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Review



AKHILESH, SHAH LOCK HORNS OVER



HEGSETH BACKS TAIWAN BUT TRUMP'S APPROACH DECIDES US STANCE



IPL: LIVINGSTONE HELPS RCB POST 169/8 AGAINST GT

Army retaliates

as Pak violates

ceasefire along

LoC in Poonch

HISTORY MADE AT MIDNIGHT AS LOK SABHA PASSES WAQF BILL

The bill was passed after a marathon debate that lasted almost 12 hours.

TDG NETWORK

n a historic development, the Lok Sabha in early hours of Thursday passed the WAQF Amendment bill after a marathon debate that last almost 12

Earlier on Wednesday, **Minority Affairs Minister** Kiran Rijiju introduced the bill on Lok Sabha which witnessed heated discussion.

Slamming the opposition parties for terming Waqf Amendment Bill as "unconstitutional", he said the law relating to Waqf property has been in existence for decades and has not been struck down by courts and such words should not be used lightly. Deputy leader of opposition, Gaurav Gogoi said "Did the Minority Affairs Ministry make this bill, or did some other department make it? Where did this Bill come from?... Today, the condition of minorities in the country has become such that today, the government will have to give a certificate of their religion... Will they ask for a certificate from other religions whether you have completed five years or not? Why is this being asked in this bill?



Lok Sabha proceedings are underway during the Budget session of the Parliament, in New

WAQF AL-AULAD: WHERE FAITH, FAMILY, AND LAW COLLIDE

In recent months, debates around India's Waqf Board and the proposed Waqf

(Amendment) Bill, 2024 have brought the term Waqf al-Aulad into the spotlight. So,

managed for the pur-

pose it was dedicated to

waqf properties, includ-

India has over 8.7 lakh

ing mosques, schools,

graveyards, and com-

managed by State Waqf

mercial real estate,

■ What is Waqf al-

Owaisi calls the bill unconstitutional, but he has done the unconstitutional thing by tearing up the bill...I

"Asaduddin

want to ask him why he tore the bill?...

Jagdambika Pal JPC Chief and BJP MP

'I tear this law. It is an unconstitutional law'

NEW DELHI: AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi said the Waqf bill is a violation of the Constitution, and the bill protect ancient temples, not mosques.

Participating in the debate on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, Owaisi said: "The Waqf (Amendment) Bill doesn't protect the Muslims. It is a violation of Article 26. The

ruling party is non-stop saying that nothing will happen. If the amendment comes into effect, only ancient temples will be protected, not mosques.'



Indian Army personnel keeping the strict vigil along the Line of Control, in Poonch on Sunday. (ANI Photo) File photo

AGENCIES

The Indian Army troops retaliated strongly after the Pakistan Army violated the ceasefire by opening fire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district.

According to a statement issued by PRO Defence Jammu, "On April 1, 2025, a mine blast occurred in the Krishna Ghati Sector while the Pakistan Army was patrolling across the Line of Control (LOC). This was followed by unprovoked firing and a ceasefire violation by the Pakistan Army. Indian Army troops responded effectively. The Indian Army continues to dominate the LoC. The situation is under control."

The Indian Army has re-

iterated the significance of upholding the principles outlined in the 2021 DGs-MO understanding to ensure peace along the LOC, as stated by PRO Defence Jammu.

The Pakistan Army violated the ceasefire agreement by firing at Indian positions across the Line of Control (LoC) in the KG Sector, Poonch, on Tuesday.

The troops of the Nangi Tekri Battalion, under the aegis of the Krishna Ghati Brigade of the Indian Army, retaliated strongly.

Earlier, the security forces intensified search and cordon operations following the exchange of fire with terrorists in the Panjtirthi area of Kathua.

Multiple surveillance and ambush-

Gupta, DSE

Deputy Guv

Poonam Gupta, at pres-

ent Director General of the

National Council of Ap-

plied Economic Research

(NCAER), has been ap-

pointed Deputy Governor

of the Reserve Bank of In-

dia for three years or until

Poonam

alumna,

new RBI

TDG NETWORK

Fighter jet on training mission crashes in Jamnagar

■ What is Waqf?

A wagf is a permanent

donation of property or

lamic law for religious,

land made under Is-

charitable, or public

good. Once declared,

sold or inherited—it

belongs to God and is

wagf property can't be

what exactly is it? And why is it important?

TDG NETWORK

A Jaguar fighter jet of the Indian Air Force crashed at a village near Jamnagar IAF station in Gujarat on Wednesday night while on a training mission with one of the pilots ejecting safely, police officials said. The pilot, who ejected safely, suffered injures, while the second pilot was missing as he failed to exit the jet in time, they

The fighter jet crashed at around 9:30 pm in an open



A Jaguar fighter jet of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed during a training mission near Jamnagar Air Force Station, in



Chile President Gabriel Boric Font during his visit to the Taj Mahal, in Agra on Wednesday. ANI

Patkar's plea against conviction dismissed

AGENCIES

Aulad?

Waqf al-Aulad, also

called family waqf, is

a type of private waqf

created for the benefit

of the donor's own fam-

ily or descendants. For

example, a man might

donate his property as

JUINDED FY District Court on Wednes Social ac

tivist Medha Patkar's appeal against her conviction in a defamation case from 2001. While dismissing the appeal Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Vishal Singh said, "appeal is dismissed and conviction sustained."

The court clarified that there is no question of enhancement of sentence as the same has not been prayed. In this situation the sentence

Dhaka hopes PM Modi will meet Yunus at BIMSTEC summit TDG NETWORK

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive in Bangkok on Thursday on a two-day visit, during which he will hold talks with his Thai counterpart Paetongtarn Shinawatra and attend the 6th BIM-STEC Summit.

Modi will be given a grand welcome by the Indian community in Thailand and is scheduled to meet Shinawatra at the Government House. where he will be accorded a ceremonial welcome.

On Thursday evening, the Prime Minister will join the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) leaders from Thai-



land, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar and Bhutan to oversee the signing of the Agreement on Maritime Cooperation. Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Ud-

din said that Bangladesh has requested for a meeting with the Indian side and expressed optimism for it to take place.



When asked about reports stating Bangladesh's request for a meeting between PM Modi and Chief Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, at BIMSTEC, Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Uddin said, "There has been a request from our side and we certainly



Poonam Gupta is the Director General of the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), an economic policy think tank. She is also a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and Convener of the Advisory Council

Kukis put up 3 conditions ahead of talks called by Centre on April 5 the other community is in dividuals in Kuki-Zo-

AGENCIES

Ahead of the April 5 talks between Kuki Zo and Meitei groups called by the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi, the Kuki leadership based in Manipur's Kangpokpi district has set up three pre-conditions including no cross movement between Meitei and Kukis in the areas where

majority.

Kuki Zo Council (KZC) chairman Henlianthang Thanglet said the three conditions were set up during a consultation meet organised at Kangpokpi by the Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU) on Tuesday.

Thanglet said the three pre-conditions are "the movement of Meitei in-

dominated areas and vice versa shall be strictly restricted, hostilities shall be halted for a minimum period of six months to facilitate negotiations, a structured formal and meaningful dialogue process must be initiated during the ceasefire period." A functionary of the Kuki Zo Council said

the Union Ministry of

Home Affairs has called for a meeting between the Kuki Zo and Meitei groups in New Delhi on April 5.

More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based majority Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo tribals since May

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has given its nod for the appointment.

WHO SAID WHAT ON WAQF BILL IN **PARLIAMENT**



Wagf is a sort of Trust which is formed to work in the interest of Muslims This is not a religious organisation. The Trust has the right to do justice to all sections of Muslims but that is not happening, today, a narrative is being made. PM Modi is being criticised, if you do like him then do not look at him. But appreciate his good work' -JD(U) leader Rajiv Ran-



jan (Lalan) Singh

The irony is that the rights of the minorities are going to be protected by a party which has no member of a Muslim community. Today, it is a remarkable day for the In dian Parliament to decide our destiny whether this secular country is going to travel in the path which was well written by the forefathers of the Constitution or a negative path decided by the communal forces in the country,"



- A Raja of DMK

har, has a lot of backward Muslims; there are also in UP. They do not get the opportunity to participate in the management of Waqf. Why should there be an issue if the bill provides space for backward Muslims to have rights in Waqt properties?"

-Ravi Shankar Prasasd of BJP



"The Wagf Amendment Bil is a dangerous, divisive law which runs against the tenets of our Constitution. The Government is bringing this today as if all other pressing issues of our country have been solved. Is there no unemployment anymore? Are farmers happy? Are women safe? Why is this the BJP's focus? This Bill is vet another example of the BJP's visceral hatred towards minorities - they want to control their lives and suppress their rights, bringing non-Muslims to control Waqf properties, Venugopal said. "This is just the beginning, they will come after every minority religion going forward. We vehemently reject this Bill and will always fight to protect the Constitution and every citizen's fundamental rights

- KC Venugopal of Cong

RIJIJU TARGETS CONGRESS OVER **WAQF AMENDMENTS IN 2013**

liament building. The Delhi

Waqf Board had claimed

these as Waqf properties. The

case was in court, but at that

time, the UPA government

denotified 123 properties and

handed them over to the Waqf

Board. If we had not intro-

duced this amendment today,

even the Parliament building

we are sitting in could have

been claimed as Waqf prop-

erty. If PM Modi Govt did

not come into power, several

properties would have been

de-notified,"Rijiju said.

ntroducing the Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025, in Lok Sabha, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday targeted UPA government's 2013 amendment in the Waqf Act, questioning the powers provided under section 108.

Rijiju noted three changes made by the UPA government, "In 2013, right before Lok Sabha elections in 2014, there were some steps taken which will raise questions in your mind. In 2013, the act was changed to allow Sikhs, Hindus, Parsis and others to create Waqf. Everyone knows Waqf is for Muslims to create Waqf in the name of Allah."

Rijiju added that the UPA government made Waqf board-specific, limiting it to a single community and provided an overriding effect with section 108.

"This change was made by Congress in 2013. Congress made the boards specifics, only Shias in Shia boards...A section 108 was added that Waqf will have an overriding effect over every other law. How can this section be acceptable?" Rijjiju said.

Rijiju alleged that under these changes, the UPA government denotified 123 properties and handed them to the Delhi Waqf board.

"A case ongoing since 1970 in Delhi involved several properties, including the

When our country has the largest Waqf property in the world, why hasn't it been used for the education, medical treatment, skill development, and income generation of poor Muslims? Why has no progress been made in this regard so far?" -Kiren Rijiju CGO Complex and the Par-

Rijiju further clarified that, "Waqf Bill is not interfering in any religious system, any religious institution, or any religious practice in any way."

He also clarified the provisions have nothing to do with the management of any mosque, temple, or religious site."It is simply a matter of property management. However, Waqf properties are managed by the Waqf Board and the Mutawalli. If someone fails to understand this basic distinction or deliberately chooses not to, then I

'I.N.D.I.A alliance stands

have no solution for that," Rijiju added.

Along with the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, Rijiju also moved the Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill, 2024, for consideration and passing in

the Lok Sabha. Ahead of the tabling of the bill, Union Home Minister Amit Shah countered opposition over their criticism of JPC and said "We have a democratic committee, which brainstorms. 'Congress ke zamane mein committee hoti thi

together to oppose this Bill' islation had never been done

in the parliamentary history

of India.

"I want to say that the discussion that has taken place on the Waqf Amendment Bill in the Joint Committee of both the Houses has never been done in the parliamentary history of India till date. I thank and congratulate all the members of the Joint Committee... Till date, a total of 284 delegations....of different communities have presented their views and suggestions before the committee. Waqf boards of 25 state governments and union territories have also presented their submissions." Rijiju said.

The bill was earlier presented in the Lok Sabha on August of last year and a Joint Parliamentary Committee, headed by BJP member Jagdambika Pal, examined it.

the BJP-led government over the Waqf Amendment Bill alagainst "the integrity of the

Participating in the debate

"Did the Minority Affairs Ministry make this bill, or did some other department make it? Where did this Bill come from?... Today, the condition of minorities in the country has become such that today, the government will have to give a certificate of their religion... Will they ask for a certificate from other religions whether you have completed five years or not? Why is this being asked in this bill? Why is the government interfering in this mat-

"Our constitution says that every citizen must receive political, social and economic justice.... freedom of expression and religion... this Bill is an attack on the fundamental structure of the constitution. This government aims to dilute the constitution through this Bill. Second, they want to defame the minority community. Third, they want to divide Indian society," he

integrity: Gogoi



Waqf Bill is against nation's

AGENCIES

Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi on Wednesday targeted leging that the legislation is nation" and that government is "interfering in this matter of religion".

on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, in Lok Sabha, Gogoi said the nationalism of Congress is that which is enshrined in the Constitution.

ter of religion," Gogoi said.

Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju's allegations against the Congress and said he should authenticate them.

"What the minister said about the UPA government was entirely misleadinge. We demand that this be authenticated," Gogoi said.

In his remarks, Rijiju said there were some anomalies in this bill, so it was necessary to amend it.

"I had mentioned earlier that any Indian could create a Waqf, but this was not the case in 1995. In 2013, you made changes, and now we have reinstated the 1995 provision, ensuring that only someone who has practiced Islam for a minimum of five years can create a Waqf,' Rijiju said. "About the work done in 2012-2013, I want to mention that the elections were approaching and the Model Code of Conduct was about to be imposed.

The elections happened in April-May 2014. On March 5, 2014, the UPA government transferred 123 prime properties under the Housing and Urban Development Ministry to the Delhi Waqf Board.

What was the need? Only a few days were left before elections. Couldn't you have waited? You thought this would help you win the elections but you lost the election anyway, so what was the gain? Such actions don't win votes," the minister added.

Gogoi alleged that the BJP was seeking to raise questions about a community which took part in the freedom struggle.

had also opposed Waqf': Shiv Sena MP AGENCIES

'Balasaheb Thackeray

Shiv Sena MP Naresh Mhaske on Wednesday expressed his support for the Waqf bill and said the opposition is spreading misinformation that the Waqf Amendment Bill is against muslims

Speaking to ANI, Shiv Sena MP Naresh Mhaske said, "The Opposition is spreading misinformation that the Waqf Amendment Bill is against Muslims only for their own gains...Balasaheb Thackeray had also opposed Waqf. Sanjay Raut is a liar and a puppet

of Rahul Gandhi." Lok Sabha on Wednesday took up for consideration the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which incorporates suggestions made by the Joint all those people whose rights Parliamentary Committee

that examined the bill tabled in Parliament in August last year. BJP leader Siddharth Nath Singh said, "This bill needs to be improved because this bill is becoming very old and according to time, there is also a demand that improvements should be made from time to time. So that the public gets benefits and PM Modi's government and PM Modi wants that poor Muslims should get benefits from this bill... Poor Muslims will get benefits from this bill, but Akhilesh Yadav is opposing it; he does not want this." Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said, "I feel pity on the mentality of those who are opposing this bill... The Waqf (Amendment) Bill is going to work towards the progress of

have been snatched away.

AGENCIES NEW DELHI DMK MP Kanimozhi on

Wednesday reaffirmed that INDIA alliance stand together to oppose the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

"The DMK is opposing it. Our CM MK Stalin has passed a resolution in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. We will not give up on the minorities of this country. The INDIA alliance stands together to oppose this Bill," Kanimozhi said.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh alleged that this is BJP's initiation to "take possession" of Waqf properties and give it to their friends. "The people of the country

should beware now that BJP has made an initiation towards taking possession of Waqf properties and giving them to their own friends.



gurudwaras, temples and churches," Sanjay Singh said. Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju introduced Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025 and the Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill, 2024, for consideration and passing in the Lok Sabha.

Introducing the bill, Rijiju said that Joint Parliamentary Committee, which examined the legislation, held very extensive discussions and such wide consultations on the leg-

alleged. Gogoi rejected Minority Parliament passes

Immigration and Foreigners Bill with Rajya Sabha nod

TDG NETWORK

Parliament approved a bill to regulate immigration, entry and stay of foreigners in India, with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod on Wednesday.

The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 was passed in Lok Sabha on March 27, 2025. The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill by voice vote on Wednesday after various amendments moved by Opposition members were negated.

Replying to the discussion on the Bill, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai attacked the previous Congress government and the TMC dispensation in West Bengal for "aiding" illegal immigrants enter the country and "facilitating" their stay by including their names in voters' list and ration cards.

This was strongly objected to by the Congress and TMC members, who along with other opposition parties' MPs, staged a walkout from the Upper House.

One of the key provisions in the Bill is that anyone found to be using a forged passport or visa for entering India or staying in or exiting from the country will be punishable with a jail term of



up to seven years and a fine which could extend to Rs 10

The Bill also seeks to ensure a close monitoring of everyone who visits India. The proposed legislation also provides for mandatory reporting of information about foreigners by hotels, universities, other educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes to enable tracking of overstaying foreigners. During the discussion, Rai said, "As many as 26 members expressed their views on the Bill. It was necessary to bring this Bill to make our universities, education system and economy world class level." About the suggestion on referring the Bill to the standing committee, he stated that this Bill was brought after deep study of three years. Rai stated that

the Immigration Bureau is already in existence which was questioned by members. The bureau will be the only agency to deal with issues related to immigration and this is the system which is being followed worldwide, he said. The minister said that all those people are welcomed in the country who come here for education, research and development work. He also stressed that there is a need to deal with all those foreign nationals who are indulged in anti-national activities.Rai said that the Bill provides for mandatory reporting of information about the admission in hospitals or their place of residence.

"We want people to visit this country and see the develop-

ment works done by Modi ji

and tell that to their country-

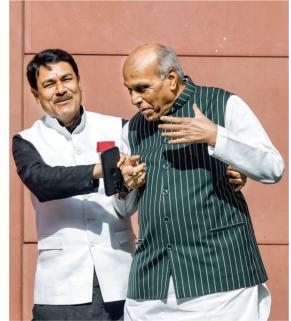
GLIMPSES FROM THE PARLIAMENT



Samajwadi Party (SP) MPs Akhilesh Yadav, Dimple Yadav, Dharmendra Yadav, Anand Bhadauriya, Zia Ur Rehman Barq, Mohibbullah Nadvi and others at Parliament premises during the ongoing Budget Session, in New Delhi. ANI



Congress MP Imran Pratapgarhi protests against Waqf Amendment Bill outside Makar Dwar during the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament, in New Delhi. ANI



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Jagdambika Pal and Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Anand Bhadauriya at Parliament premises during the ongoing Budget Session, in New Delhi.



Lok Sabha LoP and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi chairs a meeting of the party's Lok Sabha MPs, at Parliament Annexe building in New Delhi. ANI

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

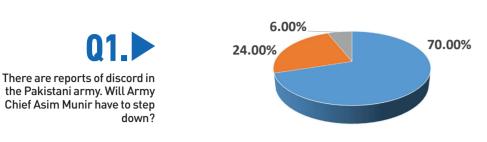
THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON PAKISTAN ARMY CLASH

75.0% of people think that the possibility of discord within the Pakistani army threatens Pakistan's stability.

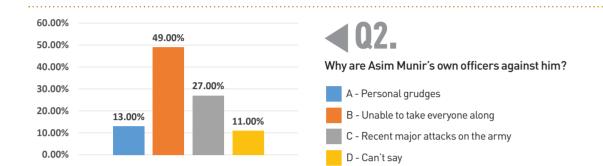
Indian and Pakistani troops after Pakistan violated the LoC ceasefire.

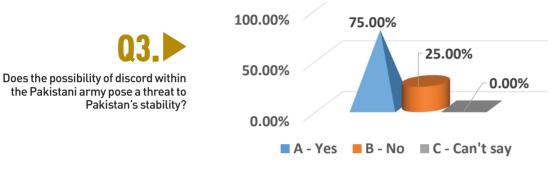
internal rebellion, with officers demanding Army Chief Asim Munir's nir of corruption and inefficiency,

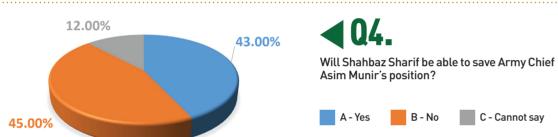
A fierce gunfight erupted between Meanwhile, Pakistan's army faces resignation, A leaked letter. The Guardians of Honour, accuses Mu-



■ A - Yes
■ B - No
■ C - Can't say







Army retaliates...

CONTINUED FROM P1

es were set up in the Panjtirthi area of Kathua based on intelligence inputs in a joint operation led by the Indian Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police, and Central Reserve Police Force

The operation intensified after suspicious movement was detected on the night of March 31, leading to a fresh encounter.

Following the engagement, security personnel swiftly initiated a searchand-destroy operation early on April 1. The operation remains in progress, with forces maintaining a heightened alert in the region.

While the Indian Army made no mention of any casualty on the Pakistan side, sources said five enemy soldiers were injured in the explosion and the subsequent firing between the two sides.

"On April 1, 2025, a mine blast occurred in Krishna Ghati Sector while the Paki-

stan Army was patrolling along the LoC. This was followed by unprovoked firing and ceasefire violation by Pakistan Army," Jammubased defence PRO Lt Col Suneel Bartwal said in a

revised statement. "Own troops responded effectively. The Indian Army continues to dominate the LoC. The situation is under control," he said.

The earlier statement had mentioned that "a mine blast occurred in Krishna Ghati Sector due to Pakistan Army intrusion across

On February 21, India and Pakistan military held a flag meeting along the LoC in Poonch district in an effort to de-escalate tension after several incidents of cross-border firing and an IED attack.

The brigade-commander level flag meeting, lasting 75 minutes, had taken place in the Chakkan-Da-Bagh crossing point area with both sides highlighting the need to maintain peace along the borders.

Patkar's plea against conviction dismissed

CONTINUED FROM P1

may reduce or maintained. She was sentenced and fined by the court on July 1 last year for the defamation of V K Saxena (incumbent LG Delhi). The Magistrate court had convicted her in May 2024. Patkar had challenged the order of trial court before the session court.

Additional sessions judge Vishal Singh was hearing Patkar's appeal against a magisterial court order, which held her guilty under IPC Section 500 (defamation) on May 24 last year.

The magisterial court on July 1, 2024 sentenced her to five months of simple imprisonment and slapped a Rs

10 lakh fine. "The evidence led by the respondent (Saxena) during the trial proved beyond reasonable doubt that Medha Patkar published the press note dated November 24, 2000, carrying imputations on his character with intent to harm or having reason to believe that the imputations

will harm his reputation," judge Singh said. The court held, "The appellant (Patkar) was rightly convicted for the offence under Section 500 of the IPC."

Dismissing her plea, it found "no substance" in the appeal against the verdict of her conviction. It directed the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) leader to appear on April 8 for the order on sentence. Advocates Gajinder Kumar and Kiran Jai represented the LG. The court also rejected Patkar's argument that the press release was issued by NBA and not by Patkar. It also trashed the contention that the release could have been typed by anybody and merely adding Patkar's name at the end of the text could not prove she had published it. "The active involvement of Medha Patkar in authoring the press note...is writ large on the face of the record. Conversely, the involvement of Patkar is as hidden as an elephant behind an office table.

SHAH ALLAYS CONCERNS OVER **NON-MUSLIM MEMBERS IN WAQF**

■ Heated debate in Lok Sabha as Waqf Amendment Bill is taken up

TDG NETWORK

ccusing Congress of indulging in politics of "appeasement and casteism", Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said there is no provision in the Waqf Amendment Bill to include any non-Muslim among those who manage the religious institutions.

Participating in the debate in the Lok Sabha on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, Amit Shah said a misconception is sought to be created that the legislation will interfere with the religious conduct of Muslims and interfere with the property donated by them.

"Waqf Act and Board came into effect in 1995. All the arguments about the inclusion of non-Muslims inclusion are about interference in the Waqf. First of all, no non-Muslim would come into the Waqf. Understand this clearly... There is no such provision to include any non-Muslim among those who manage the religious institutions; we do not want to do this...This is a huge misconception that this Act will interfere with the religious conduct of Muslims and interfere with the property donated by them. This misconception is being spread to instil fear among minorities for their vote bank," he said.

"You (Opposition) would break this country...Through this House, I would like to tell Muslims of the country that not even one non-Muslim would come into your Waqf. This Act has no such provision. But what would the Waqf Board and Waqf Council do? To catch the people selling off Waqf properties and drive them out, to catch those who lease off their properties for 100 years in the name of Waqf. The income of Waqf is dropping,



in New Delhi on Wednesday. (ANI Photo/Sansad TV)

the income with which we have to do development for minority and push them forward, that money is being stolen. Waqf Board and Council will catch that," he added.

Amit Shah said that a person can donate only property that belongs to him and cannot donate property which belongs to the government or any other individual.

He said changes have been made only in provisions related to Council and Board in the 1995 Act, which deal with administrative tasks.

"Where will non-Muslim

members be included? In Council and Waqf Board. What would they do? They won't run any religious activity. They would only look after the administration of property donated by someone under Waqf Law, whether it is being done as per law, whether the property is being used for the intent with which it was donated," he added. Targeting Congress, he said the partyled UPA government handed over 123 VVIP properties in Lutyens Delhi to Waqf when Lok Sabha elections were just round the corner.

"Had Waqf not been amended in 2013, this (Amendment Bill) Bill would not have been need-

Everything was going bloc.

When amendments to the Waqf were introduced in 2013, Lalu Prasad Yadav stated that he wanted a strict law and wanted to put those in jail who were stealing. Narendra Modi ji has fulfilled Lalu Prasad Yadav's wishes.

AMIT SHAH, HOME MINISTER

well. But there were elections in 2014, and overnight in 2013, the Waqf Act was turned extreme for appeasement. As a result, Congress government handed over 123 VVIP properties in Lutyens Delhi to Waqf when elections were just round

the corner, just 25 days away," he said. He said 18 lakh acres were under the Waqf Board from 1913 to 2013, but from 2013 to 2025, an additional 21 lakh acres of land were added. "Delhi Waqf Board announced Northern Railway's land as Waqf land. In Himachal, illegal mosques were built after the land being named after Waqf land. In Tamil Nadu, the Waqfannounced 400 acres of land from the 1500-year-old temple as Waqf land," Amit Shah said. Amit Shah also took a jibe at RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav, whose

party is part of the I.N.D.I.A

"When amendments to the Waqf were introduced in 2013, Lalu Prasad Yaday stated that he wanted a strict law and wanted to put those in jail who were stealing. Narendra Modi ji has fulfilled Lalu Prasad Yadav's wishes," the Home Minister said.

He said the changes in Waqf Board and Waqf Council were aimed at better management of Waqf properties. Shah said that the bill would not be implemented with retrospective effect and opposition members were trying to mislead and create fear among members of Muslim community.

"I stand in support of the Bill introduced by my ministerial colleague.

I have been carefully hearing the discussion going on since 12 noon...I feel that there are several misconceptions among several Members, either genuinely or politically.

WAQF AL-AULAD: WHERE FAITH, FAMILY, AND LAW COLLIDE

CONTINUED FROM P1

wagf and specify that its income should support his children or grandchildren. However, when there are no heirs left, the proceeds usually go to a charitable

This form of wagf is rooted in Islamic tradition, which sees caring for one's family as a form of ongoing charity (sadaqah jariyah). Indian law recognizes it under the Mussalman Waqf Validating Act of 1913.

Different Kinds of Wagf There are two main types: 1. Public Waqf (Waqf Khayri):

Created for religious or charitable purposes—like running a mosque, school, or helping the poor. The community benefits from it. 2. Private Waqf (Waqf al-Aulad): Made for the founder's family.

It helps support their financial needs, but eventually, the benefit must shift to a charitable purpose when no heirs remain.

Some waqfs are mixed—serving both family and public causes. What's the Controversy? The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 proposes several changes:

• Stricter rules to prevent misuse of wagf al-aulad to disinherit legal heirs, especially women.

No new waqf by "usage"—waqf can only be created through formal declaration, not just longstanding religious use of land.

• District Collectors (instead of Wagf Boards) will oversee land

• High Court appeals allowed in waqf disputes—previously, decisions by Waqf Tribunals were

• Inclusion of non-Muslims in Waqf Boards, raising concerns about religious autonomy.

Fighter jet on training...

CONTINUED FROM P1

field at Suvarda village, nearly 12km from Jamnagar city and caught fire, said district SP Premsukh Delu.

There was no civilian casualty on the ground and the cause of the crash was not immediately known.

"While one pilot safely ejected before the crash, another one was still missing as he could not eject in time. The aircraft caught fire after the crash landing. Police and firefighters have rushed to the spot and started searching for the missing pilot," said Delu.

The injured pilot was then taken to the government-run GG Hospital in the city and his condition was stated to be stable, said the SP.



Following the incident, district collector Ketan Thakkar also rushed to the spot.

He said the fire in the open field triggered by the crash was doused by firefighters.

"We immediately shifted the injured pilot to GG Hospital. The jet crashed in an open field, but there was no civilian casualty. Police as well as Air Force officials are currently trying to locate the missing pilot," said

Dhaka hopes PM Modi will meet Yunus at BIMSTEC summit

 ${\tt CONTINUED\,FROM\,P1}$ hope that this will take place.'

A five-member delegation from Bangladesh, led by Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Uddin, participated in the 25th Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) which commenced on Wednesday in Bangkok, ahead of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit scheduled for April 4, 2025. the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry stated.

The Thai capital is gearing up to host the summit with full-fledged prepara-

In the recent interactions with Bangladesh, PM Modi had sent a heartfelt message, expressing his warmest wishes to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and the people of Bangladesh on the joyous occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Muhammad Yunus had shared the letter on X and wrote, "Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi sends the following message to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus to wish people of Bangladesh on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr."

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on March 21 said it has no update on the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on the sidelines of the upcoming BIMSTEC summit.

BIMSTEC was established on June 6, 1997, through the Bangkok Declaration, with Thailand playing a foundational

The organisation connects South and Southeast Asian nations with shared economic and cultural ties dating back centuries. The summit, themed BIMSTEC--Prosperous, Resilient and Open, will focus on enhancing regional cooperation in trade, security, and connectivity.

Poonam Gupta, DSE alumna, new RBI Deputy Governor Committee. She was the Chair of the

CONTINUED FROM P1

to the 16th Finance Commission. She joined NCAER in 2021 after

working in senior positions for nearly two decades at the IMF and World Bank in Washington, DC.

In between, Gupta taught at Delhi School of Economics, University of Maryland (USA), and was a visiting faculty member at ISI, Delhi.

She has also been the RBI Chair Professor at NIPFP and a Professor at IC-RIER.

She is currently on the Boards of NIPFP and GDN (Global Development Network), a member of the World Bank's advisory groups for 'Poverty & Equity' and the 'World Development Report', a member of the Development Advisory Committee of NITI Aayog, and of FICCI's Executive

Task Force on Macroeconomics and Trade during India's G20 Presidency. At NCAER, Gupta led the work on

issues related to economic growth, International Financial Architecture, central banking, Maro economic Stability, Public Debt, and State Finances. Poonam Gupta holds a Master's de-

gree and a PhD in Economics from the University of Maryland, USA, and a Master's degree in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi.

She won the 1998 EXIM Bank award for her PhD on international economics.

At RBI, she will replace Deputy Governor Michael Patra. The other three deputy governors are M. Rajeshwar Rao, T. Rabi Sankar, and Swaminathan J, as per the RBI website.

AKHILESH, SHAH LOCK HORNS OVER NEW BJP PREZ

Delay in BJP electing new national president gives SP chief an opportunity to take a jibe at saffron party

TDG NETWORK

amajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday took a swipe at the BJP, questioning its delay in selecting a national president. Responding sharply, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the BJP follows a democratic process involving crores of members, unlike other parties, where leadership is decided by family members.

Speaking at Lok Sabha Yadav said, "The party that calls itself the world's largest party has not yet been able to choose its national president."

While speaking in the Lok Sabha, he criticized the BIP, asserting that the controversial Waqf Amendment Bill was introduced to divert attention from the government's shortcomings. "Every time the BJP brings in a new bill, it is an attempt to conceal their failures," he remarked.

Responding to Yadav's remarks, Amit Shah defended the BJP's selection process. asserting that the party operates on democratic principles

"All the parties in front of me, their national president, will be chosen by only some family members. We have to choose from 12-13 crore members after a process. So it takes time. In your case, it will not take much time. I am saying that you will remain president for 25 years..."

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, the Lok Sabha took up for consideration the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which incorporates suggestions made by the Joint Parliamentary Committee that examined the bill tabled in Parliament in August last year. The House also took up the Mussalman Wakf **FACE OFF**



The party that calls itself the world's largest party has not yet been able to choose its national president... Every time the BJP brings in a new bill, it is an attempt to conceal their failures," he remarked.

> - Akhilesh Yadav Samajwadi Party Chief

(Repeal) Bill, 2024, for congovernment of trying to sideration and passing. bulldoze the bill, saying

Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju moved the two bills for passing in the

Congress member KC Venugopal accused the national president, will be chosen by only some family members. We have to choose from 12-13 crore members after aprocess. Soittakes time. In your case, it will not take much time. - Amit Shah **Home Minister**

All the parties in front of me, their

ation to the amendments of the government and the opposition members.

for amendments," he said.

Speaker Om Birla said that

he had given equal consider-

With RSP's NK Premachandran raising some objections to the procedure adopted by the government over the bill, Home Minister Amit Shah said that the union cabinet had approved the amendments which had been incorporated in the bill. He said the amendments were based on the JPC report. "There is no point of order," he said.

Rijiju told the media earlier that the bill is in the interest of the country. "Today is a historic day,

and today, the Waqf Amendment Bill will be introduced in the Lok Sabha. This bill is being introduced in the interest of the country. Not only crores of Muslims but the whole country will support it. Those who are opposing it are doing so for political reasons," he said. The bill was earlier presented in the Lok Sabha in August last year, and a Joint Parliamentary Committee, headed by BJP MP Jagdambika Pal, examined it. The bill seeks to amend the Act of 1995 and seeks to improve the administration and management of waqf properties in India.

Karnataka BJP protests suspension of 18 MLAs

TDG NETWORK

Karnataka BIP leaders. led by Legislative Council Leader of Opposition (LoP) Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, staged a protest outside the Vidhana Soudha on Wednesday over the suspension of 18 party MLAs from the state assembly.

The suspension, imposed for six months amid the ongoing 'honey-trap' controversy, has drawn sharp criticism from the opposi-

Karnataka BJP Chief and MLA BY Vijavendra expressed outrage over the suspension, stating, "18 BIP MLAs were suspended with unheard of strict conditions when they were protesting on the floor of the house peacefully. What nonsense is this? We respect the Speaker's chair, but the Speaker should not have acted unconstitutionally



of Opposition Chalavadi Narayanaswamy

and as an agent of the state government."

He added that all BJP MLAs and MLCs have decided to boycott committee meetings until the suspension is revoked. "None of us will attend any committee meeting," Vijayendra declared. Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, condemned the suspension as unlawful.

"This is unlawful and an anti-constitutional policy. We will not accept the 60day suspension," he said, emphasising the party's stance on the matter.

'Nothing wrong in agitating for Marathi', says Maharashtra CM

TDG NETWORK

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has stated that while there is nothing wrong with agitating for the promotion of the Marathi language in Maharashtra, it should remain within the bounds of the law.

Fadnavis further warned that any individual or group resorting to unlawful actions would face appropriate legal consequences.

"There is nothing wrong with agitating for Marathi in Maharashtra. Even the government believes that the use of Marathi should be promoted. But if someone takes law in their hands, action needs to be taken against them...," said Fadnavis.

His statement comes in the wake of an incident in which a security guard was allegedly assaulted by MNS



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra

workers for allegedly disrespecting the Marathi language.

Notably, a video of a security guard allegedly disrespecting the Marathi language has gone viral on social media after which ahe was assaulted

Fadnavis further warned that any individual or group resorting to unlawful actions would face appropriate legal consequences.

that they had not been given

enough time to move their

amendments."You are bull-

dozing the legislation, you

need to give time for the

amendments, their no time

Earlier as well a controversy has broken out over language in the state when RSS Senior leader Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi, said that those coming to Mumbai need not learn Marathi. He also said that Gujarati is the "language of the Ghatkopar area in Mumbai."

Later, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde clarified and said that Marathi is "our first language" in the state. "Bhaiyyaji Joshi has given clarification on what

Mayawati criticises name change of Uttarakhand villages

AGENCIES LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Supremo Mayawati on Tuesday criticized the decision of Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami-led Uttarakhand government to change the names of 11 places in various districts of the state, accusing them of "covering up their failures on the basis of hatred and discrimination.'

The BSP Supremo hit out at the BJP and Samajwadi Party (SP) alike, highlighting the name changes of various places done by Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh



government too.

"Like the SP government of UP, the tendency of BJP governments of Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and UP to change the names of districts, cities and institutions etc. is not governance of the rule of law but a very worrying narrow politics to cover up their failures on the basis of hatred and discrimination," read Mayawati's post

highlighting the name changes of various places done by Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh government too. on X. Contrasting it with the BSP-led governance of

The BSP Supremo hit out at the BJP

and Samajwadi Party (SP) alike,

undivided Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati said that the partv kept "good governance in mind," by implementing various schemes across districts and did not change any names of places.

"While BSP was in power for four terms from 1995 in

undivided Uttar Pradesh to 2012, keeping good governance in mind, many new welfare schemes and districts, tehsils, hospitals, universities etc. were created with new names, no names were changed. Governments should definitely learn from this," her post added.

Andaman: US national held for entering prohibited area

TDG NETWORK

A US national has been arrested by the Crime Investigation Department (CID) of Andaman and Nicobar Police for allegedly entering a prohibited tribal reserve area, near Tarmugli Island in South Andaman, a senior police officer said on Wednes-

The CID arrested the US national on March 31, the officer said.

The US national has been identified as Mykhailo Viktorvych Polyakov (24) and he arrived in Port Blair on March 27, police said.

Andaman and Nicobar Police DGP HS Dhaliwal said, "He is a US national and his father is from Ukraine. He was spotted by the local people near Khuramadera beach on March 29 on an inflatable single-seater boat at around 4 am.

"We are getting more details about him and his intention to visit the reserved tribal area. We are also trying to find where else he has visited during his stay in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. We are questioning the hotel staff also where he was staying in Port Blair." A probe revealed that this is not the first time that Polyakov has visited Andaman as he had visited the archipelago twice in 2024.

"An FIR was registered against him under Foreigners Act, 1946, along with sections of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Amendment Regulation, 2012," a CID officer said.

He is presently in police custody till April 4, the CID officer said.

Man shoots dead his 6-year-old daughter, & 2 in-laws over his wife deserting him

BELLIE THOMAS

The Chikkamagaluru district police have registered a case of 3 murders & a suicide after a 40-year-old man shot himself dead after shooting dead his 6-year-old daughter and his two in-laws - mother-in-law and sisterin-law over a family dispute in Kithlikonda village on Tuesday.

The deceased accused, Ratnakar Gowda, was also a resident of the same village - Kithlikonda and had been nurturing grudge against his wife's family members as his wife Swathi had deserted him a couple of years ago.

According to the police the incident occurred between 9:30 and 10 p.m. on Tuesday when Gowda had walked into his wives families farmhouse with the Single Barrel Breach Loader



(SBBL) gun and pick the call with his mother in law and sister-in-law over his wife Swathi deserting him.

During the argument he shot at his mother in law Jyoti 50 and then his sister

in law Sindhu 24 and then he also shot at his six year old daughter Moulya. All the three were killed instantly. Co-brother of the accused Avinash who had intervened into the quarrel was also shot by Gowda at his knee injuring him. Ratnakar Gowda then

Ratnakar Gowda does not hold any gun licence and the police are probing into how he sourced the firearm. the farm, and shot and self

dead. The police are also in position of a selfie video of Ratnakar Gowda who complained about his wife Swathi we're not been staying with his family for the past 2 years and how his daughter was missing her

mother, even at school. The Balehonnur police have registered a case under section 103 109 of the BNS and the Arms Act. According to the police Ratnakar Gowda worked as a driver with a local school. The police are also investigating into how he procured the SBBL gun which is not country made and is a licenced weapon. Ratnakar Gowda does not hold any gun licence and the police are probing into how he sourced the firearm.

According to the police, Ratnakar Gowda's wife Swathi had been living separately over the past four years and she has been working at a garments' outlet. The police during inquiries learnt that Gowda was having family disputes with his wife's family members over a period of time and this could have led to the incident.

Based on a complaint from the injured Avinash, who is also an eyewitness to the crimes, the Balehonnur police have registered a case and are investigating

forces like the BSF, Assam

Indian Navy boosts security post seizure of 2.500 kg drugs



Indian Navy seizes 2,500 kg narcotics in Western Indian Ocean. File Photo

TDG NETWORK

Indian Naval Ship (INS) Tarkash successfully intercepted and seized over 2500 kg of narcotics in the Western Indian Ocean, the Indian Navy said on Wednesday. In its statement, the Indian Navy highlighted that the

seizure and intercepting of the narcotics in the Western Indian Ocean was done by INS Tarkash, which is a frontline frigate of the Indian Navy operating under the Western Naval Command. This operation underscores the Indian Navy's unwavering commitment to combating maritime crime and bolstering regional se-

Deployed in the Western Indian Ocean since January 2025 for Maritime Security Operations, INS Tarkash is actively supporting Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, which is part of the **Combined Maritime Forces** (CMF) and is based in Bahrain. The ship is participating in the multi-national forces joint focus operation, Anzac Tiger, the Indian

Govt rolls out a comprehensive arsenal to combat drug trafficking

walked out of the farm-

house, went to a corner of

NEERAJ MOHAN

The fight against drug trafficking has yielded staggering results, with over 337,000 kg of opium-based drugs and 1.7 million kg of cannabis-based drugs seized in 2022, according to the latest data from the National Crime Records Bureau

As per a written reply in Lok Sabha's Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand

Rai outlined the government's multi-pronged strategy to curb the narcotics

The report revealed an escalation in drug recoveries from 2018 to 2022 under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. Opium-based drugs saw a 67% jump, from 201,842 kg in 2018 to 337,169 kg in 2022.

Cannabis-based drugs spiked even more sharply, rising from 1.23 million kg



in 2018 to 1.72 million kg in

peaking at 2,220 kg in 2021 before dropping to 71.8 kg 2022—a 40% increase. Cocaine seizures fluctuated, in 2022, while psychotropic

preparations showed varied trends, with the latter including millions of tablets and liters of illicit liquids.

substances and medicinal

According to the minister the government has rolled out a comprehensive arsenal to combat trafficking and a 4-tier Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) mechanism ensures synergy between central and state agencies, supported by a dedicated NCORD portal for realtime data sharing. Border

Rifles, and Sashastra Seema Bal, along with the Railway Protection Force, have been empowered under the NDPS Act to conduct searches and arrests, bolstering security at vulnerable entry points and transit routes, reads the reply. The NCB has also ramped up its capacity, creating 536 new posts with a focus on cyber, legal, and enforcement expertise. A high-level Maritime Secu-

rity Group under the Na-

tional Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), formed in November 2022, is tackling sea-based trafficking, while DG-level talks with nations like Myanmar, Iran, and Sri Lanka address cross-border challenges, the minister told.

On the tech front, the NCORD portal serves as a one-stop hub for drug enforcement data, accessible to stakeholders from district to central levels. The National Integrated Database on Arrested Narco-Offenders

(NIDAAN) aids investigations by profiling NDPS Act offenders, while the Crime & Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS) links police stations for analytics and citi-

A task force on Darknet and cryptocurrency, operating under the Multi Agency Centre (MAC), targets online trafficking, updating databases on trends and networks. However the reply did not contain the data for the year 2023-2025.

AAP MLAS SUSPENDED FROM ASSEMBLY FOR **DEMANDING RESIGNATION OF MIN KAPIL MISHRA**

Atishi accused the BJP of shielding Mishra while other riot accused were jailed.

TDG NETWORK

The final day of the first Budget Session of the newly constituted eighth Assembly witnessed high drama as AAP MLAs staged a protest demanding the resignation of Delhi Law and Justice Minister Kapil Mishra. The protest erupted a day after a court directed the registration of an FIR against Mishra over his alleged role in the 2020 Delhi riots.

Carrying placards and raising slogans, AAP legislators stormed into the well of the House, prompting Speaker Vijender Gupta to suspend at least seven of them -Kuldeep Kumar, Sanjeev Jha, Mukesh Ahlawat, Surendra Kumar, Jarnail Singh, Aale Mohammed,

AAP PROTEST

- Speaker Vijender Gupta suspended seven AAP legislators for disrupting the Assembly.
- A court found grounds for an FIR against Mishra and directed Delhi Police to investigate.
- Suspended MLAs must vacate the entire Assembly premises.
- Delhi Police denied Mishra's in-AAP MLAs stages a protest demanding the resignation of Delhi Law and Justice Minister Kapil Mishra, during volvement, calling it an attempt to shift blame.

and Anil Iha.

Leader of Opposition Atishi, leading the protests, accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of shielding Mishra. "All the accused in the riots are in jail. Why is Kapil Mishra not behind bars? We are demanding his resignation, but the BJP is protecting him," she said.

Speaker Gupta instructed the Assembly secretary to verify whether the suspended MLAs remained within the premises and were continuing their protest despite the suspension order.

Speaker Gupta during the first session of the eighth Assembly on March 3, ruled that any MLA who is suspended or marshalled out must vacate the Vidhan Sabha premises entirely.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Atishi with

the Budget session of the Assembly. ANI

The ruling comes in response to a dispute over whether the suspended legislators could remain in certain areas of the Assembly complex, such as the lawns and the office of the Leader of Opposition.

Govt tightens pollution control measures

AGENCIES NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced in the assembly on Wednesday that the Delhi government will introduce a new policy for issuing Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates to vehicles from other states, in a bid to tackle air pollution. The move comes in response to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report titled 'Vehicular Air Pollution in Delhi', which flagged lapses in the national capital's pollution control mechanisms.

Gupta also announced a significant expansion of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in Delhi, stating that by 2026, the city will have 48,000 charging points 18,000 government-operated and 30,000 semi-private.

Additionally, six new air quality monitoring centres will be set up to improve pollution tracking and enforcement.

The chief minister further revealed plans to establish a new eco-park dedicated to processing electronic waste, aiming to curb air pollution caused by improper disposal of e-waste.

"These steps are crucial in strengthening Delhi's fight against pollution, ensuring stricter enforcement and better infrastructure," Gupta said while speaking on the CAG report.

Govt orders fire audit before summer



AGENCIES

The Delhi government has ordered the fire safety audit of all its buildings, with focus on hospitals and health centres, by the Public Works Department (PWD), officials said on Wednesday. The audit will cover all safety aspects, including verifying the presence and functionality of fire prevention measures such as fire alarms, sprinkler systems, and fire extinguish-

"The fire audit should

focus on assessing the fire safety measures in place, identifying potential fire hazards, and recommending corrective actions to ensure compliance with fire safety norms," PWD principal secretary said in an order.

The audit exercise is to be completed by April 15, it added.

For fire detection and alarm, the PWD officials have been directed to inspect the functionality of fire detection and alarm systems and ensure they are regularly tested and maintained.

Govt to boost water supply with 249 new tube wells, over 1,000 tankers

TDG NETWORK

Water Minister Parvesh Verma on Wednesday announced mandatory biometric attendance for Delhi Jal Board employees, the installation of 249 new tube wells, and an increase of 1,327 water tankers to improve supply.

Speaking in the Delhi Assembly session, Verma said a command centre has been established to monitor water distribution, which will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta in a few days.

He said that Delhi requires 1,200 million gallons per day but currently receives only 990 MGD.

"To address this gap, the government will install 249 new tube wells over the next three months 96 will be operational by May, 88 in June, and 55 in July."

"At present, 901 water tankers are in operation, and this number will be increased to 1,327. However, tankers are only a temporary solution, we need to



address the root causes of water shortages," Verma

The minister said 32 new super sucker machines will be deployed soon to clean sewers, with tenders for 30 more approved to ensure each constituency has one. Within the next four months, all gutters and sewers will be desilted, and sensors will be installed in water tankers to monitor levels accurately, he said.

"All sectors will be inte-

Speaking in the Delhi Assembly session, Verma said a command centre has been established to monitor water distribution, which will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta in a few days.

grated with the IT cell for better monitoring," Verma added. A water infrastructure project in Sangam Vihar, built at a cost of 4 crore under the previous government, remains unused due to multiple leaks, he said.

"Officials have informed me that an additional 5 crore would be required for its repairs and many of Delhi's pipelines are over 80 years old and require urgent replacement," he said.

HC asks MCD to secure school premises, examine shop legality

TDG NETWORK

The Delhi High Court, on Wednesday, heard a public interest litigation (PIL) concerning alleged unauthorized construction, illegal shops, and a religious structure situated within the premises of a school operated by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

During the proceedings, the court raised serious concerns about certain unmonitored openings in the school that could potentially compromise the safety of students.

The bench, comprising Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyay and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela, emphasized that it was MCD's responsibility to ensure adequate security measures. The judges directed the corporation to take immediate steps to secure these openings and protect the children.

On the matter of illegal shops, the court instructed MCD to conduct a thorough investigation. If any shops were found to be operating unlawfully within the school premises, appropriate action was to be taken against them.

While concluding the case, the court underscored the importance of necessary safety measures. It directed MCD to take comprehensive action, including the construction of a boundary wall around the school, to enhance security.

The bench further noted that the grievances raised in the PIL required due attention. The court ordered that the claims made in the petition be treated as a formal representation to MCD. The corporation was instructed to verify the allegations, carry out a detailed survey, and--if unauthorized construction was confirmed--refer the matter to the Religious Committee for further deliberation.

MCD's counsel clarified that the religious structure in question had been in existence before the school was established.

Govt limits April spending to 5%; AAP calls it a gimmick

TDG NETWORK

Delhi government's Finance department has capped spending for April to 5 per cent of the total 2025-26 budget, officials said on Wednesday. According to an order, the department has issued demands for grants for financial year 2025-26 for incurring expenditure following approval.

"Considering the mapping of expenditure with the resources of Government of NCT of Delhi and for better cash management, the expenditure during the month of April 2025 is capped at 5 per cent of the total budget allocation in budget estimates 2025-26 under the respective budget heads," the order said.

Mapping of expenditure and resources is a regular month and, at this rate, will practice for efficient financial management to prevent overspending and underspending under various heads, a senior officer from the Finance department said. Leader of Opposition in

Delhi Assembly Atishi criticised the cap and to allege that Rs 1 lakh crore budget was a "Hawa Hawai" (empty

She claimed that no department is allowed to spend more than 5 per cent of its total budget in April.

With the restriction, the government can only use Rs 5,000 crore in the first be able to spend just Rs 60,000 crore for the entire year -- far short of the Rs 1 lakh crore it promised, she

"When there's no real money, there can be no real spending and the BJP gov-

claimed.

ernment's own directive has exposed its grand budget as nothing more than a gimmick," the Aam Aadmi Party leader said. The Finance department

stated expenditures to be incurred on salaries, allowances, and wages, will be exempt from capping of 5 per cent for April.

In addition, expenditures relating to salaries of outsourced staff, security and sanitation, electricity and water supply, telephone, postage charges and maintenance of staff cars, are also

Fake pharmacy registration racket busted, 47 held

TDG NETWORK NEW DELH

The ACB busted a fake pharmacy registration racket and arrested 47 people, including a former employee of the Delhi Pharmacy Council (DPC), an official said on Wednesday. According to the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) statement, the accused allegedly facilitated fraudulent pharmacist registrations using forged documents, allowing unqualified people to operate as pharmacists in the city.

"The scam was orchestrated by Kuldeep Singh, former registrar at DPC, in collaboration with a private firm which was hired to conduct online registrations of the pharmacists. However, the company was hired without any tendering process and in violation of the laid down procedures," Joint Commissioner of Police (ACB) Madhur Verma said in a statement.

"The investigation revealed that bribes were taken through a middleman named Sanjay, who coordinated between DPC officials and various diploma colleges," Verma said.

The racket enabled applicants to upload fake certificates which were then



"The investigation revealed that bribes were taken through a middleman named Sanjay, who coordinated between DPC officials and various diploma colleges," Verma said.

employees of pharmacy institutes, read the statement. Some applicants even submitted different sets of documents for multiple registrations, all of which were approved without scrutiny. False verification emails were sent from fabricated addresses to validate counterfeit credentials, it read.

falsely verified by complicit

Authorities discovered that Kuldeep Singh continued approving registrations through his personal email

even after leaving office on August 16, 2023. Before his final suspension on September 25, 2023, he had illegally approved 232 additional applications, the statement

In total, Singh had approved 4,928 pharmacist registrations during his tenure from March 17, 2020, to September 25, 2023.

The ACB has arrested 47 people, including six touts, a printing shop owner, three employees of pharmacy col-

leges and 35 people operating as illegal pharmacists or chemists, read the statement. Neeraj, a printing shop

owner from Delhi's Shahbad, was identified as the supplier of fake certificates. A forensic analysis of his computer revealed the creation of multiple forged documents.

"ACB have seized forged training certificates, diplomas and the computer systems used for document fabrication. Investigators suspect that a large number of chemists in Delhi have been operating illegally without proper qualifications, with some not even having completed high school," the officer said in the statement.

TDG NETWORK

Eleven cars were gutted in a fire in a garage in Delhi's Dwarka Sector-24 in the early hours of Wednesday, an official said. No one was reported injured in the blaze. Nine fire tenders were dispatched to control the fire, he said.

A call regarding the fire in a garage in Dhul Siras in the Dwarka area was received at 2.58 am on Wednesday, a Delhi Fire Services official said. The firefighting operation went on till 4.05 am, he

Eleven cars were gutted in the fire and some spare parts were damaged, he added.

Fire in Dwarka garage guts 11 cars

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Ankit Singh said they received information about the fire at 3.12 am at Dwarka Sector 23 Police Station.

Ritik, the owner of the garage that caught fire, said 10 to 12 cars parked near Shri Shyam Automobile caught fire, the DCP was quoted as saying in a statement.

"The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained and investigations on the incident are still on," the DCP said.

Fire strikes Gandhi Nagar again in a week

TDG NETWORK

cial said.

A fire broke out in a building in Delhi's Gandhi Nagar area on Wednesday, the second such incident at the same site in a week, an offi-

No casualties were reported in the incident, he said.

A call regarding the fire at a building in Gali Number 5 in Peepal Wali Gali was received at 3.42 pm on, a Delhi Fire Sevices (DFS) official said, adding that the blaze was caused by a short circuit.

rushed to the spot to douse the flames, he said. Fire officer Anoop Singh

Three fire tenders were

informed that a fire had broken out in the same building on March 29. While no injury was re-

ported, household belongings were damaged in the fire, he added.

Police dismantles international drug gang

TDG NETWORK

Delhi Police Crime Branch has dismantled a narcosyndicate operating across multiple states and arrested seven key operatives, including three Nepalese nationals, an official said on

Wednesday. The operation led to seizure of above 17 kilograms of 'charas' (hashish) worth approximately Rs 8.75 crore in the international market, police said.

The syndicate was supply-

ing 'charas' from Nepal and Kasol (Himachal Pradesh) to Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Devesh Chandra Srivastva said the "operation was initiated following a tip off on November 20 regarding the supply of hashish in Delhi's Majnu Ka Tila area".

"A police team arrested two suspects -- Prem Thapa and Md Jameel -- recovering 1.192 kg of charas from them. Subsequently, an FIR was registered and

further investigation was launched," he added.

The senior police official said the interrogation of the arrested suspects led to identification and arrest of other key operatives.

Ganga Gurung Thapa, a Nepalese national, was apprehended in Wazirabad with 712 grams of charas. Further searches at her residence resulted in the recovery of an additional 13.766

kg of drug, police said. Based on Thapa's disclosures, the police arrested Ankit Budha, a Nepalese

resident of Kasol, who was supplying drug to the syn-Another accused, Pradeep

Kumar from Haryana, was arrested for distributing 'charas' to the drug users in Faridabad and Ballabhgarh. The operation also led to

the arrest of Manjeet from Punjab's Kharar. He was caught while transporting 1.856 kg of drug hidden in the stepney of his SUV. He was on his way to deliver the contraband to Moti Lal in Jaipur who was also arrested.

MAMATA, SUVENDU ADHIKARI CROSS **SWORDS AHEAD OF RAM NAVAMI**

The West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and BJP's Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday set the stage for a showdown on the occasion of Ramnavami, which falls on Sunday.

In the early-April afternoon heat, bolstered by a Calcutta High Court order permitting Adhikari to lead a rally from the party's office at Muralidhar Sen Lane to Esplanade Y-channel, the BJP's youth wing took out a procession. Sitting in Nabanna, the State secretariat across the river, the Chief Minister appealed to Bengal residents to maintain peace in the coming

"The Central Government has stopped funds for all welfare schemes. Instead they are trying to divide

Electricity consumers in

Haryana woke up to a jolt on

Wednesday as the Haryana

Electricity Regulatory Commission (HERC) rolled out a

new tariff structure for the

financial year 2025-26, effec-

The revised rates, which

mark the first significant

hike in eight years, have

increased electricity costs

for domestic and industrial

users by 20 to 30 paise per

unit, drawing sharp criti-

cism from residents and

According to the HERC

order, signed on March 28

but made public late Tues-

day, domestic consumers

will now face a 20 paise per

unit increase across lower

consumption slabs. For

households using O to 50

units per month, the rate

2.20 per unit. Those con-

now pay Rs 2.70 per unit, up

from Rs 2.50. For the O to

suming 51 to 100 units will been introduced, with rates

political leaders alike.

tive from April 1.

TDG NETWORK



Haryana power tariff hike triggers outrage

people by bringing in a religion which does not follow Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Rig-Sam-Yajur-Atharva vedas,' said Mamata this afternoon. "I want people to peacefully hold Annapurna Puja, Ram Navami. Eid was celebrated peacefully. These events will also be held peacefully."

Referring to the Waqf Amendment bill that was placed in the Lok Sabha amidst stiff opposition from the opposition lawmakers,

150-unit slab, the tariff has

been adjusted from Rs 2.75

to Rs 2.95 per unit. Higher

consumption brackets see

similar increases, with the

251 to 500-unit slab jump-

ing from Rs 6.30 to Rs 6.45

per unit, while the rate for

usage above 500 units re-

mains steady at Rs 7.10 per

For Industrial sector the

tariff for supply at 11 kVAh

(kilovolt-ampere hour) has

been revised from Rs 6.65

to Rs 6.95 per kVAh, a 30

paise hike. Additionally, a

new category for domes-

has risen from Rs 2 to Rs tic consumers with loads creased by 25 paise per unit

exceeding 5 kilowatts has

set at Rs 6.50 per unit for

up to 500 units, Rs 7.15 for

Mamata said the BJP believes in dividing people and creat-

ing rift among communities. "The jumla party believes in only dividing people. Learn to obey the Constitution first," she said. "On foreign soil why will I be asked if I am a Hindu? Who are they? I am not compelled to reply to the BJP."

Mamata had a stern warning to the opposition BIP and other parties. "The more you try to mix red with saffron your vote share will get

501 to 1,000 units, and Rs

7.50 for over 1,000 units.

Fixed charges of Rs 50 per

kilowatt have also been

imposed for consumption

above 300 units.In a bid

to soften the blow, HERC

has eliminated Minimum

Monthly Charges (MMC)

for domestic consumers us-

ing up to 300 units monthly,

introducing a two-part tariff

regime with no fixed charg-

The tariff hike comes af-

ter years of stability, with

the last revision occurring

in 2022-23, when rates in-

for consumers using up to

According to the officials

over the past decade, both

es for this group.

peace, don't try to disturb harmony," Mamata said. LOP Suvendu Adhikari

along with Bharatiya Janata Youth Morcha activists took part in a "Save Hindu Voter from TMC" rally to submit a deputation to West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer.

Speaking at the rally organ-

ised by the BIP's youth wing, Adhikari said: "TMC supremo (Mamata Banerjee) is leading this drive ever since her party's public meeting at Netaji Indoor Stadium, sensing defeat if free and fair polls are held in 2026 with genuine voters casting their votes.'

Adhikari alleged that Banerjee aims to delist "Hindispeaking Hindu people living in the state as bona fide residents of Bengal-particularly in areas such as Burrabazar, Burdwan-Asansol

DISCOMs have reduced ag-

gregate technical and com-

mercial losses from 30%

to around 10% to improve

financial health. This re-

duction in losses, alongside a state subsidy of Rs 5941.17

crore for agricultural con-

sumers, was cited as evidence of efforts to balance

consumer relief with fiscal

Despite these assurances,

the hike has ignited wide-

spread discontent. Resi-

dents, already grappling

with inflation, expressed

frustration over the added

The opposition has seized

the moment to attack the

ruling government. Con-

gress MP Randeep Surjew-

ala, addressing a press con-

ference in Delhi, accused

the Nayab Singh Saini-led

Harvana government of

robbing people's pockets.

He claimed the hike would

siphon Rs 5,000 crore from

Harvana's citizens, adding,

"In just three months, rates

have jumped by 67 paise per

sustainability.

burden.

belt, Barrackpore industrial belt, Bhadreswar-Liluah belt, and Howrah belt—as she is aware of her party's impending loss in the upcoming elections."

The Nandigram BJP MLA further claimed that the TMC is conspiring to delete the names of backward caste Hindus who migrated to India during and after Partition from the voter list.

Adhikari said the Trinamool plans to delete the names of Hindi-speaking Bengalis and refugee Bengalis who had come to India fleeing persecution in neighbouring Bangladesh.

"If the name of even one Bengali Hindu is deleted the BJP will hit the streets.

The Trinamool has targeted these sections, as they know they are not going to vote for them," Adhikari

Dr. S. Sukanya Iver honoured with IIW award

TDG NETWORK



Dr. S. Sukanya Iyer, a seasoned professional and dedicated social service activist from Maharashtra, has been conferred with the prestigious IIW She Inspires DHARMA DUBEY AWARDS 2025, in the Community Spirit category at British Parliament, London. The award, presented by Inspiring Indian Women (IIW), recognizes her relentless efforts in empowering women entrepreneurs. particularly from underprivileged sections of society, over the past 25 years.

Railway Minister Ashwini

Vaishnaw on Wednesday said more trains will have local cuisines depending on the region they are passing through and that an important experiment in this regard has been started under the Southern Railways.

The minister's response was to queries from DMK member Sumathy Thamizhachi Thangapandian, who requested that South Indian cuisine Vande Bharat trains running in Tamil Nadu.

Thangapandianan also mentioned that pantry

Cong's caste politics faces reality check as BJP

that pantry workers are predominantly speaking Hindi which is making it difficult for the passengers to communicate about their needs.

workers are predominantly speaking Hindi which is making it difficult for the passengers to communicate about their needs. During the Question Hour in the Lok Sabha, Vaishnaw said the railways has done an important experishould also be available on ment in Southern Railways to make sure that local cuisine is served to the pas-

"More and more trains

will be getting local cuisine. That programme will be for the entire country, whichever train is passing through one particular region, railways is now trying to get the delightful experience of that cuisine for the passengers whether it is in eastern, western, north or south side.... That is a continuous improve-

ment process we are taking

BJP set to roll out new party president by mid-April

AJIT MAINDOLA NEW DELHI

The process of election of BJP's National President is expected to expedite, following the end of the budget session of the Parliament. The budget session is set to conclude on Friday, with growing expectations that the names of the new state presidents in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh will be announced in the coming days. A coordination meeting between the Uttar Pradesh BJP and the Sangh was held on Wednesday, where discussions about the new state president also took place. In both Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the party has had to carefully deliberate before finalizing the names.

As the election formalities are completed across most states this week, the process for electing the National President is expected to gain momentum. There are strong indications that the new president's name could be announced before the important BJP meeting scheduled for April 10. After a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday, it seems unlikely that there will be any deadlock over the selection of the president. The latest reports suggest that former



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan is emerging as a frontrunner in the race. Chauhan, a leader with deep roots in the RSS, has earned significant support within the Sangh and is considered the first choice for the position. His extensive experience as a leader and his long tenure as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh have made him a respected figure within

The BJP is expected to announce the new president as soon as it receives the green light from Prime Minister Modi. The coming days will be crucial, as it will determine whether Chauhan's name is confirmed or if a different candidate emerges. Recently, a variety of other prominent figures have also been discussed, including Union Ministers Dharmendra Yadav and Bhupendra Yadav, along with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and former

Union Minister Smriti Irani.

As the party awaits the official announcement, all eyes have been on Prime Minister Modi's visit to Nagpur, but despite the anticipation, there was no concrete update during his visit. However, it is being reported that an agreement between Modi and Bhagwat regarding the new president has likely been reached.

While the announcement of the new national president is eagerly awaited, the BJP is in no rush to make it public. After the conclusion of the budget session, Prime Minister Modi will hold further discussions with senior party leaders and give the final approval to the chosen candidate. In the meantime, the BJP is also expected to announce new state presidents for Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

According to sources within the BJP, the organizational elections in most states will be concluded by April 10. As of now, elections in about half of the states have been com-

strengthens Hindutva narrative **AJIT MAINDOLA** NEW DELHI

unit," he said.

The Congress party is facing a critical moment and needs to rethink its strategies if it hopes to regain political relevance. If it continues focusing on caste politics, particularly the backward classes, the party could be heading towards an existential crisis. Caste-based politics cannot counter the influence of Hindutva and nationalism. In the 1990s, former Prime Minister V.P. Singh attempted to leverage the reservation issue to gain power, but this strategy ultimately led to the downfall of his government and his own political career. Meanwhile, the BJP successfully united caste-divided Hindus through temple politics and emerged as the dominant force. By combining nationalism with Hindutva,

opposition comprehensively. As a result, the BJP has remained in power for over 11 years at the center and controls most state governments. The Congress's continued focus on caste politics is unlikely to hinder the BJP's momentum. With recent amendments to the Waqf Board strengthening BJP's stance on Hindutva and nationalism, the party

the BJP managed to defeat its



is poised to gain even more support in the coming years. The statement from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) regarding the renovation of Kashi Vishwanath and Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi will significantly influence the polarization of Hindu votes. Whether by coincidence or strategic planning, on the same day the government decided to present the Waqf Bill in the Lok Sabha, RSS Chief Dattatreya Hosabale declared that the Sangh would not prevent its volunteers from participating in the temple renovation campaigns in Varanasi and Mathura. This sends a clear message: if any kind of kar seva (voluntary service) begins at these two temples, it will impact the

entire country.

Following the passage of the Waqf Board Bill, it is certain that political dynamics will shift. The opposition, particularly motivated by the Muslim vote bank, is unlikely to refrain from making this an issue. The more the opposition politicizes this matter, the sharper the focus on Hindutva will become. This will have immediate consequences, with the first significant impact expected in the upcoming Bihar elections. The BJP will likely focus its campaign entirely on the Hindutva narrative, knowing it has the upper hand in this domain. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Ku-

Even regional parties like the TDP, with a significant

supported the bill.

mar recognizes this, which is

why his party, JD(U), openly

has remained in powerforover11 years at the center and controls most state governments.

Muslim voter base, have supported the bill after careful deliberation. The passage of the Waqf Bill could also strike a blow to Congress in Kerala, where elections are scheduled for next year. In Kerala, the bill may unite Hindu and Christian voters, potentially benefiting the BJP. With these developments, the BIP stands to gain considerable political ground. The situation with Congress is surprising. After securing just 99 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, largely by chance, Congress has come to believe that its only path back to power lies in focusing on backward class politics. Rahul Gandhi, along with his team, has increasingly promoted caste-based politics, calling for a caste census and reservation in private educational institutions. From former president Sonia Gandhi to current president Mallikarjun Kharge, the entire party seems committed to pushing this agenda, mirroring the approach of regional parties in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, However, Congress has faced crushing defeats in states like Haryana, Maharashtra, and Delhi, where

such politics have failed.

The party has remained largely silent on critical issues such as farmers' concerns, youth employment, inflation, and corruption. Congress's stance on the Waqf Bill is particularly baffling. Fearing a loss of Muslim votes, the party has aligned itself with regional parties, without realizing that it's unlikely to win Muslim support in key states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, where regional parties already dominate the Muslim vote. Similarly, regional parties in the South, like in Karnataka, are strengthening their own Muslim-centric politics.

Congress is struggling in direct competition with the BJP, particularly on issues like the Waqf Bill, Kashi, and Mathura. Both Congress and Rahul Gandhi are failing to gauge the mood of the country and the youth. Caste politics is not the answer to Hindutva, and the sooner Congress understands this, the better its chances will be in the future.

Liquor vends in Chandigarh set to resume operations following a significant ruling by the Supreme Court vacating a stay imposed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

TDG NETWORK

The Punjab and Haryana High Court's March 26 order had halted the operation of liquor vends beyond March 31 amid allegations of cartelization and irregularities in the tendering process for the 2025-2026 financial year.

The Supreme Court's decision, announced on April 1, clears the way for vends to open on April 2, bringing relief to the Chandigarh Administration and liquor contractors after a week of legal wrangling.

The controversy erupted when the Chandigarh liquor vends tendering process for 2025-2026 faced judicial scrutiny following petitions that exposed potential monopolistic practices. On March 21, the Union Territory (UT) auctioned 96 out of 97 liquor vends, raking in Rs 606 crore—36% above the Rs 439 crore reserve price. However, petitioners, including M/S Kler Wines,



SC clears way for Chandigarh

alleged that over 87 vends to a single entity as a potenwere cornered by just two or tial violation of the Competithree individuals operating tion Act, prompting a notice through proxies-relatives, of motion to the Chandigarh associates, and employees— Administration. flouting the Excise Policy Unwilling to let the city 2025-26 and the Punjab Liface a prolonged "dry spell,"

the Chandigarh Administration challenged the high court's stay via a Special Leave Petition (SLP). On April 1, a Supreme Court bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmo-

han disposed of the SLP, vacating the stay and directing all parties—Chandigarh Administration, Kler Wines, and others-to complete pleadings within two weeks. However, a detailed order is awaited, the ruling ensures that vends allotted under the new policy can operate, subject to the high court's

'Local cuisine to be available in more trains', says Vaishnaw TDG NETWORK NEW DELHI Thangapandianan also mentioned

quor Licence (Chandigarh

Amendment) Rules, 2020.

These rules cap allocations

at 10 vends per entity to pre-

vent cartelization, a limit the

petitioners claimed was bla-

The Punjab and Harvana

High Court, responding to

three petitions, issued a sta-

tus quo order on March 26,

barring existing licensees

from operating past March

31 and stalling new allot-

ments until at least April

3. The bench, comprising

Justices Sureshwar Thakur

and Vikas Suri, flagged the

allocation of even 10 vends

tantly bypassed.

SENSEX, NIFTY REBOUND AHEAD OF TRUMP TARIFF CALL

President Trump has emphasised that the US will match tariffs imposed by India, to ensure fair trade.

AGENCIES

ndian stock indices recovered consider-Lably on Wednesday after experiencing a slump in the previous session. Sensex closed at 76,617.44 points, up 592.93 points or up 0.78 per cent, Nifty closed at 23,332.35 points, up 166.65 points or 0.72 per cent, respectively.

All the sectoral indices were in the green today, with Nifty realty rising the most at 3.61 per cent, data showed. On Tuesday, Sensex slumped about 1,400 points in a stock market bloodbath. Now, all eyes are on the Trump administration's reciprocal tariff plans set to be announced in the early hours of Thursday. Those announcements will come into effect immediately. Trump administration intends to implement re-

QUICK VIEW

- Markets Rebound: Sensex jumps 593 pts, Nifty up 167 after Tuesday's sharp fall.
- Broad Gains: All sectoral indices in green; Nifty Realty surges 3.6%.
- Tariff Relief Hopes: Trump hints at softer stance on India; investors upbeat.
- PMI Boost: March manufacturing PMI hits 8-month high, lifts sentiment.

partners as part of the "Fair and Reciprocal Plan".

Experts say that US President Donald Trump's statement that India was planning to drop its tariffs on American goods, substantially supported the markets on Wednesday.

ciprocal tariffs on trading Perhaps Trump's comments were seen by investors as a hint that the US will go soft on India as both countries are negotiating a bilateral trade pact. Faced with Trump's tariffs, some countries have imposed counter-tariffs on US goods, but India has staved

away from any such move. "Despite mixed global

cues surrounding the impending US tariffs, the domestic market experienced steady gains. This optimism was largely driven by expectations that the tariffs would have a minimal impact on the domestic

economy, given the positive progress in India-US trade negotiations," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Lim-

Nair added that sentiment was further reinforced by India's manufacturing PMI for March, which reached an eightmonth high, hinting at a recovery in Q4FY25 corporate earnings.

Since assuming office for his second term, President Trump has reiterated his stance on tariff reciprocity, emphasising that the United States will match tariffs imposed by other countries, including India, to ensure fair trade.

The performance of the stock market has significant implications for the national economy, investor confidence, and financial stability, especially in the context of international trade developments.

KC Ang new president of Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing

Tata Electronics Private Limited, a pioneer in the Indian electronics and semiconductor manufacturing sector, announced the appointment of KC Ang as President and Head of its Foundry business - Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited reporting to Dr. Randhir Thakur, CEO & MD of Tata Electronics. In this role, KC will spearhead Tata Electronics' advanced AI-enabled foundry operations and play a key role in driving innovation and excellence while forming strategic partnerships to position Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing as a global leader in chip manufacturing.

With over three decades of experience in the foundry industry, KC specialises in fab start-up, management, operations, and technology transfer, as well as customer, supplier, and industry relationship management. Throughout his global career, KC has worked extensively in



countries such as Malaysia, Germany, the United States of America, and China. Most recently, KC was President -Asia and Chairman - China at Global Foundries, a global leader in semiconductor manufacturing, where he served for over fifteen years. Born in Malaysia, KC holds a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from National Taiwan University and a Master's degree in Engineering from the Univer-

Commenting on the ap-

pointment, Dr. Randhir Thakur, said, "We are delighted to have an industry veteran like KC Ang join us and be part of the team driving our semiconductor journey. I welcome KC to Tata Electronics and Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing. His extensive industry knowledge and diverse expertise will be valuable as we make steady progress towards commencing operations at our Dholera Fab. With his extensive experience, KC will drive manufacturing operations and work closely with our customers and ecosystem partners."

KC Ang said, "I am excited to be a part of Tata Electronics at this extremely promising juncture for the Indian semiconductor manufacturing industry. This sector is poised to make a significant global impact in the coming vears, and I look forward to leveraging my experience to drive Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing to the forefront of global chip manufacturing."

Airtel, Nokia expand collaboration to speed up 5G service delivery

TDG NETWORK

Telecommunications companies Bharti Airtel and Nokia are expanding their partnership with the deployment of Nokia's Packet Core appliance-based and Fixed Wireless Access solutions for providing a better network experience for Airtel's growing 4G and 5G customer

As per a joint statement, the solution will help seamlessly integrate 5G and 4G technologies into a single set

Nokia's FWA will provide additional capacities for home broadband and enterprise-critical application



As per the statement, Airtel will use Nokia's automation framework to realise zerotouch service launch and efficient lifecycle management for core network functions to enhance its ability to deliver new services faster while reducing network operational

Using Nokia's converged Packet Core solution for 5G standalone (SA) readiness,

Airtel will continue its evolution toward advanced 5G and simplify its network architecture to meet the ever growing need of data while reducing network operational costs.

This, the statement said, will help Airtel optimise its hardware footprint and reduce its cost per bit by utilising appliance-based Packet Core gateways, while maintaining the rest of the network elements in a cloudnative architecture.

The rollout covers network automation in a multi-vear deal that spans the majority of Airtel's service regions across the country. The collaboration entails advancing autonomous networks by utilising GenAI for service orchestration and assurance.

Startup Mahakumbh 2.0 kicks off today

TDG NETWORK

The Second Edition of Startup Mahakumbh, presented by Government e Marketplace (GeM), is set to commence from April 3rd to 5th, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, Endto-end onboarding assistance will be provided to all Startups so that they are ready to start selling on GeM.

The GeM Pavilion will serve as an open platform for participating Startups to engage with select Government buyers and explore marketfit opportunities for their



services. Visitors can also interact with GeMAI, a virtual chatbot providing an immersive experience on the GeM portal, according to the Ministry of Commerce & Industry in an official statement.

According to the statement, with chat features and voice command innovative products and functionality in eight

languages, GeMAI will assist visitors in navigating the platform, answering queries, and tracking tickets. CEO, GeM, Ajay Bhadoo, said that the GeM Pavilion (Hall 5) will provide an exclusive opistered Startups to avail

professional product

photoshoot and catalogue

uploading assistance--completely free of cost. In alignment with its

vision of onboarding maximum eligible Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade(DPIIT)-registered Startups onto its platform, GeM is setting up a mega Pavilion in Hall 5 to facilitate Startup registrations during the three-day event. As part of GeM's extensive outreach program, Team GeM will offer guided onboarding support to help Startups seamlessly integrate as Sellers on India's portunity for newly reg- largest e-marketplace for Government buyers, the statement added.

Throughout the event,

'Hiked fertiliser subsidy unlikely to

various sessions led by GeM leadership will explore opportunities for Startups in public procurement. Special masterclasses are also being planned to provide sector-specific insights that will help Startups scale their business in the public procurement domain. Senior officials from GeM will be present at the event to engage with the Startup community.

The event will bring together over 3000 Startups, 1000+ incubators and accelerators, and industry leaders across 10 key sectors, making it the world's biggest platform for showcasing innova-

GeM facilitates hiring of over 1 mn manpower in 2024-25 the portal.

TDG NETWORK NEW DELHI

Digital procurement platform. Government e-Marketplace (GeM), has achieved a significant milestone by facilitating the hiring of over 1 million manpower resources by government organisations in the current fiscal year (2024-25), the Ministry of Commerce & Industry said on Wednesday.

Manpower outsourcing of GeM provides government buvers with a seamless solution to hire outsourced resources



viders on the platform enable buyers to engage manpower based on diverse criteria, including minimum wages and fixed remunera-

Over 33,000 service pro-

Various skilled and unskilled roles such as Security Personnel, Horticulture Staff, Multi-Tasking Staff, Data Entry Operators, and Facility Management Professionals can be hired through

registrations surge

ahead of rate hike

Speaking on this achievement, CEO of GeM, Ajay Bhadoo, stated, "GeM has harnessed digital capabilities and has emerged as a one-stop-shop for procurement of all possible services required by government buyers at various levels of administration. Our manpower outsourcing service not only simplifies the hiring process for government organizations but also ensures strict labour compliance through our comprehensive Service Level Agreement."

"This milestone under-

scores GeM's commitment to transforming public procurement through transparency, compliance, and efficiency," the ministry said.

GeM's manpower outsourcing service offers flexibility to select resources based on skills, profiles, educational qualifications, and experience

GeM's adherence with labour laws and regulations ensures that all transactions meet statutory requirements, providing government buyers with peace of mind while engaging outsourced resources.

TDG NETWORK

The gross margins of fertiliser makers are unlikely to improve in tandem with the previous financial year 2024-25, despite the latest raise in subsidy rates by the central government, asserted brokerage firm Anand Rathi.

The brokerage firm has argued that a considerable increase in global retail market prices, coupled with rupee depreciation,

are the key reasons behind the projections.

improve companies' margins'

Anand Rathi said backof-the-envelope calculations suggest that gross margins, on average, for H1 2025-26 are likely to be 32 percent versus 35 percent in the same period last year (assuming the status quo in farmgate and retail market prices).

At the same time, it believes the industry is likely to benefit from carry-over inventories in H12O25-26. "Overall, we believe this

to be neutral to positive for the complex fertilizer industry," Anand Rathi said.

"The government increasing subsidy/tonne for H1 FY26 would result in similar/marginal contraction in gross margin for most of the complex fertiliser grades. Ahead, we believe that the sector will focus on manufacturing more NPK than DAP, as the former would be more margin accretive," it added.

Mudra scheme boosts financial Mumbai housing

According to SBI Research, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) is significantly benefiting financially weaker states like Bihar, UP, Odisha, and the North East, enhancing financial inclusion and economic empowerment. The report highlights a rise in dis-

bursements to women-

inclusion: SBI Report

led MSMEs, leading to increased employment by women. Around 68% of PMMY account holders are women. Per-woman loan disbursement and deposits have grown at 13% and 14% CAGR respectively since FY16, making PMMY a key tool for grassroots empower-

Mumbai saw a 10% YoY rise in housing registrations in

March 2025, reaching 15,501 units, with property values jumping 42% to Rs 265 billion, according to Nuvama. The surge was driven by buyers advancing purchases before the April hike in ready reckoner rates. Residential units made up 80% of registrations, with a shift toward larger homes—units over 1,000 sq ft rose to 14% from 9% YoY. FY25 marked a record year with unit registrations up 9% and values up 22% to Rs 2.2 trillion.



ECONOMY WRAP



Battery storage key to net-zero goals: Report

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) are crucial for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, according to BofA Global Research. As solar and wind power are intermittent, BESS ensures grid stability and efficient use of renewables. However, raw material shortages and recycling challenges-especially for lithium, cobalt, and nickel-pose major hurdles. The EU and US are working on circular economy policies, aiming to recover key materials from waste bat-

India SME Forum seeks phased IMS rollout under GST

The India SME Forum has urged the government to delay and phase the rollout of the Invoice Management System (IMS) under GST, citing major financial and operational challenges for MSMEs. IMS, aimed at real-time invoice reconciliation to curb Input Tax Credit mismatches, is proving difficult for small businesses due to limited preparation time, technical glitches, and increased compliance costs-estimated at Rs 1.5 lakh annually per business.

Key concerns include



timelines. The Forum recommends a 6-12 month phased rollout, improved supplier dashboards, and more flexibility in handling disputed invoices to avoid disruption in MSME operations and ensure smoother compliance.

INDIA'S PROGRESSIVE WAQF BILL OUTPACES WESTERN 'LIBERAL', AND MUSLIM-MAJORITY COUNTRIES

OPINION

ABHINANDAN MISHRA

he reforms suggested in the Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday for discussion and passage by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, place India ahead of many Western, European, and even Muslim-majority countries in terms of Waqf management, offering a specialized framework designed to reflect contemporary values of accountability and inclusivity

The new framework, which is being challenged by the opposition parties—understandably driven by their political compulsions—aims to improve the efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity of Waqf management, while also aligning it with modern governance standards.

Significantly, many of the 'liberal' Western countries that have criticized India on grounds of 'plurality' and 'secularity' do not have any specific laws to govern Waqf properties.

Similarly in Asian countries where the Muslim population is substantial, the laws that govern the Waft properties are archaic and serve no beneficial purpose for the community as a whole.

As per the bill, which has been made public, it incorporates 25 recommendations made by the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) and brings reforms, especially in terms of gender equality, sectarian inclusivity, and government oversight. An analysis of the bill, and a comparison to similar laws governing Waqf in Western and European countries, as well as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, all of which

he reforms suggested in the Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024, the was introduced in the manner of the way introduced in the manner of the was introduced in the was introduced in

Speaking in the parliament

Rijiju, pointed out that the most 'draconian' provision in the previous Act was Section 40, under which the Waqf Board could declare any land Waqf property. The said provision has been removed in the new bill which is likely to be passed in both the houses given the majority enjoyed by the government. Another contentious rule, 'waqf by user' under which a property is considered as a waqf property because it is being used for a long time for religious or charitable purposes, even without formal documentation, has been abolished.

In Western and European countries, Waqf properties are primarily regulated under the general framework of charity law or trust law, which do not have provisions specifically targeting the unique governance needs of Waqf assets and there are no dedicated Waqf Boards or specific laws for Waqf management.

Instead, Waqf properties are usually treated as part of Islamic charitable organizations or Islamic foundations, governed by general legal structures designed for all charitable activities.

In the United Kingdom (
where Muslim population:
4.4%), Waqf properties are
managed under the oversight
of the Charity Commission,
a body that regulates charitable organizations. There
is no specific legislation
for Waqf properties; they
are simply categorized as
charitable assets and managed according to the general
framework provided by the

Charity Act 20

The Charity Commission ensures that these organizations adhere to laws regarding transparency, accountability, and governance, but there is no dedicated body for Waqf properties alone, and the issue of 'gender equality' or 'sectarian representation', which is mentioned in the Indian law, does not come under the specific purview of charity law.

No separate benefits are given by the charity commission to these bodies on the ground of religion.

Similarly, in the United States (Muslim population: 1.1%), Waqf properties are managed through Islamic charitable organizations, and their management is governed by state-specific trust laws and federal charity regulations, including the IRS tax code which is known for its stringent rules and regulations.

In the U.S., like in the UK, these properties are treated like any other charitable asset, subject to tax-exempt status regulations and general charitable governance. There is no specialized regulatory framework for Waqf, and governance is usually handled at the level of the individual charitable organization.

In France too (Muslim population: 8.8%), Waqf properties are incorporated within the broader scope of Islamic charities, which are regulated by general charity laws that govern all religious and non-profit organizations, and there is no specific framework for Waqf properties.

In Germany (Muslim population: 5.0%) and Canada (Muslim population: 3.2%), the situation is similar, with Islamic charitable organizations managing Waqf properties under the broader charity law framework.

In Germany, charitable foundations or organizations manage Waqf assets, and governance falls under the

oversight of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, which ensures compliance with the German Civil Code (Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, BGB), but there is no specialized body for Waqf management, and there are no specific provisions for gender equality or sectarian representation in

the administration of Waqf. In contrast to these Western and European countries, India's Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024 is a dedicated piece of legislation that provides specific rules and frameworks for Waqf management.

The Bill empowers the Central Government to create rules regarding Waqf registration, auditing, and accounts, ensuring a high level of transparency and accountability in the handling of Waqf properties.

Additionally, the Indian Waqf Amendment Bill has introduced gender equality provisions. The law mandates the representation of at least two Muslim women on both the Central Waqf Council and State Waqf Boards, a measure aimed at empowering women in the governance of Waqf assets.

Furthermore, the Bill ensures that female inheritance rights to Waqf properties cannot be denied. This contrasts sharply with Western systems, where gender representation is not mandated in the management of Islamic charitable organizations.

Another significant feature

of the Indian law is its commitment to sectarian inclusivity. The law mandates that representatives from various Muslim sects—Sunni, Shia, Bohra, Agakhani, and others—be included in the State Waqf Boards, ensuring that all Muslim communities are represented in the decision-making process. This provision is a significant departure from the Western countries, where sectarian representation is not required.

The Indian bill also introduces an appeal process

where decisions made by Waqf tribunals can be challenged in the High Court within 90 days. This formal legal recourse ensures that there is judicial oversight of Waqf-related matters, providing a mechanism for ad-

dressing grievances.

In contrast, in the West, while charity laws offer legal recourse for disputes, there is no specialized tribunal system for Waqf, and cases related to Waqf are handled under broader trust law or charity law frameworks, which lack the the focus on Islamic endowments.

In Malaysia (Muslim population: 61.3%), the management of Waqf properties is handled by a specialized body called the State Islamic Religious Councils (SIRCs). These councils are empowered by the Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) Act 1993 and other state-specific legislation to oversee the management and administration of Waqf

Unlike India's new law, which mandates gender representation and sectarian inclusivity, Malaysia's system places a significant emphasis on the State's role in managing Waqf properties. While the SIRCs play a crucial role in Waqf management, they are not as inclusive in terms of gender or sectarian diversity as the Indian system.

An analysis of the law shows that Malaysia's approach is more centralized, with the government having significant control over the administration of Waqf properties, and the inclusion of women or minority sects is not a central feature of the governance system.

In Indonesia (Muslim population: 87.2%), the Waqf Board of Indonesia (BWI) is tasked with overseeing Waqf properties. Established under Law No. 41/2004 on Waqf, the BWI is responsible for the registration, monitoring, and supervision of Waqf properties across the

their efforts in vain. Outside

country.

While Indonesia has a more centralized system for Waqf management than some other countries, it does not have the same gender-focused provisions as India's law.

The BWI focuses more on the legal administration and utilization of Waqf assets, often aimed at increasing the economic productivity of Waqf properties, but gender inclusivity and sectarian representation are not specifically emphasized in the law.

In Sri Lanka (Muslim population: 9.7%), the Waqf laws are governed under the Waqf Act, No. 51 of 1955, which establishes the Sri Lanka Waqf Board. Similar to Malaysia and Indonesia, Sri Lanka's system of Waqf governance is largely state-controlled.

The Sri Lankan Waqf system is less inclusive than India's in terms of gender equality and sectarian representation. The Sri Lanka Waqf Board primarily focuses on the legal registration and management of Waqf properties, without specific mandates for gender representation or inclusivity of Muslim sects in its governance structure.

In terms of government oversight, India's centralized control over Waqf registration and the audit process is more comprehensive than the systems in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, where state governments typically have greater discretion in managing Waqf properties, without the same level of detailed centralized regulation and oversight seen in the Indian bill.

Apart from being a progressive law that promotes gender inclusion and sectarian diversity, it is also designed to ensure that transparency and accountability are maintained at every level of governance, which is a feature that is not as robust in the Waqf management systems of these countries.

PERSPECTIVE DELUSIONAL

MUHAMMAD YUNUS IS SINGING PAKISTAN'S TUNE

Bangladesh government caretaker, Muhammad Yunus seems to fancy himself as a leader of international status, just because he has had the backing of the Democratic establishment in the United States. So much so that he is now trying to decide the future of the Indian subcontinent, by literally offering India's Northeast to China that is the only way to interpret the statement he made during his China visit. "The seven states of India, the eastern part of India, are called the Seven Sisters. They are a landlocked...country... region of India. They have no way to reach out to the ocean. We (Bangladesh) are the only guardian of the ocean for this region," he said. It is not known from which geography book Yunus has been taking his lessons that he thinks India's Northeast—which he initially misidentified as a country—is landlocked and does not have any access to the sea. Also what made him arrogate himself as the "guardian of the ocean" when his country has a coastline of a mere 710 km, and the ocean is named after India, which has thousands of kilometres of coastline along that "ocean"? Also, no state in India is landlocked because they have full access to the whole country's coastline, with innumerable ports, giving even the remotest corner of the country full access to the sea. It's just a matter of connectivity—building infrastructure to ensure ease of access. With the focus that the current government is giving on connectivity, this is true even for the Northeast, which has witnessed major infrastructure boom in the last ten years. Yunus cannot rewrite geopolitics by erasing India from the Indian subcontinent.

But the problem is deeper. The problem is in Yunus' intent, rather his malicious intent. On the one hand Yunus is trying to stir the insurgency pot in the Northeast, by alluding to the supposed grievances of the region, and on the other he is offering China to use Bangladesh as a base to encircle India's Northeast, thus increasing India's security problems. It's an open invitation to meddling by hitting India where it will hurt most, in the Northeast, which is connected to the rest of the country with a narrow Siliguri Corridor, commonly known as the chicken's neck. Right from the time Yunus has been installed in power, voices have been heard in his administration about targeting the Siliguri Corridor and dismembering and thus weakening India. There is talk in Bangladesh of reviving an air force base at Lalmonirhat, near the border with India and right next to the Siliguri corridor, thus constantly threatening India. But they also have the realization that such things are easier said than done, because of India's sheer heft, hence Yunus has resorted to wooing China.

At the same time he is speaking of being in the best of terms with India. This is sheer duplicity. The buzz is that India did not allow Yunus to travel to India, and hence he went to China. It seems the China visit was meant to teach India a lesson, and to an extent his comments were driven by spite. But then Yunus has been spiteful towards India right from the day he has taken office because of India's strong links with his archenemy, Sheikh Hasina. He has not paid any heed to India's concerns about the state of the minorities in his country, about how jihadis have been targeting them, how Bangladesh has been descending into anarchy and street violence was becoming the norm. He has always brushed aside India's concerns and has accused India of exaggeration. Till date, he has not done anything to reassure India that he will not act against India's interests. It is obvious that his deep rooted animosity towards India stems from his and his jihadis' strong links with Pakistan. Yunus has been taking Bangladesh closer to Pakistan. It was on Islamabad's instigation that Dhaka suggested that New Delhi should help it revive SAARC, of which Pakistan is a part—the SAARC which India has removed from among its foreign policy agenda because of the Pakistan factor. Pakistan has been weaponising Yunus to needle India, so it should not come as a surprise if the statements he made in Beijing were also fed to him by the generals of Rawalpindi HQ.

But Yunus may realise sooner than later that China does not decide its foreign policy on the whims and fancies of its vassal states. Its policies are dictated solely by its own interests and that India-China relations operate at a different level. There is no doubt that it's a difficult relationship, especially since China does not want India to rise. But China too realises that letting relations sour with India has been one of its biggest foreign policy mistakes in the 21st century, the reason why it is making placatory noises now. That India has no reason to trust China, is a topic for another day. For the time being, Yunus should be more worried about the fact that he is offering his country on a platter to a predatory China. This is bound to make his country go belly up, the way all Chinese vassal states have gone. Yunus is suffering from delusions of grandeur. When his fall comes, it will be a hard one.

JOYEETA BASU

Cancelled dreams: NET & NEET storm and the new law





DR. ALISHA VERMA & DR. ZEESHAN HUSSAIN HASHMI

The National Testing Agency (NTA) is an independent organization created by the Government of India to administer admission and eligibility examinations for higher education institutions. The main goal is to provide equitable, transparent, and uniform testing procedures nationwide. Since its establishment, the NTA has been tasked with overseeing a range of important examinations, such as the NET and NEET (UG), CUET, GPAT, CMAT that have significant impacts on academic and professional sphere in India. Establishment of this agency was aimed to ensure the integrity and dependability of these tests by establishing strong security measures, employing cutting-edge technology, and adhering to stringent standards. Nevertheless, recent disputes, such as the purported leakage of the NEET paper and the abrupt termination of the NET exam, have prompted doubts regarding its effectiveness and highlighted the necessity for ongoing enhancements and increased responsibility to fulfil the expectations of candidates and stakeholders.

on June 4. The exam, which is currently making headlines due to allegations of question paper leakage and irregularities, attracted approximately 24 lakh stu-

The National Eligibility Test (NET) in India is a vital test for those seeking to pursue careers in academia and research. It is administered by the National Testing Agency (NTA). The NET test acts as a means for applicants to qualify for the position of Assistant Professor and get Junior Research Fellowships (JRF) at Indian institutions and colleges. The exam is conducted biannually and evaluates applicants' expertise in many fields and

their ability to do research.

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET)-UG is the primary entrance test for candidates who wish to enter undergraduate medical and dentistry degrees (MBBS/BDS) in India. Administered on a yearly basis by the NTA, NEET guarantees a standardized and competence-driven procedure for accepting students into medical institutions throughout the nation.

The National Eligibilitycum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) or NEET-UG (medical entrance examination) was administered by the NTA on May 5 and the results were announced is currently making headlines due to allegations of question paper leakage and irregularities, attracted approximately 24 lakh students. Unprecedented in the history of NTA, a total of 67 candidates achieved All-India Rank 1. Reports of paper breaches and the distribution of grace marks have raised concerns about the integrity of the exam since that time.

The NTA also conducted University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) exam on June 18 but it was cancelled by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, on June 19, one day after it was administered, in order to guarantee the utmost transparency and integrity of the examination process. The report which came the very next day from a preliminary investigation said that the question paper was leaked 48 hours prior to the exam. The paper was sold for Rs 6 lakh on the dark web and encrypted social media platforms, according to the report. The National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre under the Ministry of Home Affairs provided the University Grants Com-

mission (UGC) with specific

inputs regarding the ex-

amination on June 19, 2024. Prima facie, these inputs suggest that the integrity of the aforementioned examination may have been compromised. The protest that happened after the notice by NTA to cancel the exam was out, was attended by a significant number of students, including members of political organizations such as the Students' Federation of India (SFI), All India Students Association (AISA), Democratic Students' Front (DSF), Krantikari Yuva Sangathan (KYS), and Congress-affiliated NSUI. The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), which is affiliated with the RSS, also organized protests on the north campus of Delhi University and the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Thousands of applicants are

in shock at the unexpected cancellation of the NET test, which has left candidates who spent months, preparing rigorously feeling severely emotionally and psychologically damaged. The sudden cancelation of the exam, together with the build-up to it, have left me feeling quite frustrated and let down. Furthermore, a large number of applicants had to bear a heavy financial load by paying for lodging, transportation, and other associated fees just to have

of the financial ramifications, the time and energy spent getting ready for the test are priceless. Many times, juggling other obligations, candidates carefully plan only to have their dreams dashed. The widespread anguish highlights how deeply these administrative mistakes affect the lives of conscientious professionals and students. Students now expect a similar response for the NEET test due to the precedent the cancellation of the NET exam has set. Union **Education Minister Dhar**mendra Pradhan accepted full responsibility for it. He also announced the creation of a high-level committee to improve the National Testing Agency's (NTA) operations, examination procedures, transparency, and data security measures. In February, President Droupadi Murmu signed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill into law. The bill was adopted by the Centre with the goal of preventing leaks, malpractices, and organized cheating in recruitment exams such as UPSC and SSC, as well as admission tests such as NEET, JEE, CUET, and NET.

The Punishments under Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 proposes that unfair means be punishable by imprisonment for three to five years with a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh.

In case a person, group or persons commits an organised crime of this nature which includes the evaning-

or persons commits an organised crime of this nature which includes the examination authority, service providers or any other institutions, they will be punished with imprisonment of five to 10 years with a minimum fine of Rs 1 crore.

The law empowers agen-

The law empowers agencies to attach and forfeit the properties of institutions involved in committing organised crime for the proportionate recovery of the cost of examination.

The law also states that an officer of the rank of deputy superintendent of police or assistant commissioner of police will be responsible for investigating any complaints under the Act. Despite the fact that the recently enforced Act cannot be applied retrospectively to the accused of NET & NEET-UG paper leak, this law is a hope to establish a more effective approach to address similar instances in future. It emphasizes how important it is to preserve test fairness and integrity. It is crucial to provide top priority to secure and transparent testing procedures in order to guarantee an impartial evaluation process for every applicant.

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HOW BOLLYWOOD BECAME INDIA'S CULTURAL SUPERPOWER — AND WHY THE SOUTH IS NOW STEALING THE SPOTLIGHT

In the 1950s, Raj Kapoor's 'Awaara' captivated over 100 million viewers in the USSR and China. Amitabh Bachchan ruled screens from Egypt to Nigeria in the '80s, while Bollywood became a cultural lifeline for the Indian diaspora in cities like London and Toronto.



or decades, Bollywood was more than just India's biggest film industry — it was a cultural juggernaut. The music, the stars, the stories: they weren't merely entertainment. They were a religion. In a country as vast and diverse as India, Bollywood was the unifying dream, offering millions a glittering window into romance, rebellion, family, and fantasy. It set the tone, the trend, and the tempo for the rest of the nation's film industries. But now, as the celluloid reels spin into the 2020s, there is a dramatic twist in the tale.

THE SOUTH RISES

What was once a one-way current of influence from Bollywood to the regional industries has evolved into a dynamic exchange. And more strikingly, the South Indian film industries particularly Telugu (Tollywood) and Tamil (Kollywood) — are no longer following in Bollywood's shadow. They are setting the pace, commanding the audience, and shaping the future of Indian cinema.

India in flux.

ing career-defining hits

for actors in those regions.

Rajinikanth's early stardom

in Tamil cinema owes much

to this era, with his perfor-

of Don) and 'Thee' (a remake

of 'Deewar') cementing his

image as a Southern super-

star with pan-Indian appeal.

grammar was also conta-

gious. Songs weren't just

interludes; they were emo-

tional punctuation marks.

The trend of elaborate

song-and-dance sequenc-

es, romantic ballads, and

high-energy item numbers

Bollywood's musical

THE GOLDEN ERA OF BOLLYWOOD INFLUENCE

Bollywood's dominance wasn't an accident. From the 1950s through the 1990s, it served as both a mirror of Indian society and a mould shaping it. The Golden Age brought socially resonant films like 'Mother India' and 'Pyaasa', whose stories of poverty, patriotism, and poetic despair struck deep chords. The '70s and '80s introduced the anti-hero and the 'Angry Young Man' through the genius of Salim-Javed, who penned films like 'Deewar', 'Sholay', and 'Don'. These narratives of

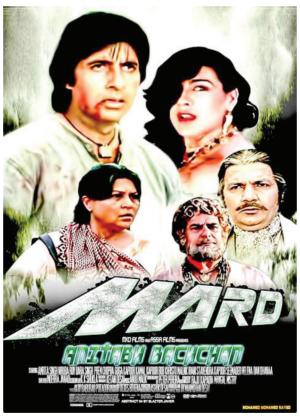
Soviet citizens gathered around a poster of Raj Kapoor's 'Awaara' in Moscow in 1950. Source: Reddit dustries. Tamil and Telugu vengeance, justice, and refilms in the '60s and '70s demption echoed the frustration and aspiration of an began integrating these musical spectacles, recognizing their mass appeal. In Regional industries took notice. Remakes of Hindi Maharashtra and Bengal, films became a common too, mainstream filmmakpractice. Scripts by Salimers often mirrored the Bolly-Javed were adapted into wood formula: melodrama, Tamil, Telugu, and Malayromance, a dash of comedy alam, sometimes becomand a climactic family re-

union.



CULTURE mances in 'Billa' (a remake By the 1990s, Bollywood had perfected its formula for family-centric entertainment. Films like 'Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!' and 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge' became cultural events, not just films. Weddings weren't complete without referencing these films; fashion was dictated by what Madhuri or Kajol wore on screen. And these weren't just Hindi-language phenomena.

'Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!' was dubbed into Telugu and ran for over 200 days in Andhra Pradesh — a staggering feat that demonstrated the magnetic pull of Bollywood across linguistic lines. Regional filmmakers took note, adapting the themes of family loyalty, tradition, and diaspora romance to their cultural

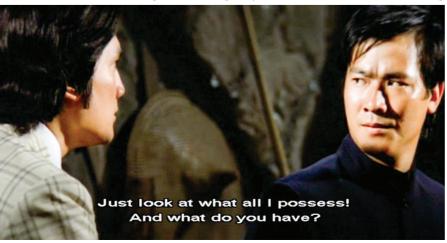


Amitabh Bachchan, Prem Chopra, Nirupa Roy, Amrita Singh, and Dara Singh Randhawa in Mard (1985). IMDb

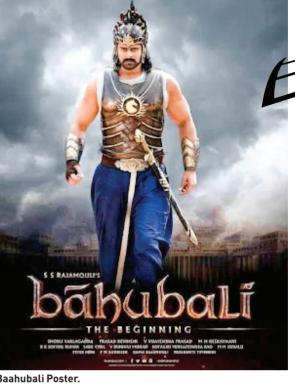
contexts. The South Indian cinema, while rooted in its own mythologies and social issues, began weaving Bollywood-style narratives into its storytelling fabric.

The cross-industry remake culture blossomed. Comedies like 'Golmaal' (1979) became 'Thillu Mullu' (1981) in Tamil. But increasingly, regional films also began influencing Bollywood. While the primary flow of inspiration was still northto-south, the seeds of mutual influence were sown.

Technically, Bollywood also led the way. When it transitioned to color, or embraced multi-location shoots, other industries followed. When the PR machine of Bollywood began cultivating fan clubs and mass merchandising



'The Brothers' (1979) Chinese film was a remake of 'Deewar', stars Tony Liu as Amitabh Bachchan's criminal, while Danny Lee steps into the role of the righteous police officer brother played by Shashi Kapoor



of Arjun Reddy (Telugu),

and Vikram Vedha (2022)

was adapted straight from

WITHOUT BORDERS

What does this mean for

Indian cinema? In a word:

The industry is no longer

fragmented by language

or geography. Today, film-

makers collaborate across

regions. Bollywood ac-

tors appear in Tamil films;

Telugu producers finance

Hindi releases. Directors

an by design. The lines have

Cinematically too, the

convergence is exciting.

Southern films brought

high-octane action and

rooted folklore into the na-

tional mainstream. Bolly-

wood, in turn, contributed

polish, global appeal, and

star power. The result is a

new Indian cinema that is

grander, bolder, and more

inclusive than ever before.

The creative synergy has

also impacted audience ex-

pectations. Viewers now

crave spectacle — not just

emotionally driven drama.

Films like 'Pathaan' and

'Brahmastra' show Bol-

lywood responding to the

challenge with high-concept

storytelling and visual wiz-

ardry. But it's not always

easy. Where 'Baahubali'

and 'RRR' succeeded with

conviction and storytelling

muscle, some Bollywood

big-budget attempts ('Thugs

of Hindostan', 'Shamshera')

fell flat. The message is clear:

scale alone isn't enough —

Bollywood's international

journey began long before

the South went pan-India.

In the 1950s, Raj Kapoor be-

came a household name in

the USSR. His film 'Awaara'

drew over 100 million view-

ers across the Soviet Union

and China. Its themes of

class struggle and justice

resonated across ideologi-

In the Middle East and

Africa, Amitabh Bach-

chan's films lit up screens

from Cairo to Casablanca.

cal boundaries.

story and soul matter.

THE WORLD IS

WATCHING

its Tamil namesake.

AN INDUSTRY

convergence.

blurred.

Baahubali Poster.

around stars like Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan, regional industries mirrored the model, building their constellation of fan-driven stardom. Bollywood, in effect, set the gold standard.

THE SOUTH BREAKS

THE CEILING The turning point came in the 2010s. South Indian cinema, long considered "regional," decided to stop playing second fiddle. With bigger budgets, bolder ideas, and brilliant execution, it rewrote the rules of like Shankar are pan-Indi-

'Baahubali: The Beginning' (2015) and its sequel 'Baahubali 2: The Conclusion' (2017) weren't just movies — they were spectacles. Directed by S.S. Rajamouli, these Telugu-language epics brought myth, fantasy, and heroism to a scale unseen in Indian cinema. Baahubali 2 became the highest-grossing Indian film of all time, proving that a regional industry could not only match Bollywood but eclipse it.

The floodgates opened. 'K.G.F: Chapter 1' (Kannada) and 'Pushpa: The Rise' (Telugu) became household names across India. 'RRR' (2022), another Rajamouli magnum opus, became a global sensation, winning an Oscar for Best Original Song ('Naatu Naatu') and receiving standing ovations in American theatres. These were not Hindi films. Yet they united Indian audiences in a way Bollywood once did.

The numbers tell the story. In 2022, Bollywood accounted for only 33% of domestic box office revenue. Telugu and Tamil films, combined, took 36%. This was unthinkable a decade ago

And the North took notice. Hindi-speaking audiences, long loyal to Bollywood, now thronged theatres for dubbed Telugu and Tamil films. South Indian heroes like Allu Arjun, Yash, and Jr. NTR became national icons. The roles reversed. Bollywood began remaking Southern hits — Kabir Singh (2019) was a remake

sold t-shirts with his face for years. In Nigeria, Hindi movies were weekend staples. Even today, older fans in Egypt and Russia remember the songs and characters of Bollywood's golden age with affection.

'Mard' (1985) was a sensa-

tion in Egypt, and vendors

The diaspora carried the torch further. In London, Toronto, Dubai, and Durban, Bollywood offered Indians abroad a taste of home. By the 1990s, Shah Rukh Khan, Aishwarya Rai, and Hrithik Roshan were global icons. Western curiosity grew: Bombay Dreams hit London's West End, and 'Lagaan' was nominated for an Oscar. Bollywood became a genre unto itself: vibrant, emotional, musical.

In the 2010s, films like '3 Idiots' and 'Dangal' broke into non-traditional markets. 'Dangal' earned over \$190 million in China alone. Its message of gender empowerment and personal triumph crossed language barriers. In Japan, 'Muthu' (starring Rajinikanth) and 'Dil Se' (with Shah Rukh Khan) gained cult status. Bollywood had officially gone global.

But here too, the Southern wave followed. RRR wasn't just a national success. It was a phenomenon. The West embraced it with viral enthusiasm, drawn by its operatic action, emotional arcs, and infectious energy. At film festivals and award shows, it stood shoulderto-shoulder with global cinema giants. The narrative had changed: Bollywood no longer held India's only passport to the world.

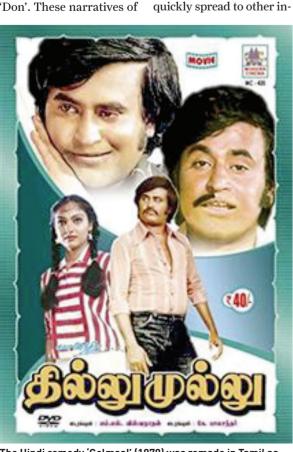
THE NEW EPIC

Today, Indian cinema is in the middle of its most exciting chapter yet. Bollywood remains powerful, but it is no longer the singular voice of Indian storytelling. The South has risen, not in opposition, but in collaboration. And together, they are crafting a cinema that is rich, diverse, and fearless.

Audiences have grown smarter, bolder, and more curious. They want depth with dazzle, tradition with innovation, and emotion with impact. And filmmakers — from Mumbai to Madurai — are rising to the challenge.

The interval is over. The second half has begun. And the climax? It's anyone's guess. But one thing is certain: Indian cinema is no longer just Bollywood. It is a chorus of many voices, singing together in spectacular harmony on the world stage.

Compiled by Ruchira Talapatra



The Hindi comedy 'Golmaal' (1979) was remade in Tamil as 'Thillu Mullu' (1981)

HERITAGE CARS OF RAJASTHAN: A GLIMPSE INTO ROYALTY, LUXURY, AND HISTORY

TDG NETWORK

ajasthan, often referred to as the land of kings, has a rich and vibrant history. The state has always been known for its royal families, majestic palaces, and grandiose lifestyle. Among the many symbols of royal luxury, one of the most captivating is the fleet of heritage cars owned by the royal families of Rajasthan. These cars, many of which date back to the early 20th century, are not just vehicles but embody the rich legacy, opulence, and history of the region. Today, these cars are treasured collectibles and a significant part of Rajasthan's cultural heritage.

THE ROYAL **CONNECTION TO CARS**

The introduction of automobiles to India in the early 20th century coincided with the flourishing of the princely states, including Rajasthan. With their increasing wealth and prominence, the royal families wanted to make a mark in terms of style and luxury. Cars were seen as a status symbol and a means to exhibit their power and prestige.

The royals of Rajasthan were among the first to embrace the luxury of automobiles. They didn't just buy ordinary cars; they went for the best and most opulent models available, often commissioning unique, customized vehicles with special features. Many of these cars were imported from European countries, such as England, France, and Germany, and were equipped with the finest materials, including polished wood, leather upholstery, and gold inlays.

THE CARS OF THE **MAHARAJAS**

The history of heritage cars in Rajasthan is closely tied to the opulent lifestyles of its Maharajas and Maharani's. The royal families were known for their extravagant tastes, and their love for automobiles was no exception. These majestic vehicles were used for ceremonial purposes, royal processions, and personal transport. Some of the most notable royal families of Rajasthan, such as the Mewar, Jaipur, Udaipur, and Jodhpur families, have an impressive collection of heritage cars.

THE MAHARANA OF **MEWAR'S CARS**

The Maharana of Mewar, a royal family from Udaipur, is known for its large collection of vintage cars, many of which were custom-made for the family. The famous vintage collection includes cars such as the Rolls-Royce Phantom, Bentley, and the iconic Packard. One of the most noteworthy cars in the collection is the Rolls-Royce Phantom III, which was used by the Maharana for ceremonial purposes and is now displayed in the Vintage & Classic Car Museum in Udaipur. The museum, set in the beautiful City Palace complex, showcases the luxury and royal taste in

The Maharana's love for automobiles extends to their other vehicles as well. The family also possesses a 1934 Packard 1207, which is considered one of the most prestigious cars of its time. These cars are symbols of the Maharana's influence and the pride of Rajasthan's





THE MAHARAJA OF **JAIPUR'S ROYAL** FLEET

Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan, is home to one of the most magnificent car collections, most of which belong to the Maharaja of Jaipur. Among the numerous cars in the royal collection, the Rolls-Royce Phantom IV stands out. This car, which was exclusively made for heads of state, is a classic example of luxury and power. The car was used by the Maharaja during state

visits and official events. Another significant car from Jaipur's royal collection is the Jaguar MK VII, which was used by the Maharaja for personal transport. The sleek lines and elegant design of the car reflect the Maharaja's sophisticated taste. The Jaipur royal family also owns a 1948 Buick Roadmaster and several other luxury cars from the mid-20th century, each representing the grandeur and opulence associated with the Jaipur

JODHPUR'S CLASSIC CAR COLLECTION

monarchy.

Jodhpur, home to the Maharaja of Jodhpur, has its own

prestigious car collection. The Maharaja of Jodhpur was an avid car collector, and the royal family is known for owning several vintage and heritage cars, many of which are considered among the finest in India. Among the collection are Rolls-Royce models, Cadillac, Jaguar, and Buick.

The 1934 Packard Convertible is one of the most prized cars in the Jodhpur collection. This car, with its distinctive design and unique features, is a testament to the royal family's impeccable taste in automobiles. The Maharaja of Jodhpur's collection is housed in the Umaid Bhawan Palace and also displayed at a local museum for the public

THE ROYAL **COLLECTION OF ALWAR**

The Maharaja of Alwar, another prominent royal family in Rajasthan, also boasts a collection of classic cars. Known for their exclusivity, the cars in the Alwar royal collection include rare

models from Rolls-Royce, Cadillac, and Aston Martin. These vehicles were often used for ceremonial events and royal gatherings.

The 1930s Rolls-Royce key pieces in the Alwar collection, known for its grandeur and elegance. The attention to detail in these cars, from the finely crafted interiors to the smooth engine performance, reflects the craftsmanship and artistry of the time.

THE ROLE OF **HERITAGE CAR MUSEUMS**

Several museums and institutions in Rajasthan now showcase the collections of these royal families, allowing the public to catch a glimpse of the grandeur of yesteryears. The Vintage & Classic Car Museum in Udaipur is one of the most famous museums in Rajasthan, exhibiting over 30 vintage cars, including the Rolls-Royce Phantom and the Packard 1207. The museum not only offers a look into the history of these royal cars but also educates visitors on the luxury and craftsmanship of the time.

In Jaipur, the Maharaja's Vintage Car Collection is a significant attraction. Housed in a section of the City Palace, this collection includes a wide range of role in tourism. Visitors

its rulers. These coins pro-

vide valuable insights into the

economy and trade systems of

the time. Inscriptions found

on stone slabs and pillars of-

fer important historical con-

text. These inscriptions often

vehicles that were used by the royal family, including the Jaguar MK VII, Rolls-Royce, and Cadillac models. The museum also features various other vintage cars, each with its own history and significance.

THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF **HERITAGE CARS**

Heritage cars are more

than just vehicles; they represent the cultural and historical fabric of Rajasthan. They are symbols of the state's royal past and showcase the creativity, Phantom II is one of the luxury, and opulence of the time. These cars were not merely tools for transportation; they were a means of showcasing power and prestige. The royal families' preference for European brands such as Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Cadillac, and Jaguar reflects the strong cultural exchange between Rajasthan and the rest of the world, especially during the British colonial period when many royal families had direct access

to European luxury items. Beyond their luxury and historical significance, these heritage cars are also a reminder of the rich craftsmanship of the time. Many of the cars were customized to meet the exact specifications of the royal families. For example, custom upholstery made from the finest leather, intricate woodwork, and specialized paint finishes were common features of these vehicles.

HERITAGE CARS AND RAJASTHAN'S TOURISM

The heritage cars of Rajasthan also play a significant

from across the globe flock to Rajasthan to experience its royal history, and the opportunity to see or ride in these majestic cars is a major attraction. Special heritage car rallies and exhibitions are organized in Udaipur, Jaipur, and Jodhpur, where enthusiasts and tourists can marvel at these timeless pieces of automotive history.

In recent years, some of the heritage cars have also been restored to their former glory and are available for hire in Rajasthan's luxurious hotels and palaces. Visitors can experience the royal lifestyle by riding in these iconic vehicles, making it a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many.

The heritage cars of Rajasthan represent the grandeur, opulence, and rich history of the region. These cars are not just machines; they are symbols of the royal families' power, taste, and cultural significance. From the Rolls-Royce Phantoms to the Packards and Cadillacs, each car has its own story to tell. These vehicles have become an integral part of Rajasthan's heritage and continue to be cherished by locals and visitors alike.

As Rajasthan moves forward, these heritage cars serve as a reminder of its majestic past, offering a glimpse into the royal lifestyle that once defined the state. Whether displayed in museums, participating in vintage car rallies, or being used for special events, these cars continue to captivate the imagination of people around the world. preserving the legacy of Rajasthan's royal history for generations to come.

MUSEUM OF CHITTORGARH: A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

TDG NETWORK

Chittorgarh, one of Rajasthan's most historically rich cities, is home to numerous monuments, forts, palaces, and temples that narrate the stories of bravery, valor, and sacrifice of its royal past. Among the many attractions in this historic city, the Chittorgarh Museum stands as an important institution that preserves the region's illustrious history and cultural heritage. The museum offers a window into the grand past of Chittorgarh and provides visitors with a chance to witness the treasures, artifacts, and narratives that make up the essence of this fort city.

LOCATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Chittorgarh Museum is located within the premises of the Chittorgarh Fort, one of Rajasthan's largest and most significant forts, which is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The fort, with its vast expanse and numerous structures, tells the tale of Raiasthan's warrior kings and queens. Situated at a strategic location atop a hill, the fort was historically important for military defense and as a center of political power.

The museum itself is nestled near the entrance to the fort, and its central role is to offer a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical significance of Chittorgarh. With exhibits that showcase the legacy of Chittorgarh's rulers, their military conquests, and the daily life of the people during the medieval

period, the museum serves as an educational hub for both locals and tourists. **HISTORY OF THE** MUSEUM

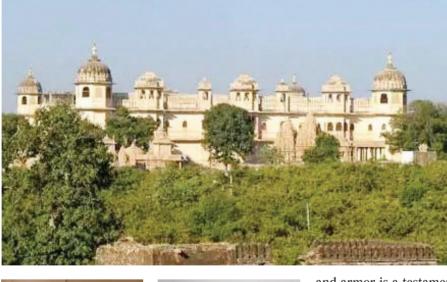
The Chittorgarh Museum was established with the intent of preserving the rich history of the fort and the city, which dates back to the 7th century. The city was a prominent center of power in Rajasthan for centuries, with several Rajput dynasties ruling the region. The museum began as a small collection of artifacts but soon expanded due to the increasing interest in preserving the region's royal legacy. The Chittorgarh Fort, being a symbol of Rajput valour and sacrifice, was the ideal location for the museum, where visitors can view relics from a bygone era.

Over the years, the museum has grown in stature and scope, offering an immersive experience for those interested in understanding the cultural and historical context of Chittorgarh's past. Today, it houses a large collection of ancient sculptures, inscriptions, miniature paintings, arms, armor, and coins, among other artifacts.

COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITS

The Chittorgarh Museum's collection is as diverse as it is fascinating. The exhibits are carefully curated to provide an in-depth insight into various aspects of life in Chittorgarh and the Rajput culture. Some of the key highlights of

the museum include: Sculptures and Stone





Carvings: The museum features an extensive collection of sculptures and stone carvings that highlight the artistic achievements of Chittorgarh's artisans. These sculptures represent Hindu gods and goddesses, animals, and everyday life. The intricately carved statues are made from stone and marble, showcasing the fine craftsmanship of the region's sculptors.

The museum also houses several Ashtadhatu (eight metals) idols, which are sacred in Hindu culture.



These idols were once used in temples, and some of them date back to the 9th and 10th centuries. The carvings and inscriptions on these idols offer a glimpse into the spiritual and artistic traditions of medieval Rajasthan.

Weaponry and Armor: A key feature of the museum is its collection of ancient weapons and armor. Chittorgarh, known for its legendary warriors, was home to a number of battles, and the display of swords, shields, daggers, and armor is a testament to the martial history of the region. The Rajput armor, which includes intricately designed helmets, shields, and weapons, is especially notable. Many of these items were used by the royal family and their soldiers during battles. One of the most significant pieces in the collection is the Khanda sword, a traditional weapon of the Rajputs, which is known for its double-edged blade and broad hilt. Other weapons include maces, spears, and daggers, all of which reflect the martial traditions of the Rajput kings. Coins and Inscriptions: The

museum also features a collection of ancient coins and inscriptions that help trace the history of Chittorgarh and its rulers. The coins, made of gold, silver, and copper, were minted during different periods of Chittorgarh's history, and they bear the names of contain royal edicts, battle records, and details about the administrative structure of the region. The ancient Sanskrit inscriptions, in particular, offer valuable information about the political and social environment during the reign of the Rajputs. **Miniature Paintings:** The museum showcases a collection of miniature paintings, which were an important art form during the reign of the Rajput kings. These paintings depict royal life, battles, and religious themes and are

characterized by their vibrant

colors and intricate details.

The miniature paintings also

depict the legends of Rani

Padmini, the queen of Chit-

torgarh, and her tragic story, which has become a part of Rajasthan's folklore. The artistic style of these paintings is a blend of Mughal and Rajput influences and provides insight into the aesthetic preferences of the royal families. Some of the paintings date back to the 16th and 17th centuries, a period during which Chittorgarh was at its peak.

Rani Padmini's Legacy: The story of Rani Padmini is integral to Chittorgarh's history and is an iconic legend in Rajput culture. The museum dedicates a section to Rani Padmini, whose beauty and bravery are said to have inspired the famous battle against the Sultan of Delhi, Alauddin Khilji. The story of Padmini's self-sacrifice, known as Johar, is one of the most poignant chapters in Rajasthan's history. The museum displays paintings and manuscripts that depict Rani Padmini's life and the events that led to the tragic end of her reign.

Relics of Rajput Kings and **Queens:** The museum also houses personal artifacts that once belonged to the Rajput kings and queens of Chittorgarh. Items such as jewelry, decorative items, and royal attire offer a glimpse into the luxurious lifestyles of the Rajput rulers. The intricate craftsmanship of these items reflects the grandeur of the royal family.

ARCHITECTURE AND

DESIGN The Chittorgarh Museum itself is housed in a building $that \, reflects \, the \, architectural$ style of the Rajput period. The design of the museum incorporates elements of traditional Rajput architecture, such as ornate carvings, arched doorways, and intricate lattice work. The museum is built in close proximity to the Vijay Stambh (Victory Tower) and the Kirti Stambh (Tower of Fame), both of which are iconic landmarks within the Chittorgarh Fort. Visitors can enjoy the panoramic views of the fort and its surroundings from the museum's vantage

points. **EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE**

The museum plays a crucial role in preserving the history and culture of Chittorgarh for future generations. It serves as a source of education for both local residents and tourists who wish to learn about the region's past. The museum also conducts various educational programs and activities for school children and young adults to foster a deeper understanding of Rajasthan's rich heritage.

In addition to serving as a repository of history, the museum is an integral part of Chittorgarh's tourism industry. It attracts visitors from all over the world who are interested in the history of Rajasthan, and it contributes to the cultural and economic development of the

The Chittorgarh Museum is a treasure trove of history, culture, and art. With its vast collection of artifacts, sculptures, weapons, paintings, and royal relics, the museum offers an immersive journey through the glorious past of Chittorgarh. Whether you are a history enthusiast, an art lover, or a traveler exploring the royal legacy of Rajasthan, the Chittorgarh Museum is a must-visit destination that brings the ancient city's vibrant history to life. It not only preserves the memories of the past but also helps in passing down the legacy of the Rajput kings and their valorous contributions to Rajasthan's history.

WORLD THE DAILY GUARDIAN REVIEW THURSDAY | 03 APRIL 2025 NEW DELHI

HEGSETH BACKS TAIWAN, BUT TRUMP'S **APPROACH DECIDES US STANCE**

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth signals US support for Taiwan during his Asia tour, but Trump's transactional foreign policy and unpredictable decisions will ultimately dictate America's commitment to Taiwan.

TDG NETWORK

n Tuesday, China's military launched large-scale joint drills around Taiwan, showcasing an array of ships, aircraft, and even bizarre propaganda videos across the Taiwan Strait. This military show of force was widely interpreted as both a warning and a punitive action against Taiwan's government, which Beijing accuses of engaging in "separatist activity." The provocation came shortly after Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te designated China as a "foreign hostile force" in March, accompanied by 17 new measures aimed at countering espionage and influence operations from Beijing.

These military maneuvers were not only meant to intimidate Taiwan but also to send a calculated message to Washington. Beijing's strategic objective was clear: to test the resilience of U.S. support for Taiwan, especially amid the shifting dynamics of the Trump administration's foreign policy.

The timing of the drills was significant, coinciding with the recent diplomatic tour of U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth across Asia. His visit, which included meetings with key allies such as Japan and the Philippines, underscored America's ongoing commitment to maintaining strategic stability in

the Indo-Pacific. However, China's actions suggested that Beijing was attempting to recalibrate Washington's stance, questioning the reliability of U.S. support for Taiwan's sovereignty.

HEGSETH'S REASSURANCES

While Beijing's military drills aimed to destabilize Taiwan's confidence, Hegseth's remarks during his diplomatic tour offered a measure of reassurance. In Tokyo, he met with Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani and declared that the U.S. was "re-establishing deterrence" in the Indo-Pacific, suggesting that America's commitment to countering China's aggressive posture had not diminished.

Hegseth emphasized that the U.S. was committed to sustaining "robust, ready, and credible deterrence" in the Taiwan Strait. This message was particularly significant given the growing concerns among U.S. allies about China's expanding influence and military capabilities in the region.

In addition to his meetings in Japan, Hegseth visited the Philippines, where he met with President Ferdinand Marcos. Both leaders underscored the importance of standing "shoulder to shoulder" to deter potential conflict, especially amid escalating tensions in the South China Sea. These diplomatic



A Taiwan Air Force Mirage 2000 fighter jet approaches Hsinchu Airbase for landing. File Photo

engagements painted a picture of a U.S. determined to uphold its strategic interests in Asia.

However, analysts caution that while Hegseth's words were strong, they do not necessarily guarantee long-term U.S. support. The Trump administration's foreign policy has been marked by unpredictability, raising questions about the sustainability of these commitments.

THE PENTAGON'S LEAKED MEMO

While Hegseth was in Asia, a leaked internal Pentagon memo surfaced, revealing a shift in U.S. military strategy. The memo reportedly prioritized deterring a potential Chinese annexation of Taiwan, signaling a recalibration of America's defense posture in the Indo-Pacific.

The document stated, "China is the department's sole pacing threat, and denial of a Chinese fait accompli seizure of Taiwan-while simultaneously defending the U.S. homeland—is the department's sole pacing scenario."

This leaked directive suggested that the U.S. was redirecting its military focus away from traditional hotspots like the Middle East and Europe, where Russia continues to wage war on Ukraine. Instead, the Pentagon appeared to be concentrating its efforts on countering China's growing influence in the Asia-Pacific

The memo's language particularly the phrase "sole pacing scenario"—was notable because it underscored the seriousness with which the U.S. viewed the Taiwan

situation. It indicated that Taiwan's security had become a central concern for American defense planners, reflecting the administration's recognition of the high stakes involved.

For Taiwan, this development was both reassuring and concerning. On one hand, it suggested that the U.S. remained committed to protecting Taiwan's sovereignty. On the other hand, it highlighted the growing risks of increased military tensions between China and the U.S., with Taiwan caught in the middle.

TAIWAN'S REACTIONS

Taiwan responded to Hegseth's remarks with a mix of gratitude and cautious optimism. A Taiwanese official acknowledged that the U.S. commitment to bolstering

Taiwan's military deterrence capabilities remained consistent with longstanding policy. The official also noted that Taiwan maintained "frequent and very positive" communications with various levels of the Trump administration, indicating ongoing diplomatic engagement.

Beyond diplomatic statements, there were other signs of U.S. support for Taiwan. A recent visit from the Alaska governor to Taiwan for discussions on gas sales, along with increased U.S. military training for Taiwanese soldiers and expedited deliveries of major weapons orders, demonstrated America's ongoing commitment to Taiwan's defense.

However, some analysts argue that Taiwan's actions reflect underlying concerns about U.S. reliability. Taipei's recent diplomatic efforts, including high-level delegations to Washington, pledges to increase defense spending, and major semiconductor deals, suggest that Taiwan is seeking to diversify its security partnerships. This indicates a growing awareness that America's support, while significant, may not be as steadfast as it once was.

THE TRUMP FACTOR

While Hegseth's comments and the Pentagon's memo provided some reassurance, experts warn that the ultimate arbiter of U.S. policy toward Taiwan is former President Donald Trump. His transactional approach to foreign policy has been a defining feature of his administration, characterized by shifting alliances, unpredictable decisions, and an emphasis on short-term gains over long-term com-

Trump's past actions, including his public questioning of Taiwan's strategic value, accusations of industrial theft, and his abrupt withdrawal of U.S. support for Ukraine, have left many in Taiwan questioning the reliability of America as a partner.

His disdain for multilateral alliances and his tendency to prioritize personal interests over global stability have further eroded confidence in his leadership.

Furthermore, Hegseth's own controversies—such as sharing sensitive military information with a journalist and his disparaging remarks about European allies—have raised questions about his credibility and effectiveness as a defense leader. These issues cast a shadow over the administration's broader strategic objectives, including its commitment to Taiwan's security.

BEIJING'S WATCHFUL

As tensions simmer, Beijing remains watchful, with reports of potential high-level meetings between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping. Ryan Hass from the Brookings Institution emphasized that it will be critical for Trump to deliver a clear and consistent message of resolve when engaging with Xi.

While Hegseth's statements and the leaked Pentagon memo are encouraging, they are ultimately only part of the equation. The true test of U.S. commitment will come down to Trump's actions-whether he can translate rhetoric into tangible support for Taiwan in the face of growing Chinese

The international community will be watching closely. The stakes are high, not just for Taiwan, but for the future of U.S.-China relations and the stability of the Indo-Pacific region. As Beijing evaluates Washington's resolve, the world holds its breath, awaiting the next chapter in this complex and volatile geopolitical saga.

Marine Le Pen's election ban escalates political crisis in France

TDG NETWORK

The decision by a French court to convict far-right leader Marine Le Pen of embezzlement and impose a five-year ban on her candidacy for public office has sent shockwaves through the French political landscape. This ruling, which also includes a four-year prison sentence (with two years suspended and two to be served under home detention), significantly reshapes the political dynamic of a country already grappling with instability.

THE POLITICAL **LANDSCAPE**

France has been in a state of political turbulence for some time. President Emmanuel Macron's administration has faced significant resistance in a hung parliament, struggling to pass key reforms. His weak mandate, coupled with the rising influence of opposition parties, has exacerbated an already precarious situation. With Prime Minister François Bayrou at the helm of a fragile minority government, governing effectively has proven challenging. The ruling against Le Pen adds another layer of complexity to this scenario.

Le Pen's Rassemblement National (RN) has been a dominant force in rightwing politics in France, steadily gaining support in recent elections. Opinion polls prior to the ruling suggested she was the frontrunner for the 2027 presidential elections. Her forced removal from the race introduces a vacuum in the political right that will be difficult to fill and could destabilize the



Présidente

Le Pen waves at the audience after speaking at a rally in Paris on April 17, 2024. File Photo



broader political spectrum.

THE CHARGES AND THE TRIAL

The conviction stems from accusations that Le Pen and other RN members engaged in embezzlement when she was a Member of the European Parliament. The court found that a fraudulent job contract scheme was used to siphon off more than 4 million euros in EU funds to benefit the RN. While Le Pen has denied any wrongdoing and vowed to appeal the decision, the ruling has immediate and significant consequences.

The appeal process in France can take several months, and during this period, political uncertainty will persist. If the conviction is upheld, Le Pen's political career could suffer an irreversible setback. However, if

the ruling is overturned, she could emerge even stronger, claiming vindication and reinforcing her narrative of being a victim of political persecution.

IMPACT ON RASSEM-BLEMENT NATIONAL

With Le Pen sidelined, RN faces the challenge of finding a new presidential candidate. The most likely successor is Jordan Bardella, the party's president and one of Le Pen's closest allies. Bardella has been instrumental in modernizing the party and broadening its appeal beyond its traditional far-right base. However, he lacks Le Pen's charisma and widespread recognition among voters.

The RN will attempt to leverage Le Pen's conviction to galvanize its base, portraying her as the victim of a political conspiracy designed to prevent an outsider from reaching power. This narrative could resonate with many voters who already distrust the political establishment. If Bardella or another RN candidate can effectively channel this outrage, the party could still remain a formidable force in 2027.

LEGAL AND POLITI-CAL PRECEDENTS

Le Pen's supporters are quick to highlight that similar accusations have been levied against other politicians, including Prime Minister Bayrou, who was investigated for misappropriation of funds but ultimately cleared due to insufficient evidence. They argue that the judicial system disproportionately targets opposition figures, reinforcing their claim of an unfair establishment.

This case bears similarities to other high-profile legal battles involving politicians, such as former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who was convicted of corruption. However, unlike Sarkozy, Le Pen remains a viable candidate with a strong support base, making the stakes of her appeal even higher.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNANCE

The ruling further weakens the already precarious position of Bayrou's minority government. The RN holds 142 out of 577 seats in the French National Assembly, and while this is not enough to topple the government outright, it can significantly hinder legislative progress. A more obstructive right-wing opposition could force Bayrou to rely even more heavily on the Socialist Party, further complicating governance and reducing the government's ability to implement economic reforms.

France is currently facing major economic challenges, including a public debt set to reach 120% of GDP by the end of the year. The country also needs to

secure an additional 40 billion euros annually to bolster its military, a crucial requirement given the changing geopolitical landscape in Europe. The ongoing political instability could deter investors, keeping bond yields high and worsening the economic outlook. France's ten-year bonds are already at 3.4%, returning to 2023 levels, largely due to broader

2025. File Photo

THE 2027 PRESIDEN-TIAL ELECTION

economic uncertainty ex-

acerbated by the political

situation.

With Le Pen potentially out of the race, the 2027 election becomes an open contest. If her conviction is upheld, the RN will need to find a candidate capable of maintaining its momentum. Jordan Bardella is the most obvious choice, but his ability to unite the party and appeal to voters beyond RN's core base remains untested.

On the left, no clear frontrunner has emerged. The Socialist Party remains fragmented, while the farleft La France Insoumise has struggled to gain traction beyond its loyal base. President Macron, ineligible for a third term, has yet to groom a successor with his level of appeal and political acumen.

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen leaves the courthouse

on the day of the verdict of her trial alongside 24 other defendants and the RN party itself in Paris, France, March 31,

> If Le Pen's appeal is successful and she is allowed to run, she could enter the race with renewed vigor, portraying herself as a fighter who overcame legal persecution. Such a scenario could boost her electoral chances and lead to an even more polarized election campaign.

THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

Regardless of how Le Pen's legal battle unfolds, the decision has already reshaped French politics. The ruling will likely fuel further distrust in the judiciary and political institutions, par-

supporters. If she is prevented from running and the RN's candidate loses the next president could face legitimacy concerns, with a portion of the electorate believing that the election was unfairly influenced by the courts.

ticularly among Le Pen's

Additionally, the case sets a precedent for legal battles playing a decisive role in French elections. This could open the door for more politically motivated prosecutions in the future, further eroding public trust in the political system.

CONCLUSION: A TENSE ROAD AHEAD

France is entering a period of heightened political and economic uncertainty. The conviction of Marine Le Pen removes a key player from the upcoming presidential race, but it does not eliminate the influence of the far right. If anything, it could embolden RN supporters and deepen the divide between populists and the political establishment.

For Prime Minister Bayrou's government, the ruling presents an additional challenge in an already difficult political landscape. With economic pressures mounting and legislative gridlock becoming more pronounced, navigating the coming years will require careful political maneuvering.

As Le Pen's appeal process unfolds, France will remain in a state of political limbo. Whether she ultimately returns to the race or not, the fallout from this decision will shape French politics for years to come.

FRANCE HOLDS RARE DEFENCE **CABINET MEETING OVER IRAN**

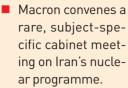
European strategists were asking themselves whether the campaign could be a precursor to a U.S. strike on Iran in the coming months.

AGENCIES

Trench President **Emmanuel Macron** was convening key ministers and experts on Wednesday to discuss Iran, including its nuclear programme, amid growing tensions between Tehran and U.S. President Donald Trump, three diplomatic sources said.

Such a cabinet meeting dedicated to a specific subject is rare and highlights mounting concern among Washington's European allies that the United States and Israel could launch air strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities unless there is a quick negotiated deal on its nuclear programme.

U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has reinforced THE SUMMARY



Growing U.S.-Iran tensions: Trump warned of air strikes and additional tariffs if negotiations stall.

U.S. Defense Sec-

retary Hegseth has boosted Middle East forces amid the bombing of Iranian-

screengrab taken from video.

Military personnel stand guard at a nuclear facility in the Zardanjan area of Isfahan, Iran, April 19, 2024, in this

European allies (France, Britain, Germany) are increasingly worried about a potential U.S./Israeli strike on Iran.

the Middle East with more warplanes, the Pentagon said on Tuesday, amid a U.S.

U.S. military capability in bombing campaign against the Houthis who control much of Yemen and are supported by Iran.

A senior European official said European strategists were asking themselves whether the campaign

U.S. strike on Iran in the coming months. Trump, who has urged

could be a precursor to a

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to engage immediately in negotiations, threatened Iran on Sunday with bombing and secondary tariffs if it did not come to an agreement over its nuclear programme, which Western countries say amounts to weapons development.

The foreign minister of Iran's direct adversary Israel will be in Paris on Thursday. Diplomatic sources said ministers from France, Britain and Germany were hoping to discuss the Iran dossier with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio when they convene in Brussels for a NATO ministerial meeting this week.

US sanctions target Iran's missile programmes

AGENCIES

The United States on Tuesday (local time) sanctioned six entities and two individuals based in Iran, the UAE. and China that have been involved in the procurement of key components on behalf of entities connected to Iran's UAV and ballistic missile pro-

The US State Department said in a statement that "today's action is a part of President Trump's maximum pressure campaign on the Iranian regime to disrupt efforts by the US-sanctioned Iranbased Qods Aviation Industries to procure equipment for Iran's military-industrial complex and UAV program."

"The United States will use all available means to expose and disrupt Iran's growing UAV and missile development programs and weapons proliferation, which destabilize the Middle East and bevond," the statement added.



ment said that they will "continue to act" against the complex schemes Iran uses in third countries to conceal its acquisition and its transfers of sensitive technology.

According to the US State Department, Iran uses this technology and the proceeds from arms sales to bolster its military industrial base to build missiles and UAVs, which are used against fellow countries, as well as exported to Russia, terrorist proxy groups around the Middle East, and to other actors of

The Department of Trea-

sury's action was taken pursuant to Executive Order 13382, which targets proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and their supporters.

On Monday, the US imposed visa restrictions on Chinese officials responsible for limiting the access of US officials to Tibetan areas.

This move is in response to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) long-standing refusal to allow US diplomats, journalists, and international observers into Tibet while Chinese officials enjoy unrestricted access to the United

US Senator Cory Booker makes record for second-longest Senate speech

AGENCIES

In a remarkable display of determination, US Senator Cory Booker has shattered the record for the longest floor speech in modern Senate history. Booker, a Democrat from New Jersey, surpassed the late Senator Strom Thurmond's 1957 record of 24 hours and 18 minutes, CNN reported.

Booker began his speech at 7 pm on Monday (local time) and continued through the night, vowing to keep speaking as long as he was physically able. His marathon speech is a protest against actions taken by President Donald Trump's administration.

The speech has delayed legislative business in the Senate, but it is largely symbolic, as Booker is not attempting to block any specific legislation, as per



US Senator Cory Booker.

Booker's speech comes as Democrats face increasing pressure from their voters to take a tougher stance against Trump. With limited options available to them in Washington, Booker's speech stands out as a high-profile form of protest by a Democratic lawmaker so far in Trump's second term.

During his speech, Booker warned in his remarks that the "country is in crisis" as he railed against a wide range of issues, from castigating Elon Musk's efforts to overhaul the federal government under Trump to warning of potential cuts to key health care programs for millions of Americans.

"I rise with the intention of disrupting the normal business of the United States Senate for as long as I am physically able," Booker said at the outset of his remarks. "I rise tonight because I believe sincerely that our country is in crisis," Booker said.

"In just 71 days, the president of the United States has inflicted so much harm on Americans' safety, financial stability, the core foundations of our democracy," Booker said. "These are not normal times in America. And they should not be treated as such in the United States Senate."

Israel cancels all import duties on American-made goods

AGENCIES

At the directive of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Economy and Industry Minister Nir Barkat, Israel has cancelled all of the customs duties - tariffs - that have been levied until now on products from the US, Israel's largest trading partner.

After the approval of the **Knesset Finance Committee** and the Economy and Industry Minister's signature on the order, the amendment to the order regarding trade levies and protective measure will take effect and customs duties on all imports from the US will be cancelled.



The US is Israel's closest ally and its most significant trading partner. In 2024, the export of goods to the US stood at USD 17.3 billion, while the export of services was estimated at USD 16.7 billion. Israel's government explained that the 1985 free

trade agreement with the

After the approval of the Knesset Finance Committee and the Economy and Industry Minister's signature on the order, the amendment to the order regarding trade levies and protective measure will take effect and customs duties on all imports from the US will be cancelled.

US has led to the fact that the overwhelming majority (approximately 99 per cent) of goods imported from the US are already fully exempt from customs duties. Therefore. the reduction in customs duties will begin on a very limited number of products,

Uyghur deportation puts Thailand-

in the category of imported food and agricultural products from the US.

"The reduction in customs duties will, in effect, expand the US-Israel trade agreement and strengthen bilateral strategic relations," the Prime Minister's Office.

N. Korea denounces US, Japan's pledge to co-produce missiles

AGENCIES

North Korea criticised a recent agreement by Japan and the United States on co-producing air-to-air missiles as aggravating regional security risks and another example of Washington's push to militarize Japan, state media said on Wednesday.

At a time the United States is upgrading its military command in Japan, the two countries' cooperation in munitions production clearly has military and aggressive intentions aimed at countries in the region, KCNA state news agency said

The comments were attributed to an unnamed vice general director of the North's defence ministry and did not

name specific countries. But the official referred to the AIM-120 air-to-air missile system that the United States and Japan have agreed to accelerate co-producing during U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's visit to



speech at the beginning of his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba at the Prime Minister's office in Гокуо, Japan. March 30, 2025. File Photo

Tokyo on Sunday.

Advancing the deployment of such a weapon used by aircraft involved in frequent military drills in the region that already pose a grave security threat adds a "new element of strategic instability to the Asia-Pacific region," the official said.

"Certainly, the centre of gravity of the U.S. hegemony-oriented military security strategy is changing and it is a new warning signal for the Asia-Pacific regional society including the countries in Northeast Asia," the official said.

The agreement comes as "the U.S. has connived at and encouraged Japan's moves for a military giant since last century," the official said. In Tokyo, Hegseth and his Japanese counterpart agreed to accelerate a plan to jointly produce beyond-visual-range air-toair missiles and to consider co-producing other surface-

Myanmar govt, media welcome India's earthquake relief support

AGENCIES

The Government of Myanmar has expressed deep gratitude for India's swift and substantial support in providing relief assistance following the devastating earthquake that struck the country on March 28.

Myanmar's Prime Minister, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, conveyed his appreciation through the Global New Light of Myanmar, stating that Myanmar was "deeply moved" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's support as Indian relief supplies continued to arrive at Yangon International Air-

Quoting from a telephone conversation between the two leaders, the newspaper reported, "The Senior General responded that he was deeply grateful and moved by the expression of the Prime Minister of India's condolences for the country of Myanmar and its people."

The report further added that the Senior General "sincerely appreciates the sympathy and support from the people of India.'

On March 29, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with the Myanmar military junta chief, Min Aung Hlaing, and offered condolences on the loss of lives in the earthquake that struck Myanmar. He expressed India's readiness to stand in solidarity with the people of Myanmar in this difficult

He said that disaster relief material, humanitarian assistance, and search and rescue teams are being expeditiously dispatched to the affected areas as part of Operation Brahma. "Spoke with Senior General H.E. Min Aung Hlaing of Myanmar. Conveyed our deep condolences at the loss of lives in the devastating earthquake.

EU trade talks at risk

The Committee on Economic Development is working alongside the foreign affairs and commerce ministries to assess the impact of the Thai government's deportation of Uvghurs on ongoing free trade negotiations with the European Union (EU), Bangkok Post reported.

On Thursday, the committee met with officials from both ministries. private sector representatives, the Thai Chamber of Commerce (TCC), and the Federation of Thai SMEs to discuss the situation.

Sittiphol Viboonthanakul, a People's Party (PP) MP and the committee's chairperson, stated before the meeting that the deportations could have serious consequences for Thailand's international trade relations, particularly given the EU's strong condemnation of the gov-



ernment's actions, as highlighted in the Bangkok Post report.

He further emphasised that the situation must be carefully examined to determine whether it could delay the signing of the free trade agreement (FTA) with the EU, which is expected to be finalised this year. Additionally, he noted that Thailand's ambitions to join the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) could also be affected.

Viboonthanakul suggested that discussions should

also consider the potential impact of US trade policies, including the possibility of increased tariffs on Thai

exports, BP reported. He stressed that the government must develop a strategy to handle any potential trade conflict and the economic repercussions if the Thailand-EU FTA is not completed as planned. During the meeting, representatives from the TCC maintained that Thailand has consistently adhered to international human rights standards,

Nepal govt appeals public not to participate in any pro-monarchists demonstration

AGENCIES

The Government of Nepal has appealed to the general public not to participate in any of the demonstrations organized by monarchists.

Announcing the decisions of the cabinet meeting on Tuesday, the Minister for Communications and Information Technology, Prithvi Subba Gurung, informed that an appeal has been made not

to participate in the demonstrations of the royalist group.

"The Government of Nepal appeals to the general public not to get involved in such chaotic activities," he said, referring to the violence of 28 March, which claimed the lives of two.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs has been instructed to investigate the truth and facts of the Tinkune incident and take action against the culprits and make arrangements to prevent such incidents from happening in the future," the cabinet decision

Minister Gurung informed about the decision to give the responsibility to the Ministry of Health and Population to arrange for the treatment of those injured in the incident.

"The government has decided to direct the Ministry of Health and Population to make arrangements for free medical treatment for those



injured in the protest that name of supporters of the took place last Friday in the former monarch," the min-

ister said.

The cabinet meeting also decided to investigate the incidents of vandalism that took place during the protests and act against those found guilty.

One of the bloodiest promonarch protests in the Himalayan Nation's history, the March 28 protest called by pro-monarchist forces under the leadership of controversial businessman Durga Prasain, sent a spree of violence across the capital.

The protest organized near the Tribhuvan International Airport turned violent, claiming the lives of two, which included a TV journalist. The Police, at the time to bring the situation under control, fired

60 live rounds. One of the casualties has been identified to have bulletinflicted wounds. Similarly, the Police fired 746 rounds of tear gas in an attempt to disperse the protestors.

During the protest 55 Nepal Police, 22-Armed Police Force (APF) personnel has been recorded to be injured. In addition, 52 general pub-

lic were injured in the violent clash which was followed by arson and vandalism. Nepal has arrested over 100 protestors including top most leaders from the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) for inciting violence in Kathmandu's Tinkune, which resulted in two deaths.

PICTURE PERFECT

INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL OF LOS ANGELES **TO BEGIN ON MAY 6**

TDG NETWORK

he 23rd edition of the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IF-FLA) is set to run from May 6 and May 10, the organisers announced on Wednesday.

The gala will open with Varsha Bharath's directorial debut Bad Girl and close with Lawrence Valin's debut Little Jaffna. It will be held at Landmark Theatres Sunset and the WGA Theatre in Los Angeles.

Part of IFFLA are films including this year's Sundance Grand Jury winner Sabar Bonda (Cactus Pears) directed by debutant Rohan Kanawade, Raam Reddy's The Fable starring Manoj Bajpayee, Deepak Rauniyar's Pooja, Sir, Village



Rockstars 2 by Rima Das, Aranya Sahay's Humans in the Loop, documentary A Fly on the Wall from Nilesh Maniyar and Shonali Bose, and TV series DUI Shaw in its Los Angeles premiere by Bangladeshi filmmaker Nuhash Humayun.

The screening of the show will be followed by a masterclass with Humayun, an IFFLA shorts alum.

Anu Rangachar, IFFLA's Artistic Director, said the 2025 IFFLA line-up celebrates the rich diversity of South Asian cinema with a strong emphasis on femaledriven narratives both in front and behind the cam-

"We are thrilled to present an expanded lineup that not only showcases an exciting mix of talent, ranging from fearless new voices to returning alums and established auteurs, but also sparks vital crucial conversations.

"These films reflect complex and timely themes such as gender identity, migration, sexuality, mental health, climate change, and responsible technology, ensuring a truly thought-provoking and unforgettable festival experience," Anu said in a statement.

The slate includes an eclectic mix of South Asian films from countries like India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the US, the UK, and Canada, along with international co-productions from France, Singapore,

Kartik accidentally hits man with guitar

TDG NETWORK MUMBAI

Kartik Aaryan and South Indian sensation Sreeleela are presently shooting for Anurag Basu's next romantic drama, the third part of Aashiqui, in Gangtok. Two of the recent behind-the-scenes (BTS) videos from the set that popped up online have got fans buzzing.

In a clip, Kartik is holding a guitar lip-syncing to the remixed version of Tu Meri Zindagi Hai from the old Aashiqui. Sreeleela, who also holds a guitar, seems to be a part of the band, while Anurag Basu



is directing the scene, giving cues to the audience.

Another video that went viral features Kartik Aaryan slapping a man with his guitar on stage. The clip left fans curious, with everyone wondering what happened to make this happen.

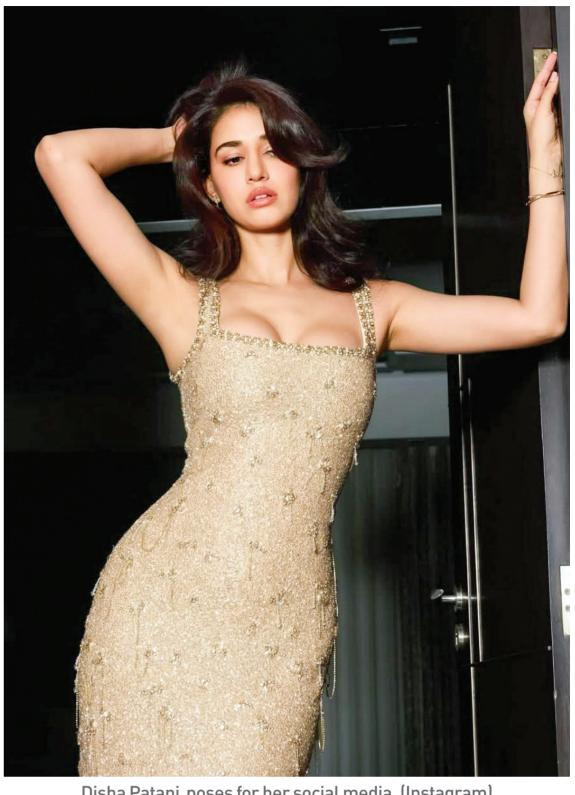
The actors were earlier seen shooting in North Bengal. One of the most shared photos from the shoot is of Kartik on a bike with Sreeleela as a pillion.

> beard, Kartik's left hand is clearly bandaged. Besides the on-set snap-

> With long hair and a thick

shots, viral pictures also featured Kartik Aaryan and Sreeleela being greeted warmly at a hotel in Siliguri. There were other BTS pics too, which featured the cast and crew celebrating some downtime together.

The title of the film is not revealed. Triptii Dimri was initially cast alongside Kartik but was replaced by Sreeleela. While discussing the casting swap at an event, Anurag Basu said, "She is still my best friend, I really like her as an actress. You should ask her too what happened."



Disha Patani poses for her social media. (Instagram)

SRK returns to Mumbai in style, spotted at airport

TDG NETWORK

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan returned to Mumbai in the wee hours on Wednesday.

Shah Rukh Khan, popularly known as King Khan of Bollywood, was spotted at Mumbai International Airport as he returned from his long trip and hopped into a car.

Often seen in a mask and hoodie, Shah Rukh Khan's latest airport look has surprised his fans. In the visuals, the 'Jawan' actor looked handsome in a black shirt and loose blue jeans.

Shah Rukh complimented his outfit with black sunglasses. The actor greeted his fans before he hopped into his car after a long journey. He was accompanied by his manager, Pooja Dadlani.

Shah Rukh recently hosted an IPL 2025 opening ceremony, which signified a beautiful crossover between cricket and Bollywood. With his amazing hosting skills, SRK added "chaar chand" to the cer-



Shah Rukh complimented his outfit with black sunglasses. The actor greeted his fans before he hopped into his car after a long journey. He was accompanied by his manager, Pooja Dadlani.

the event was undoubtedly the moment when SRK called former RCB captain 'GOAT' and shook a leg with him on his blockbuster song 'Jhoome Jo Pathaan'.

himself and chanted 'Kohli Kohli'.

The entire Eden Gardens erupted into loud 'Kohli Kohli' chants. Like the audi-

emony. The highlight of ence, SRK could not resist

"Virat bhai is the only player who has been associated with just one team in the entirety of the IPL. He is the OG. The GOAT of IPL," said Shah Rukh before asking Kohli to come on the

I can't support AI's plagiarisation: Singer Vishal Dadlani

TDG NETWORK

Studio Ghibli trend of creating images in the unique Japanese art form using AI is creating a buzz on the internet. Turning pictures into a unique art style of the popular studio, Studio Ghibli, may have been loved by many, but for singer Vishal Dadlani, it is nothing more than a mere example of "AI Plagirisation."

Indian Idol judge and singer Vishal Dadlani slammed the ongoing Studio Ghibli trend and urged fans not to



Ghibli-style avatar.

Through his Instagram story, Dadlani expressed his unhappiness with the plagiarism of an artist's life work by an Artificial Intelligence tool. The singer also highlighted the environmental hazards due to the generation of Ghibli-style photos.

"Sorry, I'm not sharing any of the Studio Ghibli style images you guys have made of or for me. I just can't bring myself to support Al's plagiarisation of an artist's life's work. Not to mention, the environmental horror that those images are. Please do NOT make any more. Thank

Vishal is best known for composing tracks for Om Shanti Om, Anjaana Anjaani, Dostana, I Hate Luv Storys, Bang Bang!, Sultan, Student of the Year, Befikre

BRAIN PICKING



I think my confidence stems from my honesty. I'm brutally honest

- ALIA BHATT (Indian Actress)

'Kantara Chapter 1' makers shut down delay rumours

TDG NETWORK

The much-awaited prequel to 'Kantara' has been confirmed for release on October 2, 2025. Fans can now relax, as the makers have officially shut down rumors about any delays

Recently, social media was buzzing with speculation about the film's postponement. However, Hombale Films took to its Instagram account on Wednesday to clear the air with a firm statement that read. "???????? Doubts. ???????? delays The legendary saga, **#KantaraChapter1 unfolds** on October 2nd, 2025."

Actor Rishab Shetty has put his heart and soul into



his upcoming film, 'Kantara: Chapter 1'. Earlier, Instagram, he shared a glimpse of his intense training.

In the post, he can be seen deeply focused during his Kalaripayattu session and the dedication on his face said it all. The actor kept the caption simple, adding just a heart-shaped emoticon. Rishab also won the pres-

Scorpions. Max Dias heads

the Eagles, but things take

a turn when his twin sister,

Shirley Dias, falls in love

with Rahul, the younger

brother of Prakash Sharma,

leaded of the Scorpion gang.

According to PTI, Mansoor

initially wanted to offer the

role of Rahul to Aamir but it

tigious National Award for Best Actor for 'Kantara'. Written and directed by Shetty, 'Kantara' became a pan-India hit in 2022.

On receiving a National Award for the film, he told ANI earlier, "This has been possible because of my entire team. I am just the face of the film, it is all because of their hard work.

Aamir turned down 'Josh' for lack of communication: Mansoor Khan

TDG NETWORK NEW DELHI

Mansoor Khan only has a few films under his belt and almost all of them featured his cousin Aamir Khan, but why was the actor not in Mansoor's 2000 romanticaction flick Josh.

Josh tells the story of a town in Goa divided by two rival gangs - the Eagles and



seems that lack of communication led to the assumption that he would play the lead

role of Max. "I had written the script, and in my mind, Shah Rukh was always going to play Max... In my mind, Aamir was the younger brother (of Sharad's character), so the romantic angle was (supposed to be) between Aamir and Aishwarya. I narrated it to Aamir, but I didn't say who is playing who, and he immediately thought he is

'Batman Forever' actor Val Kilmer dies at 65 in Los Angeles

back. The film revolves **TDG NETWORK** around a terrifying super-**NEW DELHI**

> Val Kilmer, who played Bruce Wayne in Batman Forever, died of pneumonia in Los Angeles, US, on Tuesday, April 1. He was 65. His daughter Mercedes confirmed his death to The New York Times. Kilmer was battling throat cancer

cluded comedies like Top Secret! (1984) and Real Genius (1985), as well as a breakout



role as Lt Tom "Iceman Kazansky opposite Tom Cruise in Top Gun (1986). It was followed by the fantasy film, Willow (1988).

Val Kilmer's breakout act a leading man came with his mesmerising, leather-clad portrayal of Jim Morrison in Oliver Stone's The Doors

'Bring Her Back': Makers drop terrifying trailer of the new horror flick

AGENCIES

The horror film 'Bring Her Back' has finally released its first full trailer.

The film is directed by Australian twin filmmakers Danny and Michael Philippou, who previously made the hit horror film 'Talk to Me.' They have called this new movie a 'spiritual successor' to their previous work, according to Deadline.

The one-minute-fortysecond trailer reveals more



two-time Oscar nominee Sally Hawkins as a mother struggling with the loss of her child. The trailer shows someone asking Hawkins how she dealt with the tragedy, to which she replies, "I didn't." However, she claims to have a 'secret'--she has spoken with an angel who can help her bring her child natural ritual that aims to reunite her with her lost child. 'Bring Her Back' is set to release in U.S. theaters on May 30. The film follows a brother and sister who uncover a horrifying ritual in the home of their new foster mother. Alongside Sally Hawkins, the cast includes

Billy Barratt, Sora Wong,

and Jonah Wren Phillips.

The movie was co-written

by Danny Philippou and

Bill Hinzman.

Kilmer's early films in-

for several years.

RENAULT KIGER TURBO MT REVIEW

SYED SHIRAZ SHAH

ollowing convention could be a good or bad practice, but, in the world of automobiles, it's never really the most exciting path. Similarly, while "disrupting the market (or segment)" can again have positive or negative outcomes, it certainly does check the "exciting" box a lot more often than a conventional approach. For example, when Renault launched the Duster in India in 2012, it was not only a market disruptor but a segment creator as well. For the first time in India, the

masses tasted a vehicle that looked

like an SUV but handled like a car. The icing on the cake was its superlative ride quality and overall robustness. In fact, the ride and handling balance of

acceleration runs was 10.2 seconds. The worst stood at 11.1 seconds, but the remaining four were all in 10s, which means that anyone and everyone should be able to post sub-11-second runs most of the time. I must also add that this Kiger has three drive modes—Eco, Normal, and Sport—which essentially alter the throttle response. Just don't drive it in Eco. Watching grass grow would be more entertaining in comparison.

Therefore, I did all the six runs in Normal and Sport, and the best results were obviously achieved in Sport.

But, do not underestimate Normal mode as one of the runs in it, at 10.4 sec-







Duster still remains the benchmark not only in its segment, but also in those comprising vehicles more than double the Duster's price.

The Kiger on the other hand, just like every other subfour meter crossover that came after the Premier Rio and Ford Ecosport, is an example of a conventional approach. It neither created the segment nor does it have the attributes of a disruptor. And that's okay. No manufacturer can launch disruptors or segment creators everyday. That said, I will have to say that subconsciously I was expecting the Kiger to have at least one trait that either reminds me of the

Duster or makes it the best in segment in at least that parameter. Did the Kiger live up to it or not? Well, you'll have to read the rest of the story to find out.

DESIGN & INTERIORS

The Kiger is a good looking car. There are absolutely no two ways about it. However, it does face the issue of looking not too dissimilar to the Kwid from a distance. That shouldn't be a problem if you aren't into buying cars to project an image, but if you are one of those people, you will be reminded of it more often than you would like. But again, it still does manage to turn a few heads, which was pleasantly surprising for me.

Get inside the car and at first the cabin might not feel premium like it does in some of its competitors. But spend some time in it and you realise that the ergonomics are second to none. I must also add that its rivals with better interiors do come at a higher price. Therefore, as far as both perceived and real quality is concerned, the Kiger is on a par with its similarly priced competitors. Also, the space management is terrific. The storage spaces everywhere are thoughtfully AND intelligently carved out. You will appreciate the dual gloveboxes in the dashboard, dual pads (including one for wireless charging) for keeping phones, and also the large center compartment that extends all the way to the end of the center armrest.

The seats all around are comfortable as well, and there is no dearth of space felt anywhere in the cabin. You'd also the love the fact that at the rear the floor is almost completely flat, so your middle passenger would be happy too.

My only complaint is that the thick A-pillar creates a terrifyingly big blind spot for the driver. Therefore, you really have to be more cautious than ever at intersections, roundabouts, etc. Also, I don't know what a few have been on about the Kiger's air-conditioning as I found it to be absolutely satisfactory even in a suddenly hotting up place like Delhi. And while you have a company's website and brochure to read up on all the features, the one I would like to share here would be its keyless entry which is truly keyless. Just keep the remote (it's actually a mini remote and not one of those regular key-fobs you're used to seeing/using) in your pocket and it would unlock the car the moment you go near it and lock it the moment you walk away (some say that it even locks your emotions the moment you go near the wrong person).

The remote has the essential lock, unlock, boot release, and illumination buttons but I never had to use any of them, thanks to the auto locking/unlocking feature. Yes, it worked flawlessly every time.

The boot is decent but the loading lip is quite high prompting you to take your core exercises more seriously than ever, especially if you're approaching 40.

PERFORMANCE

This Kiger, as you can make out from the heading itself, was the turbocharged manual and it didn't disappoint. The best time that I managed in a total of six O-100 km/h

onds, was almost as good

as the best run (10.2s) in Sport. Where Sport mode excels is in overtaking. The throttle response is instant and you are able to get past most forms of traffic without any meticulous planning. It should be a blast in the mountains too. It's also worth mentioning that overtakes are not at all an issue in Normal mode as well, which is

> the mode you'd be driving in the most as it's the default mode the car starts in every time, irrespective of the mode chosen in not

only the previous but same ignition cycle as well.

It's a good highway cruiser too. In top (5th) gear it does 100 km/h at 2,400 rpm, and the NVH levels are quite acceptable at this speed. In fact, the noise does not increase exponentially even thereafter if you increase the speed further. However, I wouldn't recommend doing high speeds in this one as the braking and also the composure under braking from high speeds is not confidence

inspiring. It could be a case of worn brakes on this particular unit, which I didn't get the time to inspect, but that's how it was on this car.

However, I did like the precise shifting gearbox with the gear lever moving into the intended slot without any hesitation whatsover even during the intense acceleration runs, which is where the less robust gearshift mechanisms show their true colours. This car had done close to 10,000 km in the hands of inconsiderate auto journalists (equal to at least 50,000 km clocked by the worst kind of owner), despite which all the linkages and synchro rings were still synchronising perfectly, which is a fine testimonial of Renault's engineering at places where it really matters. I can live with the less premium interiors, but I can't compromise on the mechanicals.

RIDE QUALITY AND HANDLING

The ride quality with just the driver on board is a bit on the stiffer side but not jarringly so, and it becomes a lot better with a full house. However, I would urge Renault India to equip this car with better quality springs and dampers. Again, they aren't bad by any stretch of imagination. It's just that others (read: "Japs and Koreans") have upped their game here and I expect Renault, the company that gave us the Duster, to be ahead here, especially now with fellow frenchmen, Citroen, around.

It's the same case with handling. It's okay, but nothing to write home about. A bit more work in the steering rack, along with the aforementioned suspension upgrade, might just make it the best handling car in its

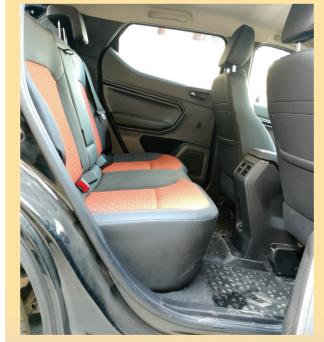
FUEL EFFICIENCY

The fuel efficiency of the Kiger Turbo MT in my test came out to be close to 14 km/l. I reckon 11-12 km/l to be the worst any owner would see in the city, whereas on highways a considerate right foot should be able to extract even 18 km/l. What I must point out is that, unlike in a few other turbo petrols, you would almost never see the fuel efficiency figures dropping down to single digits, which is commendable.

VERDICT

You might have understood by now that the Kiger doesn't have a major "best-in-segment" USP. However, the truth is that most prospective owners nowadays don't always go to a showroom with a narrow focus on just one thing; they want a complete package that doesn't have any major flaws. The Renault Kiger is just that and, at Rs. 9.99 lakh ex-showroom for this top-end RXZ variant, great value too.









How AI and Embedded Finance Are Transforming Digital Lending: The Future of FinTech



THE NEXT ABHISHEKANAND

The future of lending into everyday experiences. isn't just digital—it's deeply embedded and increasingly intelligent. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to reshape industries, it is the convergence with embedded finance that's fueling a quiet revolution in how credit is delivered, accessed, and managed.

I recently had a fascinating conversation with Rajat Deshpande, Co-founder and CEO of FinBox, where I explored how AI-powered embedded finance is not just disrupting—but rebuilding-the foundations of digital lending. So, I thought of sharing industry insights about how AI and embedded finance are transforming digital lending.

EMBEDDED FINANCE: FROM BANKS TO WHERE THE **CUSTOMER IS**

"The traditional lending funnel has flipped," Rajat shared with me. "Banks once expected customers to seek them out, but credit today flows directly where customers already are."

He explained me how embedded credit is addressing the long-standing barriers in financial inclusion. "The most overlooked factor," he said, "is how it solves the last mile problems. When credit becomes available at the exact moment of needlike a trucker needing fuel financing or a merchant restocking inventory—you eliminate both the awareness and access barriers simultaneously."

This shift is fundamental. Embedded finance brings credit to the checkout counter, to the gig work platform, or even directly inside a supplier's app. It's financial services that don't feel like "services" anymore—

AI AS THE BRAIN BEHIND SEAMLESS LENDING

Behind this seamless delivery is a brain that's always learning. That brain is AI.

AI enables platforms to evaluate borrowers using both traditional credit signals and alternative data like transaction patterns, behavioral insights, and real-time interaction. With machine learning models, platforms can dynamically calibrate risk, allowing lenders to approve loans with higher confidence and lower de-

Rajat explained, "We create learning models that continuously adjust to emerging patterns. With quality alternative data from platform interaction, we solve for expanding access while improving quality underwriting.'

In an ecosystem where access and responsibility often compete, AI bridges the gap—making responsible lending scalable.

REAL-WORLD USE CASE: CREDIT WHERE IT MATTERS

One example that Rajat shared brought this all to

A Chennai-based NBFC wanted to venture into MSME lending using QRbased payment platforms. By integrating FinBox's **Equated Daily Installment** (EDI) stack, they launched a credit product that allowed repayments daily rather than monthly—a model that aligned perfectly with the cash flows of small mer-

"Approval rates increased by 60-85% across platcost rose strategically by 30-53%, and NPAs stayed they're seamlessly woven significantly lower," Rajat

told me. "We launched a fully digital journey in under three months and rolled out 30+ policies across three major payment partners in

This is where the magic of $% \left\{ 1\right\} =\left\{ 1\right\}$ embedded lending meets AI. It's not just about offering credit-it's about designing context-aware, responsible lending ecosystems that unlock new revenue models and serve previously unreachable segments.

THE EVOLVING ROLE **OF BANKS: FROM FRONTLINE TO BACKEND**

But does this mean traditional banks are being left

Not quite. "Embedded credit isn't here to replace banks, but to redefine their role in the value chain," Rajat clarified. "Banks are great at capital management and compliance but struggle with acquisition and contextual engagement. Platforms are the opposite—they already have the relationships. Embedded lending brings them together."

AI and embedded finance thus decentralize the customer journey, but centralize trust, compliance, and capital management-the core strengths of traditional financial institutions.

This creates a win-winwin ecosystem: Banks reduce acquisition costs, platforms unlock new monetization avenues, and customers get instant, personalized access to credit.

NAVIGATING THE REGULATORY LANDSCAPE

While the opportunity is massive, the regulatory framework is playing catch-

"There is an asymmetry between innovation and regulatory evolution," Raforms, customer acquisition jat pointed out. "Most regulatory frameworks were designed for bilateral relationships, but embedded fi-

proach compliance proactively, not reactively. The embedded finance space must consider intersecting frameworks—from lending laws to platform data policies-and AI models must operate within transparent, explainable parameters.

IS EMBEDDED CREDIT **MORE RESPONSIBLE** BY DESIGN?

Perhaps the most compelling insight from our conversation was this: Embedded finance might be inherently more responsible than traditional

"When the credit is con-

textual and extended at the time of actual need," Rajat said, "it's less prone to misuse than general-purpose loans. And because plat-

forms have skin in the game—the borrower's success impacts their own revenue—healthy credit practices become a shared priority."

This creates a feedback

nomics align, reinforcing both profitability and responsibility.

Website Development, AR, Web 3.0, Metaverse, and Digital

Marketing. Abhishek is also an Author, Speaker, and

Mentor, helping businesses grow through technology.

THE ROAD AHEAD: AI + EMBEDDED FINANCE = FINTECH

The future of digital lending will be invisible yet intelligent. It won't come just about interest income from a visit to the bank—it it's a way to unlock entirely loop where AI, embedded will arrive at the point of finance, and platform eco-need, precisely calculated, customer segments."

responsibly priced, and instantly available.

The blend of AI and embedded finance is not just transforming the way we lend—it's reshaping who gets credit, how they get it, and how well it's managed.

As Rajat summed it up: "Embedded finance is not new business models and

it cannot replace human

relationships. Building

networks with peers, men-

tors, and industry leaders

remains crucial for career

growth. Human collabora-

tion, creativity, and emo-

tional intelligence will con-

tinue to define successful

workplaces, even as AI be-

comes more prevalent. The

ability to work effectively

with AI while maintaining

strong interpersonal skills

will be a defining trait of the

future workforce.

And the businesses that

ing the next decade of financial innovation.

This article is authored by Abhishek Anand, Founder of Skill Bud Technologies Pvt. Ltd., a company specializing in CGI Ads, Social Media, and other related services including Website Development, AR, Web 3.0, Metaverse, and Digital Marketing. Abhishek is also an Author, Speaker, and Mentor, helping businesses grow through technology.

Recently, Skill Bud Technologies launched a new brand, Grow My Hospital, to help hospitals, doctors, clinics, and the healthcare industry thrive and grow digitally.

nance involves multi-sided This article is authored by Abhishek Anand, Founder of marketplaces. The risk isn't embrace this shift today? just additive—it's multipli-Skill Bud Technologies Pvt. Ltd., a company specializing in They'll be the ones defincative." CGI Ads, Social Media, and other related services including Businesses need to ap-

AI Will Redefine Jobs, Not Replace Them: How Gen Z Can Prepare for the Future of Work

BY ANKIT AGGARWAL

AI has been in the spotlight for years, and its influence continues to grow, transforming industries and redefining work as we know it. It's no longer a distant sci-fi concept or just a buzzword—it's a reality shaping the world at an unprecedented pace. Yet, one persistent misconception remains: AI is here to steal jobs. The truth is more nuanced. AI will not replace humans entirely, but it will redefine job roles and the future of work in profound ways.

UNDERSTANDING

AI'S REAL IMPACT AI's integration into the workforce has sparked

concerns about job displacement, but data suggests a different narrative—one of evolution rather than elimination. A 2023 McKinsey report estimated that up to 375 million workers worldwide may need to transition to new occupations by 2030 due to automation. However, the World Economic Forum (WEF) offers a more optimistic outlook, projecting that while 85 million jobs may be displaced by 2025, AI-driven

industries could generate 97 million new roles in fields like AI development, data analytics, and digital transformation. This shift highlights the importance of adaptation rather than

AI IN ACTION: AIDING. **NOT REPLACING**

AI's integration across industries showcases its potential as a powerful assistant rather than a competitor. In healthcare, AI aids doctors in diagnosing diseases with 95% accuracy—higher than human doctors alone. In marketing, AI streamlines ad campaigns and personalizes consumer experiences. Engineers use AI for complex calculations, allowing them to focus on innovation. AI is an enabler, amplifying human efficiency rather than making professionals redundant.

GENZANDTHE AI ERA: A UNIQUE ADVANTAGE

Gen Z, a generation raised in the digital age, is at a crossroads of both challenge and opportunity in an AI-driven workforce. While over 53% of Singaporean professionals

worry about AI replacing jobs, a contrasting 70% of Gen Z professionals in India believe AI skills will enhance their careers. This difference underscores an essential mindset shift: AI should be seen as a collaborative tool, not a threat.

However, being techsavvy alone won't guarantee success. The Harvard **Business Review found** that 90% of top performers in leadership roles possess high emotional intelligence. This highlights the enduring value of human skills-empathy, strategic thinking, and creativity-none of which AI can replicate. Understanding AI's applications within industries while cultivating adaptability, collaboration, and critical thinking will be key to thriving in the evolving job market.

AI AND ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Bevond traditional employment, AI is opening new doors for entrepreneurship. Gen Z has the opportunity to leverage AI in innovative ways-launching businesses, developing AI-powered products, or offering consulting services. The key is identifying areas where human intuition remains ir-

replaceable while using AI to automate routine tasks. This entrepreneurial approach enables individuals to carve out roles that AI cannot fully assume, fostering economic growth and job creation.

THE HUMAN **CONNECTION IN AN AI-DRIVEN WORLD** While AI excels in automa-

tion and data processing,

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE: **A CONTINUOUS LEARNING APPROACH** Adapting to the AI era re-

quires continuous learning.

According to the OECD, 60% of workers currently lack the digital skills needed for an AI-driven economy. Bridging this gap through online courses, certifications, and industry-specific training is essential. A proactive learning mindset ensures professionals remain relevant and capable of navigating technological advancements.

The most successful professionals recognize AI as a collaborative tool rather than a competitor. By automating repetitive tasks,

AI frees up time for highervalue work, fostering greater productivity, enhanced decision-making, and more engaging roles. Mastering this human-AI partnership is the key to future success.

THE ROAD AHEAD: **WORKING ALONGSIDE**

The future of work is not

about competing with AI it's about coexisting and collaborating with it. For Gen Z, success lies in embracing AI while developing distinct human capabilities. By blending technical expertise with emotional intelligence, adaptability with continuous learning, and innovation with empathy, this generation can lead the way in shaping a workplace where AI complements human potential rather than replaces it.

The challenge is not to outperform AI but to harness its power to unlock new opportunities for growth and innovation. The future belongs to those who recognize AI's potential as an ally and use it to enhance-not replace-human intelli-

The author is the Founder and CEO of Unstop.

IPL: LIVINGSTONE HELPS RCB POST 169/8 AGAINST GT

Livingstone tonked a useful fifty, having precious partnerships with Jitesh Sharma and Tim David.

AGENCIES SUNIL BENGALURU

brilliant fightback by middle-order batters Liam Livingstone, Jitesh Sharma and Tim David helped Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) brave a top-order collapse and reach 169/8 against Gujarat Titans (GT) at the home ground of M Chinnaswammy Stadium on Wednesday. RCB was reduced to 42/4 courtesy of a spell from Mohammed Siraj, who took 3/19 in four overs in what were home conditions for him not so long ago. Livingstone tonked a useful fifty, having precious partnerships with Jitesh Sharma and Tim David. After GT won the toss and opted to bowl



start as a mishit from Virat Kohli landed into the hands of Prasidh Krishna at deep backward square leg, giving Arshad Khan his wicket for seven in six. With nothing but a classic cover drive against his ex-teammate

Virat walked back with RCB at 8/1 in 1.4 overs. Phil Salt failed to adapt to Chinnaswammy conditions, playing too many dot balls and not connecting the way he would have expected. Devdutt Padikkal started first, they got off to a fine Mohammed Siraj to show, with a first ball four but

was sent packing by Siraj as he tried making some room for himself but got bowled. RCB was 13/2 in 2.2overs. Salt and skipper Rajat Patidar tried to rebuild the innings, with them getting boundaries against Arshad and the Englishman sending Siraj's delivery out of the park with a 105 m six. However, Siraj continued to impress, relying on his experience with RCB. He cleaned up Salt for 14 in 12 balls. RCB was left struggling at 35/3 in 4.4 overs. At the end of the powerplay, RCB was 94/5 in 12.4 overs, RCB was 38/3, with Patidar and Sai Kishore got his first (8*) joined by Liam Livingscalp. RCB reached the stone (O *). Ishant Sharma 100-run mark in 14 overs, also trapped skipper Pathanks to a four by Krunal tidar leg before wicket for Pandya. Kishore got his sec-12. The RCB was 42/4 in ond wicket, thanks to a soft dismissal by Krunal, who 6.2 overs. Liam was joined was gone for five. The RCB by Jitesh Sharma and both started to develop a partnerwas 104/6 in 14.2 overs.

ship. RCB reached the 50run mark in 8.1 overs. Jitesh eased off some pressure with two fours and a six against Ishant in the ninth over, which went for 17 runs. RCB was 73/4 after 10 overs, with Jitesh (23 *) and Liam (8 *) unbeaten. The partnership of 52 runs was ended as a shot from Jitesh hit the toe-end of his bat and was caught by Rahul Tewatia, who came running from long-on to dismiss Jitesh for a valiant 33 in 20 balls, with five fours and a six.

from Mumbai to Goa for 2025-26 season TDG NETWORK

Yashasvi Jaiswal to move

Yashasvi Jaiswal has switched states and will move from Mumbai to Goa for the 2025-26 domestic season. It is learned that the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) found it "surprising" when Jaiswal wrote to them about the transfer but issued a noobjection certificate (NOC) immediately.

Goa Cricket Association (GCA) secretary Shambu Desai confirmed to ES-PNcricinfo that it was GCA which approached the India opener, who is counted among the best players in both international cricket as well as IPL where he plays for Rajasthan Royals.

"We are developing a good squad for Goa and want to get the best talent available and hence we approached him (Jaiswal)



recently," Desai said.

Jaiswal, 23, has represented Mumbai since his Under-19 days and is one of the most sought-after players from the younger crop. He made his firstclass debut for Mumbai in 2019 and has since played ten first-class games for them, scoring 863 runs at an impressive average of 53.93, which includes four centuries, two fifties and a highest score of 181 against Uttar Pradesh in 2022.

In the 2021-22 season, he

had smashed hundreds in three successive innings in Mumbai's run to the final, where they lost to Madhya Pradesh. He has also scored 1296 runs across 25 List A games for Mumbai at an average of 58.90, along with 648 runs in 28 T2Os at a strike rate of 136.42.

Jaiswal last played for Mumbai against Jammu and Kashmir in the 2024-25 Ranji Trophy season where he managed scores of 4 and 26.

BCCI announces home season fixtures for men's team

AGENCIES

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the 2025 home season fixtures for the Indian men's team, which will see West Indies and South Africa touring India for some exciting cricket action, kickstarting from October 2 onwards. Guwahati will also get to host its first-ever Test match.

The home season will kickstart on October 2 with the first Test of the twomatch series against West Indies at Ahmedabad. The second Test will take place in Kolkata on October 10. This will be followed by an all-format series against with the first Test at New



Delhi from November 14 onwards.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is pleased to announce the schedule for Team India (Senior Men) international home season for 2025. The upcoming season promises thrilling encounters as India faces the West Indies South Africa, kickstarting and South Africa across maiden Test match. The se-Test matches, One-Day In-

ternationals (ODIs), and Twenty20 Internationals (T2OIs)," said a statement from BCCI.

Following the West Indies series, India will host South Africa for a gripping contest across all three formats. The Test series against South Africa will be historic as Guwahati is set to host its ries will begin in New Delhi

on November 14, with Guwahati hosting the second Test from November 22 onwards

India and South Africa will then battle it out in a three-match ODI series and a five-match T20I series in December, with the final taking place in Ahmedabad. The ODIs will kickstart from November 30 onwards at Ranchi, followed by the second and third ODIs at Raipur and Vizakhapatnam on December 3 and 6, respectively.

The T20Is will kickstart from December 9 onwards at Cuttack, with subsequent matches taking place at New Chandigarh (December 11), Dharamsala (December 14), Lucknow (December 17) and Ahmedabad (December 19).

Jadumani storms into semis at World **Boxing Cup**

NEW DELHI

A resilient display under pressure allowed national champion Jadumani Singh Mandengbam overcome the formidable Ellis Trowbridge of Great Britain to reach the semifinals of the 50kg category at the World Boxing Cup Brazil 2025 on Tuesday.

Trowbridge, the 2024 World Boxing Cup Finals silver medallist, began the bout in his usual aggressive style but the Indian was prepared to absorb the pressure and find ways to land his punches, earning a 3:2 split decision in his favour.

He will now face former



Asian U-22 champion Asilbek Jalilov for a place in the final, as per the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) press release.

However, India's challenge in the 75kg, 85kg and 90+kg categories came to an end after all the three boxers went down fighting in their respective bouts. Nikhil Dubey lost the 75kg bout 0:5 against local favourite Kaue Belini while Jugnoo was at the wrong end of the 1:4 split decision against France's Abdoulaye Traore in 85kg. Narender came close to

beating Kazakhastan's Daniyal Saparbay, even getting a 30-27 verdict from one one judge but lost the 90+kg bout on a

He will now face former Asian U-22 champion Asilbek Jalilov for a place in the final, as per the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) press release.

3:2 split decision.

On Wednesday, Manish Rathore (55kg) will take on Paris Olympian Yusulf Chothia of Australia, Hitesh (70kg) will meet Gabriele Guidi Rontani of Italy while Abhinash Jamwal (65kg) has to overcome the challenge of Denis Bril of Germany.

FC Barcelona vs Real Madrid set for LSG spinner Digvesh fined for violating IPL Code of Conduct epic faceoff in Mumbai on Apr 6

TDG NETWORK MUMBAI

The entire squads for the highly anticipated 'Legends Faceoff' fixture between FC Barcelona Legends and Real Madrid Legends are announced, as per The Sports Front press release.

This clash, scheduled for April 6 at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai, will bring back some of football's most iconic rivalries in front of an energized crowd. Carles Puyol will lead the Barcelona Legends, while Luis Figo has been announced as the captain of the Real Madrid



The 'Legends Faceoff' is a pioneering force in the global sports market, dedicated to developing unique athletic intellectual prop-

erties (IPs), organizing world-class events, and providing top-tier sports activation and talent management services, the statement added.

TDG NETWORK

Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) spinner Digvesh Singh Rathi has been fined 25 per cent of his match-fee due to a violation of the Indian Premier League (IPL) Code of Conduct during the clash against Punjab Kings (PBKS) at Lucknow on Tuesday.

During the Tuesday's clash against PBKS, Rathi dismissed PBKS batter Priyansh Arya, who is also his teammate in Delhi's cricket team while playing domestic cricket. After dismissing the left-hander for a poor score. Rathi ran towards Priyansh and started doing a gesture as if he was noting down his name somewhere. Priyansh though, did not respond to this celebration at all.

A press release from IPL stated, "Digvesh Singh, Bowler, Lucknow Super Giants has been fined 25 per cent of his match fees and has also accumulated One Demerit Point for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during his team's match against Punjab Kings at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpavee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow on Tues-

Digvesh Singh admitted to the Level 1 offence under Article 2.5 and accepted the Match Referee's sanction.

For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding.



The 25-year-old Digvesh has made a name for himself during the ongoing season, taking five wickets in three matches at an average of 20.20 and an economy rate of 8.41, with best figures of

Being put to bat first, LSG was reeling at 35/3, but fighting knocks from Nicholas Pooran (44 in 30 balls, with five fours and three sixes) and Ayush Badoni (41 in 33 balls, with a four and three sixes) and a fiery cameo by Abdul Samad (27 in 12 balls, with two fours and two sixes) gave LSG something to fight for.

Arshdeep was the top bowler with three wickets and figures of 3/43. Marco Jansen, Lockie Ferguson, Glenn Maxwell and Yuzi Chahal were also among the wickets as except for a half-century stand between Pooran and Badoni for the fourth wicket, nothing really got going for LSG as

they struggled to form long partnerships.

During the run-chase, PBKS did lose Priyansh Arya (8) early. But powerpacked knocks from Prabhsimran Singh (69 in 34 balls, with nine fours and two sixes), skipper Shreyas Iyer (52* in 30 balls, with three fours and four sixes) and Nehal Wadhera (43* in 25 balls, with three fours and four sixes) took PBKS to a eight-wicket win with 22 balls left.

Digvesh's spell of 2/30 in four overs was not enough. PBKS are at the second spot in the points table and made it two wins in two, while LSG have slipped to sixth spot with a win and two losses.

NZ clinch series against Pakistan, eye whitewash in final ODI

TDG NETWORK MUMBAI

New Zealand secured the series against Pakistan with an emphatic 84-run victory in Hamilton on Wednesday. The Kiwis will now head to Mount Maunganui for the final ODI on Saturday, aiming for a clean sweep.

The hero of the second innings for them was Sears, who delivered a stunning performance, claiming a fivewicket haul in just his third ODI. After going wicketless in his first two games, Sears emerged as the standout bowler, leading New Zealand to victory with figures



Chasing a target of 293, Pakistan suffered an early collapse. Will O'Rourke

struck first, dismissing Abdullah Shafique for just a single. Soon after, Babar Azam followed, falling to Jacob Duffy for 1. Imam-ul-Haq also perished to Duffy, leaving Pakistan reeling at 9/3 in just 5.3 overs.

Things only got worse as Salman Agha (9) departed, making it 31/4 in 11.1 overs. Captain Mohammad Rizwan failed to anchor the innings,

managing 5 runs off 27 deliveries before being dismissed. Tayyab Tahir (13) fell to Nathan Smith, while Mohammad Wasim (1) became Sears' victim. Akif Javed was later removed by Duffy, giving the pacer his third wicket.

Faheem Ashraf and Naseem Shah provided some resistance, stitching together a 60-run partnership. Ashraf played a counter-attacking knock of 73 off 80 balls. while Naseem Shah contributed a fighting 51 off 44. However, it wasn't enough to rescue Pakistan from the damage inflicted by New Zealand's bowlers

Sears led the charge with 5/59, while Duffy claimed 3/35. Will O'Rourke and Nathan Smith picked up a wicket each as Pakistan were bundled out, handing New Zealand a commanding win. Earlier, New Zealand put up a strong batting performance, finishing with 292/8. Openers Rhys Mariu (18) and Nick Kelly (31) provided an aggressive start before Kelly fell with the score at 54/1 in 6.2 overs.

The Kiwis reached 100 in 15.3 overs but lost Darvl Mitchell (18) in the same over. Henry Nicholls (22) followed soon after, making it 102/4 in 16.5 overs

Captain Michael Bracewell (17) was dismissed by Mohammad Wasim, leaving New Zealand in a tricky position at 132/5. However, Muhammad Abbas and Mitchell Hay steadied the innings with a crucial 77-run

partnership.

TDG NETWORK NEW DELHI

Indian golfer Arjun Bhati, who was recently honoured with the National Youth Award, expressed his gratitude and reflected on his journey in the sport.

The young golfer, who has been playing for over a decade, considers this recognition a significant milestone in his career, and is now aiming for Olympic gold.

"I'm very grateful for this award, and it is a very big thing for my family and me. My efforts have borne fruit," Bhati said.

"I was nine years old when



Arjun Bhati aims for Olympic glory

I played golf for the first time in my school. I've been playing for the past 11 years now, and the journey has been very nice. I've had a lot of supporters in my journey, and I love this game," he

Bhati has long admired legendary golfer Tiger Woods, drawing inspiration from his career. However, when it comes to Indian sports icons, Virat Kohli holds a special place in his heart. "Tiger Woods has been

my inspiration for a very long time," Bhati said. "I personally love Virat Kohli. I love his dedication, fitness levels, physique, and mindset towards his game. He is very inspiring for all the youngsters in the country. He's a very sweet and genuine person, and his support means a lot to me," he added. Bhati also praised Kohli's

contribution to young athletes through the Virat Kohli Foundation.