



4
KARNATAKA ORDERS TO IMPLEMENT SC DIRECTIVE 'RIGHT TO DIE' WITH DIGNITY



11
THREE ISRAELI HOSTAGES, INCLUDING US, FRENCH CITIZENS, SET FOR RELEASE TODAY



16
INDIA STORMS INTO FINAL, DEFEAT ENGLAND BY 9 WICKETS

'UNACCEPTABLE': PRESIDENT'S OFFICE ON SONIA'S COMMENTS

- Sonia Gandhi told mediapersons that the "President was getting very tired by the end... She could hardly speak, poor thing"
- President Murmu was "not tired at any point": Rashtrapati Bhavan

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress Parliamentary Chairperson Sonia Gandhi's reaction to President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint session of the Parliament on Friday stoked a controversy. Her comments promoted to the Rashtrapati Bhavan to issue a rare statement which without naming Sonia Gandhi said the remarks were unacceptable.

The senior Congress leader said that the President "could hardly speak, poor thing."

"The President was getting very tired by the end... She could hardly speak, poor thing," Sonia Gandhi told reporters.

President Murmu's address kickstarted the Budget Session. Emphasising that the government is working on all-round development, President Murmu said that the country has only one aim which is to become a Vikshit Bharat (developed India) and the government is working with a "saturation approach" so nobody is left in the journey.

The BJP launched an all-out attack on the Congress over its former chief Sonia Gandhi's remarks on Presi-



President Droupadi Murmu and former Congress president Sonia Gandhi in Parliament. File Photo (ANI)

dent Droupadi Murmu's Parliament address, saying they were "deeply disrespectful" and underscored the opposition's "continued disregard" for the dignity of the highest constitutional office.

The Congress hit back and said every person in India has respect and empathy for President Murmu but BJP leaders cannot digest Sonia Gandhi's "empathy" for her health.

Will the BJP answer for the disrespect shown to President Murmu when she was not invited to the inauguration of Parliament or Ram temple in Ayodhya, the Congress asked.

In response to senior Sonia Gandhi's remarks, the Rashtrapati Bhavan, without mentioning her name called it "unacceptable"

and said it "clearly hurt the dignity of the high office."

The Rashtrapati Bhavan also clarified that President Droupadi Murmu was "not tired at any point", adding that President believes speaking up for the marginalised communities, for women and farmers can "never be tiring".

"While reacting to the media on the Hon'ble President's Address to the Parliament, some prominent leaders of the Congress party have made comments that clearly hurt the dignity of the high office, and therefore are unacceptable. These leaders have said that the President was getting very tired by the end and she could hardly speak," the Rashtrapati Bhavan said in a statement. **■ P3**

'Insult by royal family': PM hits out at Congress

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday slammed Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi over their remarks on President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint sitting of two Houses of Parliament, saying the remarks of are an insult to the "tribal brothers and sisters" of the country.

Addressing a public meeting in Dwarka, the Prime Minister said the "royal family of the Congress does not like those who rise from the grassroots" and "repeatedly insults the poor and people from Dalit, Adivasi, OBC communities who are achievers".

The Prime Minister said in a post on X later that the "royal family" should seek an apology from the President.

"Today the royal family



You must have noticed, since 2014, this is the first Parliament session, which saw no 'videshi chingari' (foreign interference) in our affairs, in which no foreign forces tried to ignite a fire....

■ REPORT P2

'Pace of work tripled in govt's third term'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said the pace of work has tripled in the third term of her government which has worked with strong determination to lift the economy out of the state of "policy paralysis". Addressing both the Houses of Parliament assembled together in the Lok Sabha chamber, she said the nation was witnessing major decisions and policies being implemented at an extraordinary speed, with the highest priority given to the poor, the middle class, the youth,



President Droupadi Murmu stands for National Anthem before addressing the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on the first day of the Budget Session on Friday. (ANI Photo/Sansad TV)

women, and farmers. "My government is infusing new energy through unprecedented achievements in this Amrit Kaal of India's development journey. The pace of work has tripled in this third term," she said in her 60-minute speech, peppered with occasional protests from the opposition benches.

In an address to the two Houses at the beginning of the first session of Parliament every year, the president outlines the vision of the government and this is considered a policy statement. **■ P3**

Economic Survey pegs growth at 6.3-6.8%

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday tabled the government's pre-Budget Economic Survey that projected economic growth of 6.3-6.8 per cent in the coming fiscal.

Experts said the estimated expansion in economy is much lower than what is needed to become a developed country and the government needed to de-regulate and implement reform in areas like land and labour to stimulate growth.

The state of the economy document, tabled in Parliament by indicated that India's growth is moderating and more needs to be done to achieve the near 8 per cent annual rate needed to achieve the Viksit Bharat target by 2047.

The 6.3 per cent to 6.8 per cent growth rate in 2025-26 (April 2025 to March 2026 fiscal year) compares to an estimated 6.4 per cent growth in the current year ending March 31 - the **■ P3**



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman poses for a picture with MoS Finance Pankaj Choudhary, a day before the Budget presentation. (ANI Photo/Rahul Singh)

SURVEY-FINEPRINT

- Economic fundamentals robust, backed by calibrated fiscal consolidation, stable consumption.
- Navigating global headwinds will require strategic, prudent policy management face-off
- Risks to inflation remain on account of significant global political, economic uncertainties
- Investment activity expected to pick up, supported by higher public capexy.
- Forex at \$640.3 billion, sufficient to cover 10.9 months of imports and 90% of external debt.
- Ease of Doing Business 2.0 should be a state government-led initiative
- Need to develop the manufacturing sector further and invest in emerging technologies such as AI, robotics, and biotechnology.

In big crackdown, 27 Bangladeshi held in Kerala for illegal stay

AGENCIES
ERNAKULAM

In a crackdown on illegal immigrants, Kerala Police on Friday arrested 27 Bangladeshi nationals residing illegally in Kochi.

According to police, the raid was conducted by the joint operation of the police and the Anti-Terrorism Squad on Thursday. In all, 54 people were taken into custody and were interrogated in detail.

District Police Chief, Ernakulam Rural, Vaibhav Saxena said, "Yesterday night, as part of a special drive in North Paravoor Police Station limits in Er-

nakulam Rural district, a raid was conducted jointly by police and Anti-Terrorism Squad. As a part of that raid, 54 people were taken into custody from one lodge. They were brought to the police station and interrogated in detail. Finally, we could understand that 27 out of them were Bangladeshis."

He further said that arrested individuals hold Bangladeshi ID cards, birth certificates and passports. He informed that an FIR had been registered against them. **■ DETAILS P4**



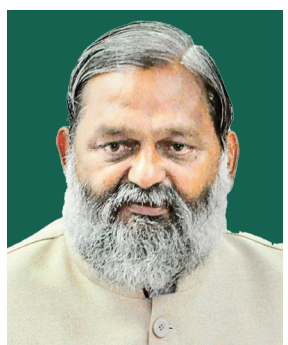
A view of Amrit Udyan during a press preview ahead of its opening for public from February 2 to March 30, in New Delhi on Friday. (ANI Photo/Amit Sharma)

Uncommon for a BJP govt: Rift in Haryana cabinet

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

The political discord within the Haryana Cabinet deepened on Friday as senior BJP leader and Cabinet Minister Anil Vij again launched a sharp attack on Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, accusing him of being inaccessible and indifferent to governance.

"Ever since Saini took over as Chief Minister, he has been travelling in his 'udan khatola' (helicopter) and does not come down. This is not just my concern; all MLAs, MPs, and ministers are saying the same," Vij said in Ambala Cantonment. His statement came a day after he expressed frustration over officials'



Anil Vij



Nayab Singh Saini

alleged non-compliance with his directives, the seven-time MLA from Ambala Cantt declared that he had stopped holding his weekly Janta Darbar (Open Session) due to administrative inaction. The seven times MLA and former Home Minister even warned of launching an indefinite hunger **■ P3**

7 MLAs quit in big blow to AAP

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a setback to the AAP, seven of its outgoing MLAs resigned from the party on Friday, with only five days to go for the Delhi Assembly polls. Sources said these MLAs were disgruntled after being denied tickets for the February 5 polls and were in touch with other parties.

Most of the MLAs shared their resignation letters on social media and slammed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over corruption and other issues.

Madan Lal, the outgoing MLA from Kasturba Nagar, claimed that he and six other AAP legislators have quit the party's primary membership.

He said they have also sent their resignation letters to Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel. **■ DETAILS P5**



MLAs who resigned are: Robit Maharoliya from Trilokpuri, Madan Lal from Kasturba Nagar, Rajesh Rishi from Janakpuri, Bhavna Gaud from Palam, Bhubender Singh June from Bijwasan, and Pawan Kumar Sharma from Adarsh Nagar.

GBS claims yet another victim in Pune

PUNE: A 36-year-old male from Pimplegurav, who worked as an Ola-Uber driver, was admitted to Yashwantrao Chavan Hospital on January 21 due to suspected Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS).

The patient's health deteriorated, and he passed away on January 30, 2025, according to a press note issued by the health department of Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation on Friday. As per a Press statement, "A post-mortem examination conducted by a committee at Yashwantrao Chavan Friendship Hospital concluded that the primary cause of death was trauma to the respiratory system caused by pneumonia and subsequent death." **■ DETAILS P4**

FIRST PARL SESSION IN 10 YRS THAT BEGINS WITHOUT ANY FOREIGN INTERFERENCE: PM

The Prime Minister said while addressing to the media before the start of Budget Session

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Moments before the commencement of the Budget Session 2025-26, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that this is the first Parliament session in which he witnessed "no foreign interference" since 2014.

Addressing the media persons before heading towards the Parliament, PM Modi said, "You must have noticed, since 2014, this is the first Parliament session, which saw no 'videshi chingari' (foreign interference) in our affairs, in which no foreign forces tried to ignite a fire. I had noticed this before every budget session. And many in our country leave no stone unturned to fan these sparks. This is the first session without any foreign meddling."

Emphasising that the government in the third term will focus on "all-round development," the Prime Minister said that 3Is - Innovation, inclusion and investment has performed primary role in the economic growth of the nation

"3Is PERFORMED PRIMARY ROLE IN ECONOMIC GROWTH OF NATION"

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the media ahead of the Budget Session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Friday. Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijju, Union Minister of State (I/C) for Law & Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal and MoS L. Murugan are also seen. ANI

ment," the Prime Minister said that 3Is - Innovation, inclusion and investment has performed primary role in the economic growth of the nation.

PM Modi said, "In the third term, in the Mission MODE, we will make the country headed towards the all-round development, whether it is geographical, social or economic aspect.

We are heading towards Mission MODE. Innovation, inclusion and investment has been primary in our economic

growth." "Reform, perform and transform. When we have to achieve the pace of the development, the most emphasis is on reform, and central and state governments have to perform and transformation can be witnessed through public participation," he added.

The Prime Minister stated that in this session, the Parliament will discuss on may historic bills which have been enacted to strengthen the nation.

"In this session, as always, many historic bills will be discussed in the House and after extensive brainstorming, they will become laws that will strengthen the nation. Specially to re-establish the pride of women power, to ensure that every woman gets a respectable life and equal rights without any discrimination of caste and creed; many important decisions will be taken in this session in this direction," he said.

President's address failed to touch major issues of nation: CPI

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha MP and Communist Party of India (CPI) leader P Sandosh Kumar on Friday criticised President Droupadi Murmu's address to Parliament, calling it a "glaring exercise in denial" that overlooked the critical challenges facing the country.

Kumar pointed out that the speech failed to mention the prolonged crisis in Manipur, where persistent violence has led to significant loss of lives and social unrest in the strategically crucial state. He also criticised the government's silence on the recurring paper leaks, which he said had eroded public confidence in the recruitment process. "Continued series of paper leaks that have shaken public trust in government recruitment processes found no mention. Furthermore, the government's inability to tackle the unemployment crisis, with India's joblessness rate standing at distressing high levels



P Sandosh Kumar, RS MP, CPI.

was conveniently ignored. These glaring omissions reflect the government's wilful ignorance of the reality of millions of citizens," he remarked. The CPI leader further raised concerns over rising inflation, arguing that it was burdening ordinary citizens while the government failed to implement effective economic measures. He noted that India's foreign debt had exceeded \$700 billion, and the rupee's depreciation reflected the administration's failure to stabilize the economy. Despite these worrying indicators, Kumar said, the President's address projected

an overly optimistic image of economic resilience.

Criticising corporate favouritism, Kumar highlighted that large-scale loan write-offs worth approximately Rs14 lakh crore between 2015 and 2025, stating that they had done little to boost job creation or infrastructure development. He also pointed to environmental degradation, noting that India had lost thousands of square kilometers of forest cover in the past decade.

"The speech completely ignored the harsh realities of corporate favouritism, environmental degradation, and growing social unrest in India. Loan write-offs to large corporations, estimated at Rs 14 lakh crore, between 2015 and 2025, contributed little to job creation or infrastructure development. India lost thousands of square kilometers of forest cover in the past decade. Atrocities against minorities, Dalits, tribals and women have increased manifold under the rule of the RSS-BJP," he said.

She meant no disrespect: Priyanka on Sonia's remarks

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra clarified that her mother and Congress leader Sonia Gandhi have the utmost respect for President Droupadi Murmu. She further expressed that it was very "unfortunate" that her comments were "twisted" by the media.

Commenting on Sonia Gandhi's remarks on President Murmu and her speech, Priyanka Gandhi told reporters, "My mother is 78 years lady, she has simply said that 'the President read such a long speech and she must have been tired, poor thing'...She fully respects (the President of India). I think it is very unfortunate that this kind of thing is twisted by the media. They both are two respected people and older than us...She means no disrespect."

Responding to the BJP's demand for an apology from the Congress party over Sonia Gandhi's remarks, She said, "BJP should first apologise for plunging the country into such a pit".

While reacting to President Murmu's address to the joint session of the Parliament, Sonia Gandhi told reporters, "The President was getting very tired by the end...She could hardly speak, poor thing."

The BJP leaders have come heavily on the former Con-



Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi and party General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at Parliament House on the first day of the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

Sonia remarks on Prez deeply disrespectful: BJP

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday launched an all-out attack on the Congress over its former chief Sonia Gandhi's remarks on President Droupadi Murmu's Parliament address, saying they were "deeply disrespectful" and underscored the opposition's "continued disregard" for the dignity of the highest constitutional office.

The Congress hit back and gress chief over her remarks. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju also called for an apology from the Congress.

"I condemn the comments

made by Sonia Gandhi and other opposition leaders. Our

said every person in India has respect and empathy for President Murmu but BJP leaders cannot digest Sonia Gandhi's "empathy" for her health.

Will the BJP answer for the disrespect shown to President Murmu when she was not invited to the inauguration of Parliament or Ram temple in Ayodhya, the Congress asked.

President, a tribal woman, is not weak... Droupadi Murmu has worked extensively for the country and society and they cannot even imagine the kind of work she has

done... They should apologise to her," Rijju said.

President Murmu's address marked the beginning of the Budget Session. Emphasising that the government is working on all-round development, President Murmu said that the country has only one aim which is to become a Vikshit Bharat (developed India), with the government working on a "saturation approach" to ensure no one is left behind.

Murmu said, "My government is working with the Saturation Approach, so nobody is left in the journey of Vikshit Bharat... We have only one aim to become Viksit Bharat."

As the Made in India defence product goes global, the President lauded the government for taking steps towards self-reliance in the defence sector.

"The country has taken several historic steps to protect the country's borders and ensure internal security.... The govt has also taken steps towards self-reliance in the defence sector. From Make in India, we have moved to make for the world..." she said.

Regarding infrastructure, she highlighted the completion of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project, stating that now India would be connected by railway from Kashmir to Kanyakumari.

Double standards: Shinde slams Opp over Waqf Bill stance

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief leader Eknath Shinde on Thursday criticised opposition MPs for their stance against the Waqf Bill at the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill and called it a display of "double standards."

Shinde asserted that his government is committed to upholding the legacy of Balasaheb Thackeray and ensuring its continuity.

"This is double standards. We are working to take forward the legacy and role of Balasaheb Thackeray. We

BJD MP Patra calls President's address 'propaganda statement'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Sasmit Patra has expressed disappointment over the President's address on Friday, calling it a "very disappointing" and "feeble attempt" to highlight the government's achievements without addressing pressing national concerns.

Patra said, "It is just a feeble attempt to go on about the government's achievements. The real issues of the country and those plaguing states like Odisha, such as our demand for special category status, providing more support to states regarding the federal structure, all of that was missing."



Sasmit Patra, BJD MP, File.

Patra further criticised the address, describing it as a "laundry list" of the government's actions, rather than a comprehensive view of the country's challenges.

"There was no imagination, it seemed just like a propaganda statement," he

added. Meanwhile, President Droupadi Murmu in her Friday's address stated that with the efforts of the government, India is going to become the third biggest economy in the world.

The President said that her government's mantra is "Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas."

President Murmu was addressing a joint sitting of the two Houses of Parliament, marking the beginning of this year's Budget Session.

The President, after arriving at the Parliament in a horse-drawn carriage, began her address, followed by the national anthem.

ONOE Bill: JPC to seek time extension, hold wide consultations

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to examine the 'One Nation, One Election' will seek an extension of time and has decided to hold wide consultations with stakeholders and take views of people across various sectors and sections of society.

The panel held its second meeting on Friday and Chairman PP Chaudhary stated that they had a "posi-



PP Chaudhary, BJP leader, chairman JPC ONOE. File photo.

gestions about stakeholders who can present their views to the committee. He said they would write to the Speaker to extend the time for submitting their report. Replying to queries, Chaudhary also said that the panel will take the views of students, teachers as also migrant workers.

"Had a very positive discussion, the members input we received regarding which all stakeholders need to be called, there was an indicative list, we gave it and the

whole list was discussed... Next meeting hasn't been decided yet...All members have decided that we need to go to every state...we will write to the Speaker for time extension...migrant workers are also important stakeholders, they need to be heard too...all stakeholders will be heard," he told reporters.

Sources said the committee has a proposed list for consultations which includes people across various sections of society.

President made to deliver political speech, alleges Cong's Venugopal

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal on Friday said that the President was made to deliver a political speech. "The President was made to deliver a political speech. Nothing is new. Everything is only complete lie and jumla."

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram remarked that his perception of India differs significantly from that of President Droupadi Murmu, claiming that she avoids discussing the harsh realities of the country.

"I think the President of India and I live in two different countries. The President's view of the country she governs over and the country I live in seems to



KC Venugopal, Congress General Secretary. File Photo.

have stark differences. The President seems to celebrate success which I don't deny is there but glossed over the harsh realities of daily life in India," he said.

Earlier today, Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi's reaction to President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint session of the Parliament on Friday stoked a controversy. She said that

the President "could hardly speak, poor thing."

"The President was getting very tired by the end... She could hardly speak, poor thing," Sonia Gandhi told reporters. President Murmu's address kicked started the Budget Session. Emphasising that the government is working on all-round development, President Murmu said that the country has only one

aim which is to become a Vikshit Bharat (developed India) and the government is working with a "saturation approach" so nobody is left in the journey.

Murmu said, "My government is working with the Saturation Approach, so nobody is left in the journey of Vikshit Bharat... We have only one aim to become Viksit Bharat." As the Made in India defence product goes global, the President lauded the government for taking steps towards self-reliance in the defence sector. "The country has taken several historic steps to protect the country's borders and ensure internal security....

The govt has also taken steps towards self-reliance in the defence sector.

BUDGET SESSION-DAY 1



President Droupadi Murmu leaves in a traditional horse-driven carriage to address the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on the first day of the Budget Session, at Vijay Chowk in New Delhi on Friday. ANI



President along with Vice President Jagdeep Thakkar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijju during a procession to address the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on the first day of the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI



Lok Sabha LoP and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi at Parliament House on the first day of the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman poses for a picture with MoS Finance Pankaj Choudhary and the CBDT Budget team on the eve of the Union Budget, at Ministry of Finance in New Delhi on Friday. Finance & Revenue Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey, CBDT Chairman Ravi Agrawal and CBDT Member Ramesh Narain Parbat also present. ANI

THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON SONIA GANDHI STATEMENT

76% believe Gandhi's remarks reflect Congress's mindset

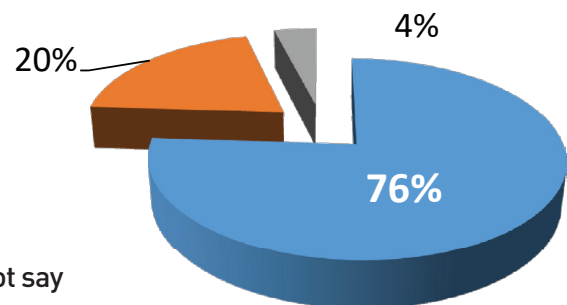
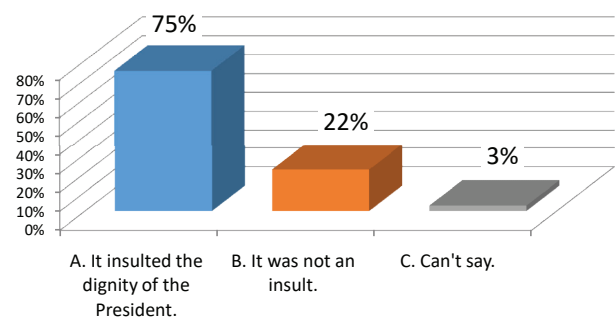
The Budget Session began with controversy as Congress MP Sonia Gandhi referred to President Droupadi Murmu as a "poor thing," ex-

pressing concern over her exhaustion after a long speech. The BJP criticized the remark as derogatory and demanded an apology. Earlier,

President Murmu addressed Parliament, marking the session's start, and Gandhi was asked to comments on her remarks.

Q1. ▶

In Parliament, Sonia Gandhi referred to President Droupadi Murmu as "POOR LADY." What is your opinion?

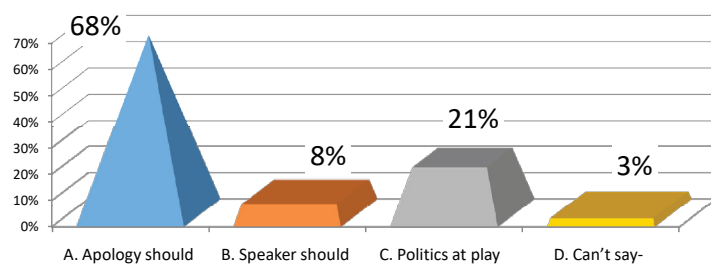


Q2. ◀

Does Sonia Gandhi's statement reflect the Congress party's anti-poor and anti-tribal mindset?

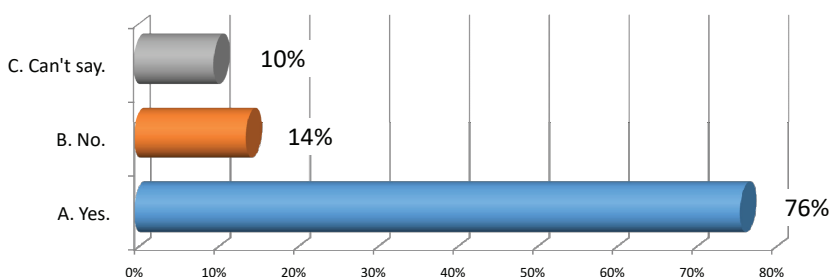
Q3. ▶

Sonia Gandhi's "POOR LADY" remark referred to the Rashtrapati Bhavan as an "oppressive palace" and demanded an apology from the BJP. What is your opinion?



Q4. ◀

Rahul Gandhi described the President's address as "boring". Do you think such language was deliberately used to insult?



Indian Air Force (IAF) pilot Group Captain and ISRO astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla has been named pilot for Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4), a private spaceflight for the International Space Station (ISS), on Thursday. Former NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson will command the commercial mission, while the two mission specialists are European Space Agency project astronaut Sławosz Uznanski-Wisniewski of Poland and Tibor Kapu of Hungary. (ANI PHOTO)

'Should not be falsely equated': MEA on report on rising extremism in UK

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs, in response to the UK Home Office Report on rising extremism in the United Kingdom, has said that the nature of "separatist and extremism threat" in UK is "well known" and the report should not be "condoned and falsely equated".

This comes after UK media reports claimed a report mentioning about 'Hindu nationalism', 'Islamist extremism' and 'Khalistani extremism' regarding rising extremism in UK. "Regarding UK we have some seen some reports on this particular matter. The nature of the separatist and extremist threat out of UK is well known I should not it

should not be condoned and falsely equated so that is our response," Randhir Jaiswal said in a press conference. Talking about pending extradition requests of terrorists in Canada, Jaiswal said that there were approximately 26 pending extradition requests which have no update from their side. "On the extradition request we have... 26 extradition re-

quests pending which are pending there has been I don't have any update to share with you," he said. Last year, the Ministry of External Affairs called out Canada for not taking any action against criminals and anti-India elements, despite multiple requests for extradition and provisional arrest being sent by India over the last decade.

'Unacceptable': President's office on Sonia's comments

CONTINUED FROM P1

It further said that "it might be the case" that the leaders are not acquainted with idiom and discourse in Indian languages, adding that "in any case, such comments are in poor taste, unfortunate and entirely avoidable."

"Rashtrapati Bhavan would like to clarify that nothing could be farther

from the truth. The President was not tired at any point. Indeed, she has believed that speaking up for the marginalized communities, for women and farmers, as she was doing during the course of her address, can never be tiring. The President's office believes it might be the case that these leaders have not acquainted themselves with the idiom and discourse in

Indian languages such as Hindi, and thus formed a wrong impression. In any case, such comments are in poor taste, unfortunate and entirely avoidable," it added. This comes after in reaction to President Murmu's address to the joint session of the Parliament, Sonia Gandhi said, "The President was getting very tired by the end...She could hardly speak, poor thing."

'Insult by royal family': PM

CONTINUED FROM P1

of Congress has insulted the President. They should at the earliest tender apology to the President and our poor brothers and sisters and those belonging to SC, ST and OBC communities, he said. The post had video clip of PM's speech at Dwarka rally.

In his speech, PM Modi said "AAPda and Congress represent height of arrogance" and the "royal family of Congress showed its arrogance again today".

"Droupadi Murmuji has come here from a tribal family. Her mother tongue is not Hindi, it is Odia. She inspired the Parliament today in a wonderful way, gave a speech. But the royal family of Congress has started insulting her. A member of the royal family said that the tribal daughter gave a boring speech. Another member went one step further and called the President a poor thing. She called the president poor and a thing and tired. They find the speech of a tribal daughter boring. This is an insult to the 10 crore tribal brothers and sisters of the country. This is an insult to every poor person of the country," he said.

PM Modi said the President's speech talked of the progress being made the country and about farmers' welfare.

"They (Congress leaders) like abusing people, defaming India in foreign countries and talking about urban Naxals," he said.

Several other BJP leaders also criticised Sonia Gandhi's remarks.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra slammed BJP leaders for politicising Sonia Gandhi's remarks.

"My mother is a 70-80 years old lady, she has simply said that 'the President read such a long speech and she must have been tired, poor thing'...she fully respects (President of India). I think it is very unfortunate that this kind of thing is twisted by the media. They both are two respected people and older than us...she means no disrespect. BJP should first apologise for pushing (the country) into a gorge," she said.

In his speech, PM Modi alleged that the ruling AAP has silently joined hands with Congress and urged Delhi voters to be cautious. "Out of fear of losing, these two egoists have joined hands," he said.

He said Delhi needs a "double-engine" government and said people of the national capital have decided that AAP will be ousted and BJP government will be formed.

"Seeing the growing anger of Delhi's people towards AAP-da, the party has started openly lying. AAP-da's dislike for Haryana is clear, and their actions reflect this. They have blamed Haryana's farmers whenever Delhi faces pollution problems. Now, they are accusing Haryana of polluting the Yamuna River...They have no shame left...They can stoop to any level to prove their lies," he said. He also slammed the AAP government for not tabling CAG reports.

"In the very first session of the Assembly, the CAG report will be presented. This report will reveal AAP-da's scams, which is why they are trying to hide it...I have seen the enthusiasm of the people of Delhi and we can also see their hatred towards the AAP-da...These people only spread false rumours," he said. PM Modi said he wants to serve people of Delhi and urged residents to vote in large numbers on February 5.

'Pace of work tripled in govt's third term': Prez Murmu

CONTINUED FROM P1

The address also outlines the views of the government on key issues and also gives out a broad roadmap for the future.

At the outset, Murmu condoled the deaths of pilgrims at the Kumbh congregation at Prayagraj on Mauni Amavasya on Wednesday when millions of faithful had gathered from all over the country to bathe at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati.

She also paid tributes to former prime minister Manmohan Singh, who passed away recently.

Murmu listed out the achievements of the government including building houses for three crore additional families, welfare of tribals, issuing property cards for the rural folks, building rural roads and extending the health insurance scheme to six crore citizens above the age of 70 years.

"The government has also made swift progress on critical issues like 'One Nation-One Election' and the 'Waqf Act Amendment'," she said.

She said India was setting an example for the world by emerging as a pillar of economic, social, and political stability in an environment of global instability.

Murmu said the world has placed its "trust" in India's "strength, policy, and intent".

In this context, she especially mentioned key groupings such as Quad, BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and G20.

The President said the government has taken "historic" initiatives to ensure defence of India's borders and internal security and "highly encouraging results" were seen in achieving self-reliance, especially in the defence sector.

She lauded the Indian Space Research Organisation for launching 100 missions from the spaceport at Sriharikota and asserted that the day was not far when an Indian citizen will travel to space aboard the indigenously developed Gaganyaan spacecraft.

"My government has worked with strong determination to lift the economy out of a state of policy paralysis. Despite global concerns such as the COVID-19 pandemic, its aftermath, and war-related uncertainties,

the Indian economy has demonstrated remarkable stability and resilience, proving its strength," she said.

The President said the government has also implemented several significant measures to promote Ease of Doing Business and introduced the GST system with the spirit of 'One Nation, One Tax' which has been benefiting all states across the country.

Noting that development is truly meaningful when its benefits reach the person standing at the last rung of society, the President said initiatives like the construction of 12 crore toilets under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, 10 crore free LPG connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, ration for 80 crore needy citizens, the Saubhagya Yojana, and the Jal Jeevan Mission have given poor the confidence that they can live with dignity.

"When poor people are provided with a dignified life, it instills a sense of empowerment that helps them fight poverty. Due to such efforts, 25 crore people have overcome poverty and are moving forward in life. They have formed a Neo Middle Class, a group that is infusing new energy into India's growth journey," she said.

Murmu said digital fraud, cybercrime and emerging technologies such as deep fakes pose challenges to India's social, economic, and national security.

She asserted that the government has consistently worked on policies of multi-dimensional and inclusive development.

"Therefore, while emphasising on physical infrastructure, equal efforts have also been made by my government for a social infrastructure revolution," she said.

Noting that the government in the past ten years has written new chapters of progress, one of which is the golden milestone of India's digital revolution, the President said today, India has emerged as a major global player in the field of digital technology.

"The launch of 5G services in India, alongside other leading nations, stands as a significant milestone in this journey. India's UPI technology has also impressed many developed countries. More than 50 per cent of the world's real-time digital transactions now take place in India.

Economic Survey pegs growth at 6.3-6.8%

CONTINUED FROM P1

weakest since the pandemic - and 8.2 per cent in the past 2023-24 financial year.

"Rural demand backed by a rebound in agricultural production, an anticipated easing of food inflation and a stable macro-economic environment provide an upside to near-term growth," said Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran, who along with his

team in the finance ministry, authored the report.

The risks to India's economic prospects next year are balanced, he added.

Geopolitical and trade uncertainties, along with possible commodity price shocks, pose headwinds to the economy, said Nageswaran, who had last year predicted a 6.5-7 per cent GDP growth in the 2024-25 fiscal.

The survey said India needs to

grow at nearly 8 per cent over the next decade or two, and the investment rate must rise to 35 per cent of GDP from the current 31 per cent to meet the longer-term economic goal of a developed nation by 2047.

The IMF projects India to be a USD 5 trillion economy by FY28 and USD 6.3 trillion by FY30, with an annual nominal growth rate of 10.2 per cent in USD terms.

Calling for reinvigorating the

Rift in Haryana cabinet deepens

CONTINUED FROM P1

strike, drawing parallels with farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dalleval's protest.

"I have not taken anything from the rest of Haryana, but the people of Ambala Cantonment have elected me seven times. If their work is not done, I will be forced to sit on a fast unto death," Vij stated.

The veteran leader also made a sensational claim that a "big leader" within the party had attempted to engineer his defeat in the previous assembly elections. Furthermore, he alleged that there was even an attempt to eliminate him.

Vij said he had requested the transfer of officials who had worked against him during the elections, but despite 100 days passing, no action had been taken.

"Now, I am fully convinced that a senior leader is behind this," he remarked.

The rift between Vij and Saini has been escalating over the past few months, with the former repeatedly voicing his grievances.

His latest outburst signals growing unrest within the BJP-led government in Haryana, raising concerns about internal divisions ahead of crucial political events in the state.

However, taking note of his repeated outburst in the media the government has transferred Ambala Deputy Commissioner on Friday and Ajay Singh Tomar has been appointed as deputy commissioner of Ambala as Ambala Deputy Commissioner Parth Gupta has been shifted to Yamunanagar.

internal engines of growth by enhancing economic freedom through deregulation, the report called for states to reduce the cost of compliance by liberalising standards and controls on businesses as well as cutting tariffs and feeds.

"Systematic deregulation is as critical, if not more, as investments in infrastructure and incentives to encourage innovation and create a viable Mittelstand i.e. India's SME sector," it added.

KARNATAKA ORDERS TO IMPLEMENT SC DIRECTIVE 'RIGHT TO DIE' WITH DIGNITY

Move aims to benefit terminally ill patients with no hope of recovery or those in a persistent vegetative state

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

The Karnataka Health Department has passed a historic order to implement the Supreme Court's directive regarding patients' "Right to Die" with dignity. This move aims to benefit terminally ill patients with no hope of recovery or those in a persistent vegetative state, allowing for the withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment when no longer beneficial.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Karnataka minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said, "My Karnataka Health Department, @DHFVKA (Department of Health and Family Welfare Services - Govt. of Karnataka), passes a historic order to implement the Supreme Court's directive for a patient's Right to Die with dignity. This will immensely benefit those who are terminally ill with no hope of recovery, or are in a persistent vegetative state, and where the patient no longer benefits from life-sustaining treatment."

'KARNATAKA FOR MORE JUST SOCIETY'

■ "My Karnataka Health Department, @DHFVKA (Department of Health and Family Welfare Services - Govt. of Karnataka), passes a historic order to implement the Supreme Court's directive for a patient's Right to Die with dignity.

■ "We have also come out with an Advance Medical Directive (AMD), or a living will, in which a patient can record their wishes about their medical treatment in the future. This important step will bring great relief and a dignified sense of closure to many families and individuals."

■ "Karnataka is a progressive state and we are always at the forefront in upholding liberal and equitable values for a more just society," he said.



"We have also come out with an Advance Medical Directive (AMD), or a living will, in which a patient can record their wishes about their medical treatment in the future. This important step will bring great relief and a dignified sense of closure to many families and individuals. Karnataka is a progressive state and we are always at the forefront in

upholding liberal and equitable values for a more just society," he said.

Earlier, Health and Family Welfare Department Principal Secretary to Government Harish Gupta said, "Supreme Court of India has recognised that the right to life under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution encompasses the right to die with dignity. To enable a digni-

fied death, it has been held that life-sustaining treatment may be withheld or withdrawn (WLST) where the patient is terminally ill with no hope of recovery or is in a persistent vegetative state, and where the patient no longer benefits from life-sustaining treatment."

It has laid down guidelines to govern WLST. Additionally, the Supreme Court has

recognised advance medical directives (AMDs) and laid down a procedure for executing and implementing them.

"Supreme Court has held that if a patient is terminally ill and is undergoing prolonged medical treatment with no hope of recovery and cure of the ailment, and does not have decision-making capacity, then WLST may be appropriate, in accordance with the prescribed procedure. This may also be the case for those who are in a persistent vegetative state and when certain kinds of medical treatment may no longer provide any reasonable possibility of benefit, and may instead, have a greater potential to cause harm to the patient," Principal Secretary to Government stated. The order stated that the procedure for WLST laid down by the Supreme Court requires approval by the treating doctor.

The hospital where the patient is being treated must also set up the Primary and Secondary Medical Boards, comprising three registered medical practitioners each.

Two Bangladeshi nationals held for illegal stay in Mumbai

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Mumbai's Versova police arrested two Bangladeshi citizens for illegally entering India and residing in Mumbai, officials said on Friday. Fake documents were also recovered from them.

Police have taken them into custody and initiated further investigation into their activities and how they managed to acquire the forged documents.

Earlier on Thursday, the Anti-Human Trafficking Cell of Thane Police arrested four women of Bangladeshi origin for illegally residing in the Manor Pada area of Thane West. The arrested individuals have been identified as Shazida Khatoun (38), Shalina Mulla (50), Ratna Khatoun (40), and Reshma Dhali (40).

36-year-old dies of GBS in Pune as cases rise to 130 in Maha

TDG NETWORK
PUNE

A 36-year-old male from Pimpelgurav, who worked as an Ola-Uber driver, was admitted to Yashwantrao Chavan Hospital on January 21 due to suspected Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS).

The patient's health deteriorated, and he passed away on January 30, 2025, according to a press note issued by the health department of Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation on Friday.

As per a Press statement, "A post-mortem examination conducted by a committee at Yashwantrao Chavan Friendship Hospital concluded that the primary cause of death was trauma to the respiratory system caused by pneumonia and subsequent death."

"The deceased was also diagnosed with Guillain-Barre Syndrome. A nerve conduction test was performed on January 22," said the statement.

Further, it was stated that the committee cited the following reasons for the death: Immediate cause of death: Severe acute respiratory distress syndrome. Antecedent cause of death: Bilateral pneumonia. Other significant condition: Guillain-Barre Syndrome."

As per the Maharashtra State Health Department, a total of 130 suspected cases



of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) have been identified till January 30 and 3 people have succumbed to the disease.

Out of these, 73 patients have been confirmed as having GBS. 25 patients are from Pune Municipal Corporation, 74 from newly added villages in the PMC area, 13 from Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, 9 from Pune Rural, and 9 from other districts. Among the affected individuals, 20 are currently on ventilator support.

The Union Health Ministry has deputed a high-level multi-disciplinary team to Pune to aid state authorities in instituting interventions and managing the spurt in suspected and confirmed cases of Guillain Barre Syndrome (GBS) in the city.

The central team sent to Maharashtra comprises seven experts from the National

Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Delhi, NIMHANS Bengaluru, Regional Office of Health & Family Welfare and National Institute for Virology (NIV), Pune. Three experts from NIV, Pune were already supporting the local authorities.

The team is working closely with the state health departments and taking stock of the on-ground situation to recommend necessary public health interventions. The central team has been tasked with monitoring the situation and coordinating with the state. The water samples from different parts of the city have been sent for chemical and biological analysis to the Public Health Laboratory. Guillain-Barre syndrome is a condition where the immune system attacks the nerves, potentially causing weakness, numbness, or paralysis.

Karnataka Lokayukta raids many locations in Bengaluru, 4 other cities

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

The Karnataka Lokayukta has conducted raids in various locations in Bengaluru, Belagavi, Chitradurga, Raichur, and Bagalkote in seven different cases.

The raids were led by Belagavi Lokayuktha SP Hanamantaray and took place in three locations in Belagavi district: Anigol, Harugeri, and Bellad Bagewadi.

Among the properties raided were the residences of Sachin Manded, the Sub-Registrar of Belagavi North Zone, and Sanjay Durgannavar, a veterinary doctor from Raibag Taluk. Both officials are under investigation for



allegedly accumulating assets beyond their known sources of income. Manded is under scrutiny over the allegations of illegal wealth accumulation. Similarly, the residence of Sanjay Annappa Durgannavar, a veterinary inspector in the Veterinary Department, was raided in Raibag Taluk. Lokayukta officials have been verifying documents at both of the raided residences, attempting to un-

cover evidence of corruption. Further details regarding the raids are awaited.

Meanwhile, after the Enforcement Directorate's action in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam against Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, state BJP President BY Vijayendra termed it as a "major victory" and said that the ED investigation has exposed "significant corruption" in-

volving the Chief Minister.

Notably, ED has attached 142 immovable properties of a market value of Rs 300 crore in connection with the MUDA case against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and others.

ED's Bangalore Zonal Office attached these properties under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002. As per the ED, these properties are registered in the name of various individuals who are working as real estate businessmen and agents.

ED initiated the investigation on the basis of a First Information Report registered by the Lokayukta Police, Mysore.

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

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TDG NETWORK
BULDHANA

In a very rare incident, a pregnant woman's sonography revealed that a baby was discovered inside the stomach of an unborn child in the Buldhana district of Maharashtra.

This is a case of a 'fetus in fetu', a condition where a parasitic twin develops inside its identical twin. It's characterized by a mass in the abdomen that resembles a fetus.

The case has been detected at a government hospital when a nine-month pregnant 32-year-old woman underwent a sonography in the hospital.

This detection was missed

in earlier sonographies due to the rarity of the case, said Dr Prasad Aggarwal, Gynecologist and Sonography Specialist at the District Women's Hospital in Buldhana.

"Two days ago, a 32-year-old woman came here for a regular checkup. She is 9 months pregnant. While doing sonography, I found that her unborn child was also carrying a child. We missed this in her earlier sonographies since this is the rarest of rare conditions," he said.

The condition is so rare that the total number of such cases in the world is only 100-200 while India hardly reports 10-15 such cases, the doctor said.

The woman has been re-

ferred to Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar for treatment, the doctor added. "After doing a detailed study and discussing it with other doctors, it was confirmed. The embryo inside her unborn child is not growing. She has been referred to Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar for treatment. There have been 100-200 of such cases in the world which came to light only after the birth of the child... In India, there are hardly 10-15 such cases..." "Fetus in fetu" is a very rare medical condition where a malformed fetus develops inside the body of its twin. It's considered a parasitic twin where the "parasitic" fetus grows inside the body of the "host" twin.

SC rejects plea for 'Urs' at demolished Dargah site in Gir Somnath

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea seeking permission to conduct a religious procession (Urs) between February 1-3 at the site of a demolished Dargah said to be located at Gujarat's Gir Somnath.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih took into consideration the submission of Gujarat authorities that the land belonged to the government and unauthorised constructions, including the temples, were demolished.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the



Gujarat authorities, stated unauthorised constructions, including temples on the land belonging to the government, were demolished. He said no activities, including Hindu religious rituals, were allowed on the

land which was encroached upon earlier.

The petitioner's counsel said that the "Urs" festival was held at the site of the razed Dargah for many years but authorities on January 30 denied permission.

The counsel further said it was a structure made before 1299 AD. To this bench asked, "Is there a structure now?"

The counsel mentioned that the structure was demolished and contended it was a protected monument.

"Whatever was unauthorised, is demolished. This is undisputedly a government land," the Solicitor General

said, adding that the demolition drive applied to all religions. The apex court is seized of petitions, including a contempt petition, against the Gujarat authorities for allegedly demolishing residential and religious structures in Gir Somnath district without its prior nod. The petition was filed against a Gujarat High Court order by which a status quo on demolitions of Muslim religious structures was declined.

On September 28, 2024, a demolition drive was carried out to reportedly clear encroachments on public lands near Gujarat's Somnath temple.

Kerala Police arrests 27 illegal Bangladeshis in Kochi

TDG NETWORK
ERNAKULAM

In a crackdown on illegal immigrants, Kerala Police arrested 27 Bangladeshi nationals residing illegally in Kochi on Friday.

According to police, the raid was conducted by the joint operation of the police and the Anti-Terrorism Squad on Thursday. In all, 54 people were taken into custody and were interrogated in detail.

District Police Chief, Ernakulam Rural, Vaibhav Saxena said, "Yesterday night, as part of a special drive in North Paravoor Police Station limits in Ernakulam Rural district, a raid was conducted jointly by police and Anti-Terror-

Recent reports indicate that Bangladeshi immigrants have been detained in several locations.

ism Squad. As a part of that raid, 54 people were taken into custody from one lodge. They were brought to the police station and interrogated in detail. Finally, we could understand that 27 out of them were Bangladeshis."

He further said that arrested individuals hold Bangladeshi ID cards, birth

certificates and passports. He informed that an FIR had been registered against them.

"They had Bangladeshi ID cards and birth certificates. Two of them were also having passports. We are registering FIR under sections 13 and 14 of the Foreigners Registration Act. Further registration will be held fast and we will try to identify who has helped them, through which agency and agent help was given to them - we will identify all of them."

Recent reports indicate that Bangladeshi immigrants have been detained in several locations.

Earlier on Friday, Mumbai's Versova Police arrested

two Bangladeshi citizens for illegally entering India and residing in Mumbai, officials said. Fake documents were also recovered from them.

Police have taken them into custody and initiated further investigation into their activities and how they managed to acquire the forged documents in underway.

Bangladeshi immigrants have illegally been staying in numerous places across India. In a most unexpected event, Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan survived a major stab attack by an intruder late at night in his Mumbai home; the attacker was identified as a Bangladeshi national.

BJP front-runner in MLC polls in Telangana, says party leader NV Subhash

TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

BJP leader NV Subhash on Thursday asserted that the party is prepared for the upcoming MLC and local body elections and emphasised that the BJP is the front-runner in the race as compared to other political parties.

Speaking about the up-

coming MLC Elections, BJP leader NV Subhash said, "We announced the MLC candidates before the notification came. In the local body elections also, we are geared up. We had a review meeting also. This shows that the BJP is the front-runner when compared to other political parties."

The BJP leader further

criticised the Telangana government's pre-election schemes, labelling them as a failure.

He pointed to Telangana Legislative Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar's statement that it is not feasible to implement these schemes, citing financial constraints.

NV Subhash accused the BRS party of exacerbating



the state's financial crisis and claimed that since Congress took power, it has sought excuses to eliminate beneficiaries.

"The schemes announced by the Telangana government before coming to power have been absolute failure. Telangana Legislative Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar very clearly said that it is

not possible to implement these schemes. We should really have done the homework looking at the budget and financial constraints of the state because the BRS party had put up a big "dent" in Telangana's financial crisis," he said.

Adding further, he said, "Since the Congress has come to power, they are finding some kind of an

excuse to eliminate the beneficiaries. This is very clear that the Speaker Gaddam Prasad said that these show the financial implications and the failure of the Congress party."

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has decided to hold MLC elections in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on February 27 from 8 am to 4 pm while

the counting will be conducted on March 3.

The last date for filing nominations is February 10 while the last date of withdrawal of nominations is February 13, according to ECI.

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) concerning these elections will come into force with immediate effect in the constituencies.

BIG BLOW TO AAP, 7 MLAs QUIT

Madan Lal, Bhavna Gaur, Naresh Yadav, Rohit Mehraulia, Pawan Sharma, BS Joon, and Rajesh Rishi resigned.

TG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a setback to the AAP, seven of its outgoing MLAs resigned from the party on Friday, with only five days to go for the Delhi Assembly polls. Sources said these MLAs were disgruntled after being denied tickets for the February 5 polls and were in touch with other parties.

Most of the MLAs shared their resignation letters on social media and slammed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over corruption and other issues.

Madan Lal, the outgoing MLA from Kasturba Nagar, claimed that he and six other AAP legislators have quit the party's primary membership. He said they have also sent their resignation letters to Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel.

Besides Lal, the AAP MLAs who have resigned are Bhavna Gaur (Palam), Naresh Yadav (Mehrauli), Rohit Mehraulia (Trilokpuri), Pawan Sharma (Adarsh Nagar), BS Joon (Bijwasan) and Rajesh Rishi (Janakpuri).

"Seven AAP MLAs were anguished over being given a cold shoulder by the party and its leaders, despite honestly working for years. We

AAP MLAS QUIT

- AAP MLAs were upset after being dropped from AAP's candidate list for the February 5 polls.
- Many accused AAP of corruption and favoritism in their resignation letters.
- Naresh Yadav was replaced due to his 2016 Quran desecration case conviction.
- The party claimed an internal survey found them unresponsive to public issues.
- The resignations come just days before the Delhi polls, where AAP



will soon share our future strategy," Lal told PTI.

In her resignation letter addressed to party supremo Arvind Kejriwal, Gaur said, "I hereby resign from the primary membership of the Aam Aadmi Party as I have lost faith in you and the party." She is a two-time MLA from Palam.

Slamming these MLAs, AAP's national spokesperson Reena Gupta said a survey conducted by the party had revealed that all of them were unavailable to the public in their respective constituencies and that is why they were denied poll tickets.

"We did not give them tick-

ets because of the unfavourable results of the survey. The fact that they are now attending another party after being refused tickets is not a huge deal. It is a part of politics," Gupta said.

The AAP has replaced 16 of its incumbent MLAs with new faces for the February 5 polls.

Yadav was initially given a ticket by the AAP from Mehrauli but was replaced by Mahender Chaudhary in December over his conviction in a 2016 case of desecration of the Quran by a Punjab court. Yadav has been the Mehrauli MLA since 2015.

Mehraulia, the AAP MLA

from the Trilokpuri reserved seat, also shared his resignation letter on X.

"My relationship with such fake and opportunist people who only need a photo of Baba Saheb (Ambedkar), not his ideology, ends today. I resign from the primary membership of the AAP and all other posts," he said in a post on the microblogging platform.

Janakpuri MLA Rajesh Rishi was also among those who quit the Kejriwal-led party.

"Born out of the Anna Hazare movement and formed by Arvind Kejriwal to ensure a corruption-free Delhi, the AAP has become corrupt now, as a result of which I am

resigning with a heavy heart from the primary membership and all other posts of the party," Rishi said on X.

The Delhi election is being seen as a referendum on the AAP's governance model and its leader, Kejriwal.

As the AAP battles to retain its stronghold for a third consecutive term, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is aiming for a comeback to power in the national capital after a gap of more than 25 years.

Rituraj Jha, the Kirari MLA who has also been denied a poll ticket this time by the AAP, slammed those who have quit the party, saying history will never forgive them.

Jha said Kejriwal gave him

AAP 'stalling Delhi's growth', using city as its 'political ATM': PM Modi

TG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday launched a sharp attack on the Aam Aadmi Party, accusing it of stalling Delhi's development while using the national capital's resources for its political gains.

He urged people to elect a "double-engine government" to ensure the city's progress.

Speaking at a public rally in Dwarka, Modi showcased the recently inaugurated Yashbhoomi convention



Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves to the gathering during a public rally for the Delhi Assembly Elections, at DDA Ground, Dwarka in New Delhi on Friday. Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Virendra Sachdeva and others are also seen. ANI

Taking a swipe at AAP, the prime minister alleged that the party has turned Delhi into a "political ATM" to fund its ambitions in other states. "AAP-da (AAP disaster) has looted Delhi's money and is using it to expand its politics elsewhere. They are taking money out of Delhi's pockets," he said, urging voters to free the city from its rule.

Modi accused AAP of engaging in constant fights instead of focusing on governance.

"Over the past years, they have only been fighting — with Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and with the Centre. If

such people continue to rule Delhi, the city will keep lagging behind," he warned.

Modi assured the people that a BJP government in Delhi would take tough action against corruption. "As soon as the BJP forms government here, there will be a stricter crackdown on AAP-da's corruption," he said, adding that the incumbent party had been trying to suppress a damning Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report.

"In the first session of the Vidhan Sabha itself, we will table the CAG report which contains details of AAP-da's scams," Modi promised.

SC asks Centre, Delhi govt stand over plea to amend OBC certificate rules

TG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday sought replies from the Centre and the Delhi government on a plea seeking directions to amend rules for issuing OBC certificates to children of single mothers. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih passed the order on a plea filed by a Delhi-based woman.

The plea said as per the guidelines issued by the re-

spondent authorities, an OBC certificate couldn't be granted on the basis of an OBC certificate of a single mother and an applicant had to produce such a certificate from the paternal side only.

The petitioner claimed such an action by the respondents was clearly against the Constitutional provisions.

"The inaction on the part of respondents to issue OBC certificates to children of single mother on the basis of the Other Backward Class certificate

of their single mother are also in contravention of the rights of the children who belong to the Other Backward Class," said the plea, filed through advocate Vipin Kumar.

The plea said it was also violative of the provision of the Constitution as the children of a single mother belonging to the SC or ST category were granted caste certificates on the basis of her certificate.

The plea said insistence on the father's OBC certificate or the paternal side by the au-

thorities for issuing OBC certificates to children of single mothers was totally against the rights of children brought up by her.

The plea referred to the Delhi government's guidelines for issuance of OBC certificate.

It said as per the guidelines, any person residing in Delhi and wanting to apply for an OBC certificate, had to produce an OBC certificate of any paternal blood relative which included father, grandfather or uncle.

Speeding car crashes into office of independent candidate in Mundka

TG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

An Independent candidate and an uncle of jailed gangster Neeraj Bawana was injured after a speeding car crashed into his office in outer Delhi's Mundka, police said.

The incident, caught on CCTV, showed the vehicle swerving to avoid a bike before ploughing into the office of Rambir Shokeen, who is a maternal uncle of

gangster Bawana. Shokeen has accused his political opponents of orchestrating the attack, while authorities have launched an investigation.

Delhi Police in a statement said that a PCR call was received at Nihal Vihar Police Station at 11.23 am.

According to police, the crash involved a class 12 boy from Nilothi village who was on his way in a borrowed car to attend a farewell party at his school along with his uncle. "He mistakenly

pressed the accelerator of the car while saving a motorcycle and in panic turned the steering. The car rammed into Rambir Shokeen's office, which is right outside his house," police said in the statement.

Shokeen, who was inside the office at the time, suffered an injury in his leg, they said, adding, it was an accident and not a deliberate assault.

Police said the driver swerved hard to avoid a colli-

sion with a motorcycle, causing the accident.

Shokeen is a former Independent MLA from Mundka Assembly constituency.

He was booked in a case filed under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, or MCOCA, in 2015, after the unearthing of an AK-47 from a plot belonging to him.

He escaped police custody in 2018 while being taken to a city hospital and was re-arrested in 2020.

BJP files complaint against Kejriwal over Delhi Sports University corruption

TG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Parvesh Verma on Friday filed a complaint with the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) against Aam Aadmi Party leader and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, alleging corruption concerning Delhi Sports University (DSU).

Verma, who is contesting Delhi polls from the New Delhi seat against Kejriwal, in his complaint alleged "corrupt misappropriation of public funds" through "the abuse of official positions to gain wrongful benefits".

The complaint has been filed with the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) of the Delhi government.

Verma's advocate, Vivek Garg, told ANI that this



was "a huge fraud" with the students of Delhi and a complaint has been filed with the ACB on behalf of the BJP candidate.

"This is a huge fraud where Arvind Kejriwal and his ministers have embezzled Rs 48 crore on paper for which our team of lawyers have filed a complaint with the Anti-Corruption Branch on behalf of Parvesh Verma... the location he (Kejriwal) has mentioned does

not even have a brick. This is a huge fraud with the students of Delhi..." Garg said.

"Such expenditure requires the approval of the Cabinet, which includes the Finance Minister and the Education Minister and so they are all involved in this case... DCP Madam has assured us that there will be a fair investigation, and a high-level investigation of the case will start immediately... We have filed a complaint with RTI evidence..." he added.

Verma had earlier filed a formal complaint with the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) against Kejriwal, a former Delhi Chief Minister, and other officials for alleged corruption in the installation of CCTV cameras in the New Delhi Assembly Constituency.

Anurag accuses AAP of large-scale corruption, misgovernance in Delhi

TG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Senior BJP leader Anurag Thakur on Friday accused the ruling AAP of large-scale corruption and misgovernance in Delhi. Addressing poll rallies in the Mustafabad and the Ghonda constituencies, Thakur alleged that former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's government had given AAP leaders a "free hand to loot Delhi".

He claimed that multiple scams had marred the AAP government's tenure, pointing to alleged irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board, classroom construction projects, liquor policy, Delhi Transport Corporation, and 'hawala' transactions.

'Family saved 50K per month due to AAP scheme'

TG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Friday, claimed that a family in Delhi with 18 members saved 50 thousand rupees per month by availing different schemes being offered by the AAP government in the national capital.

Kejriwal further highlighted the major schemes of Delhi government including free electricity, free education, free treatment, and free bus rides for women. Further, mentioning AAP's 'Budget' Patra campaign launched today, Kejriwal further said, "AAP government's initiatives provide a monthly benefit of Rs 25,000 to every Delhi family, with new schemes adding another Rs 10,000 in savings."

"Today we have Roshan ji's with us his family saves Rs



Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convener Arvind Kejriwal addresses a press conference, at party HQ in New Delhi on Friday. Party MP Sanjay Singh is also present. ANI

50,200 per month valing different schemes being offered by the AAP government. If the people of Delhi press the broom button, they will save thousands of rupees. But, if by mistake, they press the lotus button, they will lose thousands of rupees," he added.

He also highlighted the welfare schemes and measures

implemented to benefit the people of Delhi by the AAP.

"Our free electricity scheme saves Rs 4,000-Rs 5,000 monthly, free water Rs 2,500, free bus travel Rs 2,500, free education Rs 10,000, and mohalla clinics and hospitals contribute another Rs 5,000 in savings," he stated. Hitting out at the BJP, he claimed that if it comes to

power all the schemes initiated by AAP would be discontinued.

"The BJP has declared that free education, mohalla clinics, and free bus travel will be discontinued if they come to power," he added. Kejriwal also unveiled AAP's scheme, expected to benefit all households, including - Rs 2,100 for women, Free bus travel for students, and free medical treatment for senior citizens.

"These schemes will further add Rs 8,000-Rs 10,000 in monthly savings," he claimed. Kejriwal announced that AAP workers would visit households to fill out the AAP 'Bachat Patra', informing residents about the financial benefits they receive from AAP's governance. Delhi will go for polls in a single phase on February 5, while the counting of votes will take place on February 8.

Voter-friendly measures in place for smooth polling on Feb 5

TG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Around 1.56 crore voters are set to exercise their electoral franchise in the Delhi Assembly election on February 5 as voter-friendly measures have been put in place for the smooth polling process, Chief Electoral Officer R. Alice Vaz said. To facilitate voting, 13,766 polling stations have been set up across 2,969 polling premises. Of these, 733 polling stations are designated for persons with disabilities, Vaz said.

Around 1.56 crore voters, including 83.76 lakh men, 72.36 lakh women, and 1,267 individuals from the third gender will cast their ballot on February 5.

The Delhi Election Office has introduced several voter-friendly measures to ensure a smooth polling process. These include ramps, wheelchairs, medical teams, cr che services, themed polling stations, a queue management mobile application and a home voting option for senior citizens and persons with disabilities, she said.

Vaz emphasised that over 1 lakh polling personnel have been deployed, and all polling stations will have essential amenities under the Assured Minimum Facility (AMF) policy. These include waiting areas, drinking water, toilets, ramps, and wheelchairs. Paramedical staff with basic medical kits will also be stationed at polling centres.

To enhance voter experience, 210 polling stations will be set up as Theme-Based Model Polling Stations with additional facilities, she said.



Moreover, 70 polling stations -- one in each assembly constituency -- will be fully managed by women staff. Another 70 polling stations

will be operated entirely by persons with disabilities to promote inclusivity and an equal number of youth-centric polling stations will be

set up to encourage young voters, the CEO said.

The "Vote From Home" initiative will allow 6,488 senior citizens aged 85 and above, along with 1,051 persons with disabilities, to cast their votes from home, ensuring accessibility for all eligible voters, she stated.

"To help voters locate their polling stations, a colour-coded system will be used, with details mentioned on the Voter Information Slip. Additionally, 4,217 wheelchairs will be made available for easy mobility," said Vaz.

Addressing Model Code of Conduct (MCC) violations, Vaz stated that the vIGIL app has received 5,244 complaints, with the highest number from North District (1,049) and the lowest from Shahdara (136). Authorities have maintained an average response time of 35 minutes.

For the first time in India, a Queue Management System (QMS) application and webpage will enable voters to check real-time crowd levels at polling centres, helping them plan their visit. The app, Delhi Election 2025 QMS, is available

on the Google Play Store, she mentioned.

"We are also arranging Dummy/Braille ballot paper, Braille EPIC cards, Braille VAG. 120 nos of SLI are also deployed," Vaz said.

She further shared that to ensure security during polling, 220 companies of forces, 19,000 home guards, and 35,626 Delhi Police personnel will be deployed. Additionally, 21,584 Ballot Units, 20,692 Control Units, and 18,943 VVPATs have been prepared including Dummy/Braille ballot paper, she said.

KEJRIWAL CAME IN SMALL CAR BUT ENDED UP IN 'SHEESH MAHAL': RAHUL

Rahul blamed Kejriwal for the liquor scam and failure to protect Dalits and minorities.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday hit out at AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, accusing him of lying and making false promises and said that the man who came in a small car promising to change politics ended up in the "sheesh mahal" parking lot. Launching a stinging attack on the former Delhi chief minister, Gandhi alleged that he did nothing for the people of the national capital in the past 10 years.

The former Congress chief also slammed the BJP, accusing it of spreading hatred and violence in society and said it is only the Congress that talks of giving "bhaagidaari" (share) and equal rights to all irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

Gandhi showed a picture of 'Team Kejriwal', say-

NDA MPs to boost BJP's poll campaign

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The BJP is marshalling the MPs of the National Democratic Alliance to ramp up its campaign for the Delhi Assembly polls with party president J P Nadda urging them on Friday to embark on an intensive outreach drive in areas assigned to them.

Sources said groups comprising two MPs have been assigned a "mandal" each in Delhi, and they will start a micro-level campaign from Saturday till the last day of electioneering on February 3. Elections to the 70-member Assembly will be held on February 5.

GANDHI ATTACKS KEJRIWAL

- Gandhi compared Kejriwal's initial promises to his current leadership, calling it deceptive.
- Rahul criticized BJP for spreading hate, positioning Congress as a party for equality and unity.
- Gandhi claimed Kejriwal undid Sheila Dikshit's work and worsened pollution and corruption in Delhi.
- Rahul pledged a caste survey to ensure proper representation and rights for backward classes, Dalits, minorities, and tribals.
- Gandhi mocked Nirmala Sitharaman, claiming poor representation of OBCs, Dalits, and minorities in budget decisions.



ing none of his 'Navratans' (nine gems) are from the OBCs, minorities, Dalits and tribals. All belong to the upper castes, he said.

"Kejriwal had claimed to bring a change in Delhi politics. But the biggest ever corruption -- liquor scam -- was done by Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia. Five years

ago, he said that he would take a dip in Yamuna and drink its water. Forget about Yamuna water, you should drink the water made available to jhuggis here," he said.

"Your (Kejriwal's) words are hollow. He said he will protect the Dalits and minorities but I want to ask

you who is standing with you? The Congress or Kejriwal?" the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha asked at the rally.

Asserting that the Delhi Assembly election was not an "opportunistic battle" for his party, Gandhi said the Congress protects the Constitution and Ambedkar's

thoughts.

"The truth is that when Kejriwal came, he wanted to do a new type of politics. He climbed an electric pole in a small car. He came in a Wagon-R car and went straight in the 'sheesh mahal' parking lot," Gandhi alleged.

The political rivals of AAP are accusing it of corruption by referring to the exorbitant cost incurred in the renovation of the official bungalow where Kejriwal resided when he was the Delhi chief minister.

Seeking to strike an emotional chord with the people in Madipur, Gandhi said, "My ties with you are not 10 years old. This is a relation of love and not of politics. The way I see and love my sister and mother, I see you the same way and I cannot lie before you."

Kejriwal blames Haryana CM for high ammonia in Yamuna, writes to EC

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal submitted his reply to the Election Commission (EC) on Friday regarding his allegation that the BJP government in Haryana has mixed "poison" in the Yamuna water supplied to Delhi, saying his remarks were in context



national capital.

Accompanied by Delhi and Punjab chief ministers Atishi and Bhagwant Mann, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor submitted his reply to EC officials over the poll panel's notice to him in the matter. The AAP leaders also carried three bottles of ammonia-mixed water for the election commissioners to drive home their point.

In his reply, Kejriwal said the "poison" found mixed with the Yamuna water was "ammonia".

He referred to Delhi Jal Board (DJB) officials for de-

tails like evidence of mixing poison and its methodology.

Kejriwal told reporters on January 27 that the "BJP government in Haryana has mixed poison in the water supplied to Delhi through the Yamuna. Thanks to DJB engineers, who caught it and stopped the water, it did not enter Delhi. If that water got mixed with drinking water, a mass genocide would have happened".

The AAP supremo was issued a notice by the EC over the matter on a complaint from the BJP. In response to a second notice, Kejriwal submitted his reply, saying "categorically and explicitly" that his alleged statement was made in reference to the "unprecedented and dangerously-high" levels of ammonia in the raw water being supplied to Delhi from Haryana. "Any other inference of my statement is incorrect," he stated.

FIGHT FOR CAPITAL DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

of the "unprecedented high levels of ammonia in the raw water".

In his six-page written reply addressed to the chief election commissioner (CEC), Kejriwal also accused Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini of hatching a "conspiracy" to "influence" the February 5 Delhi Assembly polls by sending highly-polluted waters to the

No difference between PM Modi, Kejriwal; both are cowards, corrupt: Priyanka

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Launching a blistering attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Friday said there was no difference between the two as both were "cowards and corrupt". Addressing a public meeting at Mustafabad, Priyanka Gandhi said while Modi kept blaming India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Kejriwal blamed Modi. However, neither took any responsibility.

The BJP's politics has always been one of creating divisions, she said in the



Congress General Secretary and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra waves to the supporters during a road show in support of party candidate from Nangloi Jat Assembly constituency, Rohit Chaudhary for the Delhi Assembly Elections, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

constituency, which had been hit by riots in 2020.

The Congress general secretary said that while AAP leaders talked about Modi's

'Rajmahal' and BJP leaders about Kejriwal's 'Sheesh Mahal', none of them spoke about the real issues of the people.

The issues being discussed by the BJP and AAP are who indulged in corruption and who built a bigger 'mahal', she said.

"Think who is talking about your issues. Are these your issues? Who is making allegations against whom? Who understands your pain? They are trying to divide people. Someone says 'I was insulted' while another says someone else was insulted," she said.

Someone is trying to divide Hindus and Muslims but they are not talking about roads, clean water, children's education, strengthening businesses and employment, Priyanka Gandhi said.

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday visited the Yamuna Ghat in Wazirabad, Delhi and again accused former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of failing to clean the river while misleading the public with false claims.

Saini alleged that Kejriwal had promised to clean the Yamuna but instead allowed it to become more polluted. "Now, to hide his failures, he is making baseless allegations," he said.

The Haryana CM claimed that dirty water from Delhi was being released into the Yamuna, affecting both Delhi and Haryana. "People



are being forced to drink this polluted water. Even after 10 years, Kejriwal has not been able to clean the river. He should apologize to the people of Delhi and Haryana," Saini added.

Saini also responded to Kejriwal's allegation that the Haryana government was "poisoning" Delhi's water supply. He stated that the central government had given Rs 8,500 crore to build sewage treatment plants (STPs), but Kejriwal's government had

not completed the work.

"If Kejriwal is talking about mass genocide, he himself is responsible for it. He has not cleaned the Yamuna and is instead blaming others. The central government gave Rs 8,500 crore to build an STP, but it was not constructed. Meanwhile, Kejriwal used Rs 15 crore to build an STP in his Sheesh Mahal," Saini alleged.

To prove his point, CM Saini brought two jars of Yamuna water—one collected from the Delhi-Haryana border at Palla Ghat and another from Wazirabad in Delhi. He claimed there was a significant difference in water quality, blaming Kejriwal's government for the pollution.

Gadkari pledges rapid development for Delhi under BJP

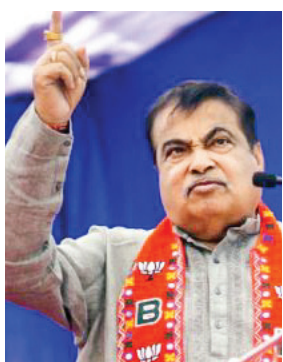
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Friday vowed to transform Delhi's landscape if the BJP assumed power in the national capital after the February 5 polls.

Addressing a public meeting in Shalimar Bagh, the senior BJP leader claimed the saffron party did not seek to merely change the government but to transform the national capital.

"We don't just want to change the government... We want to change the picture of Delhi... Only the BJP can do this," he asserted.

Gadkari compared BJP-led governance to high-speed progress, asserting that Delhi's development would accelerate like a bullet train if the saffron party assumed power.



"If the BJP's engine is installed in Delhi, development will happen at bullet-train speeds," he remarked.

Addressing the issue of pollution, Gadkari pledged to make the city free from toxic air in five years.

"Delhi is not just the country's capital but also the heart of the people. This heart has developed an infection," he said, referring to the national capital's severe air pollution problem.

Citing global rankings, he noted that 42 of the world's 50 most polluted cities were in India, with Delhi being the worst hit.

Gadkari -- the Union minister of road transport and highways -- acknowledged transportation as a significant contributor to the problem, with fossil fuels accounting for about 40 per cent of the city's pollution. "I accept that 40 per cent of the pollution happens because of my department." He also highlighted the Centre's waste management efforts, claiming that 20 lakh tons of garbage from the Ghazipur landfill had been used for road construction, reducing the height of the mound by seven metres.

"Can this situation not be changed?" he asked, asserting that the Centre had been actively working on address-

ing these challenges.

Discussing infrastructure development, Gadkari noted that since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014, road projects worth Rs 65,000 crore had been approved for Delhi.

"We have completed work worth Rs 33,000 crore and, by December, work worth Rs 1 lakh crore will be done in NCR," he said.

The Union minister said key expressways, including the Delhi-Katra Expressway, would significantly ease congestion and expressed confidence that the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway would be completed before Republic Day next year.

Gadkari also emphasised efforts to clean the Yamuna, revealing that the Centre had provided Rs 6,000 crore to the Delhi government for the river's rejuvenation.



View of a Tulip bed at Amrit Udyan during a press preview ahead of its opening for public from February 2 to March 30, in New Delhi. ANI

SC asks NGO to identify Rohingya settlements in Delhi

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday asked an NGO to tell the places of Rohingya settlement in Delhi and the facilities accessible to them. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotias Singh asked senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for NGO Rohingya Human Rights Initiative to file an affidavit indicating their places of settlement in Delhi.

Gonsalves said the NGO sought access to public schools and hospitals to Rohingya refugees as they were denied the access due to lack of Aadhaar cards.

"They are refugees having UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) cards and therefore they can't have Aadhaar cards. But, for want of Aadhaar they are not being granted access to public schools and hospitals," he submitted.

The bench said since there were no aggrieved parties



before the court but an entity, the NGO must file an affidavit indicating their places of settlement, specifying if they lived in camps

or residential colonies.

Gonsalves said Rohingya refugees resided in Shaheen Bagh, Kalindi Kunj and Khajuri Khas areas of Delhi.

The bench said since there were no aggrieved parties before the court but an entity, the NGO must file an affidavit indicating their places of settlement, specifying if they lived in camps or residential colonies.

"In Shaheen Bagh and Kalindi Kunj they are residing in slums and in Khajuri Khas they are residing in rented accommodation," he submitted.

The bench said it asked the questions to under-

stand if they lived in camps, the nature of relief would be different than the one mentioned in the PIL.

Gonsalves said in other matters related to Rohingyas, the Centre took a stand that they had the right to go

to public schools and hospitals.

The bench observed since the issue related to Rohingyas in Delhi and the NGO challenged the circular of the Delhi government, it would be appropriate if they moved the high court.

It posted the hearing on February 10.

The PIL sought a direction to authorities to grant admission to all Rohingya children free of cost irrespective of Aadhaar cards and allow them to par-

ticipate in all examinations including class 10, 12 and graduation without government insistence on the ID proof.

The PIL also sought extension of all government benefits such as free health services in government hospitals, subsidised food grains as available under Antyodaya Anna Yojana scheme and benefits under the Food Security Act to Rohingya families as available to other citizens, irrespective of citizenship.

SURVEY LIFTS MARKET SENTIMENT; NIFTY, SENSEX NOTCH UP ONE PER CENT GAIN


Markets surged for the fourth session as budget optimism lifted Nifty (+1.11%) and Sensex (+0.97%). Experts watch tax cuts, GDP growth.

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Indian stock markets ended higher for the fourth trading session, as the investor's optimism is driven by the optimism from the upcoming Union Budget 2025-26. At the end of the trading, the Nifty 50 was up 258.90 points or 1.11 per cent, at 23,508.40; on the other hand, the BSE Sensex was up 740.76 points or 0.97 per cent, at 77,500.57. According to the market experts, the investor's sentiments will be influenced by the budget announcements in the coming days. The experts noted that the investors will be keenly watching the growth-stimulating initiatives like cuts in personal income tax, etc., in the budget announcements. The market participants were watchful of the economic survey presented in the Parliament. As per the projection of the

KEY POINTS

- Markets rally: Nifty +258.90 (1.11%) at 23,508.40, Sensex +740.76 (0.97%) at 77,500.57.
- Budget hopes drive gains: Investors eye tax cuts, growth measures for market boost.
- Economic growth outlook: FY26 GDP projected at 6.3%-6.8%, fueling optimism.
- Broad market surge: Capital goods +4%, FMCG, PSU, realty +2%; all NSE indices in green.



survey, India's economy is projected to grow between 6.3 per cent and 6.8 per cent in FY26. The optimism of the government influenced the domestic markets positively. "The market is strongly reacting to results with good results being rewarded and poor results getting punished. This has spiked the market volatility. Fairly valued, high-quality, large-cap financials

continue to be a safe sector for investors," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services. "The budget-expectations and actuals--will influence the market today and tomorrow. Since we are going into the budget without a pre-budget rally, the probability of a rally post-budget will be high if the budget delivers on growth-stimulating initiatives like cuts in personal

"During Friday's session, Nifty 50 closed at the 23,469 range, and after analysing the market, we can expect the index to gain support near 23,380 and 23,150 and face near 23,650 and 23,800 in the next session." VLA Ambala, SEBI Registered Research Analyst and Co-Founder of Stock Market Today

At the end of the trading, Tata Consumer, Trent, Bharat Electronics, Nestle India, and L&T emerged as the gainers of the market, while Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Apollo Hospitals, and JSW Steel were the losers. In the sectoral indices on the National Stock Exchange (NSE), all the sectoral indices ended in the green territory. The indices of consumer durables, oil and gas, power, PSU, realty, and FMCG are up 2 percent each, while the capital goods index is up nearly 4 percent. BSE Midcap and Smallcap indices, on the other hand, gained nearly 2 percent each.

Budget session 2025-26 commences

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman prepares to present the Union Budget for the fiscal year 2025-26 on Saturday, February 1, 2025, at 11:00 am, the nation anticipates significant policy announcements aimed at bolstering economic growth and providing relief to various sectors.

ECONOMIC SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The Economic Survey 2024-25, tabled in Parliament today, offers a comprehensive overview of the country's economic performance. Key insights include:

- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth: The survey projects GDP growth between 6.3% and 6.8% for FY26, reflecting cautious optimism amid global economic uncertainties.
- Inflation Trends: Retail headline inflation softened from 5.4% in FY24 to 4.9% in April-December 2024, attributed to effective government initiatives and monetary policy measures.
- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): Gross FDI inflows revived, increasing from

\$47.2 billion in the first eight months of FY24 to \$55.6 billion in the same period of FY25, marking a year-on-year growth of 17.9%.

ANTICIPATED BUDGETARY MEASURES

The upcoming budget is expected to address several key areas:

- Income Tax Reforms: Taxpayers, particularly from the middle class, are hopeful for significant income tax reliefs. Anticipations include potential changes in tax slabs, increased standard deductions, and enhanced rebates under Section 87A. There is also speculation about making annual income up to 10 lakh tax-free and introducing a new tax slab for incomes between 15 lakh and 20 lakh.
- Agriculture Sector Boost: Reports suggest that the government plans to increase its agriculture budget by over 15%, the most substantial rise in six years, aiming to support rural incomes and control inflation. The focus is expected to be on high-yield seed varieties, improved storage and supply infrastructure, and enhanced production of pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, and dairy.

● Privatization and Disinvestment: In a strategic shift, the government is moving away from extensive privatization plans, opting instead to invest billions into reviving state-run firms. Plans include a \$1.5 billion rescue package for two state-owned companies, notably helicopter operator Pawan Hans. Privatization efforts for at least nine additional state-owned units have been put on hold due to opposition from various ministries.

FISCAL DEFICIT OUTLOOK

The fiscal deficit for the current fiscal year is projected to be between 4.7% and 4.8% of GDP, slightly below the government's estimate of 4.9%. This reduction is attributed to lower planned capital investment spending and a higher-than-anticipated dividend from the Reserve Bank of India. The government aims to keep the budget deficit within 4.5% for the next fiscal year. Citizens can watch the live proceedings of the Union Budget presentation on the government's official budget website, indiabudget.gov.in, and on Sansad TV's YouTube and television channels.

Govt's Rs 54 lakh cr capex yields weak private investment

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Indian government has spent over Rs 54 lakh crore on capital expenditure in the past 11 years, according to a report by Systematix Institutional Equities. This includes the budgeted allocation of Rs 11.1 lakh crore for FY25. Despite this massive spending, the report added that the concerns over weak private investment and unemployment persist. The report also highlighted that Rs 38 lakh crore of the total capital expenditure was allocated after the COVID-19 pandemic. In FY25, capital expenditure will account for 23 per cent of total government spending, reaching levels last seen in FY04. Back then, India experienced one of its strongest nine-year private investment cycles. However, the current situation is different, as private investment has not picked up, despite the govern-

A major concern raised in the report is the lack of a significant multiplier effect from this high capital expenditure. Ideally, large government spending should stimulate private investment and economic growth.

ment's heavy spending on infrastructure. It said "The worries of lagging private capex and unemployment have persisted since 2012, and in the recent year, as the RBI's KLEM data and PLFS survey jointly suggest, it has culminated in an unprecedented surge in disguised unemployment and contraction in real wages". A major concern raised in the report is the lack of a significant multiplier effect from this high capital expenditure. Ideally, large government spending should stimulate private investment and economic growth. However, the expected boost in private sector in-

vestments has not materialized, leading to renewed calls for even higher infrastructure spending ahead of the Union Budget. The report stated that companies have also raised concerns about a shrinking middle-income segment, pointing towards a structural slowdown in India's long-term economic growth. Over the past decade, the government has focused on two major policy responses to address economic challenges. The first phase involved steps such as resolving bad loans, recapitalizing banks, cutting corporate taxes (in 2019), and improving business conditions through formalization and GST implementation.

Gold hits record high

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Gold prices soared to an all-time high of \$2,859 per ounce, surging 37% in a year, as investors flock to the metal amid economic uncertainties. The rally follows a drop in US Treasury bond yields and concerns over former US President Donald Trump's tariff proposals, which could disrupt global trade. Lower bond yields make gold more attractive as a non-interest-bearing asset, while trade fears drive investors toward safe-haven assets. Ajay Kedia, Director of Kedia Advisory, attributed the surge to declining bond yields and rising fears over future trade policies. Expectations of US interest rate cuts have further boosted gold's appeal, with Trump urging the Federal Reserve to lower rates. In India, domestic gold prices rose Rs 500 to Rs 81,400 per 10g on MCX, with Rs 79,500 as key support and Rs 82,000 as resistance, said Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities.

Core industries grow by 4 pc in December

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) increased by 4.0 per cent (provisional) in December, 2024 as compared to the Index in the same period last year, according to a release by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. According to the Ministry, the production of Coal, Electricity, Steel, Cement, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, and Crude Oil recorded positive growth in December 2024. The ICI measures the combined and individual performance of the production of eight core industries viz. Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement and Electricity. The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). The final growth rate of the Index of Eight Core Industries for September 2024 in-



creased by 2.4 per cent. The cumulative growth rate of ICI during April to December, 2024-25 is 4.2 per cent (provisional) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Coal production increased by 5.3 per cent in December, 2024 from the last year same period. Its cumulative index increased by 6.2 per cent during April to December, 2024-25 over corresponding period of the previous year. Crude Oil production increased by 0.6 per cent in December, 2024 over December, 2023. Its cumulative index declined by 2.1 per cent from April to December, 2024-25 over corresponding period of the previous year. Natural Gas production declined by 1.8 per cent in December, 2024 the last year same period. Its cumulative index increased by 0.7 per cent during April to December, 2024-25 over corresponding period of the previous year. Petroleum Refinery production increased by 2.8 per cent in December, 2024 over December, 2023. Its cumulative index increased by 2.7 per cent from April to December 2024-25 over the corresponding period of the previous year. Fertilizer production in-

creased by 1.7 per cent in December 2024 from the last year same period. Its cumulative index increased by 1.6 per cent during April to December 2024-25 over the corresponding period of the previous year. Steel production increased by 5.1 per cent in December, 2024 from the last year same period. Its cumulative index increased by 5.8 per cent during April to December, 2024-25 over corresponding period of the previous year. Cement production increased by 4.0 per cent in December, 2024 over December, 2023. Its cumulative index increased by 3.3 per cent during April to December, 2024-25 over corresponding period of the previous year. Electricity generation increased by 5.1 per cent in December, 2024 over December, 2023. Its cumulative index increased by 5.3 per cent during April to December, 2024-25 over corresponding period of the previous year.

Ashneer Grover talks unicorns

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The CII Young Indians' Lucknow Chapter recently hosted an insightful fireside chat with BharatPe Founder and entrepreneur Ashneer Grover. Held at the Hyatt Regency, Lucknow it was supported by gold mobilisation platform and startup MyGold and focused on 'Building Unicorns: The Journey, Challenges, and Lessons from the Trenches', providing an exclusive platform for entrepreneurs, business leaders, and aspiring founders to engage in a thought-provoking discussion about the world of startups. Moderated by industry experts, the event featured Ashneer Grover as the keynote speaker, who shared his personal journey of building BharatPe into one of India's most recognized fintech unicorns. Emphasizing the importance of

STARTUP CORNER




consistency and resilience in overcoming challenges, he regaled the audience with real-life anecdotes and practical lessons for budding entrepreneurs; after which an interactive Q&A session further allowed attendees to seek advice on overcoming startup hurdles and scaling their own businesses. MyGold, as the event's annual sponsor, showcased its commitment to fostering innovation and supporting India's growing entrepreneurial ecosystem. Highlighting the startup's innovative platform and its relevance in daily life, Amol Bansal, Founder of MyGold, discussed how MyGold is revolutionizing gold investment and leasing for individuals and businesses, delivering an impactful presentation at the event. Speaking on the occasion, Amol Bansal, Founder of MyGold, said, "Supporting such a platform inspires

entrepreneurs to dream big and navigate their journeys with resilience and vision. At MyGold, we believe in empowering the next generation of entrepreneurs to achieve their financial goals and make a sizeable impact and we look forward to more such opportunities in the future." The event highlighted the importance of consistent effort and the willingness to face challenges head-on; elements that are key to building successful businesses in today's competitive landscape. Bringing together not only veteran entrepreneurs

but also aspiring founders, creating a vibrant space for the exchange of ideas and experiences, the fireside chat with Ashneer Grover reinforced MyGold's mission of transforming financial practices, empowering innovation, and supporting entrepreneurs in their journey to success. Founded in 2021 by Lucknow-based entrepreneur Amol Bansal, MyGold is a trailblazing platform that transforms idle gold into a productive asset. With over Rs. 200 lakh crore worth of gold lying unused in Indian households, MyGold encourages individuals to unlock the true potential of their gold by converting it into a source of sustainable growth and financial empowerment. MyGold provides an innovative model offering guaranteed annual growth of 5% in gold weight on 24kt pure gold, allowing users to earn in gold rather than mon-

etary value. This unique approach ensures compounded returns that significantly outperform traditional savings methods, such as bank deposits. Through its secure, transparent, and user-friendly app, users can track their daily gold returns, access their holdings 24x7, and sell gold at prevailing prices, ensuring complete flexibility without lock-in periods. Backed by MMTC-PAMP & partnerships with SEBI-approved Gold vault managers & logistics partners for insured vault storage and audited by Vistra, the world's largest asset administrator, MyGold sets the benchmark for trust, safety and security. Designed for modern families and long-term planners, MyGold is the ideal choice for those aiming to save for future goals like education, weddings, or generational wealth creation.

Lower Brent prices to support margins for Indian fuel refiners: Fitch

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Indian oil marketing companies' EBITDA will rise in the next financial year - 2025-26 -- as demand growth remains steady and Brent crude oil prices fall -- to USD 70 a barrel in 2025 and USD65 a barrel in 2026, said Fitch Ratings. EBITDA is earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation. The global rating agency expects the oil companies' gross refining margins to hover around USD 5 per barrel to USD 6.8 per barrel and for marketing margins to remain healthy in 2025-26. Brent crude is currently trading at USD 75.76 per barrel, publicly available data showed. The refining margins would be aided by lower crude oil prices, improving demand and slower net capacity growth. India Oil Corporation Ltd, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited reported gross refining

margins of USD 3.7 per barrel to USD 6.0 per barrel in the first nine months of 2024-25, compared to the unusually high levels of USD 9.1 per barrel to USD12.1 per barrel in 2023-24. Fitch's Brent price assumptions reflect the impact of OPEC's large spare capacity, increasing global production and moderating demand growth. However, heightened volatility in crude prices given geo-political considerations, and uncertainties around how the US's future energy and tariff policies may have an impact on energy demand. Soon after assuming office, US President Donald Trump laid out an aggressive plan to maximize oil and gas production, including filling the strategic reserves. Besides, he declared a national energy emergency, besides withdrawing from the international pact to fight climate change. Addressing virtually the World Economic Forum Davos, Trump called on Saudi Arabia and OPEC countries to lower oil prices.

CHINA ARMS PAK'S SSG IN BALOCHISTAN RAISING ALARMS FOR INDIA'S SECURITY

OPINION

DR. NISHAKANT OJHA



At a practical, ground-level view, the recent reports suggesting that China is providing military and financial assistance to Pakistan's Special Services Group (SSG) in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) have far-reaching consequences. These regions, which are key to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), have witnessed growing insurgency and instability. The local security forces in these areas, particularly Pakistan's SSG, have been struggling to manage the violence and unrest from groups like the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and other armed factions.

On the ground, this assistance translates into a much-needed boost for Pakistan's ability to conduct counter-insurgency operations. However, the bigger picture reveals complex geopolitical shifts—especially for India. This analysis will break down what these developments mean for the security dynamics in Pakistan, China, and India, with a focus on their local and immediate impacts.

CPEC SECURITY: GROUND-LEVEL REALITIES

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has become the backbone of China's interests in the region, amounting to approximately \$62 billion in infrastructure investments aimed at connecting China's western Xinjiang region to

Pakistan's Gwadar Port. On the ground in Balochistan, CPEC has brought both development and controversy. While the province holds immense natural resource potential and a critical maritime outlet at Gwadar, it is also plagued by ethnic separatism, insurgency, and political instability.

For local people, particularly the Baloch, CPEC is often viewed as a project that benefits China and Pakistan at their expense. The local insurgents, such as the BLA, regularly target CPEC infrastructure, foreign workers, and Pakistani military installations in an effort to disrupt the project. In the past few years, there have been several high-profile attacks, including the 2021 bombing targeting Chinese engineers working in Gwadar, which killed two Chinese nationals.

On the ground, these attacks are a clear indicator of the fragility of security in Balochistan. With China's increased investment in Pakistan's security forces, especially the SSG, Beijing aims to protect its interests in CPEC. For example, the SSG is responsible for securing key infrastructure projects, but they often lack the advanced technologies and equipment necessary to deal with sophisticated insurgent tactics. Therefore, China's proposed support—such as drones, surveillance equipment, and advanced communication systems—aims to give Pakistan the tools needed to keep these critical routes secure.

IMPACT OF CHINA'S SUPPORT ON THE SSG: TACTICAL AND OPERATIONAL CHANGES

From a ground-level perspective, the SSG—Pakistan's elite special forces—are expected to see significant improvements in their operational capacity with Chinese assistance. The SSG already operates in some of Pakistan's most

difficult terrains, including the rugged mountains of Balochistan and KP. These are areas heavily affected by insurgent activity, including the TTP in KP and the BLA in Balochistan. Both groups have been using tactics like IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and guerrilla warfare to disrupt Pakistani security forces and foreign nationals.

On the ground, this translates into a difficult operational environment for the SSG. In the absence of modern equipment, the SSG has often struggled to track insurgents or effectively neutralize threats from the air or ground. However, with Chinese assistance, the SSG is set to receive technologies such as drones (e.g., Wing Loong II), which have the ability to conduct precision strikes in remote areas, and advanced surveillance systems for monitoring and tracking insurgent movements.

The TTP, operating mainly in KP, is also likely to increase its activities. Historically, the TTP has had

greater control over their resources and more autonomy from Islamabad. The increasing involvement of China in CPEC has only intensified these sentiments, as many Baloch believe that their land and resources are being used for the benefit of Pakistan and China, without their consent.

On the ground, this could mean an escalation in insurgent attacks. Local populations in regions like Gwadar or Quetta, who already feel marginalized, may see China's military support to Pakistan as a form of foreign occupation. This could lead to further radicalization and recruitment into insurgent groups like the BLA. In turn, Pakistan's increased reliance on SSG forces—supported by China—could lead to more confrontations with local insurgents.

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At the local level, this will enhance the SSG's capability to gather real-time intelligence and execute surgical strikes against insurgents. For example, the use of drones will allow them to patrol vast, difficult-to-reach areas without putting ground troops at risk. Additionally, Chinese support for infrastructure development will likely result in more secure military outposts and operational bases, giving the SSG a stronger presence in insurgent-dominated zones.

INSURGENT AND LOCAL REACTIONS

The situation on the ground is not just about military strategies; it also involves the local populations and insurgent groups that have been fighting for autonomy or against what they see as foreign exploitation. In Balochistan, ethnic Baloch groups have long fought for

a cross-border presence in Afghanistan, and since the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, the group has regained strength. The TTP sees itself as a continuation of the broader Taliban insurgency in the region and has used the mountainous terrain of KP to conduct deadly attacks. For local civilians caught in the crossfire, the increased presence of the SSG could either stabilize or escalate tensions, depending on how the operations are conducted.

INDIA'S PERSPECTIVE: SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

From India's standpoint, the ground-level implications of this increased Sino-Pakistani military cooperation are worrying. India has long viewed Pakistan's military collaboration with

China with suspicion, and the prospect of the SSG—already one of Pakistan's most elite units—receiving advanced military support from China is seen as a direct challenge to India's security.

INCREASED MILITARY CAPABILITIES FOR PAKISTAN:

- For India, the enhanced capabilities of Pakistan's military, especially in counter-insurgency operations, could create new challenges along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir. The use of drones and surveillance systems by the SSG could be applied not just for internal operations but also for cross-border monitoring and intelligence gathering.

- On the ground, this means that Pakistan could potentially increase its monitoring and military presence along the LoC, which might heighten tensions in the disputed Kashmir region. The use of drones by Pakistan for surveillance or even targeted strikes could have significant implications for India, both in terms of border security and potential escalation.

AFGHANISTAN AND TALIBAN'S ROLE:

- India is particularly concerned about the Taliban's growing ties with Pakistan and the possibility of the Taliban aligning with China. Afghanistan's position as a neighbor to India has always been crucial for Indian strategic interests, especially in terms of trade routes and regional influence.

- With the Taliban back in power, there is a real fear in India that Afghanistan could become a source of destabilization. If the Taliban were to shift toward closer cooperation with India's adversaries—Pakistan and China—it could impact India's efforts to maintain security along its western frontier.

- On the ground in Afghanistan, this could lead to the Taliban becoming a conduit for supporting insurgent groups in Jammu and Kashmir or other regions in India. The prospect of a "proxy war" involving Taliban elements, Pakistan, and China is increasingly possible, and it would exacerbate

the already volatile situation on India's western border.

PROXY WARFARE IN KASHMIR:

- Locally, in Kashmir, where insurgency has been simmering for decades, the possibility of Pakistan's enhanced military capabilities being used for proxy warfare or infiltration is a significant concern. The increasing presence of highly trained, better-equipped Pakistani forces in KP and Balochistan could be used to further infiltrate militants into Indian territory.
- This would make counter-insurgency operations even more challenging for India, as Pakistan could use its enhanced technological and military capabilities, funded by China, to launch more sophisticated and well-coordinated cross-border strikes.

CONCLUSION: A COMPLEX FUTURE AHEAD

On the ground, China's support to Pakistan's Special Services Group represents a major shift in the military capabilities of the region. For Pakistan, this means better-equipped security forces capable of securing critical infrastructure and combating insurgency more effectively. However, this shift also has major consequences for regional security, particularly for India.

For local populations in areas like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the situation is one of increased militarization, with a higher likelihood of confrontations between insurgents and the SSG. The resulting escalation could destabilize the region further, while providing a larger strategic and military foothold for China in South Asia. India's national security concerns are also at the forefront, with the potential for heightened border tensions and the spread of proxy warfare, especially in Kashmir. India will need to closely monitor these developments, adjust its security strategies, and bolster its own defense capabilities in response to this shifting balance of power.

"Expert Analysis by Dr. Nishakant Ojha: Eminent Specialist in Counter-Terrorism and West Asia-Middle East National Security & Strategic Affairs"

'GYAN MAHA KUMBH IN PRAYAGRAJ MAHA KUMBH: REVIVAL OF TRADITION'



DR. ATUL KOTHARI

There is an ancient tradition of Kumbh Mela in Bharat. It is a little difficult to say when the organization of Kumbh Mela started, but it can certainly be said that it has a long and rich tradition. Currently, the Maha Kumbh organized in Prayagraj is the world's largest spiritual fair, in which about 50 crore people are expected to come. When

modern means of communication like TV, radio, newspapers, internet etc. did not even exist, even then lakhs of people from all over the country used to reach to participate in Kumbh on a fixed year and date. This is a symbol of the religious faith, spiritual vision and national unity of the Bharatiya people. Taking a bath in Kumbh, meeting sages and saints and getting their blessings and guidance, this has been a natural tendency in our country. But, Adi Shankaracharya gave the vision that there should be discussion and deliberation on knowledge in religious, spiritual events like Kumbh. In such events, saints and sages used to brainstorm and guide the citizens of the country from religious, spiritual and cultural point of view and used to show the path to strengthen the character and moral values of the society. Kumbh Mela was not just a gathering from spiritual and religious point of view, but it was also a collective event of reorganizing and rethinking the rules and codes to make new regulations according to the times to run the progress of the society and the nation smoothly after every twelve years and here new knowledge was also created from knowledge discussions.

Similarly, in Gyan Maha Kumbh, people from the education world of the country can gather and work to give direction to the education sector of the country to re-establish the Bharatiya knowledge tradition in accordance with modern requirements. With this goal in mind, Gyan Maha Kumbh is being organized by Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas. Just as Kumbh is organized at four holy places of the country (Haridwar, Prayag, Ujjain and Nashik), on the same format, before the Gyan Maha Kumbh, Gyan Kumbh was successfully organized in the four directions of the country, Haridwar, Nalanda, Puducherry and Karnavati (Ahmedabad). In Bharat, education, that is, acquiring knowledge, was never considered a business, but it was considered a medium of imparting knowledge with a spirit of service. In this Gyan Maha Kumbh, hundreds of people directly associated with education have contributed their body, mind and money to make this Gyan Maha Kumbh successful. Unfortunately, in independent Bharat, the subject of improvement and change in education, except for a few exceptions, became a subject of speech or intellectual discussion only. Those who aspire and expect change in any field should start it from themselves, this has been the Bharatiya tradition, only then steps can be taken forward in the direction of real change. Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Gijubhai etc. had made similar efforts to bring about change in education. Getting inspired from those great men, this subject should be first made popular among the people of the education sector and later it should become a movement of the general public, this is the basic concept of Gyan Maha Kumbh.

It is a matter of joy that today the country has become the fifth economy of the world by striving towards material progress in many fields like information technology, space technology etc. However, this is only one dimension of development. But even today we are struggling with environment, moral values and character crisis etc. As a result of this, along with casteism, linguistic discrimination, male-female, untouchability etc., we are also facing the challenge of problems like oppression of women, violence, communal tension etc., which are yet to be conquered. That is, only with the balanced coordination of both material development and spiritual development, the above problems can be resolved and steps can be taken towards becoming a world leader. In this way, the basis of balanced and holistic development of the country can be possible only by acquiring knowledge. The most powerful medium of acquiring knowledge is education. Education is the foundation of development of any country.

The 'Gyan Maha Kumbh' organised at Prayagraj Maha Kumbh is an initiative in this direction. It is said in the Bhagavad Gita that 'na hi gyanen sadrisham pavitramih vidyate' i.e. there is nothing as sacred as knowledge in this world.

Kumbh is a small form of taking a step in this direction. In Kumbh, millions of people from the country and the world take bath together. They take prasada, food etc. together in the camps of saints and social organizations, then the problems of the country visible on the surface do not seem to exist there. This is the symbol of practical spirituality. Also, due to Kumbh, economic development of that area and its people is also seen. We can see and experience this coordination of materialism and spirituality in the Maha Kumbh organised at the Triveni Sangam of Prayagraj. What else can be the medium of coordinated and holistic development of the country by reestablishing Bharatiyaness through the organisation of Gyan Maha Kumbh? With this vision, along with crores of people taking a holy dip in the Ganga, people from the world of education should join the Gyan Maha Kumbh, take a dip in the Ganga of knowledge and pledge to revive the education in the country and together in their respective educational institutions, take forward the campaign from local to nationwide; this is the future direction of organizing the Gyan Maha Kumbh.

Dr. Atul Kothari, National Secretary, Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, Delhi

Bol Tiger Bol

FROWNING PROHIBITED

JAS KOHLI



An open letter from a tiger, the vassal king of the jun-

gle, who rules over a part of Ranthambore National Park (under the overall authority of homo sapiens)

Dear Indians. Should I fold my front paws to thank you for your support for tiger conservation? I am not sure. In fact, you are only atoning for the sins of your ancestors who got cheap thrills by hunting my ancestors. Shooting at a tiger while sitting atop a jumbo is no bravery. Agar

apni maan ka doodh piya hai or even if you had baby formula- come for an unarmed one-to-one combat with me. I am sure even the men named 'double lion' (Sher Singh) would turn into 'a rat on the run from a cat' at the prospect of such a contest.

In fact, your name will become more distinctive if you prefix tiger to it (e.g. Tiger Balwaan Singh). I can easily win against a lion in a one-to-one fight. If in doubt, ask Google Aunty. Also, I am a better looker than a lion- it only has a mane as a saving grace. Look at my stripes- I think God utilized celestial artists to create me. But I am jealous of lions' lifestyle. They live in prides which include multiple lionesses. As for

me, finding my lady love in this huge forest is as complicated as a Bear Grylls expedition. The lion cubs have many aunts to care for them besides their parents while a tigress has to do all the parenting by herself. I do admit- tigers aren't good fathers.

The general public is exhorted to save tigers for the sake of the rivers which originate from tiger habitats. This perplexes me. Is vested interest the actual reason for the mollycoddling of tigers? Also, our contribution to the Indian economy is largely untrumpeted. Big bucks are generated via tiger safaris. I have also developed some traits of humans- I get a kick out of a click as well as gratification after

social media dissemination. When I am sighted by tourists who are in a safari vehicle, mostly I act as decent as an antelope. Sometimes I am in a bad mood, especially after losing a fight with a tiger over zoru or zameen (tigress or territory). Then I charge at the jeep. This makes the tourists scream and I get a thrill out of this. But I always stop short of the actual assault. I am aware that if I get declared as a man eater, my days will be numbered.

Sometimes I wish I was a vegetarian. Then I wouldn't have to kill cute animals like deer to fill my belly. But a vegetarian tiger would be taken for granted by everyone. Finding prey isn't as easy as it seems on wildlife television chan-

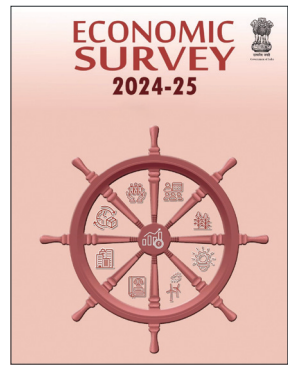
nels. The ever vigilant langurs alarm the forest creatures with their calls whenever I move to a new area. They also tease me by inviting me to their treetop homes.

So many products and services utilize tiger's name and/or its image. It is high time that royalty was paid for this to the tigers. I could use the money to set up a Tiger Welfare Fund. I promise I would embezzle only a minor proportion of it- most of it would be used for the betterment of tigers.

Don't despair if you don't sight any tiger during a tiger safari. On some days, especially when our belly is full, laziness takes over! Also, there is much more to a forest than 'the big cat with a swag'!

ECONOMIC SURVEY 2024-25: GROWTH, WAGES, AND MARKETS

Government schemes boosted household incomes, reduced inequality, and increased spending. Rural-urban consumption gap narrowed, benefiting lower-income groups through subsidies and welfare programs.



The Economic Survey 2024-25, presented in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, highlights India's significant strides in economic and social development. The report emphasizes the government's dedication to empowering citizens through substantial investments in education, healthcare, skill development, and social infrastructure.

ENHANCED SOCIAL SECTOR INVESTMENTS

Government expenditure on social services has risen from 23.3% in FY21 to 26.2% in FY25 (BE), marking a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15%. The combined outlay by the Centre and States increased from Rs. 14.8 lakh crore in FY21 to Rs. 25.7 lakh crore in FY25 (BE). Notably, spending on education grew at a CAGR of 12% to reach Rs. 9.2 lakh crore, while health sector expenditure expanded at an 18% CAGR, totaling Rs. 6.1 lakh crore in FY25.

LIFESTYLE FACTORS AFFECTING PRODUCTIVITY

The Survey raises concerns about the economic impact of long working hours and unhealthy lifestyle choices. Data indicates that individuals working over 12 hours a day report lower mental well-being, leading to productivity losses. The report also cautions against excessive junk food consumption, social media addiction, and sedentary lifestyles, recommending improvements in workplace culture and family-based interventions to enhance mental health.

Workplace stress, poor management relationships, and lack of job satisfaction contribute to increased absenteeism. With India's growing workforce, addressing these issues is crucial for sustained economic growth. The report references a WHO study estimating that 12 billion workdays are lost annually worldwide

due to mental health issues, translating into a \$1 trillion financial loss.

SURGE IN RETAIL MARKET PARTICIPATION

The Survey highlights increased retail investor participation in equity markets, with the number of investors rising from 4.9 crore in FY20 to 13.2 crore by December 2024. The decoupling of the Indian stock market from global indices indicates resilience, with domestic institutional and retail investors providing market stability despite Foreign Portfolio Investors' (FPI) outflows.

However, the document warns of potential market corrections in 2025 due to high valuations and external uncertainties. Historical data suggests Indian markets remain susceptible to U.S. market fluctuations, emphasizing the need for investor caution.

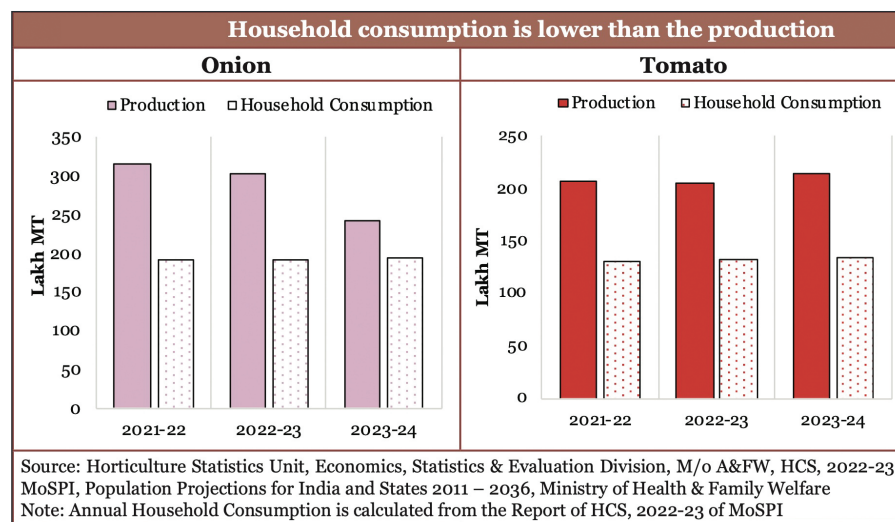
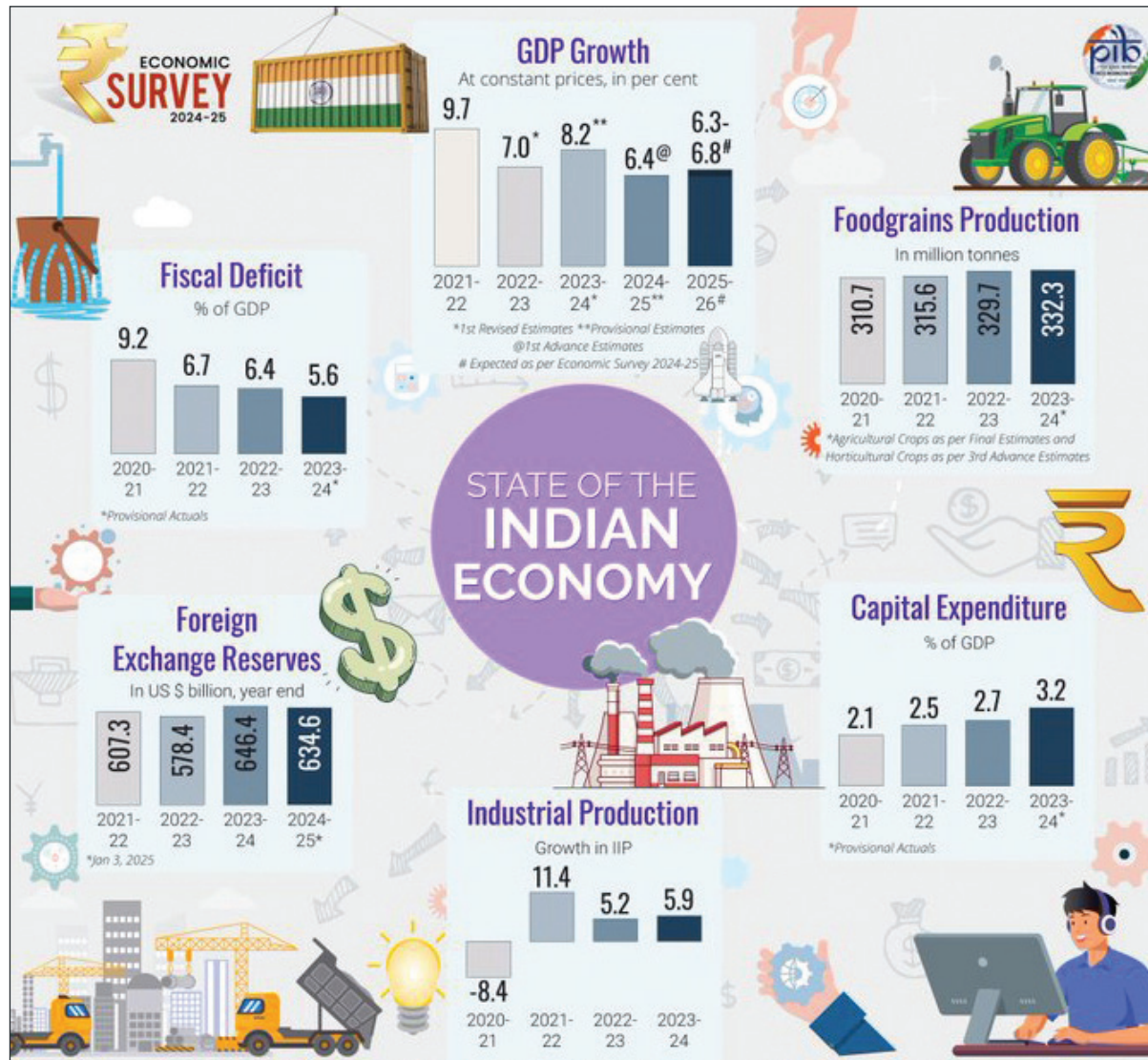
NAVIGATING AI'S IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

The Survey explores the evolving role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in employment. While acknowledging concerns about AI-induced job displacement, it argues that proactive skill development can mitigate risks and enhance workforce productivity. India must create an average of 7.85 million non-farm jobs annually by 2030 to sustain its workforce expansion.

Corporate profitability reached a 15-year high in FY24, with profits soaring by 22.3%. However, wage growth lagged significantly, with employment rising by just 1.5%. The Survey raises concerns over income disparity and stagnant wages, especially in IT and entry-level positions. Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran urged corporations to boost wages, emphasizing that wage stagnation could dampen domestic consumption and economic momentum.

OPTIMISTIC MACROECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The Indian economy is projected to grow between 6.3% and 6.8% in FY26, maintaining stability despite global uncertainties. Key drivers include robust infrastructure investment, industrial recovery, and a strengthening service sector. The agriculture sector remains a strong contribu-



Source: Horticulture Statistics Unit, Economics, Statistics & Evaluation Division, M/o A&FW, HCS, 2022-23, MoSPI, Population Projections for India and States 2011 - 2036, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Note: Annual Household Consumption is calculated from the Report of HCS, 2022-23 of MoSPI

tor, accounting for 16% of GDP.

Deregulation is emphasized as a critical factor for achieving India's long-term economic goals. The Survey recommends structural reforms to enhance business ease, reduce bureaucratic complexities, and accelerate economic freedom. The capital markets, buoyed by increased investor participation and regulatory measures, are expected to support sustained growth.

INDUSTRY AND TRADE DEVELOPMENTS

The Survey reports a resurgence in foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows, which increased by 17.9% in FY25 compared to FY24. India's exports grew by 6%

despite global challenges, with diversification efforts underway to reduce dependency on a few trade partners.

Manufacturing, driven by the 'Make in India' and Digital India initiatives, witnessed impressive growth. India now produces 99% of its smartphones domestically, demonstrating reduced import dependency. The automobile sector expanded by 12.5% in FY24, prompting an extension of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.

The steel sector registered a 4.6% growth, bolstered by infrastructure spending. Railways saw an 8% rise in passenger traffic, and wireless data usage surged to 19.3 GB per user per month in FY24, up from 12.1 GB in

FY21, reflecting digital penetration.

INFLATION TRENDS

Retail inflation moderated from 5.4% in FY24 to 4.9% in April-December 2024, aided by monetary policies and government interventions. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) projects inflation aligning with the 4% target in FY26. The financial sector remains stable, with commercial banks' gross non-performing asset (GNPA) ratio declining to 2.6% in September 2024.

GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION PERSPECTIVES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised the Survey's findings, stating, "India's growth story is a testament

to the resilience of our people and the effectiveness of our policies. Our focus remains on inclusive and sustainable growth."

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman reiterated the government's commitment to economic reforms and fiscal responsibility. "This Survey showcases India's economic resilience and long-term growth trajectory. Structural reforms and targeted social investments will continue to drive our economy forward," she said.

Opposition leaders, however, voiced concerns over wage stagnation and income inequality. Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, criticized the government's policies, stating, "Corporate profits have soared while wages remain stagnant. This is an unsustainable growth model."

In the Lok Sabha, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi echoed similar sentiments, arguing that "economic growth must translate into better wages and living conditions for all Indians, not just corporations."

EXPERTS' REACTIONS

Industry leaders welcomed the positive outlook but stressed the need for sustainable wage growth. Sanjiv Puri, Chairman of

"FDI as a share of GDP has come down much faster than the export share of GDP globally. We are no longer competing with emerging markets but also industrialised countries. Therefore, one of the biggest magnets for FDIs is actually the prospect of profitable return that India is providing."

— Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran highlighted the importance of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI)

"Tomorrow you will see that the finance minister will go with a briefcase. A photo will come. You will not see a single Dalit, a tribal, a backward class person, or a minority in the photo. There are 90 officers who will prepare the budget tomorrow."

— Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi stated

"The real GDP growth forecast of ~6.3-6.8% made by the Survey suggests that the Union Budget is likely to build in a nominal growth of ~10% for FY2026. We believe that assumptions around the tax revenue would be anchored to a similar nominal growth print, when the Union Budget for FY2026 is presented tomorrow."

— Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA

ITC Limited, remarked, "While corporate profitability is crucial, linking wages to profitability is not always feasible."

Economists offered mixed reactions. Surjit Balla noted the disparity in wage growth, while Rathin Roy emphasized the need for long-term policy interventions.

The survey also highlighted that while India Inc. has been reporting substantial profits, there is a reluctance to reinvest these earnings into the economy. This hesitation is seen as a barrier to achieving sustained economic growth.

Furthermore, the survey pointed out that despite a significant rise in patent filings and improvements in innovation rankings, India's investment in research and development (R&D)

remains low, particularly from the private sector. This underinvestment in R&D is identified as a critical area needing attention to bolster the country's innovation ecosystem.

WHAT IT MEANS...

The Economic Survey 2024-25 presents a comprehensive analysis of India's economic trajectory, social sector investments, and market dynamics. While highlighting strong growth prospects, it also flags concerns over wage stagnation, investor caution, and the evolving impact of AI on employment. As the Union Budget 2025-26 approaches, policymakers will need to balance fiscal prudence with measures that ensure equitable economic progress for all.

Compiled by Ruchira Talapatra

	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) (as of 9 January 2025) ⁷³ • 8,34,695 km of road length sanctioned. • 7,70,983 km of road length completed. • 99.6 per cent of the targeted habitations provided connectivity.
	2.69 crore houses completed since 2016 under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G). ⁷²
	68,843 Amrit Sarovars (ponds) constructed under Mission Amrit Sarovar. ⁷³
	165.6 Sub-centres (SCs) 25.4 Primary Health Centres (PHCs) 5.5 Community Health Centres (CHCs)
	32.9 Doctors at PHCs 4.4 Total Specialists at CHCs
	79.3 Nursing Staff at PHCs & CHCs
	27.7 Pharmacists at PHCs & CHCs
	23.2 Lab Technicians at PHCs & CHCs
	12.2 crore households provided with tap water connections under Jal Jeevan Mission (as of 27 January 2025). ⁷³

Source: PIB on X

	Capacity Building Mobilised 10.05 crore rural poor households into 90.90 lakh SHGs, 5.96 lakh VOs and 32,439 CLFs in 7,143 blocks of 745 districts
	Financial Inclusion • 1.37 lakh SHG women members positioned as Banking Correspondent Sakhi. • ₹49,284 crore capitalisation support provided to SHGs. • ₹ 9.85 lakh crore of bank credit accessed by SHG.
	Farm Livelihoods • More than 2.64 crore households have agri-nutri gardens • Around 36,205 Custom Hiring Centres established to help small and marginal farmers hire farm tools and services at a nominal cost. • 4.30 crore Mahila Kisan covered
	Non-Farm Livelihoods • Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP): nearly 3.13 lakh enterprises in 280 blocks of 31 States/UTs. • Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana: 2297 vehicles operational in 26 states connecting remote villages.

Source: PIB on X

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Survey underscores the positive impact of government schemes such as free or subsidized food grains, subsidized cooking fuel, insurance coverage, and Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) on household incomes. These initiatives have contributed to reduced inequality and increased consumption spending. The Gini coefficient, a measure of inequality, declined in both rural and urban areas in 2023-24.

The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023-24 reveals a narrowing urban-rural consumption gap, with the Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) growth being highest among the bottom 5-10% of the population. The urban-rural MPCE gap decreased to 70% in 2023-24, indicating improved rural spending capacity.

Food subsidies under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) accounted for 6.5% of the Union budget in 2022-23, benefiting 84% of households with ration cards. The progressive subsidy pattern ensures greater benefits for lower-income groups, strengthening food security and poverty alleviation efforts.

DELHI HIGH COURT: TRIAL COURTS MUST NOT MECHANICALLY ADJOURN BAIL PLEAS OF UNDERTRIALS WHO COMPLETED ONE-HALF OF MAXIMUM IMPRISONMENT | SECTION 479 BNSS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case *Suleman Samad Versus State Of NCT Of Delhi* observed and has ruled that the trial courts must promptly pass orders and must not mechanically adjourn bail applications moved in cases covered by Section 479 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, wherein the undertrial prisoners have already undergone one half of the maximum imprisonment.

The bench headed by Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma in the case stated that if in case a judge proceeds on leave, it must be brought to the notice of the concerned Link Judge that such cases are to be taken up on priority, either on the next date or at the shortest possible date.

The section 479 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, states that where a person has, during the period of investigation, inquiry or trial, for offences not punishable with death or life imprisonment, has undergone detention for a period extending up to one-half of the maximum period of imprisonment shall be released on bail.



The bench headed by Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma in the case stated that if in case a judge proceeds on leave, it must be brought to the notice of the concerned Link Judge that such cases are to be taken up on priority, either on the next date or at the shortest possible date.

The said proviso stated that where such person is a first-time offender, he shall be released on bail if he has undergone detention for the period extending up to one-third of the maximum period of imprisonment.

The court in the present matter was hearing the bail petition filed by a 60 year old man accused in a POCSO case.

The FIR was lodged which being on the basis of the complaint filed by victim's mother.

Last Year, the first and second bail applications of the accused were dismissed by the trial court.

It being the case of him that due to old age, he was suffering from various health ailments and had already undergone more than one and half years in jail.

The court was also informed that while the bail application was filed by him in November, 2024, the jail authorities had forwarded a letter to the Trial Court in December last year regarding completion of his one-third of the maximum sentence which may be awarded to him in case of his conviction in the case.

Along with the said letter, an application for grant of bail was also sent by the Jail authorities to the Trial Court.

The counsel appearing for him submitted before the court that the Trial Court had failed to adjudicate the bail application for the last two months and the benefit of Section 479 of BNSS was being denied to the accused.

The court noted that the

petition of the accused remains un-adjudicated before the Trial Court till date.

The court also stated that, 'It being discouraging to note that despite the mandate of Section 479 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, BNSS, as noted above, and a report in this regard having already been sent by the Jail authorities and a bail application having also been moved, the learned Trial Court had adjourned the matter on several occasions in a mechanical manner, and even after recording on January 08, 2025 that the report qua the previous involvement of the accused had been received, a date of almost 20 days was given in the present case.'

The bench headed by Justice Sharma directed the Trial Court to decide the bail application of the accused, in terms of Section 479 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, BNSS, within seven days.

The counsel, Mr. Shikhar Khare, Mr. Shahzeb Ahmed, Mr. Shashi Kumar, Mr. Adeel Ahmad Khan, Mr. Wasil Khan & Mr. Utkarsh Advocates appeared for the Applicant.

Supreme Court sets aside judgement allowing Jharkhand residents who cleared CTET/TET from neighbouring states to apply for 2023 teacher recruitment

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Parimal Kumar and Ors. v. State of Jharkhand and Ors* observed and has set aside the judgement of Jharkhand High Court, wherein the court permitted the Jharkhand residents who had cleared the Central Teacher Eligibility Test, CTET or Teacher Eligibility Test, TET from neighbouring states to participate in the recruitment process for Assistant Teacher positions in Jharkhand.

The bench comprising of Justice JK Maheshwari and Justice Rajesh Bindal pronounced the judgement.

The court in the case stated that the impugned judgment based on the concession of the Jharkhand Advocate General amounts to changing the rules of the game after the commencement of the recruitment process in July 2023.

The court pronounced that, 'This court make it clear that CTET holders and state TET holders who applied after the judgement of the High Court or after the amendment of the Rules would not be eligible for the



recruitment process of 2023.

Background of the Case:

The Jharkhand High Court's ruling came in multiple writ petitions, which includes a Public Interest Litigation, PIL filed by Jharkhandi CTET Utteern Abhiyarthi Sangh and other qualified candidates seeking directions to the State Government to conduct the State TET, STET, which had not been held since 2016.

The petitioner in the plea contended before the court that the State's inaction had prevented approximately 3-4 lakh aspirants from participating in the recruitment process, as they did not possess a valid STET qualification.

The petitioner argued before the court that the failure of the State to conduct the examination or recognize CTET as an equivalent

qualification had led to the exclusion of many eligible candidates.

The attention of High Court was drawn to clause 10 of the Guidelines for conducting TET, which allows a state to consider the eligibility of candidates holding a TET certificate from another State or UT.

The court in the case noted that the State of Jharkhand had not conducted the STET for several years and directed the State to hold the exam annually.

The State Government, through an affidavit, raised concerns about regional language requirements, wherein it argued that the recruitment process should include stipulations ensuring that teachers are qualified to teach in local and tribal languages spoken in Jharkhand.

Supreme Court denies bail to Jharkhand-Based journalist Rupesh Kumar Singh in UAPA case

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *Rupesh Kumar Singh Versus State Of Jharkhand* observed and has dismissed a Special Leave Petition filed against the order of Jharkhand High Court dated December 6, 2023, whereby the High Court denied bail to journalist Rupesh Kumar Singh in a case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 over alleged links to the proscribed Communist Party of India (Maoist).

The bench comprising of Justice M.M. Sundresh and Justice Rajesh Bindal was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case stated that this court was not inclined to interfere with the order of the High Court.

The petitioner in the plea stated before the court that he was an independent journalist and has been reporting on various social issues such as the protests of the displaced people, encounters by security forces



in the State and massive arrests of Adivasi people alleged to have been framed as Maoists in Jharkhand.

The present matter relates from a first information report FIR No. 67/2021 filed against some alleged members of the Maoist organisation.

The petitioner was not named in the FIR as claimed.

However, during interrogation, some alleged that SSD Cards were obtained from the primary accused Prashant Bose and others by the State police which allegedly had incriminating material against the petitioner, as stated in the SLP.

It was also claimed before the court that the petitioner being an active member of the Maoist party who knew about the whereabouts of the primary accused Prashant Bose, Sheela Marandi and others named in the FIR.

On May 07, 2022, the supplementary chargesheet was filed based on the purported evidence.

On July 17, 2022, the petitioner was arrested and the petitioner being in custody since then.

In the SLP, the arrest of the petitioner has been described as a 'malicious campaign of persecution'.

It has also been stated before the court that the peti-

tioner was arrested in 2019 on alleged UAPA charges for being a member of the CPI(M), where he was released on bail in December 2019 as police failed to file chargesheet within the stipulated time.

Further, it was recalled that the petitioner was one of the petitioners in the 2021 Pegasus case.

It has also been alleged by him before the court that he was targeted by the Pegasus spyware and approached the Supreme Court.

The High Court while denying the bail observed that, 'from perusal of various paragraphs of the chargesheet it appears that the appellant is active member of the banned naxal outfit and he has been propagating the idea of terrorism for many years by giving speeches, abetting the underground PLGA group to influence and add other people into the armed cadre group to strengthen their parties to fight the state agencies.'

Supreme Court reiterates: Magistrate's summoning order must reflect reasons

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *M/S. JM Laboratories And Others Versus State Of Andhra Pradesh And Another* observed and has quashed a non-speaking summoning order issued by a Judicial Magistrate against a drug manufacturer, wherein reiterating that a summoning order cannot be issued without recording valid reasons.

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

The bench in the case was hearing an appeal filed by drug manufacturers assailing the correctness of the decision of Andhra Pradesh High Court, wherein the court refused to quash the summoning order issued against them in connection with the case registered under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, hereinafter, 'DC Act' after a declaration by the government analyst that one of their drug samples namely MOXIGOLD-CV 625 was 'Not of Standard Quality'.

The appellant argued before the court that a non-speaking summoning order cannot be issued against them and that the summons should reflect a judicial application of mind, along with the recording of compelling reasons for issuing it.

The judgement authored by Justice Gavai, while setting aside the decision of High Court held the summoning order issued against the Appellants to be invalid due to the magistrate's failure to record reasons before issuing the summons.

The court in the case emphasized that the issuance of the summon is a serious matter and it should not be issued unless the magistrate applied its mind to find out whether a prima facie case is made out against the accused.

The court referred to the case of *Pepsi Foods Ltd. and Another v. Special Judicial Magistrate and Others* and another case of *Lalankumar Singh and Others v. State of Maharashtra*, to hold that an order of issuance of process is not an empty formality. The Magistrate is required to apply

his mind as to whether sufficient ground for proceeding exists in the case or not.

The court in the case *Pepsi Foods Ltd. and Another v. Special Judicial Magistrate and Others* held that, 'Summoning of an accused in a criminal case is a serious matter. Criminal law cannot be set into motion as a matter of course. It being not that the complainant has to bring only two witnesses to support his allegations in the complaint to have the criminal law set into motion. The order of the Magistrate summoning the accused must reflect that he has applied his mind to the facts of the case and the law applicable thereto. Thus, he has to examine the nature of allegations made in the complaint and the evidence both oral and documentary in support thereof and would that be sufficient for the complainant to succeed in bringing charge home to the accused. It is not that the Magistrate is a silent spectator at the time of recording of preliminary evidence before summoning of the accused. The Magistrate has to carefully scrutinise

the evidence brought on record and may even himself put questions to the complainant and his witnesses to elicit answers to find out the truthfulness of the allegations or otherwise and then examine if any offence is prima facie committed by all or any of the accused.'

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case allowed the appeal and has set aside the summoning order along with the pending criminal case because the prosecution's case was barred by limitation as stated under Section 468 (2) of Code of Criminal Procedure, CrPC as the complaint was filed beyond the stipulated period of three years.

Accordingly, the court allowed the appeal.

The counsel, Mr. H.P.S. Sandhu, Adv. Mr. Harshit Sethi, Adv. Mr. Kartik Yadav, Adv. Ms. Mansi Tripathi, Adv. Mr. Ayush Choudhary, AOR appeared for the Petitioner.

The counsel, Ms. Prerna Singh, Adv. Mr. Guntur Pramod Kumar, AOR Mr. Gautam Bhatia, Adv. Mr. Dhruv Yadav, Adv. represented the Respondent(s).

Supreme Court allows temporary allocation of fixed spot for meat vendors in Panjim

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case *The Corporation Of The City Of Panaji Versus Mushtak Hussain Khatib* observed and has allowed displaced meat vendors which is to be allotted fixed spots in a temporary fish market in Panjim, Goa after City Corporation's demolition of the building where the vendors were lessees for over 30 years.

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

The bench in the case was hearing the challenge to the Bombay High Court order, wherein the court directed

the Corporation of the City of Panaji, CCP to construct and maintain public markets and slaughterhouses, and to regulate all markets and slaughterhouses in the interim period, in the public interest.

The court issued the said directions in light of the demolition of the building where the respondents were carrying out trade operations.

The demolition was being carried out due to the dangerous and dilapidated condition of the building. Thus, here the shops of meat vendors were affected.

The CCP challenged the order, wherein it is contended that the direction is beyond the statutory ambit of the

CCP under section 59 of The City of Panaji Corporation Act, 2002.

The section 59 (1) of The City of Panaji Corporation Act, 2002 states the CCP to take adequate measures for 'the construction and maintenance of public markets and slaughter-houses and the regulation of all markets and slaughter-houses.'

Before the court, the CCP submitted that as per its latest resolution of January 24, it has agreed to provide a fixed spot in the southeastern part of the temporary fish market to 6 meat vendors.

The counsel appearing for the vendors argued before the court that the vendors be additionally permitted to

install fridges, mincers, and mincing machines with electricity and water and that the area allotted be enclosed and secured.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has permitted the same and clarified that such an allotment would be purely on a temporary basis.

The court in the case refused to interfere in the issues raised by non-meat vendors, thus, the court directed that the other vendors seeking to enforce their lease rights may file a civil suit.

The counsel, Sr Adv. Atmaram NS Nadkarni, and advocates Rohit Braz D'sa, S.S. Rebello appeared for Meat Vendors.

Supreme Court relaxes conditions to appoint ad hoc judges in High Courts, says vacancies need not be more than 20%

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on January 30, 2025 relaxed the conditions to appoint ad hoc judges in High Courts.

The Supreme Court kept in abeyance the condition in its judgement dated April 2021 that ad hoc judges as per Article 224 of the Constitution of India can be appointed only if the vacancies are more than 20% of the sanctioned strength.

The Article 224A of the Constitution of India stated that the retired High Court judges can be appointed as High Court Judges.

The bench comprising of

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, Justice BR Gavai and Justice Surya Kant was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case passed the said directions so as to ease the appointment of ad-hoc judges considering the high rise in the pendency of cases, especially criminal appeals.

In April 2021, in *Lok Prahari* through its General Secretary V N Shukla IAS (Retd) vs Union of India, the Supreme Court had issued directions for the appointment of ad-hoc judges in High Courts as per Article 224A of Constitution of India.

The Judgement stipulated that recourse to the appointment of ad-hoc judges under

Article 244A should not be made unless 80% of the sanctioned strength is already either recommended or working.

Last week, the bench headed by Chief Justice of India, CJI Khanna had posted the *Lok Prahari* case to revisit the conditions.

Further, the bench suggested that ad-hoc judges could be appointed as puisne judges in the 2-judge benches of the High Courts which deal with criminal appeals.

The bench in the case noted that the pendency in High Court cases has increased a lot. Thus, more than 62 lakh cases are pending in High Court, of which more than 18 lakh are

criminal cases and 44 lakh are civil cases.

The court in its order stated: 'Having regard to the situation, this court is inclined to keep the observations from the conditions stipulated in paragraphs 43, 54 and 55 of the order and judgement dated April 28, 2021 that recourse to the appointment of ad hoc judges under Article 244A should not be made unless 80% of the sanctioned strength is already either recommended or working. In other words, the requirement that vacancies should not be more than 20% of the sanctioned strength for the time being shall be kept in abeyance.'

TOP OF THE DAY

UAE CHAIRS I'NTL HUMANITARIAN MEETING

ABU DHABI: Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Court for Development and Fallen Heroes' Families Affairs and Chairman of the International Humanitarian and Philanthropic Council, emphasised the importance of the UAE's developmental, humanitarian and philanthropic programmes around the world under the leadership of President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, reflecting the civilisational and humane character of the country and bringing about sustainable development and creating dignified living conditions for the beneficiaries.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SLAMS PECA ACT

ISLAMABAD: Amnesty International has slammed the recent The Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act 2025, passed in Pakistan, and has called on the Pakistani authorities for immediately repealing the amendment, and ensuring the right to freedom of expression is upheld in the country. Claiming that the act was "hastily passed", the Amnesty International said that the latest amendment, aiming at criminalizing 'fake and false news' is based on "vague and overbroad provisions" which threatens freedom of expression.

MANILA ARRESTS CHINESE SPIES

MANILA: Suspected Chinese spies posing as Taiwanese tourists as Taiwanese tourists in the Philippines after allegedly taking photographs of Philippine Coast Guard ships, Taipei Times reported.

According to local media, the two suspects had been staying at a resort in Palawan, where they discreetly used their phones from a secluded location to record the comings and goings of coast guard vessels. Palawan is located near the Spratly Islands, a key area of dispute in the South China Sea, and tensions between China and the Philippines have escalated in recent years over territorial claims. The arrested suspects are also accused of using drones without authorisation and installing cameras on coconut trees at the resort to monitor the ships' activities.

PAK NEEDS \$350 B TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank said that Pakistan needed USD 350 billion to combat climate change between 2023 to 2030, urging for a comprehensive climate financing strategy on Friday, a media report said. Pakistan is currently the fifth most climate-vulnerable country in the world, according to the Global Climate Risk Index. At the same time, Pakistan also faces some of the highest disaster risk levels in the world, ranking (23rd) out of 194 countries as per the 2024 Inform Risk Index.

THREE ISRAELI HOSTAGES, INCLUDING US, FRENCH CITIZENS, SET FOR RELEASE TODAY

Keith Siegel, a 65-year-old US citizen originally from North Carolina, was abducted along with his wife, Aviva, from Kibbutz Kfar Aza.

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

Israeli officials have confirmed receiving names of three hostages who are set to be released by Hamas today -- Ofer Calderon, Keith Siegel, and Yarden Bibas, Times of Israel reported.

Keith Siegel, a 65-year-old US citizen originally from North Carolina, was abducted along with his wife, Aviva, from Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Aviva was released in November 2023.

Ofer Calderon, 54, was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz on October 7, along with his two children, Erez and Sahar. Both children were freed during the previous ceasefire.

Yarden Bibas, 35, was taken hostage separately from his wife, Shiri, and their children, Ariel and Kfir, who were also abducted from Kibbutz Nir Oz.

Hamas has claimed that Shiri and the two boys died while in captivity. While Israel has not officially confirmed their deaths, the officials have voiced "grave concern" for their safety. Yarden was reportedly injured at the time of his abduction, according to Times of Israel reported. According to Israeli



Visitors at Hostages Square in Tel Aviv, January 5, 2024. File Photo

- Israel confirmed Hamas will release three hostages: Ofer Calderon, Keith Siegel, and Yarden Bibas.
- Keith Siegel, a 65-year-old U.S. citizen, was kidnapped with his wife, Aviva, who was freed in November 2023.
- Ofer Calderon was taken on October 7 along with his two children, who were previously released.
- Yarden Bibas was abducted separately from his wife and two children, whom Hamas claims have died.
- Israel released 110 Palestinian prisoners after receiving security assurances from ceasefire mediators.

officials, the families of the hostages have been informed, and Israel has accepted Hamas' proposed list of those to be released. Earlier on Thursday, Israel released 110 Palestinian prisoners after receiving security assurance from the mediators of the ongoing ceasefire-hostage deal, following the chaotic scenes in Khan Younis during the handover of Israeli and Thai hostages.

TWO OCTOBER 7 TERRORISTS ELIMINATED BEFORE TRUCE: IDF

TEL AVIV: The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) reported that in recent months - before the Gaza Ceasfire went into effect - and together with other Israeli security forces, it eliminated two Hamas terrorists who took part in the murderous massacre of October 7, including the kidnapping of female IDF observers from the base at Kibbutz Nahal Oz. Last Month, an Israel Air Force (IAF) aircraft attacked and killed the terrorist Hatim Hazem Hejazi Regev, a Nakba terrorist in the Shuja'iyya regiment of the terrorist organization Hamas.

Hamas confirms death of military leader Mohammed Deif, months after Israeli airstrike

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM

Hamas on Thursday confirmed killing of its military leader Mohammed Deif in an Israeli strike, months after the Israel Defense Forces announcement, Times of Israel reported.

Hamas spokesman Abu Obeida confirmed the death of Deif in a video statement. He also confirmed the deaths of the deputy commander of Hamas's military wing; Ghazi Abu Tama'a, head of combat support; Raad Thabet, the military wing chief of staff; Rafa'a Salameh, commander of the Khan Younis Brigade; Ayman Nofal, commander of the Central Gaza Brigade; and Ahmed Ghandour, commander of the Northern Gaza Brigade, Times of Israel reported.

In August of last year, Israel announced that it had killed Mohammed Deif in a July 13 air strike in the Khan Younis area. In a post on X, IDF stated, "We can now confirm: Mohammed Deif



Picture said to show leader of Hamas' military wing, known as Al-Qassam Brigades (L), Mohammed Deif (R) in a location given as Gaza Strip in this handout picture released on January 7, 2024. File Photo

He also confirmed the deaths of the deputy commander of Hamas's military wing, head of combat support; Raad Thabet, the military wing chief of staff; Rafa'a Salameh, commander of the Khan Younis Brigade.

was eliminated." The Israeli military said that it obtained intelligence confirming his death in the past few hours. Deif was targeted in a strike at Hamas' Khan Younis Brigade commander Rafa'a Salameh's compound in Khan Younis area on July 13, The Times of

Israel reported. Earlier, Israel released 110 Palestinian prisoners after receiving security assurance from the mediators of the ongoing ceasefire-hostage deal, following the chaotic scenes in Khan Younis during the handover of Israeli and Thai hostages.

Myanmar junta extends state of emergency on coup's fourth anniversary

AGENCIES
NAYPYIDAW

Myanmar's military has prolonged its state of emergency for another six months as the country continues to struggle in maintaining control, with intense fighting continuing across the country, according to a report by Al Jazeera.

The military-led National Defence and Security Council decided to extend emergency rule during a meeting in Naypyidaw on Friday, just a day before the coup's fourth anniversary.

According to an official statement, all council members, including the commander-in-chief and the acting president, unanimously agreed to prolong emergency rule under Section 425 of the 2008 constitution. "All members of National Defence and Security Council including the commander in chief as well

as acting president decided in unison for the extension of the state of emergency for another six months according to section 425 of the 2008 constitution," the statement said.

"There are still more tasks to be done to hold the general election successfully. Especially for a free and fair election, stability and peace is still needed," state-run MRTV said on its Telegram channel in announcing the extension of emergency rule, Al Jazeera reported.

Notably, on February 1, 2021, the military junta seized power in a coup ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel laureate.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International has urged the international community to take "urgent action" to ensure accountability for atrocities in Myanmar, ahead of the four-year anni-

versary of the 2021 military coup. According to Amnesty International, since the 2021 coup, Myanmar's military junta has killed more than 6,000 people, arbitrarily detained more than 20,000, and renewed judicial executions. Over 3.5 million people are internally displaced. Human rights groups have documented the military's torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, indiscriminate attacks, and the denial of humanitarian aid, which may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

"Myanmar's military junta has carried out widespread and systematic attacks against the civilian population nationwide, bombing schools, hospitals, and religious buildings with total impunity. Armed groups fighting the military have also committed human rights violations.

According to Al Jazeera, Israel released the Palestinian prisoners after Israeli military confirmed the release of three Israelis, one male and two female, and five Thailand nationals.

Israel had delayed the release of Palestinian prisoners and had asserted that the prisoners won't be freed until the "safe passage" of the hostages is "guaranteed in the next releases." "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, together with Defense Minister Israel Katz, has ordered that the release of the terrorists slated to be released today be delayed until the safe exit of our hostages in the next phases is assured. Israel demands that the mediators see to this," the Israel PM Office said in a statement.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas attacked southern Israel killing over 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting over 200 others. Over 46,000 Palestinians have been also killed in Gaza in Israel's counter-offensive against Hamas.

Pakistan: 47-day protest in Gwadar ends

AGENCIES
GWADAR

After 47 days of protests in Gwadar, an alliance of political parties decided to call off their sit-in on Thursday following successful negotiations with district authorities, Dawn reported.

The alliance has provided a one-month timeframe to the district administration to address the issues that led to the protest.

A seven-point agreement was signed between the two parties after the talks. As part of the agreement, the alliance leadership agreed to end the protest until the month of Ramadan, as per Dawn.

The district administration committed to implementing the seven-point plan, which includes measures to combat illegal trawling, reduce load-shedding, provide 17 hours of electricity daily, allocate a colony for local fishermen, accelerate ongoing projects by the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), and ensure

Israel Air Force strikes Hezbollah weapons factory in Lebanon

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) reported that Israel Air Force (IAF) fighter jets attacked during the night targets of the Hezbollah terrorist organization in the Bekaa region of Lebanon that the IDF said posed a threat to the Israeli home front and its forces.

Among the targets attacked was a military site with underground infrastructure for the development and production of weapons and transit infrastructure on the Syria-Lebanon border through which the terrorist organization Hezbollah tries to transfer weapons.

Also, the IDF said that a Hezbollah drone that made its way to Israel Thursday was intercepted by the IAF constituted a violation of the understanding between Israel and Lebanon.

In the recent development, Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Thursday evening issued a statement welcoming home the three Israelis who today were released from captivity in Gaza - Agam Berger, Arbel Yehud and Gadi Moses. Netanyahu also criticized how Hamas handled their release.

"Agam, Arbel, Gadi - wel-



Israel Flag

Among the targets attacked was a military site with underground infrastructure for the development and production of weapons and transit infrastructure on the Syria-Lebanon border.

However, the Prime Min-

ISRAELI SOLDIER, TWO TERRORISTS KILLED IN JENIN RAID

TEL AVIV: The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) reported that during its anti-terrorist operation in Jenin, soldiers of the Haruv special forces unit killed the two terrorists they encountered on Thursday. However, in the fighting, IDF Sgt Liam Hezi was killed and five other fighters were wounded. Haruv forces continue to operate in Jenin. During the operation yesterday, the fighters searched inside a building in the area, and encountered at close range two terrorists who had barricaded themselves in it. After several hours, soldiers of the Haruv patrol and other forces surrounded the building to which the two terrorists fled and killed them.

come home," he said. "The entire State of Israel embraces you, as do my wife Sara and I."

"This release was achieved, first of all, thanks to our heroic soldiers, and it was also achieved thanks to the steadfast and determined stand that we took during the negotiations," added Netanyahu.

ister also had a few words about the chaos in Gaza that the freed Israelis experienced during their release saying, "We will not accept violations of the agreement. During the release of our hostages today, we all saw shocking scenes. We made it clear to the mediators that we do not intend to accept any risk to our hostages."

Satellite images reveal China's wartime military complex in Beijing

AGENCIES
TAIPEI

Satellite images have revealed that China is constructing a large wartime military complex in its capital, according to US officials, Taiwan News reported.

The satellite images show a 1,500-acre construction site, which China is suspected of beginning in mid-2024. US intelligence officials are analysing the photos, which display holes believed to be for bunkers that could protect Chinese leaders during a conflict.

Renny Babiarz, a former analyst at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, said, "Imagery analysis suggests the construction of several possible underground facilities linked via possible underground passageways, although additional data and information is needed to more fully assess this construction."

While no military presence has been observed at the



AGENCIES
TAIPEI

site, there are signs warning against drones or photography. Guards at the site have declined to comment on the project. A former US intelligence official noted that the scale of the new facility suggests it could replace the Western Hills complex as China's primary wartime command centre, reported Taiwan News. The facility is expected to provide greater security against US "bunker buster" munitions and even potential nuclear attacks.

The Chinese embassy in Washington has denied knowledge of the project details.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has proposed returning US Typhon missiles stationed in the Philippines if China ceases its aggressive actions in the South China Sea, Taiwan News reported.

Speaking ahead of a meeting with US President Donald Trump, Marcos made it clear that the Philippines' stance on the missile system is tied to China's behaviour in the disputed waters. Marcos' statement follows repeated calls from China for the Philippines to withdraw the Typhon missile system. However, the US and the Philippines decided in September to keep the missiles in place, reversing an earlier plan to temporarily remove them.

Marcos questioned China's stance, saying, "I don't understand the comments on the Typhon missile system.

We don't make any comments on their missile systems, and their missile systems are a thousand times more powerful than what we have."



The protest site in Gwadar. File Photo

a steady supply of clean water to residents.

According to Dawn, the negotiations were attended by Gwadar Additional Deputy Commissioner Dr Abdul Shakoor, Assistant Commissioner Mir Jawad Ahmed Zehri and key political and social figures from the alliance.

Other notable attendees included Director Marine Ahmad Nadeem, Quetta Electric Supply Company

SDO Shigar Allah Baloch and Naveed Mengal and GDA engineers Abdul Razak and Nadir Baloch.

Due to the ongoing protests, normal life in Gwadar remains severely impacted as workers and supporters of the All Parties Alliance continued their sit-in at Marine Drive for over a week.

The protesters are demanding the reopening of the Iranian border for trade in oil and other goods, which has

been shut for several months, as per Dawn.

Dawn's report indicates that protest leaders emphasised that border trade is the main source of livelihood for Gwadar's residents, many of whom have lost their jobs due to the extended closure. They criticised the introduction of a token system at the Kantani Hor border, calling it a significant barrier to trade that has worsened unemployment in the region.

THE COMMEMORATION



The CN Tower is illuminated with green lights to mark the national day of remembrance of the Quebec City attack in Toronto, Canada. Source: Anadolu

German party could rely on far-right again for immigration vote

AGENCIES
BERLIN

The man tipped to be Germany's next leader could rely on support from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party for the second time in a week, a move that has been widely condemned.

Friedrich Merz, the leader of the conservative CDU party, may need AfD votes to pass legislation toughening immigration laws.

Former chancellor Angela Merkel has accused him of turning his back on a previous pledge not to work with AfD in the Bundestag.

Merz has defended his actions as "necessary" and said that he had not sought



Friedrich Merz, the leader of the conservative CDU party. File Photo

nor wanted AfD's support. "A right decision doesn't become wrong just because the wrong people agree to it," he said.

On Friday morning the CDU said it had requested a pause ahead of the vote and

appeared to be holding talks on whether the legislation should be voted on or sent back to committee.

The CDU is leading in the polls ahead of Germany's snap election next month. The AfD is currently polling in second place, although Merz has ruled out any kind of coalition with them.

Thousands of people took to the streets of Germany on Thursday night in opposition to the CDU's cooperation with the far-right.

While Wednesday's vote saw a non-binding motion over changes to immigration law pass through parliament, actual legislation will be tabled on Friday aimed at curbing immigration numbers and family

reunion rights.

However, his proposed measures are highly unlikely to come into effect this side of February's snap election and - if they did - could clash with EU law.

The proposed legislation is opposed by parties including current Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD). Scholz is among those to have criticised Merz's reliance on the AfD, calling it an "unforgivable mistake".

"Since the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany over 75 years ago, there has always been a clear consensus among all democrats in our parliaments: we do not make common cause with the far right," he said.

IRON DOME PLAN: RUSSIA BLAMES US OF PLOTTING TO MILITARISE SPACE

The US said the intention was to modernise an outdated system and address a catastrophic threat.

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

Russia on Friday condemned an executive order by U.S. President Donald Trump to build a new missile defence shield, accusing the United States of trying to upset the global nuclear balance and pave the way for military confrontation in space.

Trump on Monday signed an order that "mandated a process to develop an 'American Iron Dome,'" a next-generation U.S. missile defence shield against ballistic, hypersonic, cruise missile and other forms of aerial attack.

The White House said the intention was to modernise an outdated system and address a "catastrophic threat" that had become more complex as U.S. adversaries developed new delivery systems.

But Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the plan was aimed at undermining the ability of both Russia and China to exercise nuclear deterrence.

In the sharpest Russian criticism so far of a policy announced by Trump's new administration, she said that the planned U.S. move would hinder the prospects for talks on nuclear arms control - something that both Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin have said

THE SHIELD

- Russia condemned Trump's executive order for a new U.S. missile defence shield, calling it destabilizing.
- The U.S. aims to modernize defenses against evolving threats like hypersonic missiles.
- Russia sees the plan as a threat to nuclear deterrence and arms control talks.
- Moscow accuses the U.S. of militarizing space with space-based interception systems.
- The White House claims the system will



Spokesperson of Russia's Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova attends the annual press conference held by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow, Russia, January 14, 2025. File photo

enhance deterrence and national security.

support talks on arms control, but no meeting is scheduled yet.

Trump on Monday signed an order that "mandated a process to develop an 'American Iron Dome,'" a next-generation U.S.

they favour.

"It (the plan) directly envisages a significant strengthening of the American nuclear arsenal and means for conducting combat operations in space, including the development and deployment of space-based interception systems," Zakharova told reporters at a news briefing in Moscow.

"We consider this as another confirmation of

the U.S. focus on turning space into an arena of armed confrontation... and the deployment of weapons there.

"The indicated U.S. approaches will not contribute to reducing tensions or improving the situation in the strategic sphere, including creating a basis for a fruitful dialogue on strategic offensive arms," she said.

The White House's Iron

Dome statement did not refer to strengthening the U.S. nuclear arsenal, but said:

"The Iron Dome will further the goals of peace through strength. By empowering the United States with a second-strike capability, the Iron Dome will deter adversaries from attacks on the homeland."

Trump and Putin have both said they would like to meet face-to-face to discuss a range of issues, including the Ukraine war, but Moscow says it has yet to receive any signals from the U.S. on when and where such an encounter could take place.

Canada and Mexico face 25% tariffs today, Trump says

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has said he will follow through with his threat to hit imports from Canada and Mexico with 25% border taxes, known as tariffs, on 1 February.

But he added that a decision about whether this would include oil from those countries had not yet been made.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, Trump said the move was aimed to address the large amounts of undocumented migrants and the fentanyl that come across US borders as well as trade deficits with its neighbours.



US President Donald Trump

The president also suggested that he was still planning to impose new tariffs on China, which he said earlier this month would be 10%, but did not give any details.

"With China, I'm also thinking about something because they're sending fentanyl into our country, and because of that, they're causing us hundreds of thousands of deaths," Trump said.

"So China is going to end up paying a tariff also for that, and we're in the process of doing that."

During the election campaign, Trump threatened to hit Chinese-made products with tariffs of up to 60%, but held off on any immediate action on his first day back in the White House, instead ordering his administration to study the issue.

US goods imports from

China have flattened since 2018, a statistic that economists have attributed in part to a series of escalating tariffs that Trump imposed during his first term.

Earlier this month, a top Chinese official warned against protectionism as Trump's return to the presidency renews the threat of a trade war between the world's two biggest economies - but did not mention the US by name. Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Ding Xuexiang, Vice Premier of China, said his country was looking for a "win-win" solution to trade tensions and wanted to expand its imports.

Mexico asks Google Maps not to rename Gulf of Mexico

AGENCIES
MEXICO CITY

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has written a letter to Google asking the firm to reconsider its decision to rename the Gulf of Mexico.

US President Donald Trump signed an executive order requiring the body of water - which is bordered by the US, Cuba and Mexico - be renamed the Gulf of America in his first week in office.

It will only appear on Google Maps with the new name for people based in the US - elsewhere in the world it will retain its current name, which has been used

MEXICAN AMERICA

Sheinbaum has criticised Google's decision, saying the firm should not respond to "the mandate of a country" to change the name of "an international sea". But she seemed to poke fun at Trump's move by joking Mexico may demand Google make some additional renaming decisions. "By the way, we are also going to ask for Mexican America to appear on the map," she said. Sheinbaum previously joked she would consider renaming North America as "América Mexicana" in the country. "He says that he will call it the Gulf of America on its continental shelf," Sheinbaum previously said when Trump signed the executive order. "For us it is still the Gulf of Mexico, and for the entire world it is still the Gulf of Mexico."

for hundreds of years. But Mexico argues the U.S. cannot legally change the Gulf's name because the United Nations Convention on the Law

of the Sea dictates that an individual country's sovereign territory only extends up to 12 nautical miles out from the coastline.

Ghanaian MPs clash in parliament, destroying furniture

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Chaos erupted in Ghana's parliament late on Thursday night, with lawmakers destroying furniture, and pushing and shoving each other. Police were called into the meeting - held to vet Ghana's new ministerial appointments - as MPs damaged tables and microphones. The vetting committee had disagreed over a number of issues, with some accusing opposition MPs of dragging out the process in order to settle political scores.

CANADIAN REPORT FINDS NO PROOF OF INDIA'S LINK IN NIJJAR'S KILLING

This week, two significant news from Americas have sparked debates in the realms of global politics. On one hand, the US has placed a temporary hold on foreign aid to Pakistan for the purpose of reassessment, following an executive order from President Trump. This decision has led to an immediate cessation of several significant projects under the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in Pakistan, notably including the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP), which serves as the primary initiative aimed at fostering the preservation and protection of cultural heritage. On the other hand, a report from a Canadian commission set by Trudeau himself has made shocking revelations as in how Trudeau's government is involved in promoting pro-Khalistani activities including

funding in Canada creating serious security challenges for India. Also, the report has again alleged India of interfering in Canada's elections inviting sharp reactions from Indian government.

This week, as previously mentioned by Rubio, the US has suspended foreign assistance to Pakistan for a reassessment in accordance with the executive order issued by Trump. Consequently, five initiatives in the energy sector have been halted. These initiatives include the Power Sector Improvement Activity, Pakistan Private Sector Energy Activity, Energy Sector Advisory Services Project, Clean Energy Loan Program, and Pakistan Climate Financing Activity. Additionally, four projects related to economic growth have also been affected.

The overall financial impact of the projects in question re-

WORLD RECAP
ANSHU JOSHI

mains uncertain, primarily due to the lack of clarity regarding the annual assistance the US is currently providing to Pakistan. Recently, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, while refraining from specifying any particular nation, had articulated while presenting the foreign policy roadmap under Trump 2.0 regime that the US would dechannelize international aid that it is providing to various countries presently towards its own people in the US. He had also asserted that "every dollar the US spends, every programme the US funds, and every policy the country pursues must be justified with the answer to three simple questions: Does

it make America safer? Does it make America stronger? Does it make America more prosperous?" It could be made from here itself that the US would soon be suspending its financial aids that it provides to various countries. I think there will be more such announcements made in near future.

On the other hand, in a significant development, A Canadian commission report, initiated by Justin Trudeau, has presented some startling findings, notably indicating that there is no evidence connecting any foreign state to the assassination of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. This conclu-

sion stands in stark contrast to previous claims made by Trudeau regarding India's involvement in the matter. Also, the report implied that the Trudeau administration has actively supported the Khalistan movement, including providing financial backing, which has contributed to challenges concerning India's internal security. This comprehensive report from Canada's Foreign Interference Commission spans seven volumes. Notably, on page 98 of the fourth volume, it acknowledges the validity of India's concerns regarding Khalistani terrorists, as cited by the Canadian intelligence agency. The report confirms that certain individuals residing in Canada are implicated in terrorist activities within India. Furthermore, it highlights that some of these individuals are financing terrorism from Canada, with funds

being transferred to terrorists operating in India. Additionally, Canada has recognized that the presence of these Khalistani terrorists has contributed to the deterioration of relations between India and Canada.

However, the report also alleged India of interfering in Canada's elections. India has dismissed all such unfounded accusations. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated on Wednesday this week that it is, in reality, Canada that has been persistently meddling in India's domestic matters. The Canadian Commission's report claimed that following China, India was involved in meddling with Canada's electoral process. In response, MEA has asserted that it is, in fact, Canada that has consistently intruded into India's domestic affairs. Such interference has created an environment that enables

illegal migration and organized crime. The Indian government firmly rejected the allegations presented in the report regarding India's involvement and expressed its expectation that the systems allowing for illegal migration will no longer be accepted.

However, it is not difficult to comprehend the motivations behind the allegations made by the Trudeau government. This report references the elections of 2019 and 2021 as pivotal moments, marking the decline in Trudeau's political standing. In 2015, he successfully established a government with a full majority; however, by 2019, his popularity had waned, compelling him to govern as a minority. The situation deteriorated further in 2021, necessitating reliance on parties such as the NDP for critical legislative support. Subsequently, it appears that Trudeau has be-

come increasingly fixated on appealing to the Khalistani vote bank. Currently, there is significant opposition to Trudeau within Canada, and the likelihood of his re-election appears minimal. This context may explain why he seems to be seeking justifications for a potential defeat even prior to the elections, invoking the names of various countries, including India, in his rhetoric.

Power can be a compelling force. When leaders lose sight of the fundamental purpose of their authority, they risk making critical errors that could ultimately jeopardize their position. I can only hope that this week serves as a reminder for leaders to focus on the responsibilities for which they are elected.

The author is Professor, School of International Studies, JNU

PICTURE PERFECT



Rising star and yesteryear's hero Chunky Panday's daughter Ananya Panday during a photoshoot in Mumbai. Instagram

ARJUN, RAKUL, BHUMI'S 'MERE HUSBAND KI BIWI' TO HIT THEATRES ON FEBRUARY 21

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The first poster of 'Mere Husband Ki Biwi,' starring Arjun Kapoor, Rakul Preet Singh, and Bhumi Pednekar, was unveiled by the makers of the film on Friday.

After the massive success of 'Singham Again', actor Arjun Kapoor is looking forward to continuing the momentum of his good run at the box office with his upcoming film 'Mere Husband Ki Biwi'. It is directed by Mudassar Aziz.

The film is slated to release in theatres on February 21. In the first-look poster of the film, Rakul and Bhumi were seen sitting on a horse while holding the hands of Arjun Kapoor who was



standing in the middle.

At first glance, the film was speculated to be based on an extramarital affair, however, the tagline of the film narrates a different tale.

It read, "Love triangle nahi, circle hai (It's not a love triangle, it's a circle)"

In the poster, Arjun donned a purple shirt while Rakul Preet wore an ivory

lehenga. Actress Bhumi Pednekar donned a red sarwar kurta.

While sharing the poster, Arjun wrote, "Khencho... Aur khencho!!! Sharafat ki yehi saza toh hoti hai... Kalesh ho ya clash, phassta toh mujh jaisa aam aadmi hai (Translation: Pull...and pull!!! This is the punishment for decency... Be it a conflict or a clash, it is a

common man like me who suffers). Mudassar Aziz, who earlier helmed projects like 'Khel Khel Mein' and 'Pati Patni Aur Woh', has directed 'Mere Husband Ki Biwi'.

Excited about the film, Aziz in a press note said, "As a filmmaker, I've always believed in telling stories that entertain, and leave audiences of all ages smiling. I believe such films that endure and make for repeat viewings."

"Mere Husband Ki Biwi is a film that celebrates the quirks and complexities of romantic relationships. I've always been one for wholesome entertainers--movies that bring friends and families together, make them laugh, and give them something to talk about.

ANIL KAPOOR PENS HEARTFELT BIRTHDAY MESSAGE FOR PREITY ZINTA

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Actress Preity Zinta is celebrating her 50th birthday today. On this occasion, actor Anil Kapoor penned a heartfelt message for his co-actress and also wished her luck for IPL 2025.

Taking to his Instagram handle, Anil shared a throwback photo of him and actress Preity Zinta in which they were seen posing while hooking each other's hands.

Sharing the heartfelt message, Anil Kapoor



wrote, "Happy Birthday, @realpz! Your warmth, kindness, and that radiant smile light up every room. Wishing you all the best for IPL 2025 and may you win the trophy this year!"

Apart from being a stellar actress in Bollywood,

Preity also owns a cricket franchise in IPL which goes by the name of Kings XI Punjab. Cricketer Shikhar Dhawan who has played for this team also extended his heartfelt wishes to the actress on her 50th birthday.

He wrote, "Many happy returns of the day @realpz. Stay happy, healthy and blessed always!"

Indian cricketer Yuvraaj Singh also wished the actress 'Happy Birthday'. He wrote, "Happy birthday Pzed! Loads of love and hope you have a wonderful year ahead"

Preity Zinta made her Bollywood debut with a supporting role in Dil Se (1998) and quickly became a beloved star with her versatility across romantic comedies and action thrillers.

Amir attends trailer launch of Naga Chaitanya's film 'Thandel'

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan on Friday evening attended the trailer launch of Naga Chaitanya-starrer 'Thandel' in Mumbai.

He was all smiles as he arrived to cheer for the team of 'Thandel'. Aamir also posed with Naga Chaitanya for the shutterbugs.

Have a look at the pictures of Aamir and Naga from the event

Naga Chaitanya has worked with Aamir in the film 'Laal Singh Chaddha', which was released in 2022. The movie marked the Bollywood debut of Naga Chaitanya, who is the elder son of veteran actor Nagarjuna. 'Thandel', which also stars Sai Pallavi in the lead role, is directed by Chandoo Mondeti and produced by Bunny Vasu under the prestigious Geetha Arts banner, with Allu Aravind presenting it.

In an interview with ANI, Naga opened up about his role.

"'Thandel' means the captain of the ship.. the one



'Thandel', which also stars Sai Pallavi in the lead role, is directed by Chandoo Mondeti and produced by Bunny Vasu under the prestigious Geetha Arts banner, with Allu Aravind presenting it.

who leads the entire crew. This film is based on a true story. My character Raju is Thandel, who is the leader of the group."

Throwing more light on his character and the plot of the film, he added, "The fishermen unfortunately in one of the trips drift off into Pakistan waters and are caught by the coast guard and put into Pakistan jail for a year and a half. So, it is their journey

throughout and how they come out of this situation. Through all these layers there is a beautiful love story. This is the journey of my character."

The film boasts a technical crew, including music by National Award-winning composer Devi Sri Prasad, cinematography by Shamdat, and editing by National Award-winning Naveen Nooli. The film will be released on February 7.

BRAIN PICKING



I am fiercely loyal and over-possessive, but I am learning to control my being possessive.

— RANVEER SINGH
(Indian Actor)

Chris Evans denies returning to MCU for 'Avengers: Doomsday'

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Actor Chris Evans has denied his return to the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) for 'Avengers: Doomsday'. He called himself a "happy retired man," reported The Hollywood Reporter.

Evans recently had a conversation with Esquire magazine as quoted by The Hollywood Reporter. It was a part of a cover story on Anthony Mackie who will be next seen in 'Captain America: Brave New World'.

In the conversation, he brushed away the possibility of him appearing in the MCU. He said, "That's not



true, though. This always happens. I mean, it happens every couple of years -- ever since Endgame. I've just stopped responding to it. Yeah, no -- happily retired!" as quoted by The Hollywood Reporter.

Evans played the role of Steve Rogers/Captain America in MCU. He first

portrayed the superhero in 2011's 'Captain America: The First Avenger' and, after numerous films, retired his version following 2019's 'Avengers: Endgame'.

Mackie, who will also star in Avengers: Doomsday, was asked if he had heard any news about Evans' return.

Shabana-Jyotika starrer crime drama 'Dabba Cartel' teaser released

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The makers of Shabana Azmi starrer 'Dabba Cartel' have released the teaser of the series. Sporting an all-women lead cast, the series stars Jyotika and Sai Tamhankar in the lead roles.

Directed by Hitesh Bhatia, the series follows the



tale of five middle-class women and their families whose lives take a drastic turn after they get tangled in a drug trafficking business.

The women-led cartel is now thrust into peril, while the men -- employees of a pharmaceutical company, called Viva Life, at the centre of this syndicate -- are being investigated for ties

to an illegal pharmaceutical drug.

Apart from the lead cats, the veteran actor Gajraj Rao will also play a prominent role in the series. In one minute and nine seconds teaser, Shabana Azmi exudes the powerful role of a businesswoman who follows only one principle of business -- Profit and Loss.

REVIEW: DEVA *****

DEVA

PRAVEEN NAGDA

Mumbai Police and the underworld have always caught the attention of public and there were many movies made on this subject. Often you get to see the city of Mumbai in its real avatar, the streets, the chawls, the slums, the skyscrapers, the normal Mumbaiers, the good guys, the bad guys, and the Mumbai Police

to keep you safe. Deva, a crime suspense thriller directed by Rosshan Andrews, a well-known Malayalam filmmaker with his Bollywood debut, opens with this very feel of Mumbai and keeps the audience fully engaged throughout the film.

The film starts with an accident met by Inspector Dev Ambre (Shahid Kapoor), where he loses his memory bringing an investigation



to a halt he was leading to a halt. Believing him to be dead, the underworld and the rogues celebrate the event like Mumbaiers celebrate their festivals with drum and dance on the streets.

In the flashback now... Dev, a Mumbai cop known for his defiant hooligan style and always going beyond the law to ensure the law is dreaded by the bad guys. His senior DCP Farhan (Pravesh Rana),

and also a good friend and his brother-in-law hides this memory loss issue from the whole world and tries to uncover the truth behind the last words (he has solved the case) that he heard from Dev before the accident.

A dreaded gangster, Prabhakar Jadhav, aka Prabhakar Dada (Manish Wadhwa), always escapes from the clutches of Mumbai Police, gets arrested easily at rallies, and then conveniently escapes from jail, bluffing the cops again. This pattern is discovered by the crime reporter Diya Sathaye (Pooja Hegde). This theory

leads to a mole in the department that baffles everyone.

In a bid to capture the crook, many times many lives are lost from the Mumbai cops team that includes Diya's father, a constable in Mumbai Police too. The hunt for the capture of Prabhakar Dada becomes intense and this time he is gunned down by Dev, and Dev gives the credit for the encounter to his best friend ACP Rohan D'Silva (Pavai Gulati). On Maharashtra day, while receiving the medal, Rohan is shot dead, and Dev vows to catch the culprit and asks for a free hand while leading the

investigation. While investigating and narrowing down to solving the case Dev meets with the accident, which leaves him with a lost memory.

The film moves at a fast pace in the first half, and you will enjoy the whacky side of this crazy cop dealing with the baddies. As the film progresses, there remains a non-stop suspense created by the killer leaving the cops in complete perplexity as all leads come to a dead end. In the second half you see Dev-B trying to revive his memories step by step by getting back into the case and reliving Dev-

A discovering the flaws in the investigation. Shahid Kapoor has brilliantly portrayed Dev-B in the second half with the facial expressions of being lost, and a diagonally opposite personality to Dev-A. Pravesh Rana also puts up a mature performance befitting his role, though the story somewhat unfolds predictably except the climax. There is only one song in the movie, but I wonder if it was even required.

Praveen Nagda is Festival Director of KidzCINEMA and CultureCinema Film Festivals

KEY EXPECTATIONS FOR A WORKING DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

JEEVIKA SHARMA

The expectations and non-negotiables terms for a working daughter-in-law often vary depending on cultural, familial, and personal circumstances. However, here are some commonly discussed considerations that can serve as a foundation for mutual understanding and harmony:

1. RESPECT FOR BOUNDARIES

Work-Life Balance: The right to maintain a balance between work responsibilities and family duties.

Personal Space: Time for self-care, hobbies, and relaxation without guilt.

2. EQUAL PARTNERSHIP

Household Responsibilities: Shared domestic duties between all capable family members, not just the daughter-in-law.

Mutual Respect: Respect for her career, opinions, and contributions.

3. CAREER INDEPENDENCE

Support for Career Choices: Freedom to choose and grow in her career without undue pressure to compromise for family expectations.

Time Flexibility: Understanding of her work schedule, deadlines, and commitments.



4. SHARED PARENTING (IF APPLICABLE)

Co-Parenting: Equal participation of both spouses in raising children.

Family Support: Assistance from family members without imposing rigid gender roles.

5. OPEN COMMUNICATION

Transparent Conversations: A space for her to voice opinions or concerns without fear of judgment or repercussions.

Conflict Resolution: Ad-

ressing issues respectfully and constructively.

6. RESPECT FOR HER RELATIONSHIPS

Freedom to Maintain Friendships: Time and space to nurture friendships and relationships outside the family.

Connection with Her Family: Unrestricted ability to spend time with or support her parents and siblings.

7. EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Encouragement: Recognition



and appreciation for balancing work and family.

Mental Health Awareness: Respect for her mental and emotional well-being.

8. NON-INTERFERENCE

Autonomy in Decisions: Freedom to make choices about her life, work, and personal preferences.

No Micromanagement: Avoidance of controlling or scrutinizing her actions.

9. FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Control Over Earnings: The

ability to manage her own income and financial decisions.

Joint Contributions: Shared responsibility for family expenses, if agreed upon, without undue expectations.

10. MUTUAL RESPECT FOR CULTURAL PRACTICES

Choice in Participation: The freedom to engage in family traditions or customs without coercion.

Respect for Diversity: Acknowledgment of her individuality, beliefs, and values.

What are the effects of high caffeine consumption on fertility?

DR. VANDANA BHATIA

Determining the relationship between caffeine intake and infertility is crucial as high caffeine consumption can impact your fertility more than you think. This article aims to create awareness regarding how too much caffeine can interfere with conception and what you should know to stay informed.

Caffeine is a stimulant found in different amounts – in coffee, black and green tea, energy drinks, some soft drinks and in chocolates. Caffeinated drinks are commonly consumed by many people in India and worldwide. The average amount of caffeine in a cup of coffee is 85 mg but it can range from 45 mg to 175 mg depending on how coffee is prepared. Drinking high amounts of caffeine can increase the risk of various health issues and is significantly linked with reducing fertility in both men and women. Many studies have found out that women who consume large amounts of caffeine have reduced chances of conceiving naturally and take longer to become pregnant. Just like women, even men are at higher risk of experiencing fertility problems due to excessive caffeine consumption. Over time, it can affect the quality of their sperm and reproductive health.

So couples who are actively trying to conceive or have already started their fertility treatments should be careful about their caffeine intake.

HARMFUL EFFECTS OF HIGH CAFFEINE CONSUMPTION ON FERTILITY

• Hormonal imbalance: Estradiol and progesterone are reproductive hormones which are vital for ovulation and regulation of menstrual cycle. Caffeine and estradiol are both metabolized by the same hepatic enzyme through a common metabolic pathway. As a



Nutrients/foods to increase fertility	Foods to avoid
<p>Carbohydrates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 45-60% of daily calories required. ✓ Upto 78% intake cause higher risk of ovulatory infertility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trans fats • Refined sugars • Excess caffeine • Animal protein • Alcohol • Tobacco smoking
<p>Proteins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 10-35% of daily calories required. ✓ Arginine, glutamine, aspartic acid, tryptophan and tyrosine are essential. ✓ Vegan diet suggested. 	
<p>Healthy fats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 20-35% of daily calories required. ✓ Necessary fatty acids ranging from 100-1000 mg/55 kg of body weight of the lactating women. 	
<p>Infertility ← Protein damage, DNA damage, Lipid peroxidation, Bio-membrane damage ← Oxidative stress (O₂, H₂O₂, OH)</p>	

Just like women, even men are at higher risk of experiencing fertility problems due to excessive caffeine consumption. Over time, it can affect the quality of their sperm and reproductive health. So couples who are actively trying to conceive or have already started their fertility treatments should be careful about their caffeine intake.



result, the endogenous levels of these hormones are disrupted resulting in hormonal imbalance.

• Menstrual irregularities and reduced ovulation: Hormonal imbalance as stated above leads to disturbance in menstrual cycle. It is said that a daily consumption of > 300 mg of caffeine has been associated with shorter menstrual cycle length. These women are more likely to experience problems with ovulation --- preventing the ovaries from releasing eggs regularly.

• Pregnancy: Caffeine readily crosses the placental barrier in pregnant women and the baby inside is exposed to the same caffeine levels as the mother. Exposure to excess caffeine has also been shown to have an impact on placental blood flow. Both factors may increase the risk of miscarriage, premature delivery, low birth weight, small for gestational age and even still birth. The Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists U.K. recommend that you limit your caffeine intake to as little as possible during pregnancy to less than 200 milligrams (mg) per day. This means two mugs of instant coffee per day as an average cup of coffee contains approximately 100 mg of caffeine.

• Fertility treatment : Caffeine may reduce the chance of assisted repro-

duction procedures (such as IVF) being successful though it is not very clear as yet.

• Lower sperm quality in men: Caffeinated beverages can reduce sperm motility, and count. This can impair their ability to fertilize an egg. Poor sperm health can make conception a challenging process for the couple.

• Increased Cortisol levels: Cortisol is a hormone produced by adrenal gland and is also known as "Stress hormone ". Excess caffeine intake can increase cortisol levels and this increase can disrupt menstrual cycle, interfere with sex hormone production, affect endometrium negatively -- making it harder to conceive.

• Interference with nutrient absorption: Caffeine can hamper your body's ability to absorb essential nutrients like iron, and calcium. These nutrients are crucial for the production of hormones, fertility, and maintaining overall reproductive health.

Thus, it is imperative to recognize and understand the potential side effects of high consumption of caffeine on fertility and make necessary adjustments in your dietary choices to protect your reproductive health.

TAKEAWAY MESSAGE:

Caffeine does more harm to your body than good. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recommends pregnant women and those desiring to conceive to keep their daily caffeine consumption below 200 mg, while WHO recommends a daily caffeine intake below 300 mg.

Couples who are trying to conceive are advised to limit their caffeine intake for the betterment of their chances of conception. Moderation is the key.

The author is the Fertility Specialist at Nova Southend Fertility and IVF, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi.

KEEPING THE CONSCIENCE UNTAINTED BY SOCIAL MEDIA



ERIC LE RESTE

There is no doubt that social media, or any kind of media, has an effect on our feelings and thinking. Many spiritual leaders say that the less time you spend on social media, the better will be your consciousness and mind. Those who follow a spiritual path are aware of the need to protect their consciousness at all costs.

However, the benefits of the social media phenomenon, as with all kinds of scientific developments, depend entirely on how the individual engages with it. Until I retired last year, my working world was the media, and it remains an important element of my

life. I want to know what is going on in the world. I am fortunate though, in that, as one who meditates, I am able to watch closely what is going on in my mind. Those who cultivate their inner world pay attention to the conscience, the heart of the soul. We are aware that it is possible to kill the conscience slowly and over a long period of time. It is similar to eating all the wrong kinds of food; one may be able to do so for many years before the heart is attacked.

There are three things we can do to engage with media and social media and retain a conscience that is clean. Firstly, we must look at the intention. Ask the self, 'Why am I watching?' 'What am I going to do with what I am being exposed to?'. Now, I use any source of information to increase my ability to help. Use ideas that increase the capacity to do something good for society. In other words, watch with a spiritual perspective. I may see 'bad' things, 'wrong' things, but I do not think 'bad', or criticise, or blame.



If I value my conscience, I will pay serious attention to how I consume social media.

Secondly and closely aligned to this, I create a distance. I keep a distance intellectually, emotionally,

and socially. I make sure in this way that there is no impact to hurt my mind. This allows me to have free-

dom of thinking as I watch and listen. Without that distance, I would be thinking exactly how 'they' want

me to think. I would form opinions based on the bias and skewed perspective I am being offered. Worse, I might even regurgitate all those opinions and ideas as if they were my own, without understanding that I have been influenced. Therefore, even while

thinking, using my own intellect and understanding, and based on spirituality. My thoughts will be of good wishes for whoever is involved, however they appear to be behaving. If I join in the blame and accusations, then I am only adding to the negativity. With

If I want to have a balanced diet, I need to consider what to consume and what not to consume. Therefore, I need to have a very selective attitude to social media. There are very sophisticated ways of filtering what comes onto my devices. I can create a menu of all the things that really interest me and all the elements I want to be exposed to.

knowing what is happening, I have no strong emotions, like anger or hatred, nor do I engage in accusatory rhetoric. I can do more by remaining distant, unaffected, with the freedom to think what I want to think. In other words, I remain neutral. This is the way to not diminish my spiritual capacity. I can have pure

good wishes, I may even be able to have some subtle impact on what is going on.

The third mindset is that of balance. If I want to have a balanced diet, I need to consider what to consume and what not to consume. Therefore, I need to have a very selective attitude to social media. There are very sophisticated ways of fil-

tering what comes onto my devices. I can create a menu of all the things that really interest me and all the elements I want to be exposed to. There are all kinds of firewalls that will protect me from contamination. It just takes a little work to set these protections, and special selections, up on my devices, but after that I will see only what I want to see. In this way I can stay well-connected with the outside world but maintain an untouched conscience. I can let only spiritual insights nurture my conscience. I can stay connected with the Higher Being and the inner self, when protected and not disturbed.

It all depends on how much I value my conscience, my state of mind, and my spiritual progress. To that extent, I will pay serious attention to when and how I consume any social media.

Eric Le Reste was a producer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for more than 35 years. He coordinates the Brahma Kumaris centres in Canada and is based in Montreal.

Non-violence – the highest truth



B.K. USHA

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna and Arjuna have a spiritual dialogue on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. At the end of Krishna's sermonising, Arjuna, who was hitherto reluctant to fight his own kin, realises the true nature of things and picks up his bow to fight the Kaurava army.

In essence, the Gita says that the human soul must conquer vices to attain perfection. But since the battle against one's weaknesses is depicted through the metaphor of a war between the Pandavas and Kauravas, many people have

come to believe that God exhorted Arjuna to slay the Kauravas, and therefore it is right to employ violence to destroy evil. They forget that the Mahabharata, of which the Gita is a part, extols abstinence from violence as the highest form of religion, the greatest penance, the best sacrifice, and the supreme truth.

The question of whether it is right to use any means, including violence, for what one considers a noble cause has exercised human minds for long. There may be many situations which present a moral dilemma, wherein one has to choose between employing the wrong means for the right cause, and seeing one's cause suffer.

When we think about it, we realise that violence, which is evil, can never be justified. Violence may appear to be an immediate or easy solution to a problem, but it ends up sowing the seeds of bigger problems. How the



Only non-violent means can create a world free from fear.

damage done by violence persists over centuries is illustrated by the mutual distrust and animosity - subtle and overt - be-

tween the adherents of different religions. The ill will is a legacy of violent struggles waged in the name of religion ages ago.

Historical accounts of those events still colour people's perceptions and create rancour towards those who practise a dif-

ferent faith.

Violence results from a failure to understand the concerns or point of view of others and engage in dialogue with them to resolve mutual differences. It also stems from shortsightedness, or the inability to realise the dam-

soul robbed of peace can experience neither joy, fulfilment, nor ease. Violence not only deprives the soul of peace, but also takes away our contentment and strength. Thus weakened, the soul becomes prone to more mistakes, which bring

There may be many situations which present a moral dilemma, wherein one has to choose between employing the wrong means for the right cause, and seeing one's cause suffer.

age it will do in the long run. Another cause of violence is lack of patience and tolerance. Lust, greed, ego, and fear also drive people to violence. These vices are toxic for the human soul, which is originally a being of purity, peace, and love. It is in its natural state of peace that the soul finds relaxation and comfort. A

further misery. Only non-violent means can truly resolve differences by dissolving the barriers that divide people, and fostering mutual trust and respect to create a world free from fear.

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

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

There comes a time when the soul wants to go home; home to peace, home to my true self. This is known as the spiritual pilgrimage. It is a silent internal matter of the heart and mind, not a physical trek across landscapes. The yearning for peace, love and silence becomes so great that I must travel beyond the physical to find them. Then I discover meditation, solitude, contemplation and reflection and rediscover the pathway back home to myself. Today let me honour my deep desire to come home to myself.

Overcoming perfectionism



SONJA OHLSSON

Most of us are perfectionists in some area of our lives. It could be that I keep very high standards for myself, and they are so high that I often fail to achieve them. Or it could be that I imagine that others have high expectations of me and I feel that I need to live up to those expectations in order to be accepted. Mostly we will find that perfectionism arises from anxiety, fear, and the need to control the world around me, or from a strong inner critic. On the one hand, it is good to strive

for perfection because it helps us move forward on the spiritual path, but on the other hand, we must learn to love the self and not be dependent on the results of our striving.

So, how to love the imperfect self and deal with inner fear and anxiety? We can learn to accept the imperfect self in transition. One of the ways is to start taking the journey more lightly, have fun, take a joyful and playful attitude to our endeavours. Imperfection can be liberating. Not having all the answers is OK. Once, in an intimate gathering with the Dalai Lama, at a moment of quietness, the Dalai Lama asked for questions. No one ventured to ask one and the silence continued. Then someone spoke up and said: 'How can we have world peace?'. The Dalai Lama said: 'I don't know'. Everyone laughed, including the Dalai Lama, and the atmosphere was full of lightness and love.



Perfectionism is a need to be in control, so, along with loving the self, we need to let go.

Love is the key to melting the harshness of perfectionism. We can learn to love all the changes on the journey, the changes in relationships, the unpredictability of ev-

erything - because I too am unpredictable when faced with unfamiliar challenges. Doing things with love means doing them more slowly, and this releases the

anxiety. Perfectionism is a need to be in control, so, along with loving the self, we need to let go. I need to find that negative conviction I have about myself, which

is blocking so many good things, and let it go. Then so many pathways will open up in front of me.

To be in peace, one thing that I can do is to calm

down and learn to love the self. That in itself is a way of being in control. We cannot control what is happening out in the world, but when we are completely peaceful, we can control our actions and responses to what is happening, so it feels as though I am controlling the situation, but it is coming from inside. In peace I can talk to myself and ask myself if there is some other way to respond rather than with fear and anxiety. Peace leads to contentment, and that leads to simplicity, which in turn leads back to peace. As the world is experiencing ever more peacelessness, I need to become more and more peaceful and reach a stage where nothing at all can take that inner peace from me.

It is said that love is the opposite of fear, but it can also be knowledge and understanding that dispels fear. When I understand and experience that I am a spiritual being, a soul, completely in-

destructible, then fear is reduced. When I understand what is really going on in the world, and why, then there is less fear. Understanding the power of now too takes away fear. Right now, wherever I am in this moment, I have everything I need. I will not be able to see it in a state of fear, but in a state of peace I will see it clearly. So, the moment I am in, is perfect - even if I am not, yet.

Friends are important on a spiritual journey, and when they give time to listen to us with love, our fear and anxiety disappear. God is a great friend to have. When I stop and breathe and look for what is hidden from me right now, I will be able to feel that presence. There is a saying, 'I do my best, and God does the rest', and that is more than good enough; in fact, it is pretty nearly perfect.

Sonja Ohlsson is Director, Brahma Kumaris Denmark and BK Environment Initiative.

ICC WOMEN'S U19 T20 WC

INDIA STORM INTO FINAL, DEFEAT ENGLAND BY 9 WICKETS

SUNIL YASH KALRA
KUALA LUMPUR

In a stunning display of controlled bowling and clinical batting, India emerged victorious over England by 9 wickets in the second semi-final of the ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup 2025 at the Bayuemas Oval in Kuala Lumpur on Friday, sealing their spot in the final.

The Indian team, defending champions in the tournament, chased down a modest target of 114 with five overs to spare, showcasing their dominance throughout the match.

England, after winning the toss and opting to bat, got off to a promising start with their openers. Davina Perrin played an aggressive knock, top-scoring with 45 runs. Alongside her, Jemina Spence contributed 9 runs. However, the tide turned quickly when the Indian bowlers, led by Parunika Sisodia and Vaishnavi Sharma, picked up quick wickets and reduced England to a total of just 113 runs.

Sisodia was the standout bowler for India, taking 3 wickets for 21 runs, while Sharma supported well with 3 wickets for 23 runs. Aayushi Shukla also played a key role, dismissing England's captain, Abi



Norgrove, and leaving the opposition in trouble.

The Indian batting chase began solidly, thanks to openers G Kamalini and Gongadi Trisha. Kamalini, who remained unbeaten on 56, steered India towards victory, while Trisha contributed with a steady 35 runs. Despite the loss of Trisha, India was never in doubt, and Sanika Chalke joined Kamalini to finish off the target with composure.

India's bowlers had their task cut out from the be-

ginning, as they were up against a resilient English lineup. However, the spin attack, led by Sisodia and Sharma, was too much for England to handle. The English team struggled to build partnerships and were continuously under pressure, thanks to disciplined bowling.

The match also showcased the remarkable work of India's coaching staff. Apurva Desai, the Indian batting coach, continues to work closely with the team's fu-

ture stars, while the bowling coach, Matra, emphasized the importance of building pressure through dot balls, with a focus on accuracy in good-length deliveries.

The contributions of former cricketers VVS Laxman and Neetu David were also evident throughout the tournament. Laxman, head of the National Cricket Academy, has worked personally with each player to improve their strengths and address their weaknesses.

BRIEF SCORES

England 113/8 (Davina Perrin 45, Abi Norgrove 30; Parunika Sisodia 3-21) vs **India 117/1** (G Kamalini 56*, Gongadi Trisha 35; Phoebe Brett 1-30).

His mentorship has been instrumental in shaping the team's growth over the last six months.

As India sets its sights on

the final, their solid preparations and sharp strategies make them the team to beat. With a bowling accuracy of 67 per cent on good-length deliveries and batters ready to capitalize on loose balls, the Indian team is poised to defend their title.

Meanwhile, South Africa also secured their place in the final after defeating Australia by five wickets in the other semi-final. The South African team chased down Australia's total of 105 runs with 11 balls to spare.

Openers Jemma Botha and captain Kayla Reyncke played vital roles in the chase, while Ashleigh van Wyk's brilliant spell of 4 wickets for 17 runs helped stifle the Australian batting lineup. Australia's batting struggled throughout the innings, and despite a late cameo from Ella Briscoe, they were unable to put up a competitive total.

The final between India and South Africa promises to be an exciting encounter, as both teams bring their best to the table. After a thrilling men's T20 World Cup final between the two nations last year, this women's final is set to be another historic clash.

Sunil Yash Kalra is a women's cricket historian and the founder of Cricket Predicta.

South Africa reach first-ever final



Thrash Australia by five wickets in first semi-final

TDG NETWORK
KUALA LUMPUR

South Africa secured their maiden spot in the ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup final after an impressive five-wicket win over Australia in the first semi-final in Kuala Lumpur on Friday, as per the International Cricket Council (ICC). The Proteas excelled with the ball on the back of Ashleigh van Wyk's four-wicket haul and were on song in the field as they restricted Australia to just 105/8 and cruised past that target with 11 deliveries remaining courtesy of some excellent batting from Jemma Botha (34) and Kayla Reyncke (26).

The win sees South Africa maintain their unbeaten

status at the tournament and sees them qualify for Sunday's final against either India or England.

The Proteas held on to a trio of difficult chances in the field, with some late hitting from Ella Briscoe (27*) helping the Aussies reach three figures after they won the toss and elected to bat first at Bayuemas Oval.

Nthabiseng Nini set the ball rolling for South Africa by dismissing the dangerous Ines Mckeeon with the opening ball of the match, with van Wyk (4/17) getting in on the act at the death courtesy of some help in the field. Seshnie Naidu held on to a tough return catch to dismiss Eleanor Larosa for just seven, before Luyanda Nzuzza produced a similar feat in the field to send Hasrat Gill packing as the Aussies crawled to 62/5 with a little more than five overs remaining.

4th T20I: India at 181/9 after sloppy start

Hardik, Dube knocks help India reach decent score against England

TDG NETWORK
PUNE

All-rounders Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube's blitz knocks helped India climb to 181/9 against England in the fourth T20I match of the series at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Friday.

India had a sloppy start to the innings, however, it was the efforts of Hardik and Shivam which helped the Men in Blue to pose a target of 182 runs for England on Friday.

After winning the toss, Jos Buttler-led England decided to bring Suryakumar Yadav's India to bat first.

The Three Lions had a great start to the match with three quick dismissals at the score of 12. However, the Men in Blue turned around the match on a great note and gave a whopping target.

The opening partnership of Sanju Samson (1 run from



India's captain Suryakumar Yadav plays a shot during the 4th T20I against England, at Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Friday. ANI

3 balls) and Abhishek Sharma (29 runs from 19 balls, 4 fours and 1 six) had a disappointing start to the game as they could only cement a partnership of 12 runs.

England seamer Saqib Mahmood was on fire in the second over as he removed

India's top three batters without giving a single run to the opponent.

Mahmood removed Samson, Tilak Varma (0 runs from 1 ball) and captain Suryakumar Yadav (0 runs from 4 balls) in the second over.

It was also Mahmood's first over of the tour and he started it with a triple-wicket maiden. It was the first time this had happened in a men's T20 international.

Following the early wickets, Abhishek and Rinku Singh (30 runs from 26

balls, 4 fours and 1 six) made a 45-run partnership to give India a kickstart in the match.

However, Adil Rashid removed Abhishek in the 8th over. While Rinku lost his wicket in the 11th over.

Hardik Pandya (53 runs from 30 balls, 4 fours and 4 sixes) displayed a stupendous performance and slammed his half-century in the 18th over.

Along with Hardik, Shivam Dube (53 runs from 34 balls, 7 fours and 2 sixes) also put up a show and smashed his fifty in the 19th over.

The duo of Hardik and Shivam took India to 181/9 in the first inning. Ravi Bishnoi remained unbeaten on the crease till the end.

England needs to make 182 runs to win the match in Pune and level the series.

Brief Score: India 181/9 (Shivam Dube 53, Shivam Dube 53, Rinku Singh 30;

ISL: Bengaluru-Punjab clash today

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Punjab FC will host Bengaluru FC at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 on Saturday. The Panagiotis Dilmeris-coached team will have their task cut out in improving their home form since they have not won any of the last four encounters at this venue.

Bengaluru FC had beaten Punjab FC by a slender margin of 1-0 in the reverse fixture. However, the latter is one of the four active teams that the Blues are yet to round off a league double over, alongside Hyderabad FC, Mohammedan SC, and Mohun Bagan Super Giant.

Both these teams are struggling for form, with Bengaluru FC having drawn once and losing twice in their last three away encounters. Their most recent match on the road saw them



fall to a 0-1 loss to the Mohun Bagan Super Giant in Kolkata. They will want to find their groove upfront, as the last time they had not netted in consecutive away encounters was in 2022.

Bengaluru FC have suffered losses in four out of their last five encounters. They are placed fifth in the points table with 28 points from 18 matches, on the back of eight wins and four draws. Punjab FC followed in the ninth position with 20 points from 16 games due to six victories and two draws.

Punjab FC trails the sixth-placed Mumbai City FC (27) by seven points, having played a game fewer than the Islanders (17). They have a reasonable period in hand to reignite their charge for the top-six, whereas the Blues will want to push upwards as the second-placed FC Goa have five more points (33) than them, having played a game less (17).

Punjab FC are the only team yet to find the back of the net through a headed goal in the current ISL season.

Mitchell Marsh ruled out of ICC Champions Trophy

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE

Australia has been hit hard with the news that all-rounder Mitchell Marsh will miss the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy due to injury, as per the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Marsh has been suffering from a back problem and will be sidelined for Australia's Champions Trophy campaign that begins on February 16.

"Mitchell Marsh has been ruled out of the upcoming ICC Men's Champion's Trophy with ongoing lower back pain and dysfunction," Cricket Australia said via a statement, as quoted from ICC.

"The National Selection Panel and Australian men's medical team ruled Marsh out of the tournament with the injury which has not responded sufficiently to rehabilitation," the statement added.

"His lower back pain flared in recent weeks leading the NSP to make for extended period of Marsh to complete a more

tended period of Marsh to complete a more

"Marsh will now undergo a period of further rest and rehabilitation as part of his return to play plan," it said.

AGENCIES
LAHORE

Opener Saim Ayub failed to win the race against time after he couldn't feature in Pakistan's 15-member squad for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy 2025 as announced by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). The Men in Green won the last Champions Trophy event held in 2017. This time, Pakistan are hosting this 2025 edition, along with the UAE.

Mohammad Rizwan will lead the team, having done so since Babar Azam stepped down from the role after the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in 2023. This is



the first 50-over ICC tournament since then. Rising star hitter Saim Ayub is a notable absentee, having sustained an ankle injury in Pakistan's New Year's Test in Cape Town, South Africa. "We understand how much he was looking forward to the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 and recognise how devastating it must be for

him to miss a global event, especially when he is in such exceptional batting form. However, as a valuable asset to our team, we are committed to prioritising his long-term health over making any rushed decisions," Asad Shafiq, a member of the National Selection Committee explained as quoted by the ICC official website.

Kohli falls for 6 in Ranji Trophy comeback

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Virat Kohli's much-anticipated return to the Ranji Trophy was short-lived, as he was dismissed for just six runs by Himanshu Sangwan on Friday at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi.

Kohli showed a glimpse of his brilliance with a beautiful straight drive off Sangwan just a ball before his dismissal. However, the very next delivery proved fatal-angled in on a fullish length just outside off, the ball seamed in sharply as Kohli attempted a drive but left a gap between bat and pad. The delivery rushed through, clipping the off-stump and sending the bails flying. It was a moment to remember for Sangwan, who not only claimed the prized wicket but also saw the stadium empty out soon after.

Kohli's brief stay at the crease lasted just 15 deliveries, with a solitary boundary to his name. His dismissal left Delhi at 87/3, still trailing Railways by 140 runs.

For the thousands of fans who had flocked to the stadium hoping for a Kohli masterclass, it was a moment of disappointment. However, there remains a chance for redemption—should Delhi get a second innings, Kohli will have another opportunity to make his mark.

The Delhi stadium was buzzing and filled with excitement on Day 1, a sight not common for domestic cricket matches, with fans awaiting action from their hero whose recent performances have been mostly disappointing. Some additional gates were opened to accommodate fans and additional security deployed. As per ESPNcricinfo, over 15,000 fans attended the match.

The Group D clash also saw a fan breaching security as he rushed onto the field to meet Virat Kohli. With Delhi's opening bowlers, Navdeep Saini and Siddhant Sharma, having Railways in trouble at 21/3, the person managed to evade security and reach Kohli and touched his feet. Security personnel quickly intervened and escorted the intruder off the field. Kohli requested them to go easy on the fan