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LG FLAGS OFF FIRST BATCH OF AMARNATH YATRA FROM JAMMU AMID MULTI-TIER SECURITY



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UK PM FACES LABOUR REBELLION OVER WELFARE CUTS, NEEDS CHANGE



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JAISSWAL MISSES OUT ON HUNDRED AS INDIA REACH 182/3 AT TEA IN 2ND TEST

BJP announces new chiefs in seven states, two UTs

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has announced the appointment of new state presidents in seven states and two Union territories, as part of the ongoing second phase of its organisational revamp.

The saffron party has appointed new presidents in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and

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NEW LEADERS	
Madhya Pradesh	Hemant Khandelwal
Maharashtra	Ravindra Chavan
Telangana	N. Ramchander Rao
Andhra Pradesh	PVN Madhav
Uttarakhand	Mahendra Bhatt
Himachal Pradesh	Rajeev Bindal
Puducherry	VP Ramalingam
Mizoram	Beichhua
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Anil Tiwari

Centre dismisses link between Covid vaccine and heart-related deaths

MANOHAR KESARI
NEW DELHI

In the wake of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah linking heart-related deaths in Hassan district to Covid vaccine, the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday said extensive studies by ICMR and AIIMS have conclusively established no linkages between coronavirus vaccines

and sudden deaths

In the last few days, 20 people have died of cardiac arrest in Hassan, Karnataka, after which the state government state Chief Minister Siddaramaiah constituted a high-level investigation committee.

Meanwhile, the Union Health Ministry has clarified that there is no direct relation between Covid 19 vaccines and sudden deaths

in adults.

Health Ministry officials noted that only scientific facts should be talked about.

According to a study by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Covid-19 vaccines in India are safe and effective. Sudden heart-related deaths can be caused by several

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Dalai Lama says Trust will identify successor, China rejects plan

AGENCIES
DHARAMSHALA/BEIJING

Ahead of his 90th birthday, Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama on Wednesday affirmed that the sacred institution of the Dalai Lama will continue and only the Gaden Phodrang Trust will have the authority to recognise his future "reincarnation", declaring no one else can "interfere" in his succession plan.

The statement by the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso that ended speculation on whether he will have a successor or not after his death is set to escalate tensions with China. The Gaden Phodrang Trust, a non-profit organisation, was founded by the Office of Dalai Lama in 2015.

China rejected the Nobel Peace laureate's succession plan, insisting that any future heir must receive its



seal of approval, adding a new chapter to Tibetan Buddhism's decades-long struggle with the Chinese ruling Communist Party.

The statement made by the 14th Dalai Lama, who is also called Lhama Thondup, on May 21, 2025, was released by his office on Wednesday, four days ahead of his birthday on Sunday. A 5.57-minute video of his speech in Tibetan was also released.

"I am affirming that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue and I hereby

reiterate that the Gaden Phodrang Trust has the sole authority to recognise the future reincarnation. No one else has any such authority to interfere in this matter," the statement said.

Earlier, the spiritual head of Tibetan Buddhism, had maintained that Tibet's most sacred tradition could be wound up, or his successor could be a woman or someone born outside China.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, the second-high priest of Tibetan Buddhism, has to go through the centuries-old tradition of the 'Golden Urn' law procedure started by the 18th century Qing dynasty.

"The Dalai Lama's reincarnation must follow the principles of domestic rec-

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I.N.D.I.A BLOC DISMAYED AFTER MEETING ECI OVER VOTER LIST

“ECI seemed to be disinclined to accept our submission”: Singhvi of Cong
“We saw lack of concern from the Election Commission”: Manoj Jha of RJD

ANAND SINGH
NEW DELHI

Leaders of 11 I.N.D.I.A bloc parties met the Election Commission (EC) over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter rolls in Bihar and raised their concerns, and alleged that over two crore voters of the state may be disenfranchised by this exercise being done just ahead of assembly elections later this year.

Leaders from 11 parties, including the Congress, RJD, CPI(M), CPI, CPI(ML) Liberation, NCP-SP and Samajwadi Party met Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and other Election Commissioners, objecting to the special scrutiny being conducted just a few months ahead of the assembly elections in Bihar.



Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi, flanked by other I.N.D.I.A bloc leaders, addresses a press briefing after the meeting with Election Commission of India, in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Briefing the media after the almost three-hour marathon meeting, Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi said: "A minimum figure of two crore persons may be disenfranchised in this exercise as many, especially,

the SCs/STs, migratory and impoverished among the nearly eight crore voters in Bihar, may not be in a position to present their and their parents' birth certificates to the poll authorities in such a short period of time."

Singhvi claimed that they would also not be able to challenge the removal of their names from the electoral rolls as polls would begin by then and courts do not hear challenges when elections are underway.

"We asked the EC that the last revision was in 2003 and for 22 years after 4-5 elections have happened, were all those elections faulty or imperfect or unreliable," Singhvi said, adding that the SIR was held one year before general elections and 2 years before assembly elections.

Singhvi also mentioned that in a maximum period of one or two months the EC is holding an electoral revision exercise of the second most populated state in India - Bihar, which has roughly under eight crore voters.

"This disenfranchisement, disempowerment is the worst attack on the basic structure of the Constitution. We gave universal adult suffrage, when so-called advanced countries like the USA and UK got it only in

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Siddaramaiah rules out vacating chief minister post



Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and state Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar address the media after state Cabinet meeting, in Chikkaballapur on Wednesday. ANI

AGENCIES
CHIKKABALLAPURA

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday asserted that he will be in office for a full five-year term.

He said that the Congress party was united and the party's government will be in power "solid as a rock"

for five years.

"Yes, I will be. Why do you have the doubts?" Siddaramaiah said in response to a question by reporters whether he will be the CM for five years.

There has been speculation within political circles, especially within the ruling Congress, for some

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Peak-hour ride on Ola, Uber to now cost more

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The road transport ministry has allowed cab aggregators such as Uber, Ola and Rapido to charge up to two times the base fare during peak hours, as against 1.5 times earlier, while for non-peak hours the fare has to be a minimum of 50 per cent of the base fare.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in its 'Motor Vehicles Aggregator Guidelines 2025' said "the aggregator shall be permitted to charge a

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Infosys techie films woman on mobile at office washroom

BELLIE THOMAS
BENGALURU

In a shocking incident, an Infosys techie was arrested for allegedly filming a woman colleague while she was using the washroom at the office on Wednesday.

The Electronic City police have arrested the accused following a complaint lodged by the woman employee. The accused has been identified as Swapnil Nagesh Mali (in pic), a Senior Associate Consultant in the Helix Department at the Infosys.

The victim, a 35-year-old married software profes-



sional, works as a Technical Test Lead at Infosys. She works from the office for about 10 days a month and otherwise works from home.

According to the FIR, the incident occurred on June 30 around 11 a.m. when the woman went to the ladies'

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Lawyer sips beer during virtual hearing, HC takes suo motu action

SAMBHAV SHARMA
NEW DELHI

The Gujarat High Court has initiated suo motu contempt proceedings against senior advocate Bhaskar Tanna after a video surfaced showing him sipping what appeared like beer during a virtual hearing.

Taking serious note of the act, the bench of Justices AS Supehia and RT Vachhani termed the conduct as "outrageous" and "disrespectful".

The video, dated June 26, captured Tanna purportedly sipping beer while appearing before Justice Sandeep Bhatt during a virtual court session.

A formal notice has also been issued to Bhaskar Tanna barring him from appearing virtually.

Talking to ITV Network, former additional solicitor

general of India and senior advocate Aman Lekhi stressed the need to maintain the dignity and decorum of courtrooms.

"Spirited arguments, not

"Spirited arguments, not spirits," says Aman Lekhi while disapproving the act

spirits, are part of the judicial process, and the only fermentation permitted is that of the mind," he said.

Lekhi said that how lawyers conduct themselves in and around court premises reflects the moral fibre and integrity of justice itself.

"The only affairs law tolerates are legal affairs—inimacy with intoxicants not included," he said.

Microsoft announces another mass layoff

AGENCIES
REDMOND (US)

Microsoft is firing thousands of workers, its second mass layoff in months. The tech giant began sending out layoff notices Wednesday.

The company declined to say how many people would be laid off but said that it will comprise less than 4% of the workforce it had a year ago.

Microsoft said the cuts will affect multiple teams around the world, including its sales division and its Xbox video game business.

"We continue to implement organizational changes necessary to best position the company and teams for success in a dynamic marketplace," it said in a statement.

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PM Modi receives a warm welcome from Ghana President John Mahama on his arrival at Ghana, for his first-ever bilateral visit. ANI

Bones recovered from poachers identified as those of tigers

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

The investigation into bones recovered from recently detained poachers confirmed that the bones were of tigers. The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department has shared this information with the Rajasthan Forest Department and DNA testing is under way to determine if the hunted big cats belonged to Ranthambore.

This development is particularly concerning considering that 25 tigers have gone missing in recent years. While 10 have been traced, 15 remain unaccounted for. Rajasthan Forest Department records show five



DNA testing is under way to determine if the hunted big cats belonged to Ranthambore

Ranthambore tigers -- T79, T131, T138, T139, and T2401 -- went missing under suspicious circumstances between June 2022 and May 2024. The missing tigers include two females and three males aged 3-12 years.

Forest officials said if the DNA tests confirm that the seized remains are of Ranthambore's missing tigers, it will not only highlight the vulnerability of big cats straying beyond protected zones but also the urgent need for tighter interstate anti-poaching coordination.

Officials have not ruled out the possibility that some of the missing tigers may have been killed by poachers and their remains traf-

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J&K LG FLAGS OFF FIRST BATCH OF AMARNATH YATRA FROM JAMMU AMID MULTI-TIER SECURITY

The 38-day pilgrimage to the Amarnath shrine will be via the Pahalgam and Baltal routes, ending August 9.

AJAY JANDYAL
JAMMU

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday flagged off the first batch of over 5,880 Amarnath Yatra pilgrims from the Bhagwati Nagar base camp in Jammu, marking the formal start of this year's pilgrimage under a multi-tier security arrangement.

The 38-day yatra to the 3,880-metre-high cave shrine will commence on July 3 via two routes — the traditional 48-km Nunwan-Pahalgam route in Anantnag district and the steeper 14-km Baltal route in Ganderbal district.

Officials said the first convoy comprised 5,892 pilgrims, including 1,115 women, 31 children, and 16 transgenders, who departed from Jammu around 4:30 a.m. for the base camps in the Kashmir valley. The pilgrimage will conclude



Anantnag: Amarnath bound pilgrims arrive at the Nunwan Base Camp, at Pahalgam in Anantnag, J&K. Agencies

on August 9. Over 3.31 lakh devotees have already registered for this year's yatra, while on-the-spot registration in Jammu is also underway.

Before flagging off the convoy, the Lieutenant Governor offered prayers for a safe and smooth yatra. "Wishing all spiritual seekers a safe and comfortable journey to the holy abode of Lord Shiva. Prayed to Baba Amarnath for

peace and blessings to all," Sinha said.

He also highlighted the enthusiasm among the devotees: "It feels like there is a big festival in Jammu city. Devotees of Bholenath have defied all terror threats and are coming in large numbers."

On the security front, Sinha noted that the entire yatra is being monitored 24x7 from the Integrated Command and

Control Centre at Raj Bhawan and the Police Control Room, supported by an RFID-based tracking system. "A 100-bed hospital has been constructed by ONGC at both Chandanwari and Baltal base camps," he added.

Other improvements include the widening of the pilgrimage routes from six feet to twelve feet and the addition of new facilities such as the board office and Yatri Niwas in Srinagar. "We will also be inaugurating a similar facility in Baltal on July 4," the LG said. Despite heavy rainfall, pilgrims enthusiastically chanted "Bum Bum Bhole" and "Har Har Mahadev" as they departed in a convoy, transforming Jammu into a hub of religious fervour.

Undeterred by the April 22 terror attack in Pahalgam that killed 26 people, devotees expressed strong determination

to continue the pilgrimage. "No matter how many attacks happen, devotees will not be deterred," said Sarwanand Patel, a pilgrim from Gujarat.

Sunita, a teenage pilgrim from Uttar Pradesh, said, "We are happy to be part of the first batch. We are not scared because security is adequate and the arrangements are very good." Ramesh Chander, who has undertaken the yatra for nine consecutive years, praised the efforts of the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board and the administration. "The Army and security forces are here to guard the yatra. There is nothing to fear," he said.

To ensure safety, DIG of the Doda-Kishtwar-Ramban range, Shridhar Patil, announced a ban on drones and flying objects along the yatra route without prior permission, warning of strict action against violators.

Insult of Ambedkar by Lalu no small error: Rajnath

TDG NETWORK
PATNA

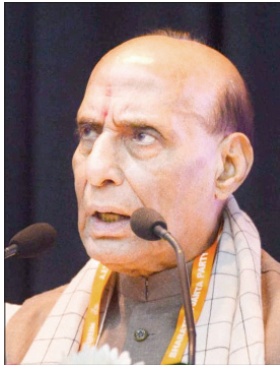
Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday asserted that the "insult" of Babasaheb Ambedkar by RJD president Lalu Prasad was "no small error" and showed a "mindset of disrespect for Dalits".

The former BJP president made the remark at the party's state executive meeting here, which was held barely a couple of months ahead of the assembly polls in Bihar.

"Lalu Prasad had a portrait of Babasaheb Ambedkar placed at his feet. This was no small error but reflective of a mindset of disrespect for Dalits... Bihar has been cheated by people who hide their feudal attitude under the cloak of socialism," Singh said.

The former Bihar chief minister has been drawing flak over a video clip in which a portrait of Ambedkar was seen close to his feet when people were visiting his residence to greet him on his 78th birthday.

At a rally in Siwan district



Thakur "but using abusive language against the OBC icon while in private".

"I am not making this up. All this has been mentioned in detail by veteran journalist Sankarshan Thakur in his book 'Brothers Bihari'," claimed Singh.

"While Lalu Prasad was in power, he never bothered to do anything in the memory of Karpoori Thakur. It was Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who conferred Bharat Ratna on this great son of Bihar," the Union minister pointed out.

The BJP leader said, "We keep talking about the past so that the younger generation does not get fooled by the glib talk of the RJD-Congress combine. They need to be told how the lantern (RJD's poll symbol) had set homes on fire instead of dispelling darkness."

Earlier, before the meeting had started, Bihar BJP president Dilip Jaiswal had told reporters that a resolution condemning the RJD supremo will be passed at the state executive.

Singh, who as the chief guest delivered a speech that was more than an hour long, also charged Prasad with "duplicity" by claiming to be a disciple of Karpoori

last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tore into the RJD supremo, asserting he will "never be forgiven by the people of Bihar and the country", even as the party insisted that the portrait was being held by a supporter and blamed "camera angle" for the confusion.

He also claimed that Bihar has made "unprecedented success" in the last couple of decades during which the state was ruled by NDA, led by Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar.

Himachal Monsoon havoc: 51 dead, Rs 300 cr lost, Mandi worst-hit

TDG NETWORK
SHIMLA

At least 51 people have died in Himachal Pradesh since June 20, 2025, of which 21 fatalities were due to road accidents, while the remaining 30 were caused by monsoon-related incidents such as floods, landslides, and cloudbursts, according to Himachal Pradesh Disaster Management Authority.

DC Rana, Special Secretary of the Himachal Pradesh Revenue Department and Disaster Management, addressed the media in Shimla on Wednesday, providing detailed figures on the ongoing monsoon crisis in the state.

"The monsoon entered Himachal Pradesh on June 19, and since then, continuous rainfall has been recorded. Heavy rainfall on June 29 and 30 caused widespread damage," said Rana.

"The death toll due to rain-related incidents has reached

‘Step-motherly treatment’: Kharge slams Centre over pending disaster relief funds

New Delhi : Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday slammed the central government on the pending relief amount for Himachal Pradesh required during landslides and rainfall.

In a post on social media X, Kharge wrote that the Himachal government had demanded a total relief package of Rs 9,000 crore.

He further wrote that in 2023, the Congress had announced a total of Rs 4,500 crore to the state, while the Modi government

only provided Rs 433 crore to the state, and called it a "stepmotherly" treatment. "Even before this year's rainfall, the Himachal government had demanded a total relief package of Rs 9000 crore from the centre. In the 2023 tragedy, the Congress state government had released special assistance of Rs 4500 crore, whereas the Modi government at the centre provided only Rs 433 crore to the state," he said

"Now, the Modi government has recently an-

nounced Rs 2000 crore for 2023 in a hurry, and the BJP is busy taking credit for it, but the relief amount is still pending. This is the stepmotherly treatment of the BJP towards Himachal!! It is hoped that this time, instead of taking credit, the BJP will take action to provide help for the losses," the post read.

Kharge, in his post, demanded that the Central government release the pending disaster relief funds for Himachal Pradesh.

nearly 30 so far. As per current data, 34 people are reported missing, with the worst-hit area being Mandi district, where 10 deaths occurred over just two days," he said. Rana stressed that the

exact number of casualties and damages will become clear once communication networks are fully restored in remote regions. "Many extreme weather events occurred across the state, in-

cluding multiple cloudbursts and flash floods," he noted. The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) have been deployed across multiple districts.

2 Kanwariyas dead, 13 hurt in Tehri crash

TDG NETWORK
TEHRI GARHWAL

Two Kanwariyas were killed and 13 others were left injured after a truck carrying 16 pilgrims overturned near Jajal in Uttarakhand's Tehri Garhwal district on Wednesday morning, said officials.

Five of the injured have been admitted to AIIMS Rishikesh with serious injuries, and the remaining are being treated in the Narendra Nagar sub-district hospital.

"A truck accident took place near Jajal at around 9.30 AM... A total of 16 people were in the truck. 8 have been sent to the Narendra Nagar sub-district hospital... 5 with serious injuries have been admitted to AIIMS. Two pilgrims have died. One is completely stable," Tehri Garhwal CMO Dr Shyam Vijay said.

"Our medical teams reached the spot immediately.

HAU protest ends after 21 days, Govt to meet students' 7 demands

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

The 21-day-long student protest at Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCS HAU) Hisar of Haryana concluded late on July 1 after the Haryana government has reportedly agreed in writing to fulfill seven out of the eight key demands raised by the agitating students.

Among the major decisions, the government suspended the university's chief security officer and announced a judicial inquiry into the alleged assault on students during a June 10 protest near the Vice-Chancellor's residence.

After repeated rounds of talks until Tuesday evening, the government relented and submitted a written agreement. It promised to retain the existing stipend structure for the 2025-26 academic



session, suspend Chief Security Officer Sukhbir Singh, and initiate a probe by a high-level judicial committee into the June 10 incident and the VC's role. Other demands, including the removal of specific administrative officers, were also accepted.

BJP MLA Randhir Panihar, who was also a member of the four members committee formed by the chief minister, said that three to four rounds of talks were held earlier, but no consensus was reached. I had also played a mediating role earlier.

As per the information students will also be part of

this committee. Also however, no decision has been taken yet on removing the Registrar. But after receiving a written assurance from the government on all demands, the students have announced to end their protest. A protesting student said that they have received a written assurance from the government on all their demands, which is why they are ending the protest. The protest, which erupted on June 10, was triggered by changes to stipend eligibility rules for postgraduate and PhD students—sparking fears that the move would jeopardize students' academic futures.

Cong leader's ‘neighbouring country’ remark triggers backlash in Sikkim

NIBIR DEKA
SIKKIM

Senior Congress leader Ajoy Kumar has sparked widespread outrage in Sikkim after he mistakenly referred to the state as a "neighbouring country" during a press conference held on Tuesday. Kumar, during a press conference on Tuesday, had referred to the state as a neighbouring country in the same frame



alongside Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

However, with the issue snowballing into a controversy, the senior Congress

leader on Tuesday apologised, stating it was a "slip of the tongue".

The comment, widely circulated on social media, has been called not only factually incorrect but also "irresponsible and insulting" by Sikkim's lone Lok Sabha MP Indra Hang Subba, who said the remark was a "grave affront to the people of the state, who have always stood

with unwavering loyalty to the nation."

Reacting strongly to the episode, Bikash Basnet, Political Secretary to the Chief Minister of Sikkim and Spokesperson of the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM), told NewsX, "This is very shocking and disgraceful that the Congress Spokesperson has mentioned Sikkim as neighbouring country.

Manipur: SAHILCA bans forest dept activities in Kangpokpi

NIBIR DEKA
MANIPUR

Amid the ongoing unrest in Manipur, the Sadar Hills Chiefs' Association (SAHILCA) has announced an immediate and total ban on all activities and programmes undertaken by the Forest Department, Government of Manipur, within Sadar Hills Kangpokpi district.

SAHILCA categorically stated that the Forest Department must halt all operations in the district with immediate effect, underscoring its strong opposition

The chiefs' association further declared a complete ban on all programmes and activities pursued by the Government of Manipur in Kuki-Zo inhabited areas of Kangpokpi district until the current conflict is amicably resolved.

to any initiatives or activities being carried out by the state government.

The chiefs' association further declared a complete ban on all programmes and

Additionally, SAHILCA directed the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs) to refrain from implementing the state government's flagship outreach initiatives, including "Go to Hills" and "Go to Villages," in all Kuki-Zo areas of the district.

According to SAHILCA, the continuation of government activities during this period of violence and heightened mistrust would be "insensitive and provocative," potentially worsening tensions on the ground.

Parties in Bihar appoint more booth level agents amid voter list revision

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

As the special intensive review of the electoral roll of Bihar gathers pace, political parties in the state, including those from the opposition, have increased the number of booth-level agents who coordinate with the poll machinery during preparation and revision of the voters' list.

These booth-level agents (BLAs) raise claims and objections about the inclusion or deletion of voters and check poll officials from taking arbitrary decisions. According to the latest



data, the BJP had 51,964 BLAs, and the number as on Wednesday stands at 52,698, an official said, citing the latest data. The CPI(M) has increased its BLAs manifold, with the number now going up to 578 compared to 76 in the field prior to the exercise. The number of BLAs ap-

pointed by the Congress has doubled from 8,586 to 16,500. The Bahujan Samaj Party had 26 BLAs before the special review began last week. The number of its BLAs now stands at 74.

The BJP, Congress, CPI(M) and the BSP are recognised national parties.

INDIA bloc leaders allege two crore voters of state may be disenfranchised by revision

New Delhi: Leaders of several INDIA bloc parties met the Election Commission over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar and raised concerns over its timing, alleging that over two crore voters of the state may be disenfranchised by this mammoth exercise being done just ahead of assembly elections. Leaders from 11 parties, including the

Congress, RJD, CPI(M), CPI, CPI(ML) Liberation, NCP-SP and the Samajwadi Party, put forth their objections before Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and other election commissioners to the special scrutiny of the voters' list. The INDIA bloc parties have been vocal in their opposition to the Special Intensive Revision exercise that has already started in Bi-

har and is to be carried out in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal which are going to the polls next year. Briefing the media after the meeting, Congress leader Abhishek Singhvi said a minimum of two crore persons may be disenfranchised in this exercise as many, especially, the SCs, STs, migratory and impoverished, among the nearly eight crore voters.

the exercise could deprive genuine voters of their right to vote to benefit the ruling

dispensation in Bihar. The electoral rolls were prepared afresh through

Will reject requests from unauthorised people: EC

New Delhi: Amid "repeated and conflicting" meeting requests by "unauthorised" individuals on behalf of various parties, the Election Commission on Wednesday decided that it will take cognisance of such communication only from heads of political parties, officials said.

Several individuals, claiming to represent political parties, have been seeking

appointments with the commission to discuss the ongoing special intensive revision of Bihar's electoral rolls.

The EC said henceforth, the poll authority will junk such requests by "unauthorised persons". Opposition parties have alleged that the revision exercise may lead to a situation where eligible citizens could be deprived of their right to vote.

various intensive revisions either across the country or in parts, nine times in the

52-year period from 1952 to 2004 -- once nearly every six years on average.



A pilgrim sits on the banks of the Liddar river at Nunwan base camp at Pahalgam, during the annual 'Amarnath Yatra', in Anantnag district, Jammu and Kashmir.

Bones recovered from poachers identified

CONTINUED FROM P1

ficked illegally.

Ranthambore Field Director Anup K R said the forest department is closely monitoring the investigation. He confirmed that Rajasthan's Chief Wildlife Warden has been informed. He added that a conclusion can only be drawn after the DNA test results are received.

Anup emphasised that Ranthambore maintains a robust anti-poaching system, regular forest patrols and a steady flow of tourists, making poaching inside the reserve highly unlikely.

However, tigers sometimes move beyond the protected boundaries into Madhya Pradesh, where their safety is less secure, and poaching

risks increase. He highlighted the need for inter-state coordination to protect tigers that stray outside protected areas.

The case came to light on June 5 during a joint operation by Madhya Pradesh-based NGO Tiger Strike Force, Rajasthan's Tiger Watch, and forest departments from both states. Three individuals—Dauji Bhil and Sunita Dauji from Dausa, and Besta Bhil from Shepur—were arrested in Shepur on charges of wildlife hunting. Authorities recovered 225 bones belonging to wild animals, including big cats, from the suspects.

Following the arrests, the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, with support from NGOs and the Rajasthan Forest Department, sent



the skulls and bones to a forensic lab in Jabalpur. Initial lab reports confirmed the remains belonged to three tigers and one panther, raising serious concerns about wildlife safety and the ongoing threat of poaching in the region.

During interrogation, the hunters confessed to hunting panthers along with tigers. The bones and skull samples have now been sent

to the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) in Bengaluru for DNA matching. This process will clarify whether the remains belong to tigers missing from Ranthambore or those from Madhavgarh and Panna Tiger Reserves. DNA results may take several weeks but will reveal where the poaching gang has been active.

Rajasthan Forest Minister Sanjay Sharma said the government is deeply concerned about tiger conservation.

"We have received information and given instructions to officials," he said.

"We are also coordinating closely with the Madhya Pradesh government and will take further action once we have all the details."

BJP announces new state chiefs

CONTINUED FROM P1

Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Puducherry, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

As part of the second phase of its Sangathan Parv (Organisational Drive), the BJP has elected new presidents in a total of nine states and Union territories. Party sources indicate that state presidents for West Bengal and Odisha are also likely to be appointed in the next couple of days.

With these developments, the BJP has successfully completed internal organisational elections in 28 states and union territories,

which is nine more than the 19 required to initiate the election process for the national president.

According to party insiders, the election for the BJP's national president will only take place once internal elections are completed in key states like Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Delhi and Haryana.

With the completion of this phase, the BJP is laying a strong foundation for its central leadership transition and gearing up organizationally for the upcoming state and national elections.

Earlier today, Bharatiya Janata Party Rajya Sabha MP Samik Bhattacharya

filed a nomination for the post of West Bengal BJP President.

Bhattacharya said that the party leadership asked him to file a nomination, which he followed. "I have nothing to say right now. The process is still underway. It has not concluded yet. Party leadership told me to file a nomination, and I did that. Result is yet to come," he said.

The Leader of Opposition in West Bengal, Suwendu Adhikari and the present West Bengal BJP Chief and Union Minister, Sukanta Majumdar, were present, accompanying Bhattacharya.

I.N.D.I.A bloc dismayed after meeting ECI over voter list

CONTINUED FROM P1

1924 and 1928," the Congress Rajya Sabha MP said.

He further said that today every vote counts, even if its wrongfully deleted or a single voter is wrongfully added, it creates a non-level playing field and that affects elections, that affects democracy.

"Elections and democracy are part of the basic structure and it is said that even a constitutional amendment is unconstitutional if it affects the basic structure," he asserted.

Firing salvos at the poll panel, Singhvi asked, "How do you expect the very di-

verse voting population of Bihar, the backwards, the flood-affected, the poor and impoverished, the SC/ST, the unempowered or even the migrant to spend the next two months running from pillar to post to get the birth certificate of his own and his father or mother."

"It is easy to say that the volunteers will help him, but if he does not get the certificate within the time limit, he loses his place in the electoral roll," he pointed out.

Singhvi also said that the delegation have said that upwards of 2.5 crore to 3 crore persons. "Let us assume the minimum figure of two crore may be disenfranchised in

this exercise".

"We are not against it, but this can be done with great care and time after this election. Why choose this time just ahead of the assembly elections," Singhvi said.

"We believe that migratory persons, who have to travel for work, cannot be at the beck and call of the person who knocks on the door asking for filling up the enumeration form," he added.

"The EC, though it heard us, seems to be disinclined to accept our submissions," he alleged.

Singhvi said they also protested against the new directive of the poll panel for entry to the Election Commission

from the next toilet cubicle. Upon being caught, the accused repeatedly apologized, the FIR stated.

The woman then rushed out of the washroom to the common area and raised an alarm, alerting others that someone was filming inside the ladies' washroom.

Several employees responded quickly. The accused attempted to flee the scene, but was stopped. HR managers who arrived at the spot confiscated his mobile phone and found footage of the woman being filmed in the washroom.

The accused continued to apologize. The woman then

asked him to delete the video. The HR team took screenshots of the footage before deleting it.

After reaching home, the woman discussed the incident with her husband. He advised her to file a formal police complaint, expressing concern that the accused might have secretly filmed other women and could continue harassing female colleagues.

Based on her complaint, the police booked the accused under Section 66E of the Information Technology Act and Section 77 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Centre dismisses Covid vaccine link

CONTINUED FROM P1

risk factors including genetics, lifestyle, pre-existing conditions and post-Covid complications. ICMR and NCDC conducted two studies on this issue among people aged 18 to 45 years, one based on historical data and the other study related to real-time investigation.

The first study by ICMR's National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE) covered the topic 'Factors associated with unexplained sudden death in adults aged 18-45 years in India - a multicentric matched case-control study.'

The study was conducted in 47 tertiary care hospitals in 19 states and Union territories from May 2023 to August 2023. It included reports of individuals who appeared healthy, but, died suddenly between October 2021 and March 2023. The study found that COVID-19 vaccination does not increase the risk of unexplained sudden death in young adults.

The second study covered the topic 'Finding the causes of sudden unexplained deaths in young people' which is currently being conducted by ICMR and AIIMS, Delhi.

Initial studies have indicated that heart attack, or myocardial infarction (MI), remains the leading cause of sudden death in this age group. No major change has been observed in the pattern of causes compared to previous years. In most cases of unexplained death, genetic mutations have been identified as the likely cause of these deaths. More reports will be shared after the study is completed.

In such a situation, scientists have reiterated that the statements linking Covid vaccination to sudden deaths are false and misleading. In such a situation, the Union Health Ministry says that such statements regarding the vaccine are irresponsible and the Government of India is committed to the health and safety of its citizens.

Microsoft announces mass layoff

CONTINUED FROM P1

Microsoft employed 228,000 full-time workers as of last June, the last time it reported its annual headcount. The company said Wednesday that its latest layoffs would cut close to 4% of that workforce, which would be about

9,000 people. But it has already had at least three layoffs this year.

Until now, at least, the biggest was in May, when Microsoft began laying off about 6,000 workers, nearly 3% of its global workforce and its largest job cuts in more than two years as the company spent heavily on

artificial intelligence.

Microsoft also cut another 300 workers based out of its Redmond, Washington headquarters in June, on top of nearly 2,000 who lost their jobs in the Puget Sound region in May, according to notices it sent to Washington state employment officials.

Dalai Lama says Trust will identify successor

CONTINUED FROM P1

ognition, the 'Golden Urn' process, and approval by the central government, in line with religious traditions and laws," she told a media briefing in Beijing while responding to the Dalai Lama's announcement.

The week-long celebrations to mark the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday commenced at Tsuglagkhang, the main temple at McLeodganj near Dharamshala, on June 30. The occasion is significant, as the Dalai Lama had said in 2011 that at the age of 90, he would decide whether the institution would continue or not.

During a meeting of the heads of Tibetan spiritual traditions on September 24, 2011, the Dalai Lama had stated that "as far back as in 1969, I had made clear that people concerned should decide whether the Dalai Lama's reincarnations should continue in future."

He had stated that when he would be 90 years old, he would consult the high La-

mas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other people who follow Tibetan Buddhism to evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not.

"I have received messages through various channels from Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhists living in other parts of the world requesting that the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue. I am affirming that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue," his statement said.

He added that the responsibility to recognise the reincarnation rests with the members of Gaden Phodrang Trust, who will consult heads of various Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors linked to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas.

"They should carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with the tradition," the statement added.

Peak-hour ride on Ola, Uber to cost more

CONTINUED FROM P1

minimum of 50 per cent lower than the base fare and a maximum dynamic pricing of two times the base fare specified under sub-clause (17.1)."

Moreover, the base fare chargeable shall be for a minimum of three kilometers to compensate for "dead mileage" -- including the distance travelled without a passenger and the distance travelled and fuel utilized for picking up the passenger(s).

As per the guidelines, the fare notified by the state government for the respective category or class of motor vehicles, shall be the base fare chargeable to passengers availing services from the aggregator.

States have been advised to adopt the revised guidelines within three months.

In case of cancellations, a

penalty of 10 per cent of the fare not exceeding Rs 100, shall be imposed on the driver, if the cancellation is made without a reason identified as valid by the aggregator.

A similar penalty will be imposed on the passenger when such cancellation is made without a valid reason.

The guidelines said the Central government shall develop and designate a portal to enable for single-window clearance of application for licence as aggregator. "The licence fee payable by the aggregator shall be Rs 5 lakhs and the licence shall be valid for a period of five years from the date of its issue," it said.

Aggregators have been mandated to ensure that drivers have health and term insurance of at least Rs 5 lakh and Rs 10 lakh respectively.

The guidelines also specified that a Grievance Officer shall be appointed by the aggregator.

"An aggregator shall not onboard vehicles which have been registered for more than a period of eight years from the date of initial registration of the vehicle and shall ensure that all vehicles onboarded by it should not have exceeded eight years since the date of initial registration of the vehicle," as per the guidelines.

To ensure passengers safety, the aggregators have been directed to ensure installation of the Vehicle Location and Tracking Devices (VLTG) in vehicles and to make sure that Vehicle Location and Tracking Devices are functional all the time.

Further, cab aggregators should make certain that the driver follows the

route indicated in the app through an in-built mechanism and in case of any deviation, the app shall signal the control room, which shall then connect with the driver and the passenger immediately.

As per the guidelines the aggregator shall establish a call centre with an active telephone number and e-mail address, displayed clearly on its website and on the App, which shall be operational 24x7, providing assistance in English and along-with the official language of the state.

"The aggregator shall mandatorily adhere to the targets fixed for inclusion of electric vehicles in their fleet, the guidelines said," adding that the targets shall be fixed by an appropriate government organization responsible for regulating air quality or by the state government.

Infosys techie films woman

CONTINUED FROM P1

washroom she sensed that someone had withdrawn an object from the partition wall of her toilet cubicle. She immediately stepped out and began monitoring the area.

She then returned to the washroom shortly after another woman exited from a nearby cubicle. After 5 to 6 minutes, she noticed a mobile phone being used to record from the adjacent cubicle.

Sensing something wrong, the woman stood on the commode and saw the accused filming her

from the next toilet cubicle. Upon being caught, the accused repeatedly apologized, the FIR stated.

The woman then rushed out of the washroom to the common area and raised an alarm, alerting others that someone was filming inside the ladies' washroom.

Several employees responded quickly. The accused attempted to flee the scene, but was stopped. HR managers who arrived at the spot confiscated his mobile phone and found footage of the woman being filmed in the washroom.

The accused continued to apologize. The woman then

asked him to delete the video. The HR team took screenshots of the footage before deleting it.

After reaching home, the woman discussed the incident with her husband. He advised her to file a formal police complaint, expressing concern that the accused might have secretly filmed other women and could continue harassing female colleagues.

Based on her complaint, the police booked the accused under Section 66E of the Information Technology Act and Section 77 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

'WHAT OPTION I HAVE? HAVE TO STAND BY HIM': DKS ON SIDDA'S STATEMENT

Dy CM says in response to question about Sidda's statement on 'CM for 5 yrs'

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

With Siddaramaiah asserting that he will be the Chief Minister of Karnataka for a full five-year term, Deputy CM D K Shivakumar on Wednesday, June 2, said he has no objection and that he will stand by and support the former.

Indicating that he had no option, he said, he will fulfill the directions of the Congress high command.

"What option I have? I have to stand by him, support him (Siddaramaiah). I don't have any objection to it. Whatever the party high command tells and whatever it desires, it will be fulfilled," Shivakumar told reporters here in response to a question about the CM's statement.

Asked whether the party is not backing him and that his



supporters are rooting for him to become CM, citing his sacrifice for the party, he said, "I don't want to discuss anything. Lakhs of workers have supported this party. It is not only D K Shivakumar." Speaking to reporters in Chikkaballapura, CM Siddaramaiah

asserted that he will be in office for a full five-year term.

There has been speculation within political circles, especially within the ruling Congress, for some time now about the Chief Minister change later this year, citing power-sharing agreement involving Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar.

There was stiff competition between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar for the chief minister's post after the declaration of Assembly election results in May 2023, and the Congress had managed to convince the latter and made him the Deputy CM.

There were some reports at the time that a compromise had been reached based on a "rotational chief minister formula," according to which Shivakumar will become CM after two-and-half years, but they have not been officially confirmed by the party.

BJP predicts change of guard in K'taka by Nov

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

Notwithstanding Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's assertion that he would complete the full five-year term, Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka on Wednesday indicated that there will be a change of guard in the state in October or November.

Ashoka's comments come amid speculation about leadership change in the ruling Congress in the state.

The LoP said the Congress party is a divided house and the Deputy Chief Minister D K Shiva-

kumar is sending signals to seize power.

"The replacement of the Chief Minister is definite in October or November. The Congress party is like a house with three doors, with all MLAs aspiring to be CM," the BJP leader said at a press conference here.

He wanted the Congress high command to clarify whether Siddaramaiah would remain the Chief Minister.

According to the opposition leader, Siddaramaiah's repeated assertion that he would continue his five-year turn was out of fear of losing his position.

RS MP Samik set to take over as Bengal BJP chief

TDG NETWORK
KOLKATA

Senior leader and Rajya Sabha MP Samik Bhattacharya is set to become the new president of the West Bengal BJP as no other candidate filed nomination for the post till the deadline on Wednesday.

Accompanied by outgoing state president Sukanta Majumdar and Leader of the Opposition in the state assembly Suvendu Adhikari, Bhattacharya submitted his nomination papers at the party's office in Salt Lake in the afternoon.

According to a party notice, nominations were accepted between 2 pm and 4 pm, followed by scrutiny and a window for withdrawal till 6 pm.

"Since Bhattacharya, the 61-year-old MP, was the sole candidate for the post and did not withdraw his nomination, he would be declared elected unopposed," a senior BJP leader said.

The official announcement



is expected to be made during a felicitation programme at the Science City auditorium in Kolkata on Thursday. The process to elect the new state BJP chief began on Wednesday, a day after the official election schedule was made public.

The party's returning officer and MLA, Deepak Barman, in the evening confirmed that only one procedurally valid nomination was received and accepted.

"The Sangathan Parv of the Bharatiya Janata Party, West Bengal, has reached its final stage. Today, in the concluding phase, 60 karyakartas

submitted their nominations at the state headquarters to become members of the National Council. All nominations have been accepted. For the post of the party's state president, only one procedurally valid nomination was submitted, and it has also been accepted," he said in a statement.

The 'State President Election & Felicitation Ceremony' will be held at Science City, where the names of the state council members will be announced in the presence of the State Election Officer and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.

2021 BJP leader murder: CBI names TMC MLA, 2 councillors in fresh charge-sheet

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The CBI has filed a supplementary charge sheet against TMC MLA Paresh Paul and councillors Swapan Samadhar and Papiya Ghosh for criminal conspiracy and murder in connection with the killing of BJP leader Avijit Sarkar during post-poll violence in West Bengal in 2021, officials said Wednesday.

In its second supplementary charge sheet file before Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Sealdah on Monday, the CBI has also named 15 others under Indian Penal Code Sections related to criminal conspiracy (120-B), murder (302) and disappearance of evidence (201) among others in connection with the case.

There was no immediate response from Paul.



Sarkar was killed in Kankurgachi area on May 2, 2021 after the results of the West Bengal assembly elections were announced.

The court has taken cognizance of the CBI charge sheets against all the accused clearing decks for starting trial in the matter.

The agency had taken over investigation from West Bengal Police re-registering the FIR dated May 2, 2021 at

There was no immediate response from Paul.

Narkeldanga police station as its own case on the directions of the Calcutta High Court.

"During the course of investigation, the State Police (Homicide Squad, Detective Department, Kolkata) filed a charge sheet on August 06, 2021 against 15 accused persons.

"Subsequently, after taking over the investigation, the CBI filed a supplementary charge sheet on September 30, 2021 before the Ld ACJM, Sealdah, against 20 accused persons, including the 15 previously chargesheeted by the State Police. Further investigation was kept open....," CBI's spokesperson said in a statement.

SpiceJet window frame dislodges mid-air; No passenger risk, says airline

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

A window frame of Spice Jet's aircraft operating its flight to Pune from Goa was found dislodged mid-air but there was no impact on passengers' safety, the airline said on Wednesday.

The frame was fixed once the aircraft landed at the next (Pune) airport, in accordance with standard maintenance procedures, the airline said in a statement.

SpiceJet, however, did not share other details.

"A cosmetic (interior) window frame on one of the Q400 Aircraft became loose



SpiceJet said the frame was fixed upon landing at the next station.

during flight and was found dislodged," the airline said in a statement.

SpiceJet also said that cabin pressurisation remained normal throughout the flight, and there was no impact on passenger safety, adding that the dislodged

of window panes, including a robust, pressure-bearing outer pane, ensuring that passenger safety is never at risk, even in the unlikely event of a superficial or cosmetic component coming loose," SpiceJet added.

Questioning the airworthiness of the aircraft, a passenger posted a video of the dislodged window on social media platform X.

"SpiceJet from Goa to Pune today. The whole interior window assembly just fell off mid flight. And this flight is now supposed to take off and head to Jaipur. Wonder if it's air worthy.." the passenger stated, while tagging the aviation safety regulator DGCA in the post.

part was a non-structural trim component, fitted onto the window for the purpose of shade, and did not compromise the safety or integrity of the aircraft in any way.

The Q400 aircraft is equipped with multiple layers

YSRCP slams Naidu for Rs. 1,250 cr farmer dues and systemic neglect

RAJ KIRAN BATHULA
HYDERABAD

YSRCP Regional Coordinator and former Minister Karumuru Venkata Nag-eswara Rao has criticized the Chandrababu Naidu-led coalition government for its relentless injustice towards farmers across Andhra Pradesh.

Speaking at the YSRCP central office in Tadepalli, Karumuru expressed outrage over the government's failure to clear Rs. 1,250 crore in dues owed to farmers for their sold grain, leaving them in financial distress for over two months. "The Civil Supplies Minister Nadendla Manohar promised payments within 24 hours, but where are those funds?" Rao demanded that the government prioritize publicity stunts like Yogandhra, which cost over Rs. 300 crore, and Amara-vati's repeated foundation ceremonies, costing Rs. 700 crore, while farmers



languish without support.

Karumuru highlighted the dire situation faced by farmers, who are not only denied fair prices for their crops but also face exploitation by middlemen and millers forming syndicates. He noted that farmers are losing Rs. 300 to Rs. 450 per sack, with some facing losses up to Rs. 600 per quintal due to the government's failure to enforce minimum support prices he alleged.

He also said that "Under YSRCP government, a 75-kg sack fetched over Rs. 2,000, but today, farmers struggle to get even Rs. 1,400," Rao stated. He criticized the

government for neglecting tenant farmers, who are unable to sell to the government due to unissued tenant cards, forcing them to sell at a loss to exploitative intermediaries. Pending dues include Rs. 300 crore in West Godavari, Rs. 260 crore in Konaseema, Rs. 150 crore in East Godavari, and Rs. 130 crore in Kakinada.

The grain procurement process, Rao charged, has been handed over to middlemen and private players, with the government failing to provide basic facilities like gunny bags, labor, or transport. "Farmers are forced to bear these costs themselves, and even then, no payments are credited to their accounts," he said. Unlike the YSRCP government, which ensured transparent procurement and covered transport and labor costs, the current regime has allowed the system to fall into the hands of exploitative syndicates.

Symbol row: SC will hear Sena-UBT plea on July 14

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Uddhav Thackeray-led faction on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court for an urgent hearing on its plea over the contentious Shiv Sena symbol in wake of the upcoming local body elections in Maharashtra.

The matter was mentioned before a bench of Justices M M Sundresh and K Vinod Chandran which agreed to list it on July 14. The counsel for the Shiv Sena (UBT) informed the bench that local body polls were likely to be notified soon in the state.

The counsel appearing for the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena faction said a similar request was made on May 7 before a bench headed by Justice Surya Kant, also hearing the symbol row matter, and it was rejected. The Shiv Sena (UBT)



counsel argued that Justice Kant-led bench had said the matter could be mentioned during the top court's partial court working days.

He argued the matter raised the "question of peoples' choice".

He said the plea seeks an interim arrangement similar to the one directed by the apex court in the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) symbol row case.

In November last year, the top court directed the Ajit Pawar-led NCP faction to publish a disclaimer in newspapers, including Marathi ones, that the issue of allocation of "clock" symbol was pending in court.

Cong OBC advisory council to hold 1st meeting on July 15 in Bengaluru

ANAND SINGH
NEW DELHI

Congress, which formed a 24 member OBC Advisory council committee will hold its first meeting in July 15 in Karnataka's Bengaluru to chalk out the strategy to woo back the backward class vote bank.

The OBC Advisory Council which consists of leaders like Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, Anil Jaihind, Jitendra Baghel, Sachin Pilot, BK Hariprasad, Veerappa Moily, Subhashini Yadav, Mahesh Gaud, Gurdeep Singh Sappal, Vijay Waddetiwar, Ajay Kumar Lallu and many others, will hold its first meeting on July 15.

The party source said that during the meeting, the party leaders will discuss the party strategy concerning the other backward com-



munity across the country.

They will also discuss, how the party plans to raise their concerns and issues.

The source also revealed that this move is aimed to bring back the OBC voters to Congress fold as they have moved away from the grand old party in last few decades.

The source further said that OBC Advisory council was formed as the way in which Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has been demanding for the fair share of representation to the SC, ST, OBC, tribal community in government jobs, this council will help in achieve the

vision of the Gandhi scion.

The source also explained that this council will also guide the party to meet the aspirations of the OBC community and give them more representation to them in the organisation as well.

Meanwhile, the source also said that the need for this council was felt following the demand of caste census across the country by the Congress. The source said that the party felt the importance of OBC voters through the last year general elections and understood that it is important to bring them back with the party.

After MP, BJP may bat for upper castes in UP amid state chiefs' elections

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP maintained its old coordination instead of betting on tribals or backward castes. Due to this, Hemant Khandelwal from the Baniya community was made the new state president in place of B.D. Sharma. This decision in Madhya Pradesh can now have an impact on

the neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh. The election of the state president is yet to be held in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP did not bet on any other leader and gave another chance to Brahmin face Mahendra Bhatt in Utarakhand, which borders Uttar Pradesh, even though there were strong chances of Bhatt being replaced. On the other hand, only upper castes have been given

opportunities in Madhya Pradesh. It is being understood that the party may now bet on upper castes in Uttar Pradesh as well.

The decision in Uttar Pradesh seems to be connected with the choice of the national president. If an OBC leader becomes the national president, then an upper caste leader may be given a chance in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP has em-



phasized completing the pending state elections soon to facilitate the election of the national president. Due to this, the election of state presidents has been com-

pleted in more than half a dozen states over the last three days. Elections have been held in more than half of the states scheduled before the national president's election. Now, the party can conduct the national president's election whenever it wants.

However, along with the national president, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Gujarat are major states where

the election of state presidents is under focus—especially in Uttar Pradesh. The party's strategy in Uttar Pradesh is to give the position to a Brahmin. But, looking at the opposition's focus on backward caste politics, there is no consensus within the party. In the last assembly elections, the opposition highlighted the neglect of Brahmins as a major issue, which affected the results.

The BJP lost some seats. In the recent Lok Sabha elections, the opposition benefited from emphasizing the politics of backward castes based on the Constitution. As a result, the BJP suffered a major seat loss.

Assembly elections are to be held in Uttar Pradesh after one and a half years. These elections are very important for the party. According to sources, the party

is considering uniting upper caste votes by appointing a Brahmin president. The BJP already receives significant OBC support, as the party's biggest face is Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an OBC leader. A combination of upper caste and OBC votes forms a strong base for victory since the remaining backward caste and Muslim votes are divided among various parties.

'KEJRIWAL MISUSED PUBLIC FUND TO BUILD 'SHEESH MAHAL' FOR COMFORT'

CM Rekha Gupta slams AAP, says public money misused for private luxury

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday accused former CM Arvind Kejriwal of misusing public funds to build a lavish residence, dubbed the 'Sheesh Mahal', for his personal comfort. Speaking at an event in Shalimar Bagh to mark the unveiling of restored heritage structures—including the historic Sheesh Mahal—Gupta drew a stark comparison between the priorities of the previous AAP-led government and the current BJP-led administration. "The former Chief Minister built a Sheesh Mahal for his pleasure from the hard-earned money of Delhi's taxpayers," Gupta said. "This

RESTORED HERITAGES

- Delhi CM Rekha Gupta slammed ex-CM Arvind Kejriwal over 'Sheesh Mahal' row.
- Claimed AAP built luxury structure for personal use, unlike restored public Sheesh Mahal.
- Urged refund of public funds allegedly spent on Kejriwal's residence.



Sheesh Mahal, on the other hand, has been dedicated to the public. That is the difference between the past and present governments."

The Sheesh Mahal in Shalimar Bagh, which dates back to the Mughal era, has been restored as part of the BJP government's broader push to preserve Delhi's

cultural heritage and make such spaces accessible to citizens. The event was attended by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and BJP MP Praveen Khandelwal.

Gupta took a veiled swipe at the AAP, stating that personal extravagance had

taken precedence over public welfare during Kejriwal's tenure. "We must return the previous Sheesh Mahal to its origin. The money taken from the public treasury should be returned," she asserted.

The remarks come amid ongoing political friction between the AAP and BJP

over alleged misuse of public funds in the construction and renovation of Kejriwal's official residence, which the BJP has repeatedly termed a 'Sheesh Mahal'.

Just a day earlier, CM Gupta visited flood-prone areas along the Yamuna in east Delhi, assuring residents of stronger flood preparedness this monsoon. "We are working round-the-clock to strengthen embankments, streamline water drainage, and provide timely relief," she had said on Tuesday.

Wednesday's Sheesh Mahal event marks a continued attempt by the Delhi BJP to contrast its administrative style with the AAP's, showcasing public accessibility and heritage preservation as core values of governance.

HC asks DJB to inspect areas getting contaminated water

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the Delhi Jal Board to conduct an inspection and rectify the fault after it was alleged that several areas in east Delhi are getting highly contaminated potable water.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela directed the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) authorities to ensure that pure potable drinking water is provided to the residents, who are getting 'black coloured' water in their taps.

"Look at the colour of the water which they are getting, we direct the appropriate authority of DJB to conduct physical inspection, prepare a report and submit it before the court," the bench said while listing the matter on July 5.

The court was hearing a public interest litigation



filed by Dhruv Gupta, an advocate by profession, submitting that the health and safety of the residents of Yojana Vihar, Anand Vihar, Jagriti Enclave and other adjacent areas in east Delhi is at great risk due to the supply of highly contaminated potable water mixed with sewer/sewage.

The court asked the counsel for the DJB to get instructions from authorities on the issue and apprise it on Friday.

It further directed that in case during the inspection any fault is found which requires urgent attention,

it should be immediately rectified.

The petitioner contended that citizens' right to clean drinking water has been gravely violated. Such supply of highly contaminated sewer water as potable water may lead to grave health diseases to residents, including elderly and children, leading to mass health crisis, he said.

The plea said residents have been getting contaminated water in their taps since June 12 and complaints were submitted to the authorities but no action was taken.

Delhi's cloud seeding trial run to start in August with 5 tests

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a bid to tackle the city's worsening air pollution, Delhi's Environment Minister Majinder Singh Sirsa announced a trial run of artificial rain through cloud seeding, set to commence between late August and early September, with five tests planned to assess its efficacy against smog, particularly during Diwali and September.

"We have been successful in securing permission for artificial rain through cloud seeding... We will run the trial between the end of August and the first week of September. We will conduct five trials to learn if it could be efficient against the smog that collects during Diwali or in September," he said.

On May 7, the Delhi cabinet on Wednesday passed a historic decision to conduct cloud seeding, also known as artificial rain, in the national capital to mitigate pollution. Pollution has been a serious concern



for the state for some time, and to help curb it, the cabinet has taken a significant step in partnership with IIT Kanpur, according to a member.

The activity is planned to be conducted in the last week of May, after the cabinet has obtained all the necessary permissions from various departments and stakeholders.

The exercise will be conducted in partnership with IIT Kanpur, and their Aircraft, a Cessna, will be used for the purpose. The Delhi government plans to conduct five trials in the outer area of the national capital.

The cost for one-time rain will account for 66 lakhs, and the operational cost will be 55 lakhs. The total cost for the entire trial plan can go up to 2 crores 55 lakhs. The aim of the Delhi government is to mitigate pollution in the national capital to achieve its goal of a Viksit Delhi. Pollution remains a pressing concern in Delhi, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) often reaching very poor levels. Although several projects have been undertaken in the past to address this issue, none have provided a lasting solution to Delhi's pollution problem.

Delhi HC slams civic bodies over deplorable public toilets

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday strongly criticised the city's civic authorities for neglecting the upkeep of public toilets, describing their actions as apathetic and negligent.

The court was hearing a petition highlighting the unsanitary and unhygienic conditions of public conveniences across Delhi, particularly impacting the dignity and safety of women.

A division bench of Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyay and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said the fresh photographs submitted by the petitioner showed unacceptable conditions, noting that similar situations likely exist in other parts of the capital.

Authorities like Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Delhi Development Authority (DDA), and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) were found to have failed in performing their duties toward maintaining these essential public utilities, said



the Court.

Though the status reports were filed by MCD, NDMC, and DDA, the court found that the actions taken were inadequate. The DDA cited a survey by IIT BHU and ongoing corrective steps, but the bench emphasised that results on the ground remain unsatisfactory.

The Court directed all three bodies to formulate a detailed, expert-backed action plan within their respective jurisdictions to ensure accessible and functional public toilets. These plans are to be presented at the next hearing.

The PIL, filed by Jan Seva Welfare Society, called for increased and better-maintained public urinals across Delhi.

80 overage vehicles impounded on day one of fuel ban

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Only 80 end-of-life vehicles were seized on the first day of Delhi's newly enforced fuel ban targeting overage vehicles, with officials attributing the low number to reduced vehicle turnout at fuel stations.

Effective since July 1, the ban prohibits fuel stations across the National Capital from dispensing petrol or diesel to end-of-life (EoL) vehicles, defined as petrol vehicles older than 15 years and diesel vehicles older than 10 years.

The measure, spearheaded by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) and enforced by the Delhi Transport Department, aims to curb vehicular emissions and improve the city's deteriorating air quality.

"A total of 80 vehicles were impounded altogether by all agencies," Delhi Transport Commissioner Niharika Rai told ANI.

When asked why the number is relatively low, Rai said, "Vehicles came out less only today." She refused to com-



ment on whether the number is expected to rise.

According to official records, Delhi has approximately 60.14 lakh deregistered EoL vehicles, of which a significant number remain in active use. Data from the VAHAN database indicates that the city has over 62 lakh EoL vehicles, including 41 lakh two-wheelers and 18 lakh four-wheelers.

The latest enforcement drive, based on Direction No. 89 issued by CAQM on April 23, 2025, mandates fuel station operators to deny fuel, display mandatory signage, and report non-compliance weekly. Violations by fuel stations may lead to penalties under Section 192 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, while EoL vehicles caught refueling

face impoundment and legal action. The implementation is backed by an advanced Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system installed at 498 fuel stations and three ISBTs.

These cameras instantly scan license plates and verify details via the centralised VAHAN database. Non-compliant vehicles are flagged, fuel denied, and alerts sent to enforcement agencies for further action including impoundment and scrapping.

Between June 1 and June 23, 2025, over 77.8 lakh vehicles were screened using the ANPR system, identifying 1.36 lakh as end-of-life. Additionally, 8.05 lakh vehicles renewed their Pollution Under Control Certificates (PUCC) during the same period.

Bail granted to two accused in Parliament security breach case

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday granted bail to Neelam Azad and Mahesh Kumawat in connection with the Parliament security breach case.

The bail was sanctioned upon furnishing a personal bond of Rs 50,000 along with two sureties each. Their earlier bail pleas had been rejected by the trial court.

The division bench, comprising Justice Subramonium Prasad and Justice Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar, imposed strict conditions as



part of the bail order. The accused have been prohibited from holding press conferences, giving media interviews, or posting on social media about the incident.

Additionally, the Court directed both individuals to report to the concerned po-

lice station every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 10:00 a.m. They have also been barred from leaving the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

Delhi Police opposed the bail, asserting that substantial and compelling

evidence exists against the accused. They cited credible documents and material suggesting the accused's involvement in activities punishable under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA).

The prosecution argued that the case fails the "triple test" for bail eligibility—namely the risk of flight, the possibility of influencing witnesses, and potential tampering with evidence. Citing the accused as "powerful and influential," the police maintained that their release could hinder the ongoing investigation.

ARZU SETH
NEW DELHI

A fresh Debate has emerged in the heart of the capital over the name of one of Delhi's oldest landmarks. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has written to Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, urging him to rename Old Delhi Railway Station to Maharaja Agrasen Railway Station.

In a letter, Rekha Gupta said that this step would be a true tribute to the great Maharaja Agrasen, who is considered a symbol of non-violence, peace and social justice.

The request to change the name has sparked mixed reac-



tions. While some support the move as long overdue recognition of Maharaja Agrasen's legacy, while others question the need for such a change. ITV visited Old Delhi Railway Station to gauge public mood. Some commuters and local residents near the sta-

tion aren't too happy about the move.

"Why change a name that has stood the test of time? If the government wants to honour Maharaja Agrasen, build a new station and name it after him," said a frequent traveller who uses the station daily.

Others point out that the name 'Old Delhi' holds more than historical weight.

Few metres away at Chandni Chowk, People See the renaming as a proud recognition of a cultural icon. "He's not just a king; he's like a deity to us. Why shouldn't the station reflect his legacy?" We are happy, will support

what the government decides said a local shopkeeper. Aam Aadmi Party leader Saurabh Bhardwaj has targeted Delhi Government and CM Rekha Gupta and said if the Chief Minister had to write a letter to the Railways, she should have said that the slums of the people living along the track in Wazirpur and Moti Nagar should be demolished only after houses are allotted. But the Chief Minister is writing a letter about changing the name.

The Railway Minister yet to make any formal announcement about the name change of Old Delhi Railway Station, also known as Delhi Junction to Maharaja Agrasen.

Girl attempts suicide by drinking acid after 'sexual assault', lover arrested

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A girl attempted suicide by drinking acid in southwest Delhi's Vasant Kunj area after she was allegedly sexually assaulted by a man she was in a relationship with, police said on Wednesday. The man has been arrested.

The accused, Md Rehan, allegedly sexually assaulted the girl on the pretext of marriage and blackmailed her with objectionable pho-

tographs, a senior police official said.

He said the incident came to light on June 18, when an MLC (medico-legal case) report was received from Spinal Injuries Hospital stating that a girl had been admitted there after she consumed acid.

A police team reached the hospital, but the girl was declared unfit for recording a statement at the time. The local crime team was deployed

and the scene of the incident was examined. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Amit Goel said.

"An acid bottle was recovered from her residence. Preliminary inquiry revealed that the girl was in a relationship with a man named Rihaan and it led to emotional distress," the DCP said.

The girl was alone at home when she consumed acid. A neighbour noticed her in pain around 4:45 pm and



rushed her to the hospital. On June 20, she was referred to Safdarjung Hospital for further treatment due to the severity of her condition,

he said. "Subsequently, the victim's mother lodged a complaint at Vasant Kunj (South) police station, accusing Rihaan of sexually

assaulting her daughter on the pretext of marriage and blackmailing her with objectionable photographs," Goel said. He said the complainant also handed over her daughter's mobile phone, which contained voice recordings allegedly supporting the allegations. According to police, the sub-divisional magistrate of Vasant Vihar was informed, and a tehsildar was deputed to record the victim's statement at the

hospital. However, the girl remained unfit to record a statement. Based on the complaint, a preliminary report was submitted recommending a forensic analysis of the girl's mobile phone, police said.

The forensic examination of the mobile phone confirmed the presence of voice recordings consistent with the complaint. Following this, a case was registered under Section 69 of the

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act at Vasant Kunj (South) police station on June 25, police said. Rehan, a resident of Shankar Camp in Rangpuri Pahari, was arrested. He has studied up to class 12 and previously worked as a loader at the airport. He is currently unemployed and his father works as a labourer, the DCP said.

CONG ANTI-HINDU, UNDEMOCRATIC: BJP'S T'GANA CHIEF ON KHARGE'S RSS REMARKS

Telangana
BJP chief
slams
Congress
over
remarks
threatening
RSS ban if
elected

TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

Telangana Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Ramachander Rao on Wednesday hit out at the Congress over Minister Priyank Kharge's remarks against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), calling the party "anti-Hindu, undemocratic and non-secular."

Speaking to the media, Rao criticised Kharge's statement, saying, "Congress leader Priyank Kharge in Karnataka has said that if

WILL BAN RSS IF ELECTED: CONGRESS CHIEF

- Telangana BJP chief called Congress "anti-Hindu, non-secular" over RSS ban talk
- Reacted to Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge's remark on banning RSS if Congress wins
- Karnataka BJP accused Kharge of 1975-style authoritarian mindset
- Slammed Kharge family for Kalaburagi's underdevelopment, alleged political dynasticism



Earlier, the BJP hit back at the leader and stated that the minister was "threatening bans" as he felt that the situation in the country was like that of 1975.

the Congress Party comes to the center, they will ban the RSS. This is the attitude of the Congress Party. It is the reason why their governments are anti-Hindu. In Karnataka, the anti-Hindu sentiment has been raised by the Congress Party. Hindu organisations are being

at the leader and stated that the minister was "threatening bans" as he felt that the situation in the country was like that of 1975.

The Karnataka unit of the BJP slammed Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge through an 'X' post. Stating that Kalaburagi,

suppressed... They (Congress) are undemocratic and non-secular..."

Earlier, the BJP hit back and stated that the minister was "threatening bans" as he felt that the situation in the country was like that of 1975.

which has been "ruled" by Kharge for more than 50 years, remains one of the most "underdeveloped" parts of Karnataka.

"Priyank Kharge, a minister only because of his father's influence, is now threatening bans like it's 1975 all over again. The Congress's alleged "President/High Command" Mallikarjun Kharge ruled the Kalaburagi region for half a century. Yet it remains one of the most underdeveloped parts of Karnataka", the 'X' post said.

The BJP further alleged that both Priyank and Mallikarjun Kharge had opportunities to contribute to Karnataka's development, but they spent their time "chasing fantasies" like banning RSS.

The 'X' post said that Priyank Kharge feels that he can distract the attention of Karnataka people by making such statements, but he has "failed" in his attempt.

"Mini Kharge, along with his father, had so much to contribute but spent their time chasing fantasies like banning the RSS. And if he thinks making such statements will distract Kannadigas from the Multi-Crore Housing Committee scam, he has failed. Just like he did in first PUC", the 'X' post said.

Priyank Kharge on Tuesday slammed Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) over their General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale's statement demanding reconsideration of the terms 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

Assam CM meets Minister Gadkari, reviews progress of infrastructure projects

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday met Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi to review the progress of the state's flagship infrastructure projects.

In a post on social media platform X, the CM wrote, "In New Delhi today, I had a fruitful meeting with Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @nitin_gadkari Ji. We reviewed the progress of Assam's flagship infra projects and sought @MOR-THIndia's cooperation in their time-bound completion. Hon'ble Minister has assured us of the Ministry's undivided focus on this matter."

Earlier on July 1, Assam's BJP strongly condemned the alleged attack on Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's convoy in Golaghat, where Congress workers reportedly hurled water bottles, said the BJP



spokesperson Kalyan Gogoi in a press statement. The party described the incident as an attack on democratic values and accused the Congress of resorting to "Naxalite-like" tactics out of political frustration.

Addressing a press conference at the party's state headquarters, BJP Assam General Secretary Rituparna Baruah said, "Unable to counter Hon'ble Chief Minister and the BJP Government's politics of liberation and development, the Congress has now resorted to Naxalite-like behaviour."

Baruah further added, "It is shocking that even while in Opposition, the Congress can act in such an undemo-

cratic manner, then imagine what may happen if Congress comes into power. Attacking an elected Chief Minister of a state exposes the true political character of the Congress."

The press briefing was also attended by BJP Assam Vice Presidents Manoj Baruah and Ratna Singh, along with Chief Spokesperson Kishore Upadhyay.

In a strong show of protest, BJP Yuva Morcha (BJYM) karyakartas staged sit-in demonstrations across all district and sub-divisional headquarters in the state. Senior party leaders and thousands of BJYM workers from 39 organisational districts participated in the state-wide protests.

TMC is trying to protect accused: BJP's Ghosh on Kolkata gangrape case

TDG NETWORK
PASCHIM MEDINIPUR

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Dilip Ghosh on Wednesday accused the Mamata Banerjee and her ruling Trinamool Congress of attempting to "protect" the accused in the alleged Kolkata gangrape case, which took place on June 25 inside the campus of a Law college.

"The facts are still not coming out, and TMC is trying to suppress them. The student leaders of TMC are the ones who are guilty. They have been in law school for 10-11 years. Even after graduating, they remain leaders there... It is the responsibility of the fact-finding committee to bring the incident to the fore. The country wants to know how such an incident took place... The culprit should also be punished..."

He also claimed that there are appre-



hensions among the people that the government may "save" the main culprit and "punish someone else".

"Mamata Banerjee and her party are still trying to protect the accused... People are scared that the government is trying to save the main culprit. Maybe they will save him, and someone else will be punished. This should not happen, this is very shameful..."

Earlier, BJP fact-finding committee member Manan Kumar Mishra stated alleged that the police was "hiding" the family of the rape survivor and not

allowing anyone to meet the security guard, who is the fourth accused in the incident which took place on June 25 inside the campus of a law college in Kolkata.

He further alleged that there was an attempt to "tamper" with the First Information Report to change the name of the accused.

Mishra, told ANI a day earlier, "We visited everyone there and met other college staff also. When we saw some documents, it showed that some tampering had been done with the FIR. By looking at the document, it looks like someone attempted to change the name of the accused... We tried to talk to the victim, but it looks like the police are hiding the family of the victim and the family members... The guard is the best witness in this case, but they have also arrested him and are not letting him meet anyone..."

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and said he is always on tour and should have a tour and travel ministry.

Speaking to reporters, Raut said, "PM Modi is always on tour, he should have a tour and travel ministry, and should have country tourism ambassadors and should tell in Mann ki Baat what to eat in which country to go..."

Raut also criticised the Modi government over Pakistan's growing influence at international forums. He said, "Ever since PM Modi



came, Jaishankar came, Amit Shah came, we could not prove this and today an important post was given to Pakistan in the United Nations. The Army Chief was invited to dinner at the White House."

He questioned the government for ignoring serious domestic issues, including farmers' suicides and recent terror attacks, saying, "Does Modi Ji know that 1000 farmers died by suicide in Maharashtra in three

months? Till now, they have been unable to find the killers in the Pahalgaon attack. Air India is finished. They are not able to find out what happened to the plane that crashed in Ahmedabad, and Modi Ji is roaming abroad; this is the condition of the country."

Meanwhile, on the relationship between the RSS and BJP, Raut said, "RSS and BJP are brothers. If RSS wants, then it can teach the BJP a lesson. The BJP that is seen today is based on the strength of RSS workers."

He further demanded that Prime Minister Modi question US President Donald Trump over his stance towards India.

Dhami, Yogi discuss asset division

TDG NETWORK
DEHRADUN

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Wednesday reviewed the pending cases related to residual assets and liabilities between Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Chairing a meeting at the Secretariat, CM Dhami instructed officials to expedite the resolution process for cases where consensus has already been achieved in earlier discussions.

He also announced plans to hold a meeting soon with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to address outstanding issues between the two states.

Mayawati slams UP Government's decision to merge primary schools

TDG NETWORK
LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party Chief Mayawati, on Wednesday, raised concerns over Uttar Pradesh government's recent decision to merge primary schools with fewer students with nearby institutions, saying that the decision appears to be "Unjust, unnecessary, and anti-poor".

In a post on X, Mayawati said that the UP government's decision will affect children who receive accessible and affordable government education near their homes.

"The decision taken by the Basic Education Council, Government of Uttar Pradesh, to close numerous schools under the guise of merging/integrating pri-



mary schools is unjust for the millions of poor children who receive accessible and affordable government education near their homes; rather, at first glance, it clearly appears to be unjust, unnecessary, and anti-poor," the BSP Chief said.

She further emphasised that if the BSP forms the next government in the state, then this decision will be cancelled, and the previous system will be restored.

"We appeal to the government to immediately withdraw this decision of merging/integration in the

broader interest of poor students. If the government does not retract this decision, then our party wishes to assure all parents and guardians that, upon the formation of our party B.S.P.'s government, this decision will be cancelled, and the previous system will be restored in the state," Mayawati said.

"However, it is hoped that the UP government, keeping in mind the broader interest of the education of the poor and the general public, will certainly consider revising this decision with empathy," she added.

The National Students' Union of India (NSUI) also held a protest on Tuesday against the UP government's decision to merge the primary schools.

Authorities tighten food safety rules in Hapur ahead of Kanwar Yatra

TDG NETWORK
HAPUR

The authorities in Uttar Pradesh's Hapur tightened food safety rules to ensure the hygiene of food shops during the Kanwar Yatra. The administration has made it mandatory for all shops along the yatra route to have proper licenses and clearly display the owner's original name. District Magistrate Hapur Abhishek Pandey said the guidelines follow Supreme Court directions and Food Safety Department rules, and enforcement will be carried out accordingly. Strict action will be taken against those who violate these rules.

Speaking to ANI, Abhishek



Pandey said, "Supreme Court has given clear guidelines in this regard and the Food Safety Department also has very clear-cut guidelines on how the name of the proprietor should and should not be mentioned on such establishments. Action will be taken by following those guidelines and following the instructions of the Supreme Court."

"The officers of the Food Safety Department have been instructed to keep moving on the mobile squad continuously.

Delhi HC directs Centre to frame rules for mode-specific RTI information

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the relevant authority of the Union Government to take necessary steps and issue directions or frame rules to guarantee that information under the Right to Information Act, 2005, is provided in the format or mode requested by the applicant, while ensuring that appropriate safety measures are in place.

Highlighting a gap in the current RTI Rules, a division bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela stated that the need for providing information in the format sought by applicants—such as email or pen drives—



while ensuring proper safeguards.

The Court emphasised that existing rules do not account for present-day digital preferences, which can limit accessibility and defeat the spirit of the RTI Act, 2005. The judges instructed the appropriate authority to evaluate the issue and make a decision within three months.

The directions came in response to a petition filed by two law students, who argued that RTI procedures continue to reference outdated formats, such as dis-

kettes and floppies. They urged that information delivery should reflect current technology, including cloud platforms and secure email transfers.

The plea also requested clear provisions for modern digital payment methods, such as UPI, net banking, and credit cards, to make the RTI process more user-friendly.

Despite earlier representations made to the concerned ministries, no action had been taken, prompting the petitioners to approach the Court, stated the plea.

The High Court concluded that framing updated rules is essential for ensuring the effective realisation of citizens' rights under the RTI Act in today's digital era.

NSA imposed on Cong councillor in MP

TDG NETWORK
INDORE

Indore Collector invoked NSA (National Security Act) against a Congress Councillor Anwar Qadri, who is accused of having involvement in criminal conspiracy of a rape case in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district, an official said on Wednesday.

A bounty of Rs 10,000 is also announced on the arrest of Qadri, who is absconding

and continuous efforts are made to nab him at earliest, he added. Collector Asheesh Singh issued the order of imposing NSA on Tuesday evening.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Addl. DCP) Rajesh Dandotiya told ANI, "A rape case was reported under Banganga police station in the district in which Anwar Qadri is wanted, accused of having involvement in criminal conspiracy. A case



was prepared by Sadar Bazaar police station against him and it was sent to the Collector

for NSA. Following which, the collector confirmed the imposition of NSA against him (Qadri). Now, an arrest warrant has been released and he will be arrested under the NSA."

The officer further said that continuous efforts were being made to nab the accused and soon he would be arrested.

"It was a rape case in which he (Qadri) was also made accused under the sections of involvement in criminal conspiracy. He is still on the run.

Honeymoon horror: Shilom sent to 14-day custody

TDG NETWORK
SHILLONG

In connection with the murder of businessman Raja Raghuvanshi, who was killed in Meghalaya during his honeymoon, the Shillong court on Wednesday sent the accused Shilom James to 14 days of judicial custody.

Two other accused, builder Lokendra Tomar and watchman Balveer Ahirwar (also known as Billa), were sent to 7 days of judicial custody

after their earlier 6-day police remand ended.

A few days earlier, a team from Shillong Police seized a CCTV DVR from the Indore residence of Shilom James in connection with the murder case. Shilom Jame, a property dealer who had reportedly rented out a flat to the accused Sonam, was arrested on June 21.

Family members of Raja Raghuvanshi, who was murdered in Meghalaya during his honeymoon, said that

they would appeal before the Meghalaya High Court for the Narco test of the accused.

Vipin Raghuvanshi, brother of Raja Raghuvanshi, reached the Indore Crime Branch police station as called by the Shillong SIT for questioning in connection with the case.

After that he spoke to the media and highlighted his appeal in relation to the probe of the case, noting that the motive of the murder was yet to be known.

"I will apply for the Narco examination of the accused and I will appeal to the High Court (Meghalaya) for the same because the motive of the crime is yet to be known as to why Raja was murdered. Therefore, I will appeal before the High Court for a Narco test. Today, Shillong police called me for interrogation regarding the offerings (jewellery and ornaments) which we made during the wedding of Raja and Sonam."

‘FISCAL CONSOLIDATION, CAPEX BOOST WENT HAND-IN-HAND IN APR-MAY FY 26’

Tax revenues increased by 10%, while non tax revenues jumped by 41.8%.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India has made a promising start to the financial year 2025-26 (FY26), as both fiscal consolidation and capital expenditure (capex) are moving forward together, according to a report by Union Bank of India.

The report highlighted that the fiscal deficit for April-May FY26 stood at just Rs 0.13 lakh crore, which is only 0.8 per cent of the Budget Estimates (BE).

This is a major improvement compared to the same period last year, when the fiscal deficit was Rs 0.51 lakh crore or 3.2 per cent of the Revised Estimates (RE).

The better fiscal position has been supported by a strong rise in revenue receipts, especially a record dividend of Rs 2.69 lakh crore from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

SBI alone added 1.1% to India’s share of 6.7% to global GDP rise in 2025

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India contributed around 6.7 per cent to the global economy’s incremental growth in FY25, and the State Bank of India (SBI) alone accounts for 1.1 per cent of the incremental growth, according to a report by SBI research.

The report highlights India’s strong performance on the global economic front, adding \$297 billion to the total increase in global GDP during FY25.

It stated, “At a global level, India contributed approx 6.7 per cent to incremental

UBI REPORT’S KEY POINTS

- Fiscal deficit drops to 0.8% of target in Apr–May FY26, down from 3.2% last year.
- RBI dividend boosts revenue, total receipts up 24% YoY; non-tax revenue jumps 42%.
- Capex surges 54% to Rs 2.21 lakh crore, 20% of full-year target spent early.
- Strong cash buffer, lower deficit likely; FY26 aim may dip to 4.2–4.3% of GDP.



RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra makes a statement on RBI Monetary Policy during the 54th MPC held from 7 to 9 April, in Mumbai on Wednesday. (ANI Photo)

It stated, “Overall, the financial year has taken off on a promising note from the perspective of the government’s contribution to growth dynamics”.

The report also mentioned that the revenue receipts in April-May FY26 rose by 24 per cent year-on-year. Tax revenues increased by 10 per cent, while non-tax

revenues jumped by 41.8 per cent.

Meanwhile, the government continued its focus on capital spending to support economic growth. Capex in April-May FY26 increased by 54 per cent year-on-year to Rs 2.21 lakh crore, compared to Rs 1.44 lakh crore in the same period last year.

This represents 19.7 per cent of the total capex budgeted for the year at Rs 11.21 lakh crore, showing that the government is frontloading spending to stimulate demand.

To fund the fiscal deficit, the government used a mix of market borrowings and small savings. Market borrowings were Rs 0.98 lakh crore (9 per cent of BE) and

cent of the total capex budgeted for the year at Rs 11.21 lakh crore, showing that the government is frontloading spending to stimulate demand.

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‘Robust 11.3% surge in Kharif sowing bodes well for inflation outlook’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

global GDP in FY25”.

The world economy grew by \$4.118 billion in FY25, and India’s share in this was \$297 billion.

This means India accounted for nearly 7 per cent of the total rise in the global economy, showing its growing importance and strength as one of the leading contributors to global growth.

The report also mentioned that out of India’s contribution, SBI alone added \$44 billion through its asset size. This contribution by SBI accounts for about 1.1 per cent of the total increase in global GDP in FY25.

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Nirmala Sitharaman during the centenary celebration of SBI Mumbai main branch building, in Mumbai in November 2024. SBI Chairman Challa Sreenivasulu Setty and DFS Secy Nagaraju Maddirala are also seen. (ANI Photo)

Lending, deposit rates fall as RBI’s 100 bps cut transmits benefits

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The weighted average lending rate (WALR) on fresh rupee loans of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) declined to 9.20 per cent in May 2025, from 9.26 per cent in April, according to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data.

RBI data also showed that

the weighted average lending rate on outstanding rupee loans of scheduled commercial banks dropped marginally to 9.69 per cent in May from 9.70 per cent in April.

The 1-year median Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate (MCLR) of scheduled commercial banks moderated to 8.90 per cent in June from 8.95

per cent in May.

The share of External Benchmark based Lending Rate (EBLR) linked loans in total outstanding floating rate rupee loans of scheduled commercial banks was 61.6 per cent at end-March 2025 (60.6 per cent at end-December 2024), while that of MCLR linked loans was 34.9 per cent (35.9 per cent at end-

December 2024).

On the contrary, the weighted average domestic term deposit rate (WADTDR) on fresh rupee term deposits of scheduled commercial banks stood at 6.11 per cent in May as compared to 6.34 per cent in April 2025.

The weighted average domestic term deposit rate (WADTDR) on outstanding rupee term deposits

of scheduled commercial banks also dropped to 7.07 per cent in May 2025 against 7.10 per cent in April 2025.

Many scheduled commercial banks have adjusted their loan interest rates, aimed at transmitting the benefits of the cumulative 100 basis points repo rate cut by the RBI monetary policy committee since early this year.

Equity inflows remained positive for the third consecutive month in June 2025, though debt outflows accelerated. A weaker US dollar also supported the rupee, largely driven by concerns over US fiscal policies, rising stagflation risks, and uncertainty around the Federal Reserve’s independence.

Globally, most currencies appreciated in June 2025 as the dollar index (DXY) fell by 2.5 per cent. The US Federal Reserve kept interest rates

small savings contributed Rs 0.63 lakh crore (18 per cent of BE).

In addition, the government’s cash balance stood strong at Rs 3.27 lakh crore as of May 2025, giving it flexibility to support further expenditure.

The report noted that the big RBI dividend has opened up additional policy space for capex by around Rs 60,000 crore or 0.15 per cent of GDP. While there is a chance that slower GDP growth due to lower inflation could affect fiscal targets,

It added that the government remains committed to reducing the fiscal deficit to 4.4 per cent of GDP in FY26, it may be lowered further down to around 4.2-4.3 per cent.

Overall, the data for April and May shows that the government is maintaining a balance between fiscal discipline and growth-supportive spending.

India-US talks hit tariff hurdle over labour-intensive sectors

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

As negotiations for a long-anticipated Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the United States enter their final stretch, India is making a last-minute, high-stakes push for full tariff elimination on its labour-intensive exports.

According to Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), without duty-free access for sectors like garments, footwear, carpets, and leather goods, the deal could become politically unsellable at home. India’s insistence is rooted in a combination of economic strategy and domestic political considerations.

These labour-intensive sectors--dominated by small and medium enterprises and providing critical employment across states like Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and West Bengal--contributed over \$14.3 billion to India’s exports to the U.S. in FY2025.

Tariffs on these goods currently range between 8 per cent and 20 per cent, especially high for garments and footwear, putting Indian exporters at a steep disadvantage in the American market.

While India has offered to reduce its Most Favoured Nation (MFN) duties on US goods as part of the deal, Washington appears un-



Labourers carry bricks on the occasion of International Labour Day, in Prayagraj on May 1. (ANI Photo)

willing to reciprocate.

GTRI says the US is not ready to scrap either its high MFN tariffs or the country-specific duties that currently stand at 26 per cent, proposing instead a limited reduction to 10 per cent--still a significant surcharge that could negate any meaningful market access for Indian exporters.

The imbalance has raised concerns in India that the FTA, if signed under the current terms, would disproportionately favour American exporters.

Adding to the tension is the U.S. Congress’s lack of fast-track trade authority, which limits Washington’s ability to offer broad tariff

concessions.

India’s broader export profile to the U.S. in FY2025 stood at \$86.5 billion, up 11.6 per cent from the previous year. Of this, medium labour-intensity sectors--such as electronics, chemicals, automobiles, and jewellery--accounted for \$44.6 billion.

These exports face moderate U.S. tariffs of 2 per cent to 5 per cent, with some exceptions reaching 7 per cent. Meanwhile, low labour-intensity exports, such as pharmaceuticals and heavy machinery, totalling \$17.3 billion, already benefit from minimal tariffs below 2 per cent and are not central to India’s demand.

ELI scheme to boost jobs, create equitable labour market: CII’s Mukundan

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

R Mukundan, President Designate CII and Managing Director & CEO, Tata Chemicals Limited, on Wednesday said that the Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme can pave the way for a more resilient, competitive and equitable labour market in the country.

“We believe the ELI scheme can pave the way for a more resilient, competitive and equitable labour market in India. We also commend the government for the consultative approach in designing the scheme while reflecting a strong commitment to public-private partnership,” Mukundan said.

“On behalf of CII and Indian industry, I extend full support to the successful implementation of this important initiative, which will pave the way for Viksit Bharat,” he added.

In a video message, Mukundan said that the Indian industry views this decision

Mukundan said, “We also commend the government for the consultative approach in designing the scheme while reflecting a strong commitment to public-private partnership.”

as a transformative step that complements the ongoing national efforts, including PLI, National Manufacturing Mission and Make in India.

“At CII, we’ve long advocated this scheme, which focuses on job creation. We believe the ELI scheme can pave the way for a more resilient, competitive and equitable labour market in India,” he added.

The Union Cabinet approved the Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme to boost job creation, incentivise first-time employees and strengthen social security for the workforce in the country.

With an outlay of Rs. 99,446 crore, the ELI Scheme

will support the creation of over 3.5 crore jobs.

Mukundan further added, “We also commend the government for the consultative approach in designing the scheme while reflecting a strong commitment to public-private partnership. On behalf of CII and Indian industry, I extend full support to the successful implementation of this important initiative, which will pave the way for Viksit Bharat.”

Under the Scheme, while the first-time employees will get one month’s wage up to Rs 15,000, the employers will be given incentives for a period of two years for generating additional employment.

Coal sector surges 16%; over 200 blocks now allocated

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Coal production from captive and commercial mines in June 2025 reached 15.57 million tonnes (MT), while coal dispatches were recorded at 17.31 MT, according to the Ministry of Coal.

These figures indicate a solid performance by the coal sector, which plays a crucial role in meeting the energy and raw material needs of key industries across the country.

The first quarter of the financial year 2025-26 has shown significant year-on-year growth. Coal production during this period increased by 16.39 per cent, while dispatches rose by 13.03 per cent compared to the same quarter last year.

This growth is a result of improved operational effi-



An overhead view of the Umrangso coal mine, where the labourers got trapped following a sudden gush of water that flooded the site, in Dima Hasao in January. (ANI Photo)

the consistent improvement in performance over the past three years at the end of Q1.

Both production and dispatch figures have steadily increased year after year, showing a strong and reliable upward trend in coal output and supply.

In terms of developments during June 2025, mine opening permission was granted for the Utkal A Mine, which has a Peak Rated Capacity of 25 MT.

This is a major step forward in expanding domestic coal production and meeting the growing demand for coal in various industries.

Additionally, vesting orders were issued for three more coal blocks in June, pushing the total number of coal blocks allocated by the Ministry of Coal to over 200.

BHARAT’S GLOBAL SOUTH GAMBIT: PM MODI’S DIPLOMATIC TOUR SIGNALS A BOLD RECALIBRATION OF FOREIGN POLICY

OPINION

SIDDHARTHA DAVE



A WELL-ORCHESTRATED DIPLOMATIC SYMPHONY

The sequencing of Modi’s visits reflects a masterclass in diplomatic choreography. Beginning in West Africa, progressing through the Caribbean, and culminating in South America and mineral-rich southern Africa, the tour is planned with deliberate geographic and strategic precision. Each leg of the journey seems to be planned not in isolation but as part of a larger tapestry designed to knit together nations of the Global South into a cohesive strategic community. The chosen countries are not random—they either host significant Bhartiya diaspora populations, possess critical resources, or occupy key positions in regional geopolitics. In this sense, the tour is not merely diplomatic but architectural: laying the groundwork for a sustainable, strategic architecture of South-South cooperation.

This architecture is being built on the pillars of shared historical experiences, anti-colonial solidarity, and aspirations for equitable growth. Modi’s engagements are multilayered—featuring not only bilateral dialogues but also trilateral, regional, and multilateral initiatives. This tour of PM Modi is symbolic of a rising civilisational power that is ready to shoulder global responsibilities while remaining

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent diplomatic foray across Africa, South America, and the Caribbean isn’t just a series of symbolic handshakes—it represents a tectonic shift in Bharat’s global outreach strategy and an ambitious recalibration of its foreign policy ethos. As the world navigates an increasingly multipolar reality—shaped by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, mounting U.S.-China tensions, energy insecurity, economic deglobalization, and post-pandemic volatility—Bharat is strategically repositioning itself as the undisputed leader of the Global South. Modi’s meticulously designed multi-nation tour—encompassing Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina, Brazil, and Namibia—is both a declaration and demonstration of Bharat’s intent to lead not just through economic and military strength but through vision, values, and shared developmental goals. It is a loud, clear assertion of Bharat’s desire to rewrite the grammar of global diplomacy—one rooted in equity, sustainability, and civilisational harmony.

rooted in its own ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

RESOURCE DIPLOMACY: SECURING THE ENGINES OF GROWTH

One of the most pressing and visible goals of the diplomatic mission is the pursuit of critical mineral resources. In the 21st-century economy, minerals like lithium, cobalt, uranium, and manganese are as strategically vital as oil was in the 20th century. Bharat’s rapid push toward green energy, electric vehicles, solar manufacturing, and digital infrastructure requires a reliable, diversified, and secure supply of these resources.

Argentina, which holds some of the world’s largest lithium reserves, is indispensable to Bharat’s future in electric mobility and battery storage. Namibia’s rich uranium deposits can catalyze Bharat’s nuclear energy ambitions, especially as the country seeks to balance climate goals with the demands of economic growth. Ghana offers gold, bauxite, and significant agricultural output—materials vital to both industrial and food security goals. By initiating and deepening agreements on exploration, joint ventures, and technological transfers in these areas, Bharat is taking critical steps toward reducing dependence on geopolitically sensitive sources and creating a more resilient supply chain.

This mineral diplomacy is being executed with finesse—partnering rather than extracting, building capacity rather than exploiting. Bharat’s engagements are increasingly accompanied by offers of education, training, environmental standards, and infrastructure investments,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a warm welcome by Ghana President John Mahama on his arrival at Kotoka International Airport in Accra, Ghana, for his first-ever bilateral visit to the country, on Wednesday. PM Modi becomes the first Indian PM to visit Ghana after 30 years. (DD/ANI)

which differentiate New Delhi’s approach from the more transactional models historically associated with China and the West.

DEFENSE AND TECHNOLOGY: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE POWER PARTNERSHIPS

A key highlight of the tour shall be the use of Bharat’s indigenously developed defense platforms as instruments of strategic diplomacy. The Light Combat Aircraft-Tejas, the Akash missile defense system, indigenously manufactured helicopters, and co-development of surveillance technologies have emerged as the vanguard of Bharat’s defense outreach. Deals to be discussed and signed during the tour not only signal Bharat’s intent to emerge as a defense exporter but also position it as a credible and reliable alternative to traditional arms suppliers.

These defense ties also provide strategic depth. They are not merely about hardware but about strategic convergence—long-term training, capacity-building, logistical cooperation, and

joint R&D. In countries wary of Chinese military expansion or struggling to maintain sovereignty over security apparatuses, Bharat’s non-intrusive, partnership-driven approach has found willing collaborators.

Moreover, technology transfer agreements are increasingly integrated into these defense pacts, creating a multidimensional engagement framework. From cyber defense to aerospace collaborations and coastal surveillance systems, these strategic linkages elevate Bharat’s role as a net security provider and empower partner nations to build self-reliant defense capacities.

SOFT POWER AND CIVILISATIONAL DIPLOMACY: BHARAT’S ENDURING ADVANTAGE

Perhaps the most understated yet most powerful facet of Modi’s diplomatic blitz is Bharat’s soft power. The Bhartiya diaspora is no longer just a cultural remnant—it is a strategic asset. In countries like Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, Ghana, and South

Africa, the Bhartiya community has been integrated into political, economic, and cultural spheres. These communities form a ready-made bridge between governments and peoples.

Beyond the diaspora, Bharat’s strengths in education, healthcare, culture, and spirituality offer compelling alternatives to traditional development models. Institutions like the Bharatn Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program, ICCR scholarships, and AYUSH initiatives continue to resonate strongly. Unlike predatory financing or opaque aid programs, Bharat’s development assistance is transparent, capacity-focused, and demand-driven. The wide global appeal of Bollywood, Yoga, classical arts, and spiritual traditions like Vedant and Buddhism further enhances Bharat’s reputation as a benign and enriching partner.

Soft power is increasingly fused with strategic objectives. For example, Bharatn institutions are being encouraged to establish campuses abroad; joint cultural festivals and tourism initiatives are being launched; and digital platforms are being used to teach Bharatn languages and philosophy to global audiences. This marriage of civilisational diplomacy and statecraft is uniquely Bharatn—and increasingly influential.

BRICS: LEADERSHIP AMID FLUX

The BRICS summit, occurring in parallel to Modi’s Global South engagement, reveals major fault lines in global alignments. With Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin absent, Bharat shall find itself in a unique position to guide the agenda. Far from exploiting the absence,

Bharat shall chose responsibility over rhetoric, focusing on constructive proposals, economic cooperation, and institutional strengthening.

Bharat’s position on the proposed BRICS currency is particularly telling. While sympathetic to calls for de-dollarization and financial multipolarity, Bharat resists any hasty or ideologically driven decisions. Its emphasis on bolstering existing bilateral and multilateral trade frameworks, promoting digital financial inclusion, and investing in real infrastructure show a preference for substance over symbolism.

This pragmatic stance has elevated Bharat’s stature in the grouping, allowing it to become the pivot around which future BRICS engagements can revolve. As internal political challenges engulf China and Russia, Bharat’s internal stability and global legitimacy make it a natural leader for the emerging world.

NAVIGATING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY THREATS

Bharat’s outreach must also be understood in the context of its persistent regional challenges. The threats emanating from cross-border terrorism supported by Pakistan and China’s expansionist behavior along its borders and in the maritime domain continue to demand global attention. Modi’s foreign visits serve not only to build alliances but also to internationalize Bharat’s legitimate security concerns.

By aligning with countries affected by similar challenges—be it piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, terrorism in Latin America, or political instability in African nations—Bharat is creating a global coalition of states that share

security interests.

Bharat should also use the tour to call for reforms in global security institutions. Its push for permanent membership in the UN Security Council and leadership roles in multilateral peacekeeping reflect a growing consensus among developing nations that current structures are outdated and unrepresentative.

TOWARD A NEW GLOBAL COMPACT

Prime Minister Modi’s diplomatic offensive is much more than a symbolic assertion of presence—it is a strategic manifestation of a resurgent Bharat ready to co-author the rules of a new world order. With every bilateral agreement signed, cultural exchange initiated, mineral pact discussed, and defense deal negotiated, Bharat is writing a new chapter in its foreign policy playbook.

The tour’s real triumph shall lie in its message: that Bharat, rooted in ancient wisdom yet surging with modern innovation, is uniquely placed to lead a fractured world toward a future of cooperative multipolarity. It blends pragmatism with principle, ambition with humility, and hard interests with soft values. As the Global South looks for a voice that can represent both its grievances and its aspirations, Bharat is not just offering sympathy—it is offering leadership.

In an age where great powers are struggling with internal contradictions and legitimacy crises, Bharat stands as a stable, democratic, civilisational state with global ambitions and the moral bandwidth to pursue them. The Global South gambit is no longer just an idea—it is an unfolding reality, with Bharat at its helm.

ENERGY SECURITY AND USE OF FORCE

A legal inquiry in the Context of G7 2025 and the Strait of Hormuz

OPINION

PROF. ABHINAV MEHROTRA & DR. BISWANATH GUPTA



The G7 Summit in 2025, hosted by Canada, placed energy security at the core of its agenda. This emphasis continues a trend shaped by rising geopolitical instability, the global energy transition, and mounting climate concerns. Simultaneously, Iran has renewed its threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime chokepoint, in response to perceived threats to its national sovereignty. These parallel developments underscore the increasing centrality of

energy security in global diplomacy, economic resilience, and national defense strategies.

Energy security in the supply chain context refers to the reliability, resilience, and sustainability of the systems responsible for the production, transportation, refining, storage, and delivery of energy resources. Disruptions in any segment of this chain whether due to geopolitical conflict, trade restrictions, or sabotage, can result in price shocks, energy shortages, and

broader national security risks. Hence, many states now regard energy security as not merely an economic concern but a strategic imperative.

The Strait of Hormuz is particularly vital in this regard. It is one of the most strategically important waterways globally, serving as the transit route for approximately one-fifth of the world’s petroleum. The Strait is only about 33 kilometers wide at its narrowest point, with shipping lanes just 3 kilometers wide in either direction. Located between Iran to the north and the UAE and Oman to the south, it forms a critical chokepoint in the global energy supply network.

In the 21st century, energy has become the lifeblood of economic growth, national defense, technological progress, and human development. As global energy demand surges and geopolitical uncertainties intensify, energy security has emerged as a top priority for states. Central to this concern is the resilience and reliability of the energy supply chain, a complex network that encompasses production, transportation, refining, storage, and dis-



tribution. The protection of this supply chain is now viewed as a cornerstone of national security and sustainable development.

THE LEGAL QUESTION: CAN STATES USE FORCE TO DEFEND ENERGY SECURITY?

The critical question arising from potential threats to the energy supply chain—such as the closure of the Strait of Hormuz—is whether such disruptions can legally justify the use of force under international law. International law, as codified in the United Nations Charter, only permits the use of force under two ex-

ceptions i.e. authorization by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII (Article 42), in response to a threat to international peace and security and Self-defence under Article 51, in the event of an “armed attack.”

The bar for invoking self-defence is high. Jurisprudence from the International Court of Justice (ICJ), including the *Nicaragua* case, the *Wall Advisory Opinion* (Palestine), and the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* advisory opinion, confirms that self-defence is lawful only in response to an actual armed attack not merely the threat or economic consequence of one.

A disruption in the energy supply chain even if economically catastrophic, does not by itself constitute an armed attack unless it is accompanied by use of military force or equivalent coercion. Mere blockades, embargoes, or threats without kinetic action would not fulfill this threshold. Therefore, any use of force in retaliation to such energy disruptions would be unlawful unless explicitly authorized by the Security Council or in response to an armed attack within the meaning of Article 51.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The energy security debate is often framed by and for the Global North, where strategic autonomy and energy diversification strategies offer a buffer against disruption. However, the Global South faces disproportionate vulnerabilities in energy security, and any disruption—especially in maritime routes like the Strait of Hormuz—has amplified consequences for developing economies.

Many nations in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America are net energy importers, heavily depen-

dent on fossil fuel supplies transiting through chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz. These nations lack the strategic reserves, diversified suppliers, or technological capacity to absorb sudden shocks in energy supply. Moreover, their financial exposure to energy price volatility directly impacts food security, industrial production, and inflation control.

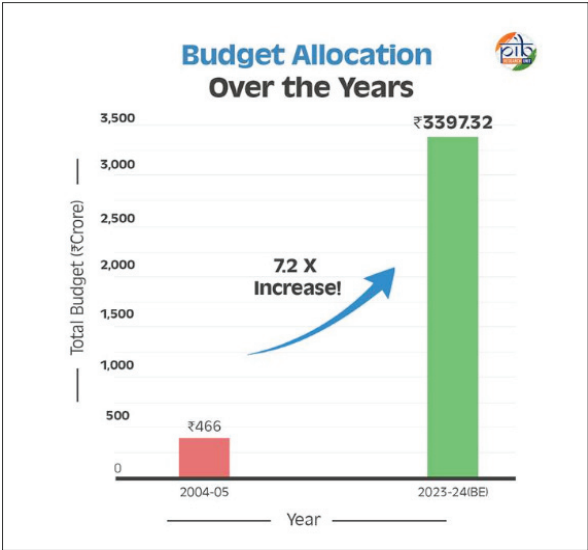
While G7 countries may respond to threats by invoking energy diplomacy, strategic reserves, or military readiness, countries in the Global South do not have similar options. This unequal capacity to respond can create cascading development challenges, deepening energy poverty, economic inequality, and political instability. This could erode the international legal order and widen the gap between North and South in both energy governance and security policy.

In conclusion, while energy security has rightly emerged as a strategic priority, it cannot be used as a carte blanche justification for the use of force. Unless a supply chain disruption qualifies as an “armed attack” under Article 51 of the

UN Charter meeting the strict threshold set by the ICJ it does not authorize unilateral military action. As the G7 emphasizes energy security and regional tensions flare in areas like the Strait of Hormuz, it is imperative that states remain committed to the rule of law and cooperative mechanisms.

For the Global South, these developments present both risks and opportunities: risks of marginalization in legal discourse and impact from disruptions, but also opportunities to push for a more equitable and inclusive global energy governance regime, one that respects sovereignty, protects shared infrastructure, and promotes development-centred security.

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TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

On a humid July morning in Delhi, the corridors of Shastri Bhawan buzzed with an unusually upbeat energy. Ministers clicked photos with medal-winning athletes. Television anchors tossed around phrases like “game-changer” and “Olympic leap.” And Prime Minister Narendra Modi, never one to underplay a national vision, took to social media to call it “a landmark day for India’s sporting future.”

The occasion? The Union Cabinet’s formal adoption of the **National Sports Policy 2025**—a sweeping, 88-page document that promises nothing short of transformation. Not just medals. Not just fitness. Transformation.

This was not the first time India had promised to reinvent its sports ecosystem. From Nehru’s vision of national unity through physical culture, to Indira Gandhi’s post-Asian Games infrastructure push, to Khelo India’s youth movement—India’s sporting dreams have always run faster than its athletes. But 2025 feels different.

This time, there’s data. There’s a five-pillar doctrine. There’s a countdown to the

2036 Olympics. And above all, there’s ambition—rooted in geopolitics, youth policy, and soft power.

But is this truly a turning point—or merely the latest chapter in a long history of missed podiums and policy déjà vu?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on July 1, 2025, that the Union Cabinet had approved the **National Sports Policy 2025** (*Khelo Bharat Niti*), it was heralded as a “landmark day” for Indian sports. Promising to turn India into a “global sporting powerhouse,” the policy outlines five foundational pillars: **excellence, economy, social inclusion, mass participation, and integration with education**. But is this a revolution—or a repackaged version of past dreams?

India’s tryst with sporting policy began in the 1950s when Prime Minister **Jawaharlal Nehru** saw sport as part of nation-building. The **All-India Council of Sports (1954)** was created to advise on national programs, though funding was minimal. While India dominated Olympic hockey (six golds from 1928–1956), success in other sports was scarce.

The **1982 Asian Games** under Indira Gandhi



New Delhi will welcome the world’s best para-athletes next year, as India holds the championships for the first time. [athleticsweekly](#)

BIG LEAP: FROM NEHRU'S 1950s POLICY TO ‘KHELO BHARAT NITI’

India’s bold 2025 sports policy aims to turn grassroots grit into Olympic gold—merging nationalism, education, and economy in a historic play for global sporting power.



CSK, MI, RCB, and KKR-have exceeded \$100 million in brand value for the first time. [ANI](#)



Players of Kerala Women Volleyball win the finals of the 71st Senior National Volleyball Championship (women) against Railways on February 10, 2023.

marked a significant inflection point, prompting the launch of India’s **first National Sports Policy in 1984**. That era saw the founding of the **Sports Authority of India (SAI)**, aimed at talent identification and infrastructure. However, the lack of a long-

term strategy meant India’s overall Olympic medal tally remained low for decades. **THE 2001 POLICY AND THE IPL ERA**

The **National Sports Policy 2001**, enacted during Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s tenure, aimed to balance mass participation with excellence. Yet execution faltered, with bureaucratic overlap, minimal state accountability, and sporting federations plagued by infighting.

Simultaneously, **cricket soared** to astronomical heights. The launch of the **IPL in 2008** made cricket a \$10 billion behemoth, leaving Olympic and traditional sports sidelined. Cricket’s governance by the **BCCI**, which operates outside of government purview, only widened this gap.

ENTER KHELO INDIA

With **Khelo India (2018)**, the Modi government finally began revitalizing the athletic ecosystem. The program offered **monthly stipends of Rs 10,000** to select athletes, built **1,000+ training centers**, and rolled out major **infrastructure grants** (Rs 3,074 crore by 2024).

Crucially, Khelo India targeted youth—its athletes returned with 42 medals at the 2022 Asian Games. The campaign was a success in terms of visibility and support, laying the foundation for the more comprehensive

NSP 2025.

GLOBAL LENS: HOW INDIA COMPARES

India’s policy has striking similarities to **China’s state-controlled sports system**. The **General Administration of Sport of China** centrally manages athlete training, medal targeting, and infrastructure. China’s focus on specific Olympic disciplines—like diving, weightlifting, and badminton—has brought extraordinary returns.

NSP 2025 borrows this logic by identifying medal-

heavy events and emphasizing **data analytics and performance tracking** to boost returns. However, unlike China’s full-time athlete programs, India’s still rely heavily on schools, NGOs, and state federations.

THE AMERICAN COLLEGIATE MODEL

In the U.S., Olympic athletes largely emerge from **NCAA universities**, with no central government oversight. India, through NSP 2025, attempts to **mimic parts of this model** by integrating sports into the **National Education Policy**

(NEP 2020) and promoting **dual-career pathways**. However, without the NCAA’s multi-billion-dollar ecosystem, India will depend on public-private investment and long-term coaching infrastructure.

CRICKET AND THE “CULTURAL SPORTS DIVIDE”

NSP 2025 notably **does not regulate cricket**, but it seeks to **replicate the IPL’s league model** across sports like kabaddi, football, and even athletics. India now boasts professional leagues in over six sports, and the policy encourages more through **CSR incentives and broadcasting partnerships**.

While cricket remains financially dominant, NSP 2025 supports **culturally rooted games** like kho-kho and mallakhamb—claim-

ing this will build “**sporting pride beyond the pitch**.”

MONEY, MANUFACTURING & THE SPORTS ECONOMY

One of NSP 2025’s most innovative features is its economic pitch: turning India into a **sports economy hub**. This includes:

- Encouraging **sports start-ups** and sports-tech innovation
- Boosting **sports goods manufacturing** under *Make in India*
- Incentivizing **sports tourism** (e.g., international event hosting)
- Integrating sports into **urban planning** and smart cities

Such framing echoes China’s **sports-industrial complex**, but also aligns with India’s larger goals in job creation and global branding.

SOFT POWER AND THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Much like China’s 2008 Beijing Olympics or Qatar’s FIFA 2022 strategy, India’s vision ties **international image** to sport. The goal is clear: become a **top-10 Olympic medal country by 2036**, and perhaps even **host the Olympics** in the 2040s.

The policy even seeks to mobilize the **Indian diaspora** through sport, using embassies and consulates to organize games abroad—marking a new chapter in **diaspora diplomacy**.

THE GROUND REALITY

Despite all the promises, **infrastructure gaps, federation politics, and social inequalities** remain hurdles. Grassroots athletes continue to lack:

- Access to **quality coaching**
- Adequate **nutrition and medical care**
- Safe **playgrounds in urban slums and rural zones**

The **success of NSP 2025**, like its predecessors, will depend not on intentions but **implementation and accountability**. The proposed **National Sports Board** could be transformative—if insulated from political meddling.



PT Usha’s haul at the 1985 Asian Championships carved a golden legacy. India have hosted the Asian Games twice, including the inaugural edition in 1951. [Wikimedia Commons](#)



Unlike India’s government-led model, the U.S. relies on decentralized college and club sports. NCAA universities produced 75% of its 2020 Olympians and 82% of medalists. [warubi-sports](#)

NSP 2025: Ambition meets structure			
The National Sports Policy 2025 builds upon Khelo India but broadens its canvas. Key initiatives include:			
Feature	NSP 2025	2001 Policy	Khelo India (2018)
Mass Participation	Fitness indices for schools, “playfield” mapping	Promotion of sports culture	School-level talent hunt
Elite Excellence	Olympic medal targets for 2036; AI-based coaching	Centres of Excellence	Stipends and diet support
Infrastructure	PPP in stadiums; digital sports mapping	No clear mechanism	Stadium renovation funding
Education Integration	Linked with NEP 2020; curriculum inclusion	Physical education focus	Games in schools
Traditional Sports	Focus on kabaddi, mallakhamb	Rarely mentioned	Some support
Governance	National Sports Board, dispute tribunal	Vague accountability	Ministry-driven
The government also plans to introduce a regulatory Sports Board —to streamline athlete registration, settle disputes, and ensure transparency in funding and selections. It is one of the most ambitious governance overhauls since the Sports Development Code of 2011.			

JAWAI DAM – A TREASURE OF NATURE AND WILDLIFE

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

Jawai Dam is located in the Pali district of Rajasthan, near the towns of Sumerpur and Bera. It is more than just a water reservoir—it is a beautiful blend of raw nature, rich wildlife, and tribal life. Surrounded by rocky hills and open landscapes, the area becomes especially scenic during the monsoon season, making it a peaceful and adventurous getaway for nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts.

INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION

Constructed across the Jawai River, a tributary of the Luni River, Jawai Dam is the largest dam in western Rajasthan. It is situated about 90 km from Udaipur and 140 km from Jodhpur, making it an accessible weekend escape from major cities in the state.

The dam is surrounded by granite hills, scrub forests, and rural settlements. The landscape transforms beautifully during the monsoon months (July to September), when the reservoir fills with rainwater, and the surroundings turn lush and green.

HISTORY AND CONSTRUCTION

The Jawai Dam was constructed in 1957 by the Government of Rajasthan with the aim of controlling floods, supporting irrigation, and supplying drinking water to nearby regions including Pali, Jalore, and



parts of Jodhpur.

Jawai Dam, inaugurated in 1957, was constructed on the Jawai River with the primary objectives of irrigation, flood control, and providing drinking water. It plays a vital role in supporting agriculture and daily water needs across parts of western Rajasthan. When at full capacity, the dam spans an impressive area of approximately 500 square kilometers, making it one of the few places in India where leopards live freely among

component of local water management.

Built using traditional masonry and concrete techniques, the dam is a crucial component of the region's water management system. Over the years, its surrounding ecology has evolved into a unique and vibrant ecosystem.

Jawai is renowned for its thriving leopard population, making it one of the few places in India where leopards live freely among

humans. Unlike dense forests, these elusive big cats reside in the rocky outcrops and natural caves of the region's granite hills, earning Jawai the title "Leopard Hills." Remarkably, they coexist peacefully with the local Rabari community. The area also shelters hyenas, sloth bears, Indian foxes, jungle cats, and crocodiles in the dam's waters. During monsoon and winter, Jawai transforms into a bird-watcher's haven, attracting



Unlike dense forests, these elusive big cats reside in the rocky outcrops and natural caves of the region's granite hills, earning Jawai the title "Leopard Hills." Remarkably, they coexist peacefully with the local Rabari community.

here for centuries. Dressed in traditional red turbans and black garments, the Rabaris rear cattle and goats and worship the leopards as sacred beings.

This peaceful coexistence is often cited as a model of human-wildlife harmony. The leopards, surprisingly, do not attack the villagers or their livestock, and the locals believe this is due to mutual respect and deep-rooted spiritual beliefs.

TOURISM AND SAFARI EXPERIENCE

Over the past decade, Jawai

has become an eco-tourism hotspot, especially for wildlife enthusiasts, photographers, and those looking to experience Rajasthan's lesser-known charms.

TOURIST ATTRACTION

Leopard Safari: Conducted in 4x4 jeeps, safaris take you through boulder-strewn hills to spot leopards in their natural rocky habitat.

Bird Watching: Early morning and late afternoon are ideal for birdwatching by the dam or in nearby fields.

Village Walks: Interact

with the Rabari community and learn about their lifestyle.

Trekking: Explore granite trails and hilltops for panoramic views of the dam and countryside.

Photography Tours: Jawai is a goldmine for landscape, wildlife, and cultural photography.

ECOLOGICAL AND STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

Jawai Dam is not only a tourist destination—it plays a vital role in water management for western Rajasthan. It helps in:

Irrigating over 100,000 hectares of agricultural land.

Supplying drinking water to thousands of people in Pali and Jalore districts.

Recharging groundwater levels in nearby areas.

However, in years of drought or weak monsoons, water levels dip drastically, creating challenges for both ecology and local livelihoods. Conservation efforts are ongoing to maintain balance and preserve the fragile ecosystem.

Jawai Dam is not just a reservoir—it is a living, breathing wilderness where man and nature share a rare symbiosis. Whether you are chasing monsoon clouds, seeking leopard trails, or looking to unwind amid tribal hospitality, Jawai offers an offbeat yet deeply enriching experience. As more people discover this hidden gem, efforts must continue to promote sustainable tourism, protect its wildlife, and honor its cultural legacy.

Amba Bagh Safari: Exploring the wild side of Jaipur

TDG NETWORK

Amba Bagh Safari, located in the scenic Aravalli hills near Amer Fort in Jaipur, is one of the city's newest and most exciting eco-tourism destinations. While Jaipur is widely known for its royal palaces, historic forts, and vibrant culture, Amba Bagh Safari offers a refreshing and wild escape into nature. Just a few kilometers from the city center, this safari brings you close to the wilderness without leaving the boundaries of the Pink City. Developed as part of Rajasthan's efforts to promote sustainable tourism and conservation, the safari provides an adventurous experience filled with wildlife, forest trails, and panoramic hill views.

The safari is located near Amer, close to Nahargarh Biological Park and Jal Mahal, making it part of a green corridor that runs through Jaipur's northern hills. It is about 10 kilometers from the heart of Jaipur and can be easily accessed by road. The journey to the safari gate itself is scenic, offering glimpses of the surrounding hills and forest.

Unlike the grand architecture of Amer Fort, Amba Bagh Safari immerses you in raw and rugged nature. The safari path winds through dense bushes, ancient granite hills, dried streams, and rocky clearings. This area, part of the ancient Aravalli range, has long been a natural habitat for leopards and other wildlife. Now it has been opened to tourists in a controlled and eco-friendly manner, with watch towers, trails, and designated viewing areas developed by the forest department.

The main attraction of Amba Bagh Safari is its population of leopards. These majestic animals roam

freely in the rocky hills and are often sighted during the safari, especially in the early mornings and late afternoons. Unlike dense forests where visibility is low, the open terrain of the Aravallis makes leopard spotting more likely. Alongside leopards, the area is home to hyenas, desert foxes, jungle cats, Indian civets, monitor lizards, and a variety of bird species. Peafowls, eagles, vultures, and owls are commonly seen, especially during the cooler months. In some nearby zones, spotted deer and nilgai also roam freely.

The safari lasts for around two to two and a half hours and is conducted in open 4x4 gypsy vehicles. There are two daily slots for safari rides – one in the morning and one in the late afternoon. Each vehicle is accompanied by a forest guide and a driver, and can accommodate up to six tourists. Tickets can be booked online through the Rajasthan Forest Department's website or purchased at authorized counters near Amer Fort. Booking in advance is advised, especially during weekends and peak tourist seasons.

What sets Amba Bagh Safari apart from other wildlife parks is the combination of natural beauty and heritage. During the safari, visitors come across old temples, ruined forts, and ancient hunting lodges hidden deep in the jungle. These structures, some of which date back centuries, add a mysterious and historic charm to the safari experience. Many of these ruins are now partially reclaimed by nature, offering hauntingly beautiful photo opportunities and a glimpse into Rajasthan's royal past.

The area around the safari is also inhabited by tribal



communities such as the Meenas and Rabaris. Their traditional settlements can be seen near the safari trails, adding a cultural element to the journey. These tribes have lived in harmony with the region's wildlife for generations, and their presence adds authenticity to the experience.

Amba Bagh Safari is part of a larger conservation and eco-tourism mission. The initiative aims to reduce pressure on Jaipur's more crowded tourist spots while promoting opportunities for local guides,

drivers, and villagers, and strict rules are followed to protect the environment. Plastic is banned, vehicle numbers are limited, and noise is discouraged to mini-

mize disturbance to animals.

The best time to visit Amba Bagh Safari is between October and March when the weather is pleasant and wildlife sightings are more

frequent. During the monsoon months of July to September, the hills turn green and the landscape becomes lush, although leopard sightings can be slightly more challenging due to thick vegetation. Summer visits are not recommended as temperatures can become extremely hot, often crossing 40 degrees Celsius.

Photography enthusiasts will find Amba Bagh Safari a rewarding experience. The open terrain, dramatic lighting, and variety of animals offer excellent opportunities to capture the raw beauty of the region. Whether it's a leopard basking on a rock, a

peacock dancing in the wild, or the ruins of a forgotten temple, the safari provides countless subjects for the camera.

Visitors can combine the safari with nearby attractions such as Amer Fort, Panna Meena ka Kund, Jal Mahal, and Nahargarh Fort. The area also has several cafes, craft shops, and museums that showcase the local culture. These places can be easily explored before or after the safari, making it a full-day experience.

Tourists are advised to wear earth-toned clothes, carry water, avoid strong perfumes, and maintain si-

lence during the safari. Following the guide's instructions is essential for both safety and maximizing the chances of animal sightings.

Amba Bagh Safari is more than just a wildlife trip. It's a journey into the hidden wild heart of Jaipur, where ancient hills meet living creatures, and history sleeps quietly under trees. This lesser-known but rapidly popularizing destination offers a peaceful yet thrilling alternative to the city's more crowded spots. For nature lovers, photographers, and adventure seekers, Amba Bagh Safari is an experience not to be missed.

UK PM FACES LABOUR REBELLION OVER WELFARE CUTS, NEEDS CHANGE

Labour's welfare vote rebellion exposes urgent need for Starmer's strategic shift to unify the party, rebuild trust, and secure broader electoral support.

In the often unforgiving world of politics, when leaders begin to lose ground, they rarely admit outright defeat. Instead, they speak of listening, of understanding, of addressing concerns — all carefully crafted phrases designed to convey responsiveness without acknowledging failure. “Your anger has been heard,” says the contrite minister in the wake of a humiliating by-election result. “We are addressing the concerns,” pledges the government spokesperson on the eve of a backbench rebellion. Yet, by the time these words are uttered, it is frequently too late to avert damage.

Such is the case for the Labour government's handling of its internal dissent over proposed disability



Keir Starmer at a reception for public sector workers, Downing Street, London, 1 July 2025. Agencies

benefit cuts. The party's response to backbench unrest has been reactive rather than proactive, allowing tensions to fester until rebellion threatened to derail a flagship welfare bill. The moment to engage seriously with Labour MPs' substantive objections was long before the mutiny became a credible threat to the government's legislative agenda. Instead, intervention came amid a chaotic scramble to save the bill from defeat.

The Bill's Precarious State

The bill was not defeated outright, but it now sails perilously close to sinking. Concessions were made hastily and often clumsily, diluting and deferring the controversial reforms in a desperate bid to placate dissenters. Despite this, 49 Labour MPs broke ranks and voted against the bill, an extraordinary act of defiance signalling deep divisions

within the party.

This episode exposes the complex challenges confronting Labour's leadership. At its heart lies a widening gap between government policy and the expectations of the party's parliamentary base, compounded by growing distrust from traditional supporters who view welfare reform as a betrayal of core principles. The government's attempts to frame the proposed changes as “necessary reform” have failed to convince those who see them as callous austerity measures dressed in technocratic language. The Treasury's unmistakable influence looms large, amplifying concerns that compassion is subordinate to cost-cutting imperatives.

Welfare as a Symbolic Frontline

For Labour MPs, disability benefits represent more than a policy dispute; they

are a symbolic frontline. Welfare is a defining issue of the party's identity, where principles of social justice are expected to trump fiscal constraints. The leadership's failure to anticipate and adequately respond

eroded. This decline is attributable to a confluence of factors, but two stand out. First, the absence of a clearly articulated, coherent policy agenda that inspires both the party's base and the wider electorate. Second, Keir Starmer's apparent struggle to inspire confidence or articulate a compelling vision of Labour's purpose in government.

These two problems are closely intertwined. The 2024 election campaign was characterised by disciplined message control and a cautious avoidance of the expansive left-wing rhetoric that might have unsettled swing voters. While this strategy succeeded in neutralising fears of a radical Labour government, it failed to galvanise enthusiasm or cultivate a passionate coalition of supporters. The election result was less a mandate for Labour's

candidates, confident in the inevitability of a Conservative defeat. This phenomenon masked latent vulnerabilities in Labour's coalition that have become increasingly apparent.

With a commanding majority of 174 seats, Labour's focus initially centred on consolidating gains in its “red wall” heartlands, particularly in constituencies susceptible to Reform UK's populist appeal. The party's messaging accordingly shifted to appeal to these voters through cautious Brexit rhetoric and a tougher stance on immigration. However, this strategic recalibration alienated liberal and progressive voters, many of whom defected to the Liberal Democrats and Greens, undermining Labour's broader electoral coalition.

Warnings from Labour MPs about neglecting the

housing, and education, Labour has failed to arrest the tide of frustration and anger driven by austerity and welfare retrenchment. This has created an opening for figures like Nigel Farage and Reform UK to present themselves as radical alternatives, harnessing public anger with promises to disrupt established institutions and upend the status quo. Starmer, by contrast, is a pragmatist and institution-builder, unwilling to embrace the politics of upheaval.

This fundamental difference between Starmer's cautious, system-oriented leadership and the insurgent populism of Reform UK shapes the current political landscape. Starmer must navigate the competing demands of addressing Reform voters' concerns—particularly on immigration and national identity—while retaining the support of Labour's liberal and progressive base.

Polling also confirms that the NHS and cost of living crises remain paramount concerns for swing voters across the political spectrum. Immigration continues to be a potent issue that Labour cannot ignore. Credible assurances on border control and national security are essential to broad electoral appeal.

However, Starmer can—and must—do more to engage the liberal-progressive electorate by emphasizing urgent climate action framed in terms of economic benefit and energy security. Equally important is a clear stance on the destabilizing influence of global autocrats such as Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, whose corrosive leadership styles have alienated voters across party lines. The UK electorate broadly repudiates such figures, including the Reform movement's alignment with their values.

Anticipating the Election

Downing Street's focus on Nigel Farage as Labour's main adversary, dismissing figures like Kemi Badenoch, reflects this strategic calculation. It anticipates an electoral scenario in which Labour seeks tactical cooperation with the Liberal Democrats and Greens to block a populist-nationalist insurgency intent on dismantling democratic norms.

Yet, this approach carries risks. If Labour continues to alienate its progressive supporters, it risks defections and voter apathy, with many opting either for protest votes or abstention.

● TDG NETWORK

TDG EXPLAINER

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

Recent polling commissioned by veteran US Democratic strategist Stanley Greenberg sheds light on this delicate balancing act. It shows that nearly 15% of Liberal Democrat voters and 10% of Greens are open to supporting Labour under Starmer, while only 3% of Conservative voters and 1% of Reform supporters express similar openness. This suggests the liberal-left remains a critical, persuadable bloc within Labour's broader coalition.

agenda and more a tactical rejection of the Conservative Party.

The Fragile Coalition

Indeed, Labour's fragile coalition began to unravel even before polling day. The widespread media narrative predicting a landslide Labour victory arguably suppressed turnout among progressive voters who felt free to support third-party

progressive flank were initially dismissed by the leadership. But the recent rebellion over benefit cuts, coinciding with the government's first anniversary, demands urgent strategic reflection.

Weak Policy Efforts

The reality is clear: despite significant investments in public services such as the NHS, social

to internal concerns has compounded the sense of alienation and suspicion that now clouds relations between Downing Street and the backbenches.

Popularity and Purpose

Yet, the difficulties faced by Labour transcend the welfare bill controversy. Since winning power just over a year ago, the party's popularity has gradually

Musk, Trump, and the deportation debate: What's actually at stake?

The already turbulent relationship between former U.S. President Donald Trump and Tesla CEO Elon Musk appears to have escalated to new heights. In a recent media interaction, Trump made veiled threats toward Musk, suggesting that the billionaire tech mogul might “lose a lot more” than just federal subsidies if he continues to challenge the administration's stance. The remarks have sparked widespread speculation and concern, with some wondering: could Donald Trump actually deport Elon Musk?



In this photo from March 14, 2025, US President Donald Trump and Elon Musk (R) speak in the Oval Office before departing the White House in Washington, DC. File Photo

to his willingness to end government support for his companies.

POLITICAL THEATER

While the deportation comments appear legally unfounded, they underscore an ongoing political battle between the two prominent figures. Trump has become increasingly critical of Musk, particularly over what he views as undue reliance on government subsidies and the billionaire's growing influence in media and technology.

In an unusual twist, Trump even invoked the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)—a fictional-sounding agency he created in January—to suggest that Musk could face regulatory consequences. “We might have to put DOGE on Elon,” Trump said. “DOGE is the monster that might have to go back and eat Elon. Wouldn't that be terrible?”

Ironically, Musk was initially appointed to head this very department, a move that was celebrated as a win for innovation and efficiency in government spending. That relationship now appears to

have soured, with Trump framing Musk as the ultimate example of corporate welfare.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The broader implications of this feud stretch far beyond Twitter spats. If Trump were to return to the White House, policy changes could potentially harm Musk's business empire. Trump's “big, beautiful bill,” a not-yet-passed legislative proposal aimed at slashing clean energy subsidies, would hit Tesla and other Musk ventures hard. Federal tax credits for electric vehicles and NASA contracts for SpaceX could be at risk.

In effect, Trump's threats might not be about literal deportation but rather a warning about Musk's financial dependency on federal support. Cutting off those streams of income could, in Trump's words, force Musk to “shut his business and leave America”—though that, too, is highly unlikely given Musk's diversified global assets and operations.

● TDG NETWORK

Rare earth elements and their significance in world diplomacy

Countries with abundant REE reserves, especially China, hold significant leverage over global supply chains. As demand grows for electric vehicles, wind turbines, and advanced electronics, control over REE production becomes a geopolitical asset. Nations like the U.S., EU members, and Australia are investing in domestic mining and diversification to reduce dependency. This competition over access, processing, and trade of REEs has turned them into tools of economic influence and national security, making them central to 21st-century diplomatic and trade strategies.

Rare earth elements (REEs) are a group of 17 metallic elements crucial to modern technology and industry, despite the misleading name—they're not especially rare in Earth's crust. Their unique chemical and physical properties make them essential for producing high-performance electronics, renewable energy infrastructure, and many everyday technologies.

Rare earth elements include the 15 lanthanides on the periodic table (atomic numbers 57 to 71), along with scandium (21) and yttrium (39), which are often grouped with the lanthanides because they occur in the same mineral deposits and share similar properties.

Though relatively abundant in nature, REEs are rarely found in concentrated, mineable forms. They typically occur mixed with other minerals, making extraction and refinement costly and environmentally challenging.



“Interestingly, rare earth elements are not actually ‘rare,’” says Dr. Lauren Macreadie, senior lecturer in chemistry at the University of New South Wales. “They are usually dispersed rather than found in large, concentrated deposits. They are often mixed with other elements forming ore deposits and are rarely found in pure form.”

Promethium, the only radioactive rare earth element, is extremely scarce due to its short half-life, making it virtually absent in mineable quantities.

WHY ARE REES IMPORTANT?

Despite their small presence in most devices, rare earth elements play a vital role in enabling key functions of modern technology. They are used in smartphones, TV screens, electric vehicles, headphones, and advanced medical devices. Even a few grams can transform how a product functions.

“These elements are critical to many of our everyday gadgets,” says Macreadie. “Without them, many of the technologies we rely on simply would not work.”

Dr. George Barakos, a mining engineering lecturer at Curtin University,

adds that REEs improve the performance and durability of electronics while reducing size and energy consumption. For example, older mobile phones lacked REEs and were heavier with shorter battery lives. Today's smartphones are lighter and last longer largely thanks to these elements.

MAGNETISM AND MINIATURISATION

One of the most important uses of rare earths is in high-performance magnets. Elements like neodymium and samarium are used to create permanent magnets that are stronger and more resistant to demagnetisation than conventional ones.

“These are the strongest magnets in the world,” says Macreadie. “They're used in electric car motors, wind turbines, MRI machines, and hard drives.”

In electric vehicles, rare earth magnets convert electrical energy into mechanical motion. In wind turbines, they convert mechanical motion into electricity. Each turbine contains around 60 kg of rare earth elements. Their atomic structures allow high magnetic output in smaller, lighter forms—essential for compact, energy-efficient

Nations like the U.S., EU members, and Australia are investing in domestic mining and diversification to reduce dependency. This competition over access, processing, and trade of REEs has turned them into tools of economic influence.

devices.

MINING AND GLOBAL SUPPLY

Mining rare earths is a complex process involving several stages: extraction, separation, and purification—often requiring 99.9999% purity to fully utilise their properties.

Barakos explains, “You mine them in concentration, then separate them from each other, and purify them. That's when we can use the whole spectrum of their properties.”

China is the world's leading producer of rare earths, controlling the majority of global supply. Other major players include the U.S., Australia, and Russia, though global access to these deposits is uneven.

Strategic and Industrial Significance

Rare earth elements are indispensable in clean energy and tech innovation. They are used in batteries, lasers, microchips, catalytic converters, and even in pharmaceuticals.

“In many of these applications, rare earth elements have no practical substitutes,” Macreadie notes. “That's why they're considered critical materials.”

● TDG NETWORK

QUAD GROUP CALLS FOR PUNISHING PERPETRATORS OF PAHALGAM ATTACK

Quad condemns Pahalgam attack, urges justice, UN cooperation, and opposes coercive actions in Indo-Pacific region.

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

The Quad grouping has called for bringing the perpetrators, organisers and financiers of the Pahalgam terror attack to justice without any delay and urged UN member nations to extend cooperation for it.

The foreign ministers of the four-nation grouping condemned the April 22 attack in the strongest terms that claimed the lives of 26 civilians and firmly pitched for action against cross-border terrorism.

In a joint statement, the ministers, however, did not mention Pakistan or the four-day military conflict between the Indian and Pakistani militaries in May.

The meeting at the US capital city on Tuesday was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and her Japanese counterpart Takeshi Iwaya.

THE CONDEMNATION

- 26 civilians killed, including 25 Indians and 1 Nepali.
- Perpetrators, organisers, and financiers must be brought to justice.
- Quad urges UN members to cooperate under international law.
- No direct mention of Pakistan or recent India-Pak military conflict.
- Foreign ministers from India, US, Australia, and Japan attended meeting.
- Quad to launch "Ports of the Future" partnership in Mumbai this year.
- Expressed serious concern over East and South China Seas situation.
- Rejected unilateral attempts to alter status quo by force or coercion.



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in a group picture with delegations at the All Quad Foreign Ministers meeting, in Washington, D.C. on July 1, 2025. ANI

kar, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and her Japanese counterpart Takeshi Iwaya.

The Quad foreign min-

isters condemned "in the strongest terms" the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, that claimed the lives of 25 Indian nationals and one Nepali citizen, while injuring several others.

"We express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims and extend our heartfelt wishes for a swift and full recovery to all those injured," they said.

Jaishankar, US energy secy explore deeper energy ties

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a meeting with US Energy Secretary Chris Wright in Washington, DC on Tuesday (local time) and spoke about the energy transformation underway in India. The two leaders discussed opportunities for a deeper energy partnership between the two nations.

In a post shared on X, Jaishankar stated, "A useful conversation with US @ENERGY @SecretaryWright in Washington DC this evening. Spoke about the energy transformation underway in India. And opportunities for a deeper India-US energy partnership."

EAM Jaishankar met US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth at the Pentagon, where he highlighted the strategic importance of India-US defence ties, describing them as "one of the most consequential pillars" of the bilateral relationship.

"Great to meet @SecDef Pete Hegseth in Washington DC today. Had a productive conversation on advancing

the India-US defence partnership, building on growing convergences of interests, capabilities and responsibilities," Jaishankar posted on X.

Jaishankar is on an official visit to the US at the invitation of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. During the visit, he participated in the Quad Foreign Ministers Meeting (QFMM).

In a post on X, Jaishankar stated, "Just finished a very productive meeting of Quad Foreign Ministers in Washington DC. Discussed how to make Quad more focused and impactful on contemporary opportunities and challenges. Today's gathering will strengthen strategic stability in the Indo-Pacific and keep it free and open."

EAM Jaishankar met US State Secretary Marco Rubio on the sidelines of Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting (QFMM) in Washington and discussed bilateral partnership between both countries in the field of security, critical technologies, connectivity, energy and mobility.

Sharing a post on X, Jaishankar stated, "A pleasure meeting US @SecRubio this

afternoon, on the sidelines of Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting. Discussed our bilateral partnership, including trade, security, critical technologies, connectivity, energy and mobility. Shared perspectives on regional and global developments."

S Jaishankar also met with his Australian counterpart Penny Wong on the sidelines of the summit.

"Good as always to catch up with FM Penny Wong of Australia. Our discussions were reflective of the trust and comfort of our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Look forward to welcoming her in India," Jaishankar wrote on X.

EAM S Jaishankar held a bilateral meeting with his Japanese counterpart, Takeshi Iwaya, on the sidelines of the QFMM, focusing on preparations for the annual India-Japan Prime Ministerial Summit later this year. In his opening remarks, Jaishankar exuded confidence on adding to the dynamism and the quality of the relationship between both nations during the upcoming summit.

'Two Chinese nationals charged with spying inside US'

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Two Chinese nationals have been charged with spying inside the United States on behalf of Beijing, including by taking photographs of a naval base, coordinating a cash dead-drop and participating in efforts to recruit members of the military who they thought might be open to working for Chinese intelligence.

The case, filed in federal court in San Francisco and unsealed Monday, is the latest Justice Department prosecution to target what officials say are persistent efforts by the Chinese government to secretly collect intelligence about American military capabilities -- a practice laid bare in startling fashion two years ago with China's launching of a surveillance balloon that US officials ultimately shot down over the coast of South Carolina.

"This case underscores the Chinese government's sustained and aggressive effort to infiltrate our military and undermine our national security from within," Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a statement announcing the case.

"The Justice Department will not stand by while hostile nations embed spies in our country -- we will expose foreign operatives, hold their agents to account, and protect the American people from covert threats to our national security."

Officials identified the defendants as Yulance Chen, 38, who arrived in the US on a visa in 2015 and later became a lawful permanent resident, and Liren "Ryan" Lai,

39, who prosecutors say lives in China but travelled to Texas this past spring and was part of an effort to supervise clandestine espionage operations on behalf of China's Ministry of State Security or MSS.

The two were arrested on charges of secretly doing China's bidding without registering as foreign agents with the Justice Department, as required by law.

It was not immediately clear if they had lawyers.



Liu Pengyu, a spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, said he had no information about the specific case but asserted that allegations against China "have no facts or evidence" and that "the US has never stopped its espionage activities against China". According to an FBI affidavit filed in connection with the case, investigators believe Lai had been developing Chen to be a Chinese intelligence asset since at least mid-2021.

Their activities, the FBI says, included coordinating on a dead-drop of at least USD 10,000 in cash to another person who was operating at the direction of the MSS.

Hope US can complete major pending defence sales to India: Defence Secy Hegseth

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

The United States has expressed optimism about completing several major pending defense sales to India, underscoring the growing strategic partnership between the two nations. This was conveyed during a meeting between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth at the Pentagon on July 1, 2025.

Secretary Hegseth emphasized the shared security concerns that both countries face in the Indo-Pacific region. "The U.S. and India are mutually aware of the security concerns in the region, and both nations have the ability to counter that threat together," he said, highlighting the importance of the evolving defense collaboration.

Hegseth also expressed satisfaction with the successful integration of U.S. defense equipment into India's military inventory. Building on this progress,



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and U.S. Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth meet in Washington DC on July 1, 2025. Source: X/@DrSJaishankar

he stated the U.S. hopes to finalize several major pending defense deals soon. These agreements are expected to deepen defense industrial cooperation, enhance co-production efforts, and improve interoperability between Indian and American forces. He also mentioned the forthcoming signing of a new 10-year Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership, a move anticipated to further cement their strategic ties.

Minister Jaishankar reiterated the significance of the defense partnership, describing it as "one of the most consequential pillars"

of the bilateral relationship. He stressed that the partnership is grounded not only in shared interests but also in a deepening convergence of capabilities and responsibilities, which is crucial for the Indo-Pacific's strategic stability.

Jaishankar noted the increasing complexity of global geopolitics and emphasized the important role the India-U.S. partnership can play in maintaining regional stability. "The contribution that we can make together would be of immense importance, not just for us, but for the larger region, and arguably, for the world," he remarked.

Netanyahu's trial testimony postponed amid US visit

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

The testimonies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his criminal trial hearings have been cancelled for next week due to his diplomatic visit to the United States. The Jerusalem Post reported.

The request, submitted by Netanyahu's defense team, was approved by the prosecution, which is in the middle of cross-examination. However, the prosecution did request that additional testimony dates be added in their stead and until the courts go on summer recess, from July 21 through September 5. Per a court decision from a few weeks ago, Netanyahu is scheduled to testify that week, on Monday, July 21, and Tuesday, July 22. Netanyahu is scheduled to fly out on Sunday and return either on Thursday or Friday. It added that the prime minister is expected to meet with US President Donald Trump, Vice President J.D. Vance, Secretary of State and National Security Advisor Marco Rubio, Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, and the heads of the Senate and the Congress, The Jerusalem Post reported. He is also expected to conduct other classified security meetings. The visit comes as reports indicate some movement on a hostage and ceasefire deal in the Israel-Hamas War.



PM Modi arrives in Ghana on first leg of five-nation tour

AGENCIES
ACCRA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday arrived in Ghana on a two-day visit during which he will hold talks with the West African country's top leadership and review the strong bilateral partnership.

Modi, who is visiting Ghana at the invitation of President John Dramani Mahama, was given a guard of honour upon his arrival at the Kotoka International Airport here.

This is the prime minister's first-ever bilateral visit to Ghana. It is also the first prime ministerial visit from India to Ghana in three decades.

Ghana is a valued partner in the Global South and plays an important



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a warm welcome by Ghana President John Mahama on his arrival at Kotoka International Airport in Accra, Ghana on Wednesday. Source: ANI

role in the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, Modi said in his departure statement.

Modi added that he looked forward to talks aimed at further deepening the two countries' historical ties and opening up

new windows of cooperation, including in the areas of investment, energy, health, security, capacity building and development partnership.

"As fellow democracies, it will be an honour to speak at the Parliament of Ghana," he added.

Putin, Macron hold talks post 3 years on Ukraine, MidEast wars

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin held a telephone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, marking their first direct contact since September 2022, RT reported, citing the Kremlin press service.

The call focused on the situation in the Middle East and the ongoing Ukraine conflict. According to RT, Putin told Macron that the Ukraine conflict was "a direct consequence of the policies pursued by Western states, which for many years ignored Russia's security interests," and had created an "anti-Russian bridgehead" in Ukraine. He reiterated that any settlement must "be comprehensive and long-term, address the root causes of the Ukrainian crisis and be based on new territorial realities."

The leaders also discussed the recent escalation between Israel and Iran. As per the Kremlin's statement, both agreed that diplomacy remains the only viable path forward and pledged to stay in touch for the "possible coordination of positions," RT reported. The two heads of state also acknowledged a "special responsibility" to preserve "peace and security" and to uphold the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. "In this regard, the importance of respecting Tehran's legitimate right to develop peaceful nuclear energy and continuing to fulfil its obligations.

Iran's President approves law to suspend cooperation with IAEA

AGENCIES
TEHRAN

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian has approved a law to suspend cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Press TV reported.

Pezeshkian officially communicated the law mandating the government to suspend cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog, which was approved during a public session of Iran's Parliament on June 25.

Considering violation of Iran's national sovereignty and territorial integrity by Israel and the United States regarding the country's peaceful nuclear facilities, the Iranian government is hereby obligated to immediately suspend all cooperation with the IAEA, Press TV reported, citing a parliament resolution.

As per the resolution,

IAEA inspectors will not be allowed to enter Iran until the security of the country's nuclear facilities is ensured and the peaceful nuclear activities are guaranteed, which is subject to the approval of Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

Earlier, Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, criticised the IAEA for not condemning the US strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Bangladesh tribunal sentences former PM Sheikh Hasina to 6 months in prison

AGENCIES
DHAKA

The International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), a Bangladesh court designated for the trial of international crimes, on Wednesday sentenced former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to six months in



prison in a contempt of court case. A three-member tribunal led by Justice Md. Golam Mortuza Majumder gave this order. Earlier, A Y Moshuiuz-zaman, a senior lawyer, was appointed as amicus curiae (friend of the court) by the ICT for a full hearing of the contempt of court case.

MINU MUNEEAR ARRESTED BY KOCHI CYBER POLICE OVER DEFAMATION COMPLAINT

AGENCIES
AGENCIES

Malayalam actor Minu Muneer was arrested by the Kochi Cyber Police after a defamation complaint was filed against her by veteran filmmaker and actor Balachandra Menon. The complaint relates to allegedly defamatory social media posts made by Muneer about Menon. She was released on bail shortly after her arrest.

Earlier, the Kerala High Court had dismissed Muneer's anticipatory bail plea. She is the first accused in the case, which was registered in 2024.

Muneer reportedly made repeated derogatory posts about Menon on social me-



dia. In response, she also filed a complaint against actor and CPI(M) leader M Mukesh, who represents the Kollam Assembly constituency.

This arrest marks a significant development in an ongoing controversy shaking the Malayalam film industry. Over recent months, Muneer publicly accused several prominent industry figures of sexual miscon-

duct and abuse during professional collaborations.

In August 2024, Muneer named actors Mukesh, Jayasurya, Maniyanpilla Raju, and Edavela Babu, alleging verbal and physical harassment. She also implicated Advocate Chandrasekharan, production controller Noble, and an individual named Vichu.

In a social media post, Muneer stated, "I am

writing to report a series of incidents of physical and verbal abuse I suffered at the hands of Mukesh, Maniyanpilla Raju, Edavela Babu, Jayasurya, Advocate Chandrasekharan, production controller Noble and Vichu, in the Malayalam film industry," adding that these experiences forced her to leave the industry and move to Chennai.

In a detailed interview with the media, she elaborated on the allegations.

"Once, as I was coming out from the toilet, Jayasurya hugged me from behind and even kissed me forcefully. After that, Edavela Babu expressed his interest in a sexual relationship with me," she said.

Dwayne Johnson recalls emotional connection with Jelly Roll's song 'Only'

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON D.C.

Actor Dwayne Johnson, also known as The Rock, recently opened about his deep connection with singer and rapper Jelly Roll, revealing how Jelly Roll's music helped him during a difficult time in his life.

In an Instagram post, Johnson shared a heartfelt video showing the two embracing and chatting warmly. He reflected on their nearly decade-long bond, sparked by Jelly Roll's 2017 song "Only." Johnson explained that



during a challenging period in 2017, when he was struggling with mental health, he often put on a brave face despite feeling overwhelmed.

"Perhaps not the healthiest thing to do, but it's what I was used to doing at the time," Johnson wrote.

One morning, while listening to a shuffle playlist,

the song "Only" caught his attention.

The lyrics—touching on battling inner demons and searching for light—resonated deeply with him: "What if the darkness inside of me has finally taken my soul? What if the angels in heaven were sent to take me home? Would they fight through the demons that I have in my life? Lord, I'm believing eventually see the light."

Moved by the song, Johnson reached out to Jelly Roll to thank him, despite never having met.

Actor Idris Elba reflects on challenges of ageing in his 50s

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON D.C.

Actor and musician Idris Elba spoke candidly about the realities of aging during a recent appearance on the 'Good Hang with Amy Poehler' podcast, sharing both the struggles and insights that come with being in his 50s, according to People.

"I don't love that, at this age, the age of having wellness and consciousness, is so upon us, yet our bodies fail us," Elba reflected.

Co-host Poehler sympathised, calling it "the biggest bummer," joking about how "you can get hurt just getting out of bed."

Elba discussed how his generation was shaped by a vibrant era of art, music, culture, and world politics during their adolescence, which still influences them today.

On the positive side, he noted how his perspective has shifted with age.

"Your influences change. In my 30s and 40s, I was blowing with the wind a little bit with what was influencing me, what my goals were. And in the 50s,



Looking ahead, Elba touched on the impact of technology, particularly AI, calling it "the future that we talked about as kids that was just in our imaginations, and here it is."

I'm like, 'Nah. That wind has to pass around me.' I'm not getting as easily influenced."

At 52, Elba said he's "not afraid of difficult things, or challenges that make him uncomfortable."

Poehler added, "To choose your own discomfort is like a privilege at our age. It's gonna be uncomfortable, but I'm

gonna be in charge of it."

Looking ahead, Elba touched on the impact of technology, particularly AI, calling it "the future that we talked about as kids that was just in our imaginations, and here it is."

Elba's latest film, 'Heads of State', is available now on Prime Video.

'Hari Hara Veera Mallu – Part 1' set for release on July 24

AGENCIES
MUMBAI

The much-anticipated historical drama "Hari Hara Veera Mallu – Part 1", starring actor and politician Pawan Kalyan, is set for a grand theatrical release on July 24, 2025. As the release date approaches, the makers have ramped up promotions for the film.

On Wednesday, the makers took to their X account to share a behind-the-scenes video of Pawan Kalyan watching the trailer. In the clip, the actor is seen deeply



engaged with the visuals and later commends director Jyothi Krishna for his work.

The post was captioned, "That's a POWER-PACKED VERDICT."

The force behind the storm, @PawanKalyan, has watched the trailer, and even he couldn't hold back the excitement." Set in the 17th century, "Hari Hara Veera Mallu"

Directed by Jyothi Krishna and written by Radha Krishna Jagarlamudi, Sai Madhav Burra, and Abhimanyu Srivastava, the film boasts a strong historical backdrop and epic scale.

tells the story of an outlaw who rises against oppression to fight for justice and his people. Pawan Kalyan takes on the titular role of Hari Hara Veera Mallu, portraying a revolutionary warrior in a time defined by

resistance and rebellion.

Directed by Jyothi Krishna and written by Radha Krishna Jagarlamudi, Sai Madhav Burra, and Abhimanyu Srivastava, the film boasts a strong historical backdrop and epic scale.

'Tanvi The Great' writers discuss inspiration behind movie

AGENCIES
MUMBAI

Writers Abhishek Dixit and Ankur Suman opened about the inspiration behind their film "Tanvi The Great" and their experience working with legendary actor-director Anupam Kher.

"Tanvi The Great" follows 21-year-old Tanvi Raina, a woman with autism who sets out to fulfill her late Indian Army officer father's dream of standing at Siachen, the world's highest battlefield, and saluting the Indian flag. The film stars debutant Shubhangi Dutt as Tanvi.

Ankur Suman revealed that the character of Tanvi

was inspired by Anupam Kher's niece.

"Sir told us about Tanvi, his niece. That was the starting point. We did extensive research, reading books and meeting people.

We realised that while society often misunderstands autistic children, they are fearless. That's the essence we wanted for Tanvi—a character without hesitation or fear."



AICWA urges PM to enforce ban on Pakistani artists' digital presence

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) has formally appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging a complete and permanent ban on the digital and media presence of all Pakistani nationals and entertainment entities in India.



In a statement posted on its official X (formerly Twitter) account, AICWA expressed deep concern over the re-emergence of Pakistani actors and media channels on Indian digital platforms. The association specifically cited the active social media presence of Pakistani celebrities such as Mawra Hocane and Yumna Zaidi, along with several Paki-

stan-based entertainment outlets, calling their visibility "an emotional assault" on the families of terrorism victims.

"This is not merely a digital appearance, it is a direct insult to the sacrifice of our martyred soldiers," AICWA stated, referencing terror attacks such as 26/11, Pulwama, Uri, and Pahalgam.

Tyler Henry shares health update after brain tumour surgery

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON D.C.

TV personality Tyler Henry shared a health update after undergoing a brain tumour surgery, reported E! News. He said that he is "doing much better" one month after doctors successfully removed a non-cancerous, fluid-filled cyst near the centre of his brain.

Tyler Henry is a reality show personality who appears in the reality show series "Hollywood Me-



dium with Tyler Henry" and "Life After Death with Tyler Henry".

"I'm very lucky," said Tyler in an interview.

"I was dealing with something called hydrocephalus, which is basically fluid being stuck around the brain and causing inflammation." He noted that his tumour had an "incidence rate of one in 3 million," adding, "I should play the lottery."

Tyler has been "amazed" by his quick recovery. Within weeks of his operation, he was already performing readings as part of his "An Evening of Hope and Healing" series of live shows, as reported by the outlet.

HARLEY-DAVIDSON BREAKOUT REVIEW



PHOTOS: ARINA HAIDER & AIRAH KHAN

SYED SHIRAZ SHAH

Harley-Davidson made their first motorcycle the same year Wright brothers made their first aircraft—in 1903. While the Wright Company folded in 1916, Harley-Davidson is still standing tall in 2025. Of course, the latter's journey hasn't been devoid of trials and tribulations either; in fact, it has suffered more than most protagonists of tragedy-genre cinema, but it got back on its feet every time more heroically and unbelievably than the invincible "heroes" of our very own South Indian movies. Therefore, with pedigree and heritage second to none, Harley-Davidson doesn't really need auto journalists and influencers to be talking about its motorcycles, unless it starts making electric scooters someday. Since that's not happening anytime soon (thankfully), the Milwaukee company's loyalists continue to NOT rely much on media reviews, especially when there are auto journalists who don't know that the jutting-out "air-intake device" they referred to as such in their Breakout review is actually called an air-filter (air-cleaner in the US).

However, unlike a few motorcycle manufacturers' comms., PR, and marketing teams that comprise folks who've never ridden even a bicycle, the core team at Harley-Davidson India consists of diehard motorcyclists (one even has a custom H-D in his living room) and most of them have been with the company for over a decade now. Moreover, what truly sets these handful of gentlemen apart from their contemporaries is that they respect other hardcore motorcyclists as well. That's why, unlike others who are swayed by superficialities like subscriber numbers, reach, circulation, etc., these chaps focus on the quality of work. One more example of their sorted fundamentals is that unlike the majority of EV manufacturers who prefer to engage with EV-only influencers, these nutters don't shy away from giving their motorcycles to sportbike-focussed people like me because they know that as a reviewer I will keep my own preferences aside, and review the bike for its intended customer and not for myself. A BREAKOUT from the norm for both of us, then? Absolutely! Guess what; that's what the motorcycle is called too.

DESIGN

This is an achingly beautiful motorcycle, gentlemen. Without going into the redundancy of telling you each and every detail you can see by yourself, I will provide some context to its design philosophy and a bit of perspective, which, as a reviewer, I am allowed to do only in this section.

See, in early 2000s, TV shows like Orange County Choppers, etc., became quite popular and the mainstay of all such shows were custom chopper motorcycles. Harley-Davidson took notice and thought it would be a good

buy a Harley-Davidson, and end up riding out with the one that looks the most striking of them all (the Breakout for the uninitiated), which is saying something when you have the equally alluring Heritage Classic and Fat Boy also present in the same showrooms.

In fact, if someday Harley-Davidson conducts a global poll asking people to vote for the most beautiful motorcycle in their current range, the Breakout will definitely win. I'll still vote for the Fat Boy though, but that's just me. The majority would vote for the Breakout, and rightly so.

slightly forward arched riding posture, which is typical of a muscle-chopper, but I have to still mention it because it's a review.

Of course, if someone like me, who's nearly a foot shorter than my aforementioned friends, can ride this daily, you must also not let your height come in the way. Your height actually doesn't matter anyway; it's your inseam that dictates your reach to the ground. Therefore, if you're an experienced rider, you will be able to manage the Breakout even if you have an inseam of 27 inches. Arms like an

motorcycles?

PERFORMANCE, RIDE QUALITY, AND HANDLING

Yes, sir. The Breakout will indeed be one of those motorcycles that we'd continue to ride to ensure not just the survival, but also the proper evolution of our species. I have always maintained that while a motorcycle—any motorcycle—is good than not having a motorcycle, you must always try to get one that has the power to scare you a bit sometimes. Why? Well, because while serotonin is crucial to

0–100 km/h time of 5.4 s in the second attempt to 4.4 s in the third attempt. The first attempt was a no-go as the bike produced so much torque that the chassis twisted coming off the line. No, I am kidding. That's what Vin Diesel said for his dad's Dodge Charger R/T. But the situation wasn't too different here as you don't expect a motorcycle, even if it has a nearly 2,000 cc V-twin, to produce so much torque that it overwhelms its massive 240 mm rear tyre. Please note that I did all the runs with the traction control switched off be-

1.5 L motor (a gem) does the same at 2,650 rpm. What's even more remarkable is the fact that there are absolutely no vibrations at ANY SPEED on the Breakout. Yes, zero vibrations on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle that has a solid-mount engine. If you concentrate hard, you'll notice a faint buzz that's just there as an additional reminder that you're riding a real motorcycle and not a washing machine on wheels, also known as an electric motorcycle. I said "additional reminder" because the distinct, and beautiful, Harley

oil anyway. You see, great motorcycles discourage unhealthy eating habits as well.

Along with your gut, the Breakout will keep your spine happy too as the ride quality is more than acceptable for a cruiser. All would be well if you remember that it's a cruiser and not an adventure tourer. Adjusting the spring preload on the monoshock is also a cinch, thanks to the conveniently placed adjuster knob (removed on the 2025 bike; this is the 2024 Breakout) that doesn't require any tools. It shows five levels of adjustment but those five levels consist of over 35 clicks. In simple words, whether you're a featherweight or a heavyweight, you'd be able to find your sweet spot without much trial and error as the stock setup itself was almost perfect for everyone in my team (weight range: 53 to 97 kg).

The fork doesn't come with any adjustability and, frankly, it doesn't need any because, like I mentioned, the stock tune is good enough.

The handling is quite nice too—much nicer than my favourite adamant boy, the Fat Boy. Despite the freakish trail, leaning the Breakout is not too difficult. Again, treat it with the respect it deserves and it will keep you up and the rubber side down. The ground clearance is also better than the Fat Boy's, and I almost forgot to tell you that the cruise control works flawlessly on all the three Harley-Davidson motorcycles (Heritage Classic, Fat Boy, and Breakout) I have tested recently.

VERDICT

Like I mentioned in the beginning, such motorcycles don't need a review. Their potential buyers don't need to be "convinced" to buy (or not buy) them. These are out and out heart purchases. My job here is to just tell you whether your brain would deride or applaud your heart's decision in the long run. So, after spending some quality time with the Breakout, I am happy to report that while your CA (or wife) might scoff at your decision, your brain and heart would pat your back every time you take the Breakout for a spin. Therefore, get a new CA/wife if it comes to that, but don't compromise on the motorcycle. Breakout!



idea to sell a factory custom chopper that's no less appealing than the regular custom choppers built by independent boutique-bike builders, but also comes with the all-important factory support for parts and service, thereby guaranteeing peace of mind as well. The company took its time and the first Breakout was announced in 2012. It has been a success for Harley-Davidson where customers continue to walk into showrooms, without any pre-selection mostly, to

ERGONOMICS

The reason for my vote to the Fat Boy is driven by the fact that it's the Terminator's motorcycle that's more suited to my small frame as compared to the Breakout that gave my limbs a full-stretch workout in the entirety of this test. The reason? The handlebar and foot controls are in a different timezone altogether as compared to the seat. In fact, during the photoshoot, I saw that even my six-footer friends had a

Orangutan will be a massive advantage, though you'd do just fine even if you're a proportionately built human and not a Carnotaurus. In fact, that's why dinosaurs became extinct. The asteroid theory tells you just half the story. The reality is that the dinosaurs couldn't ride motorcycles with those short arms; therefore, they couldn't get away. Therefore, we must continue to ride motorcycles for the survival of our species. Will the Breakout be one of those

our survival, and can be accessed by riding any motorcycle, adrenaline is equally important not only for our survival, but for evolution too. And that adrenaline, ladies and gentlemen, is something you get only on a motorcycle that has the ability to scare you. Fear brings with it respect for the motorcycle along with brutal self-assessment of your riding skills. You're compelled to improve. You're forced to evolve. That's how I was able to bring the

cause that's the correct way to do it on performance vehicles. I did the same on the Gen 3 Hayabusa too upon its debut in India. Yes, you have to be a bit deranged to accomplish that and still live to see the results, but "work" has to be done... The Breakout is equally stellar on the highways. In top (6th) gear it cruises at 100 km/h at a beautifully relaxed 2,230 rpm. For perspective, the Honda Elevate manual (6-speed) with its naturally aspirated

engine soundtrack played by the twin exhausts unquestionably remains the first one.

I do wish the engine was a bit more tractable though, but you need to remember that these motorcycles were made for open roads and not to struggle while finding parking space outside Haldirams on a weekend. The latter is where you'll also notice the Breakout's bus-like turning radius, which is why I gave *Chhole Bhatore* a miss. It's a lot of

YOUR WORK IS NOT YOUR JOB ANYMORE - CHECK HOW!



THE NEXT
ABHISHEKANAND

There was a time when your job was your work. You showed up, clocked in, delivered. Your output came from your effort. Your hours. Your presence. But something's shifting. Quietly, yet fundamentally. Today, you still have a job title. But the work — the actual doing — is starting to drift. And not because someone else is replacing you. But because something is working alongside you. Or, increasingly, ahead of you.

THE AGE OF DELEGATED INTELLIGENCE

You didn't write that full proposal — your AI did. You didn't follow up on that lead — your CRM nudged them first.

You didn't summarize that meeting — your assistant transcribed and actioned it before you even reopened your laptop. We used to automate tasks. Now we're automating roles. Your strategist has a co-pilot. Your content head has a GPT. Your sales lead has a sequence bot. Your operations manager has a Notion AI dashboard doing half the thinking. The title remains. But the "who" behind the execution? Increasingly — it's not you.

THE NEW DIVISION OF LABOR

You still lead. But you don't always write. You approve — but rarely



initiate. You strategize — but your data assistant is already two steps ahead. The result? Work becomes distributed across systems, automations, and proxies. You stop being the executor. You become the orchestrator. This sounds empowering — and often, it is. But it also raises a subtle ex-

istential tension: If your job is mostly about reviewing what AI produced, or correcting what systems suggested, then what exactly are you becoming?

THE RISK OF DISCONNECTION

When your tools get too smart, you can get too passive.

You stop crafting the message — you just edit it. You stop thinking from scratch — you tweak a template. You stop building — and start supervising. Over time, the loop tightens. You're "busy" — but with meta-work. Commenting, adjusting, greenlighting. But the making? That's mostly outsourced now.



And while you've gained speed and scale... you might have lost touch.

REDEFINING WHAT WORK ACTUALLY MEANS

We need to unbundle the idea of work from the idea of employment. Because going forward: You might work without having a job. You might have a job where

your primary contribution isn't task execution. You might lead a team where the best performer is... not human. So what becomes your value? It's not in clicking faster. It's not in formatting better. It's in the decisions you make — and the systems you design. Because when the bots are doing the doing... your work becomes the

thinking. The framing. The direction. The human edge won't be speed. It'll be judgment.

FINAL THOUGHT: THE JOB ISN'T DEAD. BUT IT'S MORPHING

Your work isn't going away. It's being refracted — split across agents, tools, platforms, and automations. Your job is still yours. But the doing has moved on. The question is no longer, "What do you do?" It's: "What still needs you to do it?" *Abhishek Anand is the Founder of Skill Bud Technologies Pvt. Ltd., a next-gen technology company building at the intersection of digital marketing, web development, CGI storytelling, AR/VR, Web3, and Generative AI. As an author, speaker, and mentor, he helps businesses navigate what's next by designing not just tools, but intelligent systems that scale thought.*

How technology is revolutionising rental payments



SARIKA SHETTY

Rental payments in India have always been managed through cash transactions or bank transfers, most of it without appropriate documentation or receipts. This lack of transparency has led to numerous difficulties for both landlords and tenants. The residential rental market has been ripe for change for a while. It seems like that moment has arrived. Fintech is actively revolutionising and reshaping the largely informal and unstructured residential rental market.

Leading this change from the forefront are digital payment platforms. The inflow of digital payment solutions in the market today has changed the face of rental transactions. These platforms are actively facilitating smoother rent payments via UPI, credit/debit cards, and e-wallets. Furthermore, the user-friendly features and integrated accounting tools in these platforms are improving the convenience factor for landlords and tenants.

Fintech apps have come up with systems that enable tenants to set up recurring rent payments. Similarly, a single dashboard to check

all rent payments by the tenants lessens the administrative burden of the landlords. The systems send auto reminders for paying rent, generate rent receipts and offer financial reports, in order to streamline the rental processes. A Rent Credit Score has also been introduced by a fintech platform. Unlike traditional credit scores which calculate creditworthiness on the basis of loans and credit card repayments, Rent Credit Score is built on the basis of rent payments of tenants. These scores allow tenants to become a part of the credit ecosystem, facilitating access to financial products and services, while empowering landlords to make informed decisions while renting out spaces.

In the present time, digital KYC has streamlined tenant verification processes as well. Several platforms utilise Aadhaar-based KYC and other means of verification to authenticate the identities of tenants. UIDAI reports that more than 211 crore Aadhaar authentication transactions were carried out in May 2025. Such digital KYC has aided in improving trust and mitigating cases of fraud for landlords. Given these technological shifts, there has been substantial impact on tenants too. To begin with, they are now able to build credit through their regular rent payments and develop a formal credit history. A positive Rent Credit Score allows them to access loans and insurance

products with greater ease. Digital platforms have further made payments and record-keeping convenient.

For landlords, technology has been an enabler in a similar fashion. They have attained access to verified tenant profiles which has helped them make informed decisions about choosing tenants. They are now also able to collect rent timely with the help of automated payments systems, reducing the risk of defaults. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) states that UPI's share in total digital payments in the nation rose to 83% in 2024, from 34% in 2019, which stresses the extensive adoption of digital payment methods. Globally also, there is a rise in digital payments. A research in

the Global Payments Report 2024 from Worldpay notes that by 2027, digital wallets will account for more than \$25 trillion in global transaction value, or 49% of all sales online and at POS combined. Akin to this, the global digital payment market is estimated to reach USD 361.30 billion by 2030, surging at a CAGR of 21.4% from 2025 to 2030.

That said, the development of technology in the rental space is not without trials. The digital divide between rural and urban India needs bridging. Incentivising digital infrastructure and literacy in these areas will determine how equitably the advantages of such innovations are distributed. In a nutshell, it can be said that technology is playing an instrumental role in revolutionising India's rental ecosystem. It is digitising payment processes, introducing rent credit scoring, and simplifying tenant verification -- thereby making the rental space more transparent and efficient. In the upcoming years, these varied innovations are bound to assist tenants and landlords, in addition to contributing to the overarching goal of financial inclusion in the country.

Sarika Shetty is the CEO and co-founder of RentenPe, a tech-enabled market disruptor app which is building India's first Rent Credit Score (R Score™) and Residence Card (R Card™), aimed at formalizing the residential rental market and promoting financial inclusion through rental data.



Fintech apps have come up with systems that enable tenants to set up recurring rent payments. Similarly, a single dashboard to check all rent payments by the tenants lessens the administrative burden of the landlords.

Regional is the new National: Why Bharat is the new real testbest for innovation

PAWAN KUMAR

India's transition from a service-based economy to a product-driven nation is not a distant goal—it's happening in real time. But if we're serious about becoming a global technology powerhouse, we need to innovate not just with speed, but with purpose. That purpose begins with understanding Bharat—the heartbeat of India that resides beyond the metros—and building for it.

WHY BHARAT MATTERS

For consumer technology manufacturers, the message is clear: the next 500 million users won't come from high-rises in Mumbai or tech parks in Bengaluru. They'll

electronics that can handle the rough usage patterns and environmental conditions of semi-urban and rural homes.

MARKETING THAT RESONATES

Marketing has to reflect this hyperlocal trend. The overall brand and even product-centric campaigns must be culturally relevant and emotionally engaging. As a brand that makes products for the local people, emphasize benefits that are important to the Bharat consumer: durability, simplicity, power conservation, or even design tastes reflective of local preferences. Concurrently, a strong offline distribution channel—supported by trusted retail partners—is critical. While digital-first marketing cre-

guri is as digitally literate as one in Gurgaon. For brands, this opens up a powerful channel: regional digital engagement.

Run influencer campaigns in vernacular languages. Use live demos via regional creators to drive feature education. Leverage e-commerce with regional partnerships. Bharat's digital leap is not just about access—it's about empowerment.

BHARAT BUILDS BRANDS

The road to national success now passes through regional India. To succeed in Bharat, brands don't merely capture market share—they earn trust. Promoting Bharat-led success stories—such as how local language integration



come from Tier 2, Tier 3 cities, and even rural towns. These users are digital-first, mobile-native, and increasingly aspirational. They stream videos, shop online, and follow influencers—just like their urban counterparts—but their needs, challenges, and cultural contexts are uniquely local. To ignore them is to miss out on the biggest growth story of the decade.

FROM ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL TO HYPERLOCAL INNOVATION

Localization is not a feature anymore—it's the DNA. The age of one-size-fits-all is gone. In 2025, a successful product strategy has to be Bharat-first, not India-wide. This includes:

- Knowing local content preferences to determine which smart TV models to release and where.
- Including local languages in your user interfaces and content discovery systems.
- Building wearables and

ates top-of-mind awareness, it's the penultimate physical availability and service support that fuels conversion and loyalty in such markets.

MICRO-INNOVATION, MACRO IMPACT

Innovation is not always about moonshots. In Bharat, small, insight-led adjustments tend to result in huge takeoff. Consider ACs with dual weather modes for humid Tamil Nadu and dry Gujarat. Or washing machines with pre-set modes for bucket washing, a popular method of usage in low-pressure zones.

This is micro-innovation with macro effects. It calls for brands to hear, iterate, and respond speedily, translating consumer insights into concrete product adjustments.

THE DIGITAL LEAP IN NON-METROS

Thanks to affordable data and smartphones, the digital gap is shrinking. Today's consumer in Satna or Sili-

increased smart TV sales or how a product that catered to local weather conditions was a bestseller—is building brand identity. These are not footnotes. These are the brand stories of the future.

SCALABILITY STARTS HERE

When a product succeeds in Bharat, it's not only proven for India—but quite often it is ready for markets around the world with analogous populations and limitations. Bharat is the most challenging, most heterogeneous, and most dynamic proving ground. If it can succeed here, it can succeed anywhere.

Bharat is not only a market segment—it is India's product revolution proving ground. To construct for Bharat is to construct for scale, sustainability, and long-term success. For tech companies, innovation based on regional realities will be the real differentiator of the future.

The author is CEO, Elista



JAISWAL MISSES OUT ON HUNDRED AS INDIA REACH 182/3 AT TEA IN 2ND TEST

AGENCIES
BIRMINGHAM

A soft dismissal denied Yashasvi Jaiswal a well-deserved hundred as India reached 182/3 at tea on Day 1 of the second Test against England on Wednesday.

Skipper Shubman Gill looked comfortable alongside his deputy Rishabh Pant on another favourable batting pitch in the five-match series.

England captain Ben Stokes, known for his knack of picking up unexpected wickets, had Jaiswal caught behind off a short and wide ball. Jaiswal went too hard at the delivery, resulting in a straightforward catch for Jamie Smith behind the stumps.

With little action during the session, English fans in the iconic Eric Hollies Stand made plenty of noise to encourage the home side. India added 84 runs in 28 overs during the session, losing just Jaiswal.

In the 34th over, Gill survived a DRS LBW call off a Brydon Carse ball because



India's Yashasvi Jaiswal, right, celebrates after scoring fifty runs on day one of the second cricket test match between England and India at Edgbaston in Birmingham, England.

of an inside edge. Facing the sole spinner Shoaib Bashir, Gill stepped out from time to time and on one occasion, dispatched him over extra cover. Pant joined Gill late in the session, taking his time to settle before using his feet to smack Bashir for a six over mid-on. Earlier, Jaiswal maintained his aggression despite being tested by England's pacers, while Karun Nair (31 off 50) showed promise at number three before being dismissed late in the morning session.

Considering the overhead conditions, Stokes opted to bowl, but Jaiswal and Nair survived the tough period.

second slip.

There wasn't much swing on offer, but the ball did seam during the first hour of play. Carse targeted Jaiswal's rib cage often, but the latter remained unscathed.

Jaiswal started with a two cover drives off Carse, who bowled full to the batter and mixed in the occasional short ball aimed at the body. Besides the following drives, Jaiswal also played a pull and a slap over backward point off Ben Stokes.

Nair, moved up three places in the batting order from the last match, was offered plenty of full deliveries from the England pacers, which he drove through cover and the straight boundary.

Before the toss, the boundary ropes being brought in caught the attention of many at Edgbaston. With premier match-winner Jasprit Bumrah rested, India brought in Akash Deep, while making two interesting changes: leaving out Sai Sudharsan for Washington Sundar and replacing Shardul Thakur with Nitish Kumar Reddy.

India knocks out Iraq in AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers

AGENCIES
CHENNAI

India consolidated its position at the top of Group B in the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers with a commanding 5-0 win over Iraq on Wednesday at the 700th Anniversary Stadium in Chiang Mai.

Following the defeat, Iraq joins Mongolia and Timor-Leste as the teams eliminated from contention for a spot in the continental tournament from this group.



Goals from Sangita Basore, Manisha Kalyan, Karthika Angamuthu, Nirmala Devi, and Ratanbala Devi took the Blue Tigresses to nine points from three matches.

India will face Thailand — which plays Mongolia later in the day — in its final qualifier, a match that will decide the group winner.

World Boxing Cup: Minakshi, Pooja assure India two medals on Day 3

AGENCIES
ASTANA (KAZAKHSTAN)

Pugilists Minakshi (48kg) and Pooja Rani (80kg) guaranteed India of two medals by progressing to the semifinals in their respective categories on the third day of the World Boxing Cup here on Wednesday.

Minakshi sealed her place in the semifinals with a dominant 5:0 win over Chinese Taipei's Guo

Yi-Xuan, showing sharp movement and clean scoring throughout the quarterfinal bout.

Pooja Rani followed with a gritty 4:1 split decision victory over Kazakhstan's Gulsaya Yerzhan in the 80kg division, securing her berth in the final four and guaranteeing a podium finish. Earlier in the day, Anamika (51kg) moved into the quarterfinals with a composed performance against Turkey's

Aysen Taskin, keeping India's momentum alive. In the men's draw, Jadumani Singh fought hard in a close contest but lost narrowly to Philippines' Jay Bryan Baricuatro, bringing his campaign to a close. With two medals assured on third day and several boxers in contention, India continues its promising run at the Astana leg, with sights set on the finals in New Delhi later this year.

Bengaluru Stampede: BCCI Ombudsman directs RCB, KSCA to file written submissions

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

IPL champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru have landed in further trouble after BCCI Ombudsman-cum-Ethics Officer Justice (Retd) Arun Mishra directed the franchise, along with the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), to file written submissions over gross negligence during the team's victory celebrations in Bengaluru, which led to the death of 11 people. The Ombudsman has granted RCB and KSCA four weeks to respond, following an official complaint filed by IPS officer Vikas Kumar.

According to a media report, the complainant has also urged the Ombudsman to bar the current owners from selling the franchise until the investigation into the tragedy is complete.

"Looking at the gravity of the incident, it is considered appropriate that the Karnataka (State) Cricket Association, as well as the concerned franchise



Royal Challengers Bangalore be asked to submit their written reply to the complaint," Justice Mishra wrote in his directive.

"This complaint has been filed in relation to the unfortunate stampede at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on 04.06.2025. Complaint alleges gross negligence and violation of safety norms by the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) franchise. Complainant submits that accountability must be fixed. Prayer has been made for the suspension of the RCB franchise and for invalidating ongoing sale negotiations."

Justice (Retired) Mishra in his directive also mentioned that complainant Kumar would get 10 days time to give a rejoinder to the respondents.

"Let the KSCA and RCB file their respective written replies to the complaint within four weeks, with copy to the complainant as well. Showing cause why the reliefs prayed for and specified in rules be not granted. Rejoinder if any may be filed within 10 days thereafter with copy to the respondents."

One of the possible reasons for seeking a written

National Sports Policy 2025: India's bold leap towards a sporting renaissance

SUJAY JOHN
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet approved the National Sports Policy 2025, on Tuesday, officially named Khelo Bharat Niti, marking a historic transformation in India's approach to sports. Replacing the National Sports Policy of 2001, this comprehensive and ambitious initiative aims to streamline sports governance, elevate India's global sporting performance, encourage private sector engagement, and lay the groundwork for hosting major international events—most notably, the 2036 Olympic Games. The policy has been shaped through extensive consultations with Central Ministries, NITI Aayog, State Governments, National Sports Federations (NSFs), athletes, domain experts, and public stakeholders.

VISION AND CORE OBJECTIVES

Khelo Bharat Niti is guided by the vision of transforming India into a leading sporting na-



tion, using sports as a catalyst for national development and individual empowerment. It seeks to build a structured, inclusive, and performance-driven ecosystem that nurtures talent, encourages participation, drives economic growth, and promotes social equity. Its goals go beyond medals and trophies, aiming to foster fitness, employment, innovation, education, and community engagement.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF KHELO BHARAT NITI: EXCELLENCE ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

This pillar focuses on creating pathways from grassroots to elite international competition. The policy emphasizes

empowerment, and social unity. It aims to increase participation among under-represented groups—such as women, tribal communities, economically weaker sections, and persons with disabilities. The policy revives and promotes indigenous and traditional games while creating dual-career opportunities to make sports a viable livelihood. It also supports volunteering and engagement with the Indian diaspora to build national pride and cultural identity.

SPORTS AS A PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

This pillar aspires to make sports and fitness an integral part of everyday life. Through mass participation campaigns, community-based events, and grassroots outreach, the policy envisions a cultural transformation. Fitness benchmarks for schools, colleges, workplaces, and other institutions will promote a measurable approach to physical well-being.

SPORTS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Khelo Bharat Niti views sports as a tool for inclusion,

Djokovic advances to Wimbledon second round after four-set win over Muller

AGENCIES
LONDON

Seven-time winner Novak Djokovic kicked off his Wimbledon 2025 campaign in style as he registered a hard-fought win against France's Alexandre Muller in the first round of the competition on Tuesday.

In the first round of Wimbledon 2025, Djokovic defeated Muller 6-1, 6-7(7), 6-2, 6-2, a match that lasted 3 hours and 19 minutes. He will now face Dan Evans in the next round of the ongoing tournament.

After his first-round victory, Djokovic revealed that he had been struggling with a stomach bug during the game.

"To be quite frank, I went from feeling my absolute best for a set and a half to feeling my absolute worst for about 45 minutes. Whether it's a stomach bug - I don't know what it is - but I struggled with that. The energy kicked back in after some doctor's miracle pills, and I managed to fin-



ish the match on a good note," Djokovic explained as quoted by the tournament's official website. "I honestly wasn't thinking about [retiring] and taking that as an option. I knew something was off with the stomach, so hopefully, when that calms down, the energy will come back. That's what happened," he added. Earlier in the day, the world number

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova bids farewell

AGENCIES
LONDON

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova waved goodbye to her favorite Grand Slam tournament Tuesday.

The 35-year-old Czech player, who won at the All England Club in 2011 and 2014, plans to leave the tour after the U.S. Open, which ends in September.

Her Wimbledon farewell was a 6-3, 6-1 loss to 10th-seeded Emma Navarro of the United States on No. 1 Court.

"This place holds the best memories I could wish for," an emotional Kvitova said in an on-court interview that is usually granted to the match winner. "I never dreamed of winning a Wimbledon and I won it twice. This is something very special."

"I will miss Wimbledon



for sure," she continued. "I will miss tennis, I will miss you fans. But I'm ready for the next chapter in life as well, and I can't wait to be back as a member."

Kvitova, who accepted a wild-card invitation, missed last year's tournament while on maternity leave.

The 24-year-old Navarro said Kvitova has been "an incredible player and obviously won this tournament twice, and then had a kid and came back, which is definitely an inspiring story from her end."

In 2011, Kvitova beat Maria Sharapova 6-3, 6-4 in the final. Three years later, Kvitova earned her second trophy, defeating Eugenie Bouchard 6-3, 6-0 in the title match.

"I think it's the best tournament in the world," she said. The U.S. Open, she assures, will be her last one.

"I am sure," Kvitova said, noting it's not just the toll on her body. "The motivation, it's different than it was before."

Coco Gauff is out in the first round with a 7-6 (3), 6-1 loss to Dayana Yastremska

AGENCIES
LONDON

Coco Gauff became just the third woman in the Open era to lose in the first round at Wimbledon right after winning the championship at the French Open, eliminated 7-6 (3), 6-1 by unseeded Dayana Yastremska of Ukraine on Tuesday night.

"Dayana started off playing strong," Gauff said. "I couldn't find my footing out there today." She joined another highly seeded American, No. 3 Jessica Pegula, in bowing out on Day 2 of the tournament. In all, 23 seeds — 13 men and 10 women — already are gone before the first round is even done, tying the most at any Grand Slam tournament since they began seeding 32 players in each singles bracket in 2001. It was just a little more than three weeks ago that Gauff was celebrating her

second Grand Slam title by getting past No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka in the final on the red clay of Roland-Garros. The quick turnaround might have been an issue, Gauff acknowledged. "I feel like mentally I was a little bit overwhelmed with everything that came afterwards," said the 21-year-old Gauff, "so I didn't feel like I had enough time to celebrate and also get back into it." She didn't think it mattered Tuesday that their match location was shifted from Centre Court to Court No. 1 or that she was told about a new start time only about an hour before the contest began. Even though Gauff's big breakthrough came at the All England Club at age 15 in 2019, when she beat Venus Williams in her opening match and made it all the way to the fourth round, the grass-court tournament has proved to be her least-successful major.