of fire incidents at the ongoing Maha Kumbh, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav alleged that the BJP has set "Mahakumbh on fire."

In a brief encounter with the media, when asked about the fire that broke out at Maha Kumbh Mela Kshetra on Friday morning Yadav said, "Sachchai yeh hai ki BJP ne Kumbh mein aag lagadi, Kumbh ki hi aag lagadi... (Truth is that BJP has set Kumbh on fire)"

Meanwhile, the fire that broke out in the Maha Kumbh Mela Kshetra has been brought under control. As many as 20-22 tents were burnt in this fire incident, however, no injury or loss of life was reported in the incident. Chief Fire Officer

'20-22 TENTS WERE BURNT, NO LOSS OF LIVES'

- The fire that broke out in the Maha Kumbh Mela Kshetra on Friday has been brought under control. As many as 20-22 tents were burnt in this fire incident, however, no injury or loss of life was reported in the incident
- Chief Fire Officer Pramod Sharma, stated that the fire started from the ISKCON tent and simultaneously brought several tents under it.
- SP city Sarvesh Kumar Mishra said, "The fire has been brought under control. There has been no loss of lives. The reason behind the fire is under investigation."



Pramod Sharma, stated that the fire started from the ISKCON tent and simultaneously brought several tents under it. "The fire has been brought under control. It began from ISKCON and then other tents also caught fire. There has been no loss of lives or burn injuries... 20-22 tents are burnt," CFO

Pramod Sharma said. A police official said that the reason behind the fire is being investigated.

SP city Sarvesh Kumar Mishra said, "The fire has been brought under control. There has been no loss of lives. The reason behind the fire is under investigation."

This incident comes on the heels of another fire that occurred last week, where 15 tents in an open area in Prayagraj caught fire. The incident happened in the Chatnag Ghat Police Station area. Fortunately, no casualties were reported, and the fire was quickly brought under control. The

tents were later found to be unauthorised.

Previous incidents at the Maha Kumbh include a fire caused by an explosion of cooking gas cylinders, as well as a tragic stampede that resulted in 30 deaths and 60 injuries on January 29. Uttar Pradesh government announced financial assistance of Rs 25 lakh for the families of the deceased.

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has also ordered a judicial inquiry and said that a judicial committee will submit its report to the state government within a time limit. Mahakumbh, which started on January 13, will continue till February 26.

The remaining significant 'snan' dates in Maha Kumbh are February 12 (Maghi Purnima), and February 26 (Maha Shivaratri).

Many UBT Sena, Cong workers have joined us: Shinde

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Multiple Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress workers joined the Shinde Sena on Friday, in the presence of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. Around 80 workers from both the parties switched over to Shinde Sena, sources said.

"Many office bearers of Uddhav Thackeray Shiv Sena from Bhiwandi, Kalyan and Thane districts have joined Shiv Sena today. People have faith in Shiv Sena...We will make sure that those who sit at home remain at home. When they lose, they blame EVMs," Eknath Shinde told reporters in Mumbai.

Talking about Mahayuti alliance's victory in the Maharashtra assembly election, Shinde said, "In the Maharashtra assembly elections, there was not a wave but a great wave of beloved sisters in the state. Beloved sisters, beloved brothers voted in large numbers. They showed a good match to their half-brothers in the opposition party and gave the grand alliance a historic victory."

On the initiative of MLA Bhavana Gawli, Akola District Chief of Ubatha group Vijay Malokar, State Congress Secretary Dilip



said Deputy Chief Minister Shinde. We are working to carry forward the ideas of Shiv Sena, which is 80 percent social work and 20 percent politics. The assembly elections proved that people need people who work, not people who make accusations and curses every day."

"In the Maharashtra assembly elections, there was not a wave but a great wave of beloved sisters in the state. Beloved sisters, beloved brothers voted in large numbers.

They showed a good match to their half-brothers in the opposition party and gave the grand alliance a historic victory. This result has given Rahul Gandhi a 440-volt shock and he has not yet recovered from the shock of defeat," Shinde said.

In Muktagiri today, UBT and Congress workers from rural areas including Washim, Karanja, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Akola, Bhiwandi, Kalyan joined Shiv Sena in the presence of Eknath Shinde.

Hundreds of UBT workers from rural areas including Malogaon Taluka, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Akola, Bhiwandi, Kalyan joined Shiv Sena today. Also, UBT (Sena) Kerala State Chief N. Bhuvanchandran also took up the bow and arrow of Shiv Sena today.

Guv not required to return 'repugnant Bill': AG to SC amid row in TN

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a case related to Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi withholding assent to several Bills passed by the State legislature, Supreme Court on Friday heard arguments over Governor's power to assent the bills.

The Attorney General of India (AG) R. Venkataramani, appearing on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Governor, pertinently submitted that when a bill passed by the State legislature is found to be repugnant, there is no requirement to return the bill to the legislature for re-examination. The return of a bill applies only when defects in the bill are correctable, other than those related to repugnancy, the AG argued.

The AG was making the arguments before a Bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan.

The Court asked the AG to clarify on another point on Article 201, which states that when a Bill is reserved for the consideration of the President



(when the Governor reserves the bill for the President's consideration), they must either assent to it or withhold assent.

The Bench asked the AG if the President can immediately decline the Bill on the grounds of repugnancy, to which the AG answered "Yes, she can".

The Court then asked the AG the decision to withhold assent to the Bill, rather than outright decline it. The Court pointed out that if the Bill were truly repugnant, assent should have been declined but the Bill was withheld.

In response, the AG argued

that when the President withholds assent, it effectively renders the law stillborn, meaning it cannot come into effect.

However, the AG clarified that when the President withholds assent, she is aware of the reasons behind it and can invoke a proviso allowing for further action. The Court told the AG that if it accepts his argument that a repugnant Bill doesn't require return under the Constitutional provision, the State's arguments regarding reconsideration, return, and assent (of a Bill) would fall to the ground. As per facts of the case, the Tamil Nadu government has filed a

plea challenging the Tamil Nadu Governor's decision in having withheld several bills, specifically in relation to appointments of Vice Chancellors in State universities.

During yesterday's hearing in the matter, the counsels appearing for Tamil Nadu had vehemently argued that the Governor's role with regard to Bills passed by the legislature is only recommendatory in nature and is governed by the Constitutional provisions. The Governor is not super government or a super legislature and thus he cannot act arbitrarily in withholding bills, it was argued.



SC dismisses PIL for postal ballot rights for students

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) relating to the issue of postal ballots facilities for students living outside their resident constituency.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar dismissed the plea saying that the Election Commission of India (ECI) already provides a mechanism for students residing outside their constituency to register as voters at their current location.

The apex court was hearing a plea by filed by one Arnab Kumar Mullick seeking postal ballot rights for students residing outside their native places.

During the hearing, the apex court pointed out that the current postal ballot system is reserved for specific categories such as defence personnel and the elderly.

CJI cited an example saying Justice Kumar travelled back home to cast his vote.

Four held in drug syndicate bust, over 22 kg narcotics seized

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Mumbai Zonal Unit has successfully dismantled a major international drug syndicate, seizing over 22 kg of high-quality narcotics and arresting four individuals, the agency confirmed in a statement on Friday.

The operation carried out on January 31 in Navi Mumbai, led to the recovery of 11.54 kg of premium-grade cocaine, 4.9 kg of hybrid strain hydroponic weed/gummies, 5.5 kg of cannabis ganjies (200 packets), and Rs 1.6 lakh in cash.

Amit Ghawate, Additional Director of NCB Mumbai, confirmed the arrests of four individuals linked to the illegal trade.

The operation was conducted after intelligence developed following a January 2025 seizure of 200 grams of cocaine from an international courier agency in Mumbai.

The operation was conducted after intelligence developed following a January 2025 seizure of 200 grams of cocaine from an international courier agency in Mumbai. The parcel was destined for Australia, prompting a detailed investigation that led NCB to the source of the contraband in Navi Mumbai.

Through a combination of human and technical intelligence, officers successfully traced the supply network and intercepted the larger cache, added the statement from NCB.

NCB's probe has revealed that the syndicate operates through individuals based abroad, sourcing contraband from the United States and distributing it across India and overseas via courier services, small cargo shipments, and human carriers. The accused individuals used pseudonyms and remained anonymous to one another to evade detection.

Authorities are continuing investigations to trace the backward and forward linkages of the syndicate, aiming to dismantle the broader network facilitating the illicit drug trade.

Keep aside ED, CBI and fight: Uddhav slams Shinde amid crossover of party workers

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Amid multiple office bearers of Shiv Sena (UBT) joining Shinde Sena on Friday, the UBT chief Uddhav Thackeray dared Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Bharatiya Janata Party to "keep aside ED, CBI" and fight them directly.

Earlier today, around 80 workers from Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress switched over to Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde), the Maharashtra Deputy CM told reporters in Mumbai.

Reacting to this, Uddhav Thackeray took a strong jibe at Shinde and said, "If you (Eknath Shinde and BJP) are 'Mard ki Aulad' (son of man) keep aside ED, CBI, Income Tax and Police and come and fight with us. We will show you which is the real Shiv Sena. If you try to break us now, we will break your head."

Thackeray was addressing the 'Shivbandhan' programme organised by party's leader Ambadas Danve in Mumbai.



Earlier today, when asked about 'Operation Tiger', which is regarding multiple leaders of Shiv Sena (UBT) allegedly defecting to Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde), the Deputy Chief Minister said that multiple MLAs are in touch with him.

"People want work. Those who come for work, their party does not look at them differently and works. Shiv Sena is the party of the tiger. One cannot become a tiger by wearing a tiger's skin, one needs the heart of a tiger," he said.

Deputy CM Shinde also hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying that

the Maharashtra assembly results had "given a 440-volt shock" to the Congress leader.

"This result has given Rahul Gandhi a 440-volt shock and he has not yet recovered from the shock of defeat," he said.

On the initiative of MLA Bhavana Gawli, Akola District Chief of UBT group Vijay Malokar, State Congress Secretary Dilip Bhojraj, Congress Washim District General Secretary Sachin Patil, Pramod Raut, Congress Karanja Taluka Vice President Vijay Khaire, Bhau Thorat, Youth Congress City President Praful Gavai and 75 workers joined Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) today.

The Deputy CM added, "Rahul Gandhi should accept defeat. The voters in Maharashtra have cleared the opposition and given a huge victory to the Mahayuti, said Deputy Chief Minister Shinde. We are working to carry forward the ideas of Shiv Sena, which is 80 percent social work and 20 percent politics.

Siddaramaiah not acquitted: BJP after HC rejects CBI probe into MUDA scam

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

After Karnataka High Court refused to transfer to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) from the Lokayukta police the investigation into the alleged Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam, state BJP president BY Vijayendra said that court has not acquitted Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

"High Court has sent back the matter to the lower



court, and at the same time, it has cancelled the summons issued by the lower court also... Let us wait for the lower court to consider all the details and thus the verdict...

"...the scrapping of Muda

Scam plea is a big relief to CM Siddaramaiah, but at the same time, High Court has not said that he and his family are not guilty... The issue pertaining to CBI investigation only has not been accepted by the High Court..." the Karnataka BJP President said.

It is alleged that Siddaramaiah has used his political influence to get compensation of 14 sites in the name of his wife BM Parvathi in lieu of three acres 16 guntas of land acquired by Mysuru

TDG NETWORK
INDORE

Six people died and 16 others sustained injuries in a road accident in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district on Friday early morning, an official said.

The accident occurred between a bike-mini-bus-tanker near Manpur area located in Mhow tehsil in the district at around 4 am on Friday. Two people travelling on a bike, residents of Madhya Pradesh, and

two others died on the spot, while two more succumbed to injuries during treatment at hospital, the officer said.

Upon receiving the information about the incident, the police reached the spot and sent the injured to the MY hospital in the district. A total of 16 people are undergoing treatment.

Additional Collector Roshan Rai said, "A road accident occurred between a bike, a mini-bus and a tanker near Manpur area in Mhow.

Aero India: HAL's LUH, CATS Warrior to be showstoppers

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is set to take the centre stage at Aero India 2025, showcasing its indigenous products and technologies at the India Pavilion, said the state-owned aerospace and defence company.

The five-day event, beginning February 10 at Airforce Station Yelahanka, will feature HAL's Light Utility Helicopter



(LUH) and the CATS Warrior as the main attractions.

"HAL's LUH to take centre

indigenous products and technologies centred on the theme 'Innovate. Collaborate. Lead' at Aero India 2025 beginning February 10 at Airforce Station Yelahanka," HAL posted on X.

This year's theme for HAL's participation is 'Innovate. Collaborate. Lead' highlights the company's focus on innovation, collaboration, and leadership in the aerospace sector. The India Pavilion will showcase HAL's cutting-edge

technologies and products, demonstrating its capabilities in the design, development, and manufacturing of aircraft and helicopters.

The LUH, a state-of-the-art helicopter designed and developed by HAL, will be one of the star attractions at the show. The CATS Warrior, a futuristic unmanned combat air vehicle, will also be displayed, showcasing HAL's capabilities in the field of unmanned aerial vehicles.

AAP LEADERS HUDDLE AT KEJRIWAL'S RESIDENCE AHEAD OF COUNTING

Leaders expressed optimism about securing a majority

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders on Friday arrived at party chief Arvind Kejriwal's residence in Delhi to take part in the meeting held ahead of the Assembly Election results scheduled tomorrow. Delhi Chief Minister and AAP's Kalkaji candidate Atishi and Patparganj candidate Awadh Ojha also arrived for the meeting at 5, Ferozeshah road (Kejriwal residence). Party MP Sanjay Singh said, "Let the meeting begin...The agenda is that we have to win tomorrow with a thumping majority." AAP candidate from Shahdara, Jitender Singh Shubh-dara, Jitender Singh Shubh-dara emphasized that they all are with Arvind Kejriwal and exuded confidence that the party will form the government in the national capital. "Let us speak with the party. We will then speak with you. Surveys that are coming in have all been manu-

KEY POINTS

- **Attendees:** Delhi CM and AAP candidates Atishi (Kalkaji) and Awadh Ojha (Patparganj) were present, along with party MP Sanjay Singh and other leaders.
- **AAP's Confidence:** Leaders expressed optimism about securing a majority. MP Sanjay Singh stated, "We have to win with a thumping majority."
- **Kejriwal's Allegation:** The Delhi CM accused BJP of attempting to poach 16 AAP candidates with offers of ministerial positions and ₹15 crore each.
- **Exit Polls Mixed:** While one poll projected BJP winning 51-60 out of 70 seats, others indicated an AAP victory.
- **Past Performance:** AAP has dominated the last two Delhi Assembly elections.
- **Election Results:** Vote counting is scheduled for February 8.



factured by them (BJP), to mislead the people... We are completely with Arvind Kejriwal... We will discuss preparations for the counting, how to not get misled if someone attempts it... We are confident of Arvind Kejriwal's victory. AAP will form the govern-

ment," Shunty told media. AAP candidate from Mustafabad, Adil Ahmed Khan asserted that he is the "soldier" of Arvind Kejriwal. "Everyone knows that I am a soldier of Arvind Kejriwal... Every Bureau belongs to the BJP they can go anywhere. BJP

has used all of its agencies in these elections, this is shameful," Khan said. On Thursday, Kejriwal claimed that the BJP called 16 of its candidates to leave Aam Aadmi Party and join the BJP. "Some agencies are showing that the 'Gali Galoch

party' (Referring to the BJP) is getting more than 55 seats. In the last two hours, 16 of our candidates have received calls that if they leave AAP and join their party, they will make them ministers and will give Rs. 15 crores to each of them," Kejriwal said.

"If the party is getting more than 55 seats then what is the need for him to call our candidates? Obviously, these fake surveys have been conducted with the sole purpose of creating this atmosphere to break down some candidates. But you abusive people, not even one of our men will break down," Kejriwal wrote.

Exit polls have varied in their predictions regarding the margin of the BJP's victory. One poll suggested that BJP could win 51-60 out of 70 assembly seats in Delhi, while two other polls predicted an AAP victory. Votes will be counted on February 8. AAP has dominated the last two assembly polls in Delhi.

Kejriwal accuses ECI of not uploading booth-wise data

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Friday accused the Election Commission of India (ECI) of "refusing to upload" Form 17C, which provides the data of the total number of votes polled by the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in each Delhi Assembly constituency.

"EC has refused to upload form 17C and number of votes polled per booth in each assembly despite several requests," the AAP chief said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

The party has also launched a website, where they have claimed to have uploaded copies of Form 17C provided to AAP for every assembly constituency. The AAP chief also claims that they will be presenting the data of every assembly constituency and every polling booth which was set up in the national capital during the February 5 election, and criticising the ECI for not doing the same "in the interest of transparency."

"Through the day, we will present the data of every assembly and every booth in



The party has also launched a website, where they have claimed to have uploaded copies of Form 17C provided to AAP for every assembly constituency.

a tabulated format as well so that every voter can access this information. This is something that the election commission should have done in the interest of transparency but it is unfortunate that they are refusing to do it," the post added.

Earlier, on Thursday, the AAP national convener, and candidate for New Delhi Assembly constituency alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is trying to poach the candidates of AAP, offering them Rs 15 crore each. BJP has vehemently denied the allegations.

"Some agencies are showing that the 'Gali Galoch party' (Referring to the BJP) is getting more than 55 seats. In the last two hours, 16 of our candidates have received calls that if they leave AAP and join their party, they will make them ministers and will give Rs. 15 crores to each of them," Kejriwal said.

"If his party is getting more than 55 seats then what is the need for him to call our candidates? Obviously, these fake surveys have been conducted with the sole purpose of creating this atmosphere to break down some candidates.

'Speak logically': Sandeep Dikshit on Kejriwal's allegations

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress New Delhi candidate Sandeep Dikshit on Friday came down heavily on Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal over his allegations that the BJP had attempted to poach 16 of AAP's candidates ahead of the Delhi Assembly election results on February 8. Reacting to the issue, Dikshit asked Kejriwal if he knows which candidate would become MLA, and suggested the former chief minister should "speak logically."

"Their mysteries remain a mystery, you never get proof for the same...Which MLA has received a phone call? Do you even know who would be an MLA?...If a party has to even offer them money, who would they call up?... Speak logically. Why are you nervous?..." Dikshit told.

Targetting Kejriwal, the Congress New Delhi candidate said, "If you are getting 55-60 seats, there is no meaning of a phone call. If BJP is getting 45-50 seats, there is no meaning of a phone call. If Congress is getting 40 seats, there is no

'They have lost their mental balance': BJP's Sachdeva

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Friday launched a sharp criticism of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders including former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Sanjay Singh, stating that they have lost their "mental balance."

This comes after Arvind Kejriwal and Sanjay Singh alleged that BJP is attempting to poach its MLAs. The Delhi BJP President further warned the leaders of legal action if they failed to submit any evidence. Speaking to ANI, Sachdeva said, "Be it Sanjay Singh or



any other AAP leader, they have lost their mental balance. They will have to give evidence of such mean allegations that they have made. Delhi BJP is going to the Anti-Corruption Bureau - to file a complaint against them... If they don't give the evidence, they will have to face legal action. Atishi is

still on bail in a similar case. Arvind Kejriwal had apologised to our leaders. Now this is their turn (other AAP leader). BJP is going to form a double-engine govt in Delhi." On Thursday, Kejriwal claimed that the BJP called 16 of its candidates to leave Aam Aadmi Party and join the BJP. "Some agencies are showing that the 'Gali Galoch party' (Referring to the BJP) is getting more than 55 seats. In the last two hours, 16 of our candidates have received calls that if they leave AAP and join their party, they will make them ministers and will give Rs. 15 crores to each of them," Kejriwal said.

Delhi CEO refutes Kejriwal's allegation

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi on Friday refuted claims of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal, who alleged that the Election Commission (EC) had not provided booth-wise voting data in assembly constituencies, with the poll body saying that Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 has been "complied in letter and spirit" at every polling station.

In response to the allegations of the AAP chief, the Delhi CEO's office posted a statement saying, "As per Rule 49S of the Conduct of Election Rules 1961, all the Presiding Officer had fur-

nished the account of votes recorded in Form 17C to every Polling Agent present at the polling station on the day of poll, February 5, 2025."

Earlier in the day, Kejriwal alleged that the Election Commission has refused to upload Form 17C, which gives booth-wise the total number of votes polled in each assembly election.

"EC has refused to upload form 17C and the number of votes polled per booth in each assembly despite several requests. Aam Aadmi Party has made a website, where we have uploaded all the form 17C of every assembly," read a post by Kejriwal.

The Rule 49S part (1) of the Conduct of Election Rules,

1961 states, "The presiding officer shall at the close of the poll prepare an account of votes recorded in Form 17C and enclose it in a separate cover with the words 'Account of votes recorded' superscribed thereon."

The 2nd part of Rule 49S says that the presiding officer shall furnish a copy of Form 17C to every polling agent. "The presiding officer shall furnish every polling agent present at the close of the poll a true copy of the entries made in Form 17C after obtaining a receipt from the said polling agent therefor and shall attest it as a true copy," part (2) of Rule 49S of Conduct of Election rules states.

Fire breaks out at Okhla landfill site

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

fire broke out at the Okhla landfill site on Friday. Videos purporting to show smoke billowing from the landfill became widely circulated on social media. Following the information, eight fire tenders reached the spot and efforts are underway to douse the fire.

"We received a call regarding a fire at the Okhla landfill around 2:45 pm. Eight fire engines were sent to the spot and efforts to douse the flames are underway," Delhi Fire Services official said, according to news agency PTI report. The local police have also been informed. Earlier, in the day a fire broke out at a slum cluster



near Upvan Apartment in Sector 28, Rohini. According to the Delhi Fire Service, 12 fire tenders were rushed to the site and no casualties have been reported as of now.

The fire spread to 20 huts in the slum and a scrap godown. In January, nearly 250 residents were evacuated after a fire broke out in a five-storey building in Maharashtra's Thane city. No one was injured in the

blaze which erupted at around 5 am in a laundry shop on the ground floor of the building located at Srinagar in Wagle Estate area, Thane Municipal Corporation's disaster management cell chief Yasin Tadvil had said. After being alerted, local fire personnel and the regional disaster management cell team members rushed to the spot to carry out the fire extinguishing operations and evacuated the building occupants, he had said.

Huts gutted in the slum fire in Rohini

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A fire broke out at a slum cluster near Upvan Apartment in Sector 28, Rohini on Friday.

According to the Delhi Fire Service, 12 fire tenders have been rushed to the site and no casualties have been reported as of now. The fire spread to 20 huts in the slum and a scrap godown. More details are awaited. On February 3, a fire broke out at a factory in Delhi's Bawana area under the jurisdiction of the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (DSIIDC).



Indian Navy's capstone Theatre Level Operational Exercise (TROPEX) is underway in the Indian Ocean Region, on Friday. (ANI)

RPF pitches in with help for woman in labour

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A woman from Bihar's Samastipur gave birth to a baby girl in a train coach at Anand Vihar Railway Station in Delhi with the help of Railway Protection Force (RPF).

RPF Sub-Inspector Naveen Kumari, who was on duty on Thursday at the time, swiftly responded to the situation, coordinating with a police constable and fellow passengers to help with the delivery before ar-



ranging for the mother and child to be transferred to a hospital for further care.

"I was on duty when I got the information. I called the ambulance. A lady from Bihar's Samas-

tipur was having labour pain. With the help of a police constable and other women in the coach, we helped in the delivery and later we sent them to hospital," Kumari told ANI.

RPF inspector Shailendra Kumar said that both mother and child are doing well. "We received the information from a train that goes to Saharsa from Anand Vihar, about the labour pain of the woman. Our lady Sub-Inspector, along with other staff went there and with the help of other women in coach, the delivery was done. Later, an ambulance came and we sent them to the hospital. Both newborn and the mother are doing well," he said. In 2024, a woman gave

birth to a baby on a Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) bus with the help of the bus conductor and fellow women passengers.

The woman was identified as Shweta Ratnam and the bus conductor was identified as R Saroja. The woman experienced intense labour pains while travelling on a IZ RTC bus from Musheerabad Depot. She had boarded the bus at Aramghar, but the situation escalated as the bus reached Bahadurpura.

AAI completes airspace design for Navi Mumbai, Noida airports

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has announced the successful completion of airspace design and flight procedures for the Navi Mumbai International Airport and Noida International Airport (Jewar).

This achievement underscored AAI's expertise in managing complex airspace configurations, especially for airports situated near some of the busiest aviation hubs in the country, said a press release issued by the AAI. This milestone is pivotal in enhancing operational efficiency at these new airports, paving the way for future growth in one of

the world's most dynamic aviation markets. As India's Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP), AAI is entrusted with the management of Air Navigation Services across the nation, including at the upcoming airports at Navi Mumbai and Noida (Jewar). The AAI's airspace as well as the flight procedure design team has meticulously crafted the airspace and Instrument Flight Procedures (IFPs) for the Navi Mumbai and Noida International (Jewar) Airport projects.

These procedures are designed to optimise flight efficiency, significantly reducing emissions, track miles, and flight times for the multitude of daily flights traversing the Delhi-Mumbai air corridors.

DELHI POLICE BUSTS 'DIGITAL ARREST' SYNDICATE, FIVE HELD

Chinese company involved in a "Digital Arrest" scam

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police have busted a "Digital Arrest" scam, arresting five Indian operatives working for a Chinese company operating from Jhansi.

The accused impersonated law enforcement officers, threatening victims with arrest unless they transferred large sums of money, according to the police statement.

The arrests were made after an 81-year-old retired Army personnel, Gopal, complained with the Delhi Police.

Gopal had received a call from the scammers, claiming he was involved in a money laundering case and would be arrested unless he transferred Rs. 15 lakhs to a DBS bank account.

The investigation revealed that the scammers operated from Jhansi, opening multiple bank accounts in unsuspecting individuals' names.

The accused - Imran Qureshi, Asad Qureshi, Dev Sagar, Javed, and Ab-

SCAM

- The accused impersonated law enforcement officers, threatening victims with arrest unless they transferred large sums of money.
- An 81-year-old retired Army personnel, Gopal, reported the scam after receiving a call alleging his involvement in a money laundering case and demanding Rs 15 lakh.
- The accused Imran Qureshi, Asad Qureshi, Dev Sagar, Javed, and mastermind Abhishek Yadav were arrested. Yadav, caught in Indore, was in contact with the Chinese company via Telegram and provided them with over 100 bank accounts.
- Police recovered 11 smartphones, 6 ATM cards, a laptop, and several bank cheque books from the accused.
- The scam resembles another January bust by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Chennai, where two accused converted illicit funds into cryptocurrency and transferred them overseas.
- The Prime Minister cautioned against such cyber frauds, emphasizing that "Digital Arrest" does not exist and is a trap used by scammers.



hishek Yadav - worked for a Chinese company, with Abhishek Yadav, the mastermind, arrested from Indore, Madhya Pradesh, said the police.

Abhishek Yadav was in contact with the Chinese

company through Telegram and had supplied them with over a hundred bank accounts.

The Delhi Police recovered 11 smartphones, 6 ATMs, one laptop, and several bank account cheque books

from the accused. Further investigation is underway to uncover the extent of the scam and other individuals' involvement. This bust comes after the Directorate of Enforcement's (ED) Chennai zonal office arrested two

people in connection with a similar "digital arrest" scam in January, where accused allegedly defrauded people using mule accounts and converted illicit cash into cryptocurrency.

ED had started investigating the alleged scam after a complaint by a senior citizen to Chennai Police, mentioning that the two scammers defrauded the person of Rs 33 Lakh.

"Both suspects played a key role in managing mule accounts, converting illicit cash into cryptocurrency, and transferring it overseas," read a statement by ED. Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted the need to repeatedly make people understand that there is no provision named digital arrest in the government. This is completely false and a conspiracy to trap people, he said on the dangers of the rising cyber scam in which fraudsters impersonate law enforcement or government officials to intimidate victims and extort money.

Delhi air quality improves to 'moderate' category

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The air quality in the national capital improved and was recorded in the 'moderate' category on Friday morning.

The improvement in the air quality comes after the AQI remained in the poor category in the previous days.

The overall AQI was recorded as 170 at 8 am on Friday, February 7, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Earlier this week, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a weather warning for dense fog at isolated places over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, and western Uttar Pradesh.

The Central Pollution Control Board reported that the AQI in the national capital stood at a "poor" air quality level after the fog conditions.

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on February 3 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) after the AQI in the national capital showed improvement.



The Central Pollution Control Board reported that the AQI in the national capital stood at a "poor" air quality level after the fog conditions.

The CAQM's decision came as the AQI in Delhi was recorded at 286 on February 3, 2025, which was 64 points below the 350 mark required to implement Stage-III measures, as per the Supreme Court's directives.

The actions under stages I and II of the extant schedule of GRAP however remains invoked and 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.

"We must record here that if the Commission finds that the AQI goes above 350, as a precautionary measure, Stage-III measures will have to be immediately implemented. If the AQI crosses 400 on a given day, Stage-IV measures will have to be reintroduced," the order read.

HC prohibits use of logos, images associated with Ratan Tata and Tata Trusts

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday ruled against the use of logos and images related to Ratan Tata and Tata Trusts, acknowledging that Tata is a well-known trademark and that the late Ratan Tata is a prominent figure deserving of name protection.

Justice Mini Pushkarna's bench, while hearing a lawsuit filed by the Sir Ratan Tata Trust and Tata Sons Pvt Ltd issued an injunction against Rajat Srivastava, who had been planning to organize an award ceremony named the 'Ratan Tata Icon Award.'

According to the lawsuit, the defendants, despite being notified, choose to continue to advertise and publicize an unauthorized event and award, falsely claiming



support by and association with the Tata Trusts and its former Chairman, late Ratan N Tata.

During the proceedings, the defendants agreed to cancel the awards event and refrain from using Ratan Tata's name.

Taking note of this submission, the court also sought an undertaking from the defendants regarding compliance and scheduled a follow-up for February 12.

The plaintiffs, Tata, were represented by Senior Advocate Rajeev Nayar. The lawsuit was filed through the law firm Anand and Anand, with representation by Pravin Anand and

Achuthan Sreekumar.

According to the suit, upon learning about the Defendants' unauthorized and misleading events scheduled for February 10, 2025, at the Constitutional Club of India and Maharashtra Sadan, New Delhi, the Plaintiffs sent a representative to verify the Defendants' claims. When the representative inquired at Maharashtra Sadan, they were informed that no such event was known to them and that the posts using their institution's name were unauthorized and surprising.

Conversely, at the Constitutional Club of India, the representative was told that there was a booking under Defendant Rajat Srivastava's name, but the officials did not provide any additional details about the booking or event.

Police suspect student mischief behind bomb threats

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A new bomb threat sent to schools in Delhi and NCR has prompted an investigation, with Noida Police suspecting student mischief, particularly since exams are underway.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Ram Badan Singh stated that the latest threat differs from previous ones, written in a South Indian language, and nothing suspicious was found after a thorough check.

Speaking to reporters, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) of Noida, Ram Badan Singh said, "...We have checked thoroughly; nothing was found. Exams are going on, and hence, I think it was done by any student. It's different from threats that were sent earlier; it's written in South Indian (language). Further investigation is going on"

The threat led to immediate school closures and a switch to online classes. Parents were informed about the closure, with one guardian suspecting the



bomb threat was the reason.

"School administration is saying that school is closed today, and the classes will run online... They said nothing, but I think it's because of the bomb threat," he said.

Earlier, several schools in Delhi and Noida received similar threats, prompting police investigations and Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) implementation.

Ahlcon International School in Delhi's Mayur Vihar-1 informed Pandav Nagar police station that an email was received through the school today regarding a bomb threat.

According to the police, the information was provided at 6:40 am. It was shared with the control room. The bomb disposal squad of

East District was informed accordingly. Station Head Officer (SHO) Pandav Nagar along with staff reached the school.

The Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) checked the school premises and nothing suspicious was found.

The Principal of the school also informed the parents through email that due to the threat to the safety of students, the campus would be closed on Friday.

Shiv Nadar School in Noida also received a threat. Afterwards, the Noida police, bomb squad, fire brigade, Dog Squad, and BDDS team immediately checked all the places.

St Stephens College in North Delhi was also among the educational institutions that received the threat.

Schools closed, classes held online

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Schools in Delhi and NCR received bomb threats on Friday, prompting immediate closures and a switch to online classes.

A guardian of one student shared that they received news of the closure and online classes just today, suspecting it was due to the bomb threat.

"School administration is saying that school is closed today, and the classes will run online... They said nothing, but I think it's because of the bomb threat," he said.

Earlier today, several schools in Delhi and Noida received a bomb threat. The police have started an investigation and Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) is being followed.

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email was received through email to the principal of the school today regarding a bomb threat.

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Wall collapse at construction site claims lives of two labourers

TDG NETWORK
GREATER NOIDA

A tragic incident occurred at the Delhi Public School (DPS) when a wall collapsed while labourers were digging a pit for a swimming pool lintel, resulting in the deaths of two workers. The deceased have been identified as Baboolal (50) and Lal Diwan (45) from Hamirpur. Another injured laborer was rushed to Kailash Hospital by the Surajpur police.

The swimming pool, located near the school's boundary

wall, is used by students, while residents of nearby high-rise societies often observe the students during their practice sessions. To provide shade for the children during the hot summer months, the contractor was tasked with erecting columns and placing a lintel over the swimming pool area.

Around 2:30 PM on Friday, while digging a pit for the columns, a seven-foot high, nine-inch thick wall collapsed onto the laborers. The workers were trapped under the debris, leading to chaos at

the scene. Bystanders quickly worked to remove the rubble and rescue the trapped laborers, Durga Prasad (50), Lal Diwan, and Baboolal. All three were taken to the hospital, where Baboolal and Lal Diwan were pronounced dead during treatment.

The families of the deceased have accused the contractor and the school administration of negligence and are demanding action against them, as well as appropriate compensation.

Additional DCP Central

Noida, Hridesh Katheria, confirmed that the contractor has been detained and stated that necessary actions will be taken upon receiving a formal complaint from the families. Sandhya Awasthi, the principal of DPS, mentioned that she was out of town and was unaware of the incident.

Previous Incidents of Negligence This incident is not the first of its kind in the city. There have been multiple accidents at construction sites due to negligence, resulting in the loss of workers' lives.

Contractors and management often overlook the safety of laborers, leading to such tragic occurrences. Workers are frequently not provided with essential safety equipment, such as helmets, safety shoes to prevent slips and injuries from falling objects, and safety belts for those working at heights. Additionally, high-visibility jackets, gloves, dust masks, and safety goggles are necessary to protect workers from various hazards on construction sites.

Murdered youth's body discovered in abandoned company

TDG NETWORK
GURUGRAM

A shocking incident has come to light in the DLF Phase-1 area, where the body of a young man was found dumped in an abandoned company. Upon receiving the information, police officials, along with fingerprint experts and a dog squad, arrived at the scene to investigate. The identity of the deceased has not yet

On February 5, Subhash Negi, along with company engineers Surat Nagar and Mithlesh Kumar, went to the DLF Phase-1 office around 4 PM to collect the remaining items.

been established. According to reports, the victim had visible head injuries and was found lying under cotton and a cloth. Subhash

Negi, an administrative executive at Solis Realty Private Limited, filed a complaint with the DLF Phase-1 police. He stated that the company had

relocated its office from DLF Phase-1 to Sector-44, with most of the office equipment moved by December 20, 2024. Only a few items remained at the DLF Phase-1 office, which is why it was locked. On February 5, Subhash Negi, along with company engineers Surat Nagar and Mithlesh Kumar, went to the DLF Phase-1 office around 4 PM to collect the remaining items. After unlocking the main gate.

Tantrik arrested for rape of woman and her minor daughter

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a shocking incident in the Loni area of Ghaziabad, a tantrik (occult practitioner) has been arrested for allegedly raping a woman and her minor daughter. The woman, distressed by her husband's abandonment, sought the tantrik's help, believing he could bring her husband back.

According to the police report, the woman approached the tantrik after her husband left her. The tantrik promised to reunite her with her husband but instead took advantage of her vulnerability. He reportedly raped the woman and recorded the act, threatening to make the video public if she disclosed the incident to anyone.

The situation escalated further when the tantrik also as-

The situation escalated further when the tantrik also assaulted the woman's minor daughter.

saulted the woman's minor daughter. The police were alerted after the woman filed a complaint, leading to the ar-

rest of the accused, identified as 65-year-old Fizu.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Loni, Surya Bali Maurya, stated that the accused had been in contact with the victim for about a year, exploiting her emotional state to carry out his heinous acts. The police have registered a case based on the woman's complaint and are continuing their investigation into the matter.

PSBs RECORD HIGHEST-EVER NET PROFIT OF RS 1.29 LAKH CRORE

PSBs posted a record Rs 1.29 lakh crore profit, improved asset quality, strong credit growth, and robust capital reserves.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have recorded the combined net profit surged to an all-time high of Rs 1,29,426 crore during April-December 2024, registering a 31.3 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth.

According to the Ministry of Finance, the aggregate operating profit also witnessed a significant rise, reaching Rs 2,20,243 crore.

The financial stability of PSBs is further reinforced by a substantial improvement in asset quality. The net non-performing assets (NPA) ratio declined to a historic low of 0.59 per cent, with an aggregate net NPA outstanding of Rs 61,252 crore. This reflects the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at strengthening the banking sector.

In terms of business expansion, PSBs recorded an 11.0 per cent year-on-year growth, with total aggregate

KEY POINTS

■ **Record profit:** PSBs' net profit hit Rs 1.29 lakh crore, up 31.3% YoY, with operating profit at Rs 2.2 lakh crore.

■ **Stronger balance sheet:** Net NPA ratio fell to 0.59%, with Rs 61,252 crore in net NPAs, signaling improved asset quality.

■ **Growth surge:** Business grew 11% YoY to Rs 242.27 lakh crore; credit up 12.4%, led by retail (16.6%), agriculture (12.9%), and MSMEs (12.5%).

■ **Robust capital & outlook:** CRAR at 14.83%, above 11.5% regulatory need; PSBs well-positioned for growth in agriculture, MSMEs, and infrastructure.



business reaching Rs 242.27 lakh crore.

Deposits grew by 9.8 per cent year-on-year, contributing to a robust financial position. Additionally, credit growth stood at 12.4 per cent, with retail credit expanding by 16.6 per cent, agriculture credit by 12.9 per cent, and MSME credit by 12.5 per cent.

Another key highlight

is the strong capital position of PSBs. The Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) stood at 14.83 per cent, significantly above the regulatory requirement of 11.5 per cent, ensuring financial stability and lending capacity.

The strong performance of PSBs underscores the effectiveness of policy and process reforms imple-

mented in recent years. These include enhanced credit discipline, improved recognition and resolution of stressed assets, responsible lending practices, governance reforms, financial inclusion initiatives, and accelerated technology adoption.

With adequate capital buffers and a well-positioned credit portfolio, PSBs re-

main fully equipped to meet the credit demands across various sectors, with a special focus on agriculture, MSMEs, and infrastructure development.

The continued focus on strengthening the banking sector is expected to sustain the momentum of financial growth and contribute to overall economic expansion in the coming quarters.

RBI rate cut fails to cheer markets

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Indian stock market ended in the red on Friday following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) announcement of a 25 basis points (bps) cut in the repo rate, bringing it down to 6.25 per cent.

This marked the first rate reduction in over five years, signalling an effort to boost economic growth amid global uncertainties.

The BSE Sensex declined by 197.97 points, closing at 77,860.19, while the NSE Nifty lost 43.40 points, ending the session at 23,559.95. Out of the Nifty 50 stocks, 28 advanced while 23 declined.

Among the top gainers in the Nifty index were Tata Steel, ITC Hotels, Bharti Airtel, JSW Steel, and Trent, while ITC, SBI, Britannia, Adani Ports, and TCS were among the biggest losers.

Commenting on the market reaction, VLA Ambala, SEBI Registered Research Analyst and Co-Founder of Stock Market Today, stated, "On Friday, the Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI

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reduced the repo rate to 6.25 per cent for the first time in over five years. This measure indicates a strategic move to stimulate economic growth amid a challenging global backdrop."

She added, "This decision is expected to benefit several sectors, particularly real estate, by increasing market liquidity, which could allow developers to accelerate on-going projects and launch new ones. In addition, lower borrowing costs on new and existing floating-rate home loans are likely to boost housing sales."

Meanwhile, the RBI retained India's CPI inflation forecast for FY25 at 4.8 per cent and projected inflation at 4.2 per cent for FY26. Retail inflation in December 2024 declined to a four-month low of 5.22 per cent,

largely driven by a drop in food prices. The RBI Governor also highlighted that the agricultural focus in the FY26 Union Budget will play a critical role in keeping inflation under control.

From a technical perspective, Nifty formed an inverted hammer candlestick pattern during the session at the 50-day EMA, with an RSI of 45. Market analysts suggest that in the next session, Nifty could find support between 23,210 and 23,100, while resistance is expected around 23,510 and 23,580.

While the rate cut is expected to provide relief to interest-sensitive sectors like real estate and automobiles, investors remain cautious as they assess the broader economic impact of the RBI's policy stance.

'India certainly can achieve 7% plus growth': RBI Governor

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Friday said India can certainly achieve 7 per cent or above growth and that should be what the country should aspire for.

"These are difficult questions to answer, but nevertheless, I would like to stick my neck out and say that certainly India can achieve 7 per cent plus growth rate, and we should certainly aspire for," RBI Governor said, when asked whether 7 per cent or above growth rate is achievable, at the post MPC press conference.

The government in its Economic Survey projected growth rate at 6.3-6.8 per cent for the upcoming fiscal - 2025-26. The RBI today projected 2025-26 growth at 6.7 per cent.

Asked to respond whether growth more important or inflation, RBI Governor said in India's case, the primary objective is to manage inflation and price stability,



RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra addresses a post-monetary policy press conference, in Mumbai on Friday. (ANI Photo)

keeping in view the growth objective.

"So we will continuously focus on that, trying to meet these objectives. We will try to align the inflation with the target that has been given to us," he said.

At the same time, Malhotra said he felt that time has come where the RBI can be more supportive of growth, given inflation is coming down. "It (inflation) is expected to go down... We will maintain a neutral stance so that we are able to proactively respond to the evolving mac-

roeconomic conditions," he supplemented.

In another question he was asked whether the RBI would aspire to maintain in 2-6 per cent band or the ideal 4 per cent mark, the Governor said, "In RBI, we like to be on top of everything", hinting that its aim is to align inflation at 4 per cent.

On the inflation front, the central bank expects Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation to ease to 4.8 per cent in 2024-25, with Q4 inflation projected at 4.4 per cent. For 2025-26, inflation is forecasted at 4.2 per cent, with quarterly estimates as Q1 at 4.5 per cent, Q2 at 4.0 per cent, Q3 at 3.8 per cent and Q4 at 4.2 per cent.

Announcing highlights from the recently held RBI's Monetary Policy Committee decisions, Governor Malhotra earlier today said that the inflation has declined, supported by a favourable outlook on food prices and the continued transmission of past monetary policy actions.

BUSINESS AT A GLANCE

Affordable housing

Real estate leader Niranjan Hiranandani welcomed RBI's 25 bps repo rate cut, calling it a "revolutionary step" that will boost affordable housing. He noted that high interest rates had slowed the sector's growth, and this reduction will help the economy move toward 7-8% GDP growth. SBI Chairman CS Setty termed the move "timely and well-communicated."

AI-enabled consumer helpline

The Department of Consumer Affairs has launched an AI-driven National Consumer Helpline (NCH) to speed up grievance redressal. Complaints received grew tenfold from 2015 to 2024, with digital registrations rising sharply. The helpline has reduced grievance resolution time from 66 days in 2023 to 48 days in 2024. Consumers can access the service via toll-free number 1915 or the official portal.

Govt to sponsor students for international moot court competition

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal announced that students selected for an international moot court on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) will be sponsored by the government. The event, hosted by National Law University Delhi, focuses on AI and copyright. Goyal emphasized AI's role in legal frameworks and highlighted various budget initiatives, including Rs 10,000 crore for startups.

Voting opens for Gadgets Now Awards 2024

The much-anticipated Gadgets Now Awards 2024 will take place on February 14, celebrating top tech innovations. Categories include smartphones, wearables, audio devices, and gaming gadgets. A distinguished jury has evaluated the nominees, while public voting is live at gadgetsnow.indiatimes.com/awards/nominations.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India has achieved a historic milestone by surpassing 100 GW of installed solar power capacity, reinforcing its position as a global leader in renewable energy.

This remarkable achievement is a testament to the nation's commitment to a cleaner, greener future and marks a significant step toward realizing its ambitious target of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based energy capacity by 2030 set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a Ministry of New and Renewable Energy release said.

Union Minister of New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said India is becoming self-reliant in green energy.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's energy journey over the past ten years has been historic and inspiring. Initiatives like solar panels, solar parks and rooftop solar projects have brought about revolutionary changes. As a result, today India has successfully achieved the target of 100 GW of solar energy produc-



tion. In the field of green energy, India is not only becoming self-reliant but is also showing the world a new path," he said.

Joshi said that this achievement is powered by the relentless commitment to clear and greener future. The Minister added that PM SuryaGhar Muft Bijli Yojana is making rooftop solar a household reality and is a game-changer in sustainable energy, empowering every home with clean power.

The release said that India's solar power sector has witnessed an extraordinary 3450 per cent increase in capacity over the past decade, rising from 2.82 GW in 2014 to 100 GW in 2025. As of January 31, 2025, In-

dia's total solar capacity installed stands at 100.33 GW, with 84.10 GW under implementation and an additional 47.49 GW under tendering. The country's hybrid and round-the-clock (RTC) renewable energy projects are also advancing rapidly, with 64.67 GW under implementation and tendered, bringing the grand total of solar and hybrid projects to 296.59 GW.

Solar energy remains the dominant contributor to India's renewable energy growth, accounting for 47 per cent of the total installed renewable energy capacity. In 2024, record-breaking 24.5 GW of solar capacity was added reflecting a more than two-fold increase in solar installations compared to 2023. Last year also saw the installation of 18.5 GW of utility-scale solar capacity, a nearly 2.8 times increase compared to 2023. Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are among the top-performing states, contributing significantly to India's total utility-scale solar installations.

India ranks 19th in top startup hub in 2024

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

STARTUP CORNER

India has ascended to the 19th position globally, returning to the top 20 in 2024, with a total score of 13,529.

Notably, six European countries are featured in the top ten positions, up from five the previous year. Below are the top 10 global startup hubs, as of 2024.

The United States remains the leading startup ecosystem in the world, supported by a strong venture capital market, a culture that fosters innovation, and a highly skilled workforce, as highlighted in StartupBlink's Startup Ecosystem Report 2024.

The US's major cities, like San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles, continue to be at the forefront of startup activity; however, the number of U.S. cities listed in the Index has declined from 383 in 2020 to



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STARTUP ECOSYSTEM REPORT 2024

Rank	Country	Total Score
1	United States	215,001
2	United Kingdom	55,995
3	Israel	51,557
4	Canada	38,254
5	Singapore	37,736
6	Sweden	27,024
7	Germany	25,83
8	France	24,894
9	The Netherlands	24,462
10	Switzerland	24,081

Source: StartupBlink—Startup Ecosystem Report 2024

240 in 2024.

Despite this reduction, the US still significantly outpaces the United Kingdom and Israel, which hold the second and third positions, respectively, with the gap between these two countries narrowing from 17% in 2022 to 8.6% in 2024.

Meanwhile, Switzerland has re-entered the top

ten position, showcasing Europe's dominance and highlighting the strength and diversity of European startup ecosystems.

Notably, six European countries are featured in the top ten positions, up from five the previous year. Below are the top 10 global startup hubs, as of 2024.

METHODOLOGY

The StartupBlink Global Startup Ecosystem Index 2024 evaluates ecosystems based on various factors, including quantity, quality, and the business environment, utilizing data from partners such as Crunchbase and Statista.

WHERE DOES INDIA RANK?

As for India, it has ascended to the 19th position globally, returning to the top 20 in 2024. With a score of 13,529, India has risen two spots.

Affordable housing to get boost from repo rate cut, tax exemption relief: Hiranandani

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Real estate business leader Niranjan Hiranandani said affordable housing segment will get yet another boost with the reduction in repo rate by the RBI monetary policy committee.

Managing Director of Hiranandani Group, lauding the Budget and its massive tax relief, said that the Finance Minister gave a big boost by raising exemption limit.

"I think RBI's now reduction is going to give the second big boost to the economy," Hiranandani said. "Affordable housing will be the most delighted because in the last one, one-and-a-half years, there was a setback to affordable housing because of the higher interest rate impact," the real estate business leader

Managing Director of Hiranandani Group, lauding the Budget and its massive tax relief, said that the Finance Minister gave a big boost by raising exemption limit.

told ANI.

"I think this reduction in (repo) rate will also begin a new beginning for affordable housing to take a second leap," he said.

Elevated interest rates over the past five years has somewhat impacted the off-take in affordable housing. Loosening repo rates are expected to have a far-reaching effect for the real estate industry, which essentially is an interest rate sensitive space.

Talking to ANI soon after the RBI announced the 25 basis points reduction in repo rate, Hiranandani

recalled how he had been demanding a reduction in interest rates for the last six months or so.

"We expected that the RBI should actually reduce it and we are very happy that RBI has finally conceded and consented to reduce it by 25 basis points."

Terming repo rate reduction as a "revolutionary step" at a time when the inflation is under control, he said the combination of both are an "added incentive".

Going ahead, he asserted that raising the economic growth to 7-8 per cent was necessary.

ADVENT OF NARENDRA MODI AS AN ECO-CONSCIOUS PRIME MINISTER

OPINION

RAGHAVENDRA P. TIWARI



The concept of binary between the self and the other does not exist in Bharatiya belief system which professes that all forms of life emanate from and return to the same source. Moreover, human body is considered to be comprising of five elements of nature itself called *Pancha Bhuta*: *Pritivi* (earth), *Jal* (water), *Agni* (fire), *Vayu* (air), and *Askash* (space). In *Prashna Upanishad*, these elements are considered manifestations of the divine energy. Therefore, there is no scope for the binary between the internal and the external in Bharatiya culture. Since this faith deeply pervaded our thought process and practices, we emphasised on self-consciousness instead of external consciousness. Moreover, this belief system is non-dogmatic and promotes the idea that all human and non-human entities are integral to nature. Contrarily, in the Western culture, the nature is seen as "other" and it exists for domination and

exploitation. However, for Indians, connecting with nature implies linking with ourselves for nurturing mother earth for sustainability. Thus Indian civilizational ethos has potential to resolve cataclysmal climate change issues.

Nevertheless, under the toxic influence of the colonial mind-set inculcated through Macaulay's education system, we look at Indian Knowledge System with suspicion and often discard it as uncivilised, unscientific and outdated. Current environmental crisis is also a creation of such a mind-set. The over-exploitation of natural resources for satisfying our greed and utter disregard to non-human life forms and earthly features have become an anathema of the products of modern education system. Thus, natural resources, conserved through generations owing to interconnectedness mindset with all manifestations of nature are under extreme stress.

The advent of eco-conscious PM Narendra Modi, at this critical juncture, is icebreaking in the socio-economic and political discourse of humankind. PM Modi's global engagements, be it bilateral, regional or multilateral, have climate concern at its core. Climate crisis has become an indispensable part of India's foreign policy and diplomacy, and is being appreciated

globally. His efforts to mitigate climate crisis revolve around restoring the very Indian way of interaction between humans and nature for their survival and progeny. Plethora of programs initiated by him to mitigate climate crisis are intended to restore eco-friendly traditional practices. He firmly believes that the utmost need of the hour is the mindful and judicious utilization of natural resources, instead of mindless and selfish consumption. His actions for the last one decade for rejuvenating holistic ecosystem for 'Survival and Happiness of All' make him a true representative of our civilizational history.

Today, India of the 21st century, under the visionary leadership of PM Modi, is taking quantum leap in combating climate crisis with ambition, courage, commitment, conviction and a consciously drawn roadmap. PM Modi's stand on global platform for combating climate crisis has greatly influenced world view. He firmly believes that collective human action is a must to safeguard nature. India has become the only country to meet its Paris Agreement ahead of schedule. Path-breaking disruptions like International Solar Alliance, One-Sun-One-World-One-Grid Project, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure for climate adaptation, green credit, Smart city project and International Big Cat Alliance have been appreciated globally. India is implementing world's largest Renewable Energy expansion programme envisaging a five-fold increase in the overall RE capacity. PM Modi is leading the global climate movement



The advent of eco-conscious PM Narendra Modi, at this critical juncture, is icebreaking in the socio-economic and political discourse of humankind. PM Modi's global engagements, be it bilateral, regional or multilateral, have climate concern at its core.

upfront and the world is ready to be led by India in its fight against climate change.

Factually, India's per capita carbon footprint is 60% lower than the global average because our lifestyle, to an extent, is still rooted in sustainable traditional practices. Intended to amplify climate-friendly behavioural changes, PM Modi initiated 'Lifestyle for Environment' to become a mass movement for environmentally conscious lifestyle. Aimed at mobilizing people globally to become 'Pro-Mother Earth', collective contribution towards Mission LiFE is bound to become a robust safeguard

for the climate in future. Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam launched recently is in fact a sequel to LiFE. Bharatiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati Programme will help save soil and water bodies from chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Agro-waste and garbage management, Ban on single-use plastics and mandatory plastic waste processing, open defecation free villages, supply of gas stove to rural women, use of eco-friendly bag tags in the airports, maximizing the use of kulhad tea cups and mud diyas and minimizing the use of fire crackers will contribute hugely to Swachh Bharat Mission. Clean Air

Programme will greatly help reduce the quantity of particulate matters in the range of PM2.5 and PM10 particle concentrations in the atmosphere.

PM Modi emphasized on the significance of green jobs and green growth in India's efforts to combat climate change. Green Skill Development Programme is in vogue to develop green skills in youth and also to provide sustainable employment opportunities in the environmental conservation, renewable energy and forest sectors. India's start-ups initiatives are in sync with the Climate Tech providing innovative and feasible solutions using environment-friendly alternatives. PM Modi has promulgated five neektars elements, 'Panchamrit' to deal with the current climate crisis. These are to increase India's non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW by 2030, to meet 50 percent of its energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030, to reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one

billion tonnes by 2030, to reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by more than 45 percent by 2030, and to achieve the target of Net Zero by 2070.

PM Modi's dream is to see India becoming a global leader in green hydrogen production. Thus, National Hydrogen Energy Mission has been launched to enable cost competitive green hydrogen production. The hydrogen fuel cell bus has already been launched. His resolve to achieve 'Net Zero' target by 2030 by Indian Railways alone may help reduce emissions by 60 million tonnes annually. Massive LED bulb campaign is already reducing emissions by 40 million tonnes annually. Solar power initiatives have helped in saving have-nots money alongside protecting the environment. Additionally, the emerging technologies like 2G Ethanol Pilot, Comfort climate box for tropical regions, Hydrogen Valleys, Heating and cooling virtual repository, are also on his agenda. India has also devised strategy for a Bio-based economy for facilitating infrastructure for Bio-manufacturing of low-carbon bio-based products.

During the last ten years, the number of wetlands and Ramsar sites in India have increased almost three times. Amrit Dharohar Yojana and Mishti Yojana would help protect and revive the mangrove ecosystem. Jal Jeevan Mission and proposed construction of 50,000 Amrit Sarovars are intended to ensure water security. Measures like a huge afforestation programme, reforming our transportation system and cleaning up villages, ponds, cities and rivers will accel-

erate climate crisis mitigation.

It is thus evident that India, under PM Modi, has positioned itself as a key global player in climate advocacy and in managing climate crisis. Eco-conscious PM Modi is leading internationally a new low-carbon approach to development and to demonstrate that India can solve global ecological crisis by reviving ancient Indian wisdom of land and water conservation and environmental preservation as a part of our civilizational ethos without compromising with development. In essence, PM Modi has streamlined energy decision-making vis-à-vis environmental decision-making processes. Moreover, PM Modi is committed to a sustainable path to Viksit Bharat@2047. Surely, he derives inspiration from the basic traits ingrained in our tradition and culture, the essence of which lies in 'One Earth, One Family, One Future.' Actually, he has become a Brand Ambassador of our great civilizational culture which does not only consider earth merely a planetary body but "Mother to All". Let us take a pledge to "Keep it Pure." Erwin Schrödinger, inspired by Upanishadic ideas, connected quantum physics with Vedic philosophy for giving new direction to humanity. Today, Narendra Modi is blending Vedic wisdom with his political discourse for the welfare of humanity. This great initiative of PM Modi has tremendous potential to globally transform the future of humankind.

Raghavendra P. Tiwari, Vice Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda.

Poetry: From creation to confrontation

OPINION

DR. JERNAIL S. ANAND



"Between the Poet and his Word, there is a crisis of faith and loyalty"

-Anand

When we are writing a poem, it is a challenging proposition because here, our belief systems and the belief systems of the words, phrases, verbs and proverbs, are in constant confrontation. We choose the ones which we find plausible to our meaning. Even when we make them fall in line, they are subdued till they are read in the pattern we have laid for them. After that, they raise their

heads again and stand up, challenging us. Thus, writing a text is an act of challenge, which is transferred to the reader who is reading the text.

The readers who are infinite, have their own belief systems, different from the writer. They either have to force their beliefs into the pattern drawn by the author, or they can draw the poet out of his haven, and challenge his beliefs directly. There used to be times, some fifty years ago, when the reader was asked to appreciate a poem. At the most, in college classes, teachers would teach critical appreciation. But, today, in these times of fierce consumerism and competition, no reader likes to accept what the poet says, rather he confronts the text. The reader is not interpreting or appreciating it. These are very docile words. The reader does not believe in the text, he tries

to defy it, and finally deny it when he comes up with his own critical report.

In fact, it is an interrogation of the text, and the reader writes an autopsy report. What is there alive in it, what is dead, how it died, and what happened at the last moment. Sometimes writing appears to be like a hunting expedition. We catch the words, make them mean something, and then, leave them dead, for others to come and see our kill. When you hunt them down, they die for a moment, and then, become liberated and fly away, to be used in some other context, in some other text. Like a painting, a text too is never a finished product. No one can write 'OK. Tested' on it. For, it is an evolving mechanism, which acquires new meanings every moment of the day. The idea of finality with regard to a text is a sacrilege.

FIRE-PLAY

Contending with words is not an easy affair. They have their own traditional values, their own ethos, in which they are racially placed. They signify living patterns and socio-psychological values. They have a life of their own. Generally, we do not use words with



We catch the words, make them mean something, and then, leave them dead, for others to come and see our kill. When you hunt them down, they die for a moment, and then, become liberated and fly away, to be used in some other context, in some other text. Like a painting, a text too is never a finished product.

the deference they deserve. They need to be respected, and used with care. A poet who plays with words knows, he is playing with fire. Poetry is a fire-play, words are burning bodies,

giving light and spending themselves, to be reborn in the readers' mind again.

What the poet wants to say is, in critical creed, dismissed as intentional fallacy and, what the reader

thinks of it, is also dismissed as affective fallacy. *The fact is that both these fallacies [intentional/affective] have some truth in them, and the final truth is what we get out of a writing. After reading a poem, you do not remain the same, that is the true test of a writing. True poetry moves the author and its readers, and brings up new visions of reality, in order to make things more understandable, not to confuse and confound the reader.*

CONFUSING REALITIES OF CONTEMPORARY TIMES

The present day reality is

confusing. Particularly, when every word and every idea stands emasculated. What is good? What is evil? Even the description of a saint is under great strain. Are white clothes symbols of purity? How dacoits dress themselves? In black? No, not nowadays. They are dressed like gentlefolks. It is only their actions, which are amiss. But, the society has developed an alphabet which does not contradict the wrong. Nobody speaks. Silence is the new alphabet. It is a shocking spectacle in which words are afraid to mean what they have meant for centuries. Think of the poor condition of the word 'saint' or 'a sage' with hundreds of sages behind the bars for offences you cannot mention.

Can a poet afford to project what good means and what evil stands for? He prefers silence than to confront the chaos. Poetry is under severe strain in this world of make-belief. *Meaning does not exist in words, or their formulation, it is determined by those who wield the gun.* This is our world. Better find a way between the intentional fallacy and the affective fallacy which only talks of truth, but can ensure a

safe passage. It however appears to be the best way to join the cacophony, and start writing about beauty, sun, moon, winds, waters, and sighing over declining eco-system. Best start accusing gods, it will surely help.

PROPHECY

If you come across the true meaning of a word, better avoid stating the truth. Take the other route. But don't forget. If the words join hands, and set after you, they may arraign you and might announce a public hanging. Words will not spare you for maltreating them, for miscarrying their intentions, and for not portraying them in their reality. Poet, you have before you a forked option. Take up their cause for truth. Or, mask their faces all over again, twist their meaning, emasculate them, and perpetuate this unholy charade of truthless tales being spun in glossy metaphors.

Dr. Jernail Singh Anand won the Seneca Award, the Charter of Morava, Franz Kafka and Maxim Gorky Awards. Author of 175 plus books, his name adorns the Poets' Rock in Serbia.

A GENTLE NUDGE TO BORROW

RBI's repo rate cut may lower lending rates, making loans cheaper for consumers and businesses, boosting housing and auto credit.

On February 7, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a 25 basis points reduction in the repo rate, bringing it down to 6.25%. This decision marks the first rate cut in nearly five years, with the previous reduction occurring in May 2020. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) unanimously voted for this adjustment while maintaining a 'neutral' monetary policy stance. The RBI also projected a GDP growth rate of 6.7% for the fiscal year 2025-26 (FY26) and anticipates a decline in inflation to 4.2% in FY26 from 4.8% in FY25. Additionally, the central bank introduced measures such as exclusive internet domain names for banks and non-bank financial entities and highlighted the challenging global economic backdrop. Despite external challenges, the RBI emphasized the resilience of the Indian economy, noting that the current account deficit (CAD) is expected to remain within sustainable levels. As of January 31, India's foreign exchange reserves stood at \$630.6 billion, providing an import cover of over ten months. The next MPC meeting is scheduled for April 7-9, 2025.

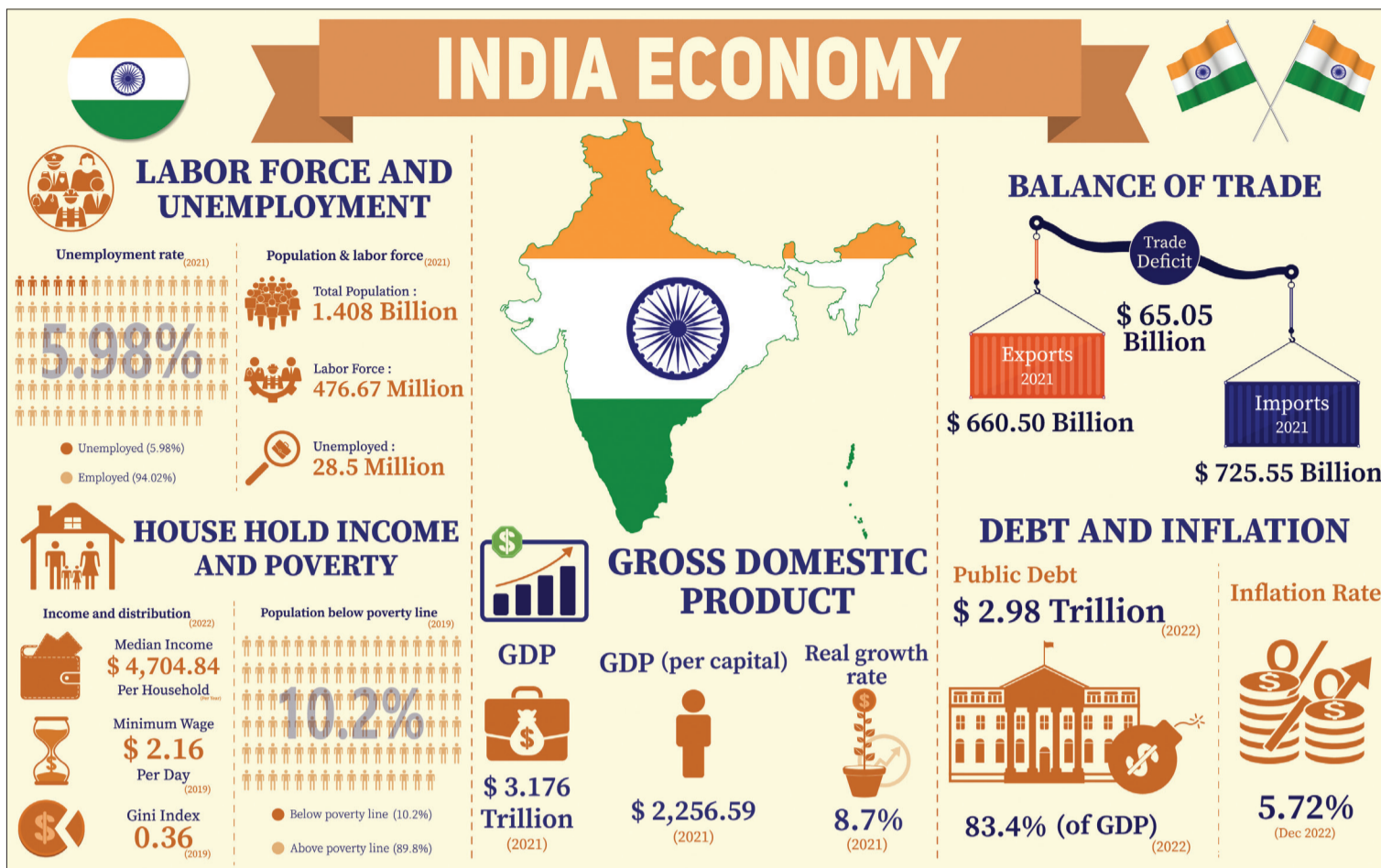
RATIONALE BEHIND THE RATE CUT

The RBI's decision to reduce the repo rate is primarily driven by the need to stimulate economic growth amid easing inflationary pressures. India's GDP growth has been on a downward trajectory, with the government forecasting a growth rate of 6.4% for the fiscal year ending in March 2025, marking the slowest pace in four years. Factors contributing to this slowdown include a weaker manufacturing sector and subdued corporate investments. The central bank's move aims to provide a boost to the economy by making borrowing more affordable, thereby encouraging spending and investment.

Inflation has shown signs of moderation, reaching a four-month low of 5.22% in December 2024. The RBI projects that inflation will average 4.8% in the current financial year and decline further to 4.2% in FY26. This downward trend in inflation provides the central bank with the leeway to adopt a more accommodative monetary policy stance without jeopardizing its inflation targets.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BANKING SECTOR

The reduction in the repo



Source: cyndiecornelia.pages.dev

TDG EXPLAINER

rate is expected to have several implications for the banking sector. Primarily, it should lead to a decrease in lending rates, making loans more affordable for consumers and businesses. This could stimulate demand for credit, particularly in sectors such as housing and automobiles. However, bankers have expressed concerns that the rate cut alone may not be sufficient to boost lending, citing persistent tight liquidity conditions. The banking system has been experiencing a liquidity deficit since mid-December 2024, which reached over three trillion rupees in January 2025. Without adequate liquidity, significant credit offtake may be challenging, and the benefits of the rate cut could take several months to materialize.

Additionally, the RBI's decision to maintain the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) at 4% means that banks are still required to hold a portion of their deposits as reserves, limiting the funds available for lending. The absence of a CRR cut has left some bankers concerned about the continued tight liquidity conditions.

IMPACT ON CONSUMERS

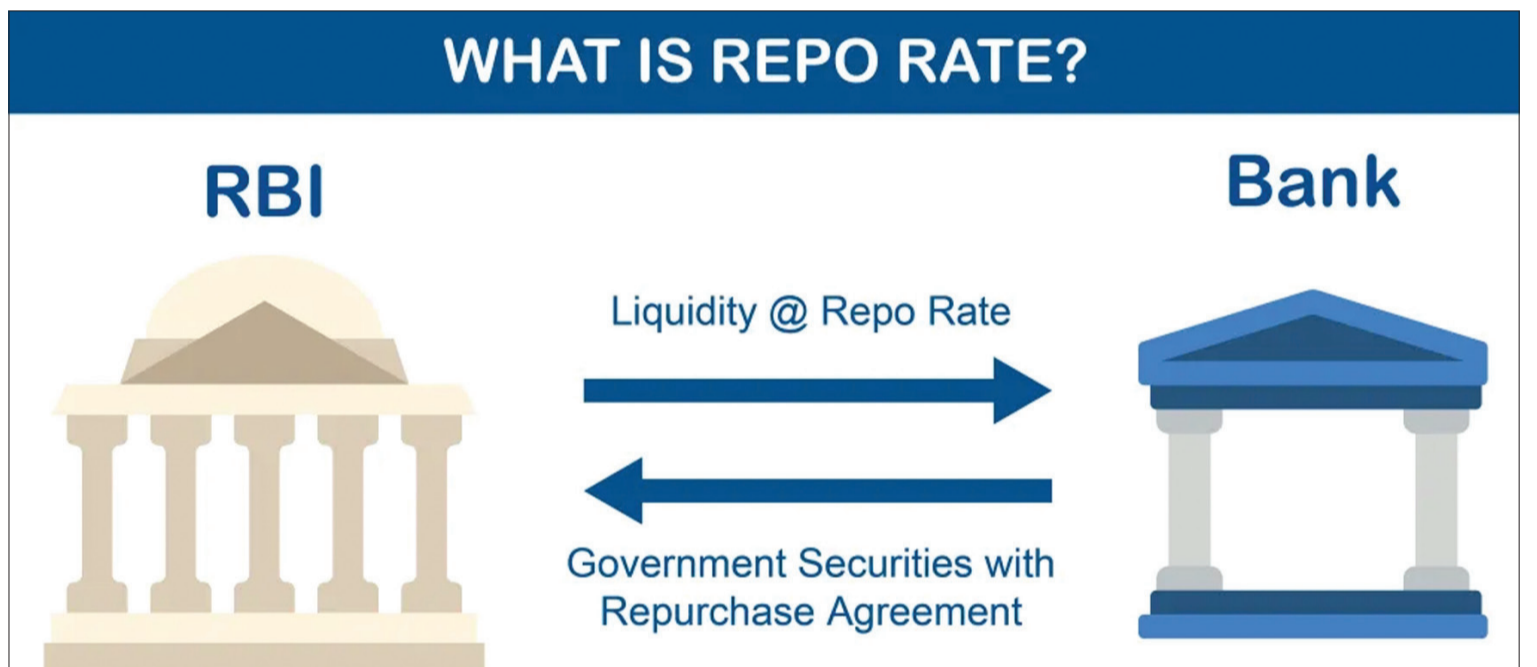
For borrowers, the rate cut is a welcome development. Existing and prospective home loan borrowers, in particular, stand to benefit

Additionally, the RBI's decision to maintain the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) at 4% means that banks are still required to hold a portion of their deposits as reserves, limiting the funds available for lending.

from lower EMIs, provided that banks pass on the rate cut to consumers. For instance, a borrower with a loan of Rs 80 lakh over 20 years at an interest rate of 9% would pay an EMI of Rs 71,978.

If the interest rate decreases to 8.75%, the EMI would reduce to Rs 70,697, resulting in substantial savings over the loan tenure.

However, the extent to which consumers will benefit depends on how quickly and fully banks transmit the rate cut to lending rates. Given the current liquidity constraints, there might be a lag in the transmission, and banks may be cautious in reducing lending rates immediately.



Source: economyaftercoronavirus.blogspot.com

ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS

The RBI's projection of a 6.7% GDP growth rate for FY26 reflects optimism about the economy's recovery trajectory. This optimism is underpinned by expectations of improved employment conditions, recent tax cuts announced

in the budget, moderating inflation, and robust agricultural output following a strong monsoon. The central bank anticipates that these factors will collectively support a rebound in economic activity.

On the inflation front, the RBI expects food inflation pressures to ease significantly, contributing to the overall

decline in headline inflation. While core inflation (which excludes food and fuel prices) is expected to rise, it is projected to remain moderate. The central bank acknowledges risks from volatile global energy prices but believes that the current trajectory of inflation allows for a more accommodative policy stance.

face significant pressure due to global trade tensions and persistent foreign portfolio outflows, marking its worst weekly performance since December 2022 with a nearly 1% decline. The RBI's intervention helped stabilize the currency, but challenges remain due to external factors.

deficit (CAD) to remain within sustainable levels, further contributing to macroeconomic stability.

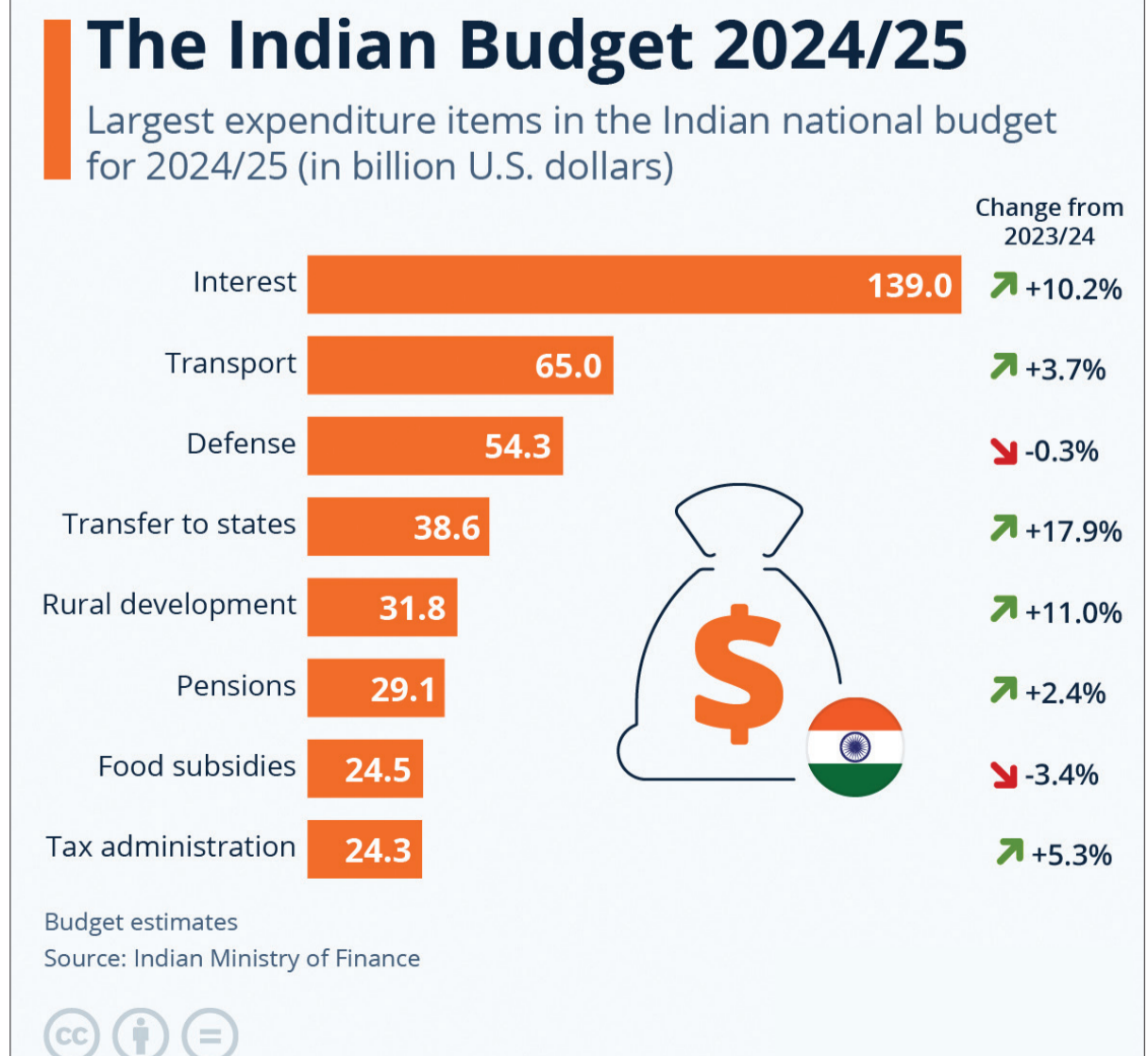
EXCLUSIVE INTERNET DOMAINS

In a move to enhance the digital identity and security of financial institutions, the RBI announced the introduction of exclusive internet domain names. Banks will now have the '.bank.in' domain, while non-bank financial entities will use the '.fin.in' domain. This initiative aims to create a distinct and secure online presence for financial institutions, thereby increasing consumer trust and reducing the risk of phishing attacks.

Forecast understanding: The RBI's recent policy measures, including the repo rate cut and the introduction of exclusive internet domains, reflect a strategic approach to stimulate economic growth while maintaining financial stability. The rate cut is expected to lower borrowing costs, potentially boosting consumption and investment. However, the effectiveness of this measure will depend on the transmission of the rate cut by banks and the management of liquidity conditions. The introduction of exclusive internet domains underscores the RBI's commitment to enhancing the digital infrastructure of the financial sector. As the global economic landscape remains uncertain, the RBI's proactive stance aims to navigate these challenges and support India's economic resilience.

YEAR	REPO RATE
December 07, 2022	6.250 %
September 30, 2022	5.900 %
August 05, 2022	5.400 %
June 08, 2022	4.900 %
May 04, 2022	4.400 %
May 22, 2020	4.000 %
March 27, 2020	4.400 %
October 04, 2019	5.150 %
August 07, 2019	5.400 %
June 06, 2019	5.750 %

Source: mattgill.pages.dev



Source: teresawren.pages.dev

SUPREME COURT ASKS CENTRE: HOW MANY PERSONS DECLARED AS FOREIGNERS DEPORTED SO FAR?

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Rajubala Das v. Union of India and Anr* observed and has directed the Union Government to inform the details of persons declared as foreigners who have been deported so far to their native nations.

The court in the case asked the Union how it was proposing to deal with persons, who were declared as not Indian citizens but whose nationality was not known.

The bench comprising of Justice Abhay S Oka and

Justice Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case passed the said directions wherein the court was hearing the matter concerning foreigners' detention camps in Assam.

The court pulled up the State of Assam for not initiating the process to deport foreigners, despite being aware of their nationalities, and questioned their indefinite detention in India.

The bench was informed by the lawyer for applicants, Senior Advocate Shadan Farasat, that deportations are not taking place because



the authorities have only determined that the persons are not Indians and have not ascertained their nationalities.

The counsel, Senior Ad-

vocate Colin Gonsalves ap-

pearing for the petitioner submitted before the court that as per his information, Bangladesh was refusing to accept the persons detained

The court pulled up the State of Assam for not initiating the process to deport foreigners, despite being aware of their nationalities, and questioned their indefinite detention in India.

in Assam as their citizens. Gonsalves said that the process thus left persons 'stateless' who are condemned to indefinite detention.

On the other hand, the counsel, Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta informed the bench that there were two broad cat-

egories of persons. Thus, the one category comprises persons who are declared as not Indian citizens, and their nationalities are not known and the second category consists of persons who have been declared by the Foreigners Tribunals as not Indian citizens and

whose actual nationalities are not known.

The bench in the case noted that as far as the first category is concerned, there is no difficulty regarding their deportation. The bench directed that, 'As far as the second category is concerned, the Union of India will have to tell the Court in what manner the cases of persons (whose nationality is not known) are to be dealt with as they are neither Indian nationals nor their citizenship status is known. We grant time of one month to the Union to file an affidavit.' The Union shall also place

on record the details of declared foreigners who are not Indian nationals and the details of the persons who have so far been deported and the details about the measure of deportation shall also be stated and the figures shall be disclosed.

The Another bench comprising of Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice R Mahadevan in the case questioned the indefinite detention of illegal Bangladeshi migrants and asked the Union why foreigners who have served their sentence under the Foreigners Act cannot be deported.

Supreme Court relieves Datla Sreenivasa Varma as in-charge of SIT formed to probe Manipur extra-judicial killings

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Extra Judicial Execution Victim And Anr Versus Union Of India And Ors* observed and allowed the Central Bureau of Investigation, CBI's petition to release Datla Sreenivasa Varma from the position as the head of the SIT formed to probe into Manipur's extra-judicial killings.

The bench comprising of Chief Justice of India, CJI Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar and Justice KV Viswanathan was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case was hearing the issue of alleged extra-judicial killings in Manipur by armed forces.

The bench in the case allowed the application filed by the CBI to relieve Datla Sreenivasa Varma, Joint Director and HOZ, NE Zone as the in-charge of the SIT constituted to investigate the alleged illegal killings.



The counsel, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati appearing on behalf of the CBI, while Senior Advocate Maneka Guruswamy appeared as the amicus in the matter.

In 2022 the Court asked the Union of India to file a status report.

In July 2017, the Supreme Court had directed the CBI to constitute a Special Investigation Team and to investigate the alleged extrajudicial killings in Manipur.

The bench comprising of Justice Madan B Lokur and Justice Deepak Gupta

had issued the direction. In July 108, the bench comprising of Justice M.B. Lokur and Justice U.U. Lalit had directed the Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation, CBI to appear before it, wherein the court noted that the investigations in the alleged extra-judicial en counter killings in Manipur were taking an 'unduly long time'.

BACKGROUND OF THE CASE

In 2016, the bench comprising of Justice Madan Lokur and Justice UU Lalit

The bench comprising of Chief Justice of India, CJI Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar and Justice KV Viswanathan was hearing the present matter.

in the case held that an allegation of excessive force resulting in the death of any person by the Manipur Police or the Armed forces in Manipur must be thoroughly enquired into.

The court held while dealing with the 'enemy', the rule of law would apply and if there have been excesses beyond the call of duty, those members of the Manipur Police or the Armed forces who have committed the excesses which do not have a reasonable connection with the performance of their official duty would be liable to be proceeded

against.

The bench in the case was considering a writ petition under Article 32 of the Constitution of India by Extra Judicial Execution Victim Families Association and The Human Rights Alert. The petitioners claimed to have compiled 1528 alleged extra-judicial executions carried out by the police and security forces in Manipur. It is alleged before the court that a majority of them have been carried out in cold blood while the victims were in custody and allegedly after torturing them.

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

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

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

The court observed that the alleged image, displayed across the city on posters or banners, depicted a Shiva Linga along with the image of Rai where she is welcoming people to the city of 'Baba Vishwanath' on the grand festival of Sawan.

Therefore, the alleged posters had sparked controversy, which led to the lodging of the First Information Report, FIR by the Akhil Bhartiya Kshatriya Mahasabha leader Vikrant Singh.

In the present case, the police submitted a chargesheet against Rai under Section

Therefore, the alleged posters had sparked controversy, which led to the lodging of the First Information Report, FIR by the Akhil Bhartiya Kshatriya Mahasabha leader Vikrant Singh.

504, Section 506, and Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code, IPC, and the Fast Track Court (J.D.)-I, Varanasi, took cognizance of the chargesheet in 2023.

Rai moved the High Court wherein challenging the chargesheet and the entire criminal proceedings.

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

his influence within the ruling party, he succeeded in lodging the impugned FIR against the applicant on false and frivolous allegations.

It was also submitted before the High Court that Article 19 and Article 21 of Constitution of India grant the applicant a right to speech and expression, and therefore, it was stressed that the allegation that only by watching the posters of the applicant, the religious feelings of the opposite party no.2 hurt, is not tenable.

The bench headed by Justice Dinesh Pathak issued a notice to the opposite party no.2 i.e., Singh. Accordingly, the court listed the matter for further consideration on February 28, 2025.

Supreme Court criticises Uttar Pradesh govt for non-compliance with order to investigate illegal filling of water bodies

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Mirza Abid Beg versus. State of UP And Ors.* observed and has expressed displeasure over the non-compliance by the State of Uttar Pradesh with the direction of Court to investigate and submit a report on instances of illegal filling of water bodies in Bijnor District.

The bench comprising of Justice Abhay Oka and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case noted that despite the orders passed dated July 16, 2024, and November 22, 2024, thus, the Committee failed to comply with the directions.

The court in the case directed the Secretary of the Ministry of Environment of Uttar Pradesh to submit a personal



affidavit detailing the progress made in compliance with the order dated July 16, 2024.

The order states: 'Notwithstanding clear orders dated July 16, 2024 and November 22, 2024, the Committee appointed by the State of Uttar Pradesh has not complied with the directions issued by this Court. The State has not shown elementary courtesy of making an application for extension of time for complying with the orders

passed by this Court. This court direct the Secretary of the Ministry of Environment of the State of Uttar Pradesh to file his personal affidavit placing on record the details of the work carried out as of date in terms of the order dated July 16, 2024.'

However, the affidavit is to be filed by January 24, 2025. The order dated July 16, 2024, stemmed from a case involving the protection and restoration of water bodies in

Tehsil Nagina, District Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh.

The court emphasized the State's constitutional duty to safeguard water bodies, directed the constitution of a committee to investigate instances of illegal filling of water bodies in the region. The direction came in an appeal by one Mirza Abid Beg against an order of the National Green Tribunal, NGT.

The appellant in the case had brought to light instances where ponds, lakes, and water bodies were filled with garbage and encroached upon for illegal constructions.

The Supreme Court disqualified with the NGT's handling of the matter directed comprehensive investigation by a committee comprising of senior officials from the Revenue Department, Environment Department, and State Pollution Control Board.

Further, the Court mandated that the committee review old revenue records, conduct site visits, and propose measures for restoration and the copies of the committee's findings were required to be submitted to the Court, with the first report initially due by November 15, 2024.

The court in its order dated November 22, 2024 granted the State an extension of one month to file the report in compliance with the Supreme Court's order dated July 16, 2024.

The counsel appearing for the State had assured the court that the report would be submitted within the extended period.

Further, the state failed to submit the report within the stipulated time.

Accordingly, the court listed the matter for further consideration on February 07, 2025.

Supreme Court asks 3 High Courts if Commercial Divisions dealing with admiralty law are constituted

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *MV Global Emerald Versus Meck Petroleum DMCC And Anr* observed and has sought a response from the Registrar Generals of the High Courts of Karnataka, Kerala and Orissa on the status of setting up Commercial Divisions dealing with admiralty cases.

The bench comprising of Chief Justice of India, CJI Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case was hearing a commercial suit which relates to admiralty and maritime law, when a circular dated February 24, 2022 issued by the High Court of Karnataka was

noted by the bench.

The Commercial Division bench constituting of a Single Judge has been constituted, each for the Principal Bench at Bengaluru and Benches at Dharwad and Kalaburagi.

In the present matter, the bench was hearing a challenge against the order of Karnataka High Court's Division Bench, wherein the court upheld the interim arrest of the petitioner's Vessel which was seized for the purposes of recovering a due sum for an amount of Rs.17,84,91,641.64/- with 2% interest.

The court was also informed that the High Courts of Orissa and Kerala have not constituted commercial divisions with regard to admiralty.

The court while considering the submissions observed and has issued notice to the three High Courts in the following terms:

'This court deem it appropriate to issue notice to the High Courts of Karnataka, Kerala and Orissa to ascertain facts and their views. Notice will be served through the Registrars General of the respective High Courts.'

Further, the court also sought assistance of the Attorney General R Venkataramani.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that, 'This court deem it appropriate to issue notice to the learned Attorney General, who will appear in the matter and assist the Court.'

Delhi High Court allows NTPC's petition against JITF arbitration award

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case has allowed the NTPC Limited's petition against an arbitration award won by Jindal ITF Ltd. Despite the ruling, Jindal ITF is protected from any adverse action by NTPC until an appeal is filed. Jindal ITF is expected to appeal the decision, leveraging advice from legal experts, before the Division bench of the High Court.

DELHI HIGH COURT REFUSES TO STAY BURMAN FAMILY'S OPEN OFFER TO BUY AN ADDITIONAL 26% STAKE IN RELIGARE

The Delhi High Court in the case observed and has refused to stay the Burman's Family open offer to acquire an additional 26% stake in Religare Enterprises. The court also rejected a minority investor's plea to halt REL's AGM on February 7. The investor sought a fair assessment of a higher competing offer.

Delhi High Court summons Shashi Tharoor in BJP's Rajeev Chandrashekhar defamation case

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case has summoned

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on a defamation petition filed by BJP leader Rajeev Chandrashekhar.



Chandrashekhar alleged Tharoor made false statements damaging his reputation. He seeks an amount of

Rs 10 crore in damages and a public apology. The matter is listed for further consideration on April 28, 2025.

BANGLADESH SLAMS SHEIKH HASINA'S REMARKS, URGES INDIA TO INTERVENE

Bangladesh on Thursday lodged a strong protest against what it said were "false and fabricated" statements by former premier Sheikh Hasina, currently in self-exile in New Delhi, and sought "appropriate measures" to stop her from making "incendiary" remarks on social media.

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI:

Bangladesh on Thursday lodged a strong protest against what it said were "false and fabricated" statements by former premier Sheikh Hasina, currently in self-exile in New Delhi, and sought "appropriate measures" to stop her from making "incendiary" remarks on social media.

Bangladesh's foreign ministry handed over a protest note to India's acting high commissioner in Dhaka a day after Hasina made a speech on her Awami League party's social media channels during which she accused interim government chief Muhammad Yunus of conspiring to kill her and her sister Sheikh Rehana.

There was no official word from the Indian side on the development. After stepping down in the face of nationwide protests last August, Hasina fled to India. Her presence in the country has emerged as an irritant in bilateral ties and the interim government in Dhaka has often bristled

BANGLADESH PROTESTS HASINA'S REMARKS

- Bangladesh's foreign ministry handed a protest note to India's acting high commissioner, condemning Hasina's "false and fabricated" statements that allegedly incite instability.
- Bangladesh formally requested Hasina's extradition in December, but India has yet to respond, as confirmed by Minister Kirti Vardhan Singh in Rajya Sabha.
- Anjuman-e-Kaderiya withdrew its request for a special train to West Bengal for an annual Urs event, marking the first such cancellation in centuries.



over her speeches on social media, during which she attacked Yunus.

A statement from the foreign ministry in Dhaka said it lodged a strong protest with the Indian government over "false and fabricated comments and statements continuously being made in different platforms" by Hasina as this is "instigating instability in Bangladesh".

The protest note handed over to the acting Indian high commissioner conveyed the Bangladesh government's "deep concern, disappointment and serious reserva-

tion" as Hasina's statements are "hurting the sentiments of the people". The foreign ministry also said her activities are "considered as a hostile act towards Bangladesh" and not conducive to efforts to establish a healthy relationship between the two countries.

The foreign ministry requested the Indian government to "immediately take appropriate measures, in the spirit of mutual respect and understanding, to stop [Hasina] from making such false, fabricated and incendiary statements using social

media and other communications while she is in India". Authorities filed dozens of criminal and other cases against her after she fled to India last August, including some related to extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances. The caretaker administration made a request for Hasina's extradition on December 12 last year, saying she should be sent back to face the judicial process.

However, minister of state for external affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said in a written response to a question in Rajya Sabha on Thursday that India is yet to respond to the extradition request.

"The Government of Bangladesh has sought the extradition of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for offences allegedly committed before she came to India on 5th August 2024. No response has been conveyed to the Government of Bangladesh," Singh said.

In a separate development, the Anjuman-e-Kaderiya, a religious group from Bangladesh, has withdrawn its request to Bangladesh Railways to arrange a special train for its members to travel to West Bengal to participate in the "Urs" or death anniversary of Sufi saint Hazrat Syed Murshed Ali Al-Qaderi Al-Baghdadi.

Thousands of members of Anjuman-e-Kaderiya travel to the Indian state every February for the event and special trains have been arranged for them since 1953. People familiar with the matter said this will be the first time in hundreds of years that the group's members will not participate in the Urs in held in Medinipur.

Munizae Jahangir is widely respected for her dedication to truth and justice and is considered an inspiration to many emerging female journalists. DigiMAP has expressed its full support for her, acknowledging her significant contribution to journalism, as reported by Pamir Times.

The Pamir Times reported that DigiMAP President Sabookh Syed pointed out that these threats are part of a troubling trend of hostility directed at journalists, especially those covering

Pakistan media body condemns threats against woman journalist

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

The Digital Media Alliance of Pakistan (DigiMAP) has strongly condemned the threats and intimidation faced by senior woman journalist and anchor Munizae Jahangir, a founding member of the organization, as reported by the Pamir Times.

According to Pamir Times, DigiMAP expressed concern over these attacks, which it views as a direct assault on press freedom and the constitutionally protected right to freedom of expression. The organization highlighted that such actions are a clear attempt to silence independent voices and obstruct efforts to hold those in power accountable.

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sensitive issues like religion and blasphemy. He reiterated that any attempt to stifle free speech must be met with firm condemnation.

Syed also emphasized that the safety of journalists is not just a personal matter but a critical issue tied to the preservation of democratic values, human rights, and the public's right to access information.

Pamir Times further reported that Shazia Mehbub, the Communication Secretary of DigiMAP, voiced deep concern over the harassment Munizae Jahangir is facing, which

appears designed to undermine both her professional credibility and personal safety.

DigiMAP has called on the relevant authorities to take immediate action, investigate the threats, and ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

The organization also reaffirmed its commitment, alongside civil society, to create an environment where journalists—particularly those in digital media—can freely exercise their right to free speech and press freedom without fear of retribution.

Bangladesh detains actress Meher Afroz Shaon for questioning

AGENCIES
DHAKA

Bangladeshi actress Meher Afroz Shaon has been detained by the Detective Branch of Bangladesh police for questioning. The detention occurred on Thursday, with Additional Commissioner Rezaul Karim Mollick stating that Shaon was taken in after receiving some information, without elaborating further.

"After receiving some information, we have detained Meher Afroz Shaon for questioning," Rezaul Karim Mollick, Additional Commissioner (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told ANI over the phone, without elaborating.

On being asked whether

Shaon would be arrested, the official said, "We have not taken any decision yet."

Shaon, a renowned actress, director, dancer, and playback singer, has been critical of the interim government of Bangladesh on Facebook. Her detention comes amidst a series of protests and vandalism, including an attack on the residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Dhaka.

Shaon won Bangladesh National Film Award for Best Female Playback Singer for her performance in the film "Krihnopokkho" (2016). She was the wife of the late popular writer and director Humayun Ahmed.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, a mob vandalised the residence of Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman in Dhaka, Dhaka Tribune reported. Visuals showed flames on one of the floors of the house.

The protesters, reportedly demanding a ban on the Awami League, stormed the premises after breaking open the gate, causing widespread destruction, Dhaka Tribune reported, citing UNB.

Local media linked the protest to an online speech by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Social media posts had earlier called for a "Bulldozer Procession" towards Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's residence located at Dhanmondi-32 if Sheikh Hasina delivered a speech, as reported by Dhaka Tribune.

Paank condemns surge in enforced disappearances in Balochistan

AGENCIES
BALOCHISTAN

Paank has vehemently denounced the enforced disappearances in Balochistan, drawing attention to a troubling trend of human rights abuses by Pakistani officials.

Fears of state-sponsored repression increased after eight people were forcibly removed from various locations throughout the province between February 3 and February 5, 2025.

Among the missing is Mehmood, son of Mehfooz, who was abducted from his home in Essai, Panjgur. Hafiz Ali Mir, a student from Kharan district, was taken by Pakistani forces in Quetta.

Balochistan resident accuses Pakistan Coast Guard of destroying his boat

AGENCIES
BALOCHISTAN

A resident from the Dasht Kaldaan area of Balochistan has accused the Pakistan Coast Guard of damaging his sole means of livelihood—a small boat that supports his family, according to a report by the Balochistan Post.

The man claims that the Coast Guard, along with other maritime agencies, has been targeting local fishermen, leading to significant financial losses. He has called for compensation so he can continue to care for his children.

According to the Balochistan Post, the local community has strongly criticized this action, stating that the Coast Guard often



detains fishermen and destroys their boats, making it increasingly difficult for them to maintain their livelihoods. Residents described these actions as unfair and unjust, expressing their anger at the repeated incidents.

The frustration of the people has been compounded by

the lack of support from political leaders. Locals voiced their disappointment, accusing politicians of offering nothing more than press statements, while failing to take direct action with the relevant authorities. They emphasised that their situation continues to deteriorate

due to the ongoing harassment from security forces.

The Balochistan Post reported that the affected fishermen and residents are now demanding urgent intervention and justice to prevent further economic suffering in the region. They are calling on both the government and concerned agencies to take immediate steps to address the issue and protect their livelihoods. Human rights organisations in the area have criticised Pakistani forces for escalating these actions to create fear among the local people. These groups are persistently calling for an immediate end to enforced disappearances and for the authorities to be held accountable for their actions.

Human Rights Watch urges Bangladesh to stop 'cycle of violence'

AGENCIES
DHAKA

Bangladesh should seek UN support for reforms, justice and the country's interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus should support a United Nations-backed mechanism that can help secure a democratic future for the country instead of succumbing to a cycle of violence and revenge, according to a statement by the the Human Rights Watch.

The rights body's statement follows Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence in Dhaka was vandalised during a live online address of his daughter and deposed prime minister



Sheikh Hasina.

Bangladesh should propose a consensus resolution at the upcoming United Nations Human Rights Council session in March to request technical assistance, further investigations, and monitoring and reporting by UN-backed rights experts, the

rights body said.

The resolution, according to Meenakshi Ganguly, Deputy Asia Director of Human Rights Watch should also acknowledge the tyranny of the previous administration and recognize positive human rights steps taken by the interim government. On

Wednesday, a mob vandalised the residence of Rahman in Dhaka, Dhaka Tribune reported. Visuals showed flames on one of the floors of the house. The protesters, reportedly demanding a ban on the Awami League, stormed the premises after breaking open the gate, causing widespread destruction, Dhaka Tribune reported, citing UNB. Local media linked the protest to an online speech by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Social media posts had earlier called for a "Bulldozer Procession" towards Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's residence located at Dhanmondi-32 if Sheikh Hasina delivered a speech, as reported by Dhaka Tribune.

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In August 2024, Hasina stepped down after 15 years of repression, including torture, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances. Protests led by students, described by many as the Monsoon Revolution, eventually forced her into exile in India.

"Nevertheless, the Yunus administration is under pressure from increasingly restless citizens, including political groups, students, or families of those harmed during the Monsoon Revolution. While it is facing a campaign of misinformation about alleged abuses against religious and ethnic minorities, it has yet to successfully reassure minority groups, particularly Hindus, who fear attacks.

China's crackdown on Tibetan culture and dissent intensified, says TCHRD report

AGENCIES
DHARAMSHALA

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), a Tibetan non-governmental nonprofit human rights organisation, has released a new report in its Dissenting Voices series, shedding light on the Chinese government's increasing repression of freedom of expression and information in Tibet, particularly under

Chinese President Xi Jinping's leadership.

As per the report, since Xi's rise to power, China has imposed a deeply authoritarian agenda, tightening its grip on Tibet through extensive surveillance, censorship, and legal tools designed to stifle dissent. The TCHRD report outlines how these repressive measures have escalated over the past decade, with the Chinese government sys-

tematically curbing freedoms that once allowed Tibetans to voice their cultural and political opinions.

The report says that the Chinese authorities have implemented a far-reaching surveillance apparatus that extends into every facet of Tibetan life. The enforcement of legal frameworks such as the Cybersecurity Law and National Intelligence Law has empowered the state to



monitor online activities, criminalize dissent, and control public discourse. Real-

name registration laws have eliminated the possibility of online anonymity, making

Tibetans highly vulnerable to punishment if they express any opposition to the state. This widespread monitoring creates an atmosphere of fear, severely curbing free expression and encouraging self-censorship. In its report, TCHRD highlighted the devastating impact of these policies on Tibetan intellectual and cultural life. It claims that over the past decade, Tibetans who have made significant

contributions to preserving and promoting Tibetan language, culture, and literature such as artists, writers, singers, and thought leaders have faced increasing persecution. Many of these individuals have been subjected to arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and imprisonment on vague or politically motivated charges. The report says that the Chinese government's relentless suppression

of these voices is not just an attack on free speech but also a concerted effort to erase Tibet's cultural identity and force assimilation into the broader Chinese state narrative. This report underscores the dire consequences of Xi Jinping's crackdown on freedom of expression, calling attention to the ongoing efforts to suppress the Tibetan people's rights to self-determination and cultural preservation.

CUSTOM



A staff member of Christie's holds a cartoon drawing against a backdrop of Barry Humphries and Dame Edna, during a preview of Barry Humphries: The Personal Collection in London. Photograph: AP

ICC condemns Trump sanctions, vows to continue work

AGENCIES
THE HAGUE

The International Criminal Court on Friday called on member states to stand up against sanctions imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump, describing the move as an attempt to "harm its independent and impartial judicial work."

The embattled court has received support in Europe from traditional allies of the U.S.

"Sanctioning the ICC threatens the court's independence and undermines the international criminal justice system as a whole," said European Council President António Costa, who heads the summits of the European Union's 27 leaders. It was the toughest direct criticism by a senior EU official to a decision by Trump since his return to office last month.

The White House issued the executive order against the ICC on Thursday in response to what it called "illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America and our close ally Israel."

Trump's order was a response to the arrest warrant that the ICC issued last year for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over alleged war crimes in Gaza. The U.S. and Israel aren't members of the court and don't recognize its authority.

"No one stands above international law"

The Hague-based ICC said that it "condemns" the move by the Trump administration. "The Court stands firmly by its personnel and pledges to continue providing justice and hope to millions of innocent victims of atrocities across the world," the court said in a statement. "We call on our 125 States Parties, civil society and all nations

of the world to stand united for justice and fundamental human rights," it said.

Germany said it will await the impact of the U.S. sanctions, while indicating where its sympathy lies.

"Standing up for international law and for the International Criminal Court is in our own maximum security interest," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said. The court "is one of the greatest achievements of international criminal law and is supported by more than 120 states," she added.

"If the ICC could no longer continue its work now, that would be one of the biggest joys for (Russian President Vladimir) Putin," Baerbock said. "In the past three years, Putin had to see that his crimes against humanity, such as the abduction of Ukrainian children, do not remain without consequences." She noted that Putin had

been unable to travel to a BRICS summit of developing economies in South Africa and said that "no one stands above international law."

"Court's work is essential" European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the ICC "must be able to freely pursue the fight against global impunity. Europe will always stand for justice and the respect of international law."

The Netherlands, which hosts the court, has also condemned Trump's order. "The Netherlands regrets the executive order imposing sanctions on the ICC. The court's work is essential in the fight against impunity," Foreign Affairs Minister Caspar Veldkamp said in a statement.

People in the Dutch government say the Netherlands has been trying to assist the court in shielding itself from the fallout.

Saris included in UK's Royal Navy's ceremonial dress code

AGENCIES
LONDON

The UK's Royal Navy has expanded its mess dress code policy for formal and ceremonial occasions to include ethnic outfits, including the sari, to reflect wider forms of the country's cultural identity.

Lance Corporal Jack Kanani, chair of the Royal Navy's Race Diversity Network, recently made the announcement of the update to the dress code as part of the force's wider "Cultural Equivalent" initiative. The existing code for naval mess functions already covers Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Cornish and



Manx heritage, represented through the wearing of kilts and tartan dresses.

"As Chair of the Royal Navy

Race Diversity Network (RNRDN), it gives me great pleasure to announce that existing Royal Navy (RN) cul-

tural mess dress policy has just been updated to include wider forms of British cultural identity," said Kanani.

RUSSIA CLAIMS CAPTURE OF EASTERN UKRAINE TOWN; KYIV SILENT

AGENCIES
KYIV

Russia's Defense Ministry claimed on Friday that its forces had captured the coal mining town of Toretsk in their latest breakthrough in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region, where Ukrainian defenses are creaking.

Ukrainian officials did not immediately make any comments on the Russian claim.

A Ukrainian officer in a brigade on the outskirts of Toretsk cast doubt on the Russian statement. Yevhen Alkhimov, the press officer of the 28th Brigade, told The Associated Press by phone that his unit had not been moved from its position, which he said likely would have happened if Toretsk had fallen.

Russia's much larger army has conducted a sustained year-long campaign along the eastern front, gradually loosening the short-handed and weary Ukrainian forces' grip on its strongholds as the war approaches its fourth year later this month.

The losses coincide with uncertainty over whether the United States will keep providing vital military aid. U.S. President Donald Trump, who says he is making American interests his priority, has said he wants to end the war, although his plans for securing peace are



unclear.

DeepState, an open-source Ukrainian map widely used by the military and analysts, showed late Thursday that Ukrainian troops were on the northwest edge of Toretsk and still had some soldiers inside the town itself.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the Ukrainian military has heavily fortified Toretsk and developed a network of underground communications, turning practically every building into a well-protected firing position. The Ukrainian forces also have used coal mines and waste heaps in Toretsk's western and northern parts as defenses, it said in a statement.

Russia's claimed fall of Toretsk, if confirmed, would advance its sweep across the Donetsk, which has cost

Moscow heavily in troops and armor but has paid dividends for the Kremlin. In the offensive, Russian forces crush settlements with the brute force of 3,000-pound (1,300-kilo) glide bombs, artillery, missiles and drones, then send in infantry units to attack the exposed defenders.

So far this year, Kurakhove was the first significant town to capitulate under Russia's onslaught, after Russian forces captured Avdiivka and Vuhledar last year. Russian forces last month also took Velyka Novosilka, in the same area.

The towns were part of a belt of Ukrainian defenses in the east. Russia's other targets are the key logistics hub of Pokrovsk and the strategically important city of Chasiv Yar.

Russia seeks to take control of all parts of Donetsk and neighboring Luhansk, which together make up Ukraine's Donbas industrial region.

Russia accelerated its destruction of Ukraine's frontline cities in 2024 to a scale previously unseen in the war, using the glide bombs and an expanding network of airstrips, according to an Associated Press analysis last year of drone footage, satellite imagery, Ukrainian documents and Russian photos.

Meanwhile, the head of the U.N. atomic watchdog met Friday in Moscow with the chief of Russia's state-owned nuclear energy provider Rosatom to discuss security around southern Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

US aircraft with 10 aboard goes missing in Alaska, search on

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON DC

US officials on Friday said a search is underway in rural Alaska after a plane carrying 10 people, including the pilot did not arrive in Nome at the scheduled time, as per local media.

The Bering Air Caravan flight, from Unalakleet to Nome, was reported overdue to Alaska State Troopers at 4 pm local time, as per Alaska Department of Public Safety as cited by NBC News.

The Coast Guard has been notified, and there is also an active ground search, the Nome Volunteer Fire Department said in a statement on social media.

The official Coast Guard account on X for the Alaska maritime area said that that the plane was 12 miles offshore going from Unalakleet to Nome when its position was lost.

"The US Coast Guard District 17 responded to an aircraft emergency notification from Alaska Rescue Coordination Center at 4:30 p.m. today for a Cessna Caravan that reported to have 10 people aboard," the USCG-Alaska said.

Meanwhile, CNN had reported that a US-contracted surveillance plane crashed in the Philippines on Thursday morning, killing all four personnel on board, including one US military service member, according to US Indo-Pacific Command.

Also on January 29, an American Airlines flight from Wichita, Kansas, collided with a Black Hawk helicopter near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. Sixty-four people, including four crew, aboard a commercial airliner of American Airlines died in the mid air crash.

Federal prisons hold detainees from Trump's immigration crackdown

AGENCIES
NEW YORK

President Donald Trump's administration is using federal prisons to detain some people arrested in its immigration crackdown, the federal Bureau of Prisons said Friday, returning to a strategy that drew allegations of mistreatment during his first term.

In a statement to The Associated Press, the prison agency said it is assisting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement "by housing detainees and will continue to support our law enforcement partners to fulfill the administration's policy objectives."

The Bureau of Prisons declined to say how many immigration detainees it is taking in, or which prison facilities are being used.

"For privacy, safety, and security reasons, we do not com-

ment on the legal status of an individual, nor do we specify the legal status of individuals assigned to any particular facility, including numbers and locations," the agency said.

Three people familiar with the matter told the AP that federal jails in Los Angeles and Miami and a federal prison in Atlanta are being used for immigration detention. The people were not authorized to speak publicly and did so on condition of anonymity.

An influx of immigration detainees could put yet more strain on federal prisons, which AP reporting revealed have been plagued by severe understaffing, violence and other problems. The Bureau of Prisons is the Justice Department's biggest agency with more than 30,000 employees, 122 facilities, 155,000 inmates and an annual budget of about \$8 billion.

TRUMP ANNOUNCES WITHDRAWAL OF THE US FROM UNHRC, UNRWA AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT UN AGENCIES

It appears that Trump will continue to generate significant upheaval in both American and international political landscapes through his bold and controversial choices. This week, President

Trump enacted an executive order that has initiated a comprehensive assessment of the US's financial contributions and participation in the UN, thereby introducing uncertainty regarding the

US' longstanding role as the primary benefactor of the global organization. Prior to signing the order,

Trump expressed his belief in the UN's significant potential, while oxymorically criticizing its current performance as failing to meet that potential.

Additionally, he announced the withdrawal of the US from the UN Human

Rights Council and the cessation of funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which is vital for providing humanitarian aid to millions affected by conflict in Gaza. Though these actions were anticipated, given Trump's previous decisions to disengage from both entities during his initial presidential term. Also, the executive order mandated a review of the US' participation in UNESCO, the agency responsible for safeguarding world heritage sites. This move reflects a broader strategy to reassess and potentially recalibrate the US' commitments to international organizations, aligning them more closely with the administration's views on equity in global governance. However, this has left the UN in great worry.

WORLD RECAP

ANSHU JOSHI



Trump already announced the US' withdrawal from the WHO, citing dissatisfaction with its handling of global health crises and a perceived bias against the US. This move has raised alarms about the potential repercussions for international health cooperation and the capacity to manage future pandemics effectively. Additionally, Trump also issued an executive order that initiated the formal exit of the US from the Paris Agreement. He criticized the agreement for imposing excessive economic burdens on the country and aimed to decrease financial contributions to interna-

tional climate initiatives. Nevertheless, this decision is likely to have significant implications for global efforts to collaborate on the critical issue of climate change mitigation. The UN had been preparing for the possibility of Trump's second term, having already navigated a challenging period during his initial four years in office. Guterres adeptly managed the UN's strained relations with the US by largely avoiding public confrontations with Trump. Nevertheless, on the very first day of his second term, Trump announced the withdrawal of the US from both the

WHO and the Paris Climate Agreement. Again, though many analysts had anticipated these moves, viewing them as consistent with Trump's previous policies, these decisions would have a serious impact on numerous international programs worldwide. This shift may disrupt ongoing efforts to address humanitarian crises and could hinder the effectiveness of initiatives designed to support vulnerable populations during times of conflict and natural disasters.

The US not only hosts the UN headquarters in New York City but also stands as the largest financial supporter of the organization, contributing around 22 percent of its overall budget. Following the US, China contributes approximately 15 percent, making it the

second largest contributor. Also, the US plays a significant role as a donor to numerous agencies and supports the annual global humanitarian appeal aimed at assisting populations affected by conflicts and natural disasters. Trump's decisions are going to impact these programs as well.

While making the critical accouncements, Trump expressed his discontent with the UN, characterizing it as ineffective in resolving ongoing global conflicts, which he claimed his administration was actively working to mitigate. The UN has faced significant criticism for failing to meet its responsibilities in mediating disputes and maintaining peace in various regions worldwide. Trump's remarks also highlighted a broader sentiment re-

garding the UN's perceived shortcomings in fulfilling its peacekeeping mandate. Many observers have pointed out that the organization's inability to effectively address these pressing issues undermines its credibility and purpose on the international stage.

However, at least, the decisions made by Trump regarding UNRWA and the UN Human Rights

Council may not yield significant immediate consequences. This is largely due to the Biden Administration's cessation of funding for UNRWA, which followed allegations from Israel that the agency had been extensively compromised by Hamas. Trump has also declared this week that there is "no place" for the LGBTQ community within the

armed forces, sports, and employment sectors, igniting a global discussion on the implications of such a stance. This decision can be attributed to his alignment with his domestic base and an anti-wokeness ideology. Additionally, he has initiated the deportation of foreign nationals residing illegally in the US, with a recent operation resulting in the repatriation of over 100 Indian nationals to Amritsar via a special flight.

While the Indian government has confirmed that these individuals were living in the US without legal status, the procedures employed by the US administration during the deportation process have also raised questions and sparked controversy.

The author is Professor, School of International Studies, JNU

PICTURE PERFECT



Malaika Arora poses for her social media (Instagram)

NICK, PRIYANKA STEAL THE SHOW WITH SPECIAL PERFORMANCE

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Actor Priyanka Chopra has been at the heart of the ongoing wedding celebrations for her brother, Siddharth Chopra, and his fiancée Neelam Upadhyaya. The couple's grand saangeet ceremony, held in Mumbai on February 6, 2025, was filled with music, dance, and fun moments. While Priyanka has been actively involved in the pre-wedding functions, it was her husband, Nick Jonas, who truly stole the spotlight at the event. Nick, who had not attended the previous mehendi and haldi ceremonies, arrived in Mumbai earlier on February



6, making a stylish entrance at the saangeet ceremony. Dressed in a royal blue bandhgala suit with matching trousers, Nick twinned with his wife, Priyanka, who looked stunning in a blue embellished lehenga.

As the night unfolded, Nick Jonas took to the stage, delivering a heartfelt musical performance that added an unforgettable touch to the evening. Accompanied by his father, Paul Kevin Jonas, who

played the synthesizer, Nick performed his popular song 'Maan Meri Jaan (Afterlife)' for the guests. Siddharth Chopra shared the glimpses from the ceremony on his Instagram handle.

'Dev D' felt like a big exam as I was still learning Hindi: Kalki Koechlin

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Actor Kalki Koechlin says she remembers being "highly stressed" about her Hindi while working on Anurag Kashyap-directed "Dev D", which released in February 2009 and slowly acquired a cult status.

"Dev D", starring Abhay Deol in the title role, is a modern take on Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's much-adapted Bengali novel "Devdas". It also starred Mahie Gill in the role of Paro. It was Koechlin's first



leading role in Hindi cinema and the actor was still learning Hindi when she landed the role of Leni/Chanda in the movie.

"My memory is of being highly stressed about Hindi. It was when I was still learning Hindi and I got a special tutor for

learning all the dialogues. I didn't understand some of the dialogues but I would be able to say them in my sleep. I was just mugging them. So, it felt like a big exam," Koechlin told PTI in an interview.

The film, which completed 15 years of its release on February 6, was the first major hit for Kashyap and all its actors earned critical acclaim for their roles. The soundtrack is considered one of the best works of Amit Trivedi's career till date with hits like "Emosanal Attyachaar", "Paayaliya", "Nayan Tarse", "Pardesi" and "Aankh Micholf".

'I would like to see Alia and Ayushmann in a love story'

ASHWINI IYER
MUMBAI

Director Ashwini Iyer Tiwari says she is a fan of romantic stories but there are very few films being made in the genre and she would love to see some fresh pairings.

The filmmaker is also looking forward to the reaction of audiences to the re-release of her romance-comedy "Bareilly Ki Barfi", a small-town romantic drama that featured Kriti Sanon and Ayushmann Khurrana as lead pairs "After the pandemic, a lot of things have changed, especially the way we view cinema. I'm a big lover of romantic cinema. I love the genre.

I would love to make more romance films. There's a lot of love missing in people's lives, we as storytellers need to add more love and joy to their lives," the director, known for helming



movies such as "Nil Battey Sannata", and "Panga", told the newsagency in an interview.

"I would like to see Alia and Ayushmann together in a love story, I would like to see Vicky Kaushal and Kriti Sanon in a love story, that will be a great combination," she said. Originally released during the Independence Day weekend of 2017,

"Bareilly Ki Barfi" was re-released during a month traditionally associated with love—February.

It is out in cinema halls across India from Friday. "Back then, we had finished shooting in December and then we had to do post-production work so then we felt August was the correct date.

BRAIN PICKING



Make your own rules, set your own trends

— KHUSHI KAPOOR
(Indian Actress)

Angelina Jolie gets emotional reflecting on father's Oscar win

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

At the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, Angelina Jolie shared a deeply personal memory from her past, recounting a poignant moment involving her mother, Marcheline Bertrand, and the Oscars.

Angelina Jolie was there to receive the prestigious Maltin Modern Master Award, presented by filmmaker Ava DuVernay, and engage in a conversation with critic Leonard Maltin about her impressive career spanning decades, according to People magazine.

The 49-year-old actress began by recalling the year her father, Jon Voight, won the Academy Award for Best Actor for "Coming Home" in 1979.

At the time, Voight was separated from Bertrand, Jolie's mother, and their divorce was finalized a year later.



While Voight attended the star-studded Oscars ceremony with actress Stacey Pickren, the "other woman," Jolie's mother was at home with her two young children.

"My mom was home with

two little kids," Jolie shared, adding, "My mom's dream was to be an actor. I believe my mother's mother's dream was to be an actor, which is probably why she took her to the theater in Chicago all the time."

REVIEW: LOVEYAPA ★★★★★

LOVEYAPA

PRAVEEN NAGDA

In recent times, GenZ has had its fair share of films made around them in Bollywood. Lifestyle, relationships, activities and engagements, social life driven by mobile devices, aspirations and dreams, and complex behavioural patterns have all been captured intricately by many films and web series like Call Me Bae, Tu Jhoothi Main Makkar, Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani, or Zara Hat Ke Zara Bach Ke, among others.

Advait Chandan directed Loveyapa is another brilliant film that focuses on GenZ and is made around the mobile mania that our young genera-

tion is gripped with. The story also reminds us of the mayhem caused by each other's mobile content in the married lives of a few friends in the film Khel Khel Mein, but this time the avalanche hits the loving couple before they get married.

Junaid Khan and Kushi Kapoor both prove to be highly talented next-generation actors and come out as very promising ones in the future of Bollywood. Ashutosh Rana again makes an impact in his role as Khushi's father and the one who triggers an opening of a can of worms as far as the couple's past relationships are concerned.

Gaurav Sachdeva (Junaid Khan) and Baani Sharma (Kushi Kapoor) and madly in



love with each other. The film opens up with Gaurav blowing up his entire savings and borrowings from his close friends to fund a new mobile for Baani, who is too scared of her Shudha-Hindi-speaking, Indian

orthodox father Atul Kumar Sharma (Ashutosh Rana).

The father catches the love birds and asks Baani to invite Gaurav to meet him, where Baani preps Gaurav on how to handle her father in talks. When

Gaurav visits Baani's home, her father proposes to swap the mobile phones of Gaurav and Baani, which they reluctantly agree, as they weren't left with any choice.

This mobile swap unleashes

a slew of emotional events between the couple as they delve into the darker side of each of them, being revealed moment by moment turning their passionate love into the wall of hatred as the story unfolds. Unwilling to accept that there are many experiences in their lives in this digital age, and most of them come from purely a need to have fun, emotional support, and bonding, and probably arising out of FOMO syndrome and not from an act of malaise.

In parallel, there are other family events unfold like Gaurav's sister Kiran Sachdeva (Tanvika Parlikar) is getting married to Anupam (Kiku Sharda), and this mobile phone brings the marriage to almost a halt, until an open conversation between Gaurav and Anupam

clears the air for Kiran.

In the first half the film revolves around the life and lifestyle of GenZ playfully, but it turns into an emotional melodrama as the layers keep opening up in the second half. Junaid Khan has done justice to his character of a funny and hyperactive young boy to a mature and emotional person ready to accept the challenges of marriage and responsibility. Kushi Kapoor is very promising as she comes across the girl next door without any cosmetic filmy glamour, and surely many hearts will throb for her.

Loveyapa is a great family entertainer and a must-watch, especially for the current generation.

Praveen Nagda is Festival Director of KidzCINEMA and CultureCinema Film Festivals

ALONE IN THE CITY: SILENT STRUGGLES OF SMALL-TOWN WOMEN



NAMRATA KOHLI

WOMAN WISE

A journalist from Indore moves to Delhi to work with a leading media house in New Delhi. A classically trained female musician from Kanpur finds it difficult to pursue her unconventional career in a non-metro, and moves to Mumbai in search of name, fame, money. A fashion designer from Jaipur relocates to Delhi to intern with top designers. A fresh engineering graduate based out of Bikaner moves to Gurgaon because the “pay is significantly higher in metros and opportunities for growth are also there. Here I may earn Rs 20,000 as against a good Rs 60,000- Rs 1,00,000 in a metro. My town has no MNCs, corporate hubs and no exposure to big opportunities. Staying in my cocoon means goodbye to growth.”

Beyond finances, young women from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities



are migrating to metros for freedom. They want financial independence, away from family control. It's an escape from the small-town patriarchy—no curfews on timings and dress codes and more importantly, no pressure to “settle down.” The city gives them space to explore life, delay marriage, and find love on their own terms. Here, they make choices—what to wear, where to go, how to live. But the fact is this freedom—both financial and mental—comes at a cost. Life

in general is tough for women because they must prove themselves at every point. But more so when you are away from home in a strange land. The journey is often riddled with socio-economic and emotional security challenges.

The biggest hurdle? Housing. Skyrocketing rents in Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore eat up most of their earnings. But finding a place is even tougher—many landlords refuse single women, fearing “unwanted social elements” or “lifestyle

concerns.”

Sujata Roy, a top-tier corporate professional who moved from Kolkata to Delhi, recalls her toughest lesson: “Never confide in anybody, esp men, that you live alone. In fact this advice was reiterated later by a male colleague of mine.” It took Sujata almost a decade of struggle—mentally, physically, emotionally, and financially—to finally feel settled.

“Society sees single women as easy prey. When you're still climbing the ladder, even

spending Rs 2,500-3,000 on a maid feels like a big expense. And we barely find help because we leave early, return late, and end up surviving on packaged food. You come back to a cold house...and that's how India's migratory single women become the biggest brand ambassadors of Maggi. Calling your parents and siblings back home is a mandatory task assigned. Your break-ups become ten times tougher as your emotional anchors are back home,” she says.



Work-life balance? A myth. Many live paycheck to paycheck, forced to return home if they lose their jobs—some battling depression, others too ashamed to go back as “failures.” For many, the only way out is co-living spaces—cheaper rent, better security, and a sense of community.

Unlike men, women in new cities lack strong networks, making adjustment tougher. They battle catcalling, stalking, and workplace harassment, all taking a mental toll. Society questions their independence, adding pressure and self-doubt. The key to survival? Finding support—women's groups, online forums, and like-minded allies to combat loneliness and stand strong.

The workplace has its own challenges—contractual jobs and gig work further add to financial instability. Gender bias in hiring, promotions, and pay

structure remains an issue in male-dominated sectors.

It is true that metro life offers career growth, financial freedom, and independence—but at a cost. Loneliness, safety risks, and workplace bias test their strength. Yet, those who can somehow endure the five to ten-year grind, emerge stronger. They redefine themselves, carve their own path, and take charge of their future. If they can persevere, they find their sweet spot and are successful in creating a new identity for themselves—come to know who they are, where they are going and what they want to do in the future.

With resilience, networks, and smart finances, small-town women aren't just surviving—they're shattering barriers and owning their space. Often, they outshine city natives. Their risks are higher—but so are their rewards.

The bold era of womanhood



DR HASEENA KABEER

The pomegranate, a fruit rich in vibrant colour and layered with seeds, has long symbolized fertility, power, and transformation. For centuries, it has stood as a metaphor for women's resilience, strength, and complexity. In many cultures, the pomegranate embodies a woman's potential for growth, creativity, and renewal. Today, as we enter a bold era for women, this fruit's symbolism is more relevant than ever. The current generation of women is like the pomegranate: full of layers, each representing their distinct roles, ambitions, and dreams. As these women break barriers and redefine the boundaries of society, they carry with them the seeds of change, empowered by the collective strength of those who came before them. From the arts to politics, from science to entrepreneurship, we are witnessing a renaissance where women are stepping into their power, unapologetically claiming their space, and shaping the world with unstoppable force.

Today's women are considered bold because they are continuously challenging traditional gender roles, speaking up for their rights, and breaking barriers across various fields. Several key factors contribute to this boldness. More women are financially independent today than ever before. With increased access to jobs and business opportunities, women are no longer reliant on others for their livelihood. This economic independence allows women to make their own choices, live on their own terms, and have



more control over their lives. Social media has become a powerful tool for women to voice their opinions, share their stories, and connect with others around the world. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube allow women to showcase their talents, spread awareness on important social issues, and challenge harmful stereotypes. This has made it easier for women to raise their voices and demand change. Today's women have the support that have allowed women to unite and amplify their voices, fighting against discrimination, harassment, and inequality.

Many women today are rejecting the stereotypes

that have historically been placed on them. They're pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), leadership roles in politics, and excelling in sports that were once seen as “men's domains.” Women like Serena Williams, Kamala Harris, and Malala Yousafzai are breaking these stereotypes by excelling in their fields and inspiring others to do the same. Today's women are bold because they have access to more opportunities, tools, and support than ever before. They're breaking free from the constraints of traditional gender roles and redefin-

ing what it means to be a woman. Their courage to speak up, push boundaries, and stand up for themselves and others is shaping a future where women's strength and resilience are celebrated. The bold era of womanhood is not just a fleeting moment in time, but a powerful movement reshaping the very fabric of society.

Today's women, much like the pomegranate, are multifaceted, resilient, and unafraid to challenge outdated norms. They are rewriting the rules, taking control of their own destinies, and inspiring future generations to do the same. With greater access to education,

economic independence, and a global platform for expression, women are breaking barriers in every field imaginable. From the arts to politics, from sports to technology, the boldness of today's women is undeniable. As they continue to pave the way for change, they carry the wisdom and strength of those who fought before them, ensuring that the seeds of progress will continue to grow and flourish. The future is bright, and it belongs to those women who dare to dream, disrupt, and define their own paths.

Dr Haseena Kabeer is a freelance columnist

SIGNS OF ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT IN RELATIONSHIPS

BY JEEVIKA SHARMA

Anxious attachment is a style of attachment developed in childhood due to inconsistent or unpredictable caregiving. It carries into adulthood, influencing romantic relationships, friendships, and self-perception. Individuals with anxious attachment often struggle with fears of abandonment, emotional dependency, and heightened sensitivity to relationship dynamics. Below are the key signs of an anxious attachment style:

1. FEAR OF ABANDONMENT

One of the most common signs of anxious attachment is an intense fear of being abandoned or rejected. Individuals with this attachment style often worry excessively about their partners leaving them, even without rational cause. This fear can lead to clingy behavior, constant reassurance-seeking, and difficulty trusting that their partner truly cares for them.

2. OVERANALYZING RELATIONSHIPS

People with anxious attachment tend to overanalyze every aspect of their relationships, from text messages to body language. They may read too much into minor interactions, perceiving distance where none exists. If a partner takes longer than usual to respond to a message, they might assume the worst—that they are being ignored or abandoned.

3. NEEDING CONSTANT REASSURANCE

Those with an anxious attachment style often seek validation and reassurance from their partners. They frequently ask questions like “Do you still love me?” or “Are you mad at me?” Their self-worth is often tied to how their partner treats them, making them highly dependent on external validation.

4. DIFFICULTY BEING ALONE

Anxiously attached individuals often struggle with



being alone. They may feel empty, restless, or anxious when they are not in a relationship or when their partner is unavailable. This can lead them to stay in unhealthy relationships simply to avoid loneliness.

5. JEALOUSY AND POSSESSIVENESS

Jealousy is another common trait of anxious attachment. Individuals may feel threatened by their partner's friendships, colleagues, or even family members, fearing that they will be replaced. This can lead to controlling behaviors, such as checking their partner's phone, constantly questioning their whereabouts, or demanding excessive time together.

6. OVERCOMPENSATING IN RELATIONSHIPS

People with anxious attachment often try too hard to please their partners, sometimes at the expense of their own needs. They may go out of their way to make their partner happy, fearing that if they don't, they will be abandoned. This can result in a pattern of unhealthy self-sacrifice.

7. EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

Anxious attachment can

lead to extreme emotional highs and lows. If a partner is attentive, they may feel euphoric, but if their partner is distant, they may experience intense anxiety or sadness. This emotional instability can make relationships exhausting for both partners.

8. FEAR OF CONFLICT Individuals with anxious attachment often avoid conflict at all costs because they fear it might push their partner away. Instead of expressing their true feelings, they may suppress their emotions, leading to unresolved resentment.

Understanding anxious attachment is the first step toward healing. Therapy, self-reflection, and practicing self-soothing techniques can help individuals develop a more secure attachment style. Building self-esteem, fostering independence, and learning healthy communication skills are essential in breaking the cycle of emotional dependency.

If you resonate with these signs, know that anxious attachment can be managed, and secure, healthy relationships are possible with effort and self-awareness.



OVERCOMING LONELINESS



PARAMJIT BASRA

Recent reports indicate that as much as 33 per cent of the world's population is lonely. That is an amazing statistic. What can be going on when so many are feeling lonely in a world where there are so many people and so many ways of staying connected and reaching out to others? Feelings of loneliness can be triggered by major life-altering events, social anxiety, or just by the fact of living alone, but those triggers are not the root cause.

The root cause is based on an identity crisis, and the conditioning belief that all happiness lies with achieving and acquiring. Looking for fulfilment outside of

the self is precarious because nothing external is permanent - everything is temporary. So, if I identify with any of the roles I play, that of profession, marital status, talents or skills, then once the role is over, as all roles will be, I am left bereft and empty. With this kind of awareness, my life will be a roller coaster - happy when things go well and lost and lonely when things do not.

I need to take a step back and observe that the problem is not out there. It is that I am attached to, identify with, and am dependent upon all the roles I play, and acquisitions I accumulate to make myself feel secure. I need to stop blaming the outside world and others for the emptiness I feel and look within. The solution lies within.

The physical body is a vehicle to navigate through the physical world. The driver of the vehicle is I - the actor, playing different roles. I, the conscient energy, the light, the soul, am making the vehicle move where I want to go, and do what I want to do. For



When I access the eternal qualities of I, the soul, nothing outside can affect me. I will never feel lonely again.

example, I may have the role of a manager, and if or when I lose that job, I feel totally lost. But I was not

born a manager - it was just a role I was playing. When I can step back in this way and separate the 'me' from

the role, it is the first step to finding happiness. This happiness is a form of freedom. I then have no need

There are three stages to this; I acknowledge (I understand), I realise (I experience), and then I become the embodiment of the awareness (I am). This is the light bulb moment and it comes, sooner or later, after persistent practice. Loneliness is a sign of inability to cope with change.

to compare, compete, comment, or criticise, because I am being true to myself. I become aware that all others are also playing their roles, their parts on the stage. I have no right to try to direct their roles, and the way they are playing them, to fit in with what I want. I just have to concentrate on playing my part to the best of my ability.

The second step is to look more deeply within to see what I, the soul, am made of. When I reconnect with the true self in this way, I begin to experience the intrinsic qualities of the soul; peace, love, joy, kindness, compassion, respect - we all have these qualities in

abundance, within. This step is called contemplation, meditation, introversion, whatever term feels most comfortable, and is a way of recharging the energy of the soul. Then I begin to feel a fullness that cannot be taken away from me; and it does not matter where I am, who I am with, what I am doing - I can remain in a state of contentment and peace. This means I can fulfil all my responsibilities, take care of my body, my family, friends, and society, not shunning nor blaming, and just enjoying the moment.

This switching of awareness, from dependence on the physical to the experi-

ence of the soul within, is like switching on a powerful light in a completely dark room - the darkness simply disappears. However, knowing I am the spiritual being within and actually feeling that as a reality, takes practice. The best time to practise this is in the early morning. I can wake a little earlier than usual and dedicate some special time, before my day begins, to having a sweet conversation with the self, and cultivate the awareness of being the soul. There are three stages to this; I acknowledge (I understand), I realise (I experience), and then I become the embodiment of the awareness (I am). This is the light bulb moment and it comes, sooner or later, after persistent practice. Loneliness is a sign of inability to cope with change. When I access the eternal, unchanging qualities of I, the soul, nothing outside can affect me. I will never feel lonely again. *Paramjit Basra has over 35 years in management and is based at the Brahma Kumaris Meditation Centre, Leicester, UK.*

Regaining our immortality



B.K. DR. SAVITA

The idea of immortality has fascinated humans for ages, and scientific efforts to prolong life and perpetuate youth began in earnest about a century ago. Such efforts are, however, misdirected. It is absurd to seek physical immortality. The body is made of the five elements and, like all organic matter, is subject to decay. That is the law of nature.

Spiritual immortality, on the other hand, is an actual fact. We are all souls, not bodies - the body is merely the physical medium through which the soul expresses itself. It is because we have forgotten

this fact that we identify ourselves with our body, and fear death and everything it connotes.

The soul, eternal and immortal, is the sentient being that lends life to the body. Consciousness resides in the soul, and the mind and intellect are the soul's faculties. It is the soul who thinks, feels, reasons, and makes decisions. These activities shape the person's identity and go towards creating their personality.

But we mistakenly link our personality with the body. Doing so is akin to an actor identifying himself with the costume given to him for his role. Just as a good actor can play a role well in any costume, a strong soul is not limited or hindered by its body. The proof of this are the real-life stories we hear of physically disabled persons achieving feats that are difficult for even healthy individuals.

When we recognise and accept our spiritual identity, and begin to live



We regain our immortality when we recognise the truth that we are eternal and imperishable souls.

The soul has no gender, race, religion, or nationality. Fundamentally, all souls, and therefore all humans, are equal. We all are children of the Supreme Soul, whom people call by many names, including God, and the Almighty.

by it, we start becoming free from the negative thoughts, feelings, and ideas that arise from identifying the self with the body.

The soul has no gender, race, religion, or nationality. Fundamentally, all souls, and therefore all humans, are equal. We all are children of the Su-

preme Soul, whom people call by many names, including God, and the Almighty.

This spiritual awareness, which frees us from the illusion of being mortal, does not come just by knowing that we are souls. We need to repeatedly remind ourselves of this fact and be aware of it while interacting with others and going about our daily tasks.

In order to understand the drama of life being played out by billions

of human souls on the stage of planet Earth, we also need to know where souls come from and where they go after leaving a body.

The original home of human souls is the soul world, an abode beyond the universe where souls and the Supreme Soul live. Each soul departs from that home for this world to play its part at its appointed time. Souls start arriving in this world in the Golden Age, which is also called 'Amarlok', the world of immortality. That name comes from the fact that all souls there are aware of their true identity and know that they are immortal. In the Golden Age, physical death is regarded merely as departure from an old body to take birth in a new one. There is no sense of loss, sorrow, or fear.

Gradually, as souls play different roles through successive lives, they lose their power. Eventually, a time comes when they

forget their true identity and start identifying themselves with their body. Body consciousness brings with it the fear of death as well as vices that corrupt humans. Lust, anger, greed, ego and attachment have their roots in body consciousness. When souls start acting under the influence of vices, they experience the karmic return in the form of suffering of various kinds, including untimely death. That in turn increases their fear of death. When untimely death becomes commonplace, this world comes to be called 'Mrityulok' or the land of death.

It is in this world of suffering that God arrives, as described in the Bhagavad Gita, to remind us of our true identity, rid us of vices, and usher in the Golden Age, the age of immortality, once again.

B.K. Dr. Savita is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Abu Road, Rajasthan.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Only when I begin to clean something do I notice how dirty it is. A thin layer of dust evenly coating a surface is not visible until the surface is wiped. In the same way, dirt settles in the soul in the form of energy absorbed from outside. I experience this inner dirt as heaviness or an off-mood. It clogs my mind making it difficult to see or feel clearly. A regular cleaning is necessary to reveal what I have accumulated. Today let me create a regular cleaning practice to remove the dust collected during the day.

Silence helps you see your blind spots



JILLIAN SAWERS

If we are looking to prove ourselves, gain approval and acceptance, then we are not self-realised, we are ego-based mind-controlled automatons.

What is the ego? In the simplest of definitions that I find useful, ego is identifying with what you are not. It takes many gross forms, such as living and breathing football, my team's success and failures, its colours and anthems, its players. Such identifications can become obsessive to the point of violence.

But for the leader, it can take more subtle forms. Like blowing your own trumpet at a team celebration, unwittingly demoralising your whole team. Defending your mistakes. Being resistant to change, in case it risks your privileges and perks. The list goes on and on. And it becomes ever more subtle. These behaviours are all based on mistaken identity. I think I am my job, my projects, my successes.

In order to stop identifying with our roles, and all the appendages accompanying them, such as my profits, my privileges, my power, my personality, my popularity, my projects, my success or lack of it; we simply need to realise our true identity. I say simply, because you do not have to create a true identity. It is there, constantly.

You simply become aware of the you present behind the noise of thoughts. We can call it all sorts of words, such as soul, or source, but



The different roles that we play in life do not define who we are.

then we immediately jump into thoughts about what we believe that is. We can argue for or against its existence.

Neither side will end up any clearer. But if we drop into silence, we become aware of our being. And that puts ev-

erything in perspective. As you compassionately but humorously observe your own absurdity as you

battle away inside your mind with your desires and frustrations, you begin to almost see yourself as a car-

In order to stop identifying with our roles, and all the appendages accompanying them, such as my profits, my privileges, my power, my personality, my popularity, my projects, my success or lack of it; we simply need to realise our true identity.

toon character.

When we see someone with exaggerated personality traits, such as boasting or moaning all the time, or staying young and desirable at all costs, they appear a bit like a cartoon character. When we can see ourselves in the same way, the contrast between the grace of being and the buffoon the ego makes of us, then perhaps we are a little closer to self-actualisation. Closer to creative inspired action. Closer to leading with clear purpose and vision, because those come naturally to someone who operates from the inside out.

A leader' with an unexam-

ined ego simply cannot lead. They can only imitate the language and actions of true leaders. But as the old adage goes, pride definitely comes before a fall. And none of us can ultimately escape the removal of all that is false from our being. Whether we do that gracefully, with wisdom, or prefer to dwell in the drama of cartoon land a little longer, will define if we can lead today or maybe sometime in the future.

Jillian Sawers is a professional self-development trainer and has a YouTube channel called 'The Department of Silence'. She is based in Mount Abu, Rajasthan, at the headquarters of the Brahma Kumaris.

NATIONAL GAMES: LOVLINA WINS GOLD, THAPA SILVER IN BOXING

Tokyo medallist boxer beats Rathore, Asian champion loses to Vansha

TDG NETWORK
DEHRADUN

Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist Lovlina Borgohain clinched the women's 75kg gold, while six-time Asian champion Shiva Thapa signed off with a silver medal in the men's 63.5kg category at the National Games here on Friday.

Playing her first tournament since the Paris Olympics, Assam's Lovlina dominated her younger opponent Pranshu Rathore from Chandigarh across all three rounds to register a convincing 5-0 win.

The 27-year-old Indian boxer had also won the gold medal in the same weight category in the 2022 National Games held in Gujarat.

In the men's light welterweight (63.5kg) division, Thapa lost in a close bout to Services Sports Control Board boxer Vanshaj, with a 3-4 scoreline.



The 27-year-old Indian boxer had also won the gold medal in the same weight category in the 2022 National Games held in Gujarat.

In other bouts of the day, Services' Mandengbam Singh defeated Chandigarh's Anshul Punia in the men's flyweight (51kg) division by a 4-1 split decision. Commonwealth Games

bronze medalist Jaismine Lamboria of Services displayed her dominance with a convincing 5-0 win over World Championship bronze-winner Manisha Moun of Haryana in the



women's 60kg event.

Another gold medal for Services came from Sakshi, who outpunched Himachal Pradesh's Vinakshi 5-0.

In the women's bantamweight category, Madhya Pradesh's Divya Panwar triumphed over Uttar Pradesh's Sonia Lather with a 4-1 victory.

Local boxer Nivedita Karki showed precision

and agility as she overpowered Haryana's Kalpana to claim the top spot in the women's flyweight (50kg) event.

Former youth world champion Assam's Anukshita Boro reigned supreme in the women's welterweight (66kg) event, outclassing Uttarakhand's Kajal by a unanimous decision.

MANJREKAR ALL PRAISE FOR GILL, IYER

Manjrekar calls Gill 'lambi race ka ghoda', rates Iyer's knock '10/10'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Former cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar picked Shubman Gill as the player who will be around for a long time in Indian cricket. Apart from Gill's masterclass, Manjrekar was also impressed by Shreyas Iyer's "flawless" stroke play and rated his belligerent 59(36) 10/10 on "quality."

Gill and Shreyas were in the vanguard of India's four-wicket triumph in the first ODI against England. When skipper Rohit Sharma and debutant Yashasvi Jaiswal left India in a mess at 19/2 while chasing 249, Gill and Iyer dug deep to keep the innings from falling apart.

With flawless technique and an unorthodox nature in their shots, Gill and Iyer raised a 94-run partnership to steer India out of a position when they walked on thin ice. While Gill, in course of his 87(96), relied on his defensive prowess, Shreyas took



the brunt of scoring runs on his shoulders. With a wide array of shots and picture-perfect strokeplay, he maintained a healthy run flow. His swift expedition was brought to an end by Jacob Bethell, who pinned him right in front of the stumps at 59(36). For Manjrekar, it was the best innings that he saw from Shreyas. "I know it's just 58 for now. But that has to be Shreyas Iyer's best innings! Because of the sheer flawless nature of stroke play & the relative orthodoxy of all his shots. On quality it was 10/10," Manjrekar wrote on X.

After Shreyas returned to the dressing room, Gill took the mantle to take India past the finishing line.

He perfectly blended defence and attack in his 87(96), leaving India a couple of steps away from victory.

"We had a term in the team 'Lambi race ka Ghoda' for certain players. Meaning someone who will be around for a long time in Indian cricket. That's what Shubman Gill is!" Manjrekar wrote on X. After sealing a 4-wicket win in the series opener, India will look to take an unassailable lead in Cuttack on Sunday.

South Africa team arrives in Lahore for ODI tri-series against Pak, New Zealand

TDG NETWORK
LAHORE

Temba Bavuma-led South Africa team arrived in Lahore on Friday for the upcoming ODI tri-series against New Zealand and Pakistan. Pakistan Cricket took to X and shared a video of the arrival of the Proteas and wrote, "Temba Bavuma-led South Africa team arrives in Lahore for the ODI tri-series."

On Wednesday, Rob Walter, South Africa's white-ball coach, named a 12-man squad for the first match of the series, including Gerald Coetzee, who has recovered from an injury setback. Coetzee played his last match for South Africa before the injury setback against Sri Lanka in the first match of a two-match Test series



The tri-series will kick off with New Zealand squaring off against Pakistan in the Gadaffi Stadium on February 8.

on November 27, 2024. For the opening match of the ODI tri-series, South Africa has several new options to look at, with six uncapped players added to the Bavuma-led side.

Meeka-eel Prince, Gideon Peters, Eathan Bosch, and Mihali Mpongwana are all uncapped at the international level so far, while Matthew Breetzke has already featured in Tests

and T20Is, and Senuran Muthusamy has played four Tests for the Proteas.

The squad will be updated for the remainder of the series following the conclusion of the ongoing SA20 league in South Africa, with players like Keshav Maharaj and Heinrich Klaassen set to be available from the second game of the series. The tri-series will kick off with New Zealand squaring off against Pakistan in the Gadaffi Stadium on February 8.

The Kiwis will then face South Africa on February 10 in a day match. After the conclusion of the first two games, the ODI action will move from Rawalpindi to Karachi, with the Men in Green taking on the Proteas on February 12 in a day/night match.

Harshit 'ready' for death overs bowling in ODIs

TDG NETWORK
NAGPUR

Young India seamer Harshit Rana is "ready" to take the responsibility of bowling in the death overs after enjoying success in his ODI debut against England. Harshit was expensive yet impactful in his maiden ODI appearance for India against England in the series opener in Nagpur on Thursday.

He exposed England's batting unit at crucial moments and became the first Indian bowler to take 3-plus wickets on his debut innings across the three formats.

Harshit is known for his expertise in death bowling in the T20I format. However, his utility in the 50-over format was limited to the new ball and middle overs. Even with three overs remaining in his account, India skipper Rohit Sharma decided to use Kuldeep



The explosive opener left Harshit in disarray by reeling off four consecutive boundaries.

Yadav, Axar Patel and Ravindra Jadeja in the final phase of the first innings. In the future, there could be a scenario where Harshit could be asked to bear the responsibility of delivering the death and the young quick is ready to embrace it. "I have bowled well in death before. I am ready

for it. This format is difficult. You get 10 overs, and you have to play different roles in different phases," he said in the post-match press conference. There has been a lot of noise around Harshit being fast-tracked into the Indian team and his T20I debut in the fourth match against

England. In his T20 debut, Harshit took the field as a concussion substitute for Shivam Dube and rescued India with game-changing figures of 3/33.

The decision to bring in Harshit had left the world of cricket divided. England captain Jos Buttler and some former cricketers were quick to express dissatisfaction with the entire scenario. Even in his ODI debut, Harshit's first three overs were a nightmare. He conceded 11 runs in his first over and then backed it up with a maiden in his second. He stuck to his line and lengths in the third over, but Philip Salt had read him like a book. The explosive opener left Harshit in disarray by reeling off four consecutive boundaries. He topped it up by swinging his bat across the line and smoked the ball past the boundary line for a flat six.

ISL: Hyderabad FC-Mohammedan SC clash today

TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

Hyderabad FC will play Mohammedan SC at the GMC Balyogi Athletic Stadium in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 on February 8.

The hosts will look to recover from a 4-1 loss to NorthEast United FC, while Mohammedan SC are seeking to end their struggles in front of goal, having netted the least number of times (8) in the competition thus far, as stated in a release from ISL.

In the reverse fixture, Hy-



derabad FC notched a 4-0 victory on October 26, 2024. A victory here would result in Mohammedan SC becoming the eighth side against whom Hyderabad FC recorded a league double in the compe-

tion.

As of now, Hyderabad FC are looking to regain their defensive touch, having given away multiple goals in both of their previous clashes. Their last longer such sequence was

a run of five encounters from April to September 2024. However, the side has been resilient at home, since they have been unbeaten in their previous three home matches. They had bettered this only during their four-game-long unbeaten stretch on their home turf between December 2022 and February 2023.

Mohammedan SC have endured a tough beginning to their ISL journey, particularly from an offensive perspective, since they have not scored in 11 games this season. This record is only surpassed by

NorthEast United FC (12 in 2017-18) and Hyderabad FC (13 in 2023-24).

Hyderabad FC have accumulated 13 points from their 18 encounters this season, drawing twice and winning once in their last five matches. They are placed at the penultimate spot in the points table. Mohammedan SC, too, boast of a similar record in their last five ISL encounters, but their two defeats have come on a bounce coming into this match, and they are positioned at the bottom of the standings.

Indian spinner Jadeja completes 600 international wickets across all formats

TDG NETWORK
NAGPUR

During the first ODI against England at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium on Thursday, Indian left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja completed 600 international wickets across all formats.

Jadeja snapped three wickets in his spell of nine overs where he conceded just 26 runs and bowled one maiden over. The 36-year-old took the wickets of Joe Root, Jacob Bethell, and

Adil Rashid in his spell. With these three wickets, the Saurashtra-born player completed the 600-wicket mark and became the fifth player to do so.

The other players to achieve the same landmark were leg-spinner Anil Kumble and off-spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Harbhajan Singh. The former India skipper and right-arm seamer Kapil Dev touched the milestone of 600 wickets.

During the time of batting, Jadeja played an unbeaten innings of 12 runs from 10 balls which came with the help of two boundaries. Recapping the first innings of the Nagpur ODI, England won the toss and elected to bat first. Openers Phil Salt (43 in 26 balls, with five fours and three sixes) and Ben Duckett (32 in 29 balls, with six fours) gave England a fine start with an explosive 75-run opening stand.

'Jeeto Baazi Khel Ke': ICC unveils official song for Champions Trophy 2025

TDG NETWORK
DUBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Friday announced the release of the Men's Champions Trophy 2025 official song, Jeeto Baazi Khel Ke, by renowned singer Atif Aslam, as per the ICC.

With 12 days to go until the ICC Men's Champions Trophy, the release of the song will build further excitement to the 15-match event taking place from 19 February to 9 March in Pakistan and the UAE.

The official song for the event is produced by Abdullah Siddiqui, with lyrics penned by Adnan Dhool and Asfandyar Asad. The music video is a visual celebration of the diverse culture of Pakistan from the streets to the markets to the stadium and represents the love and enjoyment of the game.

The official song is available to fans across popular streaming audio platforms worldwide. The thrilling two-week competition will see the world's top eight teams put it all on the line in 15



intense matches across 19 days, with every match counting in the pursuit of the iconic white jackets. Lead singer Atif Aslam said as quoted by the ICC,

"I am very fond of cricket and I always wanted to be a fast bowler. Having the passion and understanding of the game - I feel connected to the adrenaline of

The thrilling two-week competition will see the world's top eight teams put it all on the line in 15 intense matches across 19 days, with every match counting in the pursuit of the iconic white jacket

the crowd, their cheers and the feeling of being a fan. I used to wait for matches in particular the India versus Pakistan game which was always full of emotions and sentimental value. And that is why I am very excited to have been a part of

the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 official song." On the launch of the song, ICC chief commercial officer, Anurag Dahiya said, "Excitement is building ahead of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy and today we are delighted to launch the

official event song. With 12 days to go until the start of the event, fans can expect a song that represents the Pakistan identity and a true celebration of the Champions Trophy.

We encourage fans to get their tickets now and not miss out." ICC Champions Trophy 2025 tournament director and PCB chief operating officer Sumair Ahmad Syed said: "With the launch of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 official song, we mark another thrilling milestone on the road to this global

spectacle. Atif Aslam, a powerhouse of Pakistani music, has delivered blockbuster anthems for the PSL, and we have no doubt that this song will set the stage on fire. As excitement builds, we are confident that fans - especially in Pakistan - will rally behind all the teams, filling the stadiums with electrifying energy and passion for the game."

Fans still have an opportunity to get their tickets for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 to purchase online or visiting physical ticket providers in Pakistan.