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**DMK REFUTES 'U-TURN' ON NEP, SAYS CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED IT**



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**HEARTBREAK! DONNARUMMA STANDS BETWEEN LIVERPOOL AND WIN**

## BJP sweeps Haryana municipal elections

Congress crushed as saffron party wins all 10 mayoral seats

NEERAJ MOHAN  
CHANDIGARH

The Congress party suffered yet another humiliating electoral setback in Haryana, failing to secure even a single mayoral seat in the local body elections, clearing the path for the ruling BJP to dominate state's Urban politics as well.

The grand old party, which had hoped to rebuild its po-

litical standing after a dismal performance in the 2024 assembly elections, was handed another crushing defeat as the BJP swept all 10 mayoral seats.

The defeat has further exposed the deep-rooted infighting within the state unit and the lack of a strong organisational setup, which continues to plague Congress in Haryana. The civic polls saw several local leaders and workers switching loyalties to the BJP ahead of the elections, leaving Congress struggling to put up a fight.

While the BJP ran a well-structured and aggressive campaign with Chief Minister Nayab Saini, Union Min-

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS	
 <b>BJP</b>	<b>9</b>
 <b>CONGRESS</b>	<b>0</b>
 <b>OTHERS</b>	<b>1</b>
MUNICIPAL COUNCILS	
<b>BJP</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>Congress</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>0</b>

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION	WINNING CANDIDATE	PARTY
Panipat	Komal Saini	BJP
Gurugram	Raj Rani	BJP
Rohtak	Ram Avtar Valmiki	BJP
Hisar	Praveen Popli	BJP
Karnal	Renu Bala Gupta	BJP
Ambala	Shailja Sachdeva	BJP
Sonipat	Rajeev Jain	BJP
Faridabad	Praveen Joshi	BJP
Yamunanagar	Suman Bahmani	BJP
Manesar	Dr Inderjit Yadav	Independent

isters and Cabinet Ministers leading from the front, Congress leaders were nowhere to be seen on the ground. The absence of senior leadership

was glaring as campaign responsibilities were merely distributed among local leaders. But their efforts fell short in countering the BJP's mas-

**I assure the people of Haryana that we will leave no stone unturned to fulfil their hopes and aspirations**

- Narendra Modi  
Prime Minister

sive campaign machinery.

Reacting to the party's defeat, senior Congress leader and former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda dismissed the loss, saying, **P3**

## Saini emerges out of shadows, earns stamp of approval



NEERAJ MOHAN  
CHANDIGARH

The BJP's resounding victory in Haryana's mayoral elections has cemented Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini's position as the party's undisputed leader in the state. Winning 9 out of 10 municipal corporations and securing victories in

8 of 23 municipal committees, the election results are being viewed as a clear public endorsement of Saini's leadership.

Held less than six months after the BJP formed the government in Haryana for a third consecutive term, this was the first civic election under Saini's leadership. His aggressive campaigning, including back-to-back rallies and roadshows across the state, played a decisive role in BJP's sweeping success. By personally **P3**

### PARLIAMENT UPDATE

RS adjourned till March 17 amid uproar over NEP

NEW DELHI: The Rajya Sabha has been adjourned till Monday and will meet again on March 17 after the break for Holi. Earlier on Tuesday, there had been a massive uproar in the upper house of the Parliament over LoP (Rajya Sabha) and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's 'thokenge' remark. Kharge's statement came while he was speaking about Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan after his remark against the TN government. **DETAILS P2**

**Oilfields Amendment Bill passed in RS**

NEW DELHI: Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024 to expand the definition of mineral oils and include petroleum and natural gas passed in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

The bill was introduced by Union petroleum and natural gas minister Harddeep Singh Puri for consideration and passing. The Bill will regulate the exploration and extraction of natural gas and petroleum. **DETAILS P2**

## Nine Indian varsities in world's top 50

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Nine Indian universities and institutions are among world's top 50 in the QS subject-wise rankings even as some of the top institutions on the list including three IITs, two IIMs and JNU saw a drop in their positions.

According to the 15th edition of the World University Rankings by Subject, announced on Wednesday by London-based Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), India celebrates 12 top-50 positions across the subject rankings and the broad faculty areas, earned by nine institutions.

Leading the way is the Indian School of Mines (ISM), Dhanbad, which ranks



A paramilitary soldier takes position at a railway station near the attack site of a passenger train by insurgents in Balochistan province.

AGENCIES  
KARACHI/ISLAMABAD

**T**wenty-one passengers and four paramilitary soldiers were killed by militants holding hostages after seizing control of a train in Pakistan's Balochistan province, an army general said on Wednesday.

Army spokesman Lt

Gen Ahmad Sharif told Dunya News TV that security forces killed all 33 militants present at the scene.

"The armed forces successfully concluded the operation in the (Wednesday) evening by killing all terrorists and rescuing all passengers safely," Lt Gen Sharif said.

He said that 21 passengers were killed by the ter-

rorists when they attacked the train on Tuesday. He added that four paramilitary Frontier Corps soldiers were also killed in the incident.

The Jaffar Express, carrying 440 passengers in nine coaches, was going from Quetta to Peshawar when militants derailed it using explosives and hijacked it near the mountain-

ous terrain of Gudalar and Piru Kunri in a tunnel 160 kilometres from Quetta.

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack on Tuesday when they said they killed six soldiers.

Lt Gen Sharif said that on March 11, around 1 PM, terrorists blew up a railway track in the Bolan Pass area of Osi Pur. He described the area as difficult terrain, where the terrorists initially used hostages, including women and children, as human shields. "The rescue operation began immediately, with participation from the Army, Air Force, Frontier Corps, and Special Services Group commandos," he said.

During the operation, the terrorists remained in contact with their facilitators and masterminds in Afghanistan via satellite phones, he said, adding that it showed their foreign nexus.

Sharif said that forces **P3**

### INDIA, MAURITIUS INK 8 PACTS

## 'MAHASAGAR' vision for Global South unveiled

AGENCIES  
PORT LOUIS

India and Mauritius on Wednesday elevated their ties to 'enhanced strategic partnership' and inked eight pacts to boost ties in several sectors, including maritime security, and promote trade in local currencies, even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled an ambitious vision for growth and security of the Global South.

On the second and final day of his two-day trip to Mauritius, Modi graced the national day celebrations of the island nation as the chief guest and announced a raft of development projects for the strategically-located country.

Following talks with his Mauritian counterpart Navinchandra Ramgoolam, PM Modi announced India's new vision for Global South and named it "MAHASAGAR" or "Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions", a policy approach that came against the backdrop of China's relentless attempts to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean.

"We are committed to extend full cooperation in the security of Mauritius' Exclusive Economic Zone," the prime minister said.

In the meeting, Modi reiterated India's continued support and assistance to Mauritius in augmenting its defence and security needs given the shared objectives of the two nations in the region.

The PM said a free, open, secure, and safe Indian Ocean is the common priority of India and Mauritius and that he and Ramgoolam agreed that defence cooperation and maritime security are an important part of the strategic partnership between the two countries.

The two sides also unveiled a 'Joint Vision for **P3**

### TRUST AND FRIENDSHIP



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives the Highest National Award of Mauritius, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean from Mauritius President Dharambeer Gokhool on Mauritius' National Day, in Port Louis on Wednesday. ANI

■ PM Modi graced the national day celebrations of the island nation as chief guest

■ MAHASAGAR or Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions is India's new vision for Global South

■ It is a policy approach that comes in the backdrop of China's attempts to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean.

■ The new approach will focus on the spirit of trade for development, capacity building for sustainable growth, and

mutual security for a shared future

■ The two sides will enhance maritime cooperation through increasing deployment of ships and aircraft

■ Agreements provide for promoting use of national currencies for cross-border transactions, sharing of maritime data, joint work in combating money laundering and enhancing cooperation in the MSMEs

■ Cooperation on white shipping, blue economy and hydrography will be strengthened.

## Three people found dead at Delhi home

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Three people were found dead at their residence in Delhi's Molarband, officials said on Wednesday.

According to the Delhi Police, the bodies were found after a call was reported that a foul smell emanated from the residence. "A PCR call was received from PS Badarpur regarding a foul smell emanating from a house and three people residing inside and suspected suicide," the police said.

The police said that three had white foam coming out of their mouths and suggested the consumption of a poisonous substance.

## LoP in Bengal says possible terror attack on him inside Assembly

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE  
KOLKATA

West Bengal's Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari, in a letter to the Assembly's Principal Secretary, claimed a potential security threat and warned of a possible terror attack on the BJP leader inside the West Bengal Legislative Assembly.

Adhikari claimed that terror outfits Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B) and Hizb ut-Tahrir, previously banned by the Sheikh Hasina-led Bangladesh Government, pose a potential threat to the Assembly. He requested the deployment of Central security forces within the Assembly premises.



Citing intelligence inputs shared by Central agencies with the West Bengal Police, the letter stated: "After the change of guard in Bangladesh Administration and a spate of jail breaks as reported by the Bangladesh media, some of the top leaders of these two outfits have again become active in recent months. These inputs were shared with **P3**



# RS ADJOURNED TILL MARCH 17 AMID UPROAR OVER NEP ISSUE

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha has been adjourned till Monday and will meet again on March 17 after the break for Holi.

Earlier on Tuesday, there had been a massive uproar in the upper house of the Parliament over LoP (Rajya Sabha) and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's 'thokenge' remark.

Kharge's statement came while he was speaking about Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan after his remark against the Tamil Nadu government about the issue of the three-language policy. "...I request you (Deputy Chairman) with folded hands to allow me (to speak)...aapko kya kya

thokna hai thik se thokenge, sarkar ko bhi thokenge'....", he said in the Upper House of the Parliament on Tuesday.

BJP strongly opposed Kharge's statement and stated that it was disrespectful to the chair. Union Health Minister JP Nadda said that the Congress president should apologise for his statement, and his words should be expunged from the footage of the Parliament proceedings.

"The language used by him and the attack on the Chair is condemnable. He should condemn it and apologize for using this language for the Chair. He should take back his words or it should be expunged," Nadda said.

Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh also



Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh conducts the proceedings of the House during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Wednesday. (ANI)

expressed dissatisfaction over Kharge's remark, noting his seniority in the House. Kharge immediately apologised for his remark, clarifying that his remark was not aimed at the chair

but towards the government and its policy. "I apologize to you (Deputy Chairman), I have not used these words for you. I have said that 'hum sarkar ki policies ko thokenge'. I apologise to you

and not to the government..." Kharge said.

Other than the outrage over Mallikarjun Kharge's 'thokenge' remark, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan once again cleared the government's stance on the National Education Policy and replied to DMK's allegations of imposing the Hindi language onto the state. Pradhan lashed out at the opposition for claiming that the government wants to divide society while using languages and said that the central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will never use language to do such "sin." "There are certain things going on, let me first clarify in my Odia society Lord Jagannath is everybody.

# Oilfields Amendment Bill passed in RS

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024 to expand the definition of mineral oils and include petroleum and natural gas passed in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

The bill was introduced by Union petroleum and natural gas minister Hardeep Singh Puri for consideration and passing. The Bill will regulate the exploration and extraction of natural gas and petroleum. The amended bill expands the definition of mineral oils to include petroleum and natural gas in it.

The amended bill includes any naturally occurring hydrocarbon, coal bed methane, and shale gas/oil in the category of mineral oils. However, it clarifies that

mineral oils will not include coal, lignite or helium.

The amended bill also provides for mining leases, this will include various activities such as exploration, prospecting, production, making merchantable, and disposal of mineral oils.

Prospecting is the initial stage in the search for oil and gas fields, involving the assessment of potential petroleum accumulations across large areas.

The new bill will replace the mining lease with a petroleum lease to cover a similar set of activities. However, existing mining leases granted under the old Act will continue to be valid.

The new bill will empower the central government to make rules on several matters like regulating the grant

of leases, terms and conditions of leases including the minimum and the maximum area and the period of the lease, conservation and development of mineral oils, methods for producing oil, and manner of collection of royalties, fees, and taxes.

The proposal also empowers the central government to make rules on the merger and combination of petroleum leases, sharing of production and processing facilities, obligations of lessees towards protecting the environment and reducing emissions and alternative mechanisms for resolving disputes in relation to the grant of petroleum leases.

For cases of violation of rules, the bill provides to hike the punishment and penalty from a current fine of Rs 1000 to Rs 25 lakhs.

# '3,962 Skype IDs, 83,668 WhatsApp accounts used for digital arrest held'

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday informed the Rajya Sabha that its Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), a specialized wing, has identified and blocked more than 3,962 Skype IDs and 83,668 WhatsApp accounts involved in digital arrest scams.

According to the MHA, these fraudulent accounts were allegedly used to deceive individuals by impersonating law enforcement officials and coercing victims into transferring money.

Union Minister of State for Home Sanjay Bandi Kumar



provided this information on behalf of the MHA while responding to a query from Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam MP Tiruchi Siva.

The I4C, in collaboration with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), has launched a caller tune campaign to raise awareness about cybercrime and

promote the Cyber Crime Helpline Number 1930 and the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP).

"The I4C has proactively identified and blocked more than 3,962 Skype IDs and 83,668 WhatsApp accounts used for digital arrest," the minister mentioned in a written reply.

# Kanimozhi slams Sitharaman's remarks over TN schemes

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam MP Kanimozhi sharply criticized Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's recent remarks, accusing her and other ministers of continuously insulting the Tamil people and undermining the Tamil Nadu government's efforts. In her statement, Kanimozhi expressed her disbelief, saying, "What Hypocrisy? I really don't understand."

Kanimozhi took strong issue with Sitharaman's suggestion that Tamil Nadu's schemes were an act of charity. "Yesterday, the Finance Minister in her



speech made it look like that all the schemes given in Tamil Nadu is an act of charity," Kanimozhi stated. She stressed that the funds allocated to the state had not been adequately provided, contrary to what was being suggested. "The truth is that whatever funds were to be allocated to us, haven't been allocated as yet," she said.

The DMK leader highlighted that the funds received from the Union Government were, in fact, a return on Tamil Nadu's own contributions through taxes. "And moreover whatever is being allocated according to her, I think any Union Government has to do it for the states. And moreover it is from the funds the taxes which the Tamil Nadu government pays," Kanimozhi clarified.

She further pointed out the stark contrast in the financial treatment of Tamil Nadu compared to other states, noting that while Tamil Nadu contributes significantly to the national tax pool, it receives only a fraction in return.

# 2,601 Bangladeshis held on border in last 13 months: MHA to RS

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

A total of 2,601 Bangladeshi citizens have been apprehended at the India-Bangladesh border while attempting to enter Indian territory in the last 13 months, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

Union Minister of State (MoS) for Home Nityanand Rai shared this information in a written reply, stating that these 2,601 Bangladeshis were apprehended between January 1, 2024, and January 31, 2025. According to the

data shared by the MoS, 176 Bangladeshi intruders were apprehended in January 2025, as the Border Security Force (BSF)-mandated to guard the India-Bangladesh border-remained steadfast in its mission to curb illegal activities along the border.

Reflecting on the past 12 months of 2024, the data shows the apprehension of 253 Bangladeshis in December, followed by 310 in November, 331 in October, 300 in September, 214 in August, 267 in July, and 247 in June--indicating fluctuations in illegal crossings from Bangladesh.

# Madagascar Parliamentary delegation calls on LS Speaker Birla



TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday highlighted that India holds Madagascar in the highest regard as a cherished and reliable friend, as well as a steadfast partner in its journey of progress, said a statement from the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

He further emphasized that, in alignment with the "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision, Madagascar stands as a pivotal ally for India within the Indian Ocean realm. "This invaluable partnership, he noted, plays an essential role in fortifying regional stability and nurturing economic prosperity across the region", as

per the statement.

Birla made these remarks during a bilateral meeting with a Parliamentary Delegation from Madagascar led by the President of the National Assembly of Madagascar, H E Justin Tokely in Parliament House Premises today. During the meeting, Birla underscored that the "relationship between India and Madagascar has

historically been strong and that the two nations share a centuries-old history of trade, culture, and mutual interaction", the statement said.

Guided by the principle of 'Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam', India has always been at forefront in offering help to neighboring countries specially during disasters, he said.

Birla mentioned about India's proactive role in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) to Madagascar. India has supported various projects to contribute to the prosperity and socio-economic development of Madagascar, which reflects India's commitment to mutually beneficial development, he noted.

# Cong MP files motion to discuss trade deficit with China, manufacturing crisis

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Congress MP Manickam Tagore has filed an Adjournment Motion in the Lok Sabha to discuss the ongoing crisis in India's manufacturing sector and the growing trade deficit with China.

In his adjournment motion, Tagore wrote, "I rise today to bring attention to the growing crisis in India's manufacturing sector under the current government. Instead of fostering an Atma-Nirbhar Bharat, this government seems to be working towards an Adani Nirbhar Bharat, where only



a handful of corporate giants benefit, leaving the rest of the country's industries and workers to suffer."

Tagore sharply criticized the government's flagship initiative, Make in India, which was intended to boost domestic manufacturing

and employment opportunities.

"Make in India has turned into mere assembly work, with limited actual production taking place," he stated.

The MP pointed to the declining share of manufacturing in India's GDP, which has fallen from 15% in 2014 to just 12.8% in FY24. This, he argued, is a direct contradiction to the government's initial targets and promises made to the Indian public.

The Congress leader also highlighted the worsening trade deficit with China, emphasizing its negative effects on domestic industries.

Tagore noted, "The trade

deficit with China has tripled, rising from \$35.2 billion in 2013 to \$105.8 billion in 2023, as Chinese goods flood the Indian market."

He further argued that this surge in imports from China is undermining the competitiveness of Indian businesses and failing to protect the domestic market from what he described as "unfair trade practices."

Tagore did not stop there. He also criticized the government's Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, which was meant to incentivize manufacturing and reduce dependency on imports.

## GLIMPSES FROM PARLIAMENT



RJD MP Manoj Kumar Jha speaks in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. ANI



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. ANI



Union Minister Pralhad Joshi and Cong MP Jairam Ramesh at Parliament. ANI



Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Parliament House during the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI



Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress MPs Jairam Ramesh, Digvijaya Singh and others in the Rajya Sabha. ANI



Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and JP Nadda at Parliament House on Wednesday. ANI



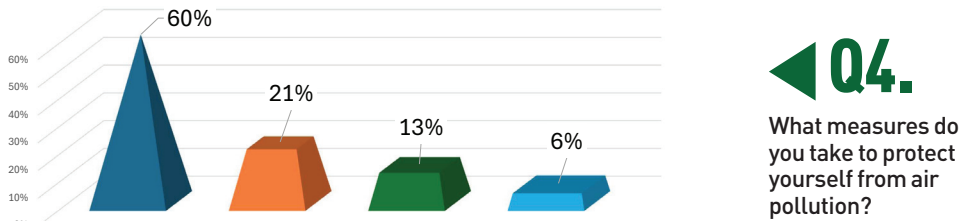
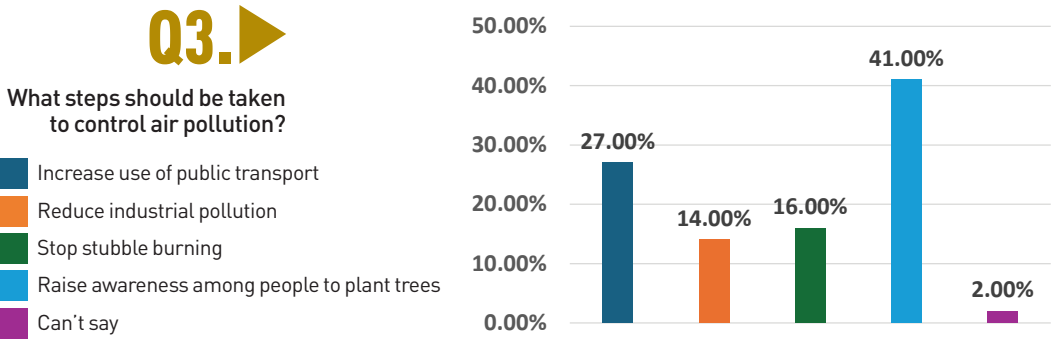
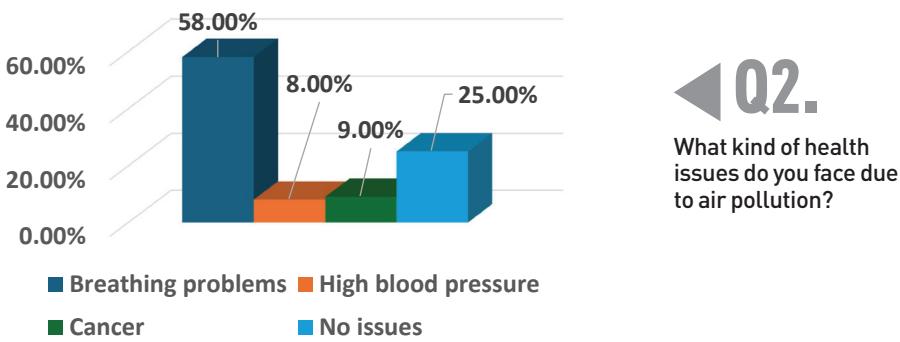
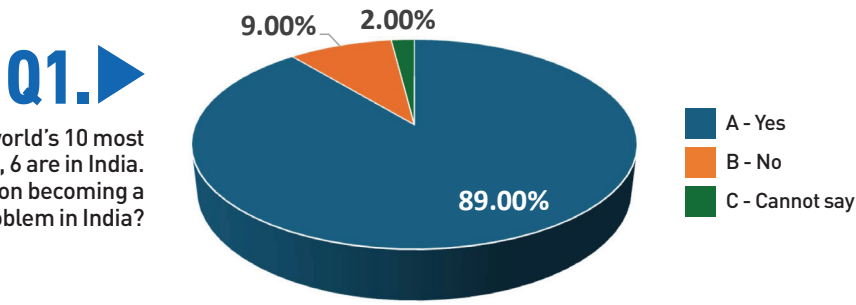
Opposition MPs walk out from the Lok Sabha during the Budget Session of the Parliament, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI



THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON TOP POLLUTED CITIES IN INDIA

27% believe public transport should be used to control air pollution.

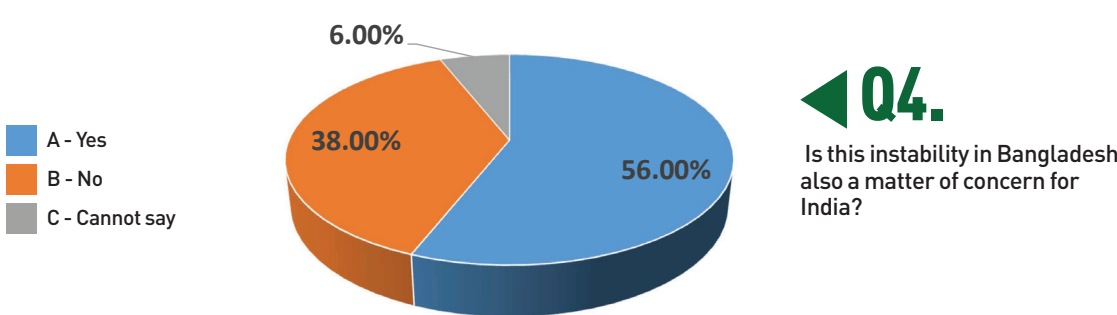
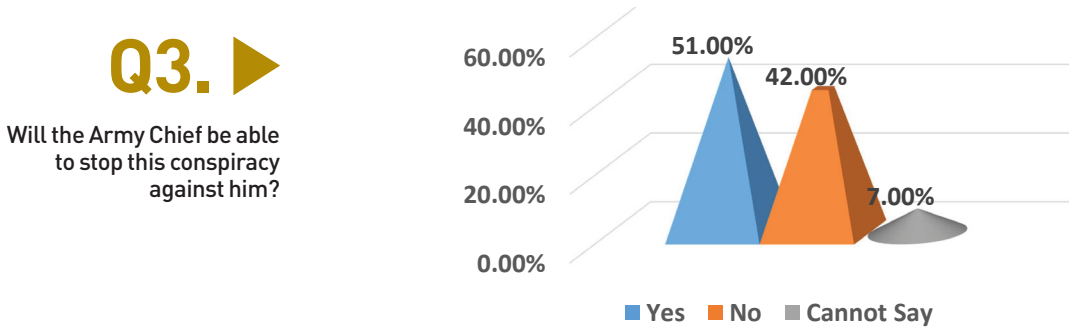
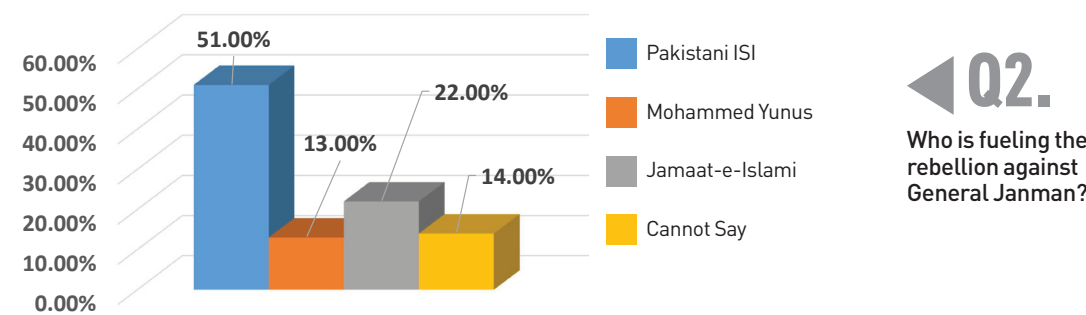
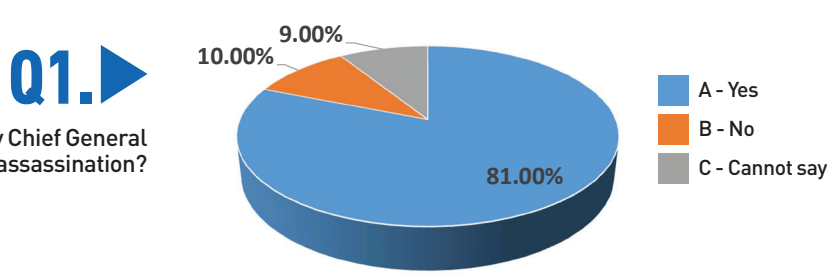
India ranked fifth globally for the most polluted air in 2024, behind Chad, Congo, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, as per IQAir. It improved from third place in 2023, with a 7% drop in PM2.5 levels to 50.6 µg/m³. However, six of the world's ten most polluted cities are in India, with New Delhi averaging 91.6 µg/m³.



THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON BANGLADESH ARMY COUP

81% believe General Janman is targeted for assassination.

A recent survey reveals that 81% of respondents believe Bangladesh's Army Chief, General Janman, is targeted for assassination. Concerns over political instability and external influence are rising, with speculations on the forces behind the conspiracy. The situation is also seen as a potential concern for India, given its regional implications.



'MAHASAGAR' vision

CONTINUED FROM P1

an Enhanced Strategic Partnership' that outlined the futuristic approach in expanding bilateral cooperation in a range of areas including in defence and maritime security, trade, health and education, and space and climate change. The document noted that the two sides will enhance maritime cooperation through increasing deployment of ships and aircraft for joint maritime surveillance and hydrographic surveys.

It said the two leaders also resolved to deepen co-operation towards securing EEZ of Mauritius, including through enhanced utilisation of newly built runway and jetty at Agalega.

The unveiling of the 'MAHASAGAR' vision came 10 years after the prime minister announced during his visit to Mauritius in 2015 New Delhi's SAGAR or Security and Growth for All in the Region policy that formed the bedrock for India's engagement with the Indian Ocean Region.

"We have taken the SAGAR vision forward for the stability and prosperity of this entire region. Today, taking it forward, I

would like to say that our vision for the Global South will be, beyond SAGAR -- (it will be) MAHASAGAR that is "Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions", "Modi said in his media statement.

The new approach will focus on the spirit of trade for development, capacity building for sustainable growth, and mutual security for a shared future, he said. "Under this, cooperation will be ensured through technology sharing, concessional loans and grants," Modi said. The agreements inked after Modi-Ramgoolam talks will provide for promoting use of national currencies for cross-border transactions, sharing of maritime data, joint work in combating money laundering and enhancing cooperation in the MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) sector.

In his remarks, Ramgoolam said Mauritius continues to benefit from Indian assistance for its socio-economic development, adding the two sides will continue to reinforce trade relations through the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA).

At a media briefing, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said an agreement was inked on an Indian rupee-denominated line of credit amounting to Rs 487 crore for undertaking the replacement of water pipelines in Mauritius.

This line of credit has been extended by the State Bank of India and it is the first ever Indian rupee-based Line of Credit that's being extended by New Delhi to any country, he said.

In their talks, the two leaders noted that defence and maritime security cooperation remains an important pillar of bilateral relations and close cooperation in this domain has achieved a strategic dimension and benefited both countries immensely, the document on joint vision for an enhanced strategic partnership noted.

They further agreed that Mauritius and India, having a shared commitment to ensure a free, open, safe and secure Indian Ocean Region, are natural partners in the region and reiterated their resolve to work closely in countering maritime challenges and safeguarding the larger strategic interests in the region, it said.

4 soldiers, 21 passengers killed

CONTINUED FROM P1

took time to complete the operation because the terrorists were using the hostages as human shields.

By last evening, around 100 passengers had been safely rescued from the terrorists, he said, adding that a large number of hostages, including women and children, were freed on Wednesday.

"The rescue operation continued periodically, and in the final clearance operation in the evening, all remaining hostages were secured. Since the terrorists were using passengers as human shields, the operation was conducted with extreme precision and caution," he told Dunya News.

Sharif said that first, snipers neutralized the suicide bombers, followed by a step-by-step clearance of

each train compartment, eliminating all terrorists present. He said that no passengers were harmed during the clearance operation.

Sharif stated that all terrorists present at the site had been eliminated, but the area and train were still being cleared as per standard operating procedures by the bomb disposal squad. He said that efforts were also underway to gather passengers who had fled in different directions during the operation.

The general warned that "the train attack has changed the rule of the game", without explaining it.

He said that the terrorists and their facilitators would be hunted down wherever they were. "We cannot allow anyone to target Pakistanis on the behalf of their foreign paymasters," he said.

Saini emerges out of shadows

CONTINUED FROM P1

campaigning even for candidates in municipal committees, Saini displayed his hands-on approach and commitment to strengthening the party's grassroots presence.

Terming the results as a 'stamp of approval' by the people, Saini managed to deliver a message that the 'triple-engine government'—BJP's governance at the Centre, state, and local levels—will now accelerate Haryana's development. "This mandate reflects the people's trust in our vision for a developed Haryana and a developed India," Saini stated. His remarks directly counter the opposition's claims that the BJP was losing ground in the state's urban areas.

The BJP's top leadership, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and former CM Manohar Lal, placed their faith in Saini the same day

last year by appointing him as Haryana's Chief Minister. He successfully led the party in the October Assembly elections, securing power for the third time—an outcome that defied Congress's expectations and dealt a significant blow to its resurgence plans.

Even as his first year in office was overshadowed by the Model Code of Conduct for Lok Sabha, Assembly, and municipal elections, Saini's government pushed through 18 key reforms that have strengthened his grip on the state's administration. His governance style, marked by accessibility and inclusivity, has earned him praise even from opposition legislators. Unlike his predecessors, he has kept the CM residence open to the public and engaged with communities across caste and regional lines, reinforcing BJP's narrative of inclusive governance.

LoP in Bengal says...

CONTINUED FROM P1

the West Bengal Police by their central agency counterparts, fearing a possible terror attack on the Hon'ble Leader of the Opposition."

The letter further mentioned that specific inputs regarding threat perception have also come within a month of the Union Home Ministry scaling up the Leader of the Opposition's security cover after assessing the current scenario surrounding the turmoil in Bangladesh.

Adhikari's letter also expressed concerns about the safety of opposition MLAs inside the Assembly premises, citing the absence of personal Central security personnel. "The Opposition MLAs, including the Hon'ble Leader of the Op-

position, already feel unsafe inside the Assembly premises because of the absence of their personal Central security inside the Assembly precincts as you have prevented them from entering the Assembly premises. Considering the current scenario, we hope that you will reassess the situation and reconsider your decision to keep the Central Security Personnel outside the premises of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly," the letter stated.

Adhikari further wrote in the letter that if an untoward incident occurs inside the Assembly premises that threatens the safety of the Leader of the Opposition, the Speaker and the Assembly Authority would be responsible for the same.

Nine Indian universities in top 50

CONTINUED FROM P1

for Engineering and Technology have improved their position to bag the 26th and 28th spot, respectively.

The two institutions have also improved their rank for Engineering-Electrical and Electronic to enter the top 50 list.

Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad and Bangalore continued to be among world's top 50 for Business and Management Studies but their

ranking has dropped since previous year. While IIM Ahmedabad's ranking dropped to 27 from 22, that of IIM Bangalore slipped to 40 from 32.

IIT Madras (Petroleum Engineering) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) (Development Studies) continued to be among world's top 50 but their ranks also dropped by few spots.

"A total of 79 Indian universities – 10 more than last year – feature 533 times

across this year's rankings, marking a 25.7 per cent increase compared to the previous edition. This includes 454 entries in individual subjects and 79 appearances across the five broad faculty areas," QS said in a statement.

In the latest edition of the QS subject-specific rankings, India has the fifth highest number of new entries behind China, the US, the UK and Korea, and ranks 12th for the number of overall entries.

came disgruntled after being denied nominations, leading to a lackluster campaign. The internal power struggle between the Selja and Hooda factions further weakened the party, with continuous electoral defeats leaving workers demoralized and directionless.

Unlike the BJP, which strategically fielded strong candidates in all wards, Congress struggled to even find enough candidates to contest across constituencies. In some municipal corporations, the party was forced to support independent candidates due to a lack of viable contenders. The BJP capitalized on this weakness, aggressively targeting Congress in its campaign and further denting its credibility among voters.

According to the political observers the Haryana civic polls have once again highlighted Congress's declining political influence in the state as unless the leadership crisis is addressed and a strong grassroots organization is rebuilt, Congress's woes in Haryana are only set to deepen.



# DMK REFUTES 'U-TURN' ON NEP, SAYS CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED IT

TN Minister Mahesh says Union Minister spreading misinformation

TDG NETWORK  
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Minister Anbil Mahesh on Wednesday refuted claims that Tamil Nadu has changed its stance on National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, asserting that the state has consistently opposed the policy as it undermines Tamil Nadu's education model.

In a post on X, Mahesh said, "Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, spreading misinformation won't change the facts. Tamil Nadu has consistently opposed NEP 2020 because it undermines our successful education model."

He added that the state will only engage with central schemes that benefit students.

"There's no 'sudden change in stance.' The letter dated 15/3/2024 is not an endorsement of the NEP. TN engages with central schemes only when beneficial to students, but that doesn't mean blind acceptance of any scheme or framework. The letter clearly

## 'APPEAL CENTRE TO SUPPORT TN'

- "There's no 'sudden change in stance.' The letter dated 15/3/2024 is not an endorsement of the NEP... The letter clearly states that a committee will be constituted, and based on the findings and recommendations of the committee, we will decide on the implementation," Mahesh said on X.
- Mahesh appealed to the central government to support and acknowledge Tamil Nadu's right to choose its educational framework.



## NEP 'SAFFRONISATION POLICY': STALIN

Tiruvallur: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on the central government, labelling the National Education Policy (NEP) as a "saffronise policy" aimed at promoting Hindi rather than developing India, alleging that the policy threatens to destroy Tamil Nadu's education system. "National Education Policy is not education policy, it is saffronise policy. The policy was not created to develop India but to develop Hindi. We are opposing the Policy as that would destroy the Tamil Nadu education system completely," CM Stalin said in Tiruvallur.

states that a committee will be constituted, and based on

the findings and recommendations of the committee, we

will decide on the implementation," Mahesh said on X.

Mahesh accused people advocating for the imposition of NEP of playing politics, claiming that the state's education model is exemplary.

"If anyone is playing politics, it's those who are trying to impose NEP and distort Tamil Nadu's culture and legacy. TN's education model is exemplary and has consistently proven its ability to shape the future of our

students," the Tamil Nadu Minister said on X.

Mahesh appealed to the central government to support and acknowledge Tamil Nadu's right to choose its educational framework.

"What we need from you is to please understand that the diversity of India is its strength, not its weakness. By acknowledging and supporting Tamil Nadu's right to choose what is best for the future of its children, you will actually be doing a great service to the future of Tamil Nadu and its students," he said.

On Tuesday, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that he stood by his earlier statement in the Lok Sabha that the DMK-led Tamil Nadu government had taken a "U-turn" on implementing the centrally sponsored PM SHRI scheme, which seeks to strengthen schools managed by the Centre, State, or Local bodies. He also urged Chief Minister MK Stalin to "not view NEP 2020 from a political lens."

# BJP, JD(S) protest over 'tax revenue misuse' in K'taka

TDG NETWORK  
BENGALURU

BJP and JD(S) MLAs staged a protest at the Vidhana Soudha, the state legislative assembly building, accusing the Congress government of misusing Karnataka's tax revenue.

The protest focused on allegations that the state government was mishandling public funds meant for the welfare of the people.

BJP MLC CT Ravi, who was present at the protest, said, "This is the public's money. The government is responsible for all the money of the public. The Culture Minister says that we do not have money to promote Kannada. The Cooperative Minister says that we do not have money to appoint farmers. Is the money only for Congress Party workers?"

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka said, "Kannadigas' tax money is being misused to pay salaries to Congress workers under the guise of guarantee imple-



mentation committees."

Meanwhile, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday justified the State government's decision to reward Congress party workers with positions and benefits through government programmes.

Shivakumar was speaking in the State Assembly, replying to MLA M T Krishnappa, who raised the issue of party workers occupying most positions in the guarantee implementation committees."

There is nothing wrong in accommodating the party workers who brought the party to power. The committees are set up to ensure the delivery of the Rs 52,000-crore guarantee schemes to the

people. But the Opposition is unable to digest it," he said.

Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka raised the point of distributing Rs 187 crore of government money to party workers.

"Let this issue be taken up in the House, we will respond. Let us limit ourselves to a discussion on the budget right now," Shivakumar said.

"The people of the state have blessed us with 138 seats. The Leader of the Opposition and other MLAs requested for positions in committees. It is not my decision alone, it needs to be discussed in the Cabinet. Our government will always be with our party workers," he added.

# BRS protests against state govt, police detains party workers in Telangana

TDG NETWORK  
HYDERABAD

Members of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Vidarthi Vibhagam staged a protest at the Telangana Assembly on Wednesday, demanding that the state government appoint an education minister.

Taking action, the police have detained the protestors and taken them into custody.

Meanwhile, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao criticised the Congress-led state government stating that this government has no vision and it only focuses on commission. KTR claimed that nobody is happy in the 15 months of Revanth Red-



dy government.

"Show me a single person in the whole of Telangana who is happy in the 15 months of Revanth Reddy government rule...The government employees whose salaries we increased by 73% are all unhappy...More than 480 farmers have committed suicide. There is only despair in the whole state... They (state government) are misleading the public and the governor...Congress

members themselves say that no land deal happens without paying 30% commission...This government has no vision, it only focuses on commission..." he said.

The BRS working president also slammed the governor's speech and called it "press meet" for Congress workers at Gandhi Bhavan.

KTR stated that they were expecting the Governor to talk about farmers' and reassure them. He further claimed that more than 20 to 30 per cent of farmers' loans have not been waived yet.

In a social media post on X, the official handle while quoting KTR, wrote, "The Governor's speech in the Assembly was like a press

meet for Congress workers at Gandhi Bhavan. We thought the governor would say new things in his speech. We thought he would reassure the farmers. More than 20 to 30 percent of farmers' loans were not waived. But... they told blatant lies to the Governor that the loan waiver was complete."

Earlier, on March 10, Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader Kalvakuntla Kavitha launched a sharp attack on the Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy-led Congress government, accusing it of plunging Telangana into financial distress with reckless borrowing and zero delivery on electoral promises.

# CM Yogi rolls out Rs 1,890 crore gas subsidy for 1.86 crore families

TIKAM SHARMA  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday distributed Rs 1,890 crore in subsidies for gas cylinder refills to 1.86 crore eligible families in Uttar Pradesh under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. The initiative was officially launched at the Lok Bhavan Auditorium in Lucknow, where the CM symbolically handed over cheques to 10 beneficiaries, including Mamta Mishra, Rampata, Rahnuma Begum, Rubina, Shweta Singh, Rupa, Sonam Shukla, Gudiya, Mamta, and Shikha Gautam. Addressing the event, CM Yogi highlighted the trans-



formation brought by the Ujjwala Yojana, emphasizing that while gas connections once required hefty bribes, today, 10 crore families nationwide have received them free of cost. He also noted that free gas cylinders are being provided on Holi and Diwali, ensuring that citizens can celebrate their festivals with ease. With Holi and Ramzan coinciding this year, he stressed that the

scheme would benefit even more families. Recalling the launch of the Ujjwala Yojana in 2016, CM Yogi mentioned that nearly two crore families in Uttar Pradesh have benefited from it. He reaffirmed the BJP government's 2021 election promise of providing free gas cylinders during Holi and Diwali, stating that this commitment has been honoured every year since 2022.

# Kerala CM, Governor meet Finance Minister Sitharaman

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Governor Rajendra Arlekar on Wednesday met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at Kerala House in New Delhi. Kerala leaders met the Union Finance Minister to discuss the issues of the state and present it to the Central government. On Tuesday, the governor had called the meeting of MPs from Kerala in Delhi where he urged the MPs to move forward together, beyond political differences, with the slogan of 'nation first' and 'Kerala also important'.

Vijayan said that it is heartening and exciting that the Kerala Governor is with team Kerala and this is a new beginning. "Let us move forward with this feeling," the CM said.



# Bihar Cong sees divide, resembling crises in Haryana, Delhi

AJIT MAINDOLA  
NEW DELHI

As the Bihar elections approach in October, the Congress party finds itself divided into two factions. One faction is led by newly appointed in-charge Krishna Alavaru, NSUI in-charge Kanhaiya Kumar, and Pappu Yadav, while the other is headed by state president Akhilesh Prasad Singh and veteran party leaders. This internal rift has created uncertainty within the party, with both sides competing for influence as they prepare for the upcoming polls. The split mirrors similar tensions seen in other states like Delhi and Haryana, raising questions about Congress's

ability to present a united front in the election.

The Congress party in Bihar is currently facing internal divisions, which have intensified as the party prepares for the upcoming yatra starting March 17. Next week, a crucial meeting will take place where significant decisions will be made, including the future of state president Akhilesh Prasad Singh, who has expressed dissatisfaction over being sidelined. Singh's frustration stems from his perceived neglect within the party, and there is speculation that Congress might replace him with another leader to strengthen its position in Bihar. This division within Congress

is not entirely new. For a long time, the party in Bihar has been in an alliance with the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), led by Lalu Yadav. Lalu has been a loyal supporter of Congress, standing by the party through both good and bad times, especially during Sonia Gandhi's leadership. However, the dynamics seem to be changing, especially with the rise of a new generation of leaders within Congress.

One of the most surprising moves came when Congress leader Rahul Gandhi replaced Mohan Prakash with Krishna Alavaru as the in-charge for Bihar. Mohan Prakash was once considered close to Rahul Gandhi, and his sudden removal has raised eyebrows.

# MP presents Rs 4,21,032 crore Budget, CM says it will open doors for growth in state

TDG NETWORK  
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has called the state budget for fiscal year 2025-26 a historic budget and said that it will open doors for development of the state.

Deputy CM and Finance Minister Jagdish Devda presented the state budget of Rs 4,21,032 crores in the state assembly on Wednesday. The budget amount of this year is around 15 percent more than that of the previous year budget which was Rs 3.65

lakh crores.

CM Yadav said, "Today, a Rs 4.21 lakh crore Budget was presented in the state assembly which is a historic budget till date and sufficient fund provisions have been made for all the sections in the budget. This budget will open doors for the development of the state."

Finance Minister Devda said that they took care of everyone in the budget and launched a 'Mera Budget' book, which also has a QR code, in an exercise of transparency.

"(This is a Budget for) all sec-



tions of society - youth, women, farmers. We have taken care of everyone. So, we came out with a 'Mera Budget' book this time, which also has a QR code. This

## CONG HOLDS 'KARZ KI POTLI' PROTEST

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Congress MLAs staged a protest against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led state government ahead of the budget presentation in front of Mahatma Gandhi statue situated on the premises of state assembly in Bhopal on Wednesday. Congress MLAs, including Leader of Opposition (LoP), Umang Singh were seen carrying black Potli (bundles tied up in cloth) on their heads and had big chains wrapped around their shoulders. The Congress leaders had also put up stickers 'Karz ki Potli' (Bundle of Debt) on the cloth bundles and said that Madhya Pradesh was stuck in the shackles of debt and had a huge debt burden on its head.

had never happened before...We wanted transparency, for people to know about the Budget," Devda said.

Former CM of Madhya Pradesh and Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan congratulated CM Yadav and Deputy CM Devda for

the state budget and said that the budget is for Viksit Madhya Pradesh and to fulfill Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat.

"I want to congratulate CM Mohan Yadav and Dy CM & finance minister Jagdish Devda. This budget is for Viksit Madhya Pradesh, to fulfil PM Modi's Viksit Bharat vision. This budget is giving a new direction to the development of the state and people's welfare," Chouhan told reporters.

On one hand, adequate provision has been made for infra-

structure and on the other hand, all efforts have been made to increase agriculture and investment in the budget. Be it agriculture and allied sectors, irrigation, rural development or urban development, historical provisions have been made in the budget, the union minister said.

"The budget has unprecedented provisions especially for women be it Ladli Behna Yojna, Ladli Lakshmi Yojna or other schemes for the welfare of women. The budget will be a milestone for farmers, youth and for the welfare of the poor," Chouhan added.



# ATISHI ALLEGES BIAS IN ASSEMBLY; SPEAKER CALLS CHARGES ‘POLITICAL’

Atishi claimed BJP MLAs were not marshalled out despite similar chanting of ‘Modi’s’ name.

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

A fresh political row has erupted as Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Delhi Assembly Atishi on Wednesday accused Speaker Vijender Gupta of “undermining democratic norms” by selectively targeting opposition MLAs during the Assembly session that concluded on March 3. In a letter addressed to Speaker Gupta on Wednesday, Atishi alleged that opposition legislators were unfairly marshalled out during the lieutenant governor’s address (on February 25) for chanting slogans, whereas BJP MLAs faced no action for similar sloganeering. “During the address of the L-G (V K Saxena), sloganeering was done by MLAs of the opposition and the ruling party. The opposition raised slogans of ‘Jai Bheem’, while the

AAP ACCUSATIONS



- Atishi criticized the ban on suspended MLAs from the Assembly premises as “unprecedented.”
- She alleged AAP MLAs got only 14% speaking time in CAG report discussions, while BJP got 86%.
- Speaker Gupta defended his actions, citing Assembly rules and the absence of suspended AAP MLAs.
- The row coincides with BJP preparing to present its first budget on March 25 after winning the February elections.

ruling party raised slogans of ‘Modi, Modi, Modi’. All opposition MLAs were

marshalled out of the Assembly, however, no ruling party MLA was mar-

shalled out or asked to leave despite repeated sloganeering by them,” Atishi

wrote. She also criticised the decision to bar suspended MLAs from the Assembly premises, calling it “unprecedented in independent India.” Additionally, she claimed that AAP MLAs were allotted only 14 per cent of the speaking time during discussions on the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report, while BJP MLAs were given 86 per cent. “The Speaker’s role is not to serve the ruling party’s interests but to safeguard the integrity of the legislative process,” she wrote, demanding “equal treatment for opposition MLAs, fair allocation of speaking time, and an end to blatantly partisan actions.” Terming Atishi’s allegations as “political”, Speaker Vijender Gupta, in his response, said that actions against the AAP MLAs were taken as per Assembly rules.

## Police busts cyber fraud gang, 3 held for phishing scam

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has dismantled an organized cyber fraud syndicate operating across India and arrested three key members of the gang for creating fake banking websites and phishing links to deceive unsuspecting victims, an official said on Wednesday. The accused used advanced digital techniques to steal sensitive banking information, leading to widespread financial fraud, he said. “The gang targeted people by impersonating representatives of a renowned bank,

offering lucrative credit card deals. Victims were sent phishing links that directed them to counterfeit banking websites designed to collect their personal and financial information,” Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Nidhin Valsan said. The officer further said that the fraudsters utilised Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) to hide their digital footprints and operated through fraudulent hosting platforms to run their scam. Police have linked over 500 complaints to this scam through a portal of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

## NDLS stampede: Govt says Rs 2.01cr paid to 33 affected

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

A total of Rs 2.01 crore was paid to 33 families whose members either died or got injured in the February 15 stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station, the government informed Lok Sabha on Wednesday. “In the instant case, an ex gratia of ₹10 lakh to the next of the kin of each deceased, ₹2.50 lakh each to the grievously injured and ₹1 lakh each to the simple injured has been paid,” Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in a written response to a question in Lok Sabha. The stampede happened at the New Delhi Railway



station in the evening of February 15 amid a huge rush of devotees headed to the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. In his response in Parliament, Vaishnaw did not give the number of the deceased and the injured, but after the incident officials had said the stampede killed 18 people and left 15 injured. Vaishnaw said a high-level inquiry has been ordered into the incident. On other questions by members on the stampede and amenities created for devotees during the Maha Kumbh Mela, the railway minister gave a detailed response.

## Centre, Delhi govt should decide over Sainik Farm regularisation: Delhi HC

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday said the Centre and the Delhi government should iron out the issue of regularisation of Sainik Farm colony in south Delhi and asked the authorities to sit together. Observing neither was there a demolition action nor legalisation of the colony, a bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela sought the assistance of the additional solicitor general and the Delhi government standing counsel. “Matter is oscillating between the Centre and the state. We can’t permit this



to go on and on. You have to take a policy decision. We are not saying what to do. Either regularise or don’t... (but) You are just dragging. Hume na karna pade, court kar de (let’s not do it, let court do it).. All of you sit together and find a solution, that is what we propose,” the bench said. It is hearing pleas, including one filed in 2015, on the

colony’s regularisation. “What we prima facie find is that the concern raised in the writ petitions needs to be addressed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development of government of India, government of NCT of Delhi and the MCD,” the court said. The court posted the hearing on April 16 and asked the respective lawyers to seek instructions on the matter. The court previously asked the Centre to take a decision on the issue of regularisation of the colony. The Centre’s counsel on Wednesday said the status quo, in relation to the colony, should continue as it was an “affluent” neighbourhood and neither repairs nor de-

molition could be permitted there. The counsel appearing for one of the petitioners urged the court to allow repairs in the meantime. The court, however, asked to observe the “larger picture” and said it could not permit a party to “keep on repairing without any sanction”. The houses, the bench said, allegedly came up in derogation of the law but since the colony had been around for so long, the authorities were expected to take a decision. A policy could be framed and the regulations could be amended or development charges could be collected from its residents, if there was a will, the court added.

## AAP protests accusing BJP of missing deadline on poll promises

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

AAP leader Rituraj Jha staged a protest at ITO in Delhi, saying the BJP has not fulfilled its election promises of providing Rs 2,500 to women and distributing free gas cylinders by Holi. On March 8, the BJP government in Delhi has approved the Mahila Samridhhi Yojana to provide a monthly assistance of Rs 2,500 each to eligible women and allocated Rs 5,100 crore for the implementation of the scheme. The AAP has alleged that the BJP has failed to meet its deadline for implementing the welfare schemes.



Holding a gas cylinder on his head, Jha, a former MLA from Kirari, said “Women in Delhi were promised Rs 2,500 on March 8 and a free cylinder for Holi. However, the BJP has not delivered on either promise.” Demonstrators carried a placard shaped like a gas

cylinder, as they raised slogans of “free ka cylinder kab ayege? Rs 2,500 kab ayege? (When will the free cylinder come? When will we get Rs 2,500?).” Speaking media, a protester Seema said, “We were promised Rs 2,500 on March 8, but it has already

*Holding a gas cylinder on his head, Jha, a former MLA from Kirari, said “Women in Delhi were promised Rs 2,500 on March 8 and a free cylinder for Holi.*

been four days. When will we get the money, or was it just a false promise?” “Holi is just a day away and we still haven’t received the free cylinder,” Sunder, another protester said.

## ‘Humidity in Delhi’s air could underestimate pollution by up to 20%’

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Fine particulate matter could be absorbing moisture from Delhi’s humid air during winters, which could result in an underestimation of the city’s PM1 pollution by up to 20 per cent, according to a new study. Researchers, including those from the University of Birmingham, UK, explained that the swelling of fine particulate matter by absorbing water from the humid air -- hygroscopic growth

-- reduces the efficiency of sampling devices, possibly leading to underestimation. The study, published in the journal npj Clean Air, “fills in the gap in the understanding of PM1 pollution in the most polluted megacity in the world.” New Delhi remained the world’s most polluted capital city, according to the 2024 World Air Quality report by IQAir, a Swiss organization. PM1 particles, sized under a micron in diameter, are especially dangerous as they

can penetrate lung tissue and enter the bloodstream, IQAir explains. Study author Ying Chen, from the University of Birmingham, said, “When carrying out air quality assessments, it is crucial to consider hygroscopic growth and the potential for significant underestimation of pollution levels in humid conditions.” The greatest underestimates in pollution levels occur during the rush hours of winter mornings in December-January, when



humidity is at its peak and pollution is most severe, the researchers said. “The underestimate can be up to 20 percent (or 50 mi-

crograms per cubic meter) of PM1 concentration on average during humid winter morning rush hours,” they wrote.

In contrast, pollution estimates during the monsoon season show negligible bias, as the swollen pollutant particles are washed out by heavy rainfall, the team added. Controlling emissions from biomass burning and residential sources -- which contain highly hygroscopic chlorine particles -- could effectively improve air quality and reduce this bias, thereby helping improve how air quality is understood, the study suggested. Chen said, “This study highlights the

true extent of air pollution in New Delhi and offers a framework for more accurate future assessments that better inform public health strategies and mitigation efforts.” The team also found that the second-highest underestimation of over 8.5 percent occurs during the rush hour of spring mornings (February to March), when an average relative humidity of 80 percent prevails. However, negligible bias, and therefore underestimation, was found during

the wettest months of the monsoon (July to September) and the driest months of summer (April to June). While frequent rains during the monsoon wash out hygroscopic particles, low levels of humidity during the summer limit the swelling of pollutant particles -- both resulting in negligible bias, the researchers explained. Chen also called for more on-site observations of PM2.5 and PM10 to gain a more rounded understanding of air pollution in New Delhi.



Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta meets veteran BJP leader L.K. Advani, in New Delhi. ANI

## Police detains 24 Bangladeshi nationals for illegal stay

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has detained 24 illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, including two minors, from south and southeast Delhi in a week-long operation, an official said on Wednesday.

Thirteen Bangladeshi nationals were detained from south Delhi, while 11 illegal immigrants, including two minors, were detained from southeast Delhi, a police officer said, adding that the operation was launched on March 6.

The crackdown came days after Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired a review meeting on the capital’s law and order situation and instructed senior Delhi Police officers to adopt a swift legal approach while dealing with illegal immigrants.

The detainees were found in possession of national ID cards issued by the Bangladesh government, Joint Commissioner of Police (Southern Range), S K Jain, said, adding that upon entering India, they allegedly used local contacts to



fraudulently obtain Indian identity documents. “The forged documents are now being forwarded to the respective authorities for cancellation,” Jain said. Action is also being taken against the local contacts who assisted them in obtaining Indian ID cards, the officer said, adding that the detainees are being processed for deportation through the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO). The immigrants crossed into India via the Benapole and Hakimpur borders in West Bengal, and then travelled to Delhi by train,

the officer said. “The authorities are intensifying efforts to trace and apprehend individuals and networks responsible for facilitating their illegal entry and stay in India,” Jain said. The women detainees worked as housemaids in the Bengali-dominated areas such as CR Park in south Delhi, while the men were largely engaged in the unorganised sector, the officer said. “Since they spoke Bengali fluently, they often introduced themselves as migrants from West Bengal to avoid suspicion,” Jain said.



## SHAH TO VISIT ASSAM, MIZORAM ON MARCH 14-16

Shah will address the 57th annual conference of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) in Kokrajhar.

TDG NETWORK  
GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will embark on a three-day visit to Assam and Mizoram beginning March 14 during which he will address the annual conference of the All Bodo Students' Union in Kokrajhar and grace a function for shifting of Assam Rifles establishments from Aizawl to Zokhawsang.

Shah will also review

## SHAH'S NORTHEAST VISIT

- Shah will attend a function in Mizoram for shifting Assam Rifles establishments from Aizawl to Zokhawsang.
- On March 15, Shah will visit the Lachit Borphukan Police Academy in Assam's Golaghat district, which trains police personnel.
- On March 16, Shah will review the implementation of three new criminal laws in Northeastern states in Guwahati.
- Shah has been reviewing the implementation of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam



the implementation of the three new criminal laws in the Northeastern states in Guwahati on March 16 before returning to Delhi, officials said. The home minister will arrive at Dergaon in Assam's Golaghat district on the night of March 14 and stay at the Lachit Borphukan Police Academy.

On March 15, he will attend a function at the police academy, which trains police personnel of different ranks of Assam

and a few other Northeastern states.

Then he will travel to Mizoram to attend a function for shifting of Assam Rifles establishments from Aizawl to Zokhawsang, around 15 km from the state capital, an official said.

He will return to Guwahati in the evening after attending the Aizawl function.

The Mizoram government and Assam Rifles had signed a formal agreement on October

23 last year in New Delhi for relocating the paramilitary force's establishments from the heart of Aizawl to the designated battalion complex at Zokhawsang.

On March 16, Shah will travel to Assam's Kokrajhar where he will attend the 57th annual conference of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU).

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Bodoland Territorial Region chief executive member Pramod Boro,

among others, will attend the conference.

ABSU president Dipen Boro said the conference at Dotma in Kokrajhar district will bring together policymakers, educators, and community leaders for discussions on education and youth development.

Later in the day, in Guwahati, the home minister will review the implementation of the three new criminal laws in the Northeastern states before returning to Delhi.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam replaced the colonial era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, respectively.

The new laws came into effect from July 1 last year.

Shah has so far reviewed the implementation of the three laws in over a dozen states and Union territories and given necessary directions in this regard.

## 549 Indians rescued from cybercrime centres on Myanmar-Thailand border

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

India has brought back 549 of its citizens in two military aircraft after securing their release from cybercrime centres located along the Myanmar-Thailand border, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The Indians were victims of fake job offers, officials said.

In a post on X, MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the government of India arranged for the safe repatriation of 266 Indians on Tuesday on-board an Indian Air Force aircraft.

On Monday, 283 Indians were similarly repatriated, he said.

In a post on X, MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the government of India arranged for the safe repatriation of 266 Indians on Tuesday on-board an Indian Air Force aircraft.

On Monday, 283 Indians were similarly repatriated, he said.

The Indian nationals, mostly from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh



were lured with fake job offers to either Thailand or Myanmar. They were then taken to cybercrime centres in Myanmar's Myawaddy region, he said.

The Indian embassies in Myanmar and Thailand worked with the governments of the two countries for the release and repatriation of the Indians, he added. The MEA said on Monday that the government has been making sustained efforts for the release of Indians lured to various Southeast Asian countries, including Myanmar, with fake job offers.

"These persons were subsequently made to indulge

in cybercrime and engage in other fraudulent activities in scam centres operating in regions along the Myanmar-Thailand border," it said in a statement.

"The government of India wishes to reiterate its caution, circulated earlier from time to time through advisories and social media posts, about such rackets," it added.

"Indian nationals are once again advised to verify credentials of foreign employers through Missions abroad and check the antecedents of recruiting agents and companies before taking up a job offer," the ministry said.

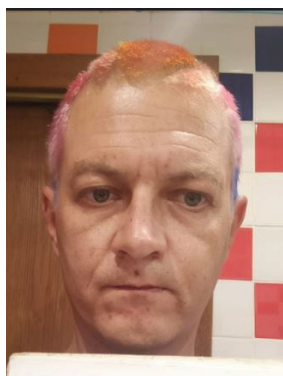
## CBI, Kerala Police arrest crypto exchange founder, wanted in US

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

In a major action, the joint team CBI and Kerala Police have arrested Lithuanian national Aleksej Besciokov, who was wanted by the United States. He was wanted in the US for setting up cryptocurrency exchange Garantex allegedly to launder the proceeds of criminal activities, including ransomware, officials said Wednesday.

The officials said that he was arrested when he was allegedly plotting to escape from the country. As per the US Secret Service documents, since 2019, Besciokov allegedly "controlled and operated" Garantex, which facilitated money laundering to the tune of at least \$96 billion in cryptocurrency transactions by transnational criminal organisations (including terrorist organisations) and violated sanctions.

"Garantex received hundreds of millions in criminal proceeds and was used to facilitate various crimes, including hacking, ransomware, terrorism, and drug trafficking, often with substantial impact to US vic-



tims," it said.

The US document said Besciokov was Garantex's primary technical administrator and was responsible for obtaining and maintaining the critical infrastructure of the platform as well as reviewing and approving transactions.

The indictment documents cited by the Secret Service said Besciokov is charged with one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

He is also charged with one count of conspiracy to violate the International Economic Emergency Powers Act—which also carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in person—and with conspiracy to operate an unlicensed money-trans-

mitting business, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

In a statement, the CBI spokesperson said, "On a request submitted by the USA, the Ministry of External Affairs, acting under the Extradition Act, 1962, got issued a provisional arrest warrant on March 10, 2025 against the subject from ACJM Patiala House Court in Delhi. The IPCU, CBI coordinated with Kerala Police for the arrest of fugitive criminal Aleksej Besciokov. The subject would be produced before the Patiala House Court by the Kerala Police."

The statement further read that he is wanted for facing trial before the United States District Court for the Eastern District Court of Virginia. "On March 6, the US Secret Service executed a seizure order authorised by a judge in the Eastern District of Virginia against three website domain names used to support Garantex's operations to prevent these sites from being used for money laundering and additional crimes. The US authorities also froze over USD 26 million as part of the action.

## No intel shared by Centre on ban on Mirwaiz's AAC: Omar

TDG NETWORK  
GULMARG

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said the Centre has not shared any intelligence with his government that could have warranted the ban on Mirwaiz Umar Farooq's Awami Action Committee (AAC), and asserted he was not in favour of such decisions.

The Centre had on Tuesday banned the AAC, headed by Kashmir's influential cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, and Shia leader Masroor Abbas Ansari-led IM for five years for their alleged anti-national activities, supporting terrorism and fuelling secessionist activities.

"I do not know the basis of the ban. This is not under the purview of the elected government (in J-K) and the intelligence on the basis of which it has taken place has not been shared with us," Abdullah told reporters here after the culmination of the fifth edition of the Khelo India Winter Games.

However, Abdullah said, "On principle, we have never been in favour of such decisions".



"Since the Mirwaiz was released from house arrest, I have not seen any objectionable statement from him, but we do not have any information about the reasons behind the ban. (But, we will see what to do (about it) in the future," he added.

PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday questioned the "silence" of the NC government over the decision, saying the people had expectations from the elected government that it would safeguard them, "but quite the opposite is happening".

"Earlier, the BJP banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI), it was done under the LG rule and we could not do anything about it, but we raised our voices. Today, when there is a people's government, more atrocities are happening and

the ruling party is silent and not doing anything.

"Such actions are wrong and abnormal, but because of the silence of the ruling party, these seem to be normal," she said.

To a question whether the ban was because of the Mirwaiz's criticism of the recently held fashion show at the resort, Chief Minister Abdullah said, "You cannot say that".

The fashion show in the ski resort of Gulmarg during the fasting month of Ramadan evoked widespread criticism, with Mirwaiz Umar Farooq saying obscenity in the name of tourism promotion will not be tolerated.

Asked about the BJP's charge that the hotel where the fashion show took place belongs to one of his relatives, the J-K chief minister

said, "Yes, the hotel belongs to one of my relatives, and I am not denying that".

"There are two hotels in Gulmarg that belong to my relatives — Nedous and the Highland Park. But, I will not say anything more than what I have said in the assembly," he said.

Asked whether any action will take place, the CM said, "If something has been done against the law, then action will take place." Referring to the Khelo India Games, Abdullah lamented that J-K could not find a place in the top three spots in the medal tally.

"I congratulate the Army, HP and Ladakh, but I regret also that the skiing started in this country from Gulmarg, but we are not in the first three positions. We will have to make arrangements for infrastructure and coaches for our athletes.

"I hope that this year, we will upgrade the infrastructure for skiing, so that when the sixth Khelo India Games take place next year, J-K is in the first three spots," he said.

He also welcomed Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya's announcement about the creation of a centre of excellence for winter sports in Gulmarg.

## Vice President Dhankhar discharged from AIIMS

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar has been discharged from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, following cardiac-related treatment.

VP Dhankhar was admitted to the cardiac Department at AIIMS on March 9. In a statement, AIIMS said, "After receiving necessary care by the medical team at AIIMS, he made satisfactory recovery and was discharged on March 12. He has been advised to take adequate rest for the next few days."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday visited the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in the national capital and enquired about the health of Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar.

In a post on X, PM Modi said, "Went to AIIMS and enquired about the health of Vice President Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar Ji. I pray for his good health and speedy recovery. @VPIndia"

## Assam CM meets EU Ambassador to discuss key collaborations

TIKAM SHARMA  
NEW DELHI

Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma met with the European Union Ambassador to India, Hervé Delphin, at the latter's official residence, on Wednesday. During their interaction, Dr. Sarma conveyed his sincere gratitude to Ambassador Delphin and, through him, to the Heads of Mission of EU member countries for their invaluable support in the successful organization of the recently concluded Advantage Assam Summit 2.0 in Guwahati. During this meet Chief Minister welcomed the initiatives and assured EU Ambassador that the Assam Government would extend its full cooperation in facilitating



the office's establishment, working in coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

The discussion between

the Chief Minister and the EU Ambassador was both insightful and productive, focusing on potential collaborations in various key sectors such as clean energy, semiconductors, higher education, skill development, and the aromatics and fragrances industry. Ambassador Delphin apprised Dr. Sarma that the European Union is currently considering the establishment of an EU Programme Management Office in Guwahati. In response, the Chief Minister warmly welcomed this initiative and assured that the Assam Government would extend its full cooperation in facilitating the office's establishment, working in coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

Later, Chief Minister Dr.

Sarma took to the micro-blogging platform X (formerly Twitter) to express his appreciation. In his post, he wrote, "Today in New Delhi, I extended my heartfelt gratitude to EU AmbIndia H.E. Hervé Delphin and, through him, to the other Heads of Mission of EU member nations for their valuable support at Advantage Assam 2.0. Had an engaging discussion on potential collaborations in clean energy, semiconductors, higher education, skill development, and the aromatics and fragrances sector. Encouraged to learn that the EU is exploring the idea of setting up a Programme Management Office in Guwahati. Assam will provide complete support to this initiative under the guidance of the MEA, GoI.

## COLOUR OF HAPPINESS



People smear colours on each other as they celebrate Holi, in Kullu. ANI



# CPI INFLATION FOR FEB AT SEVEN-MONTH LOW

All India Consumer Food Price Index recorded inflation rate of 3.75% in February

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

India's inflation outlook showed a significant improvement in February 2025, as the year-on-year Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate stood at 3.61 per cent, marking a decline of 65 basis points from the previous month.

This marks the lowest inflation level since July 2024, signaling a respite for consumers amid the challenging economic climate.


The February inflation data, released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, reflects a substantial easing of price pressures, particularly in the food sector.

The All India Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) recorded a year-on-year inflation rate of 3.75 per cent in February 2025, which also represents a sharp decline of 222 basis points compared to January 2025. This marks the lowest food inflation since May 2023.

As per the CPI data, the inflationary trend also showed varying impacts in rural and urban sectors. In rural areas, both headline

### QUICK VIEW

- Inflation Drops: CPI inflation fell to 3.61% in February, lowest since July 2024.
- Food Relief: Food inflation dropped to 3.75%, lowest since May 2023.
- Rural vs Urban: Rural inflation fell to 3.79%; urban to 3.32%.
- Sector Trends: Housing, health, and transport costs rose slightly; food prices fell.



*Urban headline inflation decreased from 3.87 per cent in January to 3.32 per cent in February.*

and food inflation saw a marked decrease.

The rural CPI inflation dropped from 4.59 per cent in January to 3.79 per cent in February, while food inflation in rural areas plummeted from 6.31 per cent to 4.06 per cent over the same period.

In urban areas, the decline in inflation was also noteworthy, with urban headline inflation decreasing from 3.87 per cent

in January to 3.32 per cent in February. Food inflation in urban areas saw an even steeper drop, from 5.53 per cent in January to 3.20 per cent in February, contributing to the overall slowdown in inflation.

Sector-specific inflation trends revealed mixed results for February. As per the February data, the housing inflation saw a slight uptick to 2.91 per cent in February from 2.82 per cent in

January.

Fuel and light inflation remained negative, at -1.33 per cent, though it showed a slight improvement from -1.49 per cent in January.

Education inflation remained stable at 3.83 per cent, while health inflation increased marginally to 4.12 per cent from 3.97 per cent in January. Transport and communication inflation, on the other hand, saw a modest rise to 2.87 per cent from 2.76 per cent.

The sharp decline in inflation, particularly in food categories, was largely attributed to falling prices in key items like vegetables,

## WPI INFLATION DROPS TO 2%

India's Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation is expected to drop to 2% in February 2025 from 2.3% in January, driven by lower oil prices and a seasonal decline in food prices, according to Union Bank of India. Vegetable prices fell 12% month-on-month, while edible oil prices increased slightly. Fuel prices remained negative due to weak global demand under U.S. President Trump's second term. Core WPI, excluding food and fuel, also eased due to lower global energy prices, though rising metal costs limited the decline. WPI inflation is expected to stay low amid softening global prices, but trade wars and supply chain issues could affect future trends.

egg, meat & fish, pulses, and milk products. These price corrections have provided much-needed relief to households grappling with the high cost of living in recent months.

## IIP records 5% growth in January

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

India's Index of Industrial Production (IIP), a measure of industrial output, recorded a growth of 5.0 per cent compared to the same month last year, as per the quick estimates released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Wednesday.

This growth marks a sharp acceleration from the 3.2 per cent growth reported in December 2024, as per the quick estimates released by the ministry's data.

The data reveals positive performance across key sectors of the economy, with growth seen in Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity. The IIP for January 2025 stands at 161.3, up from 153.6 in January 2024, reflecting a broad-based recovery in industrial activity.

The Mining sector recorded a growth of 4.4 per cent in January 2025, continuing its positive momentum.

Manufacturing saw an impressive growth of 5.5 per cent in January 2025, driven by strong performance in several key industry groups.

The Electricity sector grew at a more modest pace of 2.4 per cent, still contributing positively to the overall industrial growth.



*Basic metal manufacturing which grew by 6.3 per cent, with significant contributions from flat products of alloy steel, pipes and tubes of steel and others metals.*

Within the manufacturing sector, 19 out of 23 industry groups at the NIC-2 digit level showed positive growth in January 2025. Notable contributors to the growth include basic metal manufacturing which grew by 6.3 per cent, with significant contributions from flat products of alloy steel, pipes and tubes of steel and others metals.

Manufacture of Coke and Refined Petroleum Products recorded an 8.5 per cent growth, largely driven by items like Diesel, Petrol/Motor Spirit, and Liquefied

Petroleum Gas (LPG). Manufacture of Electrical Equipment segment showed a substantial growth of 21.7 per cent, with key contributors such as Transformers (Small), end-facing connector for optical fibers and cables, and Electric heaters. As per the data, the primary drivers of industrial growth in January 2025 were Primary Goods, Infrastructure/Construction Goods, and Intermediate Goods, all of which saw substantial growth rates.

## Sunil Mittal welcomes collaboration of telecom and satellite players

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Bharti Enterprises Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal has welcomed the collaboration between telecom and satellite companies, calling it a major step towards global connectivity.

His statement comes after Airtel and Reliance Jio partnered with Elon Musk's SpaceX to bring Starlink to India.

Mittal emphasized that partnerships between telecom and satellite companies will allow customers to stay connected even in the most remote parts of the world, including oceans and skies.

He referred to his speech at the recently concluded



Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2025 in Barcelona, where he urged telecom and satellite companies to work together to ensure universal coverage.

"In my opening remark at the recently concluded Mobile World Congress 2025 in Barcelona, I made a call to both the telecom and satellite players to work together, combine their strengths, and complete the

mission of connecting the unconnected, covering the oceans and the skies as well as difficult-to-reach areas. I am glad that this is being followed through with active announcements of partnerships between satellite companies and telecom operators," Mittal said.

He also recalled a similar appeal he made at Mobile World Congress 2017 at Barcelona Spain when he urged telecom operators to lower international roaming charges. Back then, high roaming rates forced customers to rely on local SIM cards or Wi-Fi hotspots when travelling abroad.

Mittal said the industry took action, and roaming charges dropped significant-

ly, making international mobile usage more affordable.

Mittal believes that the telecom sector would embrace satellite technology just as it has adopted advancements like 4G, 5G, and the upcoming 6G.

"For the telecom industry, the addition of satellite technology should be no different from bringing new technologies to its customers. Just like 4G, 5G, and 6G in the future, we will now have one more technology in our mix, i.e. SAT-G," Mittal said.

He also shared that with this advancement, customers will soon be able to use their mobile phones anywhere in the world, even in remote areas, across oceans, and while flying in the sky.

## 5G services now available in 773 districts: Centre

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Fifth Generation or 5G services have been rolled out in all States/ UTs across the country and are currently available in 773 out of 776 districts, including Lakshadweep, Minister of State for Communications and Rural Development Dr Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar informed the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

In reply to a question in the lower house, MoS informed that as of February 28 in the current year, 4.69 lakhs 5G Base Transceiver Stations (BTSs) had been installed by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) across the country.

The reply added that Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) have expanded 5G



services across the country and have gone beyond the minimum rollout obligations prescribed in the Notice Inviting Application (NIA) for spectrum auction. He further added that the expansion of mobile services beyond these obligations depends on the techno-commercial consideration of the TSPs.

Separately, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry

*In reply to a question in the lower house, MoS informed that as of February 28 in the current year, 4.69 lakhs 5G Base Transceiver Stations (BTSs) had been installed by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) across the country.*

Piyush Goyal said in February that the entire country would be working only on 5G by the end of the calendar year 2026. We have already started developing our indigenous technology for 6G for telecom connectivity, he added.

The minister underlined India's impressive infrastructure progress, stating that in the last decade, India has doubled its port capacity and expanded its airport

network from 74 to over 150, with plans to increase this figure to 225 airports within the next five to six years.

The fifth generation of cellular wireless technology is known as 5G. Compared to 4G, it is intended to be quicker, more dependable, and more adaptable. 5G is anticipated to enable emerging technologies like self-driving cars and enhance connections in both urban and rural areas.

## Stock markets end flat amid volatile session

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Indian stock markets continue to follow the trends of previous session on Wednesday and ended flat in the volatile session, as investor's sentiment impacted by the concerns such as overvaluation, threats of tariff war, and currency depreciation.

At the end of today's trading session in the Indian markets, the BSE Sensex stood at 74,029.76, down 72.56 points or 0.10 per cent and the Nifty at National Stock Exchange was down 27.40 points or 0.12 per cent at 22,470.50.

At NSE, the gainers were IndusInd Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Motors, ITC, Bajaj Finance while the stocks of Infosys, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Nestle, TCS remained the top losers. At BSE, both BSE Midcap and smallcap indices down around 0.5 per cent each.

Sectorally at NSE, auto, bank, pharma saw an up of around 0.5 per cent each. On the other hand metal, IT, realty, telecom, PSU Bank, media were down 0.5-3 per cent.

The domestic benchmark index, Nifty, opened on a positive note on Wednesday, but following initial volatil-

ity, the index experienced selling pressure and settled on a negative one at 22,471.

The volatility index, India VIX, cooled off by 2.70 per cent to 13.69, indicating a drop in market volatility.

The Bank Nifty index opened on a positive note, maintained buying interest throughout the day, and settled higher at 48,057.

"The initial selloff was driven by concerns over global trade policies following President Trump's warning about potentially doubling tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum, which weighed on investor sentiment," said Sundar Kewat,

Technical and Derivatives Analyst, Ashika Institutional Equity.

Observing the markets, Bajaj Broking Research team in a note added, "Buying interest emerged near yesterday's low, allowing the index to recover most of the losses and close marginally lower by 0.12 per cent at 22,470.50. The broader market showed a corrective bias, with the Nifty midcap and small-cap indices ending the session down by 0.6 per cent and 0.3 per cent, respectively. Key economic indicators, including CPI data for the US and India, along with India's IIP data, are set

to be released today after the market closes."

"Analysis suggests that the ongoing correction is not purely price-based but due to concerns such as overvaluation, GDP contraction, trade deficits, threats of tariff war, and currency depreciation. Investors who have missed the previous opportunity should focus on accumulating value stocks, while existing investors should hedge their portfolios and remain invested as the markets will eventually recover," said VLA Ambala, Co-Founder of Stock Market Today observing the stock markets.

## Trade deficit likely narrowed to \$21.5 billion in Feb: Report

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

India's trade deficit likely narrowed to \$21.5 billion in February, down from \$23 billion in January, according to a report by Union Bank of India.

However, the report also noted that the geopolitical risks, especially concerns over tariffs, will continue to influence trade dynamics.

It said "Merchandise trade deficit likely narrowed in Feb'25 to \$21.5 bln vis-a-vis \$23.0 bln a month ago".

The report suggested that the reduction in the merchandise trade deficit was mainly driven by a moderation in the Non-Oil-Non-Gold (NONG) segment, supported by seasonal factors during the quarter.

Despite this improvement, the report added that the extent of recovery in trade balance may be limited due to growing concerns over new trade restrictions and tariff increases following the change in the U.S. administration.

The oil trade deficit is also expected to have narrowed in

February, supported by a fall in global Brent crude oil prices. Brent crude dropped to \$74.95 per barrel in February from \$78.35 per barrel in January.

A notable trend was the decline in oil imports from Russia, which fell 14.5 per cent month-on-month to 1.43 million bpd, the lowest level since January 2023. As a result, Russia's share in India's total oil imports dropped to around 30 per cent in February, a sharp decline from the 2024 average of approximately 38 per cent.

## First-ever Exploration Licence auction today

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Mines is set to launch the nation's first-ever auction of Exploration Licences (ELs) in Goa on March 13, the Ministry of Mines said on Wednesday.

The ministry said that the move is a major reform to unlock India's untapped critical and deep-seated mineral resources.

Exploration licenses pertain to licences granted

for undertaking reconnaissance and prospecting operations for critical and deep-seated minerals. These licenses allow private sector players in finding and evaluating mineral deposits. As per the Ministry's release, the programme will also feature a Roadshow on the 5th Tranche of Critical Mineral Blocks and the launch of AI Hackathon 2025, a Mineral Exploration Hackathon focused on "Mineral Targeting using AI".

The event will be graced by Union Minister for Coal and Mines, G Kishan Reddy, and Chief Minister of Goa, Dr Pramod Sawant.

With the enactment of the MMDR Amendment Act, 2023, Exploration Licences were introduced to allow private participation in reconnaissance and prospecting for 29 critical and deep-seated minerals, including lithium, copper, cobalt, gold, silver, REEs, and PGEs, listed in the new Seventh Schedule of

the Act.

To facilitate smooth implementation, the Central Government exercised its powers under Section 20A of the MMDR Act, issuing an order on 21.10.2024 to conduct the EL auction process.

In the first phase, the Ministry will auction 13 Exploration Blocks for minerals like REE, Zinc, Diamond, Copper, and PGE, through a transparent online bidding process. Tender documents for

Tranche I will be available on the MSTC auction platform from March 20, 2025.

The ministry said that the step is expected to accelerate exploration, increase private sector participation, and bolster India's mineral security and self-reliance in critical minerals.

The Ministry of Mines remains committed to advancing exploration, innovation, and sustainable development in the mining sector.



# RECLAIMING IDENTITY IN MRS.: POWER-PACKED CINEMATIC DEPICTION OF PATRIARCHAL FRAME

## OPINION

DR. SHALINI YADAV



देश, काल, समाज, अथवा परिवार रहते हैं सब एक तरह मुनतज़िर चाहत में सत्त्री के साथ की हर कदम पर बंधकर अपने स्वार्थ हेतु एक बंधन में। कृत्रिम है सब समाज, व्यक्ति विशेष और परिवार के बंधन सत्त्री स्वयं बंधी है चाहे तो पल में उजागर कर सकती है यथार्थ धराशायी कर अभिशप्त धारणाओं को अपने लिए बनाते हुए एक सवतन्त्र “सुपेस”.. “स्पेस बनाती स्त्री” (The Woman Creates Space), this evocative phrase speaks to the resilience of the Indian woman, who, despite being bound by the shackles of societal expectations, familial obligations, and personal desires, yearns to carve out her own space. Women in India have gradually changed roles and responsibilities in many ways breaking the patriarchal norms, like reaching to Moon or Mountain, running small scale to large scale businesses, being boss ladies at various fronts, yet in many families, communities and areas, there conditions are not much improved, their passions remain dormant, their desires unfulfilled, their ideas unacknowledged, and their voices silenced. The way a lotus blooms in the shadows, their beauty and strength remain unseen, their potential unre-

sode, *namak kum-jyada*, is *ghar ghar ki kahani* with women who laboriously cook for the whole family standing most of the time of the day in the kitchen. Such a thankless job! Even preparation of *shikanji* (lemonade) becomes a tool for humiliation.

Richa's journey is a depiction of systemic suppression of women in India. The patriarchal forces that surround her constantly thwart her aspirations, desires, and needs. The film's portrayal of menstruation as a source of shame and impurity is a scathing critique of the regressive attitudes that perpetuate women's oppression. The way other days of month, you are a full time laborer, but in these five days, men can manage what they were not able to manage other days. What a paradox!

Yet, 'Mrs.' is not just a film about oppression; it is also a powerful exploration of resistance and liberation. Richa's ultimate act of defiance, as she throws murky kitchen sink water on her husband and father-in-law, is a symbol of her refusal to be silenced, marginalized, and oppressed. Her departure from the family is a triumphant assertion of her independence, dignity, and self-worth.

Today, if she wishes to stand at the crossroads, asking for a breath of fresh air, while her husband abandoned her, building fortresses of male ego upon the foundations of her existence, asking her to delete videos of her dance which were more than passion for her, her life, her identity. In addition, the leakage of tap adds to the tone in the movie that any time any *dhamaaka* can happen.

At the closure, where Richa is shown as an independent dance teacher, using her art to express the pain and trauma she endured, represents the transformative power of resistance. As she dances, she reclaims



her body, her voice, and her story. Her saga becomes the saga of all those women who have been silenced, marginalized, and oppressed by the patriarchal system with a ray of hope.

Sanya Malhotra delivers a captivating performance that anchors the story. Her character is of a strong yet relatable woman character, who challenges of living in a patriarchal society that often undermines her aspirations and independence. The narrative effectively highlights how societal pressures dictate choices related to marriage, career, and personal fulfillment.

The cinematography and direction complement the storytelling, emphasizing the protagonist's internal conflicts and the external pressures she faces. The supporting cast further enriches the narrative, presenting a spectrum of perspectives on gender roles, which adds depth to the conversation about patriarchy in contemporary India.

'Mrs.' is more than just a film; it is a call to action, encouraging viewers to reflect on the progress made in women's rights while acknowledging the long journey ahead. I thought to write about this as we have been celebrating International Women Day before and after the day got over, for whole week, living in a

trance, yet grass level work needs to be done at various levels in Indian system changing the mentality of folks.

The theme successfully resonates with audience members from various backgrounds, invoking critical discussions about gender equality and the evolving role of women in Indian society, as the family was of doctors, means well read scholars still suppressing women voices at home treating the as serving machines. The way Richa's mother-in-law makes prior arrangements of each and everything for her father-in-law avoiding her own me time and health issues working till midnight. On the other hand, her husband wants wife to be seductive in bed, but is not able to see how she works like a donkey whole day.

In her novel *When I Hit You*, Meena Kandasamy says: "To stay silent is to censor all conversation. To stay silent is to erase individuality. To stay silent is an act of self-flagellation..." therefore Richa also doesn't stay silent, reclaims her identity within the patriarchal framework.

This narrative seems not just of one Indian woman but behind this story, the stories lie of thousands and lakhs of Indian women who suffer in their mar-

riages. The National Family Health Survey states that their partners at some point have physically, sexually or emotionally abused more than 30 percent of women.

Behind the silence of a woman, lies hidden boundless ocean. Can you comprehend the anguish of her failed endeavors? Can you fathom the depths of her inner world? With hands clasped in trust, she aspired to soar to great heights, only to be deceived by the false promises of love and marriage. For centuries, womanhood has been shackled to the threshold of societal expectations.

Women also need to understand that all societal, personal, and familial bonds are artificial; women themselves are bound, but they have the power to break free in an instant, shattering the illusions of societal expectations and creating their own independent space

Overall, 'Mrs.' is a thought-provoking film that combines strong performances of veteran actors with a compelling narrative, making it a must-watch for those interested in social issues and the fight against patriarchy, moreover, an excellent reflection of the struggles and triumphs of Indian women, how they forge their own paths and create their own spaces. Hopefully this kind of drama will become the new catchphrase and transforming social structures and prevailed inequalities settling the minds of people around us, rather than few reviews given by reviewers, published here and there in some good newspapers on online news portals or magazines.

Canadian poet Rupri Kaur says- 'What is the greatest lesson a woman should learn / that since day one / she's already had everything she needs / within herself / it's the world that convinced her she did / not..

*Dr. Shalini Yadav is a professor, writer and columnist from Jaipur, Rajasthan.*

## PERSPECTIVE EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

# BALUCH INSURGENTS DEAL RAWALPINDI GHQ A BODY BLOW

Pakistan is witnessing an unprecedented escalation in insurgent activities, with the hijacking of the train Jaffer Express carrying 400 passengers—many of them security personnel—on Tuesday, around 160 kilometers from Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province. At the time of writing, around 155 hostages have been rescued and 27 Baluch insurgents killed, according to the Pakistani security forces. Apparently, the Baluch militants have killed 10 people until now. The Pakistanis are claiming that the Baluch hijackers are using hostages—most of whom are believed to be security personnel—as human shields. But the problem is, whatever information is coming is a Pakistani version of events, and their military establishment is among the biggest disseminators of fake information, so a cloud of disinformation hangs over the incident. But what is certain is that the Pakistan military has been caught napping and the hijacking is one of the biggest embarrassments for them, for it signifies a massive security breach and will have a negative impact on morale. But then they brought it upon themselves. The hijacking incident is a consequence of the sins



committed by Pakistan's military for decades. It is an outcry against the marginalisation of the Baluch people by Pakistan's rulers. It is a protest against oppression, torture, including the mass murder of the defenceless people of Balochistan by the Pakistan military. Balochistan was not a part of Pakistan, but was merged with Pakistan in 1948. The first flames of insurgency were lit soon after, and have continued to burn ever since, in spite of Pakistan blasting to death a Baluch giant like Akbar Bugti. Balochistan wants independence and its thirst for freedom has only intensified over the years, but it has also led to the proportionate escalation of Pakistani military oppression. One of the main issues fuelling Baloch nationalism is the lack of control over their own resources.

The situation has got aggravated with the advent of the Chinese and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. In trying to secure the CPEC and Gwadar port, China has been cutting off access to the Baluch to their own land. No wonder the situation has been deteriorating, with the Chinese now at the crosshairs of the Baluch insurgents. It is in this context that the latest hijacking has to be seen, for it puts a huge a question mark on the viability, in fact survival of the CPEC. Chinese nationals have already been facing Baluch militant attacks in this region, and with this escalation it remains to be seen how the Chinese—who have already poured in \$65 billion into this project—will be able to recover their investment. But then China's biggest mistake was banking on Pakistan, and now it will pay a heavy price for it.

As for Pakistan, it is a terror state. Terrorism is Pakistan's policy, which had to backfire sooner or later, and that's what's happening. Even then Pakistan seems not to have learnt its lesson. Elbowed out of Afghanistan by the Taliban, which is now Rawalpindi GHQ's sworn enemy, the latter is trying to paint Afghanistan as the hot bed of terror to sway international opinion against the Taliban. So it should not come as a surprise that the official Pakistani version to explain this hijacking is that it has been facilitated by Afghanistan—in other words, by the Taliban rulers there, with whom Pakistan's relations have hit the nadir, and have resulted in even armed confrontation. Importantly, as the Taliban build bridges with India, Pakistan is trying hard to throw a spanner in the works. All this would not have happened if Pakistan had tried to be a normal country, without oppressing its ethnic minorities or becoming a terror state itself. The Baloch, the Sindhis, the Pashtuns are all up in arms against Rawalpindi GHQ, thus leaving Pakistan teetering at the brink. At this rate, it's the survival of Pakistan that will be at stake.

JOYEETA BASU

# The creative impulse: A clinical view

## OPINION

DR. JERNAIL SINGH ANAND



Epic poets often pray to the Muse and declare their lofty purpose to compose a poem, on a serious issue relating to human life and destiny. The Muse, in turn, blesses the poet with extraordinary powers to write on that subject. As an epic poet myself, I have often prayed to the Muse and sought inspiration, and I can say with certainty that ideas and words keep flowing like a river and one can write things which he has not even contemplated. If the Muse pleaseth, she connects the poet to that

unlimited sources of perception, and creative sources of divinity. It is from this superior connection that sublime poetry issues forth. Let us think of 'Paradise Lost' and 'The Divine Comedy'. Can such works flow from the pen of a poet if he is not blessed by the Muse? A poet used to be called a prophet, because the superior forces blessed him with a sublime vision. Poets who write for marketing and success are shorn of this loftiness and ideality and whatever they write, is fated to have contemporaneity, and yet lack eternal value and the timeless quality which is cardinal virtue of a classic.

### THE DIVINE PUSH

It is important to watch the movement of a river. The water is flowing. It is not that the ocean is attracting the waters to keep flowing.

The source of a river's flow is in the push of the waters at the source of the river. If that push is not available, the water will not be required to flow. At first, it will turn into a lake, and then, start stinking. *Inspiration* for a poet is like that push in the source which makes the river flow. So long as the push is there, the river will continue flowing. When there is no inspiration, the river flows for some time, but then, comes to a halt. The loss of push also results in drying up of the river.

### INSPIRED WRITING VS ROUTINE WRITING

This is what happens to poetry or writing which is not driven by superior forces. Writing is something which does not come to everyone. In most of the cases, writing is a mechanical affair. Writing on particular topics, or writing research papers, has nothing to do with inspiration. This is mechanical processing of words and ideas. Even prose lacks the wheels on which poetry moves. Novels are propelled by considerations of the market, with exceptions like Leo Tolstoy and Victor Hugo, who were not bothered by

the idea of success. There were times when writers were valued like prophets and they wrote stories and novels whose purpose was less to entertain and more to instruct. We are now passing through times when literature is considered a handmaiden of the market, and the avowed objective of most of the writing is to entertain, or, if it is to instruct, it is strictly related to the considerations of successful living.

### THE HIGHER PURPOSE

This is the age of 'best sellers' and writing which caters to the mass taste, which believes in surface living, and lacks depth, is considered the best. In YouTube, it is the likes that matter. And the worst songs which cater to baser tastes of mankind, bust the popularity charts. Strange but not shocking because, as we are moving into modern times, the tastes of the people are changing. We accept things which give us momentary pleasure. We like literature which we can read and throw in the fast moving metros. Carrying books is nobody's passion today. Reading them is much the

less. WhatsApp has opened many universities and Google is there with readymade sources of knowledge. To cap it all, we have Meta AI. What is the need for serious reading of books? Poets, therefore, write books, and go to the bookshops, and get themselves photographed with their own books. This is the journey of a book for which the poet pays to the booksellers.

A writer of prose, fiction or even non-fiction, has before him a higher purpose, to uplift the society, and to resolve its issues. In these genres, it is human mind which takes the front seat, and drives the writer into writing on those subjects which are of immediate relevance. However, in dramatic poetry, mind takes the back seat, and the poet is driven forward by the Muse. The Muse becomes the charioteer and the Poet, like Arjuna, shoots his arrows tempered in wisdom, directed by the Lord.

That is why I think epic poetry is a genre which stems directly from the inspiration that comes to the poet straight from Goddess Saraswati, just as the Ganges stems from the tangled hair of Shiva. It is a sacred wave

which flows through the cities of this world, and carries the dirt of human mind, giving back to the world, an opportunity of salvation, if you drink on its waters.

The writing carried out for academic or other purposes dictated by market considerations lacks inspiration which separates great writing from the routine writing. Looking back at the beginnings of creativity, it is not difficult to realize that Poetry has always been held as the preserve of the Muse. Guru Granth Sahib, Mahabharata, Ramayana, every great writing which has impacted the thought of generations, comes to us to in the form of inspired poetry. The poet moves on a different trajectory and his own redemption lies in his power to talk on subjects which lesser writers dare not touch, and thus fulfil the promise of the creative forces.

*Dr. Jernail S. Anand, who has to his credit, 180 books, is winner of Seneca Award [Italy], Charter of Morava [Serbia], Franz Kafka [Germany, Ukraine and Chek Rep] and Maxim Gorky [Russia] Awards and his name adorns the Poets' Rock in Serbia.*



# THE ALMANAC OF BALOCH INSURGENCY

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

In a shocking development on Tuesday, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for a violent attack on the Jaffar Express, a passenger train traveling from Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan, to Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The insurgent group announced that they had hijacked the train, taking 214 passengers hostage, and threatened to execute them unless their demands were met. The BLA's claim, however, has not been independently verified, as the local authorities have not disclosed the number of hostages.

The attack occurred in the Bolan Pass, a strategically significant and rugged region in southwestern Pakistan, notorious for its history of insurgency. The incident highlights the growing influence and reach of Baloch nationalist militants, who continue to resist Pakistan's authority, calling for independence and self-determination for Balochistan, the country's most impoverished and resource-rich province. This latest attack underscores the ongoing tensions between the central government and the Baloch people, driven by decades of political disenfranchisement, exploitation of natural resources, and unresolved historical grievances.

The Baloch: A Disenfranchised Ethnic Group

The Baloch people are an ethnic Sunni Muslim group indigenous to the region that spans across southeastern Iran, southwestern Pakistan, and parts of Afghanistan. With a population of roughly 9 million, the Baloch are spread across a vast and arid expanse roughly the size of France. Despite their geographic spread, Balochistan remains a marginalized region, underdeveloped and neglected by the central governments of both Pakistan and Iran.

The historical roots of Baloch discontent trace back to 1948, when, following the Partition of India, the Khan of Kalat, the tribal leader of Balochistan, was coerced into acceding to Pakistan. Despite initial resistance, the region became part of Pakistan, leading to the alienation of the Baloch people, who have since sought either autonomy or full independence. These demands, however, have been met with a violent response by the state, with brutal military operations that have claimed the lives of thousands of Baloch civilians and fighters alike. In Pakistan, such movements are viewed as attempts to fracture the nation, while in Iran, the Baloch remain a marginalized minority, further complicating the political dynamics in the region.

The Rise of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)

Founded in the early 2000s, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) is the largest and most well-known militant group fighting for the independence of Balochistan. Over the years, the BLA has steadily escalated its operations, particularly targeting Pakistan's military and infrastructure, and more recently, the interests of China, which has developed close economic ties with Pakistan, especially through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The BLA's activities have centered on sabotaging projects that it perceives as detrimental to the welfare of the Baloch people, particularly the development of Gwadar port, a strategic deep-sea port that has become a focal point of



A still from the spot in Balochistan. Agency

the region's economic and geopolitical significance.

The BLA is known for its hit-and-run tactics, bombings, and ambushes against Pakistani security forces. The group has also become a significant player in the resistance against Chinese involvement in Balochistan, particularly criticizing China's role in the construction of Gwadar port and its broader involvement in the CPEC project. For the Baloch, the Chinese presence in Balochistan represents the latest in a series of foreign interests exploiting their land and resources, further exacerbating their political and economic marginalization.

In 2006, Pakistan officially banned the BLA, and the United States followed suit in 2019, designating the group as a global terrorist organization. Despite this, the BLA has continued to operate with increasing sophistication and expanding its base of support. The BLA is now known for its highly organized structure, with specialized units such as the Majeed Brigade, which has been responsible for some of the most high-profile attacks in recent years, including the hijacking of the Jaffar Express.

The Drivers of Baloch Insurgency

At the heart of the Baloch insurgency lies the issue of resource exploitation. Balochistan is rich in natural resources, including gold, copper, oil, and natural gas, but the local population has seen little of the wealth generated by these resources. The Pakistani government has been accused of prioritizing the extraction and export of these resources while neglecting the basic needs of the Baloch people. Despite the region's vast wealth, Balochistan remains the most underdeveloped and impoverished province in Pakistan, with nearly 70% of its population living in multidimensional poverty.

A significant point of contention for the Baloch is the construction of Gwadar port, a massive project initiated by the Pakistani government in the early 2000s. The port is seen as a key component of the CPEC initiative, which is intended to create an economic corridor connecting Gwadar with China's western Xinjiang region. However, for the Baloch people, the project symbolizes the further entrenchment of external control over their land, as the development has been largely managed by the federal government with minimal input or benefit for the local population. The port's construction has led to the displacement of local communities, with few Baloch employed in the devel-

opment process, while Chinese laborers and engineers dominate the workforce.

The Baloch grievance against the Pakistani government deepened in 2006, following the killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti, a prominent Baloch leader, by the Pakistani military. Bugti was a vocal critic of Pakistan's policies in Balochistan, and his death became a rallying cry for Baloch nationalists. In the wake of his assassination, the Baloch insurgency gained momentum, and attacks against military and civilian targets escalated.

Furthermore, the ongoing conflict in neighboring Afghanistan has further destabilized Balochistan. The influx of Pashtun refugees from Afghanistan has altered the demographic balance of the region, further marginalizing the Baloch population. Moreover, the presence of Taliban fighters in Balochistan has added to the complexity of the conflict, as Baloch nationalists fear that the influx of Islamist militants could undermine their efforts for independence and self-determination.

The Changing Nature of the Insurgency

Over the past decade, the BLA has evolved from a fragmented, loosely organized guerrilla force to a more sophisticated and disciplined military outfit. Analysts argue that the group's growing strength is a direct result of the Pakistani government's failure to effectively address the underlying causes of the Baloch insurgency. Rather than pursuing a political solution, the government has largely relied on military force, which has only fueled resentment and alienation among the Baloch population.

The BLA has increasingly shifted from targeting isolated individuals and infrastructure to launching large-scale attacks against military bases and installations. In recent months, the violence in Balochistan has surged, with attacks on military personnel, law enforcement, and civilians be-

## IN A NUTSHELL

**BLA Attack:** The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) hijacked the Jaffar Express train, taking 214 hostages and threatening execution.

**Location:** The attack occurred in the Bolan Pass, a volatile region in southwestern Pakistan.

**Baloch Grievances:** Baloch nationalists seek independence due to resource exploitation, especially concerning the Gwadar Port project, and political marginalization.

**BLA's Role:** Founded in the early 2000s, BLA targets military forces and Chinese interests (CPEC) in Balochistan.

**Historical Tensions:** The Baloch have fought for autonomy since the region's incorporation into Pakistan in 1948.

**Pakistan's Response:** The government's reliance on military action has failed to quell the insurgency, leading to escalating violence.

**Current Situation:** BLA's attacks are becoming more frequent and large-scale, with increasing risks for both local civilians and international stakeholders.

coming more frequent and deadly. The assassination of soldiers, including an attack in Kalat city in February, has highlighted the growing audacity of the insurgents. The increase in violence has also seen the BLA expand its operations into urban areas, which were previously considered relatively safe from insurgent attacks.

Balochistan's strategic location has also played a role in the resurgence of violence. The province shares borders with Afghanistan and Iran, making it a critical geopolitical flashpoint. The BLA's increasing attacks on Chinese interests, including in Gwadar, underscore the group's growing dissatisfaction with foreign involvement in Balochistan, particularly China's influence through the CPEC initiative.

The Consequences for Pakistan

The escalation of the Baloch insurgency presents a significant challenge to the Pakistani state. Despite decades of military operations aimed at quelling the insurgency, the BLA has only grown in strength and influence. Analysts argue that the government's reliance on outdated counterin-

surgency tactics, including heavy-handed military operations and political repression, has failed to address the root causes of Baloch discontent.

As the insurgency intensifies, the risk of greater instability in the region grows. The Pakistani government's heavy reliance on military force to suppress the insurgency has not only failed to quell the violence but has also led to widespread human rights abuses, including enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. According to Amnesty International, over 10,000 Baloch have disappeared since 2011, with many families still searching for their loved ones.

These human rights violations have further deepened the rift between the Baloch people and the state, fueling anti-government sentiment. Moreover, the increasing vio-



Balochistan Liberation Army has initiated 'Operation Dara-e-Bolan' against Pakistani forces. Agency



The Baloch Liberation Army. File Photo



Representative .Photo

lence in Balochistan is likely to have broader geopolitical ramifications. As the BLA intensifies its attacks on Chinese interests in the region, Pakistan's relations with its most important economic partner, China, could be further strained. The Baloch insurgency, if left unresolved, could become a major stumbling block for the CPEC project, which is vital to Pakistan's economic future.

Conclusion

The hijacking of the Jaffar Express by the BLA is yet another stark reminder of the deep-seated grievances that fuel the Baloch insurgency. With a history of political marginalization, economic exploitation, and cultural suppression, the Baloch people's desire for independence or greater autonomy remains unful-

filled. The BLA, as the leading militant group in the region, has grown in strength and sophistication, posing a growing challenge to the Pakistani state.

The insurgency in Balochistan is not just a local conflict but a reflection of broader regional dynamics, involving ethnic, political, and economic factors that continue to shape the future of the region. As Pakistan grapples with the rising tide of Baloch nationalism, it faces a critical

choice: pursue a military solution that risks further alienation and violence, or engage in meaningful dialogue that addresses the root causes of the conflict. Without a political solution, the insurgency in Balochistan is unlikely to subside, and the region will remain a source of instability for Pakistan and its neighbors.

Compiled by Kaushal Verma





# MADRAS HIGH COURT STAYS ED ATTACHMENT OF DIRECTOR SHANKAR'S PROPERTY OVER COPYRIGHT DISPUTE: 'WHY DID NOT ED WAIT FOR OUTCOME OF COMPLAINT?'

**TDG NETWORK**  
NEW DELHI

The Madras High Court in the case S Shankar v. The Deputy Director observed and has stayed an order of the Enforcement Directorate, ED provisionally attaching property worth an amount of Rs. 10 crore of Tamil filmmaker S Shankar in a copyright infringement case in connection with the 2010 movie 'Enthiran'.

The bench comprising of Justice MS Ramesh and Justice N Senthilkumar was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case observed and has stayed the provisional attachment order wherein the petition is filed by the Director.

The Enforcement Directorate, ED had attached the property on February 17 following a complaint by Arur Tamilnadan, wherein it is claimed that Shankar had violated his copyright as the story of the movie was inspired by his story – Jugiba.

The Enforcement Directorate, ED had passed the order provisionally attaching the property as the offences under the Copyright Act are scheduled offences



as stated under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, PMLA.

In June 2023, the single judge of the Madras High Court in the case dismissed a civil suit filed by Arur against Shankar, wherein

the court noted that copyright could not be claimed over an idea or a concept.

The single judge in the case noted that there was no evidence available to show that the story of Enthiran was a literal imita-

*The counsel, Vishnu appearing for ED also submitted before the court that no harm had been caused to Shankar due to the ED's action and thus the attachment need not be interfered with.*

tion of the story in Jugiba.

The court took the petition for hearing on March 11, 2025.

The counsel, Senior Advocate PS Raman argued that the Enforcement Directorate, ED's action was arbitrary, especially when the Single judge had already observed there was

no violation of the Copyright Act.

The counsel, Senior Advocate PS Raman also questioned the Enforcement Directorate, ED's stand that Shankar had received Rs. 11.5 crore from the project and submitted that the same was untrue.

It was also argued before

the court that Shankar had received the payment from other works and thus ED could not attach the property. The bench also wondered if the Enforcement Directorate, ED could take such an action on a complaint by an individual.

The court asked the counsel that, 'Can the Enforcement Directorate, ED register cases which are based on an individual's complaint that a crime has been committed. Why didn't the ED wait for the outcome of the complaint before attaching the property?'. On the other hand, the counsel, Vishnu ap-

pearing for the Enforcement Directorate, ED submitted before the court that based on the ruling in Vijay Madhanlal Choudhary, the ED had powers to take action based on a complaint by an individual.

The counsel, Vishnu appearing for ED also submitted before the court that no harm had been caused to Shankar due to the ED's action and thus the attachment need not be interfered with. The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has directed the ED for filing its counter to the petition.

## SCBA election reforms: Justice Nageswara Rao invites suggestions from Supreme Court Bar Association

**TDG NETWORK**  
NEW DELHI

The Committee headed by Justice L Nageswara Rao, the former judge of Supreme Court has invited suggestions from the members of the Supreme Court Bar Association, SCBA with regards to the reforms in the SCBA bye-laws, particularly the provisions which deals with elections.

The said suggestions are solicited from the members of the Supreme Court bar on the following issues:

1. The eligibility conditions for contesting elections to the Executive Committee.

*The court in the case observed that the norms, eligibility conditions, fees etc. of the SCBA have remained static for decades and stressed the need for timely reforms.*

2. The eligibility conditions for voting in elections to the Executive Committee.
3. The tenure of the Executive Committee.
4. The strength of the Executive Committee.
5. The disqualification of candidates (which includes, for providing inducement for votes).
6. Any other issue concerning the election of members

to the Executive Committee.

The suggestions can be shared by email (scba.committee.2025@gmail.com), not exceeding two pages, without attachments.

The Suggestions needs to be shared before March 20, 2025.

The senders should also provide their SCBA membership number and mobile number. The bench

comprising of Justice Surya Kant and Justice NK Singh appointed Justice Nageswara Rao on February 25 as the Chairperson of the Committee constituted to propose reforms of SCBA election provisions.

The Committee will also consist of some Senior Advocates or experienced advocates (from both, Advocates-on-Record and Non-Advocates-on-record category) who have never been interested in contesting the elections as office bearers of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

The bench of Justice Rao

was given the liberty to pick the Committee members.

The reference was made to the case of Supreme Court Bar Association v. BD Kaushik, wherein the issue relates to the SCBA elections was raised.

Last year, the Supreme Court had passed an order in the case for 1/3rd women's reservation in the SCBA posts.

The court in the case observed that the norms, eligibility conditions, fees etc. of the SCBA have remained static for decades and stressed the need for timely reforms.

## Delhi High Court orders take down of YouTuber Shyam Meera Singh's 'defamatory' video on Sadhguru, Isha Foundation

**TDG NETWORK**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case Isha Foundation Versus Google LLC And Ors. observed and has directed the take down of YouTuber Shyam Meera Singh's recent, allegedly defamatory YouTube video on Isha Foundation and its founder spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev.

The video titled "Sadhguru EXPOSED: What's happening in Jaggi Vasudev's Ashram" was uploaded by Singh on his YouTube channel on February 24 and he shared it on his 'X' page with allegations suggesting that the minors were being exploited in the Ashram.

At present, the video has 937K views, 65K likes and 13K comments.

The bench headed by Jus-



tice Subramonium Prasad in the case observed and has directed the defendants Google LLC, X Corp and Meta platforms to take down the video in question.

Further, the bench also restrained Singh from publishing or sharing the video in question in the interim.

The court in its order stated that the defendant no.4, associates, servants, agents, affiliates and the subscribers of the channel of defendant no. 4 are restrained from creating, publishing, uploading, sharing, dissemi-

nating defamatory videos as mentioned in paragraph 8 in the plaint. The bench headed by Justice Prasad also restrained members of the public from uploading the said video on any social media platform.

The court passed interim order wherein the defamation suit filed by Isha Foundation against Shyam Meera Singh. However, the interim, Isha Foundation sought take down or removal of the video, claiming that the same is defamatory.

Isha Foundation's defamation suit is filed through Advocate Yajat Gulia.

Accordingly, the court listed the matter for further consideration on July 09, 2025.

Further, the interim relief application is listed for hearing next on May 09, 2025.

## Motor accident claims: Supreme Court says 'legal representative' is one who suffers loss; need not be spouse, child or parent of deceased

**TDG NETWORK**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Sadhana Tomar And Ors Versus Ashok Kushwaha And Ors observed and has ruled that the term 'legal representative' under the Motor Vehicle Act should not be given a narrow interpretation to exclude those persons as claimants who were dependent on the deceased's income

The court in the case stated that if the claimants were dependent on the deceased's income, then they shall be granted compensation.

The court stated that, a 'legal representative' is one, who suffers on account of death of a person due to a motor vehicle accident and need not necessarily be a wife, husband, parent or child.

The bench comprising of Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case was hearing the matter wherein the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, MACT, while awarding compensation, who did not consider the 24-year-old deceased-Appellants' i.e., the Father and Sister as dependents of the deceased.

The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, MACT held that the father was not dependent on the income of the deceased and since the father was alive, the younger sister cannot also be held as a dependent of the deceased.

The High Court upheld that the said part of the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, MACT's ruling, which lead the Appellants to ap-

peal to the Supreme Court.

The court set aside the impugned decision, wherein observing that the Court below had erred in refusing to consider the Appellants as dependents of the deceased.

The court referred to the case Gujarat SRTC v. Ramanbhai Prabhathbhai and N. Jayasree v. Cholamandalam MS General Insurance Company Ltd., wherein the court noted that proving loss of dependency alone is sufficient to claim compensation.

The court clarified that compensation is not limited to spouses, parents, or children but extends to all individuals affected by the deceased's death.

The court in the case Gujarat SRTC v. Ramanbhai Prabhathbhai and N. Jayasree v. Cholamandalam MS General Insurance Com-

pany Ltd., observed that, 'In our view, the term 'legal representative' should be given a wider interpretation for the purpose of Chapter XII of the MV Act and it should not be confined only to mean the spouse, parents and children of the deceased. This court is of the view that in order to maintain a claim petition, it is sufficient for the claimant to establish his loss of dependency. Section 166 of the MV Act makes it clear that every legal representative who suffers on account of the death of a person in a motor vehicle accident should have a remedy for realisation of compensation.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that the appellant no.4 and appellant no.5 being the father and younger sister

of the deceased, both not financially independent, would fall under the definition of legal representatives for the purpose of claiming the compensation under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and they were considered as dependents upon the income of the deceased, as he was doing wholesale business of selling fruits to meet the day-to-day expenses of the family.

Further, the court considered the Appellants were dependents and awarded them compensation.

The counsel, Mr. Praveen Swarup, AOR appeared for the Petitioner(s).

The counsel, Mr. Salil Paul, Adv. Ms. Manjeet Chawla, AOR Mr. Sahil Paul, Adv. Mr. Sandeep Dayal, Adv. Ms. Kanupriya Mehta, Adv. represented the Respondent(s).

## Karnataka HC stays FIR against YouTuber Sameer MD in case accusing him of hurting religious sentiments

**TDG NETWORK**  
NEW DELHI

The Karnataka High Court in the case Sameer MD And State of Karnataka observed and has stayed an interim order till March 19, wherein the further proceedings are registered against YouTuber Sameer MD, accused of hurting religious sentiments by airing in a video in which he discussed a 2012 rape and murder case.

The bench headed by Justice Hemant Chandan-goudar passed the order wherein the court was hearing the petition filed by the YouTuber seeking to quash the FIR registered against him under Section 299 of BNS.

In the present matter, the prosecution was initiated



*The counsel, Advocate A Velan, appearing for the petitioner, argued before the court that the FIR was a gross abuse of the legal process and violated the petitioner's fundamental right to expression.*

after Sameer had posted a video on his YouTube channel 'Dhootha: Sameer MD'. Therefore, the video delves into several criminal cases spanning decades in

the Dharmasthala region, with particular focus on the 2012 rape and murder, the wrongful conviction and subsequent acquittal of Santosh Rao, and patterns of al-

leged influence in multiple criminal investigations.

The counsel, Advocate A Velan, appearing for the petitioner, argued before the court that the FIR was a gross abuse of the legal process and violated the petitioner's fundamental right to expression.

It was also contended before the court that Sameer had not uttered a single word against any religion or religious belief in his video and all the statements which are made in the video were on the basis of publicly available information.

The Another bench in the case had stayed the notice issued by the police under Section 35(3) of the BNS, 2023, directing the petitioner to appear before the

Investigating Officer.

The court in the case stated that, "The notice is completely contrary to the Circular dated December 30, 2024, which is issued by the State Government in pursuance to the order passed by the said Court, in as much as the notice that does not append to it a complete copy of the FIR and the complaint so registered. Therefore, there is a violation of the law."

The counsel, Advocate on Record A. Velan, assisted by Advocates Pawan Shyam, Ojaswi, Dheeraj SJ, Ms. Navpreet Kaur, Nilay Rai, Prince Singh, Sachin Deshpande, Vishwas N, Devin Gowda, Ananya, Shant VA, and Sainath DM appeared before the court.

## Centre tells Delhi High Court: Suspension of Wrestling Federation of India revoked

**TDG NETWORK**  
NEW DELHI

The Central Government on Tuesday informed the Delhi High Court that the suspension of Wrestling Federation of India, WFI by the Union Sports Ministry on December 24, 2023 has been revoked. The Division bench comprising of Chief Justice Dvendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela which disposed of an appeal filed by WFI against a single judge order passed on August 16 last year.

**BOMBAY HC ALLOWS FAMILY TO EXCHANGE RS 20 LAKH 'DEMONETISED' NOTES AS IT DEPARTMENT HAD SEIZED THE CURRENCY**

The Bombay High Court recently came to the aid of a group of people from Maharash-

tra's Kolhapur district and ordered the Reserve Bank of India, RBI to accept their demonetized notes worth Rs 20 lakhs, which were seized by the Income Tax in December 2016 and returned to them after the deadline to exchange the old notes.

**MADRAS HC ORDERS CB-CID INQUIRY AGAINST LAW FIRM FOR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES IN LAND TRANSACTION**

The Madras High Court in the case observed and has directed the Crime Branch-Crime Investigation Department, CBCID to investigate the genuineness of a law firm and its associates after noting that the lawyers had been indulging in forum shopping, misrepresenting the court and attempting to legalise their illegal activities.



# Jaffar Express hijacking: Second hostage crisis in Pakistan

Hijackers separated passengers, checking identity cards and singling out non-Baloch individuals and security personnel.

AGENCIES  
ISLAMABAD

The passengers aboard the Jaffar Express were in for a long but otherwise routine journey from Quetta to Peshawar on March 11, 2025. The train, loaded with 400-500 passengers in nine coaches, had just crossed into the remote Bolan district of Balochistan when the deafening sound of an explosion shattered the calm. Moments later, bursts of gunfire echoed through the train cars. Chaos erupted

## TDB EXPLAINER

as dozens of armed men, clad in tactical gear and carrying rifles, stormed the train. Within minutes, the Jaffar Express was under the control of the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), setting off one of the most intense hostage crises in Pakistan's recent history.

### A CAREFULLY PLANNED AMBUSH

The militants had executed a meticulously planned ambush. They targeted the train as it passed through the rugged Mashkaf area near the Piru tunnel — a remote and isolated stretch of mountainous terrain with poor cell reception and minimal security presence. Using explosives, the attackers blew up a section of the railway track, causing the train to derail or come to a grinding halt inside the tunnel.

"There was a huge explosion, and then gunfire — it felt like the earth was shaking," recalled a survivor. The train's driver was fatally wounded in the blast. Before the passengers could make sense of the situation, heavily armed militants flooded the coaches, opening fire and subduing any resistance. Security personnel aboard the train were quickly disarmed or killed. Overwhelmed and terrified, the passengers were forced to lie low as the



A train carrying empty coffins to the siege site, stands at a railway station in Quetta on March 12. — AFP

militants methodically took control of the train, coach by coach.

Eyewitnesses later described how the attackers operated with chilling precision. They separated passengers, checking identity cards and singling out non-Baloch individuals and security personnel. The militants announced they would not harm "women, children, and Baloch people" but focused their aggression on outsiders and military personnel. Suicide bombers were positioned among the hostages, with explosive vests strapped to their chests — a deadly insurance policy against any rescue attempt.

By midday, Pakistani security forces, including the Army and Frontier Corps, had mobilized. Troops surrounded the area, but the mountainous terrain and the tunnel's confined space made a frontal assault dangerous. Any rash move could trigger the suicide bombers, leading to mass casualties.

### THE FIRST BREAKTHROUGH

As the standoff stretched into the afternoon, Pakistani commandos launched a precision raid on one coach, managing to free 80 hostages,

including 26 women and 11 children. "The soldiers moved fast and took out the gunmen before they could detonate their vests," said one of the rescued passengers. But the militants still controlled the majority of the train, and the threat of further violence remained dangerously high.

The hijackers soon issued their demands: the release of Baloch political prisoners and the return of missing persons allegedly held by Pakistan's intelligence agencies. They threatened to kill the hostages if the government did not comply within 48 hours.

### A HIGH-STAKES RESCUE OPERATION

Through the night and into the next day, Pakistani security forces devised a strategy to wear down the insurgents. Special forces attempted to isolate small groups of militants while snipers targeted those guarding the tunnel entrances. Commanders had to proceed cautiously — the militants' tactic of using women and children as human shields made any aggressive push risky.

By the morning of March 12, security forces had freed an additional 190 passengers.

The gunfight intensified as the army pushed deeper into the tunnel. "We could hear the gunfire and the shouting," said a freed hostage. "The walls were shaking from the blasts."

By midday, nearly 30 insurgents had been killed. The militants fought to the last man — some detonating their vests when surrounded, causing devastating injuries among the soldiers. At least eight security personnel were killed in the fighting. The final push came late in the evening as commandos cleared the last remaining cars, shooting down the last of the attackers.

### THE AFTERMATH

In total, nearly 400 passengers were rescued. Several dozen injured passengers were rushed to hospitals in Quetta and a makeshift field hospital at Mach railway station. Tragically, the train's driver and several security personnel were among the dead. Officials were still determining the final civilian death toll at the time of reporting.

Pakistan's government hailed the operation as a success, praising the military for its "swift and precise" handling of the crisis. "This

was a carefully coordinated terrorist attack — our forces have shown exceptional courage," said the country's interior minister. The BLA's motives were clear: political leverage. Their demands for the release of prisoners and greater autonomy for Balochistan were consistent with the insurgency's long-standing grievances.

### WHY THE JAFFAR EXPRESS WAS TARGETED

The Jaffar Express was a deliberate target for multiple reasons. First, it symbolizes national unity — connecting the volatile Balochistan region with the rest of Pakistan. Targeting the train sent a message challenging the government's authority over the region. Second, the BLA likely knew that security personnel were traveling on the train — off-duty soldiers and government officials frequently use it as a transit route. And third, the location was strategic. The remote Mashkaf tunnel gave the militants time to consolidate control and limited the army's options for a rapid response.

The BLA's strategy was calculated — not just about causing casualties, but about



Passengers, who were rescued from a train after it was attacked by terrorists, sit at the Mach Railway Station in Mach, Balochistan, on March 11, 2025. — Reuters/Stringer



A soldier (L) works to evacuate freed train passengers at the Mach railway station, which has been turned into a makeshift hospital, after Pakistani security forces freed nearly 80 passengers following a security operation against armed militants who ambushed the train in the remote mountainous area, in Mach on March 11, 2025. — AFP

making a statement. Holding hundreds of hostages in a high-profile train gave the insurgents enormous bargaining power. Even though the Pakistani state refused to negotiate, the attack succeeded in drawing attention to the Baloch insurgency and its grievances.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN'S SECURITY

The Jaffar Express hijacking marks a dangerous escalation in the Baloch insurgency. Pakistani security forces are now facing a more organized and tactically sophisticated enemy. The use of suicide bombers and human shields shows that the BLA is adopting tactics more

commonly seen in Middle Eastern conflicts.

In response, Pakistan's security establishment will likely increase surveillance and security along key transport routes. Already, train services in Balochistan have been suspended pending a full security review. But the attack also raises broader political questions. The Baloch insurgency is rooted in historical grievances over autonomy, resource exploitation, and alleged human rights abuses. Without addressing these issues, future attacks may be inevitable.

Internationally, the hijacking has drawn sharp condemnation — not just for the brutality of the attack, but for the BLA's

targeting of civilians. Pakistan's government has accused "foreign actors" of supporting the insurgency, suggesting that India and Afghan-based groups could be involved. This could further strain already fragile regional ties.

### A NATION ON EDGE

For the passengers who survived the ordeal, the scars will take time to heal. "We didn't think we would make it out alive," said one passenger. "Every second felt like the last." Pakistan now faces a sobering reality. The Jaffar Express attack exposed vulnerabilities not just in security but in national cohesion.

## CAMARADERIE!

AGENCIES  
PORT LOUIS

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Mauritius on Wednesday was marked by significant events that underscored the deep cultural and strategic ties between the two nations.

### CONFERMONT OF MAURITIUS'S HIGHEST CIVILIAN HONOUR

During the 57th National Day celebrations of Mauritius, President Dharam Gokhool conferred upon Prime Minister Modi the Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean (G.C.S.K.), the nation's highest civilian award. This is the first instance of an Indian leader receiving this prestigious honor. In his acceptance, Prime Minister Modi dedicated the award to the enduring friendship between India and Mauritius and the people of both countries.

### VISIT TO GANGA TALAO

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Modi visited the sacred site of Ganga Talao, a place of immense spiritual significance for Mauritians of Indian descent. He offered prayers and ceremonially immersed holy water from the Triveni Sangam, symbolizing the deep-rooted cultural and spiritual



Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam accompanies Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam International Airport as he departs from Port Louis, Mauritius after his 2-day State Visit to the country, on Wednesday. ANI



### LAUNCH OF THE 'MAHASAGAR' VISION

In a move to bolster regional cooperation, Prime

Minister Modi unveiled the 'Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions' (MAHASAGAR) vision. Building upon the existing 'Security and Growth for All

in the Region' (SAGAR) initiative, this new vision aims to promote trade, sustainable growth, and mutual security, reflecting India's commitment to the Global South.

### STRENGTHENING BILATERAL RELATIONS

The visit also witnessed the signing of eight agreements between India and Mauritius, focusing on areas such as infrastructure development, digital technology, health, artificial intelligence, and maritime security. These agreements signify a mutual commitment to elevating the bilateral relationship to an 'Enhanced Strategic Partnership.' Prime Minister Modi's engagements today have further cemented the longstanding bonds between India and Mauritius, paving the way for enhanced cooperation in various sectors.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi performs aarti on the banks of Ganga Talao (Grand Bassin) after depositing the Gangajal brought from Prayagraj Mahakumbh, in Port Louis on Wednesday. ANI

PM MODI: A GLOBAL LEADER SHAPING INDIA'S RISING INFLUENCE
PM Modi is the Chief Guest at Mauritius' National Day for the second time, an honour he first received in 2015. This rare repeat invitation underscores India's special relationship with Mauritius, rooted in shared history, culture, and diaspora ties.
His 2023 invitation to France's Bastille Day Parade was another defining moment, symbolizing India's growing military and strategic partnership with France. The sight of Indian tri-services marching down the Champs-Élysées alongside French troops reinforced India's role in global geopolitics.
In 2022, PM Modi visited Lumbini, Nepal, for Buddha Jayanti celebrations, emphasizing India's historical connection to Buddhism and its shared heritage with Nepal. His visit reinforced India's role in promoting cultural and spiritual ties across the region.
In 2021, Bangladesh invited PM Modi to its National Day celebrations, marking 50 years of its independence—an event closely tied to India's role in its liberation. His visit reaffirmed India's commitment to regional stability and shared prosperity.
In 2017, his visit to Sri Lanka for International Vesak Day highlighted India's leadership in civilizational and cultural diplomacy. By reaffirming India's role as a custodian of Buddhist heritage, he strengthened spiritual and diplomatic ties with Buddhist-majority nations.



# TRUMP’S METAL TARIFFS DRAW SWIFT RETALIATION FROM CANADA AND EU

Trump’s hyper-focus on tariffs since taking office in January has rattled investor, consumer and business confidence in ways that economists worry

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump’s increased tariffs on all U.S. steel and aluminum imports took effect on Wednesday, stepping up a campaign to reorder global trade in favor of the U.S. and drawing swift retaliation from Canada and Europe.

Trump’s action to bulk up protections for American steel and aluminum producers restores effective tariffs of 25% on all imports of the metals and extends the duties to hundreds of downstream products, from nuts and bolts to bulldozer blades and soda cans.

Trump’s hyper-focus on tariffs since taking office in January has rattled investor, consumer and business confidence in ways that

THE TRADE WAR

- US duty rate on steel, aluminum rises to 25% as exemptions end
- Trump threatened 50% Canada metals tariff rate, but backed off
- EU responds with tariffs on up to 26 bln euros of U.S. exports
- Canada plans C\$29.8 bln in retaliatory tariffs, official says



economists worry could cause a U.S. recession and further lag on the global economy.

The European Commission, the executive arm of the European Union charged with coordinating trade matters, responded swiftly, saying it would impose counter tariffs on up to 26 billion euros (\$28 billion

worth of U.S. goods - often with more symbolic than economic impact - from next month.

Nevertheless, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told reporters she had tasked Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic to resume talks with U.S. officials on the matter.

“We firmly believe that

in a world fraught with geoeconomic and political uncertainties, it is not in our common interest to burden our economies with such tariffs,” she said.

Canada, the biggest foreign supplier of steel and aluminum to the United States, will announce C\$29.8 billion in retaliatory tariffs on Wednesday, a Ca-

nadian official who declined to be named said.

China’s foreign ministry said Beijing would take all necessary measures to safeguard its rights and interests, while Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshi-masa Hayashi said the move could have a major impact on U.S.-Japan economic ties.

Close U.S. allies Canada, Britain and Australia criticised the blanket tariffs, with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the move was “against the spirit of our two nations’ enduring friendship”. However, he ruled out tit-for-tat duties, as did Britain.

The other countries most affected by the tariffs are Brazil, Mexico and South Korea, which all enjoyed some level of exemptions or quotas.

# ‘Ukraine OK for truce; eyes on Russia now’

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has welcomed Ukraine agreeing to the ceasefire after the peace talks in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and further affirmed hope that Russia will also agree to it.

Stating that soldiers of both Russia and Ukraine are being killed in this “horrible war”, Trump said reaching a ceasefire is “very important”.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday (local time), Trump said, “Ukraine, ceasefire, just agreed to a little while ago. Now we have to go to Russia and hopefully President Putin will agree to that also and we can get this show on the road. We can get this horrible war...I get the reports and they’re not American soldiers. They’re Ukrainian and they’re Russian. But, people are being killed outside of that. People are being killed in the cities as things explode throughout the cities and we want to get that war over with.”



“So, I think it’s very big. I think it’s a big difference between the last visit you saw at the Oval Office and so that’s a total ceasefire, Ukraine has agreed to it, and hopefully Russia will agree to it. We’re going to meet with him later on today and tomorrow and hopefully we’ll be able to wipe out a deal. But I think the ceasefire is very important. If we can get Russia to do it, that’ll be great. If we can’t, we just keep going on and people are going to get killed, lots of people,” he added.

Trump’s statement comes after Ukraine expressed readiness to accept the US proposal to enact an “immediate, interim

30-day ceasefire,” which can be extended by mutual agreement of the parties, and which is subject to acceptance and concurrent implementation by Russia.

The US will immediately lift the pause on intelligence sharing and resume security assistance to Ukraine.

“The United States will communicate to Russia that Russian reciprocity is the key to achieving peace. The United States will immediately lift the pause on intelligence sharing and resume security assistance to Ukraine,” the joint statement released following the United States-Ukraine Meeting in Jeddah read.

# UK favours pragmatism over tit-for-tat tariffs

AGENCIES  
LONDON

Britain did not immediately retaliate to U.S. President Donald Trump’s tariffs on steel and aluminium imports on Wednesday, though Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was disappointed by the move and that all options remained on the table.

Trump imposed global tariffs of 25% on all imports of steel and aluminium which he said would reorder global trade in favour of the United States.

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Britain had hoped to avoid tariffs on its steel sector, which is small but produces specialist products for defence and other industries.

Trump said last month the two countries might reach a bilateral trade deal that



British Secretary of State for Business Jonathan Reynolds speaks after a Japan-Britain Economic 2+2 Ministers’ Meeting at Iikura Guest House Friday, March 7, 2025, in Tokyo, Japan. File Photo

would avert duties.

“Like everybody else, I’m disappointed to see global tariffs in relation to steel and aluminium, but we will take a pragmatic approach,” Starmer told parliament.

“We are ... negotiating an economic deal which covers and will include tariffs if we succeed, but we will keep all options on the table.”

The British government had argued its provision of key goods for the U.S. de-

fence, oil and gas and construction sectors meant it should be given a carve-out.

The EU responded to the U.S. tariffs by saying it would impose counter-tariffs on 26 billion euros (\$28 billion) worth of U.S. goods from next month.

A British official said on Tuesday the government would not impose retaliatory trade tariffs on the United States and focus instead on trying to secure an exemption.

# Philippine ex-President Duterte to face murder charges

AGENCIES  
ROTTERDAM

A plane taking former Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte to the International Criminal Court over murder charges was headed for Rotterdam on Wednesday in a move hailed by families of victims of his “war on drugs” as giving them hope for justice.

Duterte, who led the Philippines from 2016 to 2022, was arrested early on Tuesday in Manila, marking the biggest step yet in the ICC’s probe into alleged crimes against humanity during an anti-drugs crackdown that killed thousands and drew condemnation around the world.

Duterte, 79, could become the first Asian former head of state to go on trial at the ICC in The Hague.

# Yemen’s Houthis to resume attacks on Israeli ships in Red and Arabian seas

AGENCIES  
CAIRO

Yemen’s Houthis said on Tuesday they would resume attacks on Israeli ships passing through the Red and Arabian seas, the Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Gulf of Aden, ending a period of relative calm starting in January with the Gaza ceasefire.

The Houthis had launched more than 100 attacks targeting shipping from November 2023, saying they were in solidarity with Palestinians over Israel’s war with Hamas in Gaza.

During that period, the group sank two vessels, seized another and killed at least four seafarers in an offensive that disrupted global shipping, forcing firms to re-route to longer and more expensive journeys around southern Africa.

The leader of Yemen’s



Houthi in Yemen. File Photo

*The Houthis had launched more than 100 attacks targeting shipping from November 2023, saying they were in solidarity with Palestinians over Israel’s war with Hamas in Gaza.*

Houthis had warned on Friday that the group would resume its naval operations against Israel if Israel did not lift a blockade of aid into Gaza within four days.

On March 2, Israel blocked the entry of aid trucks into Gaza as a standoff over the truce escalated, with Hamas calling on Egyptian and Qatari mediators to intervene.

“This ban will remain in effect until the crossings to the Gaza Strip are reopened and humanitarian aid, including food and medical supplies, is allowed to enter,” the group said in an emailed statement on Wednesday, adding that the ban would take place with immediate effect.

The U.S. State Department said earlier this month it was implementing the designation of the movement as a “foreign terrorist organization” after President Donald Trump’s call for the move.

In January, Trump redesignated the Houthi movement as a foreign terrorist organization, aiming to impose harsher economic penalties in response to its attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea and against U.S. warships defending the critical maritime area.

# REPORT FROM 2015 EXPOSES MASS GRAVES IN BALOCHISTAN

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI

A 2015 ground report by NewsX uncovers mass graves in Balochistan, reinforcing allegations of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings by Pakistani security forces.

Eyewitness accounts and video evidence reveal a graveyard in Quetta where victims were allegedly buried after being abducted and killed.

A ground report from 2015 by NewsX sheds light on mass graves in Balochistan and reinforcing allegations of human rights abuses by the Pakistani army and intelligence agencies. The report, which includes video footage, reveals a graveyard in Quetta where victims of enforced disappearances were allegedly buried after being killed by Pakistani forces.

## EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY FROM THE GROUND

A girl in the video, standing at the site, describes the harrowing reality:

“I am in Quetta, Balochistan. This is the graveyard of the martyrs of Balochistan. What you are seeing is the grave of Khair Bakhsh

Marri. The other graves you see belong to the martyrs of Balochistan who were taken by Pakistani agencies, killed, and buried here. Others are buried in their native places like Mastung, Maj, Kala, Turbat, and Dera Bugti. They were martyred by the ISI terrorists. To hide their oppression, Pakistan is blaming others, claiming that Balochis are fighting under foreign influence, but we are raising our voices ourselves. We are fighting while living in our own land. Everyone in Balochistan hates Pakistan. We will give our lives for the freedom of our country. From the day the oppressive Pakistani state forcibly occupied Balochistan, we have been fighting for our freedom. We have given countless sacrifices and will continue to do so. Pakistan commits such heinous acts that they even desecrate the graves of our martyrs. They have even set our martyrs’ graves on fire.”

## THE KILL-AND-DUMP POLICY

Balochistan has been plagued by enforced disappearances since 2007, when a separatist insurgency gained momentum. A military-led operation launched in 2005 aimed to suppress



*Balochistan has been plagued by enforced disappearances since 2007, when a separatist insurgency gained momentum. A military-led operation launched in 2005 aimed to suppress the Baloch nationalist movement.*

the Baloch nationalist movement.

According to Pakistan’s Federal Ministry of Human Rights, at least 936 bodies have been recovered in Balochistan since 2011, most of them dumped in Quetta, Qalat, Khuzdar, and Makran—areas where the insurgency is strongest. Among the most notorious cases is that of Jalil Reki, a political activist abducted

from Quetta in 2009. His body was found two years later near the Iranian border, over 1,100 km away.

The Pakistani intelligence agencies, frequently accused of enforced disappearances, have been implicated by families of the missing. These families suspect that their loved ones were killed in custody and their bodies dumped in remote locations to cover up the crimes.

## AT A GLANCE

- 2015 NewsX Ground Report: Exposes mass graves in Balochistan, highlighting enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings by Pakistani forces.
- Eyewitness Testimony: Victims allegedly buried in Quetta after abduction and execution by Pakistani agencies.
- Kill-and-Dump Policy: Enforced disappearances in Balochistan since 2007; at least 936 bodies recovered since 2011.
- Jalil Reki Case: Political activist’s body found two years after abduction, over 1,100 km away.
- Human Rights Violations: Independent investigations hindered, with international organizations denied access.
- Missing Persons: Around 18,000 Baloch people missing since 2017, with many illegally arrested.
- International Condemnation: Amnesty International urges Pakistan to end enforced disappearances, but the government ignores calls.
- Widespread Suppression: Enforced disappearances now occur across Pakistan, including in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan.
- Global Call for Justice: Human rights organizations continue demanding accountability for the abductions and killings.

## HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Independent investigations into these disappearances are virtually impossible, as international organizations are denied access to affected areas under the guise of “security concerns.” Critics argue that the restrictions serve to shield state institutions from scrutiny rather than protect citizens.

The Voice of Missing Baloch Persons (VMBP) and other human rights groups estimate that since 2017, around 18,000 people have disappeared in Balochistan. Thousands have been illegally arrested without charges, legal assistance, or disclosure of their whereabouts. Most of them have never appeared before a court. Even official sources acknowledge that at

least 1,000 people have gone missing in the past six years.

According to Amnesty International, nearly 1,200 bodies have been recovered along roadsides, many of them linked to enforced disappearances. The organization has urged Pakistan to immediately end the practice, but the government has largely ignored such calls.

The tactic, once confined to Balochistan, has now become a national tool for silencing activists, journalists, and political opponents across Pakistan.

## A PATTERN OF SUPPRESSION

The practice of enforced disappearances is not limited to Balochistan. Defence of Human Rights, an NGO advocating for missing persons, reports that over 5,000 cases remain unresolved across Pakistan, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Sindh.

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has criticized Pakistan’s Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, established in 2011 under international pressure, for

failing to make significant progress. According to ICJ, the practice has expanded beyond conflict zones and is now a common tool for suppressing dissent nationwide.

An Amnesty International report states that targeted individuals include members of the Baloch, Sindhi, and Pash-tun ethnic groups, the Shia community, human rights defenders, political activists, and suspected members of armed groups. In many cases, individuals are openly taken into custody by police or intelligence agencies, yet authorities refuse to disclose their whereabouts to families. Some victims are eventually released, while others remain in arbitrary detention or disappear entirely. Many suffer torture or die in captivity.

## THE GLOBAL CALL FOR JUSTICE

Despite international condemnation, Pakistan’s government has shown little willingness to address the issue of enforced disappearances. Human rights organizations continue to demand accountability, but the cycle of abductions, killings, and mass graves persists, leaving families in anguish and an entire region in fear.



## PICTURE PERFECT



Bollywood actor Khushi Kapoor poses for a picture during a promotion event of her movie 'Nadaaniyan' in Mumbai. ANI

## KARTIK AARYAN'S MOTHER SEEMINGLY CONFIRMS DATING RUMOURS WITH SREELEELA

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Kartik Aaryan's mother, Mala Tiwari, has seemingly confirmed the actor's rumored relationship with Sreeleela. Recently, she accompanied her son to the IIFA Awards 2025, where a clip surfaced on social media showing her being asked about her future daughter-in-law's expectations.

In her response, Mala Tiwari mentioned that the family's demand for a good wife is "a very good doctor." This comment has left fans speculating if it was a subtle hint toward Kartik's alleged romance with Sreeleela, as the South actress is currently studying to become a doctor.

Neither Kartik nor Sreeleela



la has officially confirmed or denied the rumors, but the statement from his mother has certainly added fuel to the speculation. Earlier this month, Sreeleela was also seen attending a celebration hosted by Kartik and his family for his sister, Dr. Kritika Tiwari, who achieved a milestone in her

medical career. In a video from the party, Kartik and Sreeleela were seen having a good time, with Sreeleela performing a dance from Pushpa 2 while Kartik captured the moments on his phone.

Interestingly, Kartik and Sreeleela will soon share the screen in an untitled

film directed by Anurag Basu. This will be their first collaboration. A teaser for the film was released, showing Kartik performing a romantic song, Tu Meri Zindagi, while sporting a brooding lover's look. The teaser also showcased glimpses of their sizzling on-screen chemistry. The film is set to release in theaters this Diwali.

Kartik Aaryan is an Indian actor who works in Hindi films. While pursuing a degree in engineering, he made his acting debut with Luv Ranjan's buddy film Pyaar Ka PUNCHNAMA (2011). He went on to star in the romances Akaash Vani (2013) and Kaanchi (2014), but these failed to propel his career forward.

## Scarlett Johansson on returning as Black Widow in MCU

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

Actress and singer Scarlett Johansson confirmed that she will not be returning for her character Natasha Romanoff or Black Widow and she has moved on from the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Despite leading a prequel, 2021's Black Widow, Johansson confirmed she would not be returning to the role, reported People.

However, Marvel fans "just don't want to believe it," she said. "They're like, 'But she could come back!' Look,



I think the balance of the entire universe is held in her hand. We're going

to have to let it go. She saved the world. Let her have her hero moment."

Apart from Natasha's onscreen death, Johansson's exit from the franchise was also not straightforward.

In July 2021, the Oscar nominee filed a lawsuit against distributor The Walt Disney Company, alleging that its simultaneous release of Black Widow in theaters and on streaming service Disney+ breached a stipulation in her contract that it be released exclusively in theaters. Months later, she and the conglomerate reached a settlement; its terms were not disclosed, as per the outlet.

## Sara Ali Khan, Aditya-starrer 'Metro In Dino' release date out

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

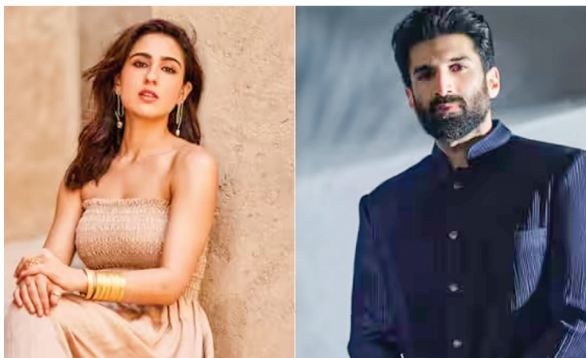
The wait for 'Metro In Dino' has finally been over. Aditya Roy Kapur and Sara Ali Khan starrer has finally got a release date.

Anurag Basu directorial anthology film Metro In Dino is set to hit the theatres on July 4. The anthology film also stars Anupam Kher, Konkana Sen, Neena Gupta, Ali Fazal, Fatima Sana Sheikh and Pankaj Kaoor in prominent roles.

T-Series, the film's official distributor, shared a poster and announced the release date on Instagram. The post read, "When love, fate and city life collide magic is bound to happen! #Metro... In Dino brings the stories of heart from the cities that you love! Experience it on #July4th in cinemas near you"

'Metro...In Dino' marks Aditya and Basu's second collaboration. The duo first worked together in 'Ludo'.

'Metro In Dino,' a film that apparently draws its title from the popular song 'In Dino' from 'Life in a... Metro', will showcase bittersweet



*Anurag Basu directorial anthology film Metro In Dino is set to hit the theatres on July 4. The anthology film also stars Anupam Kher, Konkana Sen, Neena Gupta, Ali Fazal, Fatima Sana Sheikh and Pankaj Kaoor in prominent roles.*

tales of human relationships based in contemporary times.

Sharing more details about the film, Basu had earlier said, "Metro In Dino is a tale of the people and for the people! It has been a while since I am working on this one and I am glad to be collaborating with a powerhouse like Bhushan Kumar yet again who has always been like a pillar to me!"

"The storyline is very fresh and relevant as I look forward to collaborating with amazing artists who bring that essence of contemporary aura with them. As music plays a very important role in any film, I couldn't be happier to be collaborating with my dear friend Pritam who has literally added life to the characters and story with his work," he added.

## Complaint against CNC Prez over Rashmika's security plea

TDG NETWORK  
MADIKERI

A complaint has been filed against Codava National Council (CNC) president Nandineda Nachappa, who sought security for actress Rashmika Mandanna following a controversial remark made by Congress MLA Ravi Kumar Gowda.

The complaint, filed by another organization, alleges that Nachappa is trying to create divisions in society and disturb law and order.



The complaint has been submitted to the Mandya Superintendent of Police.

Earlier this month, the Kodava rights' protection organization, Codava National Council (CNC), expressed serious concerns over Mandanna's safety, urging the Union and Karnataka Home Ministers to provide her with security amid the ongoing political controversy.

The controversy erupted earlier this month when Karnataka Congress MLA Ravikumar Gowda Ganiga accused Mandanna of dis-

regarding the Kannada film industry by allegedly refusing to attend the Bengaluru International Film Festival. He further added that the actress "must be taught a lesson."

While speaking to the media on March 3, he said, "Rashmika Mandanna, who started her career with the Kannada movie Kirik Party in Karnataka, refused to attend the International Film Festival last year when we invited her. She said, 'I have my house in Hyderabad, I don't know where Karnataka is, and I don't have

time. I can't come.' One of our legislator friends visited her house 10-12 times to invite her, but she refused and even disregarded Kannada, despite growing up in the industry here. Shouldn't we teach them a lesson?"

Later, the MLA, while speaking to ANI, provided clarification on his statement.

"When I said that I would teach her a lesson, I meant about life lessons, but I did not mean to attack her; I said, do not kick the ladder you have climbed," Gowda told.

## Sonam Bajwa to star opposite Harshvardhan Rane in 'Deewaniyat'

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Actor Harshvardhan Rane's starrer 'Deewaniyat' has found its leading lady. After announcing Rane as the male lead, the makers have now confirmed that actress Sonam Bajwa will star alongside him in the intense love story.

Bajwa, on Wednesday, took to her Instagram account to share a motion poster featuring a hand holding a red rose. The video



also included her voiceover. In the video, Bajwa can be heard saying, "Tera pyar pyar nahi, teri zid hai. Jisse tu paar kar raha hai,

woh har hadd ki hadd hai. Jal jaungi, mit jaungi, par khaati hoon main kasam--tere ishq mein jhuk jaoon, main nahi woh sanam.

## BRAIN PICKING



Women-centric films are being made, and they are doing well.

— POOJA HEGDE  
(Indian Actress)

## 'Locked' coming to Indian theatres on March 21

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Indian audience, get ready to watch 'Locked' in theatres near you.

The film will be released in Indian theatres on March 21. Bill Skarsgard stars in Locked alongside Academy Award winner Anthony Hopkins, who returns to familiar territory as a chilling villain reminiscent of his iconic Hannibal Lecter role in The Silence of the Lambs.

Sharing his experience working on the project, David Yarovsky in a press note said, "Working with Bill and Anthony was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. They are two of the greatest living actors, each



having brought to life some of the most iconic villains of all time. Now, they're going head-to-head in a battle of wits--a fight to the death! Together, they are electric! I'm deeply grateful to both of them, as well as to Sam Raimi, for being such incredible creative partners and for trusting me to steer

the ship."

The official synopsis read, "Bill Skarsgard as a petty thief, who breaks into a state-of-the-art luxury SUV, only to realize he has walked straight into a meticulously orchestrated trap. The vehicle's owner--portrayed by Anthony Hopkins, a self-proclaimed vigilante delivering his own brand of twisted justice, seizes remote control, transforming the car into a deadly prison where every decision is a matter of life and death. With no means of escape, Eddie must fight to survive in a ride where escape is an illusion, survival is a nightmare, and justice shifts into high gear."

## Oscar-nominated 'September 5' to open Red Lorry Film Festival in India



TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

The Red Lorry Film Festival, curated by BookMyShow India, has announced its opening night film, September 5, an Oscar-nominated drama about the 1972 Munich Olympics terrorist attack, according to Variety.

The festival, now in its second year, will take place

from March 21 to 23, with screenings in Mumbai and, for the first time, in Hyderabad. The event will be held at Maison INOX at Jio World Plaza, Maison PVR at Jio World Drive in Mumbai, and Prasads Multiplex in Hyderabad.

Directed by Tim Fehlbaum and distributed by Paramount Pictures, September 5 takes viewers inside ABC

Sports' broadcast station during the Munich tragedy.

As per Variety, the film combines archival footage with dramatized scenes to recreate the intense atmosphere as journalists reported live from the scene. It earned an Oscar nomination for Best Original Screenplay and has received critical praise for its gripping storytelling.



# TOYOTA URBAN CRUISER TAISOR AT & MT REVIEW | RUMBLE IN THE FRONX

Should you buy the Toyota Urban Cruiser Taisor over the Maruti Suzuki Fronx?

SYED SHIRAZ SHAH

Keeping the throttle pinned in 3rd, the Taisor MT's tacho and speedo needles swept past the halfway mark in their respective dials in tandem, and I could now see its bonnet being absolutely parallel to a rashly driven, UK registered, last-gen Honda Amaze's bonnet with a gap of around half a foot between the two cars... This happened 3-4 minutes later after noticing the Amaze driver in my mirrors overtaking everyone from the wrong side, almost throwing off a couple on a motorcycle in the process. Now, while the righteous part of me wanted to stop him and call the cops, the more prudent part of me reminded myself that I was driving a media unit and protecting it superceded everything else at that moment. So I let him pass my car as well from the left, but, since the road ahead had cleared by now, I thought I should at least give him a subtle idea that his rash driving is being noticed, so that he doesn't continue endangering others lives anymore, hopefully. Therefore, I gunned the Taisor MT while he was trying to pass it at full chat already. The bonnets, as mentioned earlier, were now parallel to each other, and for the first few seconds the Amaze driver still tried to pass but he quickly realized that he wasn't winning this one. He slowed down, despite a completely clear road ahead, and started driving normally, matching the pace of surrounding traffic. I still kept an eye on him in my rear view mirror, ready for an evasive maneuver if he tried anything funny, but, thankfully, he didn't revert to his previous uncivil behaviour. The couple on the motorcycle passed me a few seconds later, nodding in appreciation. Sometimes, you really do need to take a stand, and I am glad that I did.

That said, please refrain if you do not know the difference in standing your ground and road rage. "No engagement" is the thumb rule here. Therefore, no words or even stares should be exchanged in such situations.

Also, an offshoot of this event was that I got a good idea about the Taisor MT's performance. Of course, I didn't stop there; I put both the MT and AT to my routine test cycle the next day. Therefore, unlike my other reviews where I start with the design, here I'll begin by talking about the performance. Also, I would continue calling it just Taisor and not Urban Cruiser Taisor.

PERFORMANCE

You might be aware but I shall reiterate it anyway that all media units are generally top-end models. Therefore, while Toyota also sells the Taisor with a naturally aspirated 1.2 liter petrol engine, the press cars are the top-end 1.0 liter turbo petrol models. You may check the power and torque figures on the company's website and/or in the brochures. Here, as always, I would tell you what those figures translate to on the road.

Let's talk about the acceleration first. In my customary 0-100 km/h test, the AT consistently pulled 9.5 s runs, whereas the MT wasn't too far behind with consistent 10.0 s runs. In fact, I did manage a 9.9 s run too with the MT. However, clearly, the AT is the quicker car. But it's the MT that can stop quicker. I managed to pull off an eye-popping time of 4.5 s while braking from 160-0 km/h. The AT took 6.2 seconds for the same. Well, automatics still can't beat the manuals in engine braking...

Let me quickly add that all these tests were done on a closed road, and, no, I won't give you its coordinates.

Now while we have identified that both Taisors are quick enough, let's examine how they perform on the highways. I am talking about their cruising ability. The AT does a marvelous job here by cruising in the top (6th) gear at 100 km/h at just 2,000 rpm. The MT has a five-speed gearbox and as such 100 km/h in 5th gear comes at 2,600 rpm in it. However, the NVH levels at these speeds are well contained in both the cars. Therefore, don't be afraid to get the manual in any case.

RIDE QUALITY & HANDLING

The ride quality of both the cars turned out to be surprisingly good too. There is a terrible broken patch of around 500 m on one of my test routes, which makes for a wonderful testbed for gauging cars' and bikes' suspension setups. Both the Taisors tackled it well, so if you're someone with an ancestral property in a Godforsaken place, the Taisor will get you there in more than reasonable comfort. Also, it goes without saying then that it handles our usual road irregularities with even more ease.

Now the handling of this car is something that you might not immediately notice because you won't perhaps drive it like that initially. It's not a Toyota GR-86, right? Heck, it's not even a Toyota, but a Maruti Suzuki Fronx with Toyota badges. Still, my job as a reviewer involves taking the vehicles,



as and when possible, to their limits GRADUALLY, and I am happy to report that this car's dynamics are pretty sorted. It's the chassis that shines here. That's why, despite the steering lacking in feel and directness, your inputs are mostly rewarded with precise directional changes, and, for what its worth, the steering does carry a decent amount of weight at all times.

FUEL EFFICIENCY

I shall keep this section short. The MT is the more fuel efficient car, and if you know a thing or two about cars, you'd already be aware that a conventional manual gearbox will always be more fuel efficient than a torque converter with the same engine. So no surprises there. That said, the AT doesn't have questionable drinking

habits either. It will give you around 13 km/l in the city and 16 km/l on the highways. The MT will return around 15 km/l in the city and 18 km/l on the highways.

EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR

I'll keep this one concise as well. Hands down, the Taisor is a better designed car than the Fronx. Don't get me wrong though—the Fronx doesn't look bad by any stretch of imagination. It's just that I find its design to be unnecessarily busy, while the Taisor's lines and contours are so much more cohesive, smoother, and elegant. It's a more handsome car. Period.

I won't talk much about the interiors as both the Fronx and Taisor have been around for quite sometime

and you'd already be aware that the interiors are almost identical. However, since this is a review, I am obligated to inform you that it's a comfortable cabin overall and no member of your family would ever get a nasty surprise in this car as far as things like comfort, ergonomics, and convenience are concerned.

That said, while the driver's Auto power-window switch always stays illuminated, the rest of the switches on the door panel do not. Dear Toyota, please make at least the all-door lock/unlock switch backlit as well.

Also, the boot's loading lip is quite high and you'd need to be in good shape to haul heavy items into and out of it.

VERDICT

Have you seen those mov-

Let's talk about the acceleration first. In my customary 0-100 km/h test, the AT consistently pulled 9.5 s runs, whereas the MT wasn't too far behind with consistent 10.0 s runs. In fact, I did manage a 9.9 s run too with the MT. However, clearly, the AT is the quicker car. But it's the MT that can stop quicker. I managed to pull off an eye-popping time of 4.5 s while braking from 160-0 km/h. The AT took 6.2 seconds for the same. Well, automatics still can't beat the manuals in engine braking...



ies or OTT series where the friend or sibling of the main lead is more handsome/beautiful? The Taisor is that friend/sibling.

Plus, since it's not a per-

son, but a car carrying a Toyota badge, you get a much longer "standard" warranty coverage—3 years / 1 lakh km (can be extended to 5 years / 2 lakh

km) vs Maruti's 2 years / 40,000 km—and complimentary RSA (Road Side Assistance) for five years. That makes the Taisor a no-brainer, really.





# COMORIN BRINGS ITS TASTE TO THE WHOLE OF NEW DELHI NOW!

SANJANA CHAWLA

In a city like New Delhi, where food options are endless, it's not often that a new delivery service gets us excited. But Comorin, a popular eatery which was voted India's Best Restaurant Bar at 30 Best Bars 2022, is finally delivering in the capital, and I couldn't wait to try it out. I ordered a variety of dishes to get a feel for Comorin's menu, so read on to know what I felt about the eatery's offerings and taste!

The Comorin Vada Pav was a great starting point. The vada was crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, just like it should be, and the pav was fresh, while the chutneys added a nice tanginess to the dish.

The Sweet Corn Khichadi was another unique surprise as I didn't know what to expect! The dish turned out to be a flavorful, slightly sweet, and comforting bowl of goodness. The sweet corn added a nice pop of flavor, and the khichadi was cooked to perfection - just what a comfortable, homely meal should be like!

For mains, I tried the Comorin Paneer Rara with Garlic & Green Chilli Naan. The curry was a creamy, spicy delight and the paneer was cooked to perfection. The naans were not too garlicky or spicy, and were a great accompaniment to the other dishes.

The Kashmiri Guchhi



Pulao, on the other hand, was a rich, earthy delight and definitely my favourite! The pulao was cooked to perfection, and the mushrooms and soya chunks in it were flavorful and aromatic. It was a dish that warmed the heart and filled the belly and I couldn't stop eating it all! The accompanying Saffron Raita added a cool, refreshing, soothing touch to the pulao.

Finally to end my hearty meal from Comorin, I tried the Malai Cheeni Toast, which was a sweet, indulgent treat. The toast was crispy, the malai was creamy, and the honeycomb added a nice sweetness to the dish.

Overall, I was impressed with Comorin's offerings as all the dishes were flavorful, aromatic, and expertly cooked. The delivery was prompt, and the packaging was impressive. If you're looking for a taste of the world in New Delhi, Comorin is definitely worth trying out.

Rating: 4.5/5



# L'Opéra launches new menu and welcomes on board new French chef

TDG NETWORK

Lopera's Delhi's premier French Pâtisserie-Boulangerie and Salon de Thé, is delighted to announce the appointment of its new Head Chef, Amélie Dutheil. With a distinguished career rooted in fine pastry and culinary innovation, Chef Amélie brings a wealth of expertise, passion, and artistry to L'Opéra.

Chef Amélie has refined her craft in some of France's most esteemed establishments, including Michelin-starred restaurants and luxury patisseries. With a keen eye for detail and a dedication to authentic French gastronomy, she is poised to enhance L'Opéra's offerings, infusing them with her signature creativity and precision.

"We are thrilled to welcome Chef Amélie to the L'Opéra family," said Laurent Samandari, Co-Founder and CEO of L'Opéra. "Her extensive



experience and vision align perfectly with our commitment to delivering an unparalleled authentic French experience. We look forward to seeing her innovative touch elevate our menu and delight our patrons."

Expressing her excitement about joining L'Opéra, Chef Amélie shared, "It is an honour to be part of such a pres-

tigious establishment. L'Opéra's unwavering dedication to authenticity and quality deeply resonates with my culinary philosophy. I am eager to craft exquisite pastries and delicacies that celebrate the timeless traditions of French cuisine while embracing fresh, locally sourced ingredients."

L'Opéra invites food lovers and patrons to experi-

ence Chef Amélie's artistry firsthand, as she brings a new wave of exciting and refined pastry creations to its renowned selection.

L'Opéra is also delighted to announce the launch of its new menu.

The new menu at L'Opéra includes a variety of exquisite appetisers, main courses, and special dishes that reflect the restaurant's commitment to qual-

ity and flavour. Guests can look forward to a diverse range of options, from a delectable brown rice dish with exotic vegetables and spicy cottage cheese to succulent grilled chicken breast served with creamy mashed potatoes and a rich black pepper sauce. Each dish has been meticulously crafted to showcase authentic French flavours with a contemporary twist.

In addition to the main courses, the menu features an array of appetisers and special dishes designed to delight. Highlights include a velvety creamy broccoli soup, a gourmet tropical salad bowl with sweet potato, sprouts, and couscous, and a vibrant Mediterranean pesto wrap. These offerings provide a perfect start to the meal, setting the stage for an unforgettable dining experience.

L'Opéra invites food enthusiasts and loyal patrons to experience the new menu and savour the exceptional flavours it has to offer.





# HEARTBREAK! DONNARUMMA STANDS BETWEEN LIVERPOOL AND WIN

AGENCIES  
MADRID

Gianluigi Donnarumma came through and Paris Saint-Germain defeated Liverpool in a penalty shootout to join Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Inter Milan in the quarter-finals of the Champions League on Tuesday.

PSG beat Liverpool 1-0 on the night to level the aggregate score at 1-1. Ousmane Dembélé scored 12 minutes into the second-leg match after a blunder by the Liverpool defense.

After extra time, Donnarumma stopped the penalty shots by Darwin Nunez and Curtis Jones to secure his team a 4-1 shootout win. Desire Doue scored the winning spot kick for PSG, which will face either Aston Villa or Club Brugge.



"It does not matter if we deserve the win. Both teams deserved to go through," PSG coach Luis Enrique

said. "We were better in Paris and they were better here. My team showed great personality and character at

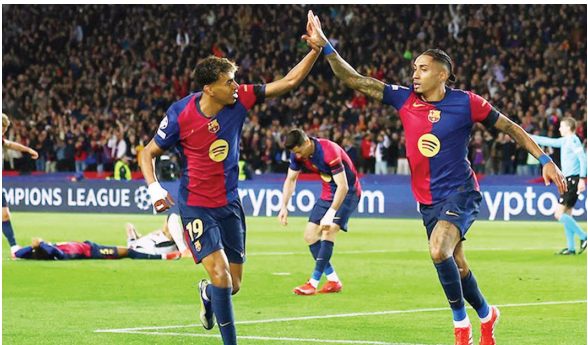
Anfield." The French league leader — seeking its first Champions League title — had lost

## Barcelona beat Benfica 3-1

AGENCIES  
BARCELONA

Lamine Yamal and Raphinha dazzled as Barcelona thumped Benfica 3-1 on Tuesday, reaching the Champions League quarterfinals 4-1 on aggregate. Raphinha netted either side of a stunning Yamal strike as the Catalans dominated in the first half, building on their 1-0 last 16, first leg win in Lisbon. Nicolas Otamendi had quickly levelled Raphinha's opener but the visitors were blown away at the Olympic Stadium as Barcelona progressed comfortably from the tie and produced some moments of brilliant attacking football.

Hansi Flick's side will face Borussia Dortmund or Lille



in the quarter-finals as they aim to win the competition for the first time since 2015 and the era of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Luis Suarez. "We are candidates to win everything," Raphinha told Movistar, with the club in the hunt for a potential treble. Barcelona are unbeaten in 17 matches in 2025. "It's good that the players think about that (winning everything), it

shows they have confidence, they believe in what they are doing, but my job is to stay calm," said Flick. Flick had said Barca would play for late club doctor Carles Minarro, who died suddenly on Saturday ahead of the team's match against Osasuna, which was postponed, and the players observed a silence in his honour before kick-off.

## Inter Milan cruise into league quarters

AGENCIES  
MADRID

Inter Milan will face Bayern Munich in the quarter-finals of the Champions League after seeing off Feyenoord 2-1 on Tuesday to complete a comfortable 4-1 aggregate victory. A thumping early strike from Marcus Thuram and Hakan Calhanoglu's penalty at the San Siro gave Inter comfortable passage to the last eight, where the Italian champions will face a blockbuster clash with Bayern Munich. Inter lead Serie A and there is talk in Italy that Simone Inzaghi's team have a chance at repeating the league, Italian Cup and Champions League treble won by Jose Mourinho 15 years ago.

"It's not about believing or not believing (in the treble), when you're at Inter you play every game to win. If you win every match you'll do great things," said Thuram.

Standing in Inter's way next month will be Bayern after they swept aside Bayer Leverkusen, who beat Inter during the league phase.

Inzaghi is hoping that he will have his first XI available for what will be the biggest matches of the season for Inter who are keen to go one better than 2023 when they lost the Champions League final to Manchester City.

"It will be a complicated match. They're solid and very well coached but we'll go for it just as we have

## Harry Kane revels in a statement win for Bayern Munich

AGENCIES  
LEVERKUSEN, GERMANY

Harry Kane is one step closer to being a Champions League winner, and he wants to enjoy Bayern Munich's statement victory over German rival Bayer Leverkusen.

"To beat this team 5-0 over two legs shows the type of team that we are," Kane told broadcaster Prime Video after scoring his 10th Champions League goal of the season in Tuesday's 2-0 second-leg win.

"We're in the quarterfinal now where Bayern Munich should be and we want to keep pushing," Kane said. "We just want to enjoy this because it's not easy. Especially when you play your domestic rivals, there's a lot of pressure, there's a lot of intensity that goes into it."

Kane added that Bayern hadn't wanted to protect its three-goal lead from the first leg, but instead wanted to put Leverkusen under more pressure by creating chances early on: "In the second half we knew they had to come out and try something and we punished them."

Next stop in the Champions League is a quarterfinal meeting with Inter Milan.

"It will be tough," Kane said. "The San Siro's a really tough place to go but also, any team we play, we know that we can cause



problems."

Kane's career has been defined by an abundance of individual awards and a lack of team trophies. With Bayern leading the Bundesliga by eight points from Leverkusen and into the Champions League quarterfinals, that wait could soon come to an end.

The coach who has got the best out of Kane and the players around him wasn't Bayern's first choice last year.

## Special Olympics Winter Games: India bags 4 medals on Day 1

AGENCIES  
BARDONECCHIA

The Indian contingent commenced its campaign at the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games with remarkable performances and achievements. Securing a total of four medals, comprising two gold and two silver medals, on the opening day, the Indian athletes demonstrated exceptional skill and determination in Italy.

Contesting in all 6 of its participating sports disciplines on Tuesday, the Indian athletes took away two gold and two silver medals in the only medal event of the day- Snowboarding, held in Bardonecchia. While Bharti and Sameer grabbed a gold medal each, Hem Chand and Harshita Thakur took home a silver medal in their respective divisions of the Novice Giant Slalom Final, as per a press release from Special Olympics Bharat.

The victory by snowboarding athletes has successfully opened India's account of medals at the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games. As the Indian contingent prepares to return to action on Wednesday, the athletes will only aim to make further significant additions to this tally.

A 49-member contingent, comprising 30 athletes and 19 support staff members, has been sent to represent India at the tournament in Turin, Italy. The event promises to bring forward



*The victory by snowboarding athletes has successfully opened India's account of medals at the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games.*



around 1500 athletes with intellectual disabilities from 102 countries to participate in eight sports, aiming to promote inclusivity and representation in the sporting world.

Eight sports will be spread across four venues: Speed Skating and Floorball will take place in Turin, snowshoeing and Alpine Skiing will be organized in Sestriere, and snowboard-

ing and Cross-Country Skiing will be played in the cities of Bardonecchia and Pragelato, respectively. The Special Olympics World Winter Games are scheduled to take place in Italy from March 8 to March 15.

This monumental event will be the largest sports and humanitarian gathering of the year, showcasing the incredible talents and

resilience of individuals with intellectual disabilities and promoting global inclusion through sports.

The Special Olympics World Winter Games is a prestigious international event that brings together athletes with intellectual disabilities from around the globe. This year's edition has attracted participants from 102 countries, with approximately 1500 athletes competing across eight sports.

The event aims to promote inclusivity and representation in the sporting world, providing a platform for athletes to showcase their talents and abilities.

The games are being held across four venues in Turin and its surrounding areas.

Speed skating and floorball competitions are taking place in Turin itself, while snowshoeing and alpine skiing events are being organized in Sestriere. Bardonecchia is hosting the snowboarding and cross-country skiing events, and Pragelato is the venue for cross-country skiing competitions.

As the games progress, the Indian athletes will undoubtedly continue to give their best efforts, representing the country with honor and determination.

Their participation in this prestigious event highlights India's commitment to promoting inclusivity and providing equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

## Suraj Singh sets 1,000m record in National Youth Athletics

AGENCIES  
PATNA

Uttarakhand's Suraj Singh broke the 1,000m national youth record to hog the limelight on the final day of the National Youth Athletics Championships here on Wednesday. The boys 1,000m race at the Patliputra Sports Complex turned out to be the most exciting event of the day as the top two runners ran better than 15-year-old national youth record of 2 minute 27.20 seconds which was set by Rahul Pal in 2010.

Singh's gold-winning time was 2:26.04, while silver winner Vikas Kumar of Uttar Pradesh clocked 2:26.59 to also dip below the earlier national youth record.

Sohit Vijender of Haryana



won the bronze with a time of 2:27.27 which was better than the meet record of 2:28.89 clocked last year by Md Nooruddin in Bilaspur.

The boys javelin throw gold went to Himanshu of Haryana whose best effort was 72.00m.

Misti Karmakar of West Bengal took home the girls

javelin throw gold with a distance of 45.04m.

Results: Boys:

200m: Sayed Sabeer (Karnataka) 21.67 seconds, J Nived Krishna (Kerala) 21.85 seconds, Aditya Pisal (Maharashtra) 21.96 seconds.

1,000m: Suraj Singh (Uttarakhand) 2:26.04, Vikas Kumar (Uttar Pradesh) 2:26.59, Sohiti Vijender (Haryana) 2:27.27.

Long jump: Shivam Yadav (Uttar Pradesh) 7.26m, Rajeev Roy (West Bengal) 7.12m, Pradeep Kumar (Bihar) 6.69m.

Javelin throw: Himanshu (Haryana) 72.00m, Krishan Chandra (Madhya Pradesh) 66.77m, Prince Jatiwal (Haryana) 65.36m.

Girls:

200m: Prisha Mishra (Haryana) 24.72 seconds,

Aarti (Haryana) 24.73 seconds, Bhoomika Nehate (Maharashtra) 24.99 seconds.

1,000m: Nandani Rajbhar (Uttar Pradesh) 2:55.68 seconds, Janhavi Hirudkar (Maharashtra) 2:56.54 seconds, Muskan (Haryana) 2:58.98 seconds.

Javelin throw: Misti Karmakar (West Bengal) 45.04m, Siya Banjara (Rajasthan) 41.82m, Tanushri Mahalder (West Bengal) 41.73m.

High jump: Anchal Patil (Maharashtra) 1.68m, Rinku Ghosh (West Bengal) 1.65m, Harshitha P (Karnataka) 1.60m.

Heptathlon: Anamika Ajesh (Kerala) 4270 points, Baddi Vyshali (Telangana) 4224 points, Harshitha P (Karnataka) 4128 points.

## All England Open: Sindhu out, Rohan-Ruthvika advance

AGENCIES  
BIRMINGHAM

Star Indian shuttler PV Sindhu suffered an inexplicable meltdown, bowing out of the All England Championships with a three-game loss to Korea's Kim Ga Eun in the women's singles round of 32 on Wednesday.

The two-time Olympic medalist, returning after recovering from a hamstring injury, squandered an opening-game advantage to lose 21-19, 13-21, 13-21 to world number 21 Kim in



a match that lasted just over an hour at Arena Birmingham.

Sindhu, 29, was cruising at 20-12 in the opening game but almost threw it away, allowing Kim to re-

cover to 19-20 before eventually winning the game.

However, Sindhu's form dipped thereafter, while Kim grew in confidence, which was reflected in her improved movement and

shot selection.

It was yet another disappointing result for world number 16 Sindhu, who had exited in the opening round of the Indonesia Masters in January, following a quarterfinal finish at the India Open Super 750 to start the year.

India's Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde, however, progressed to the second round of mixed doubles competition, prevailing 21-10, 17-21, 24-22 over Chinese Taipei's Ye Hong Wei and Nicole Gonzales Chan, ranked 41st.