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NITISH, TEJASHWI SPAR IN HOUSE OVER BIHAR CM REMARKS ON LALU'S POLITICAL CAREER



11
HOSTAGE DEAL NEEDED TO EXTEND GAZA CEASEFIRE: ISRAEL FIGHTING IN GAZA HALTED

KING KOHLI POWERS INDIA TO FINAL

REPORT ■ P16

CHAMPIONS TROPHY 1ST SEMIFINAL

AUSTRALIA:
264 all out in 49.3 overs (Travis Head 39; Steve Smith 73, Alex Carey 61; Mohammed Shami 3/48, Ravindra Jadeja 2/40, Varun Chakravathy 2/49).

INDIA: 267/6 in 48.1 overs (Virat Kohli 84, Shreyas Iyer 45; Adam Zampa 2/60).



DAYS AFTER CLASH WITH ZELENSKYY TRUMP PAUSES AID TO UKRAINE

■ Kyiv expresses alarm, apprehension
■ European allies stress support

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has paused military aid to Ukraine after the Oval Office clash with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last week, Fox News has reported.

According to Fox News, the Trump administration is pausing all aid to Ukraine, including weapons in transit or in Poland, until Ukrainian leaders show more appreciation for the US support and a commitment to peace.

A senior Trump administration official told Fox News that military aid will remain on hold until Ukrainian leaders show a commitment to good faith peace negotiations.

"This is not permanent termination of aid, it's a pause," a senior Trump administration official emphasized. "The orders are going out right now."

Last week, during media interaction with Ukraine President at the Oval Office, Trump used some strong words, telling the visiting leader that Volodymyr Zelenskyy "does not have the cards" and is not "acting thankful" for the support the United States has pro-

CHANGING WORLD ORDER

■ Ukraine and its allies are concerned Trump is pushing for a quick ceasefire that will favour Russia, which Kyiv says cannot be trusted to honour truces.

■ The pause in US aid isn't expected to have an immediate impact on the battlefield

■ US-made Patriot air defense missile systems, for example, are a pivotal part of protecting Ukraine

■ Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Washington's decision could act as a spur to a peace agreement.

■ If the U.S. suspends these supplies, it will



make the best contribution to peace.

■ Russia will likely try to use the halt in supplies to extend its territorial gains and strengthen its position in prospective peace talks.

■ The chief of the European Union's executive proposed an 800 billion euro (\$841 billion) plan to bolster defenses of EU nations and provide Ukraine with military muscle.

vided to Ukraine in its war with Russia, which began in February 2022.

The two leaders had an exchange in an explosive press conference with the Ukrainian President emphasising the need of security guarantees and noting that the Rus-

sian President Vladimir Putin had continued with his actions against his country even during Trump's first term as President.

US Vice President JD Vance also expressed his disapproval of Zelenskyy's

China slaps reciprocal duty

AGENCIES
BEIJING

China on Tuesday said it is imposing tariffs as much as 15 per cent on a range of food imports from the United States as Donald Trump imposed latest tariffs came into force on Tuesday.

China's finance ministry announced 15 per cent tariffs on imports of chicken, wheat, corn and cotton

from the United States, as well as 10 per cent tariffs on imports of "sorghum, soybeans, pork, beef, aquatic products, fruits, vegetables, and dairy products," Chinese state media said.

Further, China has also added several US firms to its "unreliable entity or export control lists."

On Monday, the United States announced that it would impose an additional

10 per cent tariff on all products imported to the US from China, effective from March 4. This follows an additional 10 per cent tariffs imposed by the United States on products imported from China in February this year.

China's Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council said that an additional 15 per cent tariff will

Munde quits amid row over sarpanch's murder

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Maharashtra minister Dhananjay Munde resigned from the cabinet on Tuesday, days after his close aide Walmik Karad was named as the mastermind in the murder of a village sarpanch and three months after the new Mahayuti government assumed office.

In a post on X, Munde also mentioned that he has submitted his resignation as state minister due to health concerns and medical advice "as well".

The pressure on Munde (49), who held the food, civil supplies and consumer protection portfolios in the BJP-led Mahayuti govern-

His close aide was named the mastermind behind murder of a sarpanch

ment, to resign mounted after gory photos and videos of Deshmukh surfaced, revealing the brutalities committed

before the murder. The photos and videos, attached to a CID chargesheet filed in the case, went viral and sparked a state-wide outrage.

The NCP strongman said it has been his demand from the very first day that the accused in Beed Sarpanch murder case should get harshest punishment.

"My firm demand from the very first day has been that the accused in the brutal murder of the late Santosh Deshmukh from Massajogin Beed district should receive the harshest possible pun-

■ P5

Panel soon to review the non-financial sector regulations, assures PM Modi

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that MSMEs play a transformative role in the economic growth of India. Government is committed to nurturing and strengthening this sector, during his virtual address at the Post Budget Webinar 2025 on Tuesday.

To further streamline regulations, the Prime Minister announced the formation of a committee to review regulations in the non-financial sector. "A decision has also been taken to constitute a committee to review regulations in the non-financial sector. We aim to make them modern, flexible, and people-friendly. The industry will play a crucial role in



this exercise."

He stated, "Today, the country has been witnessing an unprecedented consistency in government policies for over a decade. Over the past 10 years, India has demonstrated its commitment to continuous reforms, financial discipline, transparency, and inclusive growth."

He added, "The assurance of consistency and reforms has brought a new sense of confidence within our industry. I assure every

PM Modi nudges industry to identify products that can be made in India to meet global demand.

stakeholder associated with manufacturing and exports that this continuity will remain steadfast in the years to come."

He further assured the industry of the government's dedication to ensuring policy continuity, particularly for manufacturing and exports, "The assurance of consistency and reforms has brought a new sense of confidence within our industry. I assure every stakeholder associated with

Tehsildars go on mass leave, Mann says won't bow down before corrupt

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

Taking a tough and unprecedented stance against the agitating Tehsildars, the Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Tuesday said that the state government will not bow before corrupt officers, who are facing Police action for their sins.

The Chief Minister, who undertook a whirlwind tour to get the work of registration started at Kharar, Banur and Zirakpur teh-



sils, said that the revenue officers had gone on mass leave in the wake of vigilance action. He said the AAP government has zero tolerance for corruption. Mann said blackmailing will not be tol-

■ P5

Punjab cracks down on farmers a day after talks

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

Ahead of their planned protest in Chandigarh on March 5, several Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) leaders were detained in early morning raids at their residences on Tuesday.

Punjab Police conducted midnight raids at various locations. Several farmer leaders, including Balbir Singh Rajewal, were detained, while Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) leader Dilbag Singh Gill was

placed under house arrest.

The police also visited the residence of Joginder Singh Ugrahan, president of the

SKM CONDEMNS PUNJAB POLICE ACTIONS, CALLS MOVE 'DICTATORIAL'

P2

SAD SLAMS MANN GOVT OVER PRE-DAWN SWOOP ON FARMERS

P2

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan), in Sangrur, but he was not found.

In response to the police action, SKM has called

for an emergency meeting in Ludhiana, reaffirming their plan to proceed with the protest in Chandigarh on March 5.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann denounced the protesting farmer unions, saying they have turned Punjab into a "state of dharnas" and caused huge losses to it.

Speaking to reporters in the Kharar tehsil office in Mohali, Mann said he had categorically told the farmer bodies that they should not remain under the im-

■ P5

Let's focus on kindness towards animals, says PM Modi as he inaugurates Vantara

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday visited Vantara, the world's largest wildlife research centre in Gujarat's Jamnagar, and praised the wildlife conservation initiative, which provides a safe haven for animals while promoting ecological sustainability and wildlife welfare. I commend Anant Ambani and his entire team for this very compassionate effort. An effort like Vantara is truly commendable, a vibrant example of our centuries old

his entire team for their dedication to the welfare of animals and the compassionate work in rescuing and rehabilitating animals.

"Inaugurated Vantara, a unique wildlife conservation, rescue and rehabilitation initiative, which provides a safe haven for animals while promoting ecological sustainability and wildlife welfare. I commend Anant Ambani and his entire team for this very compassionate effort. An effort like Vantara is truly commendable, a vibrant example of our centuries old



ethos of protecting those we share our planet with," posted PM Modi on X.

During his visit, PM Modi shared glimpses of the initiative, which provides



a safe haven for injured, abandoned, or abused animals, while promoting

wildlife welfare and ecological balance.

Among the various ani-

mals at Vantara, the Prime Minister highlighted a case of an elephant that had been a victim of an acid attack, noting that the animal was being treated with the utmost care.

PM Modi also spoke about other elephants, one of which was blinded by its own Mahout, while another was struck by a speeding truck. He questioned the cruelty and negligence shown toward these animals, calling for an end to such irresponsibility and urging kindness toward all creatures.

"At Vantara, I saw an elephant which was the victim of an acid attack. The elephant was being treated with utmost care. There were other elephants too, which were blinded and that too ironically by their Mahout. Another elephant was hit by a speeding truck. This underscores an important question - how can people be so careless and cruel? Let us put an end to such irresponsibility and focus on kindness towards animals," posted PM on X.

■ P5

SKM CONDEMNS PUNJAB POLICE ACTIONS ON FARMERS, CALLS MOVE 'DICTATORIAL'

Demands immediate release of leaders, calls for massive protest on March 5

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) has condemned the Punjab government's mid-night crackdown on farmer leaders, calling it a dictatorial move to suppress their democratic right to protest.

The farmers' body has even warned Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Ministers following authoritarian practices that police action will not weaken their struggle for key demands like legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) and repeal of National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing (NPFAM) and a comprehensive loan waiver. Several farmer leaders were "detained" or put under "house arrest" after early Tuesday morning "raids" at their residences by the Punjab police ahead of their planned protest in Chandigarh on March 5.

'ACTION WILL NOT WEAKEN PROTEST'



- The farmer leaders alleged that on the intervening night of March 3 and 4, the Punjab Police, acting on Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's instructions, raided the houses of farmer leaders and took several into custody.
- The farmers' body has even warned Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Ministers following authoritarian practices that police action will not weaken their struggle for key demands

The farmer leaders alleged that on the intervening night of March 3 and 4, the Punjab Police, acting on Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's instructions, raided the houses of farmer leaders and took several into custody. Among

those arrested is octogenarian leader Balbir Singh Rajewal, along with Ruldu Singh Mansa, Jangveer Singh Chouhan, Gurmeet Singh Bhatial, Nachatar Singh Jaiton, Veerpal Singh Dhillon, Binder Singh Gole-

wal, Gurnam Bhikhi, and Harmesh Singh Dhesi.

According to farmer leaders the police also raided the residences of senior farmer leaders Joginder Singh Ugrahan, Raminder Singh Patiala, Buta Singh Burjill,

Harinder Singh Lokhowal, Satnam Singh Ajnala, Gurmeet Singh Mehma, and Rajinder Singh Deep Singh Wala.

The raids were followed as a meeting between Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and farmer leaders associated with the SKM remained inconclusive and the farmer leaders appreciated Punjab government for passing a resolution in the Punjab Assembly against the NPFAM. However, when farmer leaders insisted on their long-standing demands—including legal MSP and a loan waiver—the CM abruptly ended the meeting and walked out.

Following the police crackdown, SKM has called upon farmers across Punjab to participate in the "Pakka Morcha" in Chandigarh on March 5 and to organize massive village-level campaigns against the Punjab government's actions.

SAD slams Mann govt over pre-dawn swoop on farmers

TDG NETWORK
CHANDIGARH,

Senior Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia today demanded the immediate release of farmer leaders who had been arrested at the instance of chief minister Bhagwant Mann besides asking the chief minister to apologize to the leaders for threatening and misbehaving with them during an official meeting yesterday.

Expressing shock at the manner in which leaders of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, who had been invited for talks by the chief minister yesterday were being treated, Mr Bikram Majithia said "Mr Bhagwant Mann threatened the Kisan leaders with dire consequences when he was reminded of the promises he had made to farmers before assuming charge as chief minister in 2022". He said this was followed up with raids and arrests of Kisan leaders in a pre-dawn swoop today in a bid to foil the March 5 Andolan announced by them.



Asserting that the chief minister's consistent erratic behaviour was spoiling the image of Punjab and Punjabis, Mr Majithia said "recently during a visit to Hoshiarpur the chief minister misbehaved with an IPS officer besides speaking rudely with the Deputy Commissioner. His earlier acts of instability are well documented including his drunken antics onboard a Lufthansa plane from which he was deboarded".

Reminding Mann about the promises made by him to farmers, the Akali leader said "Mann assured farmers and farm labourers that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)

would remodel farm policies to ensure no farm suicide occurred in the State. He also assured farmers that farm income would be doubled and that his government would implement the Swaminathan Report whether the centre did that or not. Farmers were also assured that every crop would be procured by the State on minimum support price". Asserting that the chief minister had reneged on each and every promise made to the farmers, Mr Majithia said "when he was reminded of these promises he started threatening the farmers and walked out of the meeting rather than face them".

BJP set to announce new national president after April 18

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

The Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj has also impacted the election of the BJP's National President. Due to the Kumbh, the organizational elections in Uttar Pradesh were delayed, and now it is expected that a decision regarding the new Uttar Pradesh President will be made after Holi this month. Meanwhile, the election for the state president in Bihar was completed on Tuesday, with Dilip Jaiswal elected as the new president. So far, only 14 states have completed their BJP organizational elections. With 36 states needing to elect their state presidents, there is still a long way to go.

The election of the national president will begin only after elections in at least 18 states are concluded. BJP has announced that the National Executive and National Council meetings will take place in



Bengaluru, Karnataka, between April 18th and 20th. During this time, the election for the new national president will be held, replacing current president JP Nadda. Before this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat will have a final meeting to decide on the new president, which is likely to occur after Holi.

An important meeting of the RSS is also scheduled for the third week of this month, which may help finalize the decision. Several prominent names are being discussed for the post of national presi-

dent, including Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Bhupendra Yadav, Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Manohar Lal Khattar, G Kishan Reddy, and D Purandeswari from the South. However, the name for the president will only be announced after the completion of the state elections.

The BJP had originally planned to complete its organizational elections in January, but they were repeatedly postponed. Even in Hindi-speaking states, like Uttar Pradesh, elections were delayed, and this has caused

confusion within the party. The election in Bihar was finally held on Tuesday, but the situation remains unclear in states like Madhya Pradesh. The delay in Uttar Pradesh is particularly significant because it would have sent the wrong message if the national president election proceeded without completing the state elections, especially in such an important state. The delay in Uttar Pradesh's elections was mainly due to the Maha Kumbh, which had been a major focus for Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The Kumbh was completed successfully with minimal issues, earning praise worldwide for its organization. Now that the Kumbh has concluded, the party's focus has shifted back to completing the organizational elections, and it is expected that all remaining state elections, including those in Uttar Pradesh, will be completed by the end of this month.

Nothing for unemployed, youth, farmers, women: RJD MLAs protest over Bihar Budget

TDG NETWORK
PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MLAs staged a protest outside the Bihar Legislative Assembly on Tuesday. They alleged that nothing was announced for the unemployed, youth, farmers and women in the budget. RJD leaders were seen carrying lollipops and toys in their hands.

RJD leader Bhai Virendra said, "We conducted a survey for caste census and based on that, we had given 75 percent reservations. It was not included in the ninth schedule. We demand that the government include it in the Ninth Schedule and provide participation based on number. This double-engine government is only cheating the public. In the name of Budget, they have given toy in the hands of people. Nothing was done for



the unemployed, youth, farmers and women. The budget has been announced keeping elections in the mind."

RJD MLA Mukesh Raushan said that currently, there are two deputy Chief Ministers in the state, but people are getting nothing.

He said, "The youth of Bihar want jobs, women want Rs 2500 in their bank accounts, 200 units of free electricity, but did anyone get anything? They have handed a lollipop

and said it is for the development of all sections, and added that sports, college, and medical facilities will be available in all blocks. "This budget is for the development of all sections... Sports, college, and medical facilities will be available in all blocks. In this budget, scholarships for SC/ST children have been doubled. This budget is a budget for all-around development," Singh said. Bihar's government on Monday unveiled a Rs 3.17 lakh crore budget for the financial year 2025-26, marking a significant 13.6 per cent increase from the previous year's Rs 2.79 lakh crore allocation. This budget, presented by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Samrat Choudhary, holds special significance as it's the ruling government's last budget before the state elections later this year.

CEC directs officials to hold all-party meet regularly to resolve issues

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar on Tuesday directed officials to be approachable and responsive to political parties, and all-party meetings at all statutory levels be held regularly to resolve any issues within the existing statutory framework by the concerned competent authority.

The Election Commission on Tuesday kicked off a two-day conference of CEOs of all States and Union Territories at New Delhi. This is the first such conference to be held since Gyanesh Kumar assumed charge as CEC.

ECI in an official statement said that CEC and ECs Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi interacted with CEOs on a series of topics that will pave the way for improvements in election management in the country within the established legal framework. In his address, CEC Gyanesh Kumar exhorted all officials including all CEOs, DEOs, EROs, BLOs across the country to work transparently and fulfill all statutory obligations diligently and as per the existing legal framework i.e. the RP Act 1950 and 1951; Registration of Elector Rules 1960, Conduct of Election Rules 1961



and the instructions issued by ECI from time to time.

He directed officials to be approachable and responsive to political parties. He added that all party meetings at all statutory levels be held regularly to resolve any issues within the existing statutory framework by the concerned competent authority, i.e. ERO or DEO, or CEO. The issue-wise action taken report by each CEO is to be submitted by March 31, 2025, to their concerned DEC, it said. He emphasized that all CEOs, DEOs, ROs, EROs, should be thorough with their roles and responsibilities, as clearly delineated within the statute and ECI instructions. He added that officials should ensure that all citizens of India who are above 18 years of age are registered as electors as per Article 325 and Article 326 of the Constitution.

ED gets six days custody of SDPI president Faizy in PMLA case

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi's Patiala House Court on Tuesday granted six days custody of Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) national president, MK Faizy to ED to interrogate him in a money laundering case.

Special judge Chander Jit Singh granted the six days custody of Faizy to Enforcement Directorate (ED). He is to be produced before the court on Monday after the expiry of the custody remand.

The court has directed the ED to take care of his medicine and take care if he observe ramzan. His counsel is allowed to have legal meeting for 15 minutes.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had sought 10 days



of Faizy's custody to interrogate him about the proceeds of the crime, the funding, and the money trail.

Special public prosecutor (SPP) Simon Benjamin and Naveen Kumar Matta appeared for ED.

It is alleged that there was a fund transfer to SDPI from the PFI. ED said he had been a member of the PFI since its inception. In 2009, he start-

ed SDPI.

He is required to be interrogated in relation to three statements.

ED arrested MK Faizy at Indira Gandhi Airport while he was on the way to Delhi from Kochi.

"There is proceed of crime in crores, fundraising, etc", the ED submitted.

ED sought 10 days' custody of MK Faizy to interrogate him. An investigation is pending regarding the money trail.

The agency has alleged that SDPI is the political front of the banned organisation PFI.

Documentary evidence is to be confronted to him, ED said. Advocate Satyakam, along with Saipan Dastgir Shaikh, appeared for Faizy and opposed ED's plea.

Nitish, Tejashwi spar in House over Bihar CM remarks on Lalu's political career

TDG NETWORK
PATNA

The Bihar assembly witnessed a verbal exchange between Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav during Kumar's post-budget speech on Tuesday. In his speech, Kumar asserted that he played a "key role" in shaping the political career of Tejashwi's father, former Bihar CM Lalu Prasad Yadav.

As Kumar was making his speech, Tejashwi interrupted him, over which Kumar said, "What was there in Bihar earlier? It was me who made your father what he became. Even the people from your caste questioned me on why I was supporting him, but I still did"



Earlier, Bihar BJP President Sanjay Jaiswal, during his address, praised the state budget and said that new projects in infrastructure and Airports will give a new direction to the state's development under the NDA.

Sanjay Jaiswal said, "The budget is historic. During Lalu Prasad Yadav's tenure, the budget cost would be Rs

30000 crores, and today, after 20 years, the budget cost is Rs 3 lakh crores. New projects on infrastructure and the Airport will give a new direction to the development of the state under NDA."

Reacting to the criticism of the RJD leaders, he said that Tejashwi Yadav "does not read the budget, nor does he understand it."

PM Modi, Princess Astrid of Belgium hold talks on forging new partnerships

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday met Princess Astrid of Belgium and said he looked forward to unlocking opportunities through new partnerships between the two countries in various sectors.

PM Modi also appreciated Princess Astrid's initiative to lead a 300-member Eco-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Princess Astrid of Belgium, in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANI

omic Mission to India.

In a post on X, he said, "Pleased to meet HRH Princess Astrid of Belgium. Deeply appreciate her initiative to lead a 300-member Economic Mission to India. Look forward to unlocking limitless opportunities for our people through new partnerships in trade, technology, defence, agriculture, life sciences, innovation, skilling and academic exchanges."

Earlier, EAM S Jaishankar met Princess Astrid of Belgium on Monday, and affirmed confidence that her visit will foster greater collaborations for their ties.

In a post on X, the EAM wrote, "Delighted to meet Princess Astrid of Belgium, leading an economic mission to India. Confident that her visit will foster greater collaborations for a stronger India - Belgium and India -

EU partnership."

Princess Astrid, the second child of King Albert II and Queen Paola and sister to King Philippe, leads Belgium's economic missions as representative of the King. According to a statement from the Belgian Monarchy, these missions contribute to the development of economic and trade relations between Belgium and its regions and numerous foreign partners.



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INDIA न्यूज़

SENT OUR DEMAND TO SUSPEND ABU AZMI FROM HOUSE: MAHA DEPUTY CM

SP leader remarks on Aurangzeb spark stir, Shinde Sena, BJP demand his suspension

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Amidst the uproar over Samajwadi Party MLA Abu Azmi's remarks on Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said that they have put forth their demand to suspend the latter from the House.

"We have condemned his statement. His statement will cost him, and the people of Maharashtra will not forgive him... He will be suspended; we have put forth our demand to suspend him (from the House)," CM Shinde told reporters.

Earlier today, Abu Azmi said that his words had been twisted and that he was ready to take back his statement and apologise if sentiments were hurt.

"My words have been twisted. I have said what historians and writers have claimed about Aurangzeb Rahmatullah Alaih," Azmi said. "I have not made any derogatory comment about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maha-

'ONLY SAID WHAT HISTORIANS CLAIM'

- "I have not made any derogatory comment about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Sambhaji Maharaj or any other great men - but still if anyone has been hurt by my statement, then I take back my words, my statement," Azmi said in a video on his X.
- A zero FIR was registered against Azmi in the Naupada Police Station of Thane and was transferred to the Marine Drive police station in Mumbai in connection with his remarks on Aurangzeb.



raj, Sambhaji Maharaj or any other great men - but still if anyone has been hurt by my statement, then I take back my words, my statement," Azmi said in a video on his X. The MLA and Samajwadi Party chief on Maharashtra also said that the issue was being politicised.

"The issue is being made a political issue, and I think that closing the budget ses-

sion of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly because of this is causing harm to the people of Maharashtra," Azmi said.

Earlier, a zero FIR was registered against Azmi in the Naupada Police Station of Thane and was transferred to the Marine Drive police station in Mumbai in connection with his remarks on Aurangzeb.

The FIR was lodged based on a complaint lodged by Shiv Sena MP Naresh Mhaske.

Azmi in his comments at an interaction with media-persons in the Marine Drive area had stated that Aurangzeb was a good administrator.

After the uproar over his remarks, Azmi defended his remarks regarding Au-

rangzeb, saying that the Mughal Emperor also destroyed mosques along with temples.

Refuting the claims that Aurangzeb was "anti-Hindu", Azmi stated that the emperor had 34 per cent of Hindus in his administration and many of his advisors were Hindus. He further added that there was no need to give a communal angle to it.

"If Aurangzeb had destroyed temples, he also destroyed mosques. Had he been against Hindus, 34 per cent of Hindus would not have been with him (in his administration), and his advisors would not have been Hindus. It is true that India was a golden sparrow during his rule. There is no need to give Hindu-Muslim angles to it," Azmi said.

The SP MLA further said that the struggle for power and property carried out by kings in the past "was not religious". Azmi maintained that he hasn't made any remarks against "Hindu brothers".

Woman gangraped in Pune, two held

TDG NETWORK
PUNE

A Pune court has remanded two accused to police custody until March 7 for allegedly raping and robbing a 19-year-old woman, police said.

According to the police, the accused, identified as Amol Pote (25) and Kishore Kale (29), allegedly raped and robbed a woman in Shirur taluka of Pune district on Saturday night. Police Inspector Mahadev Waghmode of Ranjangaon Police Station on Monday stated that the victim and her cousin were threatened with a sharp knife by two accused who arrived on a scooter while they were talking at a secluded place.

'BJP spreading lie over SC/ST funds misuse by Karnataka'

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of spreading false information that the funds of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are being misused and diverted to other projects.

He asked the BJP to substantiate their allegations and demanded accountability from the previous government.

"BJP is spreading false information that the money of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is being misused and the money is being diverted to other projects. They are not telling where and how it is being misused; they are not giving any clarification about it. They should answer about what they did when they were in power," Kharge told reporters here. The Karna-



taka Minister alleged that the SCSP and TSP funds are being misused in the BJP-ruled states. He also accused the Madhya Pradesh government of missing money meant for tribals for cow shelters. "The previous BJP govt is on record in newspapers and the floor of the House that more than Rs 10,000 crore (SCSP) Scheduled Caste Sub Plan, and (TSP) Tribal Sub Plan funds have been diverted and misused. Just look at how funds are being used in other BJP-ruled states. In Gujarat, they

have made a movie about Vadnagar. In Maharashtra, they have used Rs 2000 crores for farmer loan waivers. In Madhya Pradesh, they are using money meant for tribals for cow shelters.

Priyank Kharge also raised questions over the alleged mistreatment of Dalits in the BJP-ruled states.

"Are Dalits and Adivasis in BJP-ruled states worse than cows? Is protecting cows more important than protecting the dignity of Dalits and Adivasis? The central govt is using SCSP and TSP funds to give compensation to telecom service providers... Modi's model of development is clear - to leave out Dalits, Adivasis and SC/ST," he said. The Karnataka Budget session commenced on Monday. The BJP protested outside the assembly against the rise in the prices of electricity and milk and the MUDA scam.

Kerala LoP slams LDF govt over ASHA workers' protest over honorarium

TDG NETWORK
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala LoP and Congress leader VD Satheesan criticized the LDF government over ASHA workers' protest, accusing it of failing to fulfill its Rs 21,000 honorarium promise. He slammed the government's "negative attitude" and alleged attempts to "abuse" protesting women. With ASHA workers striking for 22 days, he reiterated Congress's support, citing their heavy workload and inadequate Rs7,000 state honorarium.

Speaking to reporters, Satheesan said, "We brought up the matter of Asha workers, who have been striking in front of the secretariat for the last 22 days. Their demand



is an increase in the honorarium. They have been getting only Rs 7,000 from state honorarium. LDF had offered Rs 21,000 as Asha workers' honorarium in their election manifesto. Unfortunately, the government is showing a negative attitude to this strike. They are trying to abuse the women who are striking... we support Asha workers as their workload is very high..."

Earlier in the week, Congress leader Priyanka Gan-

dhi Vadra criticised the Kerala government over the low honorarium of ASHA workers in the state, calling their ongoing protest a fight for 'dignity and respect.'

"It is appalling that women who are the backbone of society should have to beg for their rights like this. Instead of justice, all they have got from the Kerala government is apathy and attempts to silence them," the Congress leader wrote in a post on X.

The Wayanad MP pointed out that while ASHA workers in Karnataka and Telangana receive higher wages, those in Kerala are paid a meagre Rs 7,000.

The Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers went on an indefinite strike against the Left Democratic Alliance (LDF) government in Kerala, demanding better salaries.

Following the strike, senior Congress leader KC Venugopal said that United Democratic Front (UDF) MPs would take the issue to Parliament.

He extended support to the protesting ASHA workers and advised the Kerala government to shed its arrogance. "Their demands are just and fair.

BJP, Cong clash over contractor issue in Karnataka

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

After Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar blamed the previous Bharatiya Janata Party government for pending bills of contractors in the state, BJP MLA Basagouda Patil Yatnal on Tuesday said that the contractors in the state are in a "bad state", and are "committing suicide."

"Contractors are in a very bad state right now in Karnataka and are committing suicide. The government is not

paying the Contractors. They are supporting Andhra's Contractors," the BJP said. Yatnal also attacked the Karnataka government, saying that no guarantees are being fulfilled by the state government.

"Budget will stay merely a book... No guarantees are being fulfilled by the state government... The economic state of Karnataka is very bad and hence we don't have any expectation from the budget," he said. This comes after DK Shivakumar blamed the previous BJP government for

the issue of the large backlog of unpaid contractor bills in the state.

"The association had met with him, urging the government to clear the outstanding payments," the Deputy CM had said. Shivakumar acknowledged the challenge, noting that during the previous BJP government, significant work worth over Rs 1.25 lakh crore was initiated, but the state's budget allocation for capital work is only Rs 16,000 crore.

The Karnataka Legislature session began on Monday,

with Speaker UT Khader, Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar extending a warm welcome to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot upon his arrival at Vidhana Soudha to participate in the proceedings. Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah previously said that the previous BJP government did not achieve any progress; they just "looted," adding that the Congress government implemented guarantee schemes along with development programmes.

DKS' 'nut and bolt' comments on Karnataka actors spark uproar, says not God, will rectify

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

Following the uproar over his "nuts and bolts" comment on Karnataka actors, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar stated on Tuesday that he is "not a God" and will rectify his comments, in case he has done anything wrong.

This comes after the Karnataka Deputy CM slammed the film fraternity



at the inauguration of the Bengaluru International Film Festival, for low turnout of the actors and said he knows "how to tighten the nuts and bolts" of these ac-

tors.

"We may not be right and polished... let me rectify it. I am not God, so if I have done anything wrong, I will rectify it, but I am speaking in the best interest of the (film) industry. I am also from the industry... I have an interest in this industry," Shivakumar told reporters here.

"We conducted the International Film Festival in Bengaluru, and next year, I am planning to organise

IFFA (International Indian Film Academy Awards) in Bengaluru," he added.

Shivakumar's remarks drew a lot of flak from the Bharatiya Janata Party, which accused the Deputy CM of 'threatening' actors.

BJP leader CN Ashwath Narayan condemned the statement, and alleged that the Congress government in Karnataka is asking the artists to be part of the Congress campaign.

Shah to visit Tamil Nadu in two days: State BJP chief

TDG NETWORK
COIMBATORE

Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Tamil Nadu in the next two days, state BJP president K Annamalai announced on Tuesday.

"Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Tamil Nadu in 2 days. A lot of changes may take place," Annamalai said.

Shah's visit comes amid the tussle between DMK-led Tamil Nadu and the BJP-led Centre over the three-language policy and its apprehension regarding the delimitation process.

Last month, at a BJP programme in Coimbatore, Amit Shah asserted that the southern states will not be disadvantaged by the delimitation process.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has called an all-party meeting scheduled on March 5 to discuss the delimitation issue. The DMK has expressed concerns that the delimitation based on the population count in the upcoming census will be disadvantageous for the southern States as it reduces the number or share of the Lok Sabha seats in the southern States.

AICC to meet after 11 years: Cong seeks winning formula in Ahmedabad

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

The Congress party is trying hard to strengthen its organizational structure in order to gain its foothold again. Amid continuous defeats, setbacks, and alleged factionalism, Congress has decided to hold an All India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting after 11 years. The last such meeting took place in Delhi, six months before the 2014 general elections. Since then, though Congress organized a Sankalp Shivir in 2022, no AICC meeting was convened. New members of the AICC were elected dur-



KC Venugopal reviews preparations for Ahmedabad AICC meet.

ing the Congress President elections in 2022, but a formal meeting of the committee had not been called until now. The upcoming AICC meeting, scheduled for April 8th and 9th in Ahmedabad, is seen as crucial for addressing internal concerns.

The upcoming AICC meeting of Congress, scheduled for April 8th and 9th in Ahmedabad, is being viewed as crucial for the party. The meeting is taking place at a time when the Congress faces questions about its organizational strength af-

ter several setbacks in state elections. The party's recent defeats in Haryana, Maharashtra, and Delhi, where it failed to improve its position for the third consecutive time, have raised concerns. These losses came after the party had seemed to make a comeback by securing 99 seats in the 2024 general elections, but the subsequent defeats returned it to its previous position.

In response to these setbacks, the party held a meeting of general secretaries last month, where it was decided that the AICC meeting would be convened after discussing strategies to strengthen the

organization. The official announcement for the upcoming meeting was made by Organization General Secretary KC Venugopal on Tuesday.

The Congress is facing a tough challenge, especially with important state elections coming up. Bihar is set to hold elections later this year, and states like Kerala and Assam will go to the polls next year. In light of these challenges, the party has started a series of meetings to strategize for these elections. However, the bigger concern remains how to win with a weak organizational structure and ongoing factionalism.

In Kerala, for instance, there is a divide as Shashi Tharoor wants to be the CM face, while in Karnataka, supporters of Deputy CM D Shivakumar are pushing for the CM position. By holding the meeting in Gujarat, the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress aims to energize its workers and send a message that Rahul Gandhi is an accepted leader, just as was done during the Udaipur Sankalp camp in 2022. The Udaipur camp laid the foundation for the Bharat Jodo Abhiyan, and now, in Ahmedabad, the focus will shift to the "Jai Samvidhan" initiative.

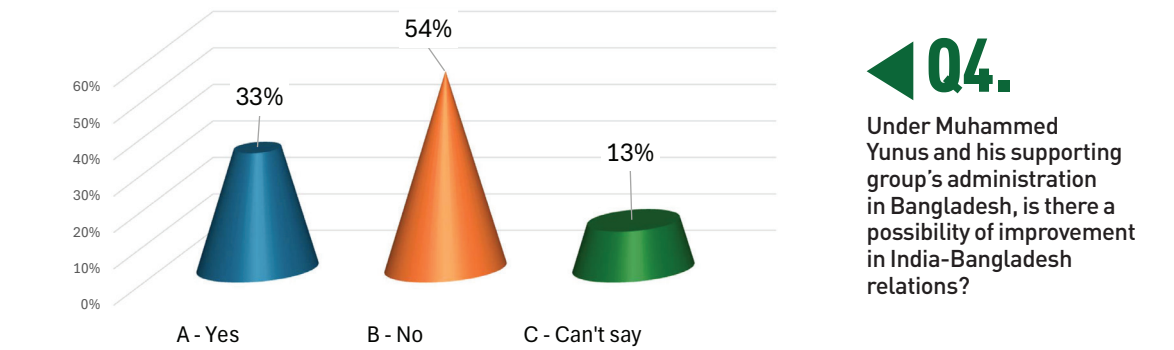
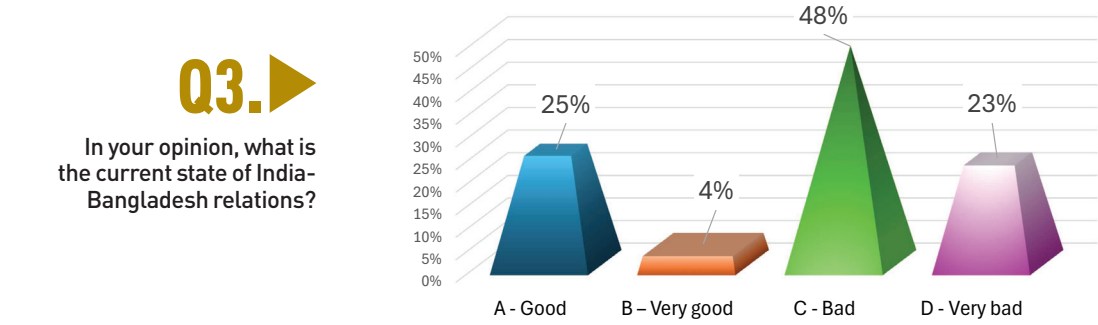
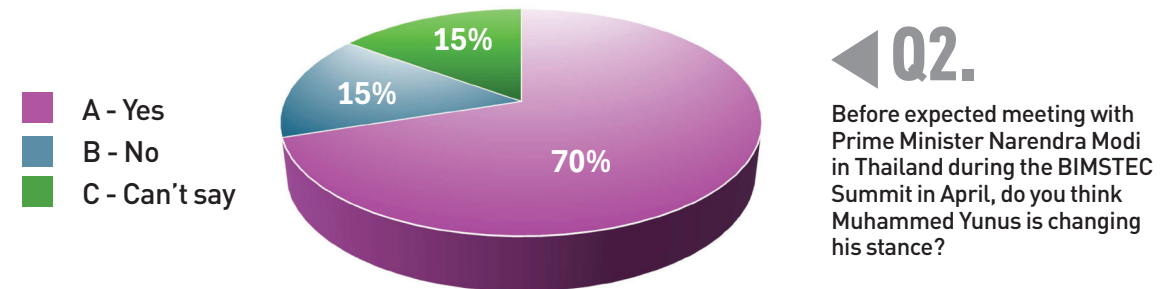
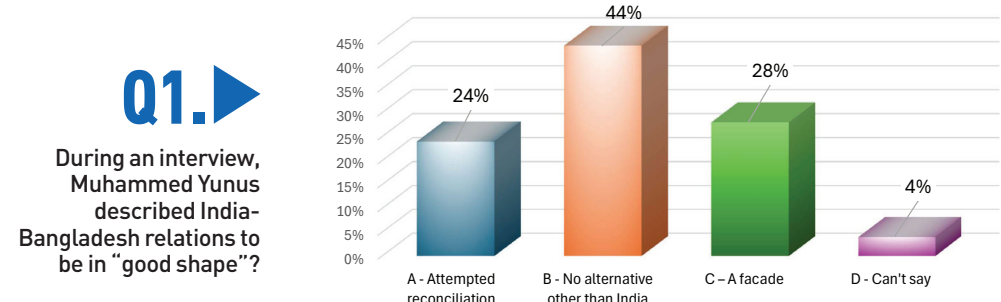
THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

25% believe India-Bangladesh relations are good

Muhammad Yunus, head of Bangladesh's caretaker government, dismissed concerns over worsening India-Bangladesh ties, calling

them victims of "propaganda." He emphasised their deep historical, political, and economic connections, stating that their interdepen-

dence prevents bad relations. In a BBC Bangla interview, he denied any deterioration, including due to student uprisings.

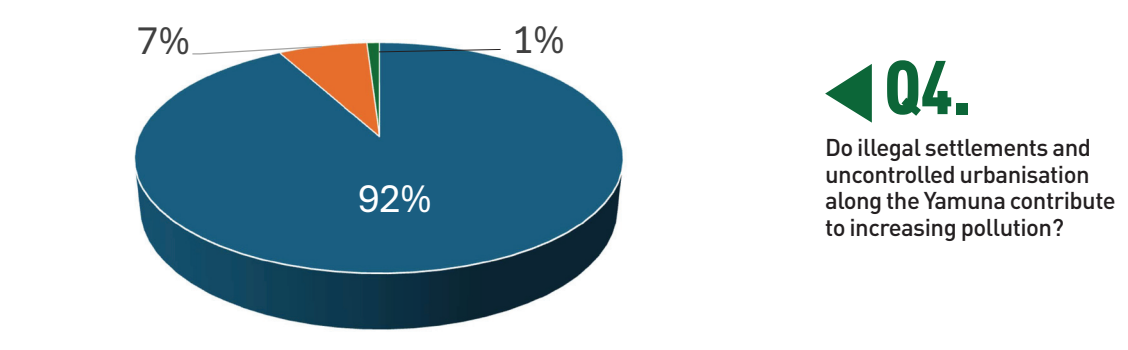
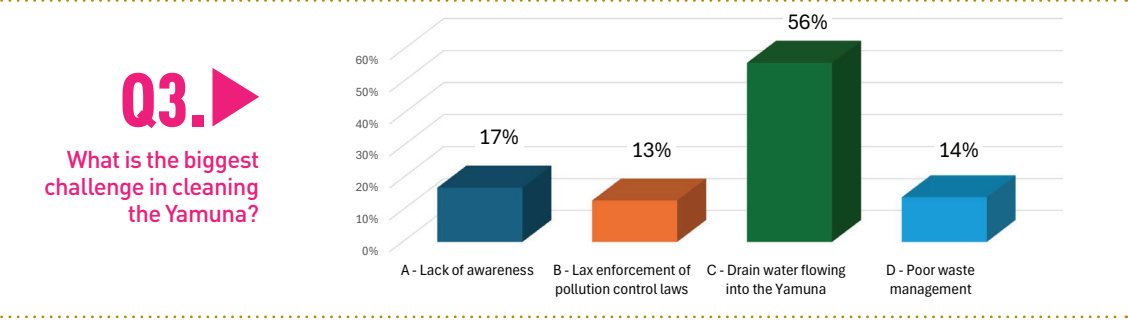
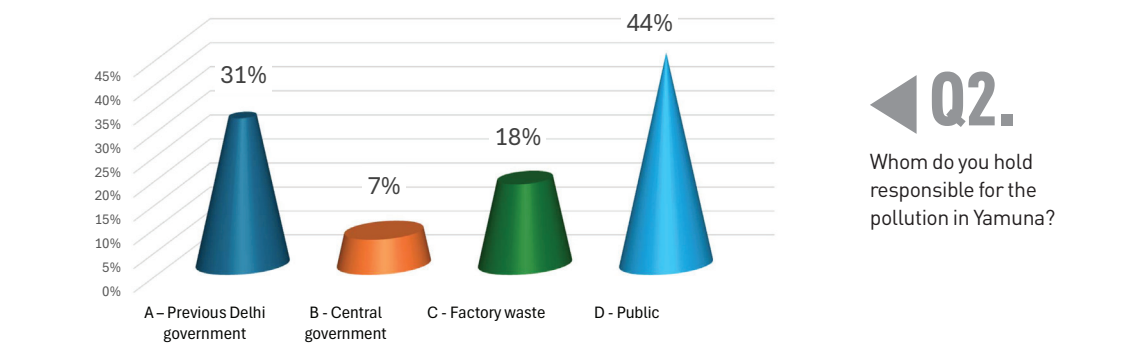
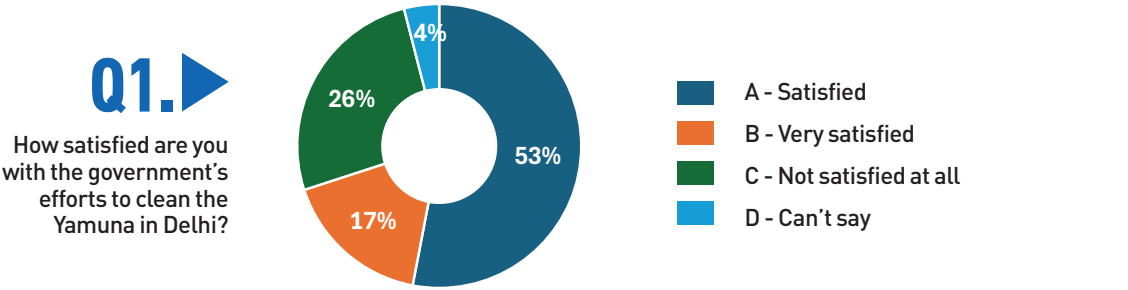


THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON DELHI MISSION YAMUNA

17% believe lack of awareness to be biggest challenge in Yamuna clean-up

Within a week of BJP's Delhi election victory, Lt Governor V.K. Saxena announced a four-pronged Yamuna cleanup plan, including waste removal, drain cleaning, STP monitoring, and new constructions.

Unlike past poll promises, BJP set a three-year deadline, boosting voter confidence. This helped BJP win 9 of 15 Yamuna belt seats, reversing AAP's 2020 dominance.



Munde quits Fadnavis cabinet

CONTINUED FROM P1

ishment. Seeing the photos that came up yesterday has deeply pained my heart," he said.

"The investigation of this case has been completed, and the chargesheet has been filed in the court. Additionally, a judicial inquiry has also been proposed. Recalling my sense of discernment and considering that my health has not been well for the past few days, the doctors have advised me to undergo treatment for the next few days. Therefore,

for medical reasons as well, I have submitted my resignation from my ministerial position in the cabinet to the Chief Minister," the NCP MLA added on X.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis accepted Munde's resignation and forwarded it to the Governor for further action. Speaking on the resignation Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis said, "Maharashtra Minister Dhananjay Munde has tendered his resignation today. I have accepted the resignation."

According to sources, CM Fadnavis had asked Munde to step down from his post.

Meanwhile the opposition has criticised the Fadnavis government alleging inaction. Congress worker Saral Patel posted a purported report on the Sarpanch murder and claimed, "The accused recorded a video of the entire incident and even urinated on his half-dead body. The mastermind behind this murder, Walmik Karad, is a business partner and close aide of Maharashtra government's minister Dhananjay Munde."

Days after clash with Zelenskyy Trump pauses aid

CONTINUED FROM P1

remarks, saying it is "disrespectful to come to the Oval Office of the United States of America and attack the administration that is trying to prevent the destruction of your country."

Trump emphasised the need of a deal to bring peace and prevent killings and told Zelenskyy "if you didn't have our military equipment, this war would have been over in two weeks".

Earlier in the day, during an investment announcement, Trump spoke on the ceasefire deal and suggested that reaching a deal between Russia and Ukraine should

be possible if all relevant parties, including European nations, are willing to negotiate. "It takes two to tango, and if you are going to have to make a deal with Russia and Ukraine, you are going to have to have the assent and the consent from the European nations," he said, stressing the importance of getting everyone involved in the room to make the deal.

He further stated that such a deal could be reached "very fast," and added that if any party is unwilling to negotiate, they may not remain in power for long. "Maybe somebody doesn't want to make a deal and if somebody doesn't want to make a deal,

I think that person won't be around very long," Trump remarked.

"Because I believe that Russia wants to make a deal. I believe certainly the people of Ukraine want to make a deal. They have suffered more than anybody else," he added.

Ukrainians expressed alarm and apprehension Tuesday at the US decision to pause military aid that is critical to their fighting Russia's invasion, as a rift deepens between Kyiv and Washington.

Officials in Kyiv said they were grateful for vital US help in the war and want to keep working with

Washington. The country's prime minister, though, said Ukraine still wants security guarantees to be part of any peace deal and won't recognize Russian occupation of any Ukrainian land.

Ukraine and its allies are concerned Trump is pushing for a quick ceasefire that will favour Russia, which Kyiv says cannot be trusted to honour truces.

The pause in US aid isn't expected to have an immediate impact on the battlefield. Ukrainian forces have slowed Russian advances along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line, especially in the fiercely contested Donetsk region some

700 kilometers (400 miles) east of Kyiv. The Russian onslaught has been costly in troops and armor but hasn't brought a strategically significant breakthrough for the Kremlin.

Ukraine, which depends heavily on foreign help to hold back Russia's full-scale invasion has feared that aid could be stopped since Trump took office.

US-made Patriot air defense missile systems, for example, are a pivotal part of protecting Ukraine. Just as vital is U.S. intelligence assistance, which has allowed Ukraine to track Russian troop movements and select targets.

China slaps reciprocal duty

CONTINUED FROM P1

be imposed on US chicken, wheat, corn, and cotton, plus 10 per cent tariff on soybeans, pork, beef, and dairy from March 10.

A spokesperson from the Chinese Commerce Ministry said that Beijing "will take countermeasures to firmly safeguard its own rights and interests," Chinese state news agency Xinhua reported.

The spokesperson said US "typical act of unilateralism and bullying in disregard of facts, international trade rules and the voices of all parties."

As per a report in the New York Times, China's Ministry of Commerce has also singled out 15 companies from the United States, including the drone maker Skydio, for punitive trade measures to "safeguard national security and interests."

The NYT reported that Beijing has has

added 10 other American companies to what it calls an "unreliable entities list," preventing them from doing business in China.

The steps include levies on US food imports and halting the sale of Chinese goods to 15 American companies.

Xinhua cited a Chinese government spokesperson as saying "We hope the US can work in the same direction as China and find a solution through equal-footed consultation." A 25 per cent US tariff on goods imported from Canada and Mexico took effect just after midnight on Tuesday, along with an additional 10 per cent tariff on goods from China.

On Monday (local time) Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had announced that retaliatory tariffs on US goods will go into force at midnight on Tuesday if the US tariffs on Canadian imports take effect.

Mann says won't bow down

CONTINUED FROM P1

erated and severe action will be taken against these corrupt and haughty officers.

He said the state government will recruit new Tehsildars and revenue officers in the coming days, the agenda for which will be brought in the Cabinet. Mann said these officers harass the common man on a daily basis but this will no longer be tolerated.

The Chief Minister said the officers who are going on mass leave should remember one thing that after they return to work from their leave, when and where they will join will be decided by the people. He said the state government is ready with plan B for tackling such tantrums and if needed powers of Tehsildars will be delegated to teachers and professors for smooth registration process.

Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the state government is committed for safeguarding the interests of the common man by all means and no one will be allowed to take them for granted.

He said that in order to ensure that people do not face any sort of inconvenience due to the strike, the PCS officers, Kanugos and Senior Assistants (who have cleared all the departmental exams for promotion to the post of Naib Tehsildars) have been appointed as Sub Registrars to carry on the work smoothly. He said that in democracy people are supreme and his government will not allow anyone, however affluent he may be, to create inconvenience to them. Bhag-

want Singh Mann categorically said that the work in Tehsils will not stop and registration of land deeds will be done in an unabated manner.

The Chief Minister said that these people are taking hefty salaries from the state government but they are not delivering the services to the people. He said that this cannot be tolerated because in democracy people are supreme and the officers are accountable to them. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that if these officers want to go on mass leave and don't want to work then the state government has a number of unemployed youth who are already waiting to work at their place.

The Chief Minister said that for the coming 10 days he will be regularly visiting various tehsils across the state to streamline the work. He said that the Tehsildars have been harassing generations of people by their corrupt ways and means. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that this is completely unwarranted and undesirable adding that the state government cannot sit idly and watch these officers doing their tantrums.

The Chief Minister said that credit war is going amongst the various farmers unions who are trying to create anarchy by running a parallel government. He reiterated that the government is always ready to resolve the issues pertaining to various sections of society through negotiations. However, Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the inconvenience to the common man through rail or road blockades must be avoided.

Let's focus on kindness towards animals

CONTINUED FROM P1

The Prime Minister also drew attention to other distressing cases, including a lioness who had been hit by a vehicle, suffering severe spinal injuries, and a leopard cub that had been abandoned by its family. Both animals received proper care and rehabilitation at Vantara, which gave them a new chance at life.

Showing his love and affection for animals, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated and visited Vantara, an animal rescue, conservation and rehabilitation centre in Gujarat's Jamnagar district.

Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani, his wife Nita Ambani, their son Anant Ambani and daughter-in-law Radhika Merchant were also present at the inauguration.

During his visit, PM Modi explored various facilities at the centre and closely interacted with various animals that have been re-

habilitated there. He also checked the wildlife hospital at Vantara and saw the veterinary facilities, which are equipped with MRI, CT scans, and ICUs among others.

The Prime Minister's visit included heartwarming interactions with the centre's resident animals. In a video shared on the official YouTube handle of PM Modi, he could be seen playing with and feeding various species including Asiatic Lion cubs, White Lion cub, Clouded Leopard cub which is a rare and endangered species, Caracal cub among others. The White Lion cub which was fed by PM Modi was born at the Centre after his mother was rescued and brought to Vantara for care.

The Caracals which were once in abundance in India are now becoming a rare sight. In Vantara, Caracals are bred under a breeding program in captivity for their preservations and are released into the wild later.

Punjab cracks down on farmers

CONTINUED FROM P1

pression that he could not take action.

Farmer leaders and opposition parties criticised the AAP government for the crackdown, which came a day after talks between Chief Minister Mann and SKM leaders ended abruptly with the CM walking out of their meeting.

Mann defended his decision to leave the meeting, stating that he had questioned the farmers about

their protest plans. When farmers insisted that the agitation would continue, Mann expressed his frustration, saying, "Then why was I made to sit there for two and a half hours? These demands are not under my authority; they are issues for the central government." He claimed that the farmers accused him of attending the meeting out of fear, while he maintained that "A meeting and a protest cannot go hand in hand."

Punjab's Agriculture

Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian stated that there was no major dispute in Monday's meeting. He said, "Farmers can meet with us whenever they want. They are respectable members of society. The meeting was conducted in a cordial atmosphere, where eight out of 18 demands were discussed." He also highlighted that the Chief Minister had urged farmers to avoid frequent protests that disrupt daily life and economic activities in the state.



NHAI TO MAINTAIN PWD ROADS IN BORDER AREAS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a first, the Delhi government has planned to handover the maintenance of PWD roads in the city border areas to NHAI, with a 13.23-km stretch of Delhi-Rohtak Road being transferred to the authority as part of its initiative to strengthen road network. The move will also boost a larger infrastructure development strategy in the national capital. According to the government, the 13.23 stretch from Peeragarhi Chowk to Tikri Border (Delhi-Haryana border) will soon be handed over to the

INFRA BOOST

- The road stretch from Peeragarhi Chowk to Tikri Border will be upgraded.
- The proposal has in-principle approval from Union Minister Nitin Gadkari.
- The move aims to improve road conditions, reduce travel time, and enhance connectivity.
- It will ease congestion and improve traffic flow between Delhi and Haryana.
- The project highlights strong coordination for world-class infrastructure development.

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). “Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and with the in-prin-

ciple agreement of Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, I have approved and forwarded a proposal to NHAI for the

transfer of the stretch to its much-needed upgradation,” PWD Minister Parvesh Verma said.

He said that other such stretches are also being identified for further strengthening the highway network and reducing travel time for commuters.

This will ensure better road maintenance, faster execution of projects, and long-term sustainability of Delhi’s highway network, a statement from Verma’s office said.

The development comes after the PWD minister approached Gadkari who has given in-principle ap-

proval to it. “The move will facilitate the upgradation of this crucial corridor into a world-class highway,” the statement said.

Last week, BJP’s Mundka MLA Gajender Singh Drall requested the PWD minister in the Delhi Assembly to give special attention to the Delhi-Rohtak road as congestion and long-hours traffic jams are a major issue for lakhs of daily commuters.

The new move will facilitate smoother traffic flow, better road conditions, and enhanced connectivity for thousands of daily commuters travelling between Delhi and Haryana.

CM: WILL MAKE LANDFILL SITES GREEN LAND IN A YEAR

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday said that the Lieutenant Governor had been closely overseeing the landfill project for the past few months, with significant efforts from the central government. She highlighted that the removed waste was being repurposed for NHAI projects and DDA ground levelling, adding that the Delhi government aims to transform the site into green land within a year.

“The LG looked after this project from the last few months with great efforts... The work being done and the targets that have been set, the central government has big role to play. The materials removed from this site are being used in several projects of the NHAI and levelling of DDA grounds...,” She told reporters.



POLLUTION-FREE VISION

- Bhalswa landfill will be turned into green land within a year with efforts from Delhi and central governments.
- The central government is helping repurpose waste for NHAI and DDA projects.
- Bamboo Benefits: Bamboo releases more oxygen, needs less water, and grows quickly, aiding Delhi’s greening.
- The project aims to reduce pollution and create green spaces.

CM Gupta further added, “We will carry out observations on a monthly basis, and we will visit all three landfill sites. Within a

year, we will ensure that the height of the landfill is reduced and a green land is developed so that good projects can be started in

the days to come. Delhi government is working on mission mode...”

As part of this initiative, LG V K Saxena and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta launched a bamboo plantation drive at the Bhalswa landfill site here on Tuesday and assured people that the area would soon be turned green, in an effort towards biominim, land reclamation and a greener Delhi under the government’s vision of Viksit Bharat@2047. Saxena efforts to reclaim landfill sites began two years ago and with the start of the plantation drive, the process of turning these areas into green zones has begun.

“Today, 200 bamboo plants have been planted here. In the coming months, 54,000 more trees will be added,” the LG said, adding that once the plantation is completed, commuters will get to see green patches instead of towering garbage mounds.



‘Four more days are left’: AAP protests over BJP’s Rs 2,500 monthly aid

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The AAP staged a protest here on Tuesday and demanded clarity from the BJP-led Delhi government on the promise to roll out Rs 2,500 monthly financial assistance to women by the International Women’s Day on March 8. The demonstration outside the Mandi House metro station here was led by former Chief Minister and Leader

of Opposition Atishi along with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs and party workers.

Atishi in a post on X questioned the BJP government over the delay in implementing the scheme.

“Four more days are left. The women of Delhi are waiting” when will Rs 2,500 come? Modi had guaranteed that on March 8, the first installment would be credited to the ac-

counts of all women in Delhi. Will this guarantee be fulfilled or will it once again prove to be just a slogan?” she wrote on X in Hindi.

AAP MLA from Kondli, Kuldeep Kumar, also took a dig at the BJP, asking Delhi’s newly appointed Chief Minister Rekha Gupta to clarify the status of the promised financial assistance.

“PM Modi had said that on the occasion of the International Women’s Day on

March 8, Rs 2,500 would be sent to the accounts of women.

Now, CM Rekha Gupta should tell whether this guarantee is going to turn out to be a ‘jumla’ like the promise of Rs 15 lakh,” he posted on X.

The BJP had made Rs 2,500 monthly assistance promise to women during the Delhi Assembly elections, surpassing the AAP’s offer of Rs 2,100.

CM Gupta slams AAP’s health model, calls it ‘zero’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday attack the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government’s health model, calling it “zero” and alleging large-scale mismanagement at government hospitals during AAP’s tenure. During a visit to the Guru Teg Bahadur (GTB) Hospital, Gupta claimed the facility has turned into a “dumping ground” with unused medical equipment and incomplete hospital infrastructure. “Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the warehouse here has been completely filled. Even today, 458 oxygen concentrators, 146 ventilators, 36,000 PPE kits, multipara monitors, masks, and other medical supplies are lying unused. This is not just the case with GTB Hospital, but with many hospitals across Delhi,” Gupta alleged.

She also claimed that

hospital buildings were constructed without proper planning, leading to wasteful expenditure.

“AAP built seven structures inside hospitals, turning parking lots and sports grounds into buildings that do not meet the medical facility parameters. These so-called ‘semi-permanent structures’ are only 60 per cent complete, and they will not be of any use even if Rs 2,500 crore more is spent on them,” she said.

The chief minister also alleged that hospital staff had not been paid their salaries for six months.

“The health and management system of Delhi’s hospitals is itself sick. How will the hospitals function in such a situation,” she asked.

Accusing the previous AAP government of governance failures, Gupta said, “AAP’s health and education model is nothing but zero.

‘Assembly panels to be formed on Mar 24-26’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The House committees, including the Public Accounts Committee, of the newly constituted Delhi Assembly will be formed in the Budget Session to be held on March 24-26, Speaker Vijender Gupta said on Tuesday. Addressing a press conference here after adjournment of the first session of the 8th Assembly, Gupta said tabling of two CAG reports on the Delhi government’s performance in the House was just a beginning.

“In the coming days, very significant decisions will be made by the House regarding the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India reports tabled in the House. The PAC will be formed in the Budget Session and it will start functioning from April, he said.

The other House committees too will be formed in the Budget Session on March 24-26, he said.

The five sittings of the newly constituted House



conducted business for 18 hours and 18 minutes, said Gupta, adding 126 members expressed their views on various issues.

Meanwhile, Vijender Gupta on Tuesday said the CAG reports on the performance of previous government in Delhi, recently tabled in the House, will be taken to their logical end and action will be ensured as per the PAC’s recommendations. The House committees, including the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), of the newly constituted Delhi Assembly will be formed in the Budget Session to be held on

March 24-26, he said.

“Laying of the CAG reports in the House and its coming before the public is not the end. Its just the beginning.

These will be taken to their logical end. I assure the people of Delhi and the country that this process will be completed at the soonest possible,” he said in a press conference.

Gupta also said the historic Delhi Assembly building will be developed as a national monument and a major tourist attraction after consultation with experts. The eVidhan project for

paperless work at the Assembly, pending for nearly ten years, will be revived immediately for implementation, he said.

The five sittings of the newly constituted House conducted business for 18 hours and 18 minutes, said Gupta, adding 126 members expressed their views on various issues.

Gupta served as the Leader of Opposition in the previous tenure of the Assembly and had approached the court for tabling of the 14 pending reports of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, in the House dominated by the AAP.

The performance audit reports on ‘Regulation and Supply of Liquor in Delhi’ and ‘Public Health Infrastructure and Management of Health Services’ were tabled in the House on February 25 and February 28, respectively, by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

The PAC will examine these reports and submit reports within three months.

Jamia protest: HC stays suspension of several students

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday stayed the suspension of several Jamia Millia Islamia students for protesting in the campus allegedly without prior permission. The high court also ordered constitution of a committee of university officials under supervision of the vice chancellor to resolve the issue, and said they should also involve students representatives in the discussion. Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma asked the university to file a report in the matter.

The court was hearing a plea by four Jamia students challenging an order of the university proctor suspending them and banning them from entering the campus.

The counsel for the students submitted before the court that they were holding peaceful protest.

Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma asked the university to file a report in the matter.

Advocates Amit Sahni and Kisley Mishra, representing Jamia, contended that no permission was sought by the students from the university administration to hold protest and they also damaged property.

The counsel said the students were sleeping outside the canteen which was not allowed.

In February, some students protesting in the university campus were allegedly detained by the Delhi Police. Protesters claimed some students remained unaccounted for hours, leading to further protests.

5 injured in firing between rival groups in Jyoti Nagar

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Five people were injured in a firing incident between two groups in northeast Delhi’s Jyoti Nagar area, an official said on Tuesday.

According to the police, the incident was reported around 9 pm on Monday at Jyoti Nagar police station by a man claiming his son had been shot at by unknown assailants.

Upon arrival, police found that multiple rounds had



been fired during the clash, the official said, adding that the injured people were rushed to GTB Hospital for

treatment. A crime team and forensic experts were called to examine the scene, where several

empty cartridges and a live cartridge were recovered, he added.

Police have registered a

case at Jyoti Nagar police station and launched an investigation. Teams have been formed to analyse technical and manual inputs to identify and apprehend the suspects involved in the shooting, the official said.

The official further said that the motive behind the gunfight is yet to be established, and police are probing possible gang rivalries or personal enmity. Local sources are being questioned, and CCTV footage from the area is being examined for leads.

7,000 potholes to be filled by April 30: PWD

TDG NETWORK
GHAZIABAD

The Public Works Department (PWD) has set a deadline of April 30 to fill 7,000 potholes on roads across the national capital, according to an official communication. The directive, issued to senior PWD officials, refers to a presentation made before the Delhi Council of Ministers on February 21 chaired by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

“In this presentation, certain timelines were commit-

ted for inviting various tenders and commencement of work. It is, therefore, directed to all concerned officers to ensure adherence to these timelines,” the communication stated. As per the enclosed presentation, potholes are being filled using department maintenance vans. Additionally, the PWD has identified 20 lakh square meters of road patches requiring repairs. The tender process for these repairs is expected to be completed by March 15, with the target for comple-

tion also set for April 30.

The alleged poor condition of roads across the national capital was a major issue during the campaigning for the 70-member Delhi Assembly elections.

Parvash Sahib Singh, the PWD minister in the newly formed BJP government, is overseeing the initiative.

The BJP secured a decisive victory in the recent Delhi Assembly elections, winning 48 out of 70 seats, while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was reduced to 22 seats.

IMF CAUTIONS OF SYSTEMIC RISKS IN NBFC SECTOR

Unlike banks, NBFCs cannot accept demand deposits, and their deposits are not insured.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has raised concerns about potential financial instability in India due to the concentrated exposure of Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) to the power and infrastructure sector.

The report highlights that NBFCs are deeply interconnected with banks, corporate bond markets, and mutual funds, which could amplify systemic stress if vulnerabilities emerge.

The IMF report specifically warns about the high exposure of NBFCs to the power sector, which continues to face structural challenges.

Concentrated lending to this sector increases the risk of financial instability, as any distress in power and infrastructure projects could trigger broader stress across banks, bond markets, and mutual funds.

Furthermore, the co-lending model, where banks partner with NBFCs to extend credit to priority sectors, further intertwines financial institutions, increasing systemic risk.

SUMMARY

- High exposure to power and infrastructure sectors threatens financial stability, impacting banks, bond markets, and mutual funds.
- NBFCs lack RBI liquidity access and deposit insurance; IMF urges tighter oversight and risk management.
- Weak corporate bond market forces NBFCs to rely on banks and mutual funds, increasing financial contagion risks.



The IMF suggests closer monitoring of NBFCs' lending patterns and improved risk management frameworks to prevent financial disruptions.

The report raises concern that while NBFCs function similarly to banks in many ways, key differences remain. Unlike banks, NBFCs cannot accept demand deposits, and their deposits are not insured.

They also do not have access to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) liquidity facilities or payment systems.

The IMF recommends strengthening liquidity regulations for NBFCs, particularly those with

significant infrastructure exposure.

Additionally, India's corporate bond market remains underdeveloped, making NBFCs heavily reliant on domestic institutions like banks and mutual funds for financing. This interconnectedness has led to past liquidity crises, with major redemptions in the mutual fund industry linked to corporate bond market distress.

Despite these challenges, India has made significant progress in financial inclusion. The IMF notes that nearly 80 per cent of adults have financial accounts, supported by ex-

tensive banking networks and the growth of digital public infrastructure such as the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

The rapid rise of retail investors in equities has also transformed India into one of the world's largest markets for equity options trading.

India's financial system is diverse and well-developed, with total assets amounting to nearly 190 per cent of GDP. While banks hold around 60 per cent of the financial system's assets, NBFCs have expanded their market share significantly.

Nearly half of the credit to the private sector now

comes from non-banking financial institutions, including insurers, pension funds, and investment funds.

The IMF notes that state-owned NBFCs dominate the sector, with the top three government-owned infrastructure financing companies (IFCs) holding one-third of total NBFC assets. Unlike private-sector NBFCs, state-owned entities are currently exempt from large exposure limits, raising regulatory concerns.

The report recommends aligning regulations for both state-owned and private NBFCs to mitigate risks.

RBI will have to cut CRR to ease banking liquidity: SBI Report

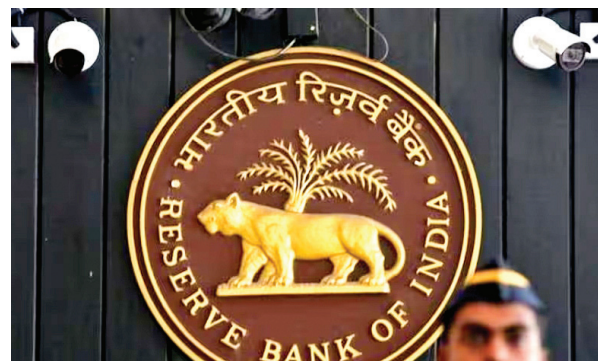
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will have to cut the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) to ease the prevailing liquidity pressure in the banking sector, according to a report by State Bank of India (SBI) research.

The report highlighted that with unchanged ownership in government securities (G-secs) in the financial year 2025-26 (FY26), the Open Market Operations (OMO) gap could still be around Rs 1.7 trillion. This suggests that additional liquidity measures may be required on a sustained basis.

It said "Liquidity Estimation; CRR cut is necessary to ease the pressure, RBI could look into using CRR more as a regulatory intervention tool / countercyclical liquidity buffer rather than as a liquidity tool in future".

According to the report, RBI should explore using CRR more as a regulatory



intervention tool or a countercyclical liquidity buffer, rather than relying on it as a liquidity tool in future.

The current liquidity conditions, combined with the projected OMO gap, underline the necessity of proactive measures to maintain stability in the financial system. The report also called for a reassessment of RBI's existing liquidity management framework. It suggested replacing the Weighted Average Call Rate (WACR) as the policy rate, arguing that it does not effectively serve its intended purpose.

The current framework, according to the report,

may need modifications to align with evolving market conditions and liquidity requirements.

The Indian banking system's liquidity has seen its worst liquidity crunch of more than a decade. The system liquidity moved from a surplus of Rs 1.35 lakh crore in November to a deficit of Rs 0.65 lakh crore in December, further to Rs 2.07 lakh crore deficit in January and Rs 1.59 lakh crore in February.

Additionally, the report pointed out an inadvertent cash leakage due to Mahakumbh, a major religious event.

Bombay HC stays filing of FIR against former SEBI chief

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

A single-judge bench of the Bombay High Court has stayed the Mumbai special court order against former SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and five others from filing an FIR in a matter related to alleged fraud in an IPO back in 1994.

The high court, while staying the order to file an FIR against the accused, has issued notices to stakeholders. The matter will be heard next after 4 weeks.

The high court has observed that the special court had not gone into the details of the matter and had passed an order for FIR 'mechanically'.

On March 2, 2025, the Special ACB Court in Mumbai ordered the launching of an FIR against former SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and five others over



alleged financial fraud, regulatory violations, and corruption while approving the listing of an IPO.

The allegations pertain to an alleged fraudulent listing of a company on the stock exchange -- Cals Refineries Ltd. It was alleged that the fraudulent activity was done with the active connivance of regulatory authorities.

Upon reviewing the mate-

rial on record, the special court noted that the allegations disclose a cognizable offense and, hence, necessitate an investigation.

SEBI challenged the special court order in the Mumbai High Court, defending all SEBI officials charged by the special court, including the former SEBI Chairperson.

"Even though these officials were not holding their respective positions at the relevant point of time, the court allowed the application without issuing any notice or granting any opportunity to SEBI to place the facts on record," SEBI had argued in a statement.

SEBI and BSE said the alleged financial fraud in contention had supposedly happened back in 1994 when none of the charged officials were part of these organisations.

IT and auto stocks fall on US tariff decisions

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Indian stock market ended in the red on Monday as investor sentiment remained cautious ahead of the implementation of new tariffs imposed by former US President Donald Trump, set to take effect from Tuesday.

The BSE Sensex closed 96.01 points lower at 72,989.93, while the NSE Nifty declined 36.65 points to settle at 22,082.65.

Among Nifty constituents, 22 stocks advanced while 28 declined. The top gainers included SBI, BPCL, BEL, Shriram Finance, and Adani Enterprises, while Bajaj Auto, Hero MotoCorp, Bajaj Finserv, HCL Tech, and Eicher Motors led the list of losers.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial

Services, said, "The domestic market exhibited a recovery from today's lows but remained in negative territory due to adverse global cues related to escalating global trade tensions. Nevertheless, the broader market outperformed, primarily driven by value buying opportunities in small-cap stocks. Currently, domestic economic indicators are favourable while investors await clarity on global trades for a consistency in momentum."

VLA Ambala, SEBI Registered Research Analyst and Co-Founder of Stock Market Today, highlighted the impact of the trade war.

"India's markets are already feeling the heat, with excessive FII outflows. The real concern arises if SIP and domestic funds start expecting a decline in inflows."

PwC India launches 'Emerging Tech Startup Challenge'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

PwC India announced the launch of its first-ever startup accelerator program called the Emerging Tech Startup Challenge, designed to empower startups in the emerging technology space to refine their solutions and accelerate market penetration.

According to PwC, the accelerator aims to foster innovation and support India's vibrant startup ecosystem by providing mentorship, consulting expertise, and strategic guidance.

The programme is open to all India-based startups working across the areas of artificial intelligence, data analytics, blockchain/Web 3.0, space tech, Industry 4.0, spatial reality, and more.

Over the course of three months, the 15 selected startups will benefit from access to mentorship from subject matter experts and 25 hours of pro-bono consulting services across critical areas such as management, technology, go-to-market strategies,

STARTUP CORNER



valuation, funding, and taxation.

A hybrid format - part online, part in-person - will ensure that geographical boundaries do not hinder participation, enabling a diverse range of companies to benefit from the resources and support on offer.

Sanjeev Krishan, Chairperson, PwC India said, "By empowering emerging technology startups and equipping them with the tools to thrive, we are fostering a dynamic and sustainable tech ecosystem in India."

He said, "This will not only drive economic growth and create future-ready jobs but also deliver transformative solutions that positively impact society. I'm excited to see the growth and innovation emerging from the startups joining the accelerator."

Arnab Basu, Partner and Leader - Advisory, PwC India said "Through this platform we want to create a growth ecosystem for our clients. We can't wait to see how the disruptors and innovators can address the most pressing challenges related to the growth of our largest clients."

Manpreet Singh Ahuja, Chief Digital Officer at PwC India, expressed his excitement about the program, saying, "At PwC India, our focus is on driving meaningful impact for our clients while supporting the broader startup ecosystem. Through the Emerging Tech Startup Challenge, we are not just fostering innovation but also enabling startups to create real, transformative value for businesses and industries."

Unchecked freebies are a luxury India can no longer afford: Experts

RUCHIRA TALAPATRA
NIMLI, RAJASTHAN

A surprisingly candid consensus emerged at this year's Anil Agarwal Dialogue (AAD) 2025, where top policymakers warned that India's decades-old practice of providing free water and electricity - especially in agriculture - is economically unsustainable and environmentally perilous. In a panel discussion that flew under the national news radar, former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant and ex-Planning Commission Deputy Chair Montek Singh Ahluwalia urged a radical policy shift: start pricing these precious resources realistically, or risk irreversible crises. Their rare bluntness at an environmental journalism conclave has spotlighted an underreported economic trend with far-reaching implications for India's future.

During a high-profile panel on "Anti-environmentalism in a Climate-risked, Deglobalised World" at AAD 2025, Amitabh Kant openly

backed Montek Singh Ahluwalia's contention that water must no longer be treated as a free infinite good. "I entirely agree with Mr. Ahluwalia when he said that water needs to be priced," Kant remarked. He rattled off stark facts to support this stance: India holds 17% of the world's population but just 4% of its water resources, and a staggering 90% of India's water is consumed by agriculture, much of it squandered on water-intensive crops grown with little oversight. "Rice and sugarcane are consuming all your water," Kant noted, adding that India is effectively "exporting virtual water in the name of Basmati rice" through its agricultural exports.

Currently, many state governments supply farmers with electricity at no cost to pump groundwater, and urban populist schemes promise free water and power to households. These policies, while politically popular, have encouraged over-extraction of groundwater and fiscal stress. Kant



Former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant (R) and ex-Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia (L)

warned that free electricity leads directly to reckless water extraction, drying up aquifers. Without pricing signals, there is little incentive to conserve. "Everybody's got used to free dose (freebies)...if you keep getting free dose, you will make the country go bust," he cautioned, using an colloquial Hindi-inflected term for handouts. According to Kant, state after state is verging on bankruptcy "because of this huge policy

of freebies and populism" - a dire assessment seldom heard so openly from establishment insiders.

Promising free water or power has long been a vote-winning formula in India, and few in power openly question it. That's what made the AAD dialogue stand out: two of India's veteran policymakers essentially urged leaders to reverse course on freebies, even if it's politically difficult. This viewpoint

remains rarely reported in mainstream coverage, which often skirts around the long-term costs of populist subsidies.

Yet the evidence is mounting that the status quo is untenable. Insiders have known the truth for years - a senior Haryana Irrigation Department engineer admitted almost a decade ago that while giving farmers free water and power "makes sense" to help the poor, "it's also not sustain-

able."

What's new is the level of urgency and profile of voices calling for change. Ahluwalia and Kant's comments highlight an underappreciated economic fault line: India's water and power giveaway is undermining both environmental security and public finances, a story often overshadowed by flashier headlines.

At AAD 2025, the experts provided context that makes this reality hard to ignore. Kant pointed out that many Indian states are effectively on the brink of a water bankruptcy - aquifers are depleted and utilities drowning in debt - even as the public remains addicted to freebies. In Punjab, for instance, the cost of "free" power for irrigation has piled up enormous bills. In 2020, Punjab owed over \$1 billion to electricity providers just to subsidize farm power for groundwater pumping - an amount twice the state's health budget and four times its transportation budget.

Such hidden liabilities, replicated across multiple states, threaten to crowd out essential development spending. This is the creeping crisis that rarely makes front-page news.

As Kant noted, when states give agriculture essentially free electricity, they often compensate by charging higher rates to industry and commercial users, or by accumulating debt. Indian manufacturers consequently face some of the highest electricity tariffs in the world, undermining competitiveness. Unreliable supply (due to rationing power for farms) further hobbles productivity. Water-intensive industries and investors in sectors like food, beverage, textiles, and power generation are similarly exposed. Today's "free" water policies mask the true risk and value of water. If aquifers run dry or governments abruptly enforce usage curbs, companies could face operational crises. Conversely, if India heeds the experts'

advice and moves toward pricing water and electricity, it could unlock new opportunities. Speakers at the event stressed that some success models exist. Cities like Indore and Surat have shown that better waste and resource management is possible with committed local governance (both cities dramatically improved sanitation and water management in recent years). Internationally, Singapore is a shining example frequently cited by Kant: decades ago it instituted steep water pricing tied to consumption - those who use more, pay more - and invested heavily in recycling and desalination. The result is a city-state that leapt from water insecurity to water adequacy while its per capita income soared from \$600 in the 1960s to \$90,000 today.

"That's not been done on populism, that's been done on very solid political governance, including pricing of water," Kant observed, implying India could learn from this template.

THE CONTROVERSY OVER CHINA'S PROPOSED EMBASSY IN LONDON

LEGAL, SECURITY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

OPINION

PROF. ABHINAV MEHROTRA
& DR. BISWANATH GUPTA



The proposed establishment of the largest Chinese embassy in Europe, located in London, has sparked significant controversy. Protesters and policymakers have raised concerns regarding national security, human rights, and surveillance risks associated with the project. In this light, this article examines the legal and diplomatic implications of fortifying embassies, the obligations of host states under international law, and the broader geopolitical ramifications of China's expanding diplomatic footprint in Europe. By analyzing key international legal instruments such as the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(ICCPR), the authors explore the tension between diplomatic privileges and state sovereignty in an era of increasing international surveillance. Embassies serve as critical links for international diplomacy, facilitating communication between nations while ensuring the protection of diplomatic personnel. However, the size and security of embassies have become contentious issues, especially considering global political tensions. The proposed Chinese embassy in London, if approved, would be the largest of its kind in Europe. While China argues that the new facility is necessary to manage its growing diplomatic responsibilities, critics warn that the embassy's scale and

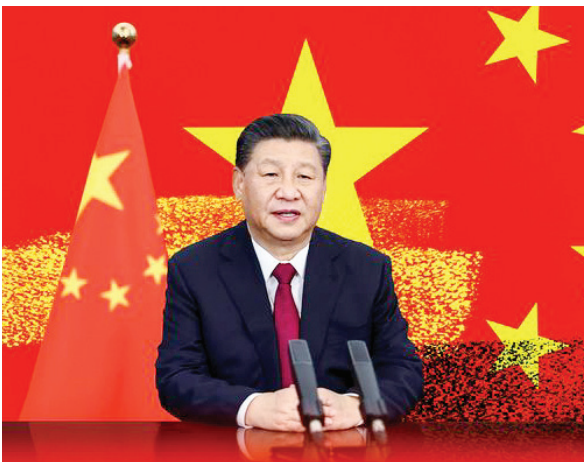
potential for intelligence-gathering pose significant risks to national security and civil liberties.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

International law provides a framework for the establishment and protection of diplomatic missions. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR), 1961 mandates host states to protect foreign embassies and their personnel. However, it does not prescribe specific standards regarding embassy size, infrastructure, or reciprocal obligations between states. The absence of clear legal guidelines has led to increasing tensions as some states seek to expand their diplomatic missions beyond traditional consular functions.

Under Article 22 of the VCDR, the host state must ensure the security of foreign embassies, preventing attacks or unauthorized intrusions. However, the growing role of embassies in intelligence and cybersecurity operations has blurred the lines between diplomatic and security concerns. The Chinese embassy project raises questions about whether existing legal frameworks are sufficient to address modern geopolitical challenges.

FORTIFICATION OF EMBASSIES:



SECURITY VS. SOVEREIGNTY

The fortification of embassies refers to the physical and structural measures taken to secure diplomatic premises. These measures, while essential for the safety of diplomats, can also raise sovereignty concerns if they exceed reasonable security requirements. The planned embassy in London is expected to be heavily fortified, reflecting both the geopolitical sensitivities surrounding China's global influence and the increasing threats faced by diplomatic missions.

In past cases, heavily fortified embassies have been criticized for functioning as intelligence hubs rather than purely diplomatic spaces. Critics argue that China's increased engagement in Europe has led to concerns over surveillance and cyber espionage. Given the lack of international legal standards on embassy infrastructure, host states must balance their obligations

to protect diplomatic missions with their duty to safeguard national security and civil liberties.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND PRIVACY CONCERNS: THE ICCPR PERSPECTIVE

The expansion of diplomatic premises has implications beyond state security; it also affects individual rights and privacy. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) establishes fundamental protections against arbitrary surveillance. Article 17 of the ICCPR states that "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence." This provision underscores the risks posed by large-scale foreign surveillance operations conducted under the guise of diplomatic functions.

WAY FORWARD

The controversy surrounding the proposed Chinese

embassy in London highlights the evolving role of embassies in international affairs. While diplomatic missions are protected under international law, their increasing fortification and potential intelligence-gathering functions raise critical legal and security questions. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations provides foundational protections for embassies, but it remains silent on embassy size and infrastructure. Likewise, international human rights law, particularly the ICCPR, emphasizes privacy rights that may be jeopardized by unchecked foreign surveillance.

As global power dynamics shift, host states must carefully navigate the balance between diplomatic obligations and national security. The debate over China's embassy project serves as a crucial test case for the future of international law, highlighting the need for updated legal frameworks to address the complex intersection of diplomacy, security, and human rights in the modern world.

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PERSPECTIVE

THE NEXT BJP PRESIDENT

The current BJP President JP Nadda is currently on an extension and his successor should be announced anytime soon. While it is correct that in the Modi-Shah era no one knows who the next BJP Chief would be, there are some names that are doing the rounds. However it would be a futile exercise to name the successor, one can take a look at the optics and the kind of messaging the BJP would like to send out when it appoints its next chief.

First, it will probably not be a woman. Though the women have emerged as a very influential vote bank, the BJP took care of the gender equation by appointing its first women chief minister when Rekha Gupta took oath as the Delhi Chief Minister. Prior to this, the BJP didn't have a single woman chief minister.

Given the focus on the south and the fact that the Modi impact is still to comprehensively cross the Dravidian divide, the next party chief could be from the South. More so since the Congress has a Dailt from Karnataka as its party chief. Which brings us to the next optic - an OBC candidate. This again is a section that the BJP is aggressively pursuing, specially after Rahul Gandhi and the INDIA bloc harping on the caste census. Of course the Prime Minister himself is an OBC which does take away from the Congress narrative that the BJP is an upper class dominated party.

The RSS will also have a say in the final decision. Which means the candidate must have a Sangh connect. The names that are doing the rounds, all have a RSS background. So it will be one of the other factors that will play a decisive role.

The decision is expected soon and if the candidate is a Union Cabinet minister, then this could also lead to a reshuffle, though JP Nadda has been holding both posts. But whoever the candidate will be, it will still be Home Minister Amit Shah who will be doing most of the heavy lifting, from membership drives, organizational handling to election strategizing. That is just the way the BJP runs.

PRIYA SAHGAL

Changing geopolitical dynamics in Syria and concern for India

OPINION

SANJAY TURI



In the wake of the ongoing Gaza ceasefire, the precise bombing of southern Lebanon just hours before the funeral of Hezbollah Chief Hasan Nasrallah, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike last September, sends a clear message from the Israeli Defence Forces to its enemies that this ceasefire is very much temporary. Israel is committed to eradicating all its enemies sooner or later.

CONTEXT

The fall of more than two decades-long dictatorships in Syria is marked by a major geopolitical shift in the war-driven Middle East. Although the journey of the Assad family-led autocracy in Syria started in 1963, its climax reached under Basar Assad, a second-generation dictator of the Assad family, in December 2024.

Though Basar Assad came to power after succeeding his father, Hafeez Assad, in early 2000, his brutal and despotic rule in actual sense mainly started right from the beginning of the pro-democracy protest in 2011 during the Arab Spring.

His autocratic rule in Syria has not only devastated the whole country economically but also played a significant role in making the country a breeding ground for terrorism while pushing the country into the mouth of civil war, which further led to mass migration, displacement and refugee crisis in Syria.

GEOPOLITICAL SHIFT AND ITS MAJOR OUTCOMES:

After the collapse of the Syrian dictatorship, Israel continues to advance towards western Syria, intending to create 400km of buffer zone in the western Syrian region beyond the Golan Heights. The idea is probably to help Israel cut off the Syrian corridor connecting Lebanon with Iran and stop it from trafficking arms and ammunition into the Levant region through this Syrian corridor.

The capability of Iran to

project power in the Levant region has certainly weakened in post-Assad Syria due to the disruption of this corridor. Hence, the significant investment previously made in Syria by Iran will greatly be impacted, further giving an economic shock to its GDP, as the Iranian government is already heavily sanctioned by the Western allies. This will, for sure, pose a new challenge in front of the Iranian government to back pro-Iranian non-state actors (Hezbollah and Hamas) existing in the region.

The overthrow of Assad from power has given a significant geopolitical setback to one of the most important players from the Syrian side in this conflict, that is none other than Russia. Using Syria as a platform to project its interest against the West, Russia had already established itself as a major player in the Middle East. But, following the dramatic fall of the Assad regime, Russia's extra-regional geopolitical image and its geostrategic influence in this region have significantly suffered. Therefore, without any delay, Moscow has already started looking for alternatives that could strategically help Russia continue making its image as a net security provider in the region. As a result, the Kremlin has recently passed a bill seeking to remove the Taliban from the list of terrorists.

There is a possibility that the USA-backed and anti-Iran Arab states of this re-



Though Basar Assad came to power after succeeding his father, Hafeez Assad, in early 2000, his brutal and despotic rule in actual sense mainly started right from the beginning of the pro-democracy protest in 2011 during the Arab Spring.

gion may be seeing the collapse of Assad's regime in Syria as a geopolitical win over Russia & Iran. There is also a possibility that the anti-Iranian Arab states may side with Israel to offset the remaining Iranian strategic influences in Syria. In the wake of PM Netanyahu's scheduled meeting with Donald Trump, Syria's recent official visit to Saudi Arabia has grabbed attention from around the world. In response to that, the chief of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has warned Syria's new leadership as well as Saudi Arabia, stating that "Our missile can

strike any enemy target in the region and overcome the enemy's anti-missile defences". This statement by the chief of IRGC shows how significant the Syrian corridor is for Iran to operate its proxy forces. This is all happening at a time when Trump 2.0 is taking a very tight diplomatic stance for his Middle East policies.

The resulting instability in Syria has cleared a path for Israel to have a strategic advantage in the region. Israel is, therefore, expected to emerge as a very crucial friend of the pro-US Arab states in the resulting instability, promising to become

a net security provider and combat terrorism while gradually promoting its own agenda in the region. This probable outcome will additionally increase the significance of Israeli defence capability in the rapidly changing geopolitical dynamics of West Asia.

KURDISH ASPECT IN THE SHIFTING GEOPOLITICS OF WEST ASIA:

In post-Assad Syria, the People's Defence Unit (PDU), a US-backed Kurdish militia which was also a party to the anti-Assad forces, is eyeing a separate independent rule in the post-Assad regime.

The HTS, being a main rebel group of the anti-Assad forces, has a great influence of Turkey politically and militarily. As Turkey is well aware of the fact that the creation of a Kurdish independent state in the region will be a direct threat to Turkey's territorial integ-

ity, it would never let PDU achieve their dream of creating an independent Kurdish state. Turkey also argues that the creation of an independent Kurdish state in Syria would trigger a domino effect for the demand for a separate Kurdish state in the neighbouring states, too. Henceforth, Turkey will probably be the most affected state by this demand, as Turkey already has great hostility with the PKK, the most notorious Kurdish militia group in the region. As HTS-led Syria has recently held a National Dialogue Conference regarding the framing of the constitution, the Turkey-backed Syrian interim government did not invite the US-backed Kurdish militia group (PDU) to the conference. Failing to include the Kurdish rival in this conference will certainly escalate the regional conflict in the future. It also proves to be right that the instability in Syria and the continuous demand for a separate state for Kurds is not over yet. Henceforth, the prevailing conflicts in post-Assad Syria have potentially proved to be a good recipe for Israel from its geostrategic point of view.

SPARK IN THE KASHMIR VALLEY

In the UN, India has always voted in favour of the Syrian claim to Golan Heights for decades in exchange for Syria not making any provocative comments against India as well as not being supportive of militancy in Kashmir at all. However,

the anti-Assad rebel groups of Syria, such as ISIS and Al-Qaida, have always been vocal and supportive of militancy in Kashmir valley. In the Julani-led regime in Syria, India may witness a spark in the Kashmir valley, as the militancy in Kashmir has a direct link with anti-Assad Syrian rebel groups.

The reason behind anti-Assad forces supporting militancy in Kashmir is probably because India always indirectly supported the Assad regime in Syria and always maintained its strategic silence over the Syrian civil war. Now, the HTS-led post-Assad regime and the increasing instability in Syria may give a spark in the Kashmir valley sooner or later. As Al Julani-led HTS is backed by Turkey, Turkey's growing ties with Pakistan in recent times are additionally quite concerning for the anticipated instability in the Kashmir Valley. Therefore, the Indian government must be well-prepared to respond to any activity challenging Indian sovereignty in the valley. However, India's strengthening ties with the West Asian countries (particularly Qatar and the Taliban) is a smart strategy to indirectly discourage and counter the negative influence of militancy in the Kashmir valley.

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A 40-year-old widow sits outside her shop in Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. Getty

In February 2025, an unexpected controversy erupted on X (formerly Twitter) when Ola CEO Bhavish Aggarwal praised a podcast titled “Sati – Fact or Fiction?” by author Amish Tripathi. Aggarwal, known for his strong opinions, compared the scarcity of evidence on sati to the widespread historical documentation of witch burnings in medieval Europe. His comment triggered comedian Kunal Kamra, who responded with a sharp retort:

“Raja Ram Mohan Roy fought against the practice of Sati; it was abolished in 1829. The last documented case of Sati in India was as recent as 1987. Please focus on your automobiles being immobile.”

Tripathi, celebrated for his mythological retellings, entered the fray, urging Kamra to read the 1829 Sati Abolishment Act, which, he argued, explicitly stated that sati was “not enjoined” by Hindu scriptures and was nearly nonexistent at the time. The debate quickly spiraled, with supporters and detractors dissecting history, religious interpretations, and colonial narratives. The controversy underscored an uncomfortable truth: even in the digital age, the embers of sati still burn in India’s collective consciousness.

THE MYTH AND THE REALITY

The word *sati* derives from Sanskrit, meaning “a virtuous woman.” The roots of the practice can be traced to Hindu mythology, particularly the tale of Goddess Sati, who immolated herself in protest against her father’s humiliation of Lord Shiva. However, in this narrative, Sati’s act was one of defiance and divine retribution—not widow immolation.

Historically, the earliest mentions of sati appear in the Mahabharata (compiled around 400 CE) and Tamil Sangam literature from the 2nd or 3rd century CE. Greek historian Diodorus Siculus recorded instances of *sati* in Punjab in the 4th century BCE, suggesting that it was known but not widely practiced. The prevalence of sati surged in the medieval period, particularly in Rajput communities, where it evolved into *jaubar*—mass self-immolation by women to avoid capture and dishonor by invaders.

THE BRITISH INTERVENTION

By the early 19th century, British colonial administrators were documenting sati cases, particularly in Bengal, where 500–600 instances were recorded annually. While the British framed their intervention as a humanitarian effort, their motives were not entirely altruistic.

Social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy played a pivotal role in advocating for the abolition of sati, arguing that it was neither a religious obligation nor a widespread practice. His efforts culminated in the Bengal Sati Regulation of 1829, criminalizing the act. However, this legislative victory also served British interests, allowing them to



Freedom fighter Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Wikipedia



In 1987, Rajasthan was under the leadership of Chief Minister Hari Dev Joshi. Under his leadership, promptly enacted an ordinance aimed at preventing the practice and glorification of sati. File photo

portray themselves as civilizing rulers while reinforcing their control over Indian customs and laws.

The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987, not only banned sati but also criminalized its glorification. However, enforcement has been inconsistent.

THE ROOP KANWAR CASE

Despite its prohibition, *sati* did not vanish overnight. The most infamous modern case occurred in 1987, when 18-year-old Roop Kanwar was burned alive on her husband’s pyre in Deorala, Rajasthan. Rather than being condemned, her death was glorified by some sections of society, with temples erected in her honor. The incident led to the Commission of Sati

(Prevention) Act, reinforcing the ban and criminalizing its glorification. Yet, Roop Kanwar’s case revealed the deep cultural entrenchment of the practice and the difficulty of eradicating it completely.

While the Roop Kanwar case (1987) is covered in detail, there have been lesser-known incidents of attempted or glorified sati post-1987. Reports suggest that temples dedicated to “sati” figures still exist, like, the Kalighat Kali Temple in Kolkata, the Chamundeswari Temple in Karnataka and Rani Sati Temple is a temple located in Jhunjhunu, Jhunjhunu district, in the state of Rajasthan. And some rituals, though unofficial, continue. These occurrences suggest that sati is not entirely erased and still holds a symbolic

THE SPECTER OF SATI

In 1987, an 18-year-old woman in Rajasthan was burned alive on her husband's pyre as thousands watched in reverence. More than 150 years after its official abolition, why does the specter of Sati still haunt India's collective conscience?



Roop Kanwar was burned to death on her husband's funeral pyre in 1987 in Rajasthan. File



Some still visit the spot where Roop Kanwar died to light a lamp. BBC

place in certain communities.

SATI IN POPULAR CULTURE

The ghost of *sati* has found new life in cinema and literature. In 1989, Aparna Sen’s film *Sati*, starring Shabana Azmi, depicted a mute woman forced into a symbolic marriage with a tree, shedding light on op-

pressive traditions. More controversially, Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s *Padmaavat* (2018) reignited debates when its climactic *jaubar* scene was perceived as glorifying self-immolation. While Bhansali defended the depiction as historically accurate, critics argued that cinematic portrayals of sati continue to romanticize oppression under the guise of honor.



Film *Padmaavat* (2018) reignited debates on sati practice in India with its climactic ‘jaubar’ scene.

Sati occasionally resurfaces in Indian politics, often weaponized for ideological battles. In 2023, BJP MP Chandra Prakash Joshi invoked *jaubar* in Parliament, triggering protests from opposition leaders who accused him of glorifying *sati*. Similar controversies have played out in legal battles, as seen in the Supreme Court’s dismissal of petitions against Padmaavat, reflecting the judiciary’s cautious stance on balancing historical representation with potential endorsement of outlawed practices.

WHY DOES THE TOPIC PERSIST?

The periodic resurgence of sati in public discourse can be attributed to several factors:

- 1. Cultural Legacy:** Deeply embedded in India’s historical and religious consciousness, sati continues to be referenced in myths, rituals, and folklore.
- 2. Colonial Narratives:** The British abolition of sati is often invoked in debates over cultural imperialism versus social reform.
- 3. Gender and Patriarchy:** Sati remains a stark symbol of patriarchal control over women’s bodies and choices.
- 4. Media and Cinema:** Films and literature keep the discussion alive, some-

times sparking controversy over artistic freedom versus glorification.

5. Legal and Political Manipulation: Politicians and activists selectively invoke sati to serve ideological agendas, ensuring it remains in the public eye.

Post-1987, global human rights organizations and UN bodies condemned the practice, urging India to strengthen enforcement. Sati is often compared to other widowhood rituals worldwide, such as seppuku in Japan and suttee-like practices in Southeast Asia, where widows were historically expected to follow their husbands in death. Examining these comparisons would provide a broader perspective on the ways patriarchal societies have controlled women’s lives through rituals of sacrifice.

Sati was not uniformly practiced across India. The practice was more prevalent in Rajasthan, Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh, where historical instances were recorded. While Rajput *jaubar* was often an act of collective self-immolation, Bengal’s instances were largely individual cases, often rooted in social pressures and upper-caste traditions. Understanding these regional nuances provides a more accurate historical picture

of sati’s presence and decline.

Though sati was abolished, did the oppression of widows simply take another form? Cities like Vrindavan and Varanasi are known as ‘cities of widows’, where thousands of women—ostracized by their families—live in extreme poverty. Many are left to beg or perform religious rituals for survival. The stigma surrounding widowhood, though not as extreme as sati, continues to deny women agency, property rights, and social dignity. Addressing these ongoing issues is crucial in ensuring that the spirit of sati does not persist in subtler ways.

A LEGACY THAT LINGERS

Despite its legal abolition, the idea of sati refuses to fade, morphing into new forms of oppression—be it honor killings, domestic violence, or societal expectations of widowhood. The question remains: *Has India truly buried the flames of Sati, or does it smolder beneath the surface, waiting for another spark?*

The fight against sati was never just about stopping widow immolation; it was about challenging an entire system that dictated a woman’s worth based on her marital status. As long as patriarchy exists, the ghost of sati will never be entirely exorcised. It is up to society to decide whether it wants to keep revisiting this practice as a relic of the past—or finally put its ashes to rest.

While Raja Ram Mohan Roy is credited with *sati* abolition, movements like Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj took strong stands against *sati* and widow oppression, while modern Hindu nationalist factions have had varied perspectives, sometimes invoking *sati* in cultural rhetoric.

From heated Twitter debates to Supreme Court cases, Sati refuses to be just a relic of the past. Even in the digital age, its embers still glow in political speeches, Bollywood films, and legal controversies.

Compiled by Ruchira Talapatra

SUPREME COURT RAISES CONCERNS OVER TRIBUNALS ENGAGING CONTRAST STAFF FROM PRIVATE AGENCIES, CALLS FOR BETTER SERVICE CONDITIONS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Madras Bar Association Versus Union Of India observed and has orally flagged two issues which relates to the tribunals across the country that require immediate attention namely: the appointment of staff and the service conditions.

The bench comprising of Justice Surya Kant and Justice NK Singh was hearing the present matter.

In the present matter, the bench was hearing a batch of petitions filed which

broadly raised various issues with regards to the pendency vacancies, infrastructure and service conditions of the tribunals, etc across India and its members.

The bench headed by Justice Surya Kant flagged the appointment of staff on a contractual basis from private agencies.

It has been stated by him before the court that, 'One important issue, probably in respect of all tribunals is that we are providing them the basic infrastructure-the judgment writers...I am Chairperson of the committee for one of these tribunals that deals with mat-



ter involving millions and thousands of crores. Now, the entire deputation came to me, met me, pointing out that we are permitted to engage staff on a contract basis. If tomorrow, someone takes away file of the case, who is going to protect us? So, I suggested one of your

ministers that why don't you go for taking people on deputation while on Government service. They will be responsible people.'

The bench headed by Justice Kant suggested to the Attorney General for India, R. Venkataramani, that the staff of the tribunals needs

The bench headed by Justice Kant suggested to the Attorney General for India, R. Venkataramani, that the staff of the tribunals needs to be appointed on a deputation basis and not on a contractual basis.

to be appointed on a deputation basis and not on a contractual basis.

He also suggested that some retired government officers could also be engaged. He reasoned that at least his would provide more security and safety in terms of the records entrusted to the

staff. Adding to it, the bench of Justice Kant stated that, 'Now getting from private agencies, what kind of employees will come? How much can you entrust them with original records? These are very sensitive issues. You have to understand the

nature of Court working. The tribunal has the same kind of system. Today, if we have unknown staff here. Please identify all these issues and collate them.'

The bench of Justice Kant responded to another issue with regards to the Senior conditions.

The counsel, Senior Advocate Arvind Datar stated that a serious issue with regards to the four-year appointment tenure is being faced by all NCLTs.

He also stated that, 'This kind of four-year appointment is not working out.'

The court stated that the tribunals have become a

reality which shares an enormous burden from the Courts.

The bench of Justice Kant orally remarked that, 'Good candidates are not coming forward...We have offered to retired judges requesting them, please accept. They are declining only because of the conditions of service.'

Further, he also remarked that in terms of transfer and positing, the institutions need 'internal inner-strengthening' of all tribunals.

He stated that the Court expects the Union to come out with some "effect modicum" on this.

SC directs Delhi HC & District Bar Assns to not defer polls beyond Mar 21; asks NGT Bar Assn to conclude polls by Mar 31

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case D.K. Sharma And Ors Versus Bar Council Of Delhi And Ors observed and has ordered that the Delhi High Court and District Bar Association elections, which are scheduled to be held on March 21, shall be held on the scheduled date and not be deferred any further.

The court in the case directed that the National Green Tribunal, NGT Bar Association shall hold and conclude its elections by March, 31, 2025.

The bench comprising of Justice Surya Kant and Justice N Kotiswar Singh was hearing the present matter.

The court ordered that the elections shall be held on the scheduled date without any further deferment.

The court in the case was hearing the DK Sharma case, wherein the court stated that the Registrar (General) of the National Green Tribunal, NGT is directed to hold elections of the Bar Association for which, if need be, an Election Committee and a Returning Officer, from amongst the senior members who are not contesting the elections, may be constituted. The elections shall be completed in all circumstances by March 31, 2025. Thus, a compliance af-

fidavit needs to be filed.

However, the elections in the Delhi High Court Bar and the District Bar Associations are now scheduled to be held on March 21, 2025.

The counsel, Senior Advocate Atmaram Nadkarni appearing for applicants in the NGT Bar case contended before the court that elections of the Bar Association had not been held since 6 years.

The counsel prayed for a direction to the Association to hold the elections at the

earliest, saying, "Registrar (General) was supposed to conduct the elections, even a Returning Officer was appointed. But nothing further has happened". As the NGT Bar Association remained unrepresented, on a specific query, the senior counsel further informed that the Association was served by the applicants on 1 March itself.

The bench of Justice Kant stated that, "There are more concerned about the environment not being polluted". Ultimately, the bench ordered that the Association's elections shall be concluded by March 31. The court ordered that the elections shall be held on the

scheduled date without any further deferment. It has also been pointed out by one the counsel appearing before the court that, 'One Post, principle, urging that as a result of the petitioners' efforts, the Delhi Bar elections are going to be held on one day. However, another issue remains, i.e., with regard to the "One Member, One Post" principle, which the Delhi High Court has somewhat agreed to, insofar as it held that no member of any Bar Association or body (such as the Bar Council of Delhi or Bar Council of India) would contest simultaneously for posts in two different Bar Associations or bodies.

PMLA review: Supreme Court lists pleas challenging Vijay Madanlal Choudhary judgement on March 6

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Karti P Chidambaram v. The Directorate of Enforcement and connected cases observed and is set to hear the writ petitions filed against the Vijay Madanlal Choudhary judgement, which upheld various provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, PMLA.

The bench comprising of Justice Surya Kant, Justice CT Ravikumar (now retired) and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing the present matter.

However, after the retirement of Justice Ravikumar, a need arose for reconstitution of the bench.

The petitions were first listed on August 07, 2024, but the hearing kept getting adjourned ever since.

The present matter is listed before a two-judge bench of Justices Kant and N Kotiswar Singh on March 06, 2025.

BACKGROUND OF THE CASE

On July 27, 2022, the bench comprising of Justice AM Khanwilkar, Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice CT Ravikumar delivered the VMC judgment. Thus, vide the said judgement, certain provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, PMLA were upheld.



However, after the retirement of Justice Ravikumar, a need arose for reconstitution of the bench.

THESE PROVISIONS INCLUDED -

1.The section 5, section 8(4), section 15, section 17 and section 19 of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, PMLA, which relates to Enforcement Directorate's power of arrest, attachment, search and seizure;
2.The Section 24 of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, PMLA, which relates to reverse burden of proof (in this regard, the Court said the provision had 'reasonable nexus with the objects of the Act);
3.Section 45 of Prevention of Money Laundering Act PMLA, which provides "twin-conditions" for bail (in this regard, it was said that the Parliament was competent to amend the provision in 2018 even after the Supreme Court's judgment in Nikesh Tarachand Shah,

which struck down the conditions).

Subsequent to the said decision, the instant review petitions (8 in number) were filed. With the retirement of Justice Khanwilkar, then CJI NV Ramana presided over the bench to consider the petitions.

On August 25, 2022, the bench headed by CJI Ramana-led bench orally observed that at least two conclusions of the judgment required relook - first, that the copy of the Enforcement Case Information Report, ECIR; equivalent of FIR in money laundering cases need not be given to the accused, and second, the upholding of the reversal of presumption of innocence. The court in the case observed and has allowed an application for open court hearing of the review petitions and since issuance of notice, the petitions were listed for hearing for the first time on August 7. The court adjourned the matter at the request of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who sought some time to prepare and argue.

However, the matter was listed on September 18 but the matter got re-listed for October 16. On the said date, it could not be taken up as Justice Kant was on leave.

Accordingly, the court listed the matter for further consideration on March 16, 2025.

Supreme Court: Visually impaired persons cannot be denied opportunity to join judicial services

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the landmark ruling stated that the boundaries of judicial service hiring.

The Supreme Court ruled that nobody can be discriminated against in the matter of judicial appointments based on physical disabilities alone, overturning discriminatory rules in the Madhya Pradesh Judicial Services Rules.

The division bench of Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice R. Mahadevan was hearing

the present matter.

The bench in the case was hearing a suo motu case on Rule 6A of the Madhya Pradesh Services Examination Rules 1994, which had earlier excluded visually impaired and low vision candidates from judicial service.

The court stated that, 'Blind candidates cannot be considered to be 'not suitable' for judicial service and they can compete for selection for posts in judicial service.'

The court in the case rejected the idea that blind-

ness makes candidates unsuitable for judicial appointments. The bench of Justice Mahadevan stated that, 'Persons with disabilities must not face any discrimination in the pursuit of judicial service opportunities.' The court stated that the provision needs to be made for candidates who are disabled while determining their fitness under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

The matter was consequent to a letter to then Chief Justice DY Chandrachud by

a visually impaired candidate's mother complaining of exclusionary practices in selection as judges.

The court while interpreting one of the petition filed under Article 32 of the Constitution of India stated that what reason it could be to withhold reservation quotas from visually challenged candidates in the 2022 Civil Judge Class-II examination.

The court also stated that the requirements of Rule 7 of MP Service Rules such as an additional condition of three years of practice or

scoring 70% marks in the very first attempt by differently abled candidates. Keeping the 70% aggregate marks as a requirement.

The said judgement also relieves the victims all at once by ruling that PWD candidates who had appeared for earlier selection rounds are to be re-considered and candidates from Rajasthan who were left out because of non-utilization of different cut-offs can be given a chance in the subsequent recruitment process.

Jamia protest: Delhi HC constitutes committee to calm down situation, stays suspension of students

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case Saurabh Tripathi & Ors. v. Jamia Millia Islamia and other connected matters observed and has directed that a committee needs to be constituted to 'calm down' the situation amid recent students' protest in the Jamia Millia Islamia, JMI.

The said Committee will be constituted under the supervision of Vice Chancellor of the varsity and will comprise of other officials, including students' representatives.

The bench headed by Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma also suspended till the next date of hearing the operation of a letter issued by the varsity on February 12, wherein it suspended various students over the protest.

As per the report of media, 17 students have been suspended for 'protesting without permission' and 'defacing public property'. therefore, the students have been protesting against the order of Jamia wherein it



banned the protests and meetings without permission.

In the present matter, the court was hearing the petition filed by the suspended students wherein it challenged the suspension letter issued by the office of Chief Proctor of the varsity whereby they were suspended and immediately banned from entering into the university campus.

The counsel, Senior Advocate Colin Gonsalves appearing for petitioner submitted before the court that the varsity had resorted to the action which was highly disproportionate to the protest being undertaken by the students.

Senior Advocate Colin Gonsalves also submitted that the petitioners have a clean track record and had assembled outside the canteen for their protest.

Gonsalves also stated that

the varsity, instead of guiding the students, sided with the Delhi Police and made them arrested.

The Gonsalves stated that the action of Jamia was totally against its academic regulations and that no such chance was given to the petitioners to defend themselves.

Before the court, Chimni submitted that the suspension of the students cannot be more than two weeks as per the varsity's ordinances.

On the other hand, Advocate Amit Sahni appearing for Jamia submitted before the court that the varsity had given sufficient opportunity to the students and that the protest was nowhere related to academics and that no permission was sought from the university.

It has been stated by him before the court that the students were sleeping outside the canteen without permission and were therefore removed.

It was also submitted that no student was arrested inside the campus and that they were initially detained and released later.

Centre notifies appointment for four additional judges of Madras High Court

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Central Government has notified the appointment of four additional judges of the Madras High Court as permanent judges.

The Union Ministry of Law and Justice, Arjun Ram Meghwal made a tweet for the appointment of following judges as permanent judges of the Madras High Court.

- Justice Ramasamy Sakthivel
- Justice P Dhanabal
- Justice Chinnasamy Kumarappan, and
- Justice Kandasamy Rajasekar

The Supreme Court Collegium in its meeting held on February 20, 2025 recommended them as permanent judges. The four judges were appointed as Additional Judges of the Madras High Court on May 19, 2023.

JUSTICE SAKTHIVEL

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

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

JUSTICE P. DHANABAL

Justice P. Dhanabal, who was serving as the Registrar General of the Madras High Court at the time of his elevation joined the District Judiciary in 2011. He served as an Additional District Munsif and thereafter as Additional Sub Judge at Dharmapuri, and as III Additional District Judge, PCR, and I Additional District Judge at Tirunelveli. He also served as Principal District Judge, Cuddalore and then as Chief Judge, Pudukcherry.

JUSTICE C KUMARAPPAN

Justice C Kumarappan, who also joined the District Judiciary as District Judge in 2011, served in Thoothukudi and Madurai Districts. He also served in the Registry of Madras High Court as the Registrar (IT-cum-Statistics) and Registrar General and was the Presiding Officer at the Principal Labour Court, Chennai at the time of his elevation.

SC quashes rape case: 'Unbelievable that educated woman endured 16 yrs of exploitation'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Rajnish Singh @ Soni State Of U.P. And Another observed and has quashed a criminal complaint proceeding initiated against a man who was accused of sexually assaulting a woman, with whom he had a 16-year-old consensual sexual relationship, on a false pretext of marriage.

The court in the case reaffirmed that a mere breach of a marriage promise does not constitute rape unless it is being proven that the accused never intended to marry the woman from the outset of the relationship.

The court in the case observed and has expressed surprise that the complainant, a highly educated and well-established adult, did not report the alleged sexual assaults for over a decade, wherein the doubts are raised about the credibility of her claims.

The court noted that she filed the First Information

Report, FIR only after the accused married another woman, suggesting an ulterior motive to harass him.

The court observed that it is being hard to believe that the complainant, being a highly qualified and well-placed major woman, kept on bending to the demands of the appellant for a period of nearly 16 years without raising any protest to any quarter that the appellant was exploiting her sexually under the pretext of a false promise of marriage. Therefore, the prolonged period of 16 years during which the sexual relations continued unabatedly between the parties, is sufficient to conclude that there was never an element of force or deceit in the relationship.

Adding to it, the court also stated that it being impossible to swallow the version of the complainant that for the entire period of 16 years, she unreservedly allowed the appellant to subject her to repeated acts of sexual intercourse under the impression that the accused would on someday act upon his

promise of marriage.

The bench comprising of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case was hearing the appeal filed by the accused against the decision of High Court, wherein the court dismissed his quashing petition. In 2022, the FIR in the instant case was lodged for the offence of rape and a chargesheet was also filed by the police the same year. It was alleged before the court that the accused, sometime in the year 2006, sneaked into the house of the complainant in the night and subjected her to forcible sexual intercourse. The court in the case noted that in the intervening period, the intimacy between the appellant and the complainant continued to flourish.

The appellant argued before the court that the relationship was consensual and that the complainant, who being a major and educated woman, willingly engaged in a long-term relationship with him.

TOP OF THE DAY

DRUG SMUGGLING:
3 INDIANS HELD IN
NEPAL

KATHMANDU: Three Indians were arrested in southern Nepal on charges of smuggling narcotic drugs, police said. Gautam Kushwaha (35), Ranjan Kumar Singh (30), and Sanjiv Kumar Ram (40), all residents of Bihar, were arrested on Monday from Jitpur Simara Municipality along with 170 grams of brown sugar, according to police. The suspects were arrested following a police raid on a hotel. Drug smuggling is illegal in Nepal because it poses severe risks to public health, safety, and societal well-being. It fuels addiction, violence, and organized crime, undermines national security, and violates international drug control agreements.

SINGAPORE FOR
CANING FOR
SCAMMERS

SINGAPORE: Singapore will consider caning financial scammers in certain cases, in recognition of the serious harm they cause, Minister of State for Home Affairs and Social and Family Development Sun Xueling said in Parliament on Tuesday. The Minister was responding to a suggestion from MP Tan Wu Meng in her speech laying out the Ministry of Home Affairs' (MHA) spending plans for the year ahead. The proposed measure emphasizes swift, severe punishment to combat fraud, protect public trust, and maintain Singapore's reputation as a secure, transparent financial hub. Singapore is known for its zero-tolerance approach toward crime, especially financial scams, which can have devastating effects on individuals and businesses.

CHINA HINTS AT
HIKING DEFENCE
BUDGET

BEIJING: China on Tuesday hinted at increasing its defence budget, the second largest after the US, saying peace and sovereignty can only be "safeguarded with strength". China will unveil its defence expenditure, a part of the main budget to be presented to the parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), by Premier Li Qiang on Wednesday. Last year, China increased its defence budget by 7.2 per cent to about USD 232 billion (1.67 trillion yuan) -- over three times that of India -- as it continues with the massive modernisation of all its armed forces.

EARTHQUAKE OF
MAGNITUDE 4.2
ROCKS TIBET

TIBET: An earthquake of magnitude 4.2 on the Richter Scale jolted Tibet on Tuesday, as per a statement by the National Center for Seismology. As per the NCS, the earthquake occurred at a depth of 5km, making it susceptible to aftershocks. "EQ of M: 4.2, On: 04/03/2025 14:44:28 IST, Lat: 28.28 N, Long: 87.56 E, Depth: 5 Km, Location: Tibet," NCS stated. Shallow earthquakes like this one are more dangerous than deeper ones due to their greater energy release closer to the Earth's surface, causing stronger ground shaking and increased damage to structures and casualties.

HOSTAGE DEAL NEEDED TO EXTEND GAZA
CEASEFIRE: ISRAEL FIGHTING IN GAZA HALTED

Since January 19 under truce Hamas exchanged 33 Israeli hostages for 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM

Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said on Tuesday Israel was ready to proceed to the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire deal, as long as Hamas was ready to release more of the 59 hostages it is still holding. Fighting in Gaza has been halted since January 19 under a truce arranged with U.S. support and Qatari and Egyptian mediators, and Hamas has exchanged 33 Israeli hostages and five Thais for some 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

But the initial 42-day truce has expired and Hamas and Israel, which has blocked the entry of aid trucks into Gaza, remain far apart on broader issues including the postwar governance of Gaza and the future of Hamas itself. "We are ready to continue to phase two," Saar told reporters in Jerusalem as Arab leaders prepared to meet in Cairo to discuss a plan for ending the war permanently. "But in order to extend the time or the framework, we need an agreement to release more hostages." Hamas says it wants to move ahead to the second phase negotiations that could

THE TRUCE



Palestinian children gather to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, March 3, 2025. File Photo

- Ceasefire extension proposed during Ramadan until after Passover
- Hamas wants to move on to second truce phase for permanent end to war, full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza
- Hamas and Israel at odds over postwar governance of Gaza

Israel thanks US for accelerating shipments of weapons

TEL AVIV : Israel Defence Minister Israel Katz spoke with US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, whom he thanked, for President Trump's support for accelerating shipments of weapons and security equipment to Israel, and for his commitment to the "strong alliance between the countries."

President's Special Envoy for the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, and stressed the need to return all the Israeli hostages still held in Gaza and to destroy the Hamas regime there. The Minister reviewed with the Secretary Hegseth the IDF's (Israel Defence Forces) activities in Judea and Samaria against terrorism, emphasized the im-

portance of the security areas Israel's military established in Lebanon and Syria, and thanked America for its support. In addition, Katz and Hegseth agreed that Iran is the main threat to the region, and that close cooperation between Israel and the US must continue with the aim of preventing it from obtaining nuclear weapons.

open the way to a permanent end to the war with the full

withdrawal of Israeli forces from the devastated Palestin-

ian enclave and a return of the remaining 59 hostages taken

Israel wins
vote against
expulsion from
medical group

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

Diplomatic victory for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Attempt to expel Israel from the World Medical Students Association was thwarted

Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is celebrating Monday night what it called a "significant victory" in the international arena as the attempt to expel Israel from the World Medical Students Association was thwarted. The MFA credited what it called intensive diplomatic efforts made by its UN missions for the win.



Russian military fighter jets are seen at Hmeimim air base in Syria's coastal Latakia, Syria, December 14, 2024. File Photo

terim President Ahmed al-Sharaa's new administration, which has deployed many of its forces into the area since Assad was deposed in December. A senior security official in the area told Reuters there had been an increase in hit-and-run attacks on security patrols and checkpoints in

several towns in Latakia province over the last two weeks, blamed on former army personnel in hiding. The Syrian state news agency SANA, citing a security source, reported that the two members of the defence ministry had been killed in al-Datour by "groups of Assad militia remnants".

Syrian forces launch sweep as
Assad loyalists accused of attacks

AGENCIES
DAMASCUS

Syrian authorities launched a security sweep in the city of Latakia on Tuesday, residents said, after two members of their forces were killed in an attack blamed by state media on remnants of Bashar al-Assad's ousted government.

Bursts of gunfire were heard through the night as government security forces deployed in the Datour district of Latakia, part of the coastal region where Assad had drawn support from the Alawite community to which his family belongs.

The coastal region has emerged as one of the main security challenges for in-

Pakistan-Afghanistan border
clashes ease, thousands seek shelter

AGENCIES
PESHAWAR

Overnight clashes between Pakistani and Afghan security forces at the main border crossing between the countries caused thousands of people to flee their homes but the situation had calmed down by Tuesday morning, residents and officials said.

The conflict started on Monday, the first working day of Ramadan, when food imports from Pakistan usually peak in Afghanistan.

Around 15,000 local residents fled to Landi Kotal due to the clashes, an official said. Afghan border guards had opened fire without warning, targeting government



People stand next to parked trucks loaded with supplies at the Torkham border crossing following the closure of the border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan, March 3, 2025. File Photo

buildings and civilians, and causing widespread panic. "The tensions between the two countries and continuous closure of the border has been causing multiple problems to the people of

the border area. People are very poor and dependent on their businesses related to the border," Ali Shinwari, who lives in the border town, told Reuters. Relatives and tribesmen in a nearby town

have been hosting dozens of relatives since the border closure, he added.

The Torkham crossing has been shut since February 21 due to a dispute over the construction of a border-area outpost by Afghanistan, Pakistani officials said on condition of anonymity.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not immediately respond to a request for a comment.

The Taliban-run Afghan Interior Ministry said on Monday one Taliban fighter was killed and two injured, while Pakistani security officials reported that members of their forces had also been wounded.



Flames and smoke rise from the site of an explosion in Al Bukamal, Deir al-Zor, Syria in this screengrab obtained from a social media video released on March 3, 2025. File Photo

Israel strikes military
site in Syria's Al
Qardahah: IDF

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said that it has struck a military site where weapons belonging to the previous Syrian regime were stored in Syria's Al Qardahah.

In a statement on Tuesday, the IDF said that the decision to strike military infrastructure in Al Qardahah was taken due to the recent developments in the area.

According to the statement, the IDF continues to monitor developments in the area and will act as necessary in order to defend the citizens of Israel.

In a post on X, the IDF stated, "The IDF struck a military site where weapons belonging to the previous Syrian regime were stored

in the area of Al Qardahah in Syria a short while ago. Due to recent developments in the area, it was decided to strike military infrastructure at the site. The IDF continues to monitor developments in the area and will act as necessary in order to defend the citizens of the State of Israel."

Earlier on March 3, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed his gratitude to US President Donald Trump for his "unwavering support" for Israel, particularly with the ongoing situation in Gaza.

In a recent statement on X, Netanyahu praised Trump as "the greatest friend that Israel has ever had in the White House," highlighting the significant steps Trump has taken to aid Israel's security in the region.

North Korea accuses Trump administration
of stepping up provocations

AGENCIES
SEOUL

North Korea's Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong Un, criticised the Trump administration for stepping up "provocations" and said it justified the nuclear state increasing its nuclear deterrent, state media KCNA said.

Kim denounced the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson's visit to South Korea on Sunday, saying the action was part of a "policy of confrontation" against North Korea.

"As soon as its new administration appeared this year, the U.S. has stepped up the political and military provocations against the DPRK, 'carrying forward' the former administration's hostile policy," Kim said, according to Tuesday's KCNA report.

DPRK is short for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"Hostile policy toward the

Kim denounced the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson's visit to South Korea on Sunday, saying the action was part of a "policy of confrontation" against North Korea.

DPRK pursued by the U.S. at present is offering sufficient justification for the DPRK to indefinitely bolster ... its nuclear war deterrent," Kim added.

South Korea's defence ministry said in a statement on Tuesday that Kim Yo Jong's comments were nothing more than deception to justify its nuclear missile development.

"North Korea's nuclear weapons are never acceptable, and the only way for North Korea

to survive is to abandon its obsession and delusion about nuclear (weapons)," the ministry said in a statement.

South Korea's navy said on Sunday the U.S. aircraft carrier arrived at the southern port city of Busan in South Korea as a show of force against North Korea.

The nuclear-powered Carl Vinson is the first U.S. aircraft carrier to dock at a South Korean port since Trump's second term in office began in January.

Kim Yo Jong also criticised the deployment of U.S. B-1B strategic bombers over the Korean peninsula as part of joint drills with the U.S. and Japan, as well as slamming a pledge by the three allies made at a security conference in Munich in February that called for the denuclearisation of the North.

Trump held unprecedented summits with the North Korean leader during his first term and has touted their personal rapport.

Imran rejects decision to
rename stadium after him

AGENCIES
PESHAWAR

Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan disapproved the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's decision to rename Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium after the cricketer-turned-politician's name, his sister said on Tuesday.

Aleema Khan, the Pakistani Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founder's sister, told the media after meeting her brother in jail that Khan, 72, did not like the provincial

government's decision to rename the cricket stadium in Peshawar after him.

"I don't like anything to be named after me. So the stadium's name should be reverted to the original," Khan told Aleema.

Khan said he did not favour such changes and that national assets should be preserved with their original identity. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has been reviewing the matter following Khan's disapproval.

Arbab Khizar Hayat, a Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party leader in the province, said Khan took a good step by ordering Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur through his sister to restore the Arbab Niaz Stadium's original name.

"Political differences aside, we see Imran Khan's decision in a positive light. Truth has prevailed, and it is a victory for all political parties and the people of Peshawar," Hayat said.

China watches from the sidelines as Trump switches allegiance

AGENCIES
HONG KONG

As world respect for the USA plummeted to a new nadir on 28 February, after President Donald Trump and Vice-President JD Vance dressed down Ukraine's leader in a televised White House meeting, the true winners are Moscow and Beijing. The capitulation of the US to tsarist

Vladimir Putin's viewpoint is astonishing in its rapidity, and it bodes ill for smaller countries around the world and hotspots like Taiwan.

Chairman Xi Jinping, as well as Putin, could not have dreamed of a more perfect outcome. As Russian state TV observed, "Now everything is being decided inside a big triangle: Russia, China and



the US. Within this, the new construction of the world will come to fruition. The EU as a united political force no longer exists."

On the very day that Trump was abusing Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu met Xi in Beijing. Chinese state media said the two sides were bringing the

bilateral relationship to an "unprecedented high level". Xi reiterated that "China and Russia are good neighbors linked by geography and, above all, a time-tested iron-clad friendship".

Xi added that "the two sides should maintain close communication at all levels to fully implement the common understandings" they

reached, "and carry forward the spirit of China-Russia relations for a new era, which is characterized by permanent good-neighborliness and friendship, comprehensive strategic coordination and mutually beneficial cooperation for win-win results, further deepen strategic coordination and practical cooperation.

SMOKE GRENADES TOSSED IN SERBIAN PARLIAMENT

Student-led protests, joined by teachers and farmers, challenge President Vucic’s rule over corruption, incompetence.

AGENCIES
BELGRADE

Serbian opposition lawmakers threw smoke grenades and tear gas inside parliament on Tuesday to protest against the government and support demonstrating students, with one legislator suffering a stroke during the chaos.

Four months of student-led demonstrations have drawn in teachers, farmers and others to become the biggest threat yet to President Aleksandar Vucic’s decade-long rule, with many Serbians denouncing corruption and incompetence in government.

At the legislative session, after the ruling coalition led by the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) approved the agenda, some opposition politicians ran out of their seats towards the parliamentary speaker and scuffled with security guards.

Others tossed smoke grenades and tear gas, with live TV showing black and pink smoke inside the parliament, which has also witnessed brawls and throwing of water in the decades

THE ATTACK

- Opposition lawmakers threw smoke grenades and tear gas in Serbian parliament.
- Protest supported by students, teachers, and farmers against government corruption.
- One legislator, Jasmina Obradovic, suffered a stroke during the chaos.
- Protesters outside honored victims of a deadly railway station roof collapse.



Smoke emitting due to the explosion of grenades in the Serbian parliament. Agency

Four months of student-led demonstrations have drawn in teachers, farmers and others to become the biggest threat yet to President Aleksandar Vucic’s decade-long rule, with many Serbians denouncing corruption and incompetence in government.

POLITICIAN HURT Speaker Ana Brnabic said two lawmakers were injured, with one, Jasmina Obradovic of the SNS party, suffering a stroke and in critical condition. “The parliament will continue to work and to defend Serbia,” she told the session.

As the session continued, ruling coalition politicians debated while opposition lawmakers whistled and blew horns.

Zelenskyy meets German leader Merz

AGENCIES
KYIV

As Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy continues to scramble for support through Europe following rift with the United States, he held a ‘productive’ conversation with Christian Democratic Union (CDU) leader and likely German Chancellor, Friedrich Merz on Tuesday.

Appreciating Berlin’s support for Kyiv, Zelenskyy acknowledged the supplies of air defence systems which



President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with Friedrich Merz, Chairman of the Christian Democratic Union party. File Photo

played an important role in ensuring financial stability for the war-hit country. “Had a productive conver-

sation with the leader of the CDU party, which won the Bundestag elections, Friedrich Merz. We coordinated our positions and I appreciate his support. Ukraine highly values Germany’s efforts to restore European security and protect lives in our country. We remember that Germany is the leader in supplying air defense systems to Ukraine and plays a crucial role in ensuring our financial stability. Agreed with Friedrich Merz on further cooperation and contacts.”

SpaceX postpones 8th test of Starship rocket

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

SpaceX postponed its eighth test of the Starship rocket just before its scheduled launch on Monday. The launch was delayed after a flight hold was placed due to a Super Heavy booster issue that was not resolved in time for launch, New York Post reported. The spacecraft was scheduled to take off from SpaceX’s Starbase facility near Boca Chica Beach in Texas. However, computers flagged a booster issue when just 23 minutes were left in the countdown. A flight hold was placed, implying that if the issue was unresolved by T-40 seconds, then the countdown would hold to provide more time to finish troubleshooting. The countdown was stopped briefly at T-40, and it again started ticking down for about 10 seconds before another hold was placed, and the clock again went back to 41 seconds.

Russia seeks deeper ties with Myanmar in trade and nuclear energy

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

Russia told Myanmar’s leader and military junta chief Min Aung Hlaing on Tuesday that Moscow saw good prospects for expanding cooperation in a range of areas including agriculture and nuclear energy. “Despite the illegitimate sanctions against Russia and Myanmar, our trade and economic cooperation is developing successfully, and mutual trade is growing,” Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said.

“There are good opportunities to increase our cooperation in the energy sector, peaceful nuclear energy, transport infrastructure, and agriculture,” Mishustin said, according to the Interfax news agency.

Russian companies plan to invest in Myanmar’s special economic zone in Dawei, Mishustin said, without naming specific firms. The long-



Myanmar’s military chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier near the Kremlin Wall in central Moscow, Russia, March 4, 2025. Agency

“Despite the illegitimate sanctions against Russia and Myanmar, our trade and economic cooperation is developing successfully, and mutual trade is growing,” Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said.

delayed Dawei project on the Andaman Sea is intended to be a major hub for industry, technology and transport. Hlaing, 68, who rarely travels abroad, was greeted earlier by Sergei Shoigu, one of President Vladimir Putin’s top security officials. He was also due to meet Putin, and

THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE



The President of Finland, Alexander Stubb, (2nd L), his wife, Suzanne Innes-Stubb (L), King Frederik X of Denmark (2nd R) and Queen Mary of Denmark (2nd R) stand on a balcony of the Presidential Palace in Helsinki, Finland. Source: Ida Marie Odgaard

Trump hints Zelenskyy ‘won’t be around very long’

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

The Trump administration has paused military aid to Ukraine following a verbal clash between US President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office

Trump warned that the Ukrainian leader “won’t be around very long” if progress was not made on a peace deal. Without taking names, Trump hinted that the Ukrainian leader “won’t be around very long” without a ceasefire deal with Russia. “It should not be that hard a deal to make. It could be made very fast,” Trump told reporters, referring to a ceasefire. “Now, maybe somebody doesn’t want to



Donald Trump (Right) and Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Trump warned that the Ukrainian leader “won’t be around very long” if progress was not made on a peace deal.

make a deal, and if somebody doesn’t want to make a deal, I think that person won’t be around very long.” During an event with Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co (TSMC) chief

executive CC Wei at the White House on Monday, Trump criticized Zelenskyy for saying the war could go on for a long time and said Ukraine’s president should be “more appreciative” of

billions of dollars of military aid in Kyiv’s fight against Russia.

When asked about what he needs to see from Zelenskyy to restart negotiations, Trump said,

“Well, I just think he (Zelenskyy) should be more appreciative because this country has stuck with them through thick and thin.

We’ve given them much more than Europe, and Europe should have given more than us, because, as you know, that’s right there. That’s the border.

This country really was like the fence on the border. It was very important to Europe. And I’m not knocking Europe, I’m saying they’re just -- they were a lot smarter than Joe Biden, because Joe Biden didn’t have a clue.

Pope suffered two episodes of ‘acute respiratory insufficiency’

AGENCIES
VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis suffered two episodes of “acute respiratory insufficiency” on Monday as the 88-year-old pontiff continues to battle pneumonia, according to Vatican News, citing the Holy See Press Office.

In a statement on Monday, the Holy See Press Office said, “Today, the Holy Father suffered two episodes of acute respiratory insufficiency, caused by a significant accumulation of endobronchial mucus and consequent bronchospasm.”

“Two bronchoscopies were therefore performed, with the need to remove large secretions,” it added.

It further said that non-invasive mechanical ventilation was resumed in the afternoon. According to the statement, Pope Francis remained alert, oriented and cooperative at all times.



Pope Francis

It further said that non-invasive mechanical ventilation was resumed in the afternoon. According to the statement, Pope Francis remained alert, oriented and cooperative at all times.

In a statement, the Holy See Press Office said, “In the afternoon, non-invasive mechanical ventilation was resumed. The Holy Father remained alert, oriented and cooperative at all times,” Vatican News reported.

“The prognosis remains guarded,” it added.

Pope Francis’s test values are unchanged, suggesting that he does not have leukocytosis (a high white blood cell count). This, in turn, suggests that there is no new infection, and the accumulation of mucus is merely the consequence of the pontiff’s pre-existing pneumonia.

Four UK men guilty of laundering £200 million via gold dealership convicted

AGENCIES
LONDON

Four men were convicted on Tuesday of laundering more than 200 pounds (\$255 million) in proceeds from organised crime through their gold dealership in northern England, the Crown Prosecution Service said.

The cash was couriered in holdalls or carrier bags from around Brit-

ain to Fowler Oldfield’s premises in Bradford and elsewhere, and paid into its NatWest (NWG.L), opens new tab bank account for the purchase of gold, prosecutors said.

West Yorkshire Police, which led the investigation, said that, shortly before police raided Fowler Oldfield in September 2016, an average of 1.7 million pounds came into its offices every day.



West Yorkshire Police, which led the investigation, said that, shortly before police raided Fowler Oldfield in September 2016, an average of 1.7 million pounds came into its offices every day.

NatWest had already pleaded guilty in 2021 to failing to monitor Fowler Oldfield properly, which

a judge who fined the bank 265 million pounds said allowed the laundering to happen.

Hannah Von Dadelzen from the CPS said the case, heard at Leeds Crown Court, was “one of the largest money laundering prosecutions ever brought to the courts in England and Wales”.

Assistant Chief Constable Pat Twigg of West Yorkshire Police said that “this cash is linked to organised crime activity, including drugs and wider criminality”.

Two former Fowler Oldfield directors, Gregory Frankel and Daniel Rawson, both 46, were found guilty, along with Haroon Rashid, 53, and Arjun Babber, 32. They will be sentenced on Friday.

James Stunt, 43, the former son-in-law of Formula 1 motor racing tycoon Bernie Ecclestone, was acquitted of the same charge.

PICTURE PERFECT



Rasha Thadani poses for her social media handle. (Instagram)

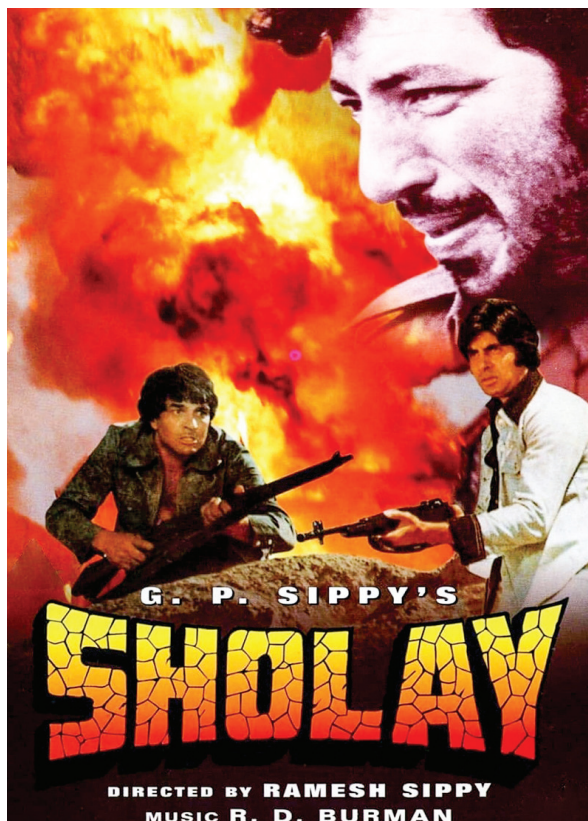
IIFA 2025 TO MARK GOLDEN JUBILEE OF ICONIC FILM 'SHOLAY'

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

The 25th edition of the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) is bound to make all cinema buffs nostalgic with a special celebration of Ramesh Sippy's iconic film 'Sholay'.

Marking the 50th anniversary of 'Sholay', the organisers of IIFA have decided to organise an exclusive screening of the film at Jaipur's legendary Raj Mandir Cinema.

Andre Timmins, Co-Founder of IIFA, shared his heartfelt excitement on the occasion, saying, "IIFA 2025 is not just a celebration—it's a journey through time, honouring 50 years of Sholay at Jaipur's iconic Raj Mandir. As we mark IIFA's Silver Jubilee, we are celebrating more than milestones; we are



celebrating legends, memories, and the magic of cinema that has touched hearts for generations. Sholay is more than a film—it's an emotion, a timeless masterpiece that continues to inspire storytellers and audiences alike. And what better place to honour its legacy than Raj Mandir, a theatre that has been a historical sanctuary for movie lovers for five decades."

He said, "This tribute is our way of bringing together the soul of Indian cinema with the grandeur of an architectural marvel, creating a moment that will be cherished forever. It's a historic celebration of cinema and culture. IIFA 2025 promises to be an unforgettable homage to the power of storytelling, uniting film lovers in a celebration of the magic that makes Indian cinema so special."

'Be Happy' trailer: Abhishek-starrer shows love relation

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Get ready to experience the loving bond of father and daughter in the Abhishek Bachchan and Nora Fatehi-starrer 'Be Happy.'

It also stars Inayat Verma, Johnny Lever and Harleen Sethi.

The makers of the Abhishek and Nora starrer 'Be Happy' unveiled the trailer of the film. Packed with elements of humour, bittersweet moments, dance, dreams, care, and passion, the film shows the emotional, loving,



and caring bond between a single father and his

passionate daughter. It shows the dedication and

passion of a daughter for making her career in dance and how her father is initially reluctant but later supports her in fulfilling her dreams.

Taking to Instagram, Prime Video dropped the trailer of 'Be Happy' and wrote in the caption, "sometimes it takes two to achieve a dream..#BeHappyOnPrime, March 14" "Playing Shiv was an emotional journey, as he is a father fighting against time and fate to make his daughter's dream come true," said Abhishek Bachchan in a statement.

Tamannaah and Vijay part ways after years of dating



TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Actors Tamannaah Bhatia and Vijay Varma, once the talk of the town as a couple, have ended their relationship after dating for several years, according to a source close to the couple told Moneycontrol. The couple had captivated the hearts of their fans and were often seen as the perfect example of love in the industry. From public outings to collaborative projects, the duo made waves with their chemistry both on and off-screen.

Despite the end of their romantic journey, sources close to the couple told Moneycontrol that they continue to share mutual respect and admiration for each other.

However, in an unexpected turn of events, the source told Money Control that the couple parted ways just a few weeks ago.

Despite the end of their romantic journey, sources close to the couple told Moneycontrol that they

continue to share mutual respect and admiration for each other. "Tamannaah Bhatia and Vijay Varma parted ways weeks ago as a couple but they plan to remain good friends. Both have been working hard in their respective schedules"

Adarsh Gourav to star in a Telugu film

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Actor Adarsh Gourav, who recently starred in "Superboys of Malegaon", is set to make his south debut with a Telugu film.

Billed as a psychological thriller, the currently untitled movie will be headlined by Jahnvi, daughter of "RRR" producer D.V.V. Danayya.

According to a press release issued on Tuesday, the upcoming film will be directed by Baba Shashank and is slated to be released



in 2025.

Gourav said it's the biggest thrill "to explore diverse narratives across industries".

"The South film industry

Gourav is also known for films such as 'The White Tiger', 'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan'" and web series 'Guns & Gulaabs'.

has consistently delivered some of the most compelling and innovative films, and I'm excited to finally be a part of it. This project, in particular, is unlike anything I've never done, the psychological horror genre and it has a gripping story that immediately drew me in.

"Collaborating with a vi-

sionary team and making my Telugu debut with Jahnvi's production is truly special. I can't wait for audiences to see what we're creating," the actor said in a statement.

Gourav is also known for films such as "The White Tiger", "Kho Gaye Hum Kahan", and web series "Guns & Gulaabs".

BRAIN PICKING



Your determination is the compass that directs you towards your goals; let it never waver.

— SAMANTHA RUTH PRABHU
(Indian Actress)

Mawra Hocane on 'Sanam Teri Kasam's re-release

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The 2016 film Sanam Teri Kasam, starring Harshvardhan Rane and Mawra Hocane, has been making waves at the box office ever since its re-release in theatres on February 7, 2025. Pakistani actress Mawra Hocane, who made her Bollywood debut with this film, has now shared a heartfelt gratitude post.

She wrote that the film's success is a testament to the fact that things happen in their own time, and that patience and timing are crucial for success. While the film was a dud at the box office when it had first released in 2016, it has now emerged as the highest grossing re-released Indian



film, and went on to cross the Rs 50 crore mark.

In her Instagram post, Mawra Hocane shared a carousel of videos from Sanam Teri Kasam. The first clip shows the actress fainting. In her caption, Mawra wrote, "Not me fainting to the numbers STK re-release is doing MashAllah absolutely magical! STK re-releasing is a testament

to the fact that "waqt se pehle or naseeb se zyaada nahi mil sakta" – I'm so grateful for the love you've all poured in for the last 3 weeks.. it's unheard of.. they're saying we've made history.. Soo soo happy for my producer @deepakmukut ji you've always smiled in the face of failure and taken it in your stride like nothing happened.

Dolly Parton's husband Carl Dean passes away



Parton wrote in an Instagram post.

"Words can't do justice to the love we shared for over 60 years. Thank you for your prayers and sympathy. He will be laid to rest in a private ceremony with immediate family attending. He was survived by his siblings Sandra and Donnie. ... The family has asked for privacy during this difficult

time," she said.

After learning about the unfortunate news, members from the showbiz chimed in the comment section and paid their heartfelt condolences.

"Oh my heart! I am so sorry for your loss! My heart aches for you! My deepest condolences. praying for you and sending you love and prayers," Khloe Kardashian commented.

Goldie Hawn flaunts Sabyasachi's statement necklace

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

On the cinematic front, this year's Oscars ended on a disappointing note for Indian audiences. However, there's still a major reason to celebrate, as the native designers showcased their talent at a post-event party, with international stars marking their presence in their exquisite creations.

Desi fans turned their eyes to Goldie Hawn as soon as they saw pictures of the veteran actress in Sabyasachi's statement necklace.



For the Oscars party, Goldie Hawn arrived in a golden corset dress from Dolce & Gab-



bana. She elevated her look with Sabyasachi jewellery. The ornament comprises a

diamond chain-link necklace accented with tourmalines and spinels from the designer's eponymous high-end jewellery line.

How beautiful she is looking! Have a look at her pictures Netflix's Chief Content Officer, Bela Bajaria, was also seen in Sabyasachi's jewellery and outfit. She wore a stunning red saree by ace Indian designer Sabyasachi.

Another celebrity who was spotted wearing an Indian designer at the event was Thai singer and actress Lalisa Manoban during her performance at the 2025 Oscars.

COSYING UP AT COSY BOX, GURGAON!

SANJANA CHAWLA

Tucked away in the heart of Gurgaon's DLF Horizon Center, Cosy Box is a hidden gem that promises to transport your taste buds on a global culinary journey. My recent visit to this charming eatery was nothing short of exceptional, with a carefully crafted menu that seamlessly blends flavors, textures, and presentation.

We began our evening with an impressive array of craft cocktails, each one expertly mixed and garnished. Standouts included Ruby Glamour, a delicate cocktail combining gin, raspberry, and Lillet Blanc for a sweet and tangy flavor profile. Sunset Serenity was another refreshing cocktail paired with tequila with grapefruit and kokum for a unique twist on the classic margarita. We also tried the Berry Porte, a fruity cocktail featuring gin, blueberry, and kaffir lime, topped with tonic water. The blueberry puree added a lovely sweetness, while the kaffir lime provided a subtle citrus note!

Moving on to the food,



we were treated to a diverse selection of small plates and mains imported right from Turkey, Japan, France, and Italy! The Jackfruit Adana Kebab was made of tender jackfruit marinated in a blend of Turkish spices, grilled to perfection and served with turkish bread, lavash, and tartare. The jackfruit kebabs were incredibly flavorful, with a lovely char on the outside and a tender, meat-like texture on the inside. We also savoured the Asparagus Tempura Sushi, a tasteful dish featuring crispy asparagus tempura wrapped in sushi rice and nori seaweed, providing a subtle



umami flavor. For mains we had a fresh Burrata Pizza, which is a classic Italian dish featuring a perfectly cooked pizza crust



topped with creamy burrata cheese, fresh basil, and a drizzle of balsamic glaze. The burrata was incredibly rich and creamy, with a lovely sweetness



from the balsamic glaze. The Rigatoni Broccoli Cream Pasta had al dente rigatoni pasta tossed in a rich and creamy broccoli sauce, topped with



Cosy Box is a must-visit for anyone seeking a sophisticated, globally inspired dining experience in Gurgaon. With its inventive cocktails, expertly

prepared dishes, and cozy atmosphere, this hidden gem is sure to delight even the most discerning palates. *Will I Return? Absolutely!*

Swastik: A Luxurious Sanctuary for Holistic Wellbeing



ARVIND JOSHI

Nestled in the picturesque Peacock Valley, Pune, Swastik - A Luxury Well-being Sanctuary is a retreat that seamlessly blends ancient wisdom with modern science. More than just a wellness center, Swastik is a transformative journey designed to nurture the five key dimensions of life: Health, Wealth, Love, Bliss, and Spirituality. Rooted in the Sanskrit meaning of "all things auspicious," Swastik embodies a holistic approach to wellbeing, guiding seekers towards a life of abundance, inner peace, and joy.

Swastik's philosophy is deeply ingrained in the ancient Vedas and Puranas, ensuring that each experience fosters harmony, growth, and balance. Upon arrival, guests are welcomed with a heartfelt "Aatma Naman," setting the tone for an enriching experience. The sanctuary's offerings are meticulously curated by experts and masters to rejuvenate the body, mind, and soul through physical healing, emotional enrichment, and spiritual awakening.

THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF WELLBEING

1. Health: At Swastik, health is viewed as the balance of the five elements—Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Space. This is achieved through Vedic therapies, integrated diagnostics, conscious nourishment, and holistic fitness programs guided by expert practitioners.

2. Wealth: Beyond financial prosperity, wealth is defined as personal growth through knowledge, skills, and experiences. Programs such as the "Knowledge Library" and mentor-guided skill-



building initiatives empower seekers to cultivate abundance with a peaceful mindset.

3. Love: Love is fostered through compassion, kindness, and meaningful connections. Swastik encourages community-building and acts of service, reinforcing emotional fulfillment and societal wellbeing.



4. Bliss: Happiness at Swastik is about joyful awareness and gratitude. Practices such as "Ananda Immersion" and "Growing in Gratitude" help guests cultivate peace and appreciation for life's journey.

5. Spirituality: By aligning life energy with existential laws, Swastik provides seekers with the

tools to explore mindfulness, ancient scriptures, and transformative spiritual practices, leading to self-realization.

THOUGHTFULLY DESIGNED SPACES

Swastik Wellbeing features distinct spaces, or "Vihars," each dedicated to a unique aspect of wellness:

- **Ayu Vihar:** The epicenter of health and healing, offering Ayurveda, naturopathy, hot and cold therapy pools, massage rooms, and relaxation spaces.
- **Sukh Vihar:** A tranquil retreat with 64 earth-toned suites and villas, designed for deep relaxation amidst nature.
- **Anand Vihar:** Overlook-



ing Khadakwasla Lake, this vibrant space includes a gym, sound healing area, Ayurvedic restaurant, and swimming pools.

- **Utsav Vihar:** A hub for artistic and spiritual exploration, offering yoga, music, dance, and an amphitheater.
- **Dhyan Vihar:** The spiritual core of Swastik, fea-

turing an 11,000-square-foot meditation hall and a Nakshatra garden for cosmic energy alignment.

TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS

Swastik offers tailored programs that cater to different wellness needs:

- **Discover Programs:** Ideal for beginners, intro-

ducing holistic wellbeing through three- to seven-night retreats.

- **Heal Programs:** Addressing detox, sleep optimization, weight management, and integrated healing.
- **Empower Programs:** Focused on graceful aging, women's health, and fertility.

- **Yearly Signature Programs:** Long-term personal growth initiatives for adolescents and families. Founded by Dr. Nitin Nyati through the Nyati Foundation, Swastik is more than a retreat—it is a movement toward a harmonious, meaningful, and abundant life. From its architectural elegance to its Ayurvedic and naturopathic cuisine, every element is designed for holistic rejuvenation. Swastik is a sanctuary where seekers can embark on an enlightening journey, meet masters, and rediscover themselves in a state of true wellbeing.



Sleep patterns may reveal comatose patients with hidden consciousness: Study

AGENCIES
NEW YORK CITY

Several studies conducted over the last decade have found that up to a quarter of unresponsive patients with recent brain injuries may have a level of consciousness that is generally hidden from their families and physicians.

New research from Columbia University and NewYork-Presbyterian may soon help physicians identify unresponsive brain-injury patients with hidden consciousness who are likely to achieve long-term recovery by looking for brain waves that are indicative of normal sleep patterns.

“We’re at an exciting crossroad in neurocritical care where we know that many patients appear to be unconscious, but some are recovering without our knowledge. We’re starting to lift the lid a little bit and find some signs of recovery as it’s happening,” says Jan Claassen, associate professor of neurology at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, who led the study.

“Families of my patients ask me all the time, will my mother wake up? How is my mother going to look in three, six, or 12 months? Very often we cannot guide them very precisely, and it’s crucial that we improve our predictions to guide their decision making.”

Claassen, who is also chief of critical care and hospitalist neurology at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center, has previously developed sophisticated techniques to identify patients with hidden consciousness by analyzing a patient’s EEG recordings as they are presented with a command in the neurocritical care unit. The techniques detect EEG brain wave activity, indicating that the patient can hear and understand their physicians’ instructions (to open and close their hand, for example) even though the patients do not physically respond.

But the techniques can be



difficult to implement and can yield false-negative results.

Claassen decided to focus on sleep, as brain circuits that are fundamental for consciousness, including cognitive motor dissociation, are also critical to control sleep.

“I’m always thinking about how my work can be best implemented and used in the real world,

and looking at sleep made sense practically and scientifically,” Claassen says. “Sleep brain waves are easy to record and do not require intervention from the care team.”

In the new study, the researchers looked through EEG recordings of overnight brain activity in 226 comatose patients who also underwent the more complex testing for cogni-

tive motor dissociation.

“The electrical activity during sleep looks relatively chaotic, and then occasionally in some patients, these very organized, fast frequencies appear,” Claassen says.

These bursts--called sleep spindles--often preceded the detection of cognitive motor dissociation with the more complex method, the return of con-



sciousness, and long-term recovery.

“Spindles happen normally during sleep and they’re showing some level of organization in the brain, suggesting circuits between the thalamus and cortex needed for consciousness are intact.”

About one-third of patients had well-defined sleep spindles, including about half of patients with

cognitive motor dissociation.

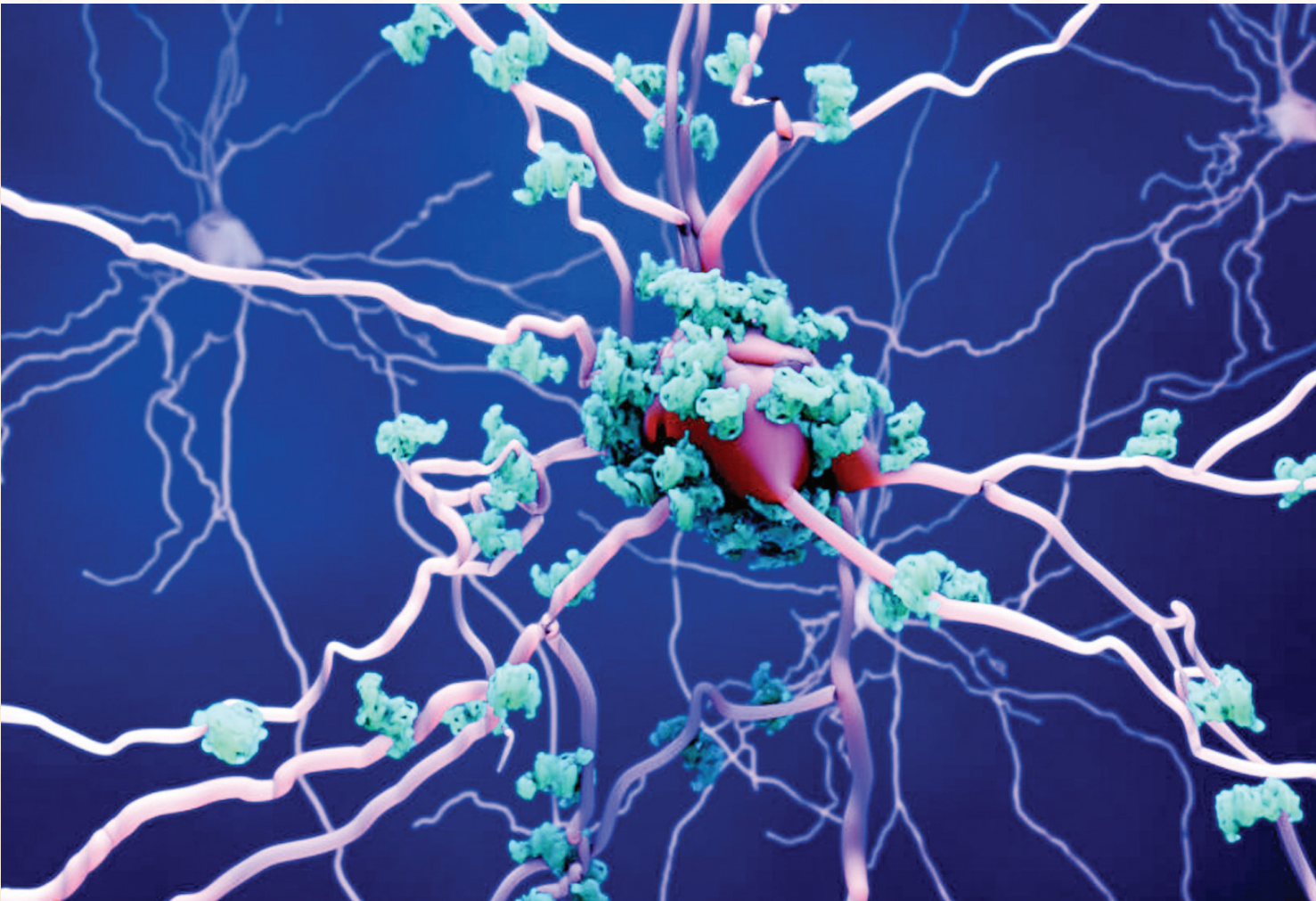
Patients with sleep spindles and cognitive motor dissociation were more likely to recover consciousness and functional independence. Among those with sleep spindles and cognitive motor dissociation, 76% of patients showed evidence of consciousness by the time they were

discharged from the hospital. A year later, 41% of these patients had recovered neurological function, with either minor deficits or a moderate disability, and were able to care for themselves during the day. Only 29% of patients with neither sleep spin-

touching them, 24/7. This is all for a good reason, but it’s hard to sleep in that environment,” Claassen says.

Claassen cautions that the findings only apply to patients with recent injuries, not those with long-term disorders of consciousness. For most patients in the current

I see these spindles as a way to direct more sophisticated testing to the patients most likely to benefit,” Claassen says. “The techniques are not ready for use in clinical practice yet, but this is something that we’re actively working on right now.



dles nor cognitive motor dissociation showed signs of consciousness by the time they were discharged and just 7% regained neurological function a year later.

Even though these findings don’t prove that inducing sleep spindles would translate to better outcomes, they raise the possibility that improving a patient’s sleep--possibly by changing their environment--may promote their recovery. “If you think about the ICU environment, it is rather disruptive for a good night’s sleep. There is noise everywhere, alarms going off, clinicians

study, normal sleep spindles appeared within days of the initial injury.

And the predictors were not perfect: 19 of 139 patients who did not show sleep spindles or signs of cognitive motor dissociation did recover consciousness. Other data will likely be needed to make more accurate predictions.

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Key protein identified for treating Alzheimer’s disease: Study

AGENCIES
COLOGNE (GERMANY)

A team of researchers from the University of Cologne has made an important contribution to understanding the role of the tau protein in Alzheimer’s disease.

Using human induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), the international team demonstrated that a specific variant of the tau protein, known as the 1N4R isoform, mediates the harmful effects of protein clumping in human brain cells.

The study was led by Dr. Hans Zempel from the Institute of Human Genetics, who is also a group leader in the Career Advancement Program (CAP) at the Center for Molecular Medicine Cologne (CMCC) of the University of Cologne and University Hospital Cologne.

If a person suffers from Alzheimer’s disease, certain proteins accumulate in brain cells, forming clumps that restrict normal cell function or even cause the cell to die.

Dr Buchholz and Dr Zem-



pel’s team have used state-of-the-art techniques such as CRISPR/Cas9 gene editing and live-cell imaging in human induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) to demonstrate that the 1N4R tau isoform is responsible for the pathological effects on the cell. iPSCs are human stem cells that are generated from other cells.

For example, skin cells

can be reprogrammed into iPSCs and then transformed into brain cells (neurons). The researchers tested different forms of the tau protein by expressing them specifically in nerve cells. This allowed them to analyse how each protein isoform affects the cell.

According to Dr Sarah Buchholz, first author of

the study, “this study represents a significant advance in helping us to understand the mechanisms of Alzheimer’s disease. By identifying 1N4R tau as a key protein, we have discovered a potential new target for future treatments.”

The study’s interdisciplinary approach not only helps to better understand Alzheimer’s disease but

also demonstrates the importance of human cell models in neurodegenerative research. Further studies are needed to translate the results of this study into clinical application, in particular to validate the results in adequate animal models and to develop specific therapeutics that will intervene in this process.



KOHLI'S MASTERCLASS CHASE PLACES INDIA IN FINAL

AGENCIES
DUBAI

Virat Kohli delivered a chase masterclass to knock Australia out of the tournament and send India to the final with a four-wicket win in the first semi-final of the Champions Trophy on Tuesday in Dubai.

India finally savoured the sweet taste of revenge of the 2023 ODI World Cup heart-break, which now became a distant memory as India relished its four-wicket victory in the semi-final.

By chasing down a competitive 265-run target, India toppled the record by completing its highest-successful run chase against Australia in an ICC event, bettering the previous best chase of 261 in the 2011 World Cup quarter-final.

India began its pursuit of the 265-run target with a touch of caution. Shubman Gill looked jittery in his approach, while India's captain, Rohit Sharma, remained undaunted and stuck to his early blitzkrieg approach.

In his policy of playing fearless cricket, Rohit received his first lifelines when Cooper Connolly dropped a sitter. He received a second chance after Marnus Labuschagne sprinted towards the ball and got hold of it but eventually fluffed it as he landed on the ground.

With India showing signs of nerves getting the better of them, Australia saw the opening and capitalised on the opportunity. Ben Dwarshuis drew the first blood with a delivery angling into the right-handed star. Gill tried to dab it to third man and dragged the ball straight into the stumps.

Rohit soon followed in his

footsteps after being pinned in front of the stumps by Connolly on 28(29). Virat initiated the recovery phase with Shreyas Iyer and laid the foundation for India's success.

Virat relied on his basics and trademark style, while Shreyas added a couple of unorthodox shots from his artillery. The duo raised a 91-run partnership before Adam Zampa castled Shreyas on 45(62).

Axar Patel came in, played a couple of shots, and departed with a score of 27(30). Virat took a step closer towards his 52nd ODI century, with KL Rahul maintaining his strike rate at 100 to steer India towards victory.

Virat tried to up the ante and finish the job early for India by taking the fight against Zampa. He tried to slog it but connected with the bottom of his bat. The ball sailed to Dwarshuis, who took a straightforward catch to bring an end to Virat's knock on 84(98).

With the ball-to-run ratio going neck and neck, Hardik Pandya blazed back-to-back towering sixes off Zampa to turn the momentum in India's favour.

Hardik (28) tried to put the fi-

nal nail in the coffin by seeing off the game in style. He went for glory but holed it straight to Glenn Maxwell. KL Rahul finished it off in style and smoked the ball into the stands over wide long-on to send In-



India's Mohammed Shami and KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer and teammates celebrate the dismissal of Australia's Cooper Connolly during the 1st Semi-Final (A1 v B2) in the ICC Champions Trophy, 2025, at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai on Tuesday. (INSET): Australia's Adam Zampa and teammates celebrate the wicket of India's Shreyas Iyer during their ICC Champions Trophy 2025 semi-final match, at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai on Tuesday. ANI

Travis Head eased off some pressure, hitting Hardik Pandya for a four and a six and then smashing a hat-trick of boundaries against Shami. He continued his assault for a while until Varun Chakravarth was introduced to the attack. Australia reached the 50-run mark in 7.2 overs.

The spinner, who had taken a fiver in the previous match, once

BRIEF SCORE

AUSTRALIA: 264 all out in 49.3 overs (Travis Head 39; Steve Smith 73, Alex Carey 61; Mohammed Shami 3/48, Ravindra Jadeja 2/40, Varun Chakravarth 2/49).

INDIA: 267/6 in 48.1 overs (Virat Kohli 84, Shreyas Iyer 45; Adam Zampa 2/60).

again emerged as a hero, getting the crucial wicket of Head for 39 in 33 balls, with four boundaries and two sixes. Shubman Gill completed a fine catch at long-off. Australia was 54/2 in 8.2 overs.

At the end of 10 overs, Australia was 63/2, with Smith (17*) and Marnus Labuschagne (1*) unbeaten.

The run-rate was squeezed off for a while by Indian spinners until Labuschagne played some shots and brought Australia's 100 runs in 19.5 overs.

Jadeja ended the 56-run stand, trapping Labuschagne leg before wicket for 29 in 36 balls, with two fours and a six. Australia is 110/3 in 22.3 overs. Smith reached his half-cen-

turies in 68 balls, with four boundaries, continuing his fine run in knockouts.

Jadeja once again broke a promising partnership with an easy catch by Virat Kohli at cover, removing Josh Inglis for 11. Australia was 144/4 in 27 overs.

Alex Carey was next up on the crease. With his arrival, Australia started scoring runs at a faster rate as he took down Kuldeep and Hardik for two fours and Varun for a six.

However, the aspirations for a 300-plus total took a massive dent as Shami cleaned up Smith's stumps for 73 in 96 balls, with four boundaries and a six. Australia was 198/5

in 36.4 overs. Glenn Maxwell arrived on the crease, smashing a six, before perishing to a fine straight delivery from Axar for seven runs in five balls. Australia was 205/6 in 37.3 overs.

Carey continued his fine run at number six, scoring his 11th ODI fifty in 49 balls, with seven fours and a six. Ben Dwarshuis also joined the party with some shots against spin.

The partnership between Carey and Ben did not last very long as the latter was removed by Varun while taking the aerial route. Shreyas Iyer took a fine catch at mid-wicket, removing Ben for 19 in 29 balls, with a four and six. Australia was 239/7 in 45.3 overs. A fine direct hit from Shreyas spelled the end of Carey's brilliant knock of 60 in 57 balls, with eight fours and a six. Australia was 249/8 in 47.1 overs.

A fine catch from Virat ended Nathan's brief cameo of 10 in seven balls, giving Shami his third wicket. Australia was 262/9 in 49 overs. Hardik cleaned up Zampa, bundling out Australia for 264 in 49.3 overs. Australia: 264 all out in 49.3 overs (Travis Head 39; Steve Smith 73, Alex Carey 61; Mohammed Shami 3/48, Ravindra Jadeja 2/40, Varun Chakravarth 2/49).

India: 267/6 in 48.1 overs (Virat Kohli 84, Shreyas Iyer 45; Adam Zampa 2/60). Virat Kohli Rohit Sharma Hardik Pandya India vs Australia India beat australia 2002 Champions Trophy final Asian Champions Trophy ICC Champions Trophy Champions trophy 2025 2025 Champions

Usha says ad-hoc panel for boxing needed

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Indian Olympic Association (IOA) chief P T Usha on Tuesday defended her decision to appoint an ad-hoc committee for boxing, saying the national federation failed to fulfil its "fundamental responsibilities" in the last one year and her action was necessary to "restore order and ensure proper governance".

Her statement came in response to IOA vice president Gagan Narang's letter on February 28 in which the former Olympic bronze-winner accused her of issuing "arbitrary" orders and undermining athletes' welfare.

Usha's steadfast position is despite the Delhi High Court's stay on the IOA's order. The court issued notice, seeking IOA's response to a petition filed by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI).

"...there is no truth in your (Narang) assertion that



athletes are suffering due to this decision or any alleged arbitrary actions on my part. The decision to appoint an ad-hoc Committee was not arbitrary but a necessary step to restore order, ensure proper governance, and prioritize athlete development," Usha said in her reply to Narang, who is also a member of the IOA's Executive Council.

"The unfortunate reality is that BFI has failed in fulfilling its fundamental responsibilities, including conducting national championships

in the last year.

"With the 2026 Asian Games fast approaching, there has been little to no effort to identify fresh talent, select promising boxers, and implement structured training programs to enhance India's medal prospects," Usha, who has been at loggerheads with the Executive Council members over several issues, accused them of showing "disproportionate preoccupation" with issues of "personal preferences" rather than the overall good of Indian sports.

Odisha FC aim for win against Jamshedpur FC

AGENCIES
JAMSHEDPUR

Odisha FC will play Jamshedpur FC at the JRD Tata Sports Complex in Jamshedpur in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 on Wednesday.

Jamshedpur FC have qualified for the playoffs and are fourth in the table with 38 points from 22 games on the back of 12 wins and two draws. Odisha FC are preparing for their final league fixture, placed seventh with 30 points from 23 encounters thus far, a press release by ISL stated.

A win against Jamshedpur FC will see them reach 33 points. If the sixth-placed Mumbai City FC lose both their remaining games, the Islanders will also be on 33 points at the end of the league phase.

Indian Women's Hockey Team enhances penalty corner skills

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The Indian Women's

Hockey Team took significant steps in refining their penalty corner conversion abilities during a specialised dragflicking camp organised from February 10-16, 2025, in Bhubaneswar.

The camp was held ahead of the recently concluded home leg of the FIH Pro League 2024-25, where India competed against top teams, including England, Germany, Netherlands, and Spain at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium in Bhubaneswar, according to the press release from Hockey India.

The camp was led by Dutch dragflick legend Taeke Taekema, who is renowned for his penalty corner precision during his playing days. Taekema, who netted 170 goals in 94 appearances for the Netherlands Men's Hockey Team

over 11 years, is widely regarded as one of the world's most feared penalty corner specialists.

His illustrious career includes being the top scorer in numerous major international tournaments, including the 2002 and 2006 Men's Champions Trophy, 2006 Men's World Cup, 2008 Olympic Games, and 2010 Hero Honda FIH World Cup. He also served as the assistant coach for the China Women's Hockey Team from 2022 to 2024.

Senior players, including Deepika, Manisha Chauhan, Sonam, and Annu, along with a few junior players, participated in the camp. The focus was on honing technical skills and improving drag-flick accuracy under Taekema's expert guidance.

Deepika, who netted two out of her three goals through penalty corners during the home leg of the

FIH Pro League 2024-25, reflected on the camp's positive impact and said, "Although it was just a week-long camp, it proved to be highly beneficial for the home leg of the FIH Pro League. I focused on refining my footwork, shot release, and finishing, which gave me a clear understanding of the technical adjustments I needed to make during the tournament for dragflicking."

"During the week-long camp, we concentrated on key technical areas like body positioning and stepping based on the type of shot we wanted to execute. This focus made a significant difference. Overall, it was an enriching experience. Taekema was excellent in guiding us, and we started noticing improvements under his mentorship. He also shared his own experiences as a player, which helped us build mental resilience," she

said in a press release from Hockey India.

Meanwhile, Indian Women's Hockey Team Chief Coach Harendra Singh expressed his excitement about having Taeke Taekema on board to assist the team with penalty corner execution.

He stated, "Taeke is one of the greatest legends in dragflicking, and I requested Hockey India to bring him in to help us improve in this area. He has been working with the team on refining technique and ensuring a smoother dragflicking process. Dragflicking is a highly specialised skill, and Taeke will continue to work with us in future camps as well."

Singh also acknowledged the visible improvements in Deepika's performance.

"We have seen definite progress with Deepika, particularly during the recent Pro League matches.

India Paddle Festival 2025 returns with global champions

AGENCIES
MANGALORE

The India Paddle Festival, the country's only international stand-up paddling event, returns for its second edition with a powerhouse line-up, featuring world number two Christian Andersen, former World Champion Daniel Hasulyo, and four-time World Champion and the Defending Women's Champion Esperanza Barreras.

Leading India's charge will be the formidable Sekar Patchai, the current national champion and 25-time title-holder. The second edition of the India Paddle



Festival is set to take place from March 7 to 9, 2025, at the scenic Sasiithlu Beach, Mangalore, and Karnataka, as per a press release.

The three-day international event is organized by the Surfing Swami Foundation and Mantra Surf Club, in collaboration with WrkWrk, and is proudly

presented by Incredible India (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India) and Karnataka Tourism. Sanctioned by the Association of PaddleSurf Professionals (APP) World Tour, the official World Championship Tour for stand-up paddling, the festival will feature elite-level SUP racing, live music

performances, and vibrant cultural festivities, making it a milestone event for non-motorized water sports in India.

The Women's category will see the return of defending champion Esperanza Barreras from Spain, a four-time International Surfing Association (ISA) SUP World Champion. She will be joined by South Africa's rising star Chiara Vorster and Korea's SUP champion Lim Sujeong, among others in a bid for supremacy on Indian waters.

The Men's category at the India Paddle Festival promises an intense contest, featuring top global athletes

like Spain's Antonio Morillo, who narrowly missed the title last year, and Denmark's Christian Andersen, the current World No. 2, better known as the "Polar Bear." Adding to the competition's depth, Hungary's former World Champion Daniel Hasulyo brings his wealth of experience, while the UK's Will Keetley prepares to make his mark on the waters of Sasiithlu Beach.

Local favorite and India's top-ranked stand-up paddler, Sekar Patchai, will spearhead the Indian contingent. A 25-time National SUP Champion, Patchai is determined to make a mark on his home waters.



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, center, shoots as Los Angeles Clippers center Ivica Zubac, left, and guard James Harden defend during the second half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, March 2, 2025, in Los Angeles. (Agency)