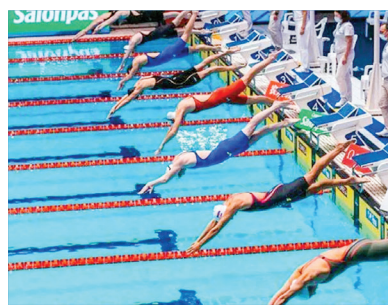




2
PARLIAMENT ADJOURNED
AS DMK MPS PROTEST WITH
T-SHIRTS WITH SLOGANS



11
CAN EUROPE SURVIVE
SANS RUSSIA'S GAS
LIFELINE?



16
INDIA TO HOST 11TH
ASIAN SWIMMING C'SHIP
IN AHMEDABAD

30 NAXALITES KILLED IN 2 ENCOUNTERS IN C'GARH

■ A police jawan was also killed in Bijapur encounter

AGENCIES
BASTAR (CHHATTISGARH)

In a fresh offensive against Naxals, security forces killed at least 30 members of the banned CPI (Maoist) in two separate encounters in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region on Thursday, officials said.

While 26 Naxalites were killed in Bijapur district, four Maoists were gunned down in Kanker by a joint team of the BSF and District Reserve Guard (DRG) personnel of the state police.

Security forces recovered the bodies of 30 Naxalites along with a large cache of firearms during search operations in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur and Kanker districts on Thursday, Bastar Inspector General of Police P Sundarraj said.

After two separate encounters with Naxalites in the two districts, IG Sundarraj said, "Operations were conducted today in various areas of the Bastar district. In the Bijapur-Dantewada border region, we have recovered the bodies of 26 Naxalites."

"A large number of AK-47 rifles, as well as automatic and semi-automatic weapons, have also been seized.

One personnel of the Bijapur District Reserve Guard (DRG) lost his life during the encounter," he said.

Speaking about the encounter near the Kanker-Narayanpur border, the IG said that four Naxalites were killed in the gunfight, and their bodies were recovered during a search operation. "The search operation is still underway in the area," he added.

Earlier in the day, Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma condoled the death of the District Reserve Guard and said that at least 18 bodies out of the total 22 Naxalites killed in an encounter were recovered.

"Search operations have been ongoing in the Gangaloor area between Bijapur and Dantewada. One of our DRG jawans, Raju Oyyami, was killed in action during the operation. The entire government stands with his family. May God give them strength," the Deputy CM said.

He further praised the security forces, saying, "I congratulate the jawans of Bastar and the entire team in Bijapur. This success is due to the bravery and strength of our soldiers. In addition

■ P3



Jawans returning from the encounter site after the encounter in the forest area at Bijapur-Dantewada border, in Bijapur on Thursday. ANI

Big success in Naxal-free India drive: Shah

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said the security forces have achieved another big success in its march to make the country Naxal-free.

Shah also said the Narendra Modi government is moving forward with a ruthless approach against the Naxalites, and adopting a zero tolerance policy against those extremists who are not surrendering despite all the facilities be-

ing offered.

"Today our soldiers have achieved another big success in the direction of a 'Naxal Mukta Bharat Abhiyan'. Twenty-two Naxalites were killed in two separate operations by our security forces at Bijapur and Kanker in Chhattisgarh.

Later in the day, Bastar Inspector General of Police P Sundarraj said security forces recovered the bodies of 30 Naxalites along with a large cache of firearms during search operations in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur and Kanker districts.

Maha clash over Disha Salian case

MUMBAI: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve on Wednesday accused the BJP of 'conspiring to defame' party leader Aaditya Thackeray by raising questions on him in connection with the Disha Salian death case.



"I think this matter has gone to the court. We have no idea what he (Disha's father) has said, but Aaditya Thackeray is a mature leader, a young leader. The Bharatiya Janata Party is conspiring to defame him by putting pressure on him. We don't need to answer to this conspiracy. The court will answer," Ambadas Danve told media. DETAILS ■ P4

Musk's X moves court against govt's 'content-blocking mechanism'

AGENCIES
BENGALURU

Social media giant 'X' (formerly Twitter), owned by US billionaire Elon Musk, has filed a lawsuit in the Karnataka High Court against Government of India, challenging what it called unlawful content regulation and arbitrary censorship.

It raised concerns over the Centre's interpretation of the Information Technology (IT) Act, particularly its use of Section 79(3)(b), which 'X' argues violates Supreme Court rulings and undermines free expression online.

The lawsuit alleged the government is using the said section to create a parallel content-blocking mechanism, bypassing the structured legal process outlined in Section 69A.

'X' claimed this approach contradicts the Supreme Court's 2015 ruling in the Shreya Singhal case, which established that content can only be blocked through a proper judicial process or the legally defined route under Section 69A.

According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B), Section 79(3)(b) mandates online platforms to remove illegal content when directed by either a court order or a government notification.

If a platform fails to comply within 36 hours, it risks losing its safe harbor protection under Section 79(1) and could be held accountable under various laws, including the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

However, X has contested this interpretation, arguing

NORTH OR SOUTH, NETAS WANT FAT PAY

K'taka CM, ministers get 100% salary hike

AGENCIES
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has approved a 100% salary hike for the Chief Minister, ministers, and MLAs, sparking a heated debate. The approval was granted for two amendment bills.

The approval was granted for the Karnataka Ministers' Salaries and Allow-



ances (Amendment) Bill 2025 and the Karnataka Legislature Members' Salaries, Pensions, and Allowances (Amendment) Bill

2025.

Sources indicate that the bills are likely to be tabled in the Assembly on Thursday itself.

Home Minister G Parameshwara justified the hike, citing rising expenditures and the need for lawmakers to survive.

"The justification is that their expenditure is also going up along with other

people. A common man is also suffering, and MLAs are also suffering. So, recommendations have come from MLAs and others, and that is why the Chief Minister has taken the decision. Everybody has to survive and CM will manage to give this money from some account..." Parameshwara said. ■ P3

Shambhu border opens after 13 months; farmers up in arms

TARUNI GANDHI & NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

Farmers across Punjab staged protests at several locations on Thursday against the detention of several farmer leaders and the police crackdown at the Shambhu border. Farmers held protests in Sangrur, Muktsar, Moga, Tarn Taran, Gidderbaha and Faridkot districts.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha announced that they would continue to hold demonstrations outside the offices of deputy commissioners on Friday.

Meanwhile, after 13 months, one lane of the Shambhu border between Punjab and Haryana has been reopened for traffic, allowing movement from Rajpura in Punjab toward Ambala and Delhi.



Road restoration work underway as Haryana Police removes the cement barricades on the Ghaggar river, at the Shambhu border (Haryana-Punjab interstate) on Thursday. ANI

Haryana Police is in the process of removing barricades from the second lane. This lane will be opened after a green signal from NHAI safety team. The border had remained closed for 13 months due to the farmers' protest.

On Thursday, the once-bustling protest site at the Shambhu border was left deserted. Scattered across the highway were utensils, LPG cylinders, freezers, washing machines, chairs,

tables, beds, and clothes—remnants of the protest camps that had stood for months.

However, security has been heightened at the Haryana-Punjab Shambhu border as a Punjab police cleared Khanauri border. At Khanauri border, the Haryana security forces began removing the cemented barricades that were set up to stop Punjab farmers from marching to Delhi. ■ P3

Stock market extends gains to 4th straight day

Sensex rises 899.02 point, Nifty 283 pts

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The stock market ended Thursday on a high note, with benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surging on positive sentiment in global markets. Inves-

Nifty50 crossed 23k mark after a month. the Federal Reserve maintaining its forecast of two rate cuts this year boosted investor sentiment.

tors remained optimistic despite looming concerns over tariff policies, with the benchmark indices closing at record highs. The BSE Sensex soared by 899.02 points, closing at 76,348.06, while the NSE Nifty climbed 283.05 points, ending at 23,190.65. DETAILS ■ P7



Artists perform during the opening ceremony of the 2nd Khelo India Para Games, in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

At 7.3%, Kerala logs highest inflation in states in Feb

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India's inflation hit a low of 3.6 per cent in February with many states seeing high inflation. According to SBI research report, Kerala reported the highest inflation rate of 7.3 per cent among states in February, followed by Chhattisgarh at 4.9 per cent.

The overall inflation trends continue to highlight the divergence between rural and urban inflation, with rural areas experiencing a sharper rise in prices.

This disparity is largely attributed to the higher weightage of food prices in the CPI index. Food items constitute 54.2 per cent of the rural consumption basket, compared to 36.3 per

cent in urban areas.

Among major states, nine states recorded rural inflation higher than the all-India rural inflation rate, while eight states witnessed urban inflation exceeding the national urban inflation rate.

The report says that Tamil Nadu has recorded higher inflation than the all-India inflation rate in nine of the

last 13 years. In contrast, Gujarat and Punjab have managed to keep their inflation rates lower than the national average in nine of the last 13 years.

Despite the all-India inflation rate cooling to a seven-month low of 3.6 per cent in February 2025, inflationary trends among states remain divergent. However, infla-

■ P3

Omar plans a panel on MLAs' salaries

AGENCIES
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah announced on Thursday that a new Assembly building will be constructed soon, alongside the development of courts equipped for virtual hearings.

Addressing key concerns during the ongoing Budget



Session 2025, he emphasised the need to revise MLA salaries, unchanged since 2015, and proposed forming a committee com-

prising the Leader of Opposition (LOP), Congress, and PDP to align salary revisions with parliamentary norms every five years.

"Officers now have salaries of Rs 3 lakh, while we are stuck in 2015. It's not right," Abdullah said, adding that guidelines for the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) under MPLADs should also be

updated.

On the issue of power amnesty, the Chief Minister declared that the current amnesty scheme would continue only for this year, with no further extensions.

"Giving amnesty, again and again, is not good," he remarked, citing an example: "I, Omar Abdullah, ■ P3

PARLIAMENT ADJOURNED AS DMK MPs PROTEST WITH T-SHIRTS WITH SLOGANS

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Both houses of Parliament were adjourned on Thursday without transacting any significant business following protests over delimitation by DMK MPs who wore T-shirts with slogans to oppose any redrawing of electoral boundaries.

While Lok Sabha witnessed two adjournments in the pre-lunch period till the house was adjourned for the day at 2 PM, Rajya Sabha was adjourned thrice in the pre-lunch period till the final adjournment at 2 PM.

Both the houses were adjourned for the day as opposition members protested wearing T-shirts with slogans to highlight the issue of delimitation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies.

This is the first day during the second part of the Budget Session when the Houses were adjourned without



Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MPs A Raja, Thanga Tamil Selvan, Kanimozhi NVN Somu, T.R. Baalu and party MPs stage a protest on the issue of delimitation at Parliament during the Budget session, in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

transacting any business except for the laying of papers. DMK MPs have been raising the issue of delimitation in both the houses of Parliament, claiming that the exercise would lead to reduction of Parliament seats in the southern states if it is carried out on the basis of census population. The Chair in both houses

have rejected adjournment notices in this regard by DMK members.

Objecting the wearing of T-shirts with slogans on delimitation, Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was in the Chair, requested the Opposition members to come back to the House in "proper shape".

"We have a discussion on

agriculture. Such an important topic of the country you are not allowing the discussion to take place. I request you to cooperate and let the proceedings go on," he urged the Opposition members.

When they did not comply, Tenneti adjourned the House for the day.

Earlier, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla objected to the

DMK members wearing T-shirts with slogans written on them, and said such actions were against the rules of procedure of the House.

Birla adjourned the proceedings till noon. Similar scenes were witnessed when the House reconvened at 12 noon and TDP member Tenneti, who was in the chair, adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm.

DMK members were wearing white T-shirts with slogans "fairdelimitation Tamil Nadu will fight, Tamil Nadu will win" written on them.

"House functions with rules and procedures. Members have to maintain the dignity and honour of the House. But some MPs are not following the rules and violating the dignity which is not acceptable," Birla said when the House met at 11 am.

DMK MP Kanimozhi later said BJP members had also carried out protests when they were in opposition."

Small modular reactors being developed to boost India's nuclear energy capacity, RS told

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Minister of state for personnel, public grievances & pensions and PM's office Dr Jitendra Singh said that India is designing and developing Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and will consider deployment in brown field sites as a part of Nuclear Energy Mission to enhance India's nuclear energy capacity and with an objective to replace retiring thermal power plants to decarbonise the energy sector.

In a reply to the question by Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma, the Minister said that the Centre has planned to make prototype demonstration reactors for establishing technology for design, construction and operation of reactors before commercial deployment.

Three demonstration reactors are planned for development and deployment, he said.



Sharing the details of these reactors and plan for deployment he said, Bharat Small Modular Reactor (BSMR) is completely indigenous 200MWe Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR). He said that Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) has requisite scientific technological know-how for its design and development. Majority of equipment are within manufacturing capability of Indian industries. It can be deployed as captive plant for bigger industries, and exclusion zone required will be significantly lower.

Proposal for construction of lead unit of BSMR 200 MWe at DAE site is to be placed for in-principle approval, he added.

In the case of Small Modular Reactor (SMR), which is 55 MWe Pressurised Water Reactor, two lead units are planned to be installed at DAE site. Currently, the conceptual design of this reactor is in advanced stage. Necessary technology for deployment of these reactors is available in the country and majority of equipment are within manufacturing capability of Indian Industries, he informed the House.

The Minister said that advanced reactor designs mentioned by him are being pursued by BARC along with other DAE units in line with objective of Atmanirbhar Bharat mission. These demonstration reactors are likely to be constructed in 60 to 72 months after receipt of project sanctions.

BJP issues whip to its MPs ahead of passing of Budget

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party on Thursday issued a three-line whip to all of its Lok Sabha MPs asking them to be present in the House for the passing of the Union Budget 2025-26.

"All BJP members in Lok Sabha are hereby informed that guillotining of various demands for Grants 2025-26 will be taken up for passing in the House on Friday. All members of BJP in Lok Sabha are, therefore, requested to be positively present in the House throughout the day and support the government's stands," the party said in its letter.

A guillotine is a parliamentary tactic used to expedite the passage of a bill without allowing further discussion. It is typically employed when the government wants to pass a bill quickly, but the opposition is delaying its progress.

Union Finance Minister



Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1 presented the Budget 2025-26 in the Parliament.

The Union Budget 2024-25 provided major relief to the salaried class with no income tax on an average monthly income of up to Rs one lakh to boost household savings and consumption with the government also giving thrust to four engines of development - agriculture, MSMEs, investment and exports.

The Finance Minister's announcement on tax relief

means that the salaried class will pay nil income tax up to Rs 12.75 lakh.

Sitharaman highlighted the main goal of the budget, that of rolling out a "futuristic path for transforming India into a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047." With focus on "Garibi, Youth, Annadata and Nari," the budget unveils new schemes and reforms in the sectors of agriculture, MSMEs, investments, exports, rural development, enabling employment, spurring domestic consumption and more."

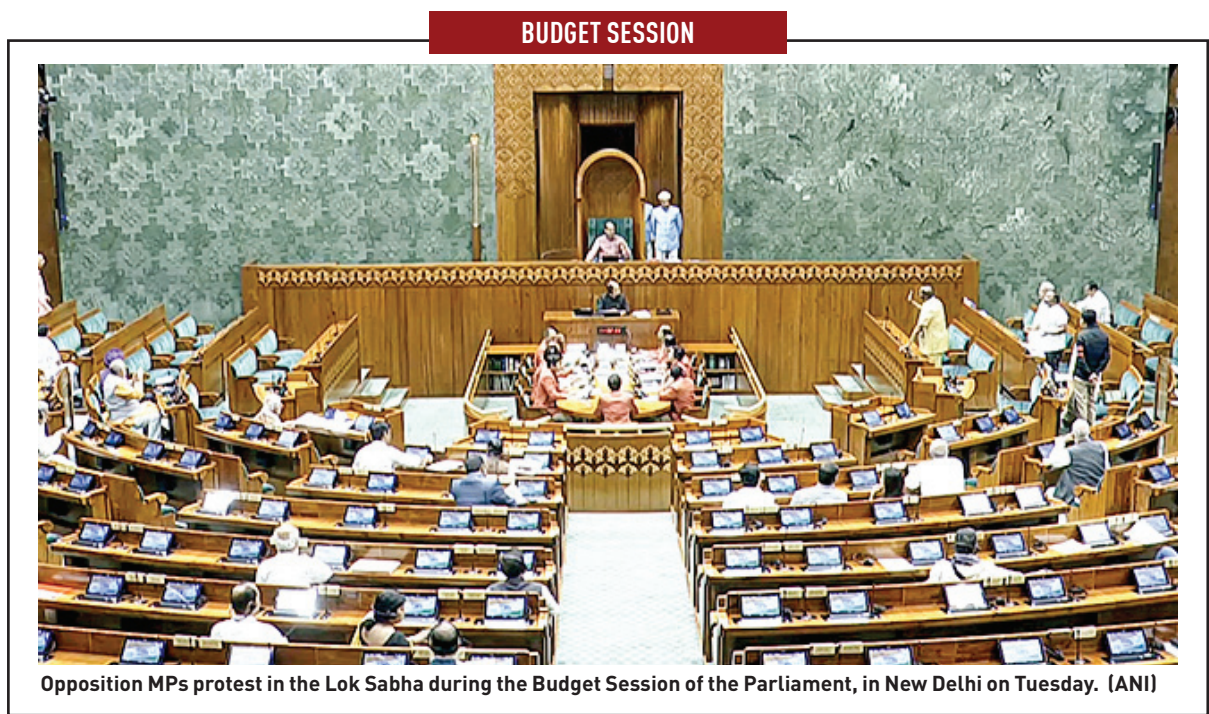
The Union Budget seeks to astutely balance the nation's development priorities and fiscal imperatives.

FM Sitharaman mentioned that indirect tax under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) has significantly reduced over the years since its implementation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the Union Budget 2025 as a "Force Multiplier" for India's development journey, describing it as a "budget of aspirations" for 140 crore Indians. He emphasized that this budget would fulfil the dreams of the people, with a strong focus on opening up several sectors for the youth.

"This is the budget of the aspirations of 140 crore Indians, this is a budget that fulfills the dreams of every Indian," PM Modi stated.

However, Opposition parties slammed the Budget, saying it was mainly focused on Bihar, where assembly elections will be held later this year.



Opposition MPs protest in the Lok Sabha during the Budget Session of the Parliament, in New Delhi on Tuesday. (ANI)

Rahul meets Punjab Congress MPs protesting over farmers' issue

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress MP and Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Thursday met with the Congress MPs from Punjab, who are protesting in the Parliament premises over the issue of farmers'.

Punjab Congress MPs, including the party's Punjab chief, Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, staged a protest against both Punjab and central governments over the eviction of farmers from the Punjab-Haryana Khanauri and Shambhu Borders.

Congress leaders also raised concerns over various other issues affecting farmers in the region.

Warring condemned the treatment of farmers, stating, "The way atrocities have been



done on farmers. I condemn it. The real face of the governments that used to say that we are well-wishers of the farmers has been exposed."

He specifically accused Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Union Home Minister Amit Shah of being responsible for the forceful removal and violence against farmers. "Bhagwant Mann and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have done the work of beating them (farm-

ers), this should not happen," Warring added.

Earlier in the day, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav hit out at the BJP-led Central government over the issue of farmers' protests, stating that they don't care about the farmers.

Slamming the BJP, Yadav said that no government should do injustice to farmers and hence their demands should be discussed.

Addressing reporters, the

SP chief said, "As far as farmers are concerned, the BJP does not care about them... We have to improve our system from the ground, make farmers prosperous. But the BJP sees the economy from above and makes big people rich... No government anywhere should do injustice to farmers, their demands should be discussed." Earlier today, Satnam Singh Pannu of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee condemned both the Union and the Punjab state government for the eviction of farmers from Shambhu and Khannaur borders. In a video shared by the Kisan Morchha, Pannu stated that today they will hold protest demonstrations outside the offices of Deputy Commissioners in Haryana and Punjab against the "atrocities" on farmers.

Over Rs 22 crore incurred on PM's visit to US in June 2023: Govt tells Parliament

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Over Rs 22 crore was incurred on the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the US in June 2023, according to data shared by the government.

Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita shared the data in his written response to a query in Rajya Sabha on Thursday. Leader of Opposition in the Upper House Mallikarjun Kharge asked the government the total expenditure incurred by Indian embassies on arrangements for the



prime minister's foreign visits in the past three years. He also asked for visit-wise details of expenses under major heads such as hotel

arrangements, community receptions, transport arrangements and other miscellaneous expenditures among others. The data on country-wise expenditure on foreign visits by the prime minister, including the expenditure on official, accompanying, security and media delegations, in 2022, 2023 and 2024 was shared in a tabulated form in his response. According to the data, an expenditure of Rs 22,89,68,509 was incurred on the visit of the prime minister to the US in June 2023, while the ex-

penditure incurred was Rs 15,33,76,348 on the September 2024 visit to the same country. The tabulated data pertained to over 38 visits, from May 2022 visit to Germany to Kuwait visit in December 2024. According to the data related to the PM's Japan visit in May 2023, the expenditure incurred was Rs 17,19,33,356 while the same was Rs 80,01,483 on the Nepal visit in May 2022. The minister in his response also shared some corresponding data for years prior to 2014.

GLIMPSES FROM PARLIAMENT



Cong's Mallikarjun Kharge meets RS Chairman Jagdeep Thakur. ANI



Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi and party MP Anil Yeshwant Desai. ANI



Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma at Parliament during the Budget session, in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI



All India Trinamool Congress MPs June Malia, Saayoni Ghosh and Sushmita Dev.



Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at Parliament House on Thursday. ANI



Congress MP Jairam Ramesh, TMC MP Derek O'Brien and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut at Parliament during the Budget session, in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI



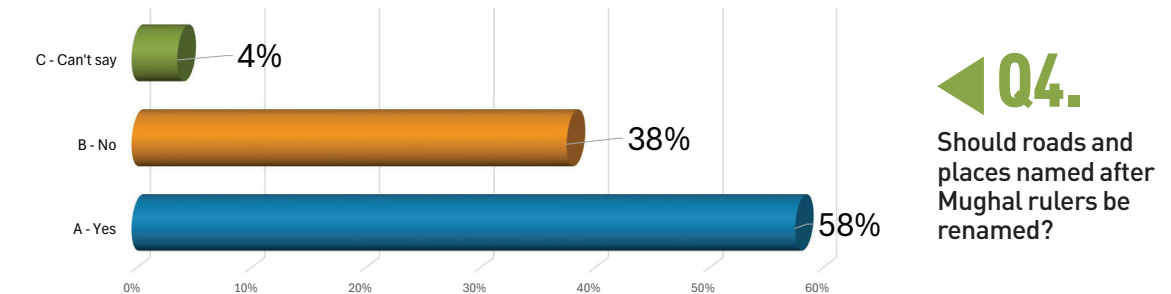
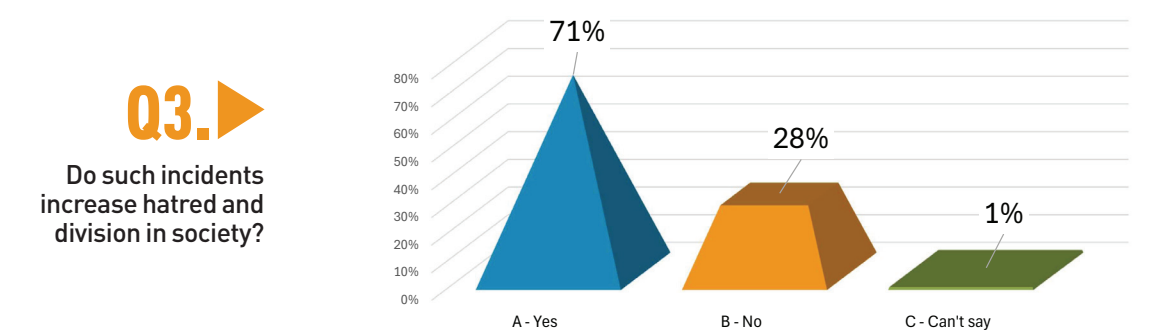
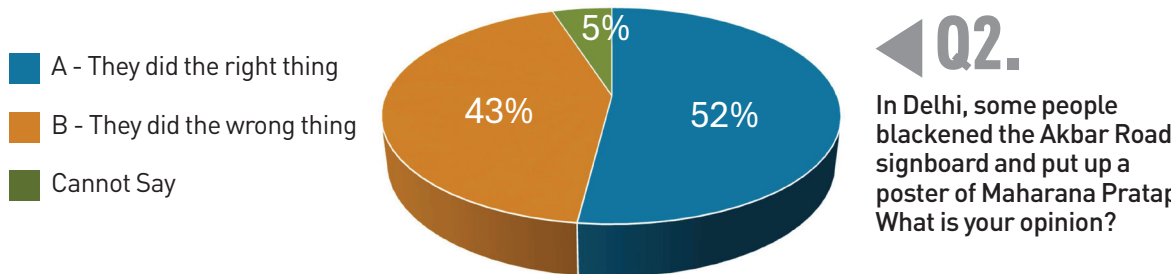
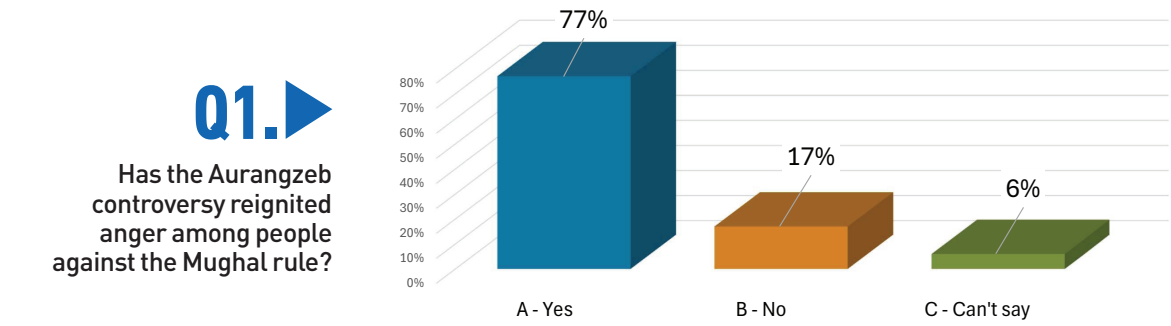
Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia at Parliament premises during the Budget session, in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON AKBAR ROAD NAME CONTROVERSY

58% believe places named after Mughal rulers should be renamed.

Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta has urged NDMC to rename roads that “symbolise Muslim slavery.” He proposed re-naming Tughlaq Road as Guru Gobind Singh Marg, Ak-

bar Road as Maharana Pratap Road, Aurangzeb Lane as Abdul Kalam Lane, Humayun Road as Maharshi Valmiki Road, and Shahjahan Road after General Bipin Rawat.



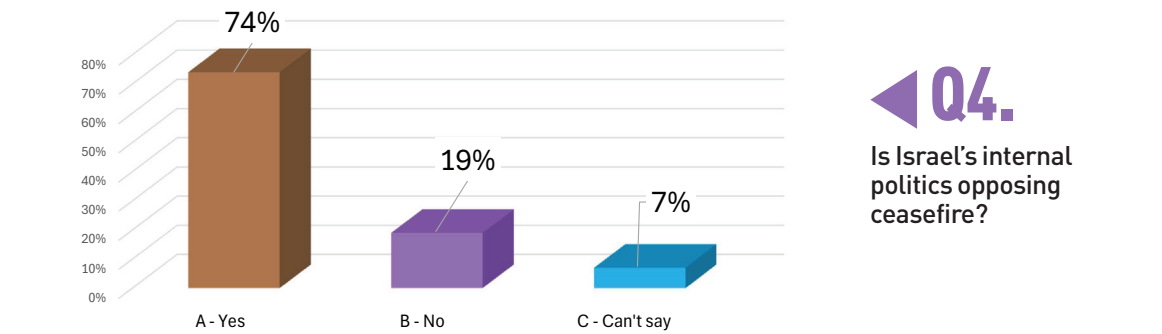
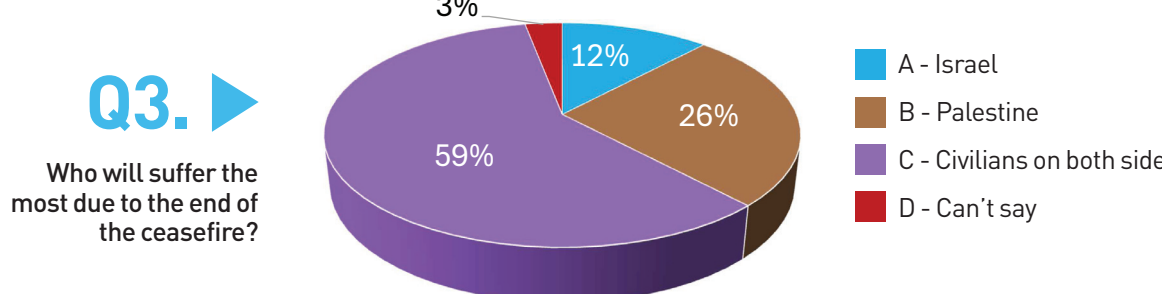
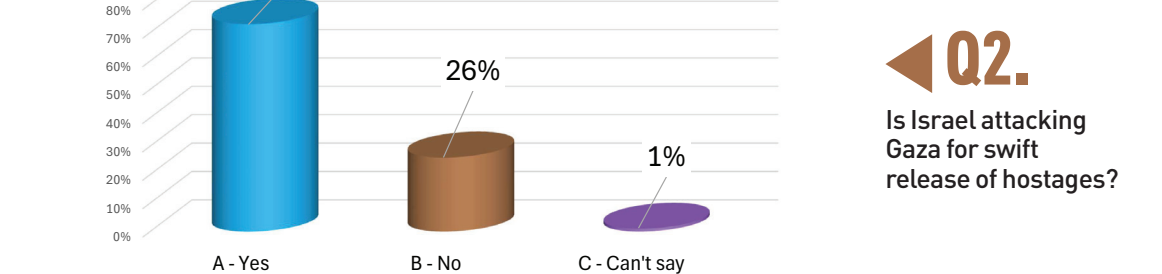
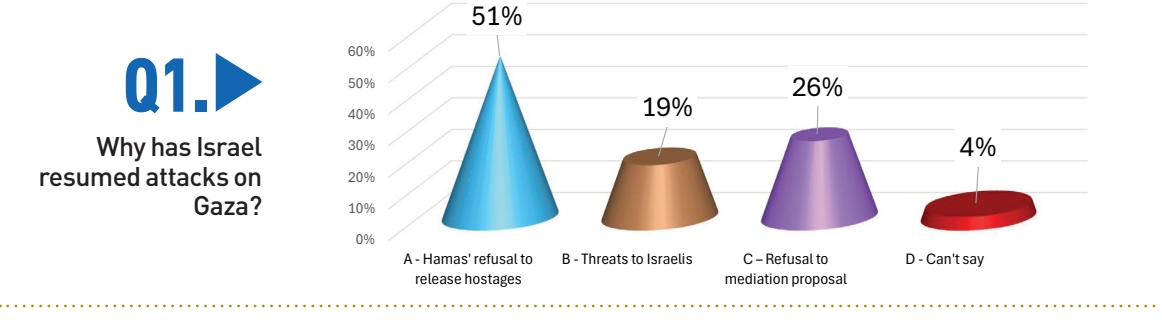
THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

51% believe Israel attacked Gaza due to Hamas's refusal to release hostages

At least 413 people were killed in Gaza on Tuesday as Israel launched its biggest attack since the January 19 cease-

fire, amid stalled truce talks. Strikes during Ramadan hit multiple areas, killing mostly civilians. Hamas secu-

rity chief Mahmud Abu Watfa was also reportedly killed. Around 150 people were injured in the assault.



X moves court against Centre

CONTINUED FROM P1

that the provision does not grant the government independent authority to block content.

Instead, it accused authorities of misusing the law to impose arbitrary censorship without following due process.

Under Section 69A of the IT Act, the government has the power to block public access to digital content if it is deemed a threat to national security, sovereignty, or public order. However, this process is regulated by the 2009 Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Block-

ing for Access of Information by Public) Rules, which require a structured review process before blocking decisions are made.

‘X’ has argued that instead of following these procedures, the government is using Section 79(3)(b) as a shortcut, allowing content to be removed without the necessary scrutiny. The platform sees this as a direct violation of legal safeguards meant to prevent arbitrary censorship.

Another major point in the social media platform's legal challenge is its opposition to the government's Sahyog portal.

Created by the Indian

Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs, this platform was designed to streamline takedown requests under Section 79(3) (b) and facilitate direct communication between social media platforms and law enforcement agencies.

However, ‘X’ has refused to onboard an employee onto the Sahyog portal, claiming it acts as a “censorship tool” that pressures platforms to remove content without proper legal review.

The lawsuit argues that this is yet another attempt by the government to control online discourse without judicial oversight.

CONTINUED FROM P1

Security has been intensified at the Punjab-Haryana border.

Several farmer leaders, including Jagjit Singh Dallewal—who has been on an indefinite hunger strike—and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha leader Sarvan Singh Pandher, were taken into custody and are reportedly on hunger strike in the police custody.

Punjab police had shifted Dallewal to a PWD rest house in Jalandhar Cantonment, a military-controlled area. After his detention on Wednesday afternoon, he was initially taken to PIMS Hospital in Jalandhar city.

Punjab Chief Minister

Bhagwant Mann has called an emergency cabinet meeting at 7 PM in response to the situation.

In Haryana, protesting farmers have given Chief Minister Nayab Saini a one-month deadline to address their demands. On Thursday, police stopped farmers who attempted to march toward the CM's residence in Kurukshetra.

In the evening, Punjab Police launched a clearance operation at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders, detaining around 200 protesting farmers. Temporary sheds and tents set up by farmers were demolished using bulldozers.

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema de-

fended the move, stating, “The AAP government and the people of Punjab stood by farmers during their protest against the three black laws. However, these demands are against the central government, and the prolonged blockade of Shambhu and Khanauri borders has severely impacted Punjab's traders and youth. Economic activity must resume so that employment opportunities increase and young people stay away from drugs. We want these borders reopened, and farmers should take their protest to Delhi or elsewhere instead of blocking Punjab's roads.”

With the clearance operation complete, traffic has

resumed at Shambhu, and the Khanauri border is expected to reopen by evening.

Police teams dismantled tents and stages at both border points. At Shambhu, makeshift shelters were being removed, with broken air conditioners and beds scattered along the roadside. Debris piles lined the area, and locals gathered to witness the scene before police dispersed them. A dispute erupted between farmers and tent house owners, with both sides accusing each other of seizing belongings. The matter was later taken up with police officials, and a municipal team from Patiala confiscated some items.

At Khanauri, Punjab Po-

lice had erected barricades 4 kilometers ahead of the protest site, restricting access. Haryana Police had similarly set up blockades a kilometer before the border, effectively sealing off a 3-kilometer stretch. Authorities were seen removing farmers' tractors and trolleys.

Heavy machinery, including Hydra, JCBs, and Poclains, was deployed to clear cement barricades and soil-filled containers. Farmers alleged that their mobile phones were confiscated and that some gas cylinders and personal belongings had gone missing. However, police stated that some items had been taken into custody and that farmers could reclaim them.

No notice to X over Grok: Officials

CONTINUED FROM P1

Previous advisories sent to the social media by MeITY are still valid, they added.

“Meity has not sent any notice to Grok or X. Meity is in talks with X and Grok to understand what law it is violating,” a source said.

Media reports, citing sources, had earlier said that the IT Ministry is in touch with X over Grok and using Hindi slang in

response to questions and comments.

Grok, an AI chatbot developed by xAI helps to answer user's questions and provide helpful insights, often with a dash of outside perspective on humanity, according to Grok. As per the chatbot its goal is to assist users.

The policies of the Government are aimed at ensuring an open, safe, trusted and accountable internet for users in the country.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, in January this year, organized a workshop on the Grievance Appellate Committee (GAC) to address stakeholder concerns regarding a safer internet. The event brought together GAC members, social media intermediaries, and senior government officials to discuss strengthening the grievance redressal framework under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

Kerala logs highest inflation

CONTINUED FROM P1

tion across states seems to be synchronizing within a 3-6 per cent range, a significant improvement from 6-12 per cent levels in FY14.

A region-wise analysis of inflation from FY12 to February 2025 indicates that the Southern region recorded the highest CAGR inflation of 6.0 per cent, followed by the Eastern region at 5.8 per cent.

Notably, the Southern region also registered the highest inflation in both rural (6.1 per cent) and urban (6.0 per cent) areas.

CPI inflation is expected to decline to 3.9 per cent in Q4 FY25, averaging 4.7 per cent for FY25. Based on current projections, inflation is likely to moderate further to 4.0-4.2 per cent in FY26, while core inflation is expected to remain

between 4.2 per cent and 4.4 per cent.

Given the benign inflation trend, a cumulative rate cut of at least 75 basis points is anticipated, with successive rate cuts expected in April and August 2025. If inflation remains under control, further rate cuts could be introduced from October 2025 onwards, providing relief to consumers and businesses alike.

30 Naxalites killed

CONTINUED FROM P1

to the Bijapur operation, search efforts are also ongoing in Kanker.”

The encounter in Bijapur district broke out on Thursday morning during a search operation carried out by security forces in Bijapur district. In a separate operation in Kanker district, four Naxalites were killed during a gunfight near a village.

bai, and Chandigarh have gone. In Sector 17 of Chandigarh, a state guest facility will be made. At Prithviraj Road, we will also make one.”

He appealed for assistance in reclaiming the original Kashmir House at Rajaji Marg in the national capital, currently under the control of Indian Army, adding, “This is the identity of J&K. Kindly help us in vacating that so we can make a Kashmir House.”

Omar plans a panel on hiking MLAs' salaries

CONTINUED FROM P1

and LOP Sunil Sharma are neighbours. Sunil ji pays his power bill on time, I don't. When amnesty comes, my bill is waived, and Sunil ji says, ‘What is happening? Why am I paying?’ So, this is the last time I will give amnesty on power bills, not in the future.”

Abdullah also stressed the importance of preserving land amid growing population pressure,

warning, “Our future is tied with our land; if we don't have land, we will be nothing, but slowly this is in danger. With the increase in population, there is pressure on land, agricultural land has been converted to other purposes this will lead to our more dependence on others.”

He noted that agricultural land is increasingly being converted for other uses, risking greater dependence on external resources.

Defending the Roshni scheme, he said, “Muzaffar Khan MLA had said Roshni was a good scheme; its purpose was to give leaseholders land rights. Ghulam Nabi Azad changed the time frame. We have to bring the Roshni scheme back.”

The Chief Minister further outlined plans to repair Jagti township and restore cultural heritage, announcing, “33 heritage sites will be restored with an allocation of 65 crore.”

He expressed concern over the stalled Mubarak Mandi project, vowing to expedite its completion within the next three years.

Abdullah also highlighted the diminished role of the planning department, stating, “Planning department has no such responsibility as earlier. We have to review this.”

Addressing state guest infrastructure, he said, “Hospitality and Protocol structures in Delhi, Mum-

Karnataka CM and ministers get 100% salary hike

CONTINUED FROM P1

State Minister MB Patil also defended the proposal, arguing that raising lawmakers' pay and perks is acceptable if decided by an independent committee. Patil pointed out that even the Prime Minister, Ministers, and MPs are among the highest-paid in the world, which makes them more independent and less corrupt.

“There is nothing wrong in the salary and perks of MLAs being raised, it is not fair if we do it ourselves; that's why a committee is there which is recommended...you take the example, the PM, Ministers and MPs are highest paid in the world...that makes them very independent not corrupt...we cannot compare our salaries to Singapore but still decent pay

should be given....,” said MB Patil.

However, not everyone is convinced. Congress legislator Dr Ranganath expressed uncertainty about the matter and didn't expect a personal raise. He acknowledged that some MLAs require a basic salary to manage expenses, but suggested a more modest hike of 10-20%.

“I am not very sure about this issue. I am a doctor and MLA. I am not expecting that hike personally, but there are many MLAs who need a basic salary. If they give a hike, it won't be more than 10 or 20 per cent,” said Ranganath.

The proposal has sparked debate, with critics questioning the necessity of a hike while the state faces various financial ‘challenges’.

MAHA CLASH OVER DISHA SALIAN CASE

Salian's father seeks CBI probe, FIR against Aaditya Thackeray

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve on Wednesday accused the BJP of 'conspiring to defame' party leader Aaditya Thackeray by raising questions on him in connection with the Disha Salian death case.

"I think this matter has gone to the court. We have no idea what he (Disha's father) has said, but Aaditya Thackeray is a mature leader, a young leader. The Bharatiya Janata Party is conspiring to defame him by putting pressure on him. We don't need to answer to this conspiracy. The court will answer," Ambadas Danve told media.

This comes after Disha Salian's father approached the Bombay High Court seeking a CBI probe and an FIR against Aaditya Thackeray in her death case.

Maharashtra's former Home Minister and NCP (SP) leader Anil Deshmukh on Thursday also said that the

CONSPIRACY TO DEFAME AADITYA THACKERAY: OPP

- Maharashtra MoS Home and Shiv Sena leader Yogesh Kadam said, "The honourable court's orders will be followed.
- "The petition filed on the Disha Salian case was done by her father. It is their internal matter. The incident that took place a few years ago is not fit for the blame game. It is not right to make political comments and play politics on this," said Maharash-



tra Minister Uday Samant.

- Maharashtra's former Home Minister and NCP (SP) leader Anil Deshmukh on Thursday also said that the developments in the Salian



case seem like a conspiracy. Speaking to the media, Deshmukh said, "I am taking information on the plea filed by Disha Salina's father. All this now looks like a part of a conspiracy."

father has openly spoken. He has now approached the High Court. Those found guilty in this case will be sent to jail."

Shiv Sena MLA Manisha Kayande also spoke on the matter and said, "We are not taking anybody's name. But as for the reports. Disha Salian's family had never approached the court. It is the first time that they have gone to the court. So whoever is responsible, whether it was suicide or some conspiracy. This is the question. We say that there should be a free and fair investigation."

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-SCP) leader Rohit Pawar also earlier in the day attacked the BJP, accusing the party of politicising late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death for elections and claimed that the party would do politics over Disha Salian after her father sought a probe into her death., Pawar said, "If any person is trying to get justice, he (Disha Salian father) should get justice. He has gone to the court.

Karnataka govt orders high-level probe as state min alleges ‘honey trap’

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

The Karnataka Home Minister, G Parameshwara, has ordered a high-level investigation into an alleged honey trap attempt on a state minister.

Parameshwara made the announcement during the budget session discussion in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Thursday. This comes after Karnataka Cooperation Minister KN Rajanna alleged a honey trap attempt was made on him and called for an investigation into the matter.

During the budget session discussion, Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal raised the issue, saying that an attempt had been made to trap the Co-operation Minister in the state. "This is a bad culture. People's representatives are being blackmailed," he said. Since his name was



mentioned, KN Rajanna responded, acknowledging the allegations. "Many people say Karnataka has become a CD and pen drive factory. This is a serious allegation. It is being said that an influential minister from Tumakuru has been caught in a honey trap. The ones from Tumakuru are G Parameshwara and me," Rajanna said in the Legislative Assembly.

He further said, "I will file a complaint regarding this. The Home Minister must investigate this matter." The minister also claimed

that those involved in making CDs and pen drives had honey-trapped 48 people across different political parties.

"They belong to two different political parties. This issue is not limited to our state--it extends to the national level, involving leaders from various political parties across the country. I won't respond to the allegations against me here. I will give a written complaint to the Home Minister. This must be investigated. Let it be revealed who the producers and directors behind this are. The public must know," Rajanna said.

"There are pen drives of 48 individuals from two parties. This is a dangerous menace. This is now a public issue. They attempted it on me too. I have evidence. I will file a complaint. Let it be revealed who is involved," he demanded.

Grabbing breasts, snapping pyjama string not attempt to rape: Allahabad High Court

TDG NETWORK
PRAYAGRAJ

Grabbing the breasts of the victim and snapping her pyjama strings do not constitute rape or attempt to rape but serious sexual assault, Allahabad court observed in a Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) case of alleged rape of a minor girl.

A single bench of Justice Ram Manohar Narayan Mishra has modified the summons order of Special Judge POCSO Court of Kasganj and has ordered fresh summons. The court said that the summons issued on the charge of rape is not legal.

The accused, identified as Pawan and Akash, allegedly grabbed the breasts of an 11-year-old victim, tearing her pyjama string and attempted to drag her beneath a culvert in Uttar Pradesh's Kasganj. The accused fled from the spot after a passerby came to her rescue. The case is registered in Patiyali police station.

Petitioners Akash, Pawan and Ashok were initially called to face trial under Section 376 of IPC and Section 18 of POCSO Act. The High Court has directed that the accused should be tried under Section 9/10 (serious sexual assault) of POCSO Act along with the minor charge of Section 354-B IPC

(assault or use of criminal force with intent to disrobe).

The court, while partially allowing the criminal revision petition, said, "The allegations levelled against accused Pawan and Akash and the facts of the case do not make out the offence of attempt to rape in this case.

As per the prosecution, accused Pawan and Akash grabbed the breasts of the 11-year-old victim and Akash broke the string of her pyjama and tried to drag her under the culvert, but due to the intervention of passersby/witnesses, the accused fled from the spot leaving the victim behind. They have not committed the offence of rape."

NCW should approach SC on this, says MP Rekha Sharma

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

After the Allahabad High Court's observation that "Holding breast, breaking pyjama's string is not a crime of rape", Rajya Sabha MP Rekha Sharma said that that it is wrong and the National Commission for Women should approach Supreme Court on this.

The former Chief of the NCW called on the judges to see the intention behind an act.

Punjab orders probe into assault on Colonel Batth, son by cops

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab government has launched an investigation into the brutal assault on Colonel Pushpinder Batth and his 24-year-old son, Angad Singh, allegedly by police officials in Patiala on March 13. IAS officer Paramvir Singh has been appointed as the Inquiry Officer, with the probe expected to conclude within three weeks.

Colonel Batth, currently posted at the Army headquarters in New Delhi, claims that he and his son were attacked by policemen near Rajindra Hospital in Patiala. Expressing dissatisfaction with the police's handling of the case, the family has decided to approach the Punjab Governor.

The state government has assured a fair and impartial inquiry, acknowledging



the seriousness of the incident. Meanwhile, 12 police personnel, including three inspectors, have been suspended in connection with the assault. However, the family and supporters are demanding stricter action, including the arrest of those involved.

BJP leader Gurtej Dhilon, a relative of Colonel Batth, stated that their three key demands remain unfulfilled—registration of an FIR based on Colonel Batth's complaint, arrest of

the 12 policemen responsible for the attack, and action against errant officers. He added that the incident has triggered widespread outrage, with several veteran Army officers condemning the police's actions. A protest has been scheduled outside the Patiala DC office on March 22.

Angad Singh, who was injured in the attack, expressed frustration, stating that no police official has visited them or recorded their statement.

Rahul may push for non-Jat politics in Haryana amid party pressure"

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

The congress party seems to be geared up to change and make strategies that will help it gain a strong foothold. After Bihar, there is speculation that Rahul Gandhi may be planning a major move in Haryana. Sources suggest that a significant faction within the Congress party is advocating for non-Jat politics in the state. This is why, despite pressure from former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and his supporters, the party is avoiding any appointments this time.

Hooda's supporters have been demanding a post for him, either as the state president or as the leader of the legislative party. Traditionally, if the state president is a non-Jat, Hooda's supporters argue that the leader of

the legislative party should be given to him. However, this time, the Congress high command seems to be taking a different approach. Reports indicate that Hooda's efforts to secure a prominent position have not been successful, and some of his supporters have even hinted at a possible split within the party.

Despite the challenges, the Congress high command is closely monitoring the political developments in Haryana. The current budget session is continuing without a leader of the opposition, which shows the high command's cautious approach. It is believed that around 31 MLAs have written to the high command requesting that Hooda be appointed as the leader of the opposition, but the high command has not yet yielded to the pressure.

Punjab farmers’ protest hits AAP; Kejriwal's leadership challenged

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

The issue of farmer's protest at Shambhu border and the treatment meted out to them has once again gained momentum causing stir in Punjab and Delhi. The controversy over the forceful removal of protesting farmers from Shambhu border in Punjab has sparked political tensions. Allegations and counter-allegations have emerged, affecting both the Punjab government and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). This incident has raised challenges for Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and could lead to AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal facing opposition isolation. The protesting farmers, who are targeting the Indian government, have also directed their criticism towards the Punjab government and AAP. In response, Congress has become more active, with Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge criticizing

AAP, and Rahul Gandhi joining the protest alongside party leaders. Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait also voiced displeasure over AAP's actions. Meanwhile, rebel AAP leader Swati Maliwal accused Kejriwal of prioritizing his own political ambitions, alleging that he is acting in pursuit of a Rajya Sabha seat. The situation has escalated political tensions in the state and raised questions about AAP's strategies.

The by-election in Ludhiana West is closely linked to the recent Shambhu Border incident, where farmers were forcefully removed. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has fielded Rajya Sabha MP Sanjeev Arora in this by-election. The party's strategy is to secure Arora's win, allowing AAP to send Arvind Kejriwal to the Rajya Sabha. This move is part of Kejriwal's plan to launch a new political phase. Kejriwal recently met with traders in Ludhiana, who expressed concerns about the

losses caused by the ongoing farmers' protests. After hearing their grievances, Kejriwal instructed the Chief Minister of Punjab to take action, which led to the removal of the protesters and the reopening of the road.

The opposition is now attacking both the AAP and the BJP. However, the farmers' protests could turn into a significant challenge for AAP, especially in Punjab, where farmers' anger can lead to political unrest. Congress has also been quick to capitalize on the situation. Pratap Singh Bajwa, the Leader of the Congress Legislative Party, has claimed that many AAP MLAs are in touch with Congress, though toppling the Punjab government is not an easy task due to AAP's large majority. However, the party has been weakened by its defeat in the Delhi elections, and if anti-government sentiments grow, AAP could face a more difficult political climate in the future.

Rahul may push for non-Jat politics in Haryana amid party pressure

ANAND SINGH
NEW DELHI

With a focus on the states where elections are due later this year and next year, the Congress has started preparing for the big battle ahead and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has given task to its leaders to take on the opponents with full force and strengthen the organisation first.

In the last few weeks,

Rahul Gandhi along with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge held marathon meetings with the leadership of Haryana, Punjab, Kerala, Assam and West Bengal.

In the last meeting on Wednesday for West Bengal, Rahul Gandhi asked the party leaders to focus on strengthening the party at block and district levels so that the results favour the grand old party in the coming days.

In his meeting with the West Bengal state in-charge Ghulam Ahmed Mir, state unit chief Subhankar Sarkar, where several other senior leaders like Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Deepa Das Munshi and others were also present, the Lok Sabha MP from Rae Bareli stressed on strengthening the party and asked the leadership to hold protest and several other programmes on the issues related to people so

that it can in roads in the bastion of Mamata Banerjee.

It is interesting that West Bengal is ruled by Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress and is also one of the members of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc at the national level. However, in 2024 Lok Sabha polls, it contested the elections in the state all alone.

Party sources said that in

meeting with the state leaders, Rahul Gandhi clearly asked the state leaders to hit the street on the issues directly related to public.

He asked the leaders to protest and give the ruling party a clear message that the results will similar to that of the Delhi, where the ruling AAP was ousted from the power with Congress cutting the votes of its opponents.

The source pointed out that the Gandho scion also

stressed that even if the ruling party gets annoyed with it due to its protests on issues, it will be discussed. The source further said that Rahul Gandhi also stressed on increasing the vote share in the state by focusing on SC, ST, Tribals and Dalit communities and bring them to its side like it did it successfully during the Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh.

He also asked the party leaders to strengthen the

organisation instead of thinking about alliance in the state and instead of developing the party's leadership pool.

In West Bengal, the Congress had in last Assembly polls joined hands with the left parties, which did not yielded much favoured results for the grand old party. The Congress scored a nil after contesting on 91 out of 294 seats in the state and the voter per centage going to record low of 2.93

per cent.

The source said that Rahul Gandhi during the meeting also made it clear that if the party manages to increase its vote share by 8 to 10 per cent then it can hold the key to government formation in the eastern state.

The Congress has been out of power in West Bengal since 1970's on its own. The party had won 46 seats in 2011 assembly polls and 44 in 2016 assembly seats.

SPEAKER RUES APATHY OF OFFICERS

Seeks Chief Secy's intervention

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta has written to Chief Secretary Dharmendra seeking his intervention in bringing in line some officers who allegedly have not been responding to communications from MLAs. In his letter on Wednesday, Gupta sought the top city bureaucrat's attention to the procedure and protocol to be adhered to by the government officers while dealing with the members of the Assembly.

"A few instances have been brought to my notice where the communications of the Members in the form of letters, phone calls or messages have not even been acknowledged by the concerned officer," Gupta said in the letter, terming it a "serious" matter.

Gupta said he expected that all administrative secretaries, head of departments, Delhi Police, DDA,

REQUEST FOR ACTION

- Gupta called the lack of response a serious matter and stressed the need for adherence to protocols.
- Gupta cited the Central Secretariat Manual, which requires prompt attention to MLA communications.
- Gupta supported legal action in the ACB FIR against Satyendar Jain over the Rs 571 crore CCTV scam.
- BJP Allegations: Delhi BJP Chief Virendra Sachdeva accused CM Kejriwal and Jain of being involved in the scam.



and other agencies would be asked to follow a strict compliance to the norms.

Further, in his letter, Gupta stated that this was a serious matter and there was an urgent need to reiterate the government's instructions by the General Administration, Department, Government of NCT of Delhi and the Department of Personnel and Training.

"This is a serious matter, and I think there is an urgent need to reiterate the

Government Instructions issued in this regard by the General Administration Department, Government of NCT of Delhi and the Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India, from time to time," the letter read.

"I would be grateful if all Administrative Secretaries, Head of Departments of various Departments of Government of NCT of Delhi, Delhi Police, DDA are sensitised towards these

instructions for strict compliance. Action taken in this regard may be intimated to me at the earliest," the letter further read.

The Speaker also sought to be updated about action taken in the matter.

The Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure lays down instructions for prompt disposal of references from Members of Parliament and State Legislatures.

It instructs that commu-

nications received from a Member of Parliament/ State Legislature should be attended to promptly.

Any Information sought by a Member of Parliament and State Legislature should be supplied, unless it is of such a nature that it would have been denied to him, it instructs further.

Earlier in the day, the Delhi Assembly Speaker stated that the law should take its course after the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) filed a First Information Report (FIR) against former Delhi minister Satyendar Jain in connection with alleged corruption and bribery related to the Rs 571 crore CCTV project in the national capital.

Gupta said, "Law should do its work, and by political blame game, we somewhere try to obstruct the action."

Reacting to the development, Delhi BJP Chief Virendra Sachdeva claimed that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal would also be found involved in the alleged scam.

He further alleged that Kejriwal and Jain were the masterminds behind the irregularities.

IGI T1 to operate fully from April 15; T2 closed for refurbishment

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi airport's new Terminal 1 (T1) will be fully operational from April 15, and Terminal 2 (T2) will be temporarily shut for refurbishment work next month. Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL), the operator of the Indra Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in the national capital, on Thursday, said with T1 resuming full operations from April 15, all flights currently operating from T2 will be shifted to T1.

At present, IndiGo and Akasa Air have flights from T2, which handles around 270-280 air traffic movements and serves over 46,000 passengers per day. "The expansion and modernisation of T1 have been completed as part of the Phase 3A expansion project. The expanded world-class integrated T1 of Delhi Airport was dedicated to the nation in March last year," DIAL said in a release. On Thursday, DIAL did



not mention the temporary closure of T2. DIAL, on January 10, said the four-decade-old T2 will be closed for four to six months in the next financial year for refurbishment works that are expected to be completed in the September quarter.

IGIA, also the country's busiest airport, has three terminals -- T1, T2 and T3. Currently, T1 and T2 are used only for domestic flights.

The new T1 will have 100 check-in counters, including 36 Self Baggage Drop (SBD) kiosks, 108 Common Usage Self-Service (CUSS) kiosks for check-in and self-service, and 20 Automated Tray Retrieval Systems

(ATRS) for smoother security checks, the release said. Among other facilities, there will be 10 baggage reclaim carousels, and the baggage handling capacity will be increased from 3,240 to 6,000 bags per hour.

The terminal area has been expanded from 55,740 sq m to 2,06,950 sq m, combining arrival and departure terminals for enhanced passenger experience, the release said. According to the release on Thursday, T1 can accommodate 40 million passengers, and T3 can handle 45 million passengers annually. T2 has an annual capacity to handle 15 million passengers.

'When will women in Delhi receive Rs 2,500 aid', Atishi asks BJP

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Senior AAP leader Atishi on Thursday sought to know when will women in Delhi receive the Rs 2,500 monthly financial assistance under the Mahila Samridhhi Yojna as promised by the ruling BJP in the national capital.

Addressing a press conference, Atishi, who's the Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, wondered if the BJP government will provide Rs 2,500 to nearly 48 lakh women in the capital aged above 18 years, or restrict the benefit to less than 1 per cent of the figure by putting in various riders. Claiming that the BJP

government formed a committee 12 days ago, which is yet to do anything, the former Delhi chief minister asked when will registration for the scheme begin and money be credited to the accounts of the beneficiary women.

The BJP government has approved Rs 5,100 crore for providing Rs 2,500 monthly assistance to women from poor families in Delhi.

A committee of ministers headed by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has been formed to oversee the implementation of the scheme, which was a key election promise of the saffron party ahead of the February 5 Delhi polls.

'Sympathisers': Court frees 11 men in Delhi riots murder case

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has discharged 11 men accused for the murder of an auto driver during the February 2020 riots observing they had no role in the crime and were in fact "sympathisers for the victim". Additional sessions judge Pulastya Pramachala made the prima facie observation based on statements of the witnesses and the video of the incident in an order passed on March 18.

"The statements of the witnesses and the video of the incident show that the members of the mob of persons from Muslim community had no role to play



in the beating of victim Babbu. Rather they were sympathisers for this victim," the judge said.

The court, however, ordered framing of the charge of murder and other offences against eight men from a different community, saying they assaulted and left the injured victim on the road following which "rival mob, includ-

ing those being discharged, came to that boy" and perhaps took him from the spot.

"The act of attack over the rival mob, on the basis of them being from a different community, was certainly an act prejudicial to maintenance of communal harmony and assault on Babbu was part of such act," the judge said.

As part of a broader strategy to tackle the expected winter pollution peak, the Delhi government will install six new air quality monitoring stations across the national capital over the next three months, Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said. In an interview on Wednesday, Sirsa said, "This winter, we will ensure that Delhi sees more clean air days, and we are already working to minimize pollution. We will not wait until winter to take action. Our work to purify Delhi has already started, and as part of this, we will also add new ambient air quality monitoring stations." "Delhi currently has 40



air quality monitoring stations, and six more will be added in the next three months, bringing the total to 46," Sirsa said.

The minister did not specify the locations where the new stations will be installed but mentioned that the work is likely to be completed within three months. He added that these stations will help

gather more detailed data on air quality.

Delhi's existing 40 air quality monitoring stations include locations such as Alipur, Anand Vihar, Aya Nagar, Bawana, Burari, Chandni Chowk, DTU, Dwarka, IGI Airport, IHBAS, ITO, Jahangirpuri, Lodhi Road, Najafgarh, Narela, and 25 other sites.

Health Minister launches 6 mobile dental vans for free care

TIKAM SHARMA
NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Dr. Pankaj Kumar Singh has inaugurated six state-of-the-art Mobile Dental Clinics, a pioneering initiative jointly operated by the Delhi Government and Maulana Azad Institute of Dental Sciences (MAIDS). This initiative aims to bring high-quality dental care directly to the citizens of Delhi, ensuring accessibility for all, particularly the underprivileged. As part of this program, six fully air-conditioned, technologically advanced mobile dental clinics have been flagged off by the Health Minister. These clinics will travel across various parts



of the city, offering free dental check-ups, treatment services, and awareness campaigns on oral health.

Speaking on the occasion of World Oral Health Day, Dr.

Singh emphasized that this initiative is designed to provide essential dental care without financial barriers, particularly for mar-

ginalized communities. Stressing the importance of oral health, he stated, "Being a part of the dental fraternity myself, I have personally witnessed how people often overlook their oral health. There is an urgent need to raise awareness in society so that even minor dental issues are not ignored.



President Droupadi Murmu looks at a bioscope during the 'Udyam Utsav' at the President's Estate, in New Delhi. Union Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Shobha Karandlaje is also seen. ANI

BSES urges consumers to turn off power for Earth Hour

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Bombay Suburban Electric Supply Limited (BSES) on Thursday urged its consumers to turn off their power during Earth Hour on the weekend. In a statement, BSES encouraged its over 50 lakh consumers and 2 crore residents in Delhi to participate by switching off power on Saturday from 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm. Last year, Delhiites saved 206 MW of electricity during Earth Hour, with BSES areas contributing a significant 130 MW, the distribution company said in a statement.

Water Minister Verma unveils Summer Action Plan with weekly reviews

TIKAM SHARMA
NEW DELHI

Delhi Water Minister Pravesh Verma has introduced a new initiative under the Summer Action Plan, mandating weekly review meetings with Delhi Jal Board (DJB) officials.

These meetings will focus on assessing water supply, enhancing sewer system efficiency, and improving transparency in water distribution. The initiative is designed to ensure a steady and clean water supply for

Delhi residents during the summer while addressing illegal water connections and reducing system losses.

During today's meeting, officials reviewed the progress made over the past week and finalized the action plan for the upcoming week. Clear directives were issued to streamline the water supply, prevent leakages, resolve sewer blockages, and optimize overall distribution. Additionally, several key measures were announced to enhance accountability and efficiency

SUMMER PLAN

- Weekly DJB meetings to assess supply and efficiency.
- Legalizing water connections with revised fees and penalties for non-compliance.
- GPS-equipped tankers to track water distribution.
- Increased tanker trips (16 per day) for better coverage.
- Monitoring water flow to manage resources effectively.
- Enhanced transparency and accountability in water distribution.



in water management.

Minister underscored the importance of legalizing water connections and making them more accessible. "The high cost of obtaining a water connection currently discourages many residents from opting for legal connections. We will revise these rates to encourage compliance. A deadline will be set for residents to legalize their connections, after which penalties will be imposed on those who fail to comply," he stated.

To enhance transparency

and enable proper monitoring of water supply, the minister announced that a new tender will be floated for GPS-equipped tankers. "At present, there is no proper documentation of tanker trips or details of their supply points. I have instructed that every water tanker be fitted with GPS, and a proper record of supply locations be maintained," he said. To further strengthen water distribution during the summer, the number of tanker trips will be increased to 16 per day.

Verma also emphasized the need for monitoring the outflow of water from underground reservoirs (UGRs) to estimate both revenue and losses. He highlighted that these initiatives will improve water supply, prevent wastage, and ensure more effective management of resources by the Delhi Jal Board.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi, our government is committed to prioritizing public welfare above all else.

TEMPLE DEMOLITION IN MAYUR VIHAR DEFERRED AFTER MLA-LED OUTRAGE

Three temples in Mayur Vihar targeted for demolition due to being built on a green belt.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi High Court-ordered demolition drive against three temples in Mayur Vihar was postponed in the face of a protest led by the local MLA on Thursday.

A team of DDA accompanied by police reached the east Delhi locality around 4 am Thursday to raze Kali Mandir, Amarnath Mandir, and Badrinath Mandir – supposedly built in a green belt in the area's Phase 2.

“As per the High Court's order, the DDA team, along with police, reached Mayur Vihar Phase 2 in the Patparganj Assembly. But we were already there, trying to ensure the temple remained safe,” Patparganj MLA Ravinder Singh Negi said on X. A DDA spokesperson confirmed that the demolition was postponed.

“We had to postpone the drive due to the outrage it sparked. However, our legal team is reviewing the matter,” the spokesperson said.

Negi said that he and others had been present at the site since 3 am and made every effort to protect the

DEMOLITION DELAYED

- Affected Temples: Kali Mandir, Amarnath Mandir, and Badrinath Mandir targeted for demolition
- MLA Negi claims the delay followed discussions with CM Rekha Gupta and Lt. Governor VK Saxena.
- DDA confirmed postponement, with its legal team reviewing the situation.
- AAP's Atishi blamed BJP for ordering the demolition, accusing them of misleading residents.
- SC dismissed temple committees' petition, directing them to approach Delhi High Court.



temples.

He claimed that the drive was postponed after a discussion with Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena.

Meanwhile, AAP leader and Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Atishi, claimed that the BJP's “double-engine government” first ordered the demolitions, deployed bulldozers and police, and then pretended to be unaware when a public outrage erupted.

“If the BJP did not send them, then who did?” she asked, accusing the party of misleading the residents of Delhi.

“They should at least answer -- who sent the police? Who sent the CRPF? Who ordered the bulldozers? Now, with a double-engine government in place, the DDA, police and PWD are all under their control,” she said. There was no immediate reaction from the BJP over Atishi's allegation.

The Supreme Court on

Thursday refused to entertain a petition filed by committees of three temples -- Purbo Delhi Kali Bari Samiti, Sri Amarnath Mandir Sanstha, Sri Badri Nath Mandir -- in Mayur Vihar Phase 2, challenging DDA's demolition notice issued on March 19.

Justices Vikram Nath, Sanjay Karol, and Sanjay Mehta dismissed the plea and granted the petitioners liberty to approach the Delhi High Court.

Initially, the bench agreed

to hear the matter but later dismissed the plea asking petitioners to approach the Delhi HC.

The petition filed through advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain said public notice was affixed by the officials at 9 pm on Wednesday and was informed that the temples will be demolished at 4 am on March 20, 2025.

The plea said that no hearing was afforded to the temples by any authority of DDA or any religious committee.

The temples are 35 years old, and the DDA granted permission to the Kali Bari Samiti temple to conduct Durga Pooja on the ground in front of the temple, the petition stated.

“DDA has, on its own whims and fancies, decided to demolish the temple in complete violation of the judgment passed by this Court as well as in violation of the provisions contained in 14 and 25 of the Constitution of India. No opportunity of hearing was afforded to the petitioners by any authority of DDA or any religious committee,” the plea said.

Delhi Police busts large-scale visa fraud racket after US Embassy's complaint

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has registered a case against more than 30 people operating from Punjab, Haryana, and other states into a large-scale visa fraud racket after a complaint by the US Embassy in New Delhi's Chanakypuri area, an official said on Thursday. According to the FIR registered following the complaint on February 27, the fraudulent activities took place between May and August 2024, where the embassy highlighted 21 alleged instances of conspiracy between agents and applicants to cheat the US government.

This case comes at a time when the US government under President Donald Trump has been cracking down on visa fraud and unlawful immigration.

The US Embassy named 31 accused, including visa agents and applicants, who were allegedly involved in forging documents such as bank statements, educational certificates, and employment records to obtain US visas.

“The agents are suspected of submitting fraudulent information on US online visa applications, DS-160s and providing fraudulent documents to applicants to cheat the US



Embassy in India and the US government in order to obtain US visas based on fraudulent information, misrepresentations, and fraudulent documents,” the FIR read.

“During the period, May to August, 2024, our office (US Embassy) conducted relevant investigations and compiled a comprehensive list of individuals linked to multiple IP addresses, suspected to be associated with visa consultants; document vendors (educational certificates, bank documents and employment certificates); passport delivery addresses; and education consultants,” it read.

During their investigation, the embassy found that several visa agents were charging applicants between Rs one lakh and Rs 15 lakh to arrange fake documents. In one such instance mentioned by the US Embassy, the agent promised to help in the process of an applicant's visa for Rs 13 lakh.

“On August 20, 2024, an individual identifying himself as Chamkaur Singh applied for a non-immigrant

visa at the US Embassy in New Delhi. As part of the visa application process, Singh claimed on his online visa application that he was employed as a front desk operator at a company located in Punjab,” it read.

“However, during the stipulated interview with the US Embassy officials on August 20, 2024, he admitted that he never worked as a front desk operator and stated that a visa agent who worked at an immigration company in Punjab's Batala, entered incorrect information in his visa application to fill the one-year gap,” the FIR mentioned.

Singh further said that the company allegedly provided fake bank documents in his and his father's name. “Singh stated that he did not have access to or control of this account, and that it was created by the agent only for the purpose of his visa application. He stated that his father had to pay Rs 13 lakh to the agent if the visa was issued,” it added.

He also said the company submitted financial documents to the university in the United States on his behalf, and he did not know whose financial documents were used to seek his admission, the FIR read.

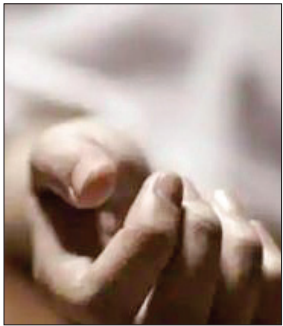
Woman strangled to death, dumped in Najafgarh drain

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Two people have been arrested for killing a woman and dumping her body in the Najafgarh drain in Dwarka, an official said on Thursday. The accused have been identified as Zubair and Asif, with the latter being in a relationship with the victim, Komal (22), police said.

According to police, Asif strangled Komal on March 12 after the two had a heated argument. Subsequently, he, along with his friend, Zubair, disposed of the body in the drain after tying a stone to it.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Ankit Singh said the matter came to light when a dead body



was found in the drain on March 17. Upon investigation, it was revealed that a missing person's report was filed in Seemapuri on March 13, he added. A probe was launched, and the two accused were arrested on Wednesday, police said. Sources said Komal used to work at a call centre while Asif was a cab driver. Further probe is underway to ascertain the motive behind the murder.

MCD to provide affordable medicines for pensioners

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) plans to provide low-cost generic medicines to designated pensioners' centres across the city through partnerships with Jan Aushadhi Kendra operators. MCD Pensioners' Centres are facilities where pensioners can access essential services, such as obtaining life certificates and availing themselves of healthcare benefits under the Municipal Pensioner Health Scheme (MPHS).

The estimated expenditure across all zones over the next two years is projected to be Rs. 20,68,53,934.40, factoring in a 20 per cent rise due to the increase in the number of pensioners and market



inflation. The Hospital Administration Department has invited Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from Jan Aushadhi Kendra operators and vendors located near the designated pensioners' centres for empanelment. These Jan Aushadhi Kendras must agree to supply only Jan Aushadhi medicines to one or more designated MCD pensioners' centres, depending on feasibility, covering all 12

MCD zones.

A total of 37 pensioners' centres are spread across the city: Central Zone-three centres, City SP Zone -- five centres, Civil Lines Zone -- two centres, Karol Bagh Zone -- three centres, Keshavpuram Zone -- five centres, Najafgarh Zone -- two centres, Narela Zone -- four centres, Rohini Zone -- two centres and the remaining centres distributed across other zones.

MCD cracks down on illegal encroachments in Sultanpuri

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), in collaboration with the Delhi Police, launched a large-scale anti-encroachment drive in Sultanpuri on Thursday, removing unauthorized structures and reclaiming public land. According to an official statement from the MCD, the operation focused on an abandoned community toilet complex in the area's P-block, which had been illegally occupied, obstructing public movement and raising sanitation

and safety concerns.

“The action aimed at reclaiming public spaces unlawfully occupied by unauthorized individuals, ensuring the effective enforcement of municipal regulations,” it said.

Officials stated that the initiative aligns with the MCD's ongoing efforts to restore public spaces, improve urban infrastructure, and maintain civic order.

“The MCD urged residents to respect municipal regulations and adhere to legal procedures when uti-

lizing public resources. The corporation emphasized that such actions will continue to ensure that public spaces remain accessible, orderly, and beneficial to the community,” the statement reads.

An MCD spokesperson emphasized the need for adherence to municipal regulations, urging residents to use public spaces responsibly. “We are committed to keeping the city clean, safe, and organized. Any unlawful encroachments will face strict action,” the official said.

CBI nabs Delhi cop for taking bribe from businessman

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The CBI has arrested a Delhi Police sub-inspector for allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 2.5 lakh through hawala operators for clearing the name of a Navi Mumbai-based tour operator from a case, officials said Thursday. The agency arrested Rahul Malik, posted at Cyber Police Station in Rohini here, for allegedly accepting an installment of Rs 2.5 lakh out of total Rs 14 lakh demanded from the businessman through “layers of multiple hawala operators” based in Mumbai, Tamil

Nadu's Erode, and Delhi, they said.

The businessman had approached the CBI with the complaint against Malik.

The person said he had business relations with a private company related to Cash Management System, but he later found that the login credentials for virtual wallets provided to him was created under fake name.

“The matter related to private company was under investigation in FIR lodged at the Cyber Police Station, Rohini, Delhi,” a CBI Spokesperson said in a statement.



arrested, and immediate action should be taken against them,” Amit Rathore, one of the men said.

Another man, Vijay said that they are continuously removing the signboards of invaders like Akbar, Babur and Humayun.

“We are continuously removing signboards of invaders like Akbar, Babur and Humayun, and we are trying to make the government open its eyes and take a decision... The attackers raped our sisters and

mothers, hanged the from trees, demolished temples, destroyed the unity of India. The question is why are only we doing this, where are the other people of the society?” he said.

This comes after a video went viral on social media, in which the sword and hand of Maharana Pratap's statue at Kashmir Gate can be seen damaged. Meanwhile, violent clashes erupted in Nagpur on March 17 over the demand of removal of Aurangzeb's grave.



Volunteers perform the 'Kar Sewa' for the Sarovar at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib organised by Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) in collaboration with Baba Bachhan Singh Ji, in New Delhi. ANI

Jamia Millia Islamia announces significant fee hike for 2025-26

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Students at Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) will have to shell out significantly more for their education this year, with tuition fees rising by 19 per cent to 41 per cent across undergraduate and post-graduate programs.

The sharpest hikes are seen in humanities, social sciences, and science courses, traditionally considered more affordable, while technical

and professional programs have also seen significant revisions. This was revealed after comparing the 2025-26 prospectus with that of the previous year.

Jamia's administration did not respond to calls or messages for comment.

Students enrolling in the Department of Persian will see a 41.41 per cent increase, with annual fees rising from Rs 6,700 to Rs 9,475, the comparison of the two prospectuses revealed.



The Department of Arabic follows closely with a 37.15

per cent hike, pushing fees from Rs 7,200 to Rs 9,875.

Similarly, fees for foreign language programs such as BA in Turkish, French, and Spanish have also jumped by 37.15 per cent, now costing Rs 9,875 per year.

Among social sciences programs, students pursuing M.A. and B.A. in Political Science, History, and Sociology, as well as the four-year B.A. (Multidisciplinary) program, will now have to pay Rs 9,875 per year, reflecting a 32.99 per cent hike from Rs 7,425 last year. B Com (Hons.)

fees have also risen from Rs7,425 to Rs9,875 per year (33.02% increase).

The fee hikes extend to science programs as well. B.Sc. students in Geography, Mathematics, and Physics will now pay Rs 10,475 annually, a 34.29 per cent increase from Rs 7,800 last year.

Technical and professional courses have also been affected.

The B Tech program has seen a 19.04 percent hike, with fees increasing from Rs

16,150 to Rs 19,225 per cent. M.Tech programs will now cost Rs 21,375 per year, up 16.48 per cent from the previous Rs 18,350. Law students in B.A. LL.B. and LL.M. programs will pay Rs 17,850 per year, reflecting a 19 per cent hike from Rs 15,000.

In addition to the tuition fee hikes, Jamia Millia Islamia has introduced several new courses for the academic year 2025-26, particularly in self-financed programs. Notable additions include

the MSc in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (Rs52,400 per year) and the MSc in Disaster Management & Climate Sustainability Studies (Rs58,775 per year). The university has also launched postgraduate diploma programs such as the P.G.

Diploma in Air and Space Laws (Rs29,000 per year), along with new certificate courses in design, textile, photography, and calligraphy.

Attendees can participate in approximately 40 conference sessions over the three-day expo, where policymakers, industry leaders, and innovators discuss the latest trends shaping India's digital transformation and urban development.

DARK FACTORIES: THE FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING OR A LOOMING CHALLENGE?

OPINION

SIDDHARTHA DAVE



The industrial sector is undergoing an unprecedented metamorphosis, propelled by advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and the Internet of Things (IoT). Among the most transformative developments in this domain is the advent of *dark factories*—highly sophisticated, fully autonomous manufacturing facilities that operate devoid of human intervention. These facilities promise unparalleled precision, cost efficiency, and continuous production. However, their emergence also precipitates substantial socio-economic and technological challenges, including workforce displacement, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and adaptability concerns within an

evolving industrial paradigm. This article critically examines the trajectory of dark factories, their advantages, potential drawbacks, and their implications for the future of global manufacturing.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF DARK FACTORIES

Dark factories, also termed *lights-out manufacturing facilities*, represent a paradigm shift in industrial production. These facilities integrate an intricate nexus of AI-driven robotics, machine learning algorithms, and IoT-enabled monitoring systems that autonomously oversee manufacturing processes. Operating in an entirely automated environment, these factories function without human oversight, thus obviating the need for lighting—hence the term *dark factory*.

At the core of dark factory functionality lies an interconnected network of intelligent machinery and sensor-based diagnostics, which enable real-time error detection, predictive maintenance, and self-optimization. By leveraging

AI-based analytics, these systems ensure precision-driven output while mitigating operational inefficiencies and downtime, heralding a new era of smart manufacturing.

STRATEGIC INCENTIVES FOR ADOPTING DARK FACTORIES

The proliferation of dark factories is underpinned by multiple compelling factors. Chief among these is the enhancement of operational efficiency. Automated systems facilitate unprecedented levels of accuracy and consistency, mitigating human error and optimizing production throughput. AI-driven algorithms further contribute to minimizing waste and maximizing resource utilization, thereby driving cost efficiency.

Another critical determinant is the potential for 24/7 operational continuity. Unlike human labor, AI-integrated machinery does not require rest periods, enabling seamless production cycles that enhance market responsiveness and scalability. Moreover, dark factories present significant advancements in occupational safety by eliminating human exposure to hazardous conditions, particularly in sectors dealing with toxic chemicals, extreme temperatures, and high-risk manufacturing environments.

Furthermore, the scalability of AI-driven production lines affords manufacturers

the flexibility to respond dynamically to shifting market demands. Machine learning models facilitate adaptive production planning, obviating the need for extensive retraining or workforce realignment. This adaptability positions dark factories as a cornerstone of future-ready industrial ecosystems.

INDUSTRY PIONEERS IN DARK FACTORY INNOVATION

Several global enterprises have spearheaded the transition toward dark factories. Japan's Fanuc, a frontrunner in industrial robotics, operates a facility where robotic arms are manufactured exclusively by other automated systems, effectively eliminating human involvement. Siemens' Amberg plant in Germany similarly exemplifies dark factory integration, achieving a near-perfect 99.99% quality assurance rate through AI-powered monitoring and real-time adjustments.

In the realm of automotive production, Tesla has incrementally advanced its automation infrastructure within its Gigafactories, with CEO Elon Musk envisioning a fully autonomous vehicle production ecosystem. Meanwhile, in China, CNC machining firms have embraced dark factory models to achieve unprecedented precision in high-volume manufacturing. Adidas, though encountering logistical setbacks, pioneered automated *Speedfactories* as

an experimental initiative in robotic production, underscoring the potential of dark factories in consumer goods manufacturing.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION 4.0: DARK FACTORIES AND THE FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING

The impact of dark factories extends beyond automation, symbolizing a seismic shift in industrial methodologies. AI-powered quality control systems are increasingly supplanting human-led inspections, leveraging machine learning for defect detection, thus optimizing reliability and waste reduction. Energy efficiency is another area of innovation, with AI-optimized power consumption strategies reducing operational costs and environmental footprints.

Additionally, real-time data analytics is revolutionizing manufacturing ecosystems. IoT-embedded sensors enable predictive maintenance by continuously assessing machinery performance and preempting mechanical failures, thus averting costly production halts. Moreover, industries that necessitate sterile production environments, such as pharmaceuticals and semiconductor manufacturing, are poised to benefit substantially from dark factories, where human contamination risks are entirely mitigated.

CHALLENGES AND COMPLEXITIES IN IMPLEMENTING DARK FACTORIES

Despite their transformative potential, dark factories are not devoid of challenges. Foremost among these is the significant capital investment required for deploying AI-integrated robotics, data analytics infrastructure, and machine-learning frameworks. For small and medium-sized enterprises, these financial barriers may impede large-scale adoption.

Furthermore, the rise of dark factories has profound socio-economic ramifications. The automation of labor-intensive production processes raises pressing concerns about widespread job displacement. This necessitates proactive governmental and corporate policies geared toward workforce reskilling and the development of AI-competent labor forces, ensuring sustainable employment transitions within the evolving industrial landscape.

Operational vulnerabilities also present formidable risks. Fully automated facilities are inherently dependent on intricate AI and IoT infrastructures, which, if compromised, could result in catastrophic system failures. The absence of human oversight renders these facilities susceptible to unforeseen disruptions, including cybersecurity threats. As dark factories increasingly rely on inter-

connected networks, safeguarding against cyberattacks, industrial espionage, and data breaches will be paramount.

Additionally, while AI-based manufacturing excels in high-volume, standardized production, it remains inherently rigid in accommodating highly customized or rapidly shifting production demands. Unlike human workers who possess adaptive cognitive capabilities, AI systems require extensive reprogramming to modify operational parameters, potentially impeding flexibility in dynamic markets.

THE FUTURE TRAJECTORY: A HYBRID MODEL OF AUTOMATION AND HUMAN EXPERTISE

While dark factories are poised to revolutionize industrial production, a wholesale shift to fully autonomous manufacturing remains improbable in the foreseeable future. Instead, a hybrid model—where AI-driven automation coexists with human expertise—is likely to define the next phase of industrial evolution. In sectors necessitating craftsmanship, adaptability, and bespoke production, human labor will continue to play an indispensable role.

To mitigate the socio-economic impact of automation, multi-stakeholder collaborations involving governments, corporations, and educational institutions

must facilitate workforce upskilling initiatives. By fostering AI literacy and technological proficiency, societies can better navigate the transition toward an AI-augmented manufacturing ecosystem. Ethical considerations regarding employment displacement, economic inclusivity, and regulatory frameworks must also be rigorously examined to ensure an equitable industrial transformation.

CONCLUSION: THE CONVERGENCE OF AUTOMATION AND HUMAN INGENUITY

Dark factories represent a transformative milestone in industrial evolution, heralding a future defined by efficiency, sustainability, and AI-augmented innovation. However, the trajectory of automation must be carefully calibrated to balance technological progress with socio-economic responsibility. Strategic investments in workforce adaptation, cybersecurity resilience, and regulatory oversight will be instrumental in ensuring that dark factories drive industrial progress while fostering an inclusive and sustainable future.

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The cry of the cuckoo

OPINION

HIMANSHU DHULIYA



This year though the Cuckoo arrived in end February in Goa as if to caution us that enough was enough , stop cutting trees as one day I shall not be able to sing my painful song ! Beauty to it may be , it is cuckoo's cry , her lament and sorrowful call for company ! Cuckoos arrive as the spring's warmth beckons them , but with early warming of weather she thinks that her arrival time has approached!

Why is it that the Cuckoo hides herself around the leaves of tree branches , prefers to remain unseen ? Is she shy? I look for her always and sometimes see her sitting alone singing her sad sweet song. Perhaps, enticing or cajoling her mate! Maybe she wants her privacy when she finds her mate. Does she know that how beautiful she sings? How happy she makes all of us ? How much music and

comfort and joy she gives to the world , Is she shy because she is dark ? May be, but she possesses a beautiful heart and inner beauty and voice so soul stirring . I have been observing this sound since years . I am not sure if it is to herald the spring or the approaching summer or to announce the mango flowering and ripening thereafter or an advance notice, invitation or caution of the monsoons but there is melody and distinct pain in her call. Though it sings in spring the call can be heard even in early June. I have learnt that both male and female Cuckoos call , but since years I have perceived the cuckoo call with the female cuckoo only.

During my early student days I always connected cuckoo to summer and mangoes after having heard a classical song in raag 'Malikaus' during School Annual day function – “ *koyalija bole amuwa ki daar par*.” (Koyal sings sitting on the mango tree branch). In Kochi I was pleased to hear the cuckoo almost through the year as the mangoes are available on trees much prior and beyond the standard summer months. Could it be the mango which motivates the cuckoo to sing? And mangoes do appear by end May/ early April and keep



us company till the middle of monsoon.

Strange it may appear I observe that the cuckoo-mango-monsoon have a link to the character and personality of us Indians. 'Waiting' (*Intezar*) is the first emotion which the above process generates followed by 'exasperation', 'hope', 'arrival', 'rejoicing', 'celebration', 'separation' , 'disappointment'. Like the twist in monsoon tale which sometimes approaches but retreats or withers our emotional cycle too behaves similarly. Mangoes rejuvenate wavering health, so do the monsoon. Therefore the emotional quotient of Indians is heavily hinged on cuckoo-mango- and monsoon. Year after year the wait and embrace makes our emotional system superior to the logical mind system, it also explains our variety of cultural expressions during the monsoon months. In addition to reviving our economy the monsoon-mango and

cuckoo give us emotional therapy to sustain for a year.

There is one variety of Cuckoo/Koyal called '*Chatak*' called Jacobian Cuckoo found in large number in Indian sub continent . This bird awaits for the monsoon rain to quench its thirst!

CHATAK

Cuckoo not only resides in Indian subcontinent , but also in Europe . Wordsworth has written of her in his poem '*To the Cuckoo*'-

“Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;
The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky. “
And so also other poets such as John Logan in his '*Ode to the Cuckoo*' writes:
“Hail, beauteous stranger of the grove!
Thou messenger of Spring!
Now Heaven repairs thy rural seat,
And woods thy welcome ring.”

Reference to Cuckoo is in abundance in Hindustani classical music , poetry . Hindi cinema songs are full of Koyal and mango references . Para Devi sings in 1947 film 'Do Bhai' song penned by Raja Mehdi Ali Khan –
“*Amuwa ki Dari pe Koyal Bole Koyal Bole Re Koyal Bole Prem Ki Nadin Mein Man Ki Nayya Dag Mag Dole Re Dagnag*”
(Koyal sings on the mango branch , koyal sings

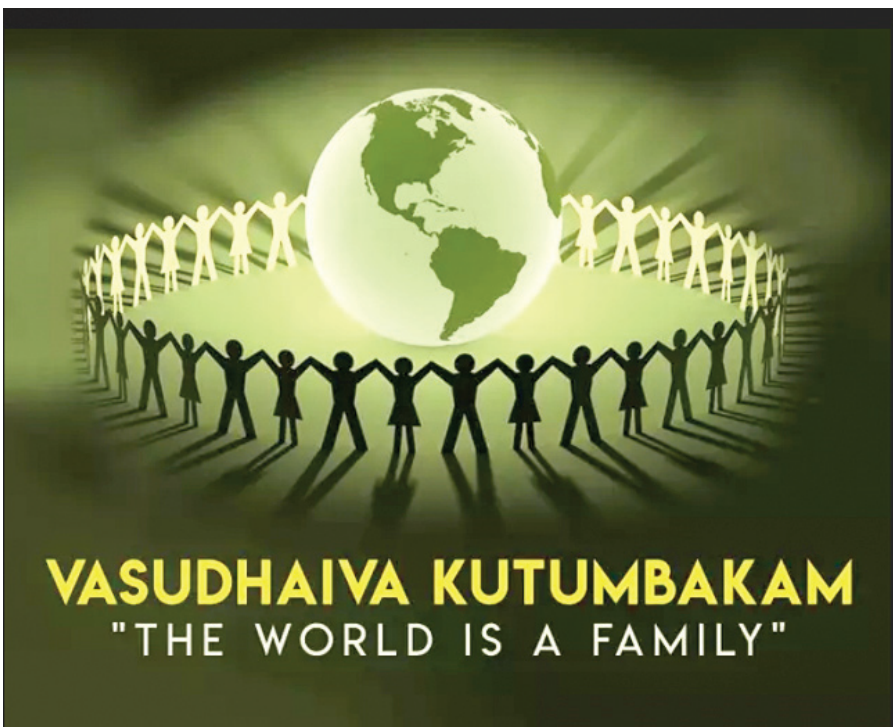
In the river of love my mind's boat rolls and rolls)
–“ Abdul Majeed 'Shams' writes in his poem titled '*Phagun*'-
“*Khushi se fazaa muskarane lagi Nasime Sabar gungunane lagi Papibon ne rat 'pi kaban' ki lagayi Kabin mast koyal ne ku-ku sunayi*”
(with happiness nature is smiling
The morning breeze is humming
Papiha (a Cuckoo variety) is continually singing
Somewhere the merry Cuckoo is cooing !)
She is known by different names – Cuckoo, Koyal , Kokila all names resonating with the song and sound she makes. Unlike Pigeons , Parrots and Blabbers who move in a flock Cuckoo remains in her own world, she perhaps stays single . In Kalidas's famous Poem '*Ritusambara*' which has six Cantos each dedicated to a 'season' , in Canto six dedicated to Spring/Basant there are numerous references to Cuckoo, Mango and Bees . A few stanzas/lines are

quoted below from the book , translated by Abhay K:
“ *Crazy Cuckoo drunk on Mango nectar,
Kisses his mate passionately ,
So do the honey bees hidden inside lotus petals
Make love to their sweet-hearts*”(Stanza 14)
“ *and now the joyous Cuckoo with its sweet cooing
Seals the fate of young hearts lost to amorous women*”(Lines from stanza 20)
“ *In Chaitra , Cuckoo's cooing and humming of bees fill the air*”(Lines from stanza 24)
During the time of Wordsworth and John Logan the nature was close to humanity , it was part of their world and they had leisure and inclination to observe nature and write about it. Kalidas was writing in a period about two thousand years ago, where there was abundance of nature and the wild urban life post industrialization was centuries away . From the poetic expression of Kalidas the progressive society of that time is reflected which we call the 'Golden Age'. However we are lucky that we hear the Cuckoo still ; Sadly I fear that this sweet bird of spring shall appear less and less and shall soon disappear in the urban desert which we are creating . I end this article with my anguish in verse below:

“THE PAIN OF THE CUCKOO”

The cuckoo cried in passionate pain throughout the night.
*Not a drop of water fell; though distant thunder fell.
Cuckoo arrives in early march and is heard till june-july end.*

*She searches for her mate and creates many symbols of rain.
Her song, her solitude, her plea goes unheard; in traffic din urbane.
Why is she here then wasting her voice on ungrateful citizens?
I have heard her song at all times during the day. But why is she so much in grief tonight?
Will she be able to attract her mate?
Will she be able to love once again before the season dies?
This sound is the nature's blessing which we search in temples and tomb.
Those are blessed who hear her cry , those who don't; remain ungroomed.
No scientist can create such soulful cry, it is only an artist's inspiration.
Am I the lucky one who bears in this green corner of metropolis?
Have the concrete kept her away from her annual visits?
Deprived of destiny will the children of modernity never hear her nectar sound that nourishes their generation.
God they say lies in small things, small sounds!
Same sound with subtle variations is the source of truth and joy.
She is in perennial quest, in eternal pain, an emotional pain.
To make us happy.
To liberate us .
To redeem us.
To rejoice us.
Do we deserve her?
Worshippers of market!
Soldiers of wealth!
Ready to conquer the fertile for greed.
No! we do not deserve her song; her sound.
No ! do not come cuckoo again.
This shall be our punishment; our penance. “*



Today, we will explore India's journey as a peace negotiator, its contributions to global peacekeeping, and its efforts to bridge divides in the international order.



A view of the G20 Summit held in New Delhi from September 9 to 10, 2023. File Photo

BRIDGING DIVIDES

INDIA'S GLORIOUS HISTORY AS PEACEBUILDER IN GLOBAL ARENA

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India, with its rich historical legacy and strategic foreign policy, has long been a champion of peace in international relations. The nation's role as a peace negotiator and mediator is deeply embedded in its historical experiences, ideological commitments, and diplomatic engagements. India's influence in global peacebuilding has been shaped by its participation in multilateral diplomacy, peacekeeping missions, and development partnerships. Over the years, it has demonstrated a commitment to resolving conflicts through dialogue, multilateral cooperation, and development initiatives.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INDIA'S PEACE DIPLOMACY

India's emergence as a peace negotiator was a natural extension of its post-independence foreign policy, shaped by its historical experiences and national values.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

In the aftermath of World War II and its struggle for independence, India, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, advocated for the creation of a neutral bloc of nations, distinct from the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Non-Aligned Movement, founded in 1961, sought to promote global peace and cooperation by encouraging nations to avoid aligning with any major power bloc.

The Korean War (1950-1953): One of India's earliest roles as a peace mediator occurred during the Korean War. In 1953, India played a key role in brokering the ceasefire between North and South Korea. The Indian government, under Nehru, proposed a resolution to the United Nations calling for the establishment of a Neutral Nations Repatriation



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with alumni of Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation from across Pacific Island Countries in Papua New Guinea on May 22, 2023. Source PIB

Commission. India's efforts were instrumental in the successful armistice agreement that led to the cessation of hostilities in Korea. The Indian resolution on Korea was adopted by the UN in 1952, and India managed to gain consensus from major stakeholders, including the United States, the USSR, and China.

Indochina and Vietnam Mediation: India also played a crucial role in the conflict-ridden Indochina region in the 1950s and 1960s. As a co-chair of the International Commission for Supervision and Control, India helped monitor the ceasefire agreements reached during the First Indochina War (1946-1954). In the wake of the Vietnam War, India continued to emphasize peace and dialogue, voicing its concern over the escalation of the conflict.

INDIA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO GLOBAL PEACEKEEPING

India's active participation in peacekeeping operations around the world has been one of its most significant contributions to global peace.

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO): India has long been a significant contributor to UN peacekeeping operations. Since its first deployment in the early 1950s, India has sent over 290,000 peacekeepers to more than 50 UN missions across the globe. Indian peacekeepers

have been deployed in diverse regions, including Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. India has also contributed a substantial number of military and police personnel to UN missions, reflecting its commitment to maintaining global peace and security.

The Suez Crisis (1956): India was also active in the diplomatic response to the Suez Crisis. When Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt, India strongly condemned the aggression and called for the immediate cessation of hostilities. India's firm stance against the use of force in international conflicts exemplified its commitment to upholding the principles of international law and peaceful conflict resolution. India's role in advocating for a ceasefire during the Suez Crisis highlighted its support for peaceful diplomacy over military intervention.

Congo Crisis (1960-1965):

India's involvement in the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) further demonstrated its peacekeeping credentials. India contributed thousands of troops to help restore peace in the Congo following the country's independence from Belgium. Indian peacekeepers played a vital role in stabilizing the situation in the Congo, helping to mediate between various factions and prevent the conflict from spreading. This mission reinforced India's commitment to peacekeeping and its reputation as a reliable partner in maintaining global security.

PEACEBUILDING THROUGH DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to traditional peacekeeping efforts, India has also focused on peacebuilding through development initiatives.

Development Cooperation with Africa:

India's partnership with African countries is rooted in the belief that economic development is integral to achieving peace. India's development assistance to African countries has been wide-ranging, covering areas such as infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and agriculture. One of India's notable contributions to Africa is the Pan-African e-Network Project, which connects all 53 African Union nations with India for tele-education and telemedicine services. This initiative has not only helped improve access to education and healthcare in Africa but has also fostered closer ties between India and the continent.

Afghanistan's Reconstruction:

After the fall of the Taliban regime, India became one of the leading contributors to Afghanistan's reconstruction. India provided substantial financial assistance for rebuilding Afghanistan's infrastructure, including the construction of roads, schools, and hospitals. One of the key projects undertaken by India in Afghanistan was the Afghan-India Friendship Dam, which helped address water and electricity shortages in the region. India also provided scholarships and training opportunities to Afghan students and officials, helping to build the country's human capital. India's support for Afghanistan has been a crucial part of its broader strategy to promote



Indian peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2008. File photo

regional peace and stability.

ITEC Programmes and Capacity Building:

India's Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programmes have been instrumental in building the capacity of countries in the Global South. Through ITEC, India has offered training in areas such as governance, education, healthcare, and information technology. These programmes have not only fostered development but have also helped create lasting partnerships between India and other nations, contributing to regional stability and peace.

INDIA'S CIVILIZATIONAL ETHOS AND GLOBAL PERCEPTION

The philosophical concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,' which translates to 'the world is one family,' has been a cornerstone of India's foreign policy and international engagement.

Philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam':

This ancient Indian philosophy emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people and the importance of harmony and peace in the world. It resonates with India's commitment to fostering peaceful relations between nations and resolving conflicts through dialogue rather than violence. India's diplomatic approach is informed by this worldview, and it has consistently advocated

for peaceful coexistence in international forums such as the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Bridging Divides Between the Global South and North:

India's ability to bridge the divide between the Global South and North is one of its key strengths as a peace negotiator. By maintaining balanced relations with major powers such as Russia, the United States, Israel, Iran, and Japan, India positions itself as a neutral mediator in global conflicts. India's efforts to include the African Union (AU) in the G20, for instance, demonstrate its commitment to amplifying the voices of developing nations and ensuring that their concerns are addressed in global economic discussions. India's diplomatic engagements are driven by its belief in a more equitable and inclusive global order.

INDIA'S CONTEMPORARY DIPLOMATIC ENDEAVORS

India continues to play an active role in addressing contemporary global challenges and conflicts, reflecting its enduring commitment to peace.

Middle East Peace Efforts:

In recent years, India has been involved in efforts to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East. In 2020, after the killing of Iran's

military commander Qasem Soleimani, India was asked to mediate between Iran and the United States to reduce tensions. India's neutral stance and strong diplomatic ties with both countries allowed it to play a constructive role in defusing the crisis. Similarly, India has maintained a balanced approach in the Israel-Palestine conflict, advocating for a two-state solution and the peaceful resolution of differences.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict:

India's diplomatic approach to the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been characterized by a commitment to dialogue and peaceful resolution. While India has maintained close ties with Russia, it has also expressed support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized India's desire for peace in Ukraine and offered to mediate to facilitate a ceasefire. India's stance reflects its belief that peace can only be achieved through diplomacy and dialogue.

Engagement with the Taliban:

India's engagement with the Taliban has been a topic of much discussion in recent years, especially after the fall of Kabul in 2021. India has maintained a cautious approach, focusing on humanitarian aid and regional stability.

MADRAS HIGH COURT ORALLY ASKS ED TO HALT PROBE AGAINST TASMALC TILL MARCH 25: 'CAN YOU WITHHOLD ENTIRE OFFICE AND STAFF UNDER YOUR CONTROL?'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Madras High Court in the case Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation Ltd TASMALC v. Directorate of Enforcement, ED observed and has asked the Enforcement Directorate, ED not to proceed with its investigation initiated against the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation, TASMALC in an alleged money laundering case till the next date of hearing.

The Division bench comprising of Justice MS Ramesh and Justice N Sent-

hil Kumar was hearing the present matter.

The bench in the case directed the Enforcement Directorate, ED for filing a counter to the petition filed by TASMALC, wherein it challenged the recent searches by the agency conducted at the latter's headquarters.

The court orally asked the Enforcement Directorate, ED to not proceed with the investigation.

The State also filed a petition seeking for a declaration that ED's power to investigate into an offence of money laundering arising out of and within the



territorial limits of the State, without state consent is violative of the basic structure of federalism and separation of powers.

The court directed the State to modify its prayer, as the court noted that the relief sought is wide.

The counsel, Advocate General PS Raman assured the court that the state would modify the prayer.

The counsel, Senior Advocate Vikram Chaudhri questioned the manner in which the search and seizure was conducted by the Enforcement Directorate, ED.

The bench in the case directed the Enforcement Directorate, ED for filing a counter to the petition filed by TASMALC, wherein it challenged the recent searches by the agency conducted at the latter's headquarters.

ment Directorate, ED.

Senior Advocate Vikram Chaudhri argued that as per Section 17(1) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, the Director or any other officer not below the rank of Deputy Director was to proceed with the search on the basis of information in

his possession and should have reason to believe that an offence under the Act was committed.

Chaudhri also pointed out that the Section mandated that such reasons should be recorded in writing.

Chaudhri submitted that the ED had failed to follow

the procedures in the present case.

Chaudhri also argued before the court that there was a total invasion of privacy by the Enforcement Directorate, ED as it entered the premises and had taken documents, seized mobile phones of the employees.

Chaudhri argued that ED did not have powers to barge into the office and take any document it wished.

Adding to it, Chaudhri stated that the seizure should be proportional to the offence.

Chaudhri also informed the court that the employ-

ees were made to sit for 60 hours with women officers being sent back home late in the night with total disregard to their rights.

On the other hand, the Additional Solicitor General ARL Sundaresan, denied the allegations and has submitted that the employees were allowed to go home. He argued that the ED had materials to proceed with the seizure.

The court in the case wondered if the Enforcement Directorate, ED had the power to detain the entire office based on materials available against some persons.

Supreme Court grants interim protection from eviction to over 19,000 Maharashtra street vendors

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Maharashtra Pheri-wala Kranti Mahasangh Versus Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation And Ors observed and has granted interim protection from eviction to 19000 odd street vendors in Pimpri-Chinchwad near Pune in Maharashtra.

The court in the case stated that until the exercise of identifying or notifying the

hawking and non-hawking zones is contemplated in accordance with the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, status quo be maintained and the hawkers not be evicted from their place of vending.

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

The bench in its order stated that, 'The exercise

to accommodate the 19792 street-vendors or 14000 and odd street-vendors, as it is pointed out by the learned counsel appearing for the respondent-Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, is continuing. The parties shall maintain status quo with respect to possession and functioning of the street-vendors.'

The court in the case observed that hawkers should be treated with dignity and respect and that they cannot

be evicted illegally.

In October 2023, the respondent No.1-Corporation had sought at least 6 weeks' time to complete the exercise under the Street Vendors Act.

A year later, in September, the Corporation informed that the final list of street vendors on February 07, 2024 comprising 19,792 street vendors, was ready and due to financial constraints and limited resources, it needed more time to

accommodate all the 19,792 street vendors.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case noted that the exercise by the Corporation was still continuing.

Further, the Court directed that status quo be maintained qua possession and functioning of street vendors until the exercise is completed.

The counsel, Advocate Zain Haider appeared for the Petitioner.

SC asks Odisha govt to decide premature release plea of convict in Graham Staines murder case within 6 weeks

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Rabindra Kumar Pal @ Dara Singh Versus State Of Odisha observed and has asked the State of Odisha to take a decision wherein the petition is filed for premature release of Dara Singh who is serving life sentence for the murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons in 1999. The bench comprising of Justice Manoj Misra and Justice KV Viswanathan

was hearing the present matter.

In the present matter, a writ petition was filed by Singh seeking remission of his sentence.

It has been stated before the court that Dara Singh has served more than 24 years in imprisonment.

The counsel appearing for the State informed the court that it is deliberating upon the said issue.

The bench in the case though it fit to adjourn the matter by six weeks.

The bench observed that, 'It is being expected that a decision with regard to above shall be taken. When the said matter is listed on the next date of hearing, the decision so taken shall be brought on record.'

In 2003, the Trial Court sentenced Dara Singh to death.

In 2005, the Orissa High Court commuted the death penalty to life imprisonment, which was the Supreme Court confirmed in 2011. The counsel, Advo-

cate Hari Shankar Jain and Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain appearing for Dara Singh submitted before the court that Singh committed the crime in a 'fit of youthful rage' and was now repentant of his acts.

Dara Singh in its petition stated that he be allowed pre-mature release from prison, so as to go back to society as a reformed person.

Therefore, Singh also placed reliance on the Supreme Court's 2022 judg-

ment, wherein the court allowed for the premature release of the convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

In January 22, 1999, the crime happened at Manoharpur village in Keonjhar district, Orissa, when a mob led by Dara Singh set fire on Graham Staines's vehicle in which he and his two sons, Philip (aged 10) and Timothy (aged 6), were sleeping.

Accordingly, the court adjourned the matter for six weeks.

Supreme Court expresses inclination to transfer gold smuggling case trial from Kerala to Karnataka

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Directorate Of Enforcement Versus Sarith P.S. And Ors observed and has orally expressed a prima facie inclination to transfer the trial of the money laundering case which relates to the 2020 gold smuggling case from Kerala to Karnataka.

The court in the case observed that since the prima facie allegations are 'serious', the plea of the Enforcement Directorate, ED to transfer the trial should not be opposed.

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

In the present matter, the transfer petition is filed by the Enforcement Directorate, ED in 2022, wherein seeking to transfer the trial of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, PMLA case, at present before the Special PMLA Court at Ernakulam, to a Special Court for PMLA cases in Karnataka.

The bench headed by Justice Sundresh orally remarked that, 'The allegations are serious and why does the [ED] not go for transfer'.

However, this was orally stated after the State of



The bench headed by Justice Sundresh orally remarked that, 'The allegations are serious and why does the [ED] not go for transfer'.

Kerala sought a passover since Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, for the State, was busy in another Court. The counsel, Senior Advocate Jayant Muthuraj, appearing for some accused, submitted before the court that notice has to be served on the additional accused added in the case through the supplementary complaint. The bench of Justice Sundresh stated that, 'In all fairness, you should not even oppose this i.e., the transfer petition.

When the matter was taken up again, Sibal opposed the need for transfer.

Sibal submitted that the ED's allegations were that the State was influencing the investigation.

Sibal stated that since the investigation is now over and charges have been

framed, there was no need to transfer.

It has also been pointed out by Sibal that the Enforcement Directorate, ED initially sought transfer to Karnataka, but now they do not want to transfer the matter to Karnataka.

Sibal implied that this was because a non-BJP government came to power in Karnataka in 2023.

Sibal asked that, 'Why did they need Karnataka then and why do they don't need it now?'

The bench informed the counsel, Advocate Kanu Agarwal, appearing for the ED stated that the notice has to be issued to the newly added accused persons as well so as to avoid arguments of prejudice raised by them in the future.

Family Court dissolves marriage of Yuzvendra Chahal & Dhanashree Verma, after Bombay High Court order

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A Family Court dissolved the marriage between Indian cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal and his estranged wife Dhanashree Verma on March 20, 2025.

On March 19, the Bombay High Court ordered the Family Court in Mumbai's Bandra area, to decide the petition filed by couple for divorce by 'mutual consent' today itself, wherein the court noted that Chahal has to join his team Kings XI Punjab for the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League, IPL from March 22.

The High Court bench headed by Justice Madhav Jamdar in its order noted that the fact that the couple have been living separately for over two and a half years and that they have already complied with the consent terms, they agreed to during the mediation between them.

In December 2020, the couple got married and parted ways in June 2022.

This year on February 05, the couple filed a pe-

tion for mutual consent before the Family Court in Mumbai's Bandra.

The couple jointly urged the Family Court to waive the cooling - off period but by an order passed dated February 20, the Family Court rejected their plea.

The Family Court while rejecting the request had noted that Chahal had paid only Rs 2.37 crores of the agreed amount of Rs 4.75 cores to Dhanashree and thus had only partially complied with the consent terms.

Before Justice Jamdar, the cricketer argued that as per their consent terms, the second instalment of the alimony was to be paid only after the decree of divorce.

The Judge noted that the Family Court erred in considering this aspect of the case.

Accordingly, the judge allowed the petition.

The counsel, Advocates Nitin Gupta and Sanchay Mehrotra appeared for Yuzvendra Chahal.

The counsel, Advocate Aditi Mohoni represented Dhanashree Verma.

SC Collegium recommends permanent appointment for three additional judges of Punjab and Haryana High Court

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the appointment of three additional judges, including two women, as permanent judges of Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Haryana High Court. The Supreme Court Collegium in its meeting held on March 19, 2025 approved the proposal for the appointment of the following Additional Judges as Permanent Judges of Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The name of the Additional Judges as Permanent Judges of Punjab and Haryana High Court are. 1.Shri Justice Sumeet Goel, 2.Smt. Justice Sudeepti Sharma, and 3.Ms. Justice Kirti Singh.

Supreme Court Collegium recommends appointment of 8 judicial officers as Gujarat High Court judges

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium recommended the the appointment of eight judicial officers as judges of the Gujarat High Court.

The Supreme Court Collegium in its meeting held on March 19, 2025 has approved the proposal for appointment of the following Judicial Officers as Gujarat High Court Judges:

1.Shri Liyakathussain Shamsuddin Pirzada, 2.Shri Ramchandra Thakurdas Vachhani, 3.Shri Jayesh Lakhanshibhai Odedra, 4.Shri Pranav Maheshbhai Raval, 5.Shri Mool Chand Tyagi, 6. Shri Dipak Mansukhlal Vyas, 7. Shri Utkarsh Thakoribhai Desai, and

8.Shri Rohenkumar Kundanlal Chudawala.

CENTRE TO SUPREME COURT: EFFORTS ON TO SETTLE ISSUE OF RECOVERY OF ROYALTY, TAX DUES WITH CERTAIN STATES

The Centre informed the Supreme Court about its efforts to resolve the issue of royalty and tax recovery on mineral rights with mineral-rich states. The hearing involving states like Jharkhand, is deferred to April 24.

DELHI HIGH COURT PERMANENTLY RESTRAINS LOCAL DHABAS FROM USING REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF POPULAR MURTHAL EATERY 'MANNAT DHABA'

The Delhi High Court has permanently restrained various restaurants (local dhabas) using the registered trademarks of popular Murthal base eatery 'Mannat Dhaba.'

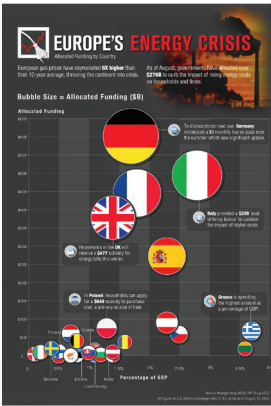
CAN EUROPE SURVIVE SANS RUSSIA'S GAS LIFELINE?

Europe's path to energy independence from Russian gas is both complex and multifaceted. The transition involves a combination of securing alternative gas suppliers, upgrading energy infrastructure, and accelerating the adoption of renewable energy sources.

Europe's long-standing reliance on Russian natural gas has been a cornerstone of its energy system for decades. The Russian supply of gas has powered homes, businesses, and industries across the continent, contributing to economic stability and growth. However, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Europe has been forced to reevaluate its energy strategy and find alternative sources to reduce its dependence on Russian fossil fuels. This shift raises the critical question: Can Europe meet its energy needs without Russian gas?

THE DEGREE OF DEPENDENCE ON RUSSIAN GAS

Prior to the geopolitical tensions sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia was the EU's largest supplier of natural gas, accounting for roughly 40% of the continent's natural gas imports. The reliance on Russian energy supplies was unevenly distributed across the European Union, with countries like Germany, Italy, and other Central and Eastern European nations being major consumers of Russian gas. This heavy dependence on a single sup-



plier created a vulnerability, particularly as Russia used its energy resources as a geopolitical tool, increasing tensions in the region. When the war in Ukraine intensified, Russia began cutting off gas supplies to various European nations, revealing the risks of relying on a single source for such a critical commodity. Strategic Steps Towards Diversification In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent energy disruptions, the European Union has accelerated its efforts to reduce its dependence on Russian gas. One of the central initiatives is the REPowerEU plan, introduced in 2022, which aims to reduce the EU's reliance on

improving insulation, and promoting energy-saving behaviors among citizens. By reducing demand, Europe can alleviate pressure on its energy infrastructure and make its energy needs less reliant on any single source. Renewable Energy Expansion: Another crucial pillar of the REPowerEU plan is increasing the use of renewable energy sources, particularly wind and solar power. By significantly ramping up its renewable energy capacities, Europe aims to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. The EU has set a target to double the current capacity of renewables, which will not only help meet long-term energy demands but also align with



A worker for the Russian state energy company Gazprom surveys a natural gas treatment facility at the starting point of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in northwest Russia.

gas, Europe has identified several key alternative suppliers. The diversification of energy sources is critical to ensuring the stability and security of Europe's energy system in the long run. The primary alternative suppliers to Russian gas include the United States, Qatar, and Azerbaijan. United States: The U.S. has emerged as a key supplier of LNG to Europe, especially since the onset of the war in Ukraine. American LNG exports have surged in recent years, helping to fill the gap left by reduced Russian pipeline gas deliveries. For example, Spain, which has long had a robust LNG import infrastructure, has significantly ramped up its imports of LNG from the United States. The U.S. offers Europe flexibility in securing energy supplies, as LNG can be sourced from multiple locations and shipped via sea routes, offering more freedom compared to fixed pipeline routes. Qatar: Qatar, one of the world's leading LNG exporters, has become an increas-

ingly important supplier for European countries seeking alternatives to Russian gas. The nation has substantial LNG export capabilities and has offered long-term contracts to European countries to ensure a stable energy supply. Qatar's strategic location in the Middle East and its role as a key energy player make it an attractive partner for Europe's diversification strategy. Azerbaijan: Azerbaijan's natural gas resources, particularly those supplied through the Southern Gas Corridor, are increasingly significant for Europe. The pipeline route, which connects Azerbaijan's gas fields to Europe through Turkey, has become an important source of energy for Southern and Eastern Europe. The EU has worked to strengthen its energy ties with Azerbaijan as part of its broader strategy to reduce dependence on Russian energy. UPGRADING ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE To accommodate the growing demand for alternative

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND FUTURE OUTLOOK EU'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY

- Europe is focusing on renewable energy sources to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The EU aims to transition to a more sustainable energy model in the coming decades.
- Wind and Solar Power: ● The EU is committed to rapidly expanding its wind and solar energy capacities. The goal is to double renewable energy capacity within the next decade. Wind and solar power are seen as clean and sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels. Their widespread adoption will play a key role in meeting Europe's long-term energy needs and climate targets.
- Hydrogen and Biomethane: Hydrogen and biomethane are emerging as promising substitutes for natural gas. These energy sources are especially valuable in industries and sectors that are difficult to electrify, such as heavy industries and transportation. Significant investment in hydrogen and biomethane will be critical to achieving the EU's climate goals and reducing overall fossil fuel dependence.
- Future Energy Mix: ● The focus on renewables aims to create a diversified energy mix, minimizing dependence on fossil fuels, particularly natural gas. Achieving these goals will contribute to energy security and help Europe meet its sustainability and climate objectives in the coming years.

requires significant investment and time. Even though new projects are underway, the pace of infrastructure development may not keep up with the urgent demand for energy, potentially leading to delays in securing alternative gas supplies. Market Volatility: The global LNG market is highly competitive, with multiple regions vying for the same supplies. Spot market prices for LNG can fluctuate significantly, making it difficult for European countries to secure long-term contracts at favorable prices. This volatility could lead to price hikes for consumers, particularly in the face of rising global energy demand.

IMPACT ON RUSSIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

The EU's shift away from Russian gas has had significant consequences for Russia's energy sector. Decline of Gazprom: Gazprom, Russia's state-owned natural gas monopoly, has been particularly hard hit by Europe's decision to reduce its dependence on Russian gas. Previously one of Russia's most valuable corporations, Gazprom has seen a rapid decline in its revenues and market share. As European countries turn to alternative suppliers, Gazprom has lost a major portion of its customer base, leading to the company reducing its workforce and divesting luxury estates to limit its losses. Shift Toward Asia: In response to the loss of European markets, Russia has sought to reorient its energy exports toward Asia, particularly China. However, building new pipelines and infrastructure to support gas exports to Asia is not an instantaneous process, and the existing infrastructure for these markets is limited. As a result, Russia faces challenges in diversifying its energy markets and overcoming logistical constraints.



Russian fossil fuels by 2027. The plan is multifaceted and involves a combination of energy efficiency measures, a greater push for renewable energy, and diversification of supply sources. The REPowerEU strategy is designed to meet three core objectives: Energy Efficiency: The EU has set ambitious targets to reduce overall energy consumption. A key element of this strategy is to cut energy demand by at least 15% across the member states by 2030. Measures include encouraging more energy-efficient practices, such as modifying heating systems in public buildings,

the EU's climate ambitions to reduce carbon emissions and transition toward a greener energy mix. Diversification of Energy Supply: The EU has embarked on efforts to secure alternative gas suppliers and to invest in energy infrastructure to accommodate a wider range of energy imports. This includes both pipeline projects and expanding infrastructure for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) imports, which can be shipped from different regions globally, providing a hedge against reliance on Russian gas. Alternative Gas Suppliers To replace Russian natural

new terminals will allow Germany to import LNG from a variety of suppliers, further reducing its dependence on Russian energy.

CHALLENGES IN THE TRANSITION

Despite the progress made in diversifying energy supplies, there are several challenges in Europe's transition away from Russian gas. Supply Security: Diversifying energy suppliers is a critical step, but it is essential to avoid over-dependence on any single source. Relying on a few alternative suppliers such as the United States, Qatar, or Azerbaijan could expose Europe to supply disruptions or price volatility. Securing long-term contracts with multiple suppliers, while avoiding competition for scarce LNG resources, will be crucial for maintaining energy security. Infrastructure Bottlenecks: Rapidly scaling up infrastructure such as LNG terminals, storage facilities, and cross-border interconnectors

● TDG NETWORK

Germany's New Coalition: Unleashing the Radical Centre

In 1966, Germany formed its first "grand coalition" government in postwar history to address an unexpected economic downturn and growing concerns over a nascent neo-Nazi far-right movement. Nearly six decades later, Germany is on the cusp of another grand coalition, with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) preparing to join forces after February's snap election. Although the challenges today appear similar to those of the past, the circumstances and stakes are much more critical, signaling a shift in German politics that could reverberate across Europe. Germany's current situation is shaped by a combination of internal stagnation and external geopolitical upheaval. The German economy is enduring its longest period of stagnation since World War II, and growing tensions across the globe are putting pressure on its trade-led economic model. Meanwhile, the extreme-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which is seen by security services as a threat to Germany's democratic constitutional order, has become the second-largest party in the country. Additionally, the rise of a Putin-sympathetic Donald Trump, who has undermined transatlantic security alliances, is further complicating Germany's international standing. In response to this challenging backdrop, German politics

is undergoing rapid transformation. Chancellor-elect Friedrich Merz, at the helm of the CDU, is leading a historic shift in Germany's fiscal and defense policy. The Bundestag recently voted to amend Germany's Basic Law, allowing for a significant increase in public investment in defense, national infrastructure, and the climate transition. This change effectively sidesteps the "debt brake," a constitutional limit on borrowing that has long been a symbol of Germany's conservative fiscal policies. By doing so, Germany is shifting from its traditional fiscal conservatism to a more proactive approach, with an emphasis on bolstering European security and addressing long-standing domestic challenges. This transformation is particularly striking given Merz's background as an economic liberal and former investment banker. His embrace of a more active state marks a dramatic political shift. Merz has moved away from the strict fiscal discipline that has defined German policy for decades and is now advocating for substantial public investments in critical areas. Although the investment package must still be approved by Germany's upper house of parliament, the response from the markets has been positive. Shares in defense companies and major manufacturers, such as Volkswagen, have risen, reflecting growing confidence in the country's future economic direction. This shift is seen as a critical step toward alleviating



Germany's parliament, the Bundestag. File Photo

fears of deindustrialization and addressing the populist surge of the AfD.

A BOLD SHIFT IN POLITICAL STRATEGY

For both the CDU and the SPD, the new coalition represents a bold leap into unknown territory. In recent years, coalitions across the political spectrum have delivered stability but often lacked the urgency and energy needed to address the challenges facing Germany. During Angela Merkel's tenure, the CDU dominated the political landscape, but the SPD, as the junior partner in coalition governments, lost much of its identity and purpose. The rising tide of nationalism and xenophobia, particularly among working-class voters, added



German election winner Friedrich Merz

to the sense that the political establishment was failing to address the needs of ordinary citizens. This disillusionment led many to flock to the far-right AfD, which capitalized on economic frustrations and anti-immigrant sentiments. The prevailing fiscal orthodoxy, emphasizing austerity and budgetary restraint, has

also been a source of frustration for many. While this approach helped Germany weather global financial crises, it also contributed to a broader political malaise across Europe. The focus on fiscal discipline was ill-suited to the growing challenges of a rapidly changing world, and it failed to respond effectively to issues such as

climate change, industrial decline, and social inequality. This failure to adapt contributed to the rise of populism and a crisis of confidence in the political center. The new coalition, however, is designed to break free from this era of stagnation. Merz's government is committed to a more active state, emphasizing public investment in defense, infrastructure, and the climate transition. This shift is crucial not only for Germany's domestic stability but also for Europe's future. By reinvigorating Germany's industrial base, strengthening European security, and addressing the climate crisis, the new coalition is positioning Germany as a leader in tackling some of the most pressing challenges of our time.

THE RADICAL CENTRE: A MODEL FOR OTHER DEMOCRACIES?

One of the most compelling aspects of this shift is the emergence of what could be described as a "radical centre." In recent years, Western democracies have struggled with growing polarization and the rise of populist movements. Many political leaders have spoken of the need for a "radical centre" to address these challenges, but it has often been little more than a rhetorical slogan. In Germany, however, the radical centre is taking concrete form through a combination of bold fiscal policies, increased public investment, and a more assertive role for the state in shaping the country's future.

Merz's government is a clear departure from the fiscal conservatism that has long defined German politics. The decision to allow for significant public investment in key areas marks a critical turning point in Germany's economic and political trajectory. This shift is particularly notable given Merz's background as a proponent of market-oriented economic policies. His newfound support for a more proactive state is indicative of a broader shift within the political establish-

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Despite the promise of the new coalition, significant challenges remain. The shift away from fiscal conservatism will likely face resistance from conservative factions within the CDU, as well as from those who have long championed Germany's commitment to balanced budgets and debt reduction. While the shift toward public investment is a bold and necessary step, it will take time to implement fully, and its success will depend on



ment, one that recognizes the need for change in the face of growing domestic and international challenges. The significance of this shift extends beyond Germany. Countries like the United Kingdom and France, which have also faced economic stagnation and the rise of populism, could benefit from taking note of Germany's new direction. The shift towards greater public investment and a more active state is a response to the limitations of traditional austerity-based policies. As populist movements continue to gain ground across Europe, Germany's experience could offer a model for other Western democracies seeking to address the root causes of political and economic instability.

Germany's ability to navigate the uncertainties of the global economy, including inflation, supply chain disruptions, and potential economic slowdowns. Furthermore, Germany's new approach to defense and European security will be tested by the evolving geopolitical landscape. The growing threat from Russia, combined with the ongoing challenges posed by global instability, will require Germany to play an increasingly active role in maintaining peace and security in Europe. Whether Germany can maintain this more proactive stance will depend on the country's ability to balance its domestic priorities with its broader international responsibilities.

● TDG NETWORK

UK PROTESTERS DISRUPT HOUSE OF LORDS

The House was adjourned for a short time as the demonstrators were escorted out.

AGENCIES
LONDON

A group of around half a dozen people in the public gallery threw leaflets, shouted and sang during the demonstration at noon on Thursday.

The House was adjourned for a short time as the demonstrators were escorted out.

Protester Lucy Porter, 50, a primary school teacher from Leeds, said the media that she was “campaigning for a house of the people”.

On the Lords, she said: “It’s a symbol of everything that’s outdated.

“We don’t have a functioning democracy in this country.”

The leaflets, apparently modelled on an album by the Sex Pistols punk band, had written on them: “Never mind the Lords here’s the House of People.” On the other side it stated: “Aristocrats and oligarchs: Out.



Screen grab of members of the House of Lords looking up during a protest in the chamber after protestors calling for the abolition of the unelected chamber started shouting, singing and throwing leaflets. [Source: UK Parliament]

The protesters said they were acting on behalf of Assemble, an organisation that campaigns for the Lords to be abolished and replaced by a citizens’ assembly.

Citizens’ assemblies are selected by sortition, which means members of the public are picked at random via a lottery.

Supporters of this system argue it means a more representative sample of the population are able to come together and debate impor-

tant issues.

Another demonstrator, who wished to be known only as Christina, said: “We did this action on behalf of Assemble and the ask is that, instead of a House of Lords, which is a house of unelected wealthy elites, we have a house of the people.

“So, we have citizens’ assemblies where people can participate in real democracy, instead of having everything handed to them from up high.”

Another woman, who also referred to herself as Christina, said: “If people enter into assemblies and a house of the people via sortition, that’s real representation where people get a say on real issues that matter to them, which are not getting processed by the Government or Parliament.

“The cost-of-living crisis, the housing crisis, the climate crisis, it’s a mess, and we need people with real representation to start making a difference and having a say.”

As they were escorted out, the protesters sang a song encouraging people to “raise a glass to Thomas Paine”.

The English-born American founding father was a strong advocate of democracy and rejected monarchy and aristocracy.

In a statement, the House of Lords said: “We are aware of an incident in the public gallery, after which the House briefly adjourned but has now resumed. We will

not be commenting further at this time.”

Protests by the public in the Lords are prohibited. Signs there say: “All demonstrations by strangers in the gallery are out of order and must be treated accordingly.”

The protest came amid moves at Westminster to reform the Lords by ousting hereditary peers.

The House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill, which has already been through the Commons, will abolish the 92 seats reserved for members of the upper chamber who are there by right of birth.

The legislation delivers on a promise in Labour’s election manifesto and has been promoted as the first step in revamping the House.

But a commitment to introduce a participation requirement and mandatory retirement age of 80 were not included in the Government’s current legislative plans.

US companies race for tariff exemptions

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Washington’s temporary relief for import tariffs on goods covered under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) has triggered a spike in US companies seeking exemption under the trade deal, industry experts said.

The White House slapped fresh 25% tariffs on goods from Canada and Mexico on March 5, but later announced that levies on goods covered under the USMCA would be delayed until April 2.

Get a look at the day ahead in U.S. and global markets with the Morning Bid U.S. newsletter. Sign up here.

The USMCA grants preferential treatment to goods either sourced from or having a minimum percentage of value added in any of the three countries.

“We’re seeing importers rush to become USMCA certified ... the risk is just too high not to,” said Brian Ri-



U.S. President Donald Trump waves as he returns to the White House after attending a board meeting at the Kennedy Center, in Washington, D.C., U.S., March 17, 2025. File Photo

ley, senior vice president of customs house brokerage at logistics firm GEODIS.

Some of the companies, mostly small businesses reliant on cross-border trade, are scrambling to verify if their products already qualify for exemptions.

At present, only 37.8% of imports from Canada and 48.9% from Mexico are eligible for duty-free status under the USMCA, an S&P Global Market Intelligence report

showed.

To qualify, an importer must analyze the bill of materials - a list of all parts and materials used in a product - to determine if their goods meet requirements.

Mike Short, president of Global Forwarding at freight forwarder C.H. Robinson, said there was an increase of USMCA qualification and tariff classification requests even before the official announcement.

Ukraine strikes Russian strategic bomber airfield, triggering huge blast

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

Ukraine struck a major Russian strategic bomber airfield on Thursday with drones, triggering a huge blast and fire about 700 km (435 miles) from the front lines of the war, Russian and Ukrainian officials said.

Russia’s defence ministry said air defences had shot down 132 Ukrainian drones over Russian regions.

Other verified videos showed a giant plume of smoke rising into the dawn sky and an intense fire.

The base in Engels, which dates back to Soviet times, hosts Russia’s Tupolev Tu-160 nuclear-capable heavy

The base in Engels, which dates back to Soviet times, hosts Russia’s Tupolev Tu-160 nuclear-capable heavy strategic bombers, known unofficially as White Swans.

strategic bombers, known unofficially as White Swans.

Roman Busargin, governor of Saratov, said there had been a Ukrainian drone attack on the city of Engels that had left an airfield on fire, and that nearby residents had been evacuated. He did not specifically mention the Engels base, but it is the main airfield in the area.

Ukraine’s defence ministry said its forces had struck

the airfield and triggered secondary detonations of ammunition. Kyiv said Russia had used the Engels base to carry out strikes on Ukraine.

Ten people were injured in the attack, local officials said. Some local residents expressed surprise at finding various parts of Ukrainian drones in their gardens. The Shot Telegram channel said that Ukraine struck with PD-2 and Liutyi

drones.

Engels district head Maxim Leonov said that a local state of emergency had been declared but gave few details. Reuters was unable to independently confirm what had taken place at the airfield.

Ukraine has conducted previous attacks on the Engels air base dating back to December 2022. In January it claimed to have struck an oil depot serving the base, causing a huge fire that took five days to put out.

A Ukrainian security source said at the time that a drone attack had struck a storage facility holding guided bombs and missiles at the Engels base.

At least 91 killed in Gaza as Israel abandons ceasefire

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

At least 91 Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded in airstrikes across Gaza on Thursday after Israel resumed bombing and ground operations, the enclave’s health ministry said.

After two months of relative peace, Gazans were again fleeing for their lives after Israel effectively abandoned a ceasefire, launching a new all-out air and ground campaign.

Israeli aircraft dropped leaflets on residential neighbourhoods, ordering people out of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun towns in the north, the Shejaia district in Gaza City and towns on the eastern outskirts of Khan Younis in the south.

“War is back, displacement and death are back, will we survive this round?” said Samed Sami, 29, who fled Shejaia to put up a tent for his family in a camp on open ground.

A day after sending tanks into central Gaza, the Israeli military said on Thursday



A child looks on as Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip March 20, 2025. Agency

HUNDREDS DEAD

It said on Thursday that its forces had been engaged for the past 24 hours in what it described as an operation to expand a buffer zone separating the northern and southern halves of Gaza, known as the Netzarim corridor. Israel ordered residents to stay away from the Salahuddin road, the main north-south route, and said they should travel along the coast instead. Tuesday’s first day of resumed airstrikes killed more than 400 Palestinians, one of the deadliest days of the war, with little let-up since. In a blow to Hamas as it sought to rebuild its administration in Gaza, this week’s strikes have killed some of its top figures, including the de facto Hamas-appointed head of the Gaza government, the chief of security services, his aide, and the deputy head of the Hamas-run justice ministry.

it had also begun conducting ground operations in the

north of the enclave, along the coastal route in Beit Lahiya.

B’desh for PM Modi-Yunus talks

TDG NETWORK
DHAKA

Bangladesh has approached India to arrange a meeting between its Chief Adviser, Muhammad Yunus and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Bangkok in the first week of April.

The two leaders are likely to visit Thailand from April 2-4 to attend the sixth BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok.

Foreign Affairs Adviser to the interim government of Bangladesh, Md Touhid Hossain, said, “We have made a diplomatic approach to India to hold bilateral meeting between our two leaders at the sidelines of BIMSTEC Summit.”

Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus is expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping on March 28.

Earlier in February, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a meeting with Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Advisor Hosain on the sidelines of Indian Ocean Conference in Oman.

Indonesian parliament passes contentious amendments to military law

AGENCIES
JAKARTA

Indonesia’s parliament passed revisions to the country’s military law on Thursday, allocating more civilian posts for military officers as hundreds of students and activists protested against the legislation.

The revisions have been criticised by civil society groups, who say it could take the world’s third-biggest democracy back to the draconian ‘New Order’ era of former strongman president Suharto, when military officers dominated civilian affairs.

Speaker Puan Maharani led the unanimous vote in a plenary council and officially passed the law, saying that it was in accordance with the principles of democracy, human rights and civil supremacy.

President Prabowo Subianto, who took office last October and was a special forces commander un-



der Suharto, has been expanding the armed forces’ role into what were considered civilian areas, including his flagship programme of free meals for children.

Rights groups have criticised the increased military involvement because they fear it may lead to abuses of power, human rights violations and impunity from consequences for actions.

The government has said the bill requires officers to resign from the military before assuming civilian posts at departments such as the Attorney’s General

Office.

There were concerns that officers could be allowed to join state-owned businesses but that aspect of the law was not revised, lawmaker Nico Siahaan, who was involved in talks on the legislation, told Reuters.

Evan Laksmana, an analyst at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said the law does not address problems faced by the Indonesian military, such as adding resources for training and standardisation of military hardware.

Trump may dismantle Department of Education

TDG NETWORK
WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump is planning to sign an executive order on Thursday (local time) that aims to eliminate the US Department of Education, delivering on his campaign promise, USA Today reported, citing senior Trump administration officials.

Trump is expected to sign the order at a White House ceremony, which will have the participation of several Republican governors and state education commissioners.

Trump will instruct his education secretary Linda McMahon to take all necessary measures to facilitate the shut down of the Department of Education and return education authority to the States, USA Today reported, citing a White House summary of the order.

US warns Iran to stop supplying Houthis

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday warned Iran to immediately stop supplying the Houthis, stating that without Tehran’s support, the group would be defeated quickly, as he vowed their complete ‘annihilation’ amid escalating tensions in the region.

Trump, in a post on Truth

Social, stated that Iran would lose either way, but without its support, the Houthis would lose quickly.

“Reports are coming in that while Iran has lessened its intensity on Military Equipment and General Support to the Houthis, they are still sending large levels of Supplies. Iran must stop the sending of these Supplies IMMEDIATELY. Let the Houthis fight it out themselves. Either way,



they lose, but this way they lose quickly.”

Trump further said that the “barbaric” Houthis would be annihilated.

“Let the Houthis fight it out themselves. Either way, they lose, but this way they lose quickly. Tremendous damage has been inflicted upon the Houthi barbarians, and watch how it will get progressively worse -- It’s not even a fair fight and never will be. They

will be annihilated!” he said.

The latest threats of military action against Iran by Trump have prompted further discussions about the possibility of Iran abandoning nuclear non-proliferation, Al Jazeera reported.

Senior White House officials have reiterated that Iran must completely dismantle its nuclear program, ceasing all uranium enrichment activities, even at low levels.

Russia-Asia Youth Forum showcases nuclear innovations

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

The Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) in Moscow hosted the International Youth Forum “Russia-Asia: Human Resources Potential of the Nuclear Industry of the Region,” where students and experts from multiple countries presented advancements in nuclear technology, TV BRICS reported. The event focused on strengthening cooperation between Russia and Asian nations in the nuclear sector, highlighting its role in energy, medicine, and environmental sustainability. Industry professionals from Russia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and other countries participated in the plenary session.

PICTURE PERFECT



Rasha Thadani poses for her social media. (INSTAGRAM)

Vikramaditya, Hansal, Zahan to take part in Cinevesture Film Fest

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Acclaimed filmmakers and actors, including Vikramaditya Motwane, Hansal Mehta, Nandita Das, Zahan Kapoor and Pratik Gandhi, will participate in the second edition of the Cinevesture International Film Festival, which is set to begin from Thursday.

The festival will host many celebrity conversations under CinéVoices, an exclusive series to take place at

The Grand Ballroom, Taj Chandigarh. Besides Motwane, Mehta, Das, Kapoor, Gandhi, names like Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Boman Irani, Rasika Dugal, Ammy Virk, Rahul Bhat, Randeep Hooda, Shriya Pilgaonkar, Shweta Tripathi, Mukesh Chhabra, Jasbir Jassi, Shahank Arora, Sameer Nair, and Dhruv Sehgal will also be part of these candid discussions. In addition to celebrity conversations, the festival will present Industry Talks, a curated series

of 16 sessions featuring insights from key professionals shaping Indian cinema. Notable speakers include Mehta, Motwane, Abhishek Chaubey, and Honey Trehan, along with industry figures like Khushwant Singh (author and lawyer), Saameer Mody (managing director of Pocket Films), Balwanth Singh (founder of Zineverse Motion Pictures), producer Chirag Bajaj, and sound designers Naren Chandavarkar and Sid Meer, among others.

Chiranjeevi receives Lifetime Achievement Award at UK's House of Commons

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Telugu cinema star Chiranjeevi was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to "cultural influence and public service" by London-based thinktank Bridge India at the UK's House of Commons. The celebrated actor, known for films such as "Rudraveena", "Indra", "Khaidi", and "Swayamk-

rushi", received the honour on Thursday night.

The event was hosted by British-Indian Member of Parliament Navendu Mishra. "Last night, Bridge India gave its first-ever Lifetime Achievement Award to megastar @KChiruTweets, for a lifetime of cultural influence and public service, at the @HouseofCommons hosted by @NavPMishra. Attendees included MPs, Lords, Diplomats and lead-

ers from the Indian community," Bridge India wrote on its official X page. On Friday, Chiranjeevi thanked the thinktank and the House of Commons for the honour.

"Heart filled with gratitude for the honour at the House of Commons - UK Parliament by so many Esteemed Members of Parliament, Ministers & Under Secretaries, Diplomats. Humbled by their kind words.

Ed Sheeran teases new single 'Azizam' ahead of eighth album release

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Ed Sheeran is gearing up to release new music with the announcement of his upcoming single, 'Azizam,' marking the first glimpse of his much-anticipated eighth studio album.

The singer shared a sneak peek of the track on Instagram, offering fans a taste of what's to come.

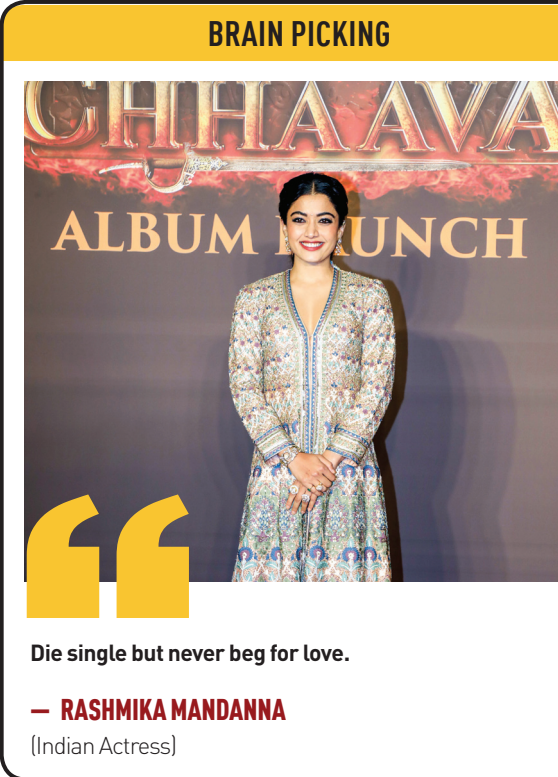
"Album done. Single soon," Sheeran wrote alongside a video in which he dances to the new song while standing next to producer Ilya



Salmanzadeh.

The post revealed little about the release schedule,

leaving fans eagerly waiting for more details on the album and the single's official



Die single but never beg for love.

— RASHMIKA MANDANNA
(Indian Actress)

Amaal Mallik cuts family ties as he opens up about battling depression

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Amaal Mallik, best known for composing tracks such as 'Kar Gayi Chull' and 'Jab Tak', left everyone surprised on Thursday with his lengthy Instagram post where he opened up about his battle with clinical depression and his soured relationship with his family.



about this new direction in his music.

Before 'Autumn Variations', Sheeran released 'Subtract' in 2023, the final album in his mathematics-themed series following 'Plus', 'Multiply', 'Divide', and 'Equals'.

In addition to teasing new music, Sheeran remains busy with his ongoing Mathematics Tour, which has taken him across the globe.

Since then, he has performed in countries like India, Bhutan, and China. His next show is scheduled for April 30 in Qatar.

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Filmmaker Karan Johar on Thursday announced his new film, which will mark the launch of a new director.

Karan expressed his excitement for the project by calling it his 'proudest film'. However, he didn't reveal the name of the project.

"When I began producing films (once I stepped into Dharma as an active part of the company), in 2003 with Kal Ho Naa Ho - the idea was to empower filmmakers and storytellers...to pay it forward. We got it right... we got it wrong but the intent was always to put out stories and films we believed in. The motive was only either entertain, seek acclaim or to sim-

KJO ANNOUNCES NEW FILM WITH DEBUTANT FILMMAKER, TAKES JIBE AT TROLLS



ply have fun at the movies," he wrote.

Taking a dig at trolls who criticize him for working with star kids and not giving a chance to outsiders, Karan added, "I am so proud to say that our next

offering is the 24th debutant filmmaker we have introduced to Hindi cinema! (Trivia for trolls: 90% of them are 'outsiders') I rarely write notes before the release of a film but few films excite me, energise me and

inspire me the way the process of this film has... (sic)."

"The director did nothing else but put his head down and work relentlessly on his film combating pandemic delays and other unforeseen circumstances.

Mohanlal returns in Prithviraj Sukumaran's directorial

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The makers of Mohanlal starrer 'L2: Empuraan' have finally released its much-awaited trailer ahead of the film's theatrical release on March 27.

The 'Game of Thrones' actor Jerome Flynn is also set to make his Indian cinema debut with the film that has been shot in various international locations, as shown in its trailer.

After the massive success of its first instalment in 2019, the Prithviraj Sukumaran



directorial 'L2: Empuraan' is one of the highly anticipated movies of 2025. Apart from Mohanlal, the film also stars Tovino Thomas, Abhimanyu Singh, Indrajith Sukumaran, Manju Warrier among others.

As per the trailer, the second part of the film delves into social-political drama with Mohanlal's character at the centre. Packed with intensity, the video is a cinematic spectacle with Mohanlal commanding larger than life screen presence as Khureshi-Ab'raam.

SS Rajamouli shares video of garbage-strewn Deomali Peak

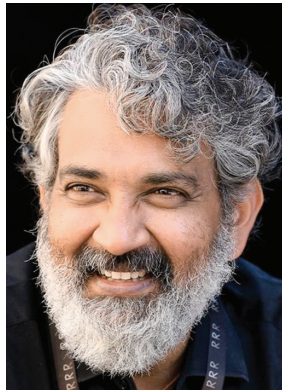
TDG NETWORK
BHUBANESWAR

Filmmaker SS Rajamouli has voiced his concerns about the lack of civic sense displayed by visitors to Odisha's highest peak, Deomali, during his recent solo trek.

Rajamouli took to X (formerly Twitter) to share a video collage of his trek, expressing disappointment over the litter he found along the trail.

In the video shared by Rajamouli, the camera pans across the breathtaking view from the top of Deomali, but it also shows plastic bottles and other garbage scattered among the rocks.

Rajamouli, dressed in a green T-shirt, pants, and white sneakers, ended the



video with a shot of himself posing for the camera.

"Had an amazing solo trek to Deomali, Odisha's highest and most stunning peak. The view from the top was absolutely breathtaking. However, it was disheartening to see the trail marred by litter. Such pristine wonders

deserve better. A little civic sense can make a huge difference... Every visitor should carry back their waste to help protect these places," he captioned the post.

The post caught the attention of local socio-political leader Suparno Satpathy, who replied to Rajamouli's tweet, expressing regret over the unpleasant experience.

"Dear @ssrajamouli, regrets for your unpleasant experience at the stunning Deomali. My appeal to our 'positions of power' - 'Visitors need to be sensitized extensively and violators need to be penalized heavily' - SS. ps: This also goes for all the other stunning spots of Odisha," he wrote.

Lisa Ray says AI 'denied' medical waiver for her ailing father

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

"Where's the empathy," asked actor-model Lisa Ray after Air India "denied" her a waiver when she had to change her travel plans due to her 92-year-old father's ill health. In its response, Air India said Ray's claim that the airline didn't display empathy for her unwell father is "unfounded". Ray, known for starring in movies such as "Kasoor", "Water" and "Bollywood/Hollywood",

I've been made to feel like I am less inspite of spending days and nights toiling away to make a safe life for people. Cancelled every dream of mine to only find myself to be spoke down to and question what I've ever done. I have spent my blood, sweat & tears to create each of the 126 melodies that have released over



tagged the air carrier in a post on X on Wednesday.

Her travel destination was not known. "Here we go again @airindia My father is 92, unwell and I have to cancel travel due to his ailing condition. Submitted doctors letter

the last decade," his post read.

"I made every dream on earth within an arm's reach for them, so that they can stand tall in front of the world and keep their head held high. I along with my brother's vocal prowess have changed the narrative of being called XYZ's nephew or son to whoever we are today!

and the waiver was denied? How is that possible? Where is the empathy from an airline that is claiming to care about passengers???" she wrote. On Thursday, an Air India spokesperson issued a statement saying: "The claim that Air India did not display empathy for her unwell father is unfounded, as the passenger herself mentioned that she is booked to fly Air India along with two other co-passengers that does not include her father, whose medical documents she has submitted."

Abhishek Varma brings a Fusion of Fashion and Aviation

TDG NETWORK

Luxury has always been defined by exclusivity, refinement, and a meticulous attention to detail. Nowhere is this more evident than in the seamless integration of high fashion with private aviation. At the forefront of this evolution is Abhishek Varma, an entrepreneur who has reimagined luxury travel by infusing it with the sophistication of haute couture.

As the Founder of Luxuriousness and CEO of Europe Van Tour, Abhishek has revolutionized the way high-end travelers experience the world. "Travel isn't just about reaching a destination; it's an art form," he explains. "Every itinerary should be as carefully curated as a designer collection, ensuring that every moment embodies style and elegance."

WHERE FASHION MEETS THE SKIES

In the golden era of air travel, dressing to impress was an essential part of the journey. While trends have shifted, the essence of sophistication remains.

Recognizing this, Abhishek has crafted a unique travel experience where luxury is not just a feature—it is the foundation. His bespoke itineraries include access to high-end fashion events, VIP shopping experiences, and private styling consultations with some of the most sought-after designers in the world.

"Luxury travel should feel like stepping onto a runway," he says. "From the finest accommodations to exclusive experiences, every detail should reflect elegance and individuality."

A regular at international fashion weeks, from Paris to Milan, Abhishek stays at the cutting edge of trends. His deep-rooted industry connections allow him to integrate exclusive designer experiences into his travel offerings, ensuring his clients receive an unparalleled blend of opulence and personalization.

BEYOND TRAVEL—A STATEMENT OF STYLE

Abhishek's expertise in private aviation elevates the luxury travel experience to extraordinary lev-



els. "A private jet is more than just a mode of transport—it's a symbol of freedom, convenience, and indulgence," he notes. But for him, it's about more than just luxury; it's about storytelling. His fleet of premium aircraft is meticulously designed with lavish interiors, bespoke dining, and personalized concierge services.

Taking exclusivity even

private showcases of the latest collections.

A MASTERPIECE OF EXCLUSIVITY—ALEC MONOPOLY'S TOUCH ON LUXURY

Further solidifying his status at the intersection of high fashion and art, Abhishek recently visited Vienna to meet world-famous artist Alec Monopoly. In an exclusive collabo-

art and high fashion—an ethos that Abhishek himself embodies in his vision for luxury travel.

THE FUTURE OF LUXURY TRAVEL

Looking ahead, Abhishek envisions a world where high fashion and aviation blend even more seamlessly. "I see a future where runway shows take place in breathtaking destinations, where in-flight fashion showcases become the norm, and where every journey is a fully immersive luxury experience," he says.

With his innovative approach, Abhishek is redefining the boundaries of luxury travel. Whether it's a private jet tour of the world's fashion capitals, a VIP retreat with a personal stylist, or an invitation-only couture event, he ensures that every journey is a statement of elegance.

"Luxury isn't just about the clothes you wear or the places you visit—it's about how the experience makes you feel," he reflects. "And my goal is to create moments that are as timeless as fashion itself."

"Luxury isn't just about the clothes you wear or the places you visit—it's about how the experience makes you feel," he reflects. "And my goal is to create moments that are as timeless as fashion itself."

further, he collaborates with top-tier fashion houses to create customized in-flight experiences. "Imagine stepping into a jet where every detail—from the upholstery to the amenities—has been curated by a renowned designer," he describes. Partnerships with industry icons such as Philipp Plein have led to unique onboard styling consultations and

ration, Alec customized Abhishek's Louis Vuitton bag with his signature Monopoly artwork, transforming it into a one-of-a-kind masterpiece. "Luxury is about uniqueness, and having a piece that is truly one of one makes it even more special," Abhishek shares. This rare creation represents the fusion of contemporary

Being Miss World is huge responsibility: Krystyna Pyszková

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

Reigning Miss World Krystyna Pyszková says "she agrees with her predecessor Karolina Bielawska, the longest reigning Miss World due to the outbreak of pandemic, who once famously said, the crown is not an accessory, but a responsibility".

"And it's a huge responsibility, I would add, because this platform offers you many opportunities to promote different causes. It would be a shame if we cannot help or connect with the people, Pyszková" she said in an interview.

Pyszková was in Hyderabad to launch the 72nd edition of the Miss World, which will be held in many venues of cultural significance across Telangana, including Hyderabad, between May 10 and May 31.

Like her predecessor Bielawska, Pyszková too chose making education accessible to the disadvantaged children as her clarion call. But the Miss World 2024 said she has been working to bridge the gap even before she won the prestigious title.

It started in 2020 when she was living in Tanzania, she said. And by July 2022, by the time she won the Miss Czech Republic title, she, along with some like-minded people, had already opened a fully-equipped school, which now benefits 320 children.

Naturally, this became the foundation on which she stood and won the much coveted Miss World crown, said 25-year-old Pyszková.

Julia Morley, chair of Miss World Limited, said women like Pyszková have been consistently redefining the idea of beauty with a purpose' the defining character of a Miss World when given a chance.

Morley has been credited with doing away with many of Miss World's traditions that have preyed on the confidence of the young girls like the swimsuit round, for instance.

"I didn't do anything really, I only created a safe space for them to express themselves. They're the ones that create the change,"



said Morley.

Although Morley is amazed at the incredible confidence of women these days at such a young age, Pyszková said it has not always been like that for her.

"When I was growing up, I was this tall girl. I didn't feel that there was something special about me," said Pyszková.

Luckily for her, she said, she started travelling very young, which provided the shift that she needed to calibrate her mindset. Being tall meant being able to be a 'model'.

"When I was 14 years old, I signed my first modelling contract. Modelling was missing the purpose, yes, but it taught me how to be independent. Every time when I was going to a new country, it taught me how to take care of myself. And mainly, it taught me the different perspectives from around the world," said Pyszková.

All that travelling, said Pyszková, also made her realise that self love is the key that can unlock many doors.

"You need to start loving yourself and to help yourself before you start helping and loving other people. It's such an important thing to start with," she added.

Once she convinced her mind that she can lead and can speak up for others, convincing others became easy, said Pyszková.

"This mindset changed everything for me, because who will believe in you if you will not believe in yourself?" said Pyszková.

And this self-awareness is also exactly why she knows that her work will not finish with the crown.

"Once you are Miss World, you are always Miss World, and the influence extends all your life. So, I'll definitely continue what I'm building right now, as I know now that the doors are open and that the only thing I need to do is put

my head down and do the work," said Pyszková.

As Miss World, she had not only furthered her project in Tanzania, enabling more children to get education, but also started something in the Czech Republic.

"Czech Republic may not be like Tanzania, but all countries have their own problems. In the Czech Republic, I know that disabled people are having a tough time finding jobs. So, I started a foundation to help them find jobs," said Pyszková.

She is also excited about an app that she has been working on to tackle lack of financial literacy among disadvantaged children, especially girls.

"It's such an important topic but, forget children, sometimes even young adults and adults have a gap in financial literacy. This app will be helping them all to actually learn how to be financially savvy in a funny

and engaging way. I have made this more of a game," said Pyszková.

India too has played such a huge role in her life -- it was in Mumbai that she was crowned Miss World last March -- that she said she wouldn't mind starting something worthwhile here too.

"I was expecting India to be a diverse country with a vibrant, energetic culture. And that's exactly what it is. It's really the energy that comes to you once you land here," she said.

And yes, she does have a word of advice to the aspiring Miss Worlds: break the mould, be uniquely you.

"I always also say, don't forget to enjoy the process, because it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Contestants from all around the world gather at one place. They're creating memories and friendships that will last forever. And it goes so fast. So, enjoy every day," said Pyszková.



WRITING FOR ME IS A SACRED PURSUIT: SHIVANGINI JINDAL



PROF SHIV SETHI

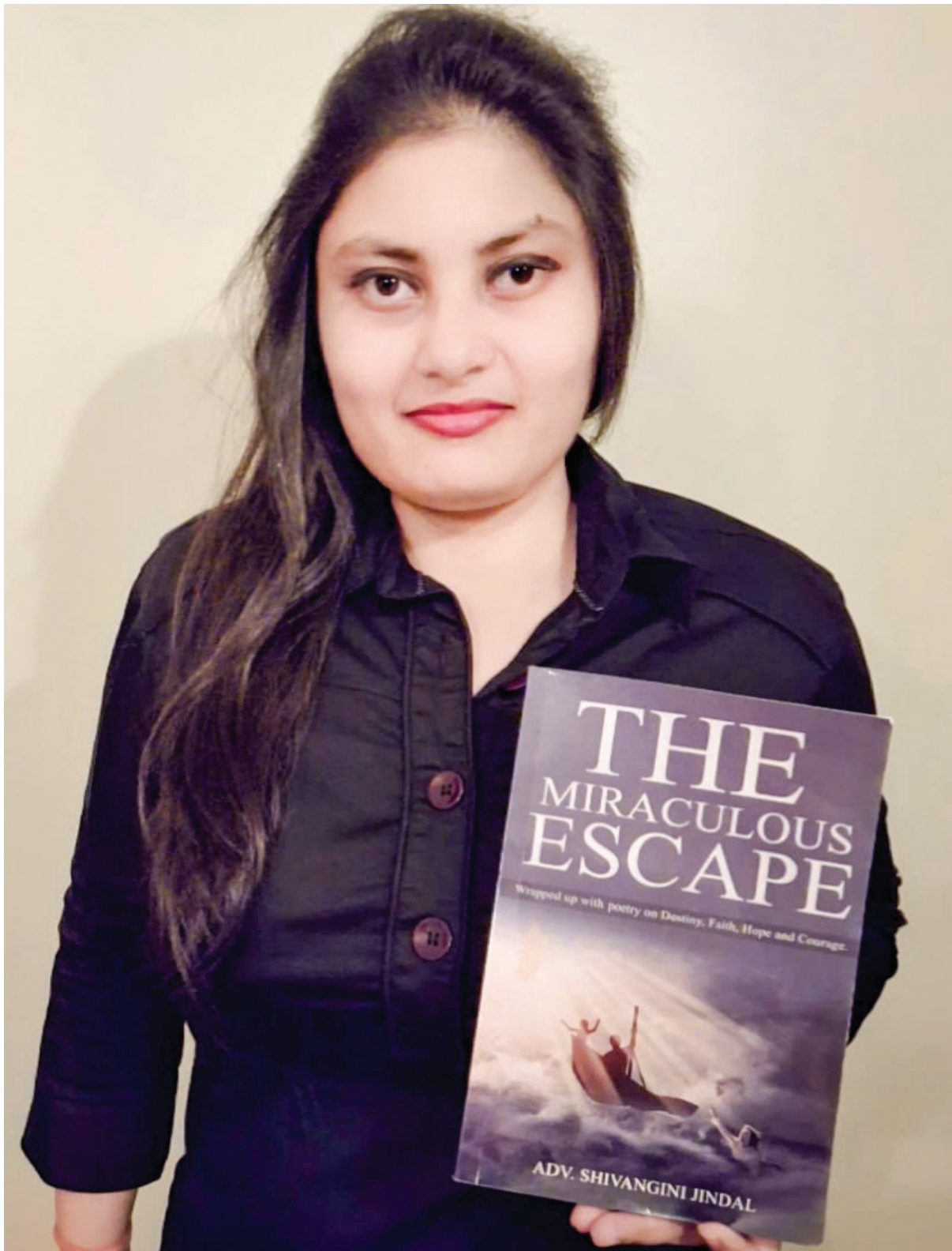
When it comes to quality literature, author Shivangini Jindal's name begins to reverberate in our mind. Writing for her is a sacred pursuit which she follows with utmost devotion and dedication. A corporate lawyer by profession and an enthusiastic writer by passion, Shivangini has once again registered her presence on the literary landscape with her latest book of poetry "The Miraculous Escape". The book is receiving a rousing reception from the readers' community. Recently, Prof. Shiv Sethi from the Daily Guardian had a conversation with the author about the making of this book. Here are the excerpts.

Q. How does the idea of your latest book The Miraculous Escape germinate in your mind?

Ans- Professionally, I am a corporate lawyer however I have been passionate about writing since my childhood days. "The Miraculous Escape" is something the Universe conspired to happen. I think the Universe has its own exquisite and astonishing ways of rewarding us with something we truly deserve. Sometimes the road of life takes to an unexpected turn and we have no choice but to follow it, only to end up in the place we are supposed to be. This dictum stands true in my case too.

Q. What is The Miraculous Escape all about and how is the title relevant to the subject matter?

Ans- The Miraculous Escape is about my journey of rescuing my parents during the pandemic; when I myself was COVID positive. Being a single child, I had to take up the cudgels. Leavened with autobiographi-



cal elements, the book sheds lights on the emotions I went through, the fears I faced, the struggles I grappled with and faith that helped me sustain and sail through. The entire journey has been described in an engaging poetic format containing poems pertaining to the struggle faced and pain endured.

Q. What is the prime inspiration for the book?

Ans- The prime inspiration behind this anthology of poems is the "Heavenly Messenger" of God; Dr Janki

Nandan Agarwal, a distinguished medico who left no stone unturned in saving my ailing parents. Secondly, the Never-say-die attitude of my father gave me an intense motivation to come up with this book. Undoubtedly, the encouragement given by my mother also proved quite instrumental in the making of this masterpiece.

Q. Which is most favourite or the poem from this anthology?

Ans- There is a poem titled Double Role which quite succinctly defines my role as

a princess of the house and at the same time an audacious daughter who holds the fort and makes assiduous endeavour to rescue her Covid-afflicted parents. It also highlights those silent, unsaid calls and screams within a child that perhaps got stuck in the tempest desperately looking for guidance and a bit of affection.

Q. What message would like to give to your readers or aspiring Authors?

Ans- I would like to say to all my readers and even

aspiring authors that they must invest enough of energy in their dreams and go all hog to translate them into reality. My piece of exhortation is loud and clear which says "Whenever you do any work in life, do it in such a way that the work in itself should emerge as a pride for you. Your goals do not care about how you feel, so work hard with all your heart because if we take today for granted, the desired tomorrow might not come.

A REMARKABLE READ

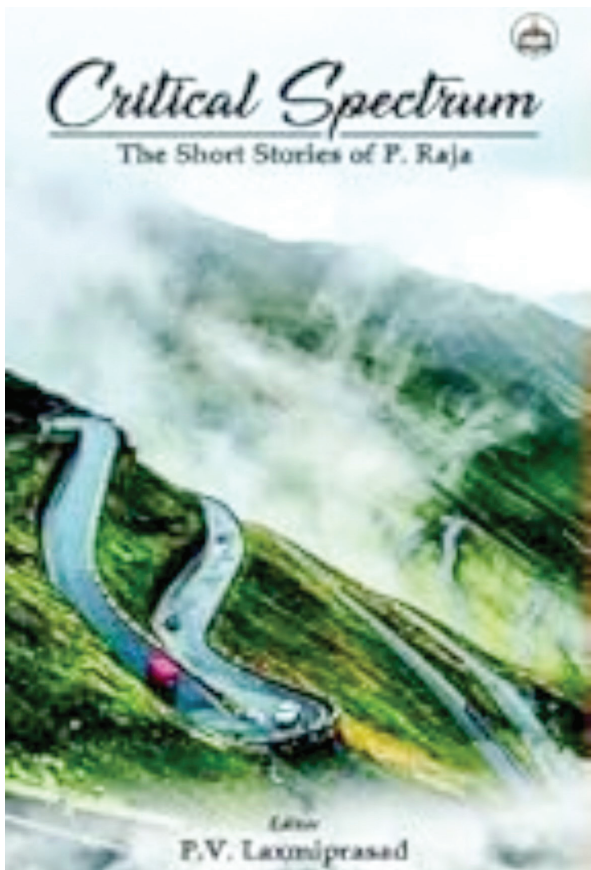
PROF DR NAVNEET KAUR

Critical Spectrum: The Short Stories of P. Raja is the collection of twenty-seven critical essays on the story writings of P. Raja who has four story collections to his credit. P.V. Laxmiprasad, an acclaimed Indian author has edited this book with a remarkable literary acumen.

It is to the credit of Dr Laxmiprasad that he has brought into limelight a story writer next to Manoj Das and Ruskin Bond. As a writer, P. Raja who hails from Pondicherry has fifty published books to his credit.

He has three thousand publications in the form of poems, stories, one-act plays and History of Pondicherry. He is the recipient of several awards. Pondicherry University awarded him "the Best Writer Award" and the Governor of Pondicherry honored him with the Creative Writer's award.

Indians are, no doubt, great story tellers. P. Raja is a worthy successor to Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das. In fact, everyone tells stories in their everyday



life. Story-writing is essential to being human. Animals do not tell stories to each other.

Raja has published four collections of short stories namely The Blood and Other Stories Kozhi Grandpa's Chickens My Father's Bi-

cycle and The Black Bitch and Other Stories

These four collections present a kaleidoscope of strange sights and impressions that he observed and felt. Most of his stories were broadcast on All India Radio, Pondicherry and later

got published in Newspapers and Journals.

P. Raja has been mainly a story teller of subjective sentiments and personal quests but at the same time, he could assimilate into his narratives all that carry a universal impact and transcend time and space through his meditative analysis of human predicaments.

He is known for his humor. He draws his characters largely from the middle class into which he has been steeped since birth. They key for his narrative is vocabulary and words come to him unsummoned and with words, he plays all sorts of trickery. A story teller mastering the short story form, his style was fashioned by his surroundings, his semi-urban environment and the inherited cultural ethos of his forbears.

Wit and humor are his forte and these ingredients are always subtly woven into the fabric of his narrative technique, while traveling on something profound.

All the critics who have worked on Raja's stories have amply demonstrated

these features of story writing in his stories. This critically edited volume consists of twenty-eight brilliant research papers.

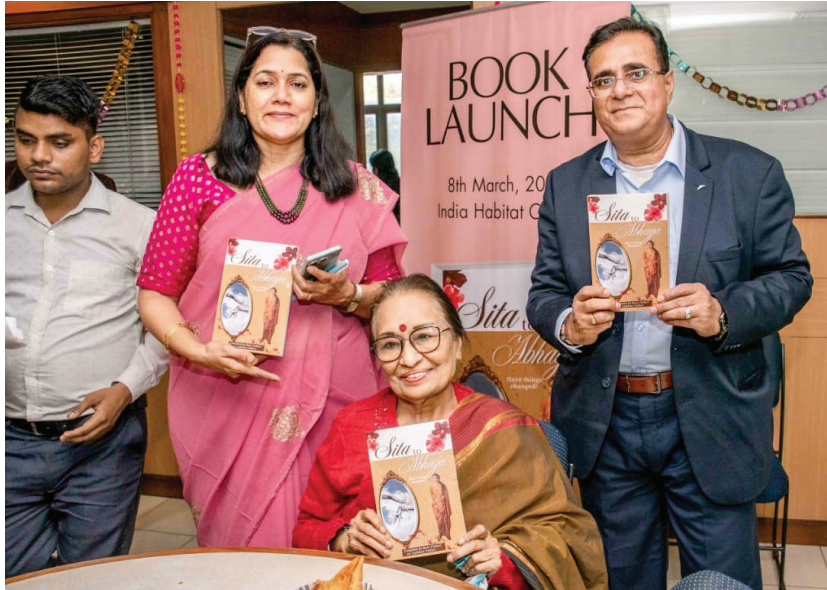
Thus, the short stories of P. Raja are brilliant and are rooted in wit, satire and humor. It is his sheer brilliancy that P. Raja entertains his readers all through the stories. Humor and satire are his chief forte.

Readers take delight in reading them. He makes simple themes look like extraordinary. His strength in selecting the stories is his sole observations. He has a keen eye for looking around the society.

A story writer picks up the observations and experiences of his life for story writing. P. Raja is definitely a story writer whose experiences are visible throughout the collections.

His stories offer, without an iota of doubt, a pure delight and entertainment. His merit and class are evidently clear in the way he presents the settings, locale and themes. Kudos to P.V. Laxmiprasad for bringing this masterpiece for the aficionados of literature.

Reflecting the ever-evolving status of women



RUPALI SETHI

A deeply thought-provoking anthology Sita to Abhaya: Have Things Changed? was released during a function organised at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

The release took place in the presence of an august panel of guests. Chief Guest was noted author and Vyas Samman awardee Mamta Kalia. Guests of Honour included Amarendra Khatua (multilingual author and former Director General, ICCR), Jaya Varma Sinha (first woman Chairman and CEO of Railway Board) and Surekha Sahu (author and cancer survivor). Several of the forty-one contributing authors along with compilers of the anthology, Ravi Valluri and Lakshmi Valluri graced the occasion with their dignified presence.

Talking about the book, Ravi Valluri and Lakshmi Valluri shared that the anthology explores the status of important popular mythological figures like Sita, Draupadi and Andal. Each of these characters, while being strong individuals in their own right, had to bear the weight of patriarchal judgement and moral scrutiny at various stages in their life. In the context of the contempo-

rary society, the anthology explores the home-maker vs working woman stereotypes and the attendant appellations often associated with them. The anthology also dwells on the dichotomy of the status of women in our country, where on the one hand the Mother Goddess is deeply venerated in various parts of the country and yet women continue to be at the receiving end of patriarchal and abusive treatment both at a personal and societal level.

The book also highlights the fact that though not uniform nor complete, transformation and progress have taken place. The section on women achievers highlights the battles against cultural barriers and systemic constraints that women achievers have had to overcome to secure their spot under the sun.

The fiction segment drives home the point that though women-achievers are often trailblazers in their fields, it need not necessarily be so in the conventional sense. It could be something as simple as a grandmother spreading happiness all around her through every situation in life.

The struggles of modern symbols like Abhaya are explored, acknowledging that the recent case of

Abhaya, represented once again the collective failure of society in guaranteeing women a safe and secure life.

In conclusion, the anthology drives home the fact that real transformation will require sustained efforts to challenge outdated expectations and ingrained thought processes.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Guest Mamta Kalia immensely appreciated the initiative to compile such a thought-provoking book. Talking about the contents of the book she commended the compilers for putting together a book that approached the subject in a positive light, leaving the readers with a sense of optimism.

Woman do not have a Sunday off, rather a Sunday was a double-Monday, remarked the guests present.

The event was compered by Mridusmita Das. Delivering the Vote of Thanks, Ravi Valluri observed that Shiva is incomplete without Shakti, signifying that women were the creative force of the universe. =

The book has been edited by Lakshmi Valluri (English section) and Sneha and Ashish Gaur (Hindi section) and published by AKS Publishers, Delhi.



POEM

THE ETHEREAL GINGER



ARBIND KUMAR CHOUDHARY

The ginger person is the ethereal ginger
Who soothes with ginger
For the spices of the global ginger
Amidst many a sassy ginger?

The witty ginger is the punny ginger
Who feels ginger
For the fusion ginger
Amidst many a baby ginger?

The true ginger is the vibrant ginger
Who engineers the timeless ginger
For the witty ginger
Amidst many a whimsical ginger?

How can one enjoy the chill ginger
Amidst many a rugged ginger?

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA DECLARES 2ND KHELO INDIA PARA GAMES 2025 OPEN

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Labour and Employment, Youth Affairs and Sports, Mansukh Mandaviya, on Thursday declared the second edition of the Khelo India Para Games (KIPG) 2025 open at the Indira Gandhi Stadium Complex in Delhi.

Over 1,300 para-athletes from across India will compete in six sports disciplines during the event, which is scheduled to take place from March 20-27, 2025.

Mandaviya expressed confidence that the Games would provide para-athletes with a platform to showcase their talent and bring glory to themselves and the country.

“Khelo India Para Games 2025 has started at Indira Gandhi Stadium in Delhi. More than 1,300 para-athletes from all over the country will participate in it... This is the second edition of



Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya lights the ceremonial lamp during the opening ceremony of the 2nd Khelo India Para Games, in New Delhi on Thursday. Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar Khatik, Arunachal Pradesh Sports Minister Kento Jini and others also seen.

the Khelo India Para Games. I am confident that through the Khelo India Para Games, the country's para-athletes will get an opportunity to play. On the basis of their talent and ability, they will

bring glory to themselves and the country in the coming days in the country and the world,” the Union Minister told reporters.

Sports Secretary Sujata Chaturvedi and senior offi-

cials of the Sports Authority of India (SAI) were also present. Khelo India Para Games is part of Khelo India's mission to provide a platform for talented athletes to showcase their sporting and competi-

Over 1,300 para-athletes from across India will compete in six sports disciplines during the event, which is scheduled to take place from March 20-27, 2025.

tive skills.

The 1st edition of the Khelo India Para Games, held in December 2023, was organized to enable para-athletes to showcase their talent at the national level. The Games were played in seven sports disciplines across three venues in Delhi.

The second edition of KIPG, to be held at three venues in the capital between March 20-27, 2025, will be held in six disciplines -- para athletics, para archery, para powerlifting, para-badminton, para table tennis and para shooting.



BCCI reveals breakdown of Rs 58 crore cash prize to India's CT 2025 team

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Each player in the squad of the ICC Champions Trophy winning team will be given Rs 3 crore, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary Devajit Saikia said.

BCCI on Thursday announced a cash prize of Rs 58 crore for the ICC Champions Trophy-winning Indian team, with the contributions of all players, coaching staff, support staff and members of men's selection committee to be recognised.

Speaking to ANI, Saikia revealed the breakdown of the cash prize, saying, “Rs 3 crore each will be given to every player. Rs 3 crore will be given to the head coach (Gautam Gambhir), Rs 50 lakh will be given to the remaining coaches (assistant coaches Ryan Ten Doeschate, Abhishek Nayar, batting coach Sitanshu Kotak, bowling coach Morne Morkel), remaining support staff will 50 lakh each and BCCI officials will get Rs 25 lakh each.”

Team India continued its monstrous white-ball run after the 2023 ICC Cricket World Cup final heartbreak, winning their second successive white-ball trophy after ICC T20 World Cup

2024, beating New Zealand by four wickets in the final of CT 2025 at Dubai on March 9.

A press release from BCCI announced, “The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is delighted to announce a cash reward of INR 58 crore for Team India following their triumph at the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. This financial recognition honours the players, coaching and support staff and members of the Men's Selection Committee.”

Under the able and astute leadership of captain Rohit Sharma, India dominated the tournament, registering four commanding victories en route to the final. The team began their campaign with a solid six-wicket win over Bangladesh, then secured a convincing six-wicket triumph against Pakistan. They continued their momentum with a 44-run victory over New Zealand before ultimately overcoming Australia by four wickets in the semi-final.

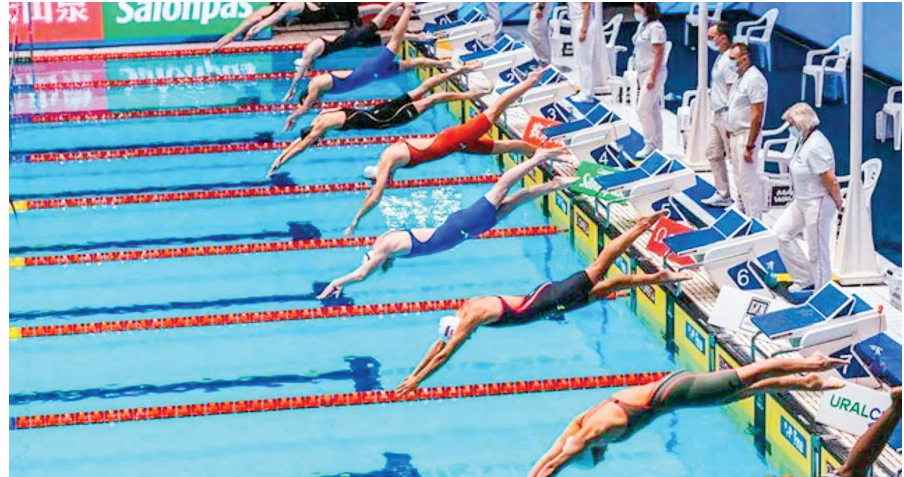
Roger Binny, President, BCCI: “Winning back-to-back ICC titles is special and this reward recognizes Team India's dedication and excellence on the global stage. The cash award is a recognition of the hard work that everyone puts in

behind the scenes. This was also our second ICC Trophy in 2025, following the ICC U19 Women's World Cup triumph and it highlights the strong cricketing ecosystem in place in our country.”

Devajit Saikia, Honorary Secretary, BCCI said, “The BCCI is proud to honour the players and support staff with this well-deserved reward. Their dominance in world cricket is a result of years of hard work and strategic execution. This victory has justified India's top ranking in white-ball cricket, and we are sure the team will continue to excel in the years to come. The dedication and commitment shown by the players have set a new benchmark, and we are confident that Indian cricket will keep raising the bar on the global stage.”

Rajeev Shukla, Vice-President, BCCI said, “This cash reward is a tribute to the outstanding performances delivered by the team throughout the tournament. The players exhibited remarkable composure under pressure, and their success is an inspiration to aspiring cricketers across the country. The team has once again proved that Indian cricket is built on a strong foundation of skill, mental toughness, and a winning mentality.”

India to host 11th Asian Swimming C'ship in Ahmedabad



AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

India will host the 11th Asian Swimming Championship at Ahmedabad's Naranpura Sports Complex from Oc-

tober 1 to 15, the national federation announced on Thursday.

Swimmers from Japan and South Korea are expected to compete at the continental meet, marking the event's rst-ever

edition in the country. “We have received in-principle approval from the Gujarat government and Asia Aquatics. The MoU is in its early stages and should be signed by March or mid-April,”

Swimming Federation of India Secretary-General Monal Chokshi told PTI. The 10th Asian Age Group Championships in 2019 was the last international swimming event hosted by India.

he championship will feature swimming, diving, artistic swimming, and water polo. Ahmedabad remains central to India's 2036 Olympic bid, with the Naranpura Sports Complex - set for completion next month - designed as an Olympic-standard venue for multiple sports, including swimming and wrestling. The national junior championship will serve as a test event for the Asian Championship.

Swimmers from Japan and South Korea are expected to compete at the continental meet, marking the event's rst-ever edition in the country. “We have received in-principle approval from the Gujarat government and Asia Aquatics.

Saliva ban revoked after captains' meeting in Mumbai

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Bowlers will be allowed to use saliva on the ball in IPL 2025. The decision was made by IPL following a meeting on Thursday at the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai, where most of the franchise captains expressed support for the change to the decision-makers of the tournament, as per a report by ESPNcricinfo.

Several captains agreed to revoke the saliva ban adopted by the ICC in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. Several fast bowlers have opined that the ban impedes their effectiveness by not allowing reverse swing, which has become un-



common in white-ball cricket, including ODIs, where two new balls are utilized.

The rule against use of saliva was introduced in May 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a temporary measure, but ICC made it permanent in September 2022, the

report said.

Bowlers were only allowed to use sweat to shine the bowl. From time to time, bowlers have raised their voice for revoking saliva ban.

Following India's win over Australia in the Champions Trophy in which Mohammed

Shami starred with a three-wicket spell, the bowler had called upon ICC to let bowlers use saliva on the ball again to bring reverse swing back into the game.

“We are trying [to get reverse swing], but using saliva on the ball is not allowed. We keep appealing that we should be allowed to use saliva so that we can bring reverse swing back into the game and it becomes interesting,” Shami had said, according to ESPNcricinfo.

Southee, who also feels the absence of reverse swing in the game, especially in batting-friendly conditions, had backed Shami.

WFI set to move National camps to curb 'indiscipline'

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) is set to move the National camp for men and women to Pune and Gandhinagar respectively, saying it was time to take the sport to other regions and curb incidents of “indiscipline”.

The National camps have been on hold since January 2023 when the country's top wrestlers led a protest against the then WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who they accused of sexual harassment of women players.

The SAI centre in Bahalgarh, Sonapat has been a training centre and trials venue for the men's wrestlers for long while



the SAI centre in Lucknow has served as a venue for women's camp and trials.

The wrestlers who finished in top-4 in each of the 30 categories during the trials for the Asian Championships, starting March 25 in Amman, Jordan, will be part of the camp.

“We will resume the National camp after the conclusion of

the Asian Championship. For long, the activities have been shut. There was a discussion between WFI and government officials on possible venues and we felt moving the camp to Pune would serve the game better,” WFI President Sanjay Singh told PTI.

Explaining the rationale behind the move, he said, “There

have been incidents of indiscipline at the Sonapat centre since it had proximity with many wrestlers' houses and personal training centres.” “It was brought to our notice that a few wrestlers flouted rules by not staying at the camp but since all activities were shut, we could not do anything. The Army Institute in Pune is known for maintaining discipline.

“Similarly there were apprehensions that Lucknow should not host training camp for women because the place is considered close to our former chief (Gonda). We want to avoid controversies and focus on sport, so we have moved it to SAI centre in Gandhinagar which has superb facilities.”

Sindhu fails in first round, Kidambi moves to pre-quarters

RUPINDER SINGH
BASEL

Two-time Olympic medalist and former world champion PV Sindhu made a first-round exit from the ongoing Swiss Open badminton tournament on Wednesday, continuing her horror run on Badminton World Federation (BWF) World Tour this year.

Sindhu, the world number 17, lost to world number 31 Julie Jakobsen 21-17, 21-19 in a 61-minute match, as per Olympics.com.

With this loss, Sindhu has registered her third successive first-round exit during this year.



She started the year by reaching the quarterfinals of the Indian Open, but could not make it past round one in the Indonesia Masters, All England Open and now the Swiss Open, which she won back in 2022.

Coming to the men's singles competition, Kidambi Srikanth overcame a tough match against compatriot HS Prannoy during the opening round, beating him in a toughly-contested 23-21, 23-21.

Srikanth, who has

dropped down to 49th place in the men's singles world rankings, will be facing world number six of China, Li Shifeng in his round of 16 match.

Qualifier Sankar Subramanian, the world number 64, reached the second round in the men's singles, defeating Magnus Johannesen with a dominant scoreline of 21-5, 21-16. Now, he will be facing Denmark's world number two star, Anders Antonsen.

In the women's singles, Anupama Upadhyaya and Isharani Baruah were among the progressing players, with Anupama defeating rising Indian

star nmol Kharb 21-14, 21-13 before Isharani Baruah went past Aakarshi Kashyap by a 21-18, 17-21, 20-22.

The rest of the Indian badminton players, including Malvika Bansod, Kiran George and Ayush Shetty, could not make it past the first round.

Swiss Open 2025 badminton: India's Day 2 results

-Men's singles
Ayush Shetty lost to Kenta Nishimoto (JPN) 21-15, 21-19

Kidambi Srikanth beat HS Prannoy 23-21, 23-21
Sankar Subramanian beat Magnus Johannesen (DEN) 21-5, 21-16

SPORTS



Players in action during Bihar Sepaktakraw (KICK VOLLEYBALL) World Cup 2025 match between India and Iran, at Patliputra Indoor Stadium, in Patna on Thursday. (ANI)