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'DRACONIAN LAW': VENUGOPAL ON CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL



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ISRAEL TO MOBILIZE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF RESERVISTS FOR EXPANDED GAZA OPS



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ASIAN SHOOTING C'SHIP: INDIA WINS 2 GOLD, 3 SILVER

OPPN CRIES FOUL AS GOVT TABLES BILL ON REMOVING ARRESTED PMs, CMs

The Lok Sabha erupted in protests on Wednesday as Amit Shah introduced bills to bar jailed leaders from holding office.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha witnessed uproarious scenes on Wednesday as Union Home Minister Amit Shah introduced three contentious legislations — the Constitution (One Hundred and Thirtieth Amendment) Bill, 2025; the Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill, 2025; and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2025 — prompting opposition MPs to tear and fling copies of the bills towards the Treasury benches.

The bills, later referred to a Joint Committee of Parliament, seek to disqualify a Prime Minister, Chief Minister, or Minister if they face corruption or serious criminal charges and remain in custody for 30 consecutive days. The J&K Bill specifically amends Section 54 of the 2019 Reorganisation Act to enable the removal of the Chief Minister or Ministers under such circumstances. Soon after the referral,



Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Congress MP KC Venugopal speak on the morality of the legislation, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

J&K REORGANISATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025

- Introduced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Lok Sabha.
- Amends Section 54 of the 2019 Act.
- Provides a legal framework to remove the Chief Minister or Ministers if arrested or detained on serious criminal charges.

SHAH'S 3-POINT PLAN IN THE BILLS

- No governing from jail:** Prime Ministers, Chief Ministers, or Ministers under arrest cannot continue in office.
- 30-day rule:** If bail is not secured within 30 days of arrest, leaders are automatically disqualified.
- Reinstatement on bail:** If released on bail later, they may resume their position.

Shah issued a sharp public defence of the measures. "Now, the people of the country will have to decide whether it is appropriate for a minister, Chief Minister, or Prime Minister to run the government while in jail," he said in a post on X, adding that the move reflected the Modi government's commitment to fighting political corruption and responding to public outrage.

The Home Minister asserted that the legislation was aimed at "restoring morality in public life and bringing integrity to politics". He outlined three key provisions. First, arrested lead-

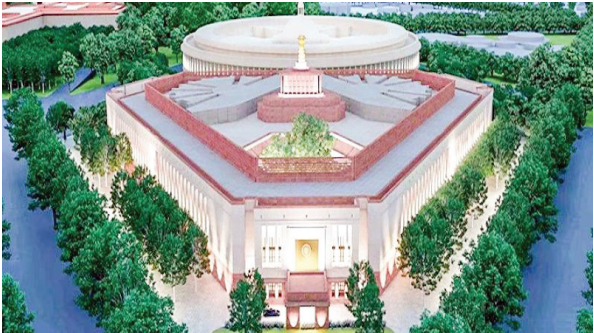
P3

Lok Sabha clears Bill to ban online money games

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, seeking to promote e-sports and online social games while imposing a complete ban on online money gaming.

The legislation prohibits the offering, operation, facilitation, and advertising of online money games, regardless of whether they are based on skill, chance, or both. It also bars financial transactions linked to such games. Service providers,



Representative image.

advertisers, promoters, and financiers face stringent penalties, while players themselves will not be punished.

Union Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaish-

naw, piloting the Bill, said the government had prioritised societal welfare over industry revenues. "Our Prime Minister has always chosen society. Never have

P3

Rahul warns of political unrest in Bihar

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday warned of growing political unrest in Bihar ahead of the upcoming state elections, accusing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of attempting to "steal elections" across multiple states.

Speaking at a press conference, Gandhi claimed a "fire" of discontent was

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India successfully test-fires nuclear-capable Agni-5 missile in Chandipur

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday successfully test-fired its nuclear-capable Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) Agni-5 from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Odisha, the Ministry of Defence confirmed.

The launch, carried out under the Strategic Forces Command, validated all operational and technical parameters, reaffirming the missile's reliability and accuracy. Defence officials said the test was part of routine user trials to ensure the

AGNI-5 AT A GLANCE

- Nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)
- Range: Over 5,000 km (upgradable to 7,500 km)
- Developed by DRDO, tested under Strategic Forces Command
- Can carry up to three nuclear warheads simultaneously
- Equipped with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology
- First MIRVed test conducted on 11 March 2024 from Kalpakkam
- Future variants to feature bunker-buster strike capability

system's readiness.

Developed by the Defence

Research and Development Organisation (DRDO),

Agni-5 is one of India's most advanced long-range missiles, capable of striking targets beyond 5,000 kilometres. It is equipped with modern navigation, guidance, propulsion and warhead technologies, significantly strengthening India's strategic deterrence.

The Ministry of Defence said the successful test reaffirmed the country's commitment to maintaining a credible minimum deterrence posture and highlighted the preparedness of its armed forces.

Agni-5 is a land-based intercontinental ballistic mis-

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External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar interacts with prominent scholars and think tank representatives of Russia, in Moscow on Wednesday. ANI

TDG NETWORK
MOSCOW

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Wednesday began his official visit to Moscow, where he met leading Russian scholars and think tank representatives to discuss bilateral ties, global geopolitics, and India's strategic outlook.

Jaishankar, who arrived in Moscow on Tuesday evening, will co-chair the 26th session of the India-Russia

Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC) with First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov. He is also scheduled to hold talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and address the India-Russia Business Forum. The Ministry of External Affairs said the visit reflects efforts to strengthen the "Special and Privileged

P3

Rekha Gupta vows stronger return after Civil Lines attack

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday described the attack on her during a public hearing as a "cowardly attempt" to derail her work for the people, even as police revealed that the accused, identified as Rajesh Khimji of Gujarat, is a serial offender with multiple cases registered against him.

The incident took place during a Jan Sunwai at her Civil Lines camp office, when Khimji allegedly attempted to assault the Chief Minister. He was swiftly overpowered and arrested. A case under Section 109(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (Attempt to Murder) has been registered at Civil Lines police station.

In a post on X, Gupta said she was initially shaken by the attack but was now feeling better. "The attack on me during this morning's public hearing was not just an attack on me, but a cow-



Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta. ANI

WHAT REKHA GUPTA SAID

- Attack was a "cowardly attempt" on her work for Delhi
- Initially in shock, now feeling better
- Promised to return "with even more energy and dedication"
- Urged well-wishers not to visit her

WHO IS RAJESH KHI MJ?

- Resident of Rajkot, Gujarat
- Serial offender with multiple past cases (2017-2024)
- Accused in most, one case still pending
- Arrested in Delhi for attempted murder of CM Rekha Gupta

ardly attempt on our resolve to serve Delhi... I will soon be working among you again with even more en-

ergy and dedication. Such attacks can never break my spirit," she wrote, while urging supporters not to

India, Russia push trade ties as US raises tariffs

Bihar, Bengal set for mega infra projects worth Rs. 18,000 cr

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Bihar and West Bengal on 22 August to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of development projects valued at more than Rs. 18,000 crore, the Prime Minister's Office said on Wednesday.

In Bihar, Modi will launch projects worth nearly Rs. 13,000 crore at a public event in Gaya, where he will also flag off two trains and address a gathering. He will inaugurate the 8.15-km Aunta-Simaria bridge on NH-31, including a 1.86-km six-lane bridge over the Ganga built at a cost of over 1,870 crore. The new bridge will ease traffic, cut detours of more than 100 km for heavy vehicles, and boost connectivity between north and south Bihar.

Other major projects in Bihar include the four-lane



Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Bakhtiyarpur-Mokama section of NH-31, the Buxar Thermal Power Plant (Rs. 6,880 crore), the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital & Research Centre in Muzaffarpur, and sewerage and urban infrastructure projects under Namami Gange and AMRUT 2.0. Modi will also hand over symbolic keys to beneficiaries of PMAY-Gramin and PMAY-Urban housing schemes.

In West Bengal, the Prime Minister will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of projects worth over Rs. 5,200 crore. At 4:15 pm, he will flag off metro ser-

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Agnihotri claims threats over 'The Bengal Files'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Filmmaker Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri on Wednesday claimed that he and his family have received threats ahead of the release of his upcoming film The Bengal Files.

Speaking to ANI, Agnihotri said his daughter and son had been targeted online, while his family, including his wife, faced intimidation. "After the release of The Kashmir Files, three fatwas were issued

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Shadow of Chawla looms as Congress targets CEC Kumar

ABHINANDAN MISHRA
NEW DELHI

The Congress-led INDIA bloc is mounting a fierce campaign against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, even considering an impeachment motion over allegations of voter fraud and perceived bias towards the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Kumar has come under sharp attack from opposition leaders after he challenged Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi—without naming him directly—to either submit an



16th Chief Election Commissioner of India, Navin Chawla. File photo

affidavit or apologise for his repeated claims of "vote chori" in states such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Haryana.

The opposition's offensive against the Election Commission in general, and

Kumar in particular, has revived memories of 2009. At the time, the Congress was in power at the Centre and election commissioner Naveen Chawla, who later became the CEC, faced an unprecedented attempt by his immediate superior, CEC N. Gopalaswami, to remove him over alleged proximity to the Congress leadership.

The 2009 general elections, conducted in five phases beginning 16 April, were overseen by Chawla and unfolded against the backdrop of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, which

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WHO SAID WHAT
IN PARLIAMENT

TN CM CALLS 130TH
CONSTITUTIONAL
AMENDMENT BILL
'BLACK BILL'

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Wednesday described the 130th Constitutional Amendment Bill as a "Black Bill" to foist cases against political opponents in power and remove them. The chief minister said 30 day arrest meant removal of an elected CM without any trial or conviction by court. However, it was merely a diktat of the BJP. This was how dictatorships begin; "steal votes, silence rivals and crush states." In a social media post, the CM said: "The 130th Constitutional Amendment is not reform — this is a Black Day and this is a Black Bill."

RESTORATION OF
CHAKKI KHAD
BRIDGE TAKEN UP'

New Delhi: Restoration work has been taken up after train services were discontinued due to unprecedented rain and consequent washing away of piers of the Chakki Khad bridge on the Pathankot Cantt-Jogindernagar narrow gauge route, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told Lok Sabha in a written reply on Wednesday. The issue came up in the House when a member asked if the pillars of the bridge over the Chakki rivulet near Pathankot collapsed due to illegal mining, disrupting rail service from Jassur to Pathankot, and what steps have been taken to prevent illegal mining to ensure seamless rail operation.

POLICE COMPLAINT
OVER PRIVATE
ARMY REMARK

Imphal: Manipur's lone Rajya Sabha MP Leishemba Sanajaoba has lodged a police complaint against a person for claiming on social media that Meitei outfit Arambai Tenggol is the "private army" of the parliamentarian, a BJP leader said on Wednesday. The complaint was filed at the Porompat Police Station in Imphal East, he said. Maisnam Shivdutta, PA/PS to the MP, said he was directed by the member of Parliament to lodge the complaint regarding a post on social media on August 18.

PARL COMMITTEE
RAISES CONCERNS
ON SAI'S HEALTH

NEW DELHI: Declaring Sports Authority of India (SAI) "critically" under-funded and under-staffed, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on sports has observed that India's international performances are "far from satisfactory" and also raised concerns around the lack of fund utilisation in the government's flagship Khelo India Scheme. The committee said that SAI's financial health is crucial to the country's international medal performance.

'DRACONIAN LAW': VENUGOPAL ON
CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL

Congress MP KC Venugopal accuses Centre of diverting attention from electoral fraud.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress MP KC Venugopal on Wednesday slammed the Centre over the Constitution Amendment Bill to remove the PM, CMs, and ministers held on serious criminal charges, terming it a "draconian law" and a diversionary tactic.

"This is only a diversionary tactic. This is a draconian law. This is not going to be passed by the Parliament. They want to divert attention from electoral fraud and the Bihar Yatra...They are trying to constitutionalise vendetta politics," Venugopal told the media. Communist Party of India (CPI) MP P Sandosh Kumar asserted that the opposition will fight it out.



Congress MP KC Venugopal

Speaking to ANI, Kumar emphasised that the NDA has become "National Destruction Alliance."

"This is the destruction of certain portions of the Constitution. RSS never believed in the federal structure of this country...Who is framing these charges? All agencies are in the hands of the

BJP. So, they can file charges against any minister, and he can be jailed for up to 30 days, after which he will be finished. So, can we allow this? NDA has become National Destruction Alliance. They should come out of it, and we will fight it out," Sandosh Kumar said.

Congress MP Pramod Ti-

wari said that they will take any action after the Bill is introduced in the House.

"Congress is against corruption, but since the BJP has come into power, the definition of corruption has changed. Whether it is the Election Commission, ED, or CBI, there is a lot of misuse, and that is why their conviction rate is more than 90%... Let the bill come; we will understand it, and only after understanding it will we take action and react to it..." Tiwari said.

Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee also slammed the BJP Government, accusing it of only amassing "POWER, WEALTH AND CONTROL WITHOUT ANY ACCOUNTABILITY."

Govt fenced 74% India-B'desh
border in WB: Nityanand Rai

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai on Wednesday informed Rajya Sabha that 1647.696 km out of 2216.7 km border, which lies with Bangladesh in West Bengal, has been covered with a fence.

The information was provided to the Rajya Sabha in a written reply to the Question of BJP MPs Shambhu Sharan Patel and Neeraj Shekhar.

"Out of balance stretch of 569.004 km, which is yet to be covered by fence and other border infrastructure works, 112.780 km is non-



Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai

feasible and 456.224 km is feasible. Out of 456.224 km of feasible IB (International Border) length in West Bengal, land for 77.935 km has been handed over to the executing agency.

LS Speaker Birla urges MPs not to
bring banners, placards in House

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday urged Members of Parliament not to bring banners and placards into the House and asked them to cooperate for smooth proceedings.

The session was disrupted by opposition members shouting slogans, demanding a discussion on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list in Bihar. During the session, Om Birla said, "I request that banners with wooden sticks are not appropriate in the House. Many of you shout slogans and bring



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

sticks, placards, and banners, but this is not suitable for the House. Since you all belong to political parties, you should cooperate with the House."

Meanwhile, today, Union Home Minister Amit Shah

More chaos Oppn creates,
more public will reject it: Rijiju

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Both the Houses of the Parliament faced a major adjournment on Wednesday after Opposition MPs held a protest, seeking discussion on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in Bihar.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is facing criticism over the deletion of voter names from electoral rolls in various constituencies. Opposition MPs have alleged a "vote theft" in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and Bihar SIR.

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju slammed the opposition over the continuous ruckus in the House.

Speaking in the Lok Sabha, Rijiju said, "Since the monsoon session began, these people (Opposition) have been continuously shouting slogans. For the past three days, it has been decided to honour Group



Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju

Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, but it is very unfortunate that the hero of our country—who travelled to space and hoisted the Indian flag—was not even given the opportunity to be honoured because of the actions of the opposition.

This is truly shameful." Sharpening his attack, Kiren Rijiju emphasised that the government will pass the bills on its agenda "no matter what". "Go outside and see how badly your actions are perceived. The world laughs at this, and now even school children

have started asking, "Do MPs behave like this?" We will get the government's business passed no matter what. We will do the work that needs to be done in the interest of the country and society, because the people of this nation have entrusted us with this responsibility," he said. "Creating disruption only harms the opposition, especially the new MPs. The more chaos you create, the more the public will completely reject you. Once again, I urge you all to participate in the discussion," the Union Minister said.

AI is an opportunity to
dream big: AAP's Chadha

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MP Raghav Chadha on Wednesday demanded the government to provide free subscription of advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude and others to every Indian in the Parliament session.

The AAP leader highlighted the potential of emerging technologies in Rajya Sabha, saying, "Indians must be prepared for 2030 and hence must be given free subscriptions to generative AI tools. AI is not a technology but an opportunity to

dream big and accomplish those dreams. AI will help boost India's productivity and save precious time."

Chadha stressed that access to such tools could revolutionise the way Indians work, study and live. He further emphasised that the AI can unlock India's true potential for farmers to students to old age people.

The MP argued that AI tools should not remain limited to the privileged few but be made universally accessible. He also cited examples of nations like UAE, Singapore and China. AI is beneficial for farmers, students, and businessmen.

Parl panel calls for fatigue risk mgmt
system for air traffic controllers

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary committee on Wednesday expressed concerns over the practice of "normalisation of deviance" with respect to duty hours for air traffic controllers as it urged the authorities to put in place a modern fatigue risk management system that provides enforceable standards on work hours, rest periods, and roster design.

India is one of the world's fastest-growing civil aviation markets with growing

air traffic, but there is a shortage of Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs). In its 36-page report tabled in Parliament, the Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture said the evidence points to a deeply troubling practice within India's air traffic management system: the normalisation of deviance. "The system is knowingly and consistently operating outside its own mandated safety limits (WDTL) through the routine use of exemptions. This

is a classic organizational failure, where a known and significant risk -- controller fatigue -- is accepted as a normal part of operations due to persistent operational and resource pressures," the panel, chaired by Rajya Sabha member and JD(U) leader Sanjay Kumar Jha, said. The panel, in its report on 'Overall Review of Safety in the Civil Aviation Sector', the committee said the practice of granting routine exemptions from WDTL regulations must cease immediately.



INDIA bloc MPs protest over the alleged voter fraud and SIR issues, at Parliament premises in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

GLIMPSES FROM PARLIAMENT



Priyanka Gandhi and Shashi Tharoor at Parliament on Wednesday. ANI



Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi at Parliament premises. ANI



Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Lok Sabha on Wednesday. ANI



C.P. Radhakrishnan with Kiren Rijiju, Dharmendra Pradhan, Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, Pralhad Joshi, Arjun Ram Meghwal and others at Parliament Complex.



SP MP Anand Bhaduriya, Mohibullah Nadvi, and AAP MP Raghav Chadda, at Parliament premises. ANI

Sudershan Reddy's nomination for
VP Oppn's firm commitment: Kharge

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday said that former Supreme Court Judge B Sudershan Reddy's nomination for the Vice Presidential elections stands as the opposition's firm commitment to restoring "fairness, impartiality, and dignity" to the functioning of the Rajya Sabha.

Addressing the gathering of the INDIA bloc members at the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan, which was also attended by former Supreme Court Judge B Sudershan Reddy, Kharge pointed out that opposition members have been denied the opportunity to raise matters of vital public concern in the Upper House and to avoid this "transgression" Sudarshan Reddy's being elected is vital. "In Parliament, we have

seen a growing trend of stifling opposition voices. We are repeatedly denied the opportunity to raise matters of vital public concern in the House. To resist and decisively act against these transgressions in Parliament, the nation needs an exemplary, impartial justice B. Sudarshan Reddy as the Vice-President of India. His nomination represents our collective resolve to defend and uphold the democratic ideals that define India," Kharge said.

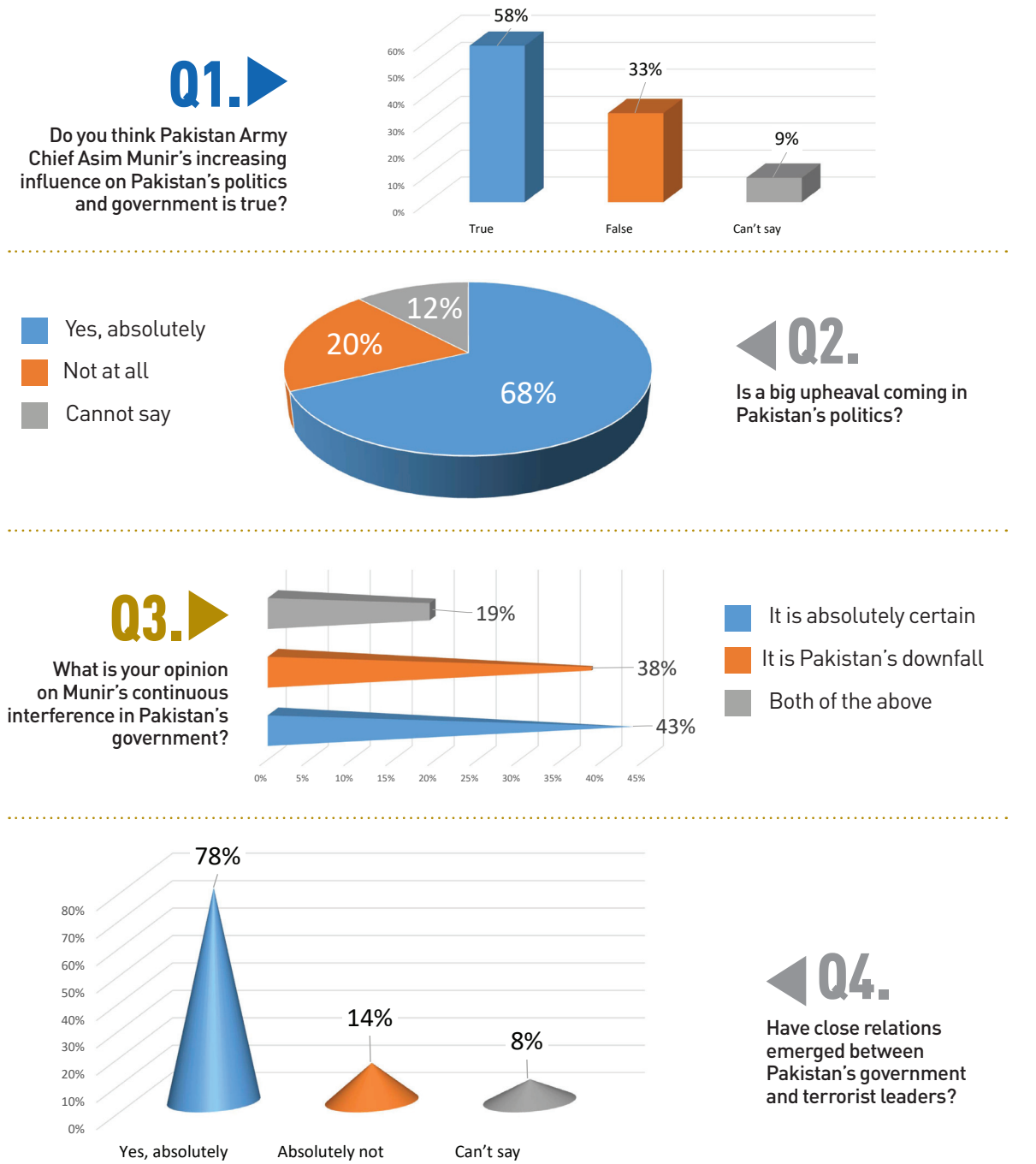
"Reddy's life and work reflect the spirit of our Constitution, a commitment to fairness, compassion, and the empowerment of every citizen," he added. Congress president further asserted that blatant misuse of parliamentary majority has been witnessed in the last 11 years under the BJP government. "Over the last 11 years, we have witnessed

the blatant misuse of parliamentary majority to arm the autonomous agencies like ED, I-T, and CBI with draconian powers to target opposition leaders. Now, these new Bills are set to become instruments in the hands of the ruling party to further undermine and destabilise democratically elected governments in the states," he said. Slamming the government over the 130th Constitution Amendment bill, Kharge said that the legislation undermines the core values of parliamentary democracy. "At a time when the integrity of our democratic institutions is facing unprecedented challenges, his (former Supreme Court Judge B. Sudershan Reddy) nomination stands as a firm commitment to restoring fairness, impartiality, and dignity to the functioning of the Rajya Sabha, which has been in steady decline," Kharge said.

THE DA ILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON PAKISTAN POLITICAL CRISIS

78% respondents said close relations have emerged between Pakistan’s government and terrorist leaders.

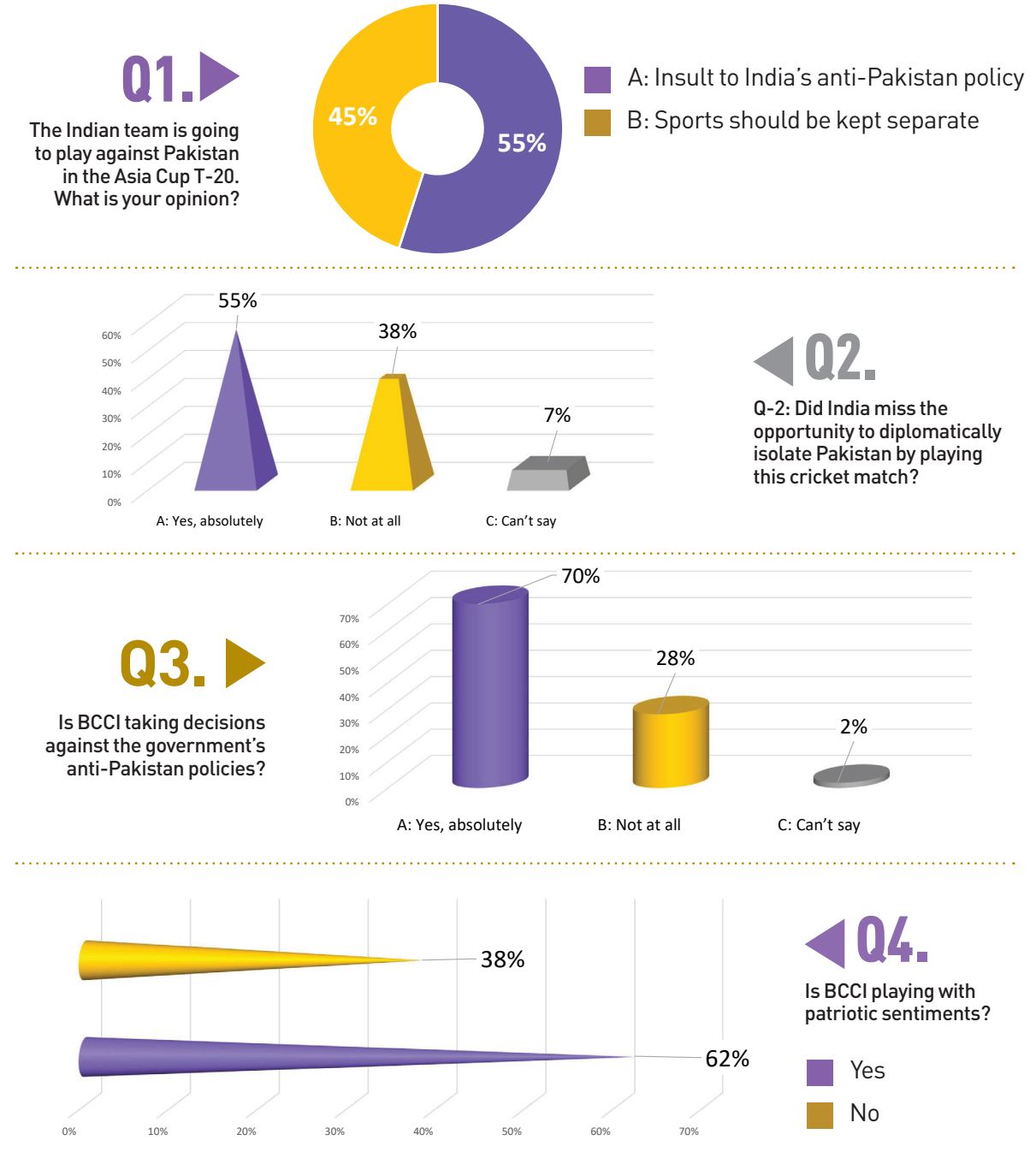
A survey on Pakistan’s political crisis revealed that 58% believe Army Chief Asim Munir’s influence on politics is real, while 68% foresee a major upheaval. Nearly 78% think Pakistan’s government shares close ties with terror leaders, and 72% feel the country is losing balance in its foreign policy, highlighting rising instability concerns.



THE DA ILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON ASIA CUP INDIA-PAKISTAN MATCH

55% believe India missed a chance to diplomatically isolate Pakistan by playing the match.

The survey on India playing Pakistan in the Asia Cup reveals strong discontent. A majority (55%) feel it insults India’s anti-Pakistan stance, and 70% say BCCI is acting against government policies. 62% believe patriotic sentiments are being undermined, while 57% want players to oppose BCCI’s decision. Public opinion is divided.



Rekha Gupta vows stronger return

CONTINUED FROM P1

the CM’s residence prior to the attack. Delhi Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh added that the accused had spent the previous night near Gupta’s home before striking during the public hearing.

Environment Minister Majinder Singh Sirsa al-

leged a possible political conspiracy, claiming that the attacker had links with former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal’s associate Gopal Italia. Sharing a photograph of Khimji with Italia, Sirsa demanded answers from Kejriwal, saying: “Is this a coincidence or a deliberate act? The public is angry, and those behind

this attack will not escape the law.”

Police sources said none of Khimji’s relatives is in jail and that he did not bring any petition or grievance to the CM’s office. Investigators are now seeking his remand to determine the motive and whether others were involved in the conspiracy.

Oppn cries foul as Govt tables bill on removing...

CONTINUED FROM P1

ers cannot serve as Prime Minister, Chief Minister, or Minister. Second, if bail is not secured within 30 days of arrest, they are automatically disqualified. And third, if granted bail later, leaders may resume office.

Inside the House, Shah reiterated that the government wanted to “elevate the declining level of morality in public

life”. He requested that the bills be examined by a Joint Parliamentary Committee of 21 members from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha.

The Opposition, however, mounted a united resistance. AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi said the bills would “be the final nail in the coffin of elected governments”, accusing the government of turning India into a “police

state” where agencies act as “judge and executioner”.

Congress MP Manish Tewari called the measures unconstitutional, warning that they violated the presumption of innocence and Article 21, which guarantees the right to life and liberty. “This bill makes an investigating officer more powerful than the Prime Minister of India,” he said, alleging that it could be politically mis-

used.

Congress leader KC Venugopal accused the BJP of attempting to “sabotage the basic principles of the Constitution”. In a heated exchange, he questioned Shah’s own past conduct during his arrest in Gujarat. Shah retorted that he had resigned on moral grounds before his arrest and only resumed office after being acquitted.

Speaker Om Birla ad-

joined the House twice, first until 3 pm and later till 5 pm, amid slogans and uproar. He warned MPs against lowering the dignity of Parliament, saying, “People are watching.”

Despite fierce opposition, the government succeeded in sending the bills to the Joint Committee of Parliament, where they will now undergo detailed scrutiny before being reconsidered.

LS clears Bill to ban online games

CONTINUED FROM P1

we compromised on its interests,” he told the House, urging members to pass the legislation, which was cleared by voice vote despite Opposition protests.

Vaishnav explained that online gaming comprises three segments—e-sports, online social games, and money gaming. While the first two will be promoted, he said money gaming posed grave risks including addiction, financial ruin, suicides, money laundering,

and even terror financing.

The Bill prescribes imprisonment of up to three years and/or fines up to 1 crore for offering or facilitating money games. Advertising such games may attract up to two years in jail and fines of 50 lakh. Financial transactions linked to money gaming carry the same penalties as offering them. Repeat offenders may face harsher punishments of three to five years’ imprisonment and fines up to 2 crore.

Key offences under the law will be cognisable and non-bailable, with provisions empowering authorised officers to search, seize, and arrest without warrant in specific cases.

For e-sports, now recognised as a legitimate form of competitive sport, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports will establish a dedicated framework. Online social games such as Chess, Sudoku and Solitaire will also receive government support.

Shadow of Chawla looms...

CONTINUED FROM P1

had underscored the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government’s weaknesses in countering terrorism. Public outrage, compounded by insensitive remarks and actions of Union ministers, fuelled a strong anti-UPA sentiment. Yet the UPA secured a second term.

Chawla’s tenure was dogged by allegations of partisanship, particularly over his alleged ties to the Nehru-Gandhi family. The most striking rebuke came from within the Election Commission itself. In an extraordinary move on 31 January 2009, Gopalaswami recommended Chawla’s removal to the President of India—without consulting fellow Election Commissioner S.Y. Quraishi.

The recommendation

followed a meeting between Gopalaswami and a small NDA delegation in his chambers. They accused Chawla of acting in a partisan manner to favour the Congress party. Gopalaswami alleged that Chawla had shared sensitive Election Commission information with Congress officials and had opposed issuing a notice to Congress president Sonia Gandhi for accepting honours from Belgium—a complaint that Chawla and Quraishi had dismissed in a two-to-one majority.

Gopalaswami’s action marked a rare instance of a CEC publicly seeking the removal of a fellow commissioner, effectively accusing him of undermining the Commission’s impartiality. But President Pratibha Patil rejected the recommendation, allowing

the 1969-batch IAS officer Chawla to assume charge as CEC on 20 April 2009 and oversee the parliamentary elections.

Chawla’s career had long been controversial. The Shah Commission, led by former Chief Justice of India J.C. Shah to probe Emergency-era excesses, had declared him “unfit to hold any public office which demands an attitude of fair play and consideration for others” for his role as a senior official in the 1970s. Though the Delhi High Court later dismissed the Commission’s findings, the stigma endured.

Even before Gopalaswami’s intervention, the NDA had targeted Chawla. In March 2006, led by the BJP, the alliance submitted a memorandum to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam—signed by over 200 MPs—

demanding his removal as election commissioner. The government rejected the demand. In May 2006, Jaswant Singh, then Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, approached the Supreme Court seeking Chawla’s ouster, citing his ties with Congress leaders and issues related to the MPLADS scheme. The petition was later withdrawn after Gopalaswami asserted his authority to remove an election commissioner, though the Court left the legal questions unresolved.

Despite the anti-UPA wave following 26/11, the Congress-led alliance won the 2009 polls. No definitive evidence of electoral malpractice emerged. Party leaders maintain that the elections were free and fair, and that the UPA’s victory reflected voter priorities such as economic policy.

India successfully test-fires Agni-5

CONTINUED FROM P1

sile with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) capability, allowing it to carry and release multiple nuclear warheads simultaneously. India conducted its first MIRVed test launch of the missile on 11 March 2024 from Kalpakam in Tamil Nadu, validating this technology.

With a current range of over 5,000 kilometres, an upgraded variant under development is expected to extend its reach to 7,500 kilometres. Future enhancements are also aimed at integrating bunker-buster bomb technology, expanding its strike capability against fortified targets.

India, Russia push trade ties

CONTINUED FROM P1

Strategic Partnership” between the two countries.

The visit comes as India’s ties with the United States face strain over New Delhi’s continued purchase of Russian crude oil. Washington has doubled tariffs on Indian goods to 50 per cent, with the White House stating the measures are intended to apply secondary pressure on Moscow over the Ukraine conflict. A planned round of India-US trade talks has also

been postponed.

In Moscow, Russian officials expressed optimism about expanding cooperation with India despite Western sanctions. Roman Babushkin, Charge d’Affaires at the Russian Embassy in Delhi, said the India-Russia-China trilateral dialogue could soon be revived, calling it vital for regional stability. Deputy Trade Representative Evgeniy Griva highlighted that rupee-rouble payments were proving resilient under

pressure, noting stable annual trade growth of around 10 per cent and a surge in Indian exports, particularly in pharmaceuticals, machine tools and electronics.

Babushkin criticised unilateral sanctions as “illegal” and stressed that Russia’s economy was adapting despite “tremendous pressure.” He also described the recent Russia-US summit in Alaska as a “breakthrough development” in restoring trust between global powers.

Bihar, Bengal set for mega infra projects worth Rs. 18,000 cr

CONTINUED FROM P1

vices on newly constructed routes, including the Noapara-Jai Hind Bimanbandar corridor, and take a metro ride from Jessore Road station to the airport. Through video conferencing, he will also launch the Sealdah-Esplanade and Beleghata-

Hemanta Mukhopadhyay metro services, which are expected to significantly reduce travel times and improve connectivity to Kolkata’s airport, IT hub, and commercial centres.

Additionally, Modi will lay the foundation stone for the six-lane elevated Kona

Expressway in Howrah, worth over 1,200 crore, to ease traffic flow and boost trade and tourism.

The Prime Minister’s two-state visit underscores the government’s push to upgrade infrastructure, connectivity, and public services across eastern India.

Rahul warns of political unrest in Bihar

CONTINUED FROM P1

spreading in Bihar. “A 4-year-old child in Bihar is shouting ‘vote chor, vote chor’... They stole the Maharashtra and Haryana elections. They will steal elections in Bihar, West Bengal and Assam. But now the fire has spread in Bihar... You can see there is a storm,” he said. Backing party general secretary KC Venugopal, Gandhi praised his role in shaping social justice policies and the Telangana caste census, adding that Venugopal always carried a copy of the Constitution. “There is a fight going on between those attacking the Constitution and those defending it,” he remarked.

Agnihotri claims threats

CONTINUED FROM P1

against me. Since then, I haven’t sat in a car with my children. We haven’t done anything together. I didn’t

have as much trouble making The Kashmir Files as I am having with this film,” he said, alleging that he was facing “social media lynching.”

The director noted that the film, which depicts Bengal’s culture alongside the violence of the 1940s, had originally been titled The Delhi Files: Bengal Chapter.

IMPLEMENT SC, ST, OBC QUOTAS IN PVT HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: CONG TO GOVT

Congress urged government to enact the legislation for reservation.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday pressed the PM Modi Government to act on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education's report recommending reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) in private higher educational institutions (HEIs). Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, in a statement, said that the Committee chaired by senior party leader Digvijaya Singh has presented its report to Parliament advocating for the implementation of reservations in private HEIs.

The statement highlighted that Article 15(5) of the Constitution, introduced by the UPA Government under Dr Manmohan Singh in 2006

RESERVATIONS MANDATED

- Congress demands law to enforce reservations in private HEIs.
- Based on Parliamentary Committee chaired by Digvijay Singh.
- Cites constitutional authority: Article 15(5), from the 93rd Amendment (2006).
- Supreme Court validated Article 15(5) in 2014 (Pramati case).
- Data show extremely low SC, ST, OBC representation in top private institutions.
- Committee recommends quotas: 15% SC, 7.5% ST, 27% OBC, with government funding.
- Congress reiterated this demand, referencing its 2024 manifesto ("Nyay Patra").
- "Ball is now in Modi Government's court," said Jairam Ramesh.



Congress leader Jairam Ramesh

through the 93rd Amendment, empowers the government to mandate reservations for SC, ST, and OBC students in private HEIs. In May 2014, the Supreme

Court in Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust v Union of India upheld the validity of Article 15(5), affirming that reservations are permissible in such in-

stitutions.

However, the statement pointed out that no law has been passed by Parliament to enforce Article 15(5). Data examined by the Committee

revealed low representation of marginalised communities in private institutions, including three Institutions of Eminence (IoEs) recognised by the Union Government, where SC students constituted only 0.89 percent, ST students 0.53 percent, and OBC students 11.16 percent.

In view of this, the Committee has unanimously recommended that the Parliament enact legislation to implement 15 percent reservations for SCs, 7.5 percent for STs, and 27 percent for OBCs in private HEIs.

Jairam Ramesh stressed that the demand for reservations in private educational institutions can no longer be ignored. He also recalled that the Congress, in its 2024 Lok Sabha election manifesto "Nyay Patra," had pledged to bring such legislation.

Indian Air jets spotted over LoC skies at dawn amid IAF exercise

ASHIQ MIR
SRINAGAR

Indian Air Force (IAF) jets were observed flying over areas near the Line of Control (LoC) in north Kashmir around 5 AM on Wednesday, creating a buzz among residents in border villages.

This activity is part of a high-intensity air exercise for which the IAF had issued a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM), scheduled between August 19 and 21 across Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab, close to the Pakistan border.

The exercise is aimed at enhancing combat readiness and testing operational preparedness in strategically sensitive zones.

Recent India-Pakistan Conflict: Operation Sindoor

These military drills come in the backdrop of the 2025 India-Pakistan conflict—a brief but intense confrontation that



Representative Image

began on May 7, 2025, when India launched missile strikes under the banner of Operation Sindoor.

The strikes were carried out in response to the deadly Pahalgam terrorist attack on April 22, 2025, which claimed 26 civilian lives. India targeted terror infrastructure operated by Pakistan-based groups Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba, both in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

India maintained that no Pakistani military or civilian facilities were hit.

The conflict lasted four days, ending on May 10, 2025, marked by heavy cross-LoC engagements and allegations of ceasefire violations from both sides, even after a ceasefire was agreed upon.

These recent air exercises signal India's continued vigilance and preparedness against any emerging threats in the region.

Residents in border areas are advised to remain alert and comply with advisories issued by the administration during the exercise window.

Telangana CM pays tributes to Rajiv Gandhi, vows to work for making Rahul PM

RAJ KIRAN BATHULA
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Tuesday paid floral tributes to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his birth anniversary and pledged to continue his unfinished mission. The Chief Minister asserted that Congress will not rest until Rahul Gandhi is made the Prime Minister of India, as only he can fulfill the aspirations and vision of Rajiv Gandhi.

Speaking at the anniversary celebrations in Hyderabad, Revanth Reddy described Rajiv Gandhi as an inspiration for youth and a visionary who laid strong foundations for India's growth. He recalled Rajiv's pioneering role in introducing computers, ushering reforms in the telecom sector, and promoting information technology. "It was Rajiv Gandhi who sowed the seeds for Hi-Tech



Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy

City in Hyderabad. His foresight transformed India's technological future," the CM observed.

Revanth Reddy also highlighted Rajiv Gandhi's contributions to women's empowerment, poverty alleviation, and transparency in governance. He said the former Prime Minister sacrificed his life while striving to uphold national unity and integrity.

The Chief Minister announced that, in line with Rajiv Gandhi's ideals, Con-

gress would amend laws to enable youth who complete 21 years of age to contest Assembly elections once Rahul Gandhi assumes the office of Prime Minister. "Rajiv Gandhi believed in empowering the younger generation, and we are committed to realizing his dream," he said.

Reiterating his government's commitment to social justice, Revanth Reddy said Telangana has already taken historic steps by implementing 42 percent quota for Backward Classes in education, employment, and politics. He noted that Telangana is also the first state in the country to introduce Scheduled Caste sub-categorization, a move aimed at equitable development.

"Drawing inspiration from Rajiv Gandhi, the people's government in Telangana is determined to achieve social and economic development. Our policies are guided by his vision of inclusive growth," Revanth affirmed.

TDG NETWORK
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh government will launch a statewide campaign from September 16 to achieve 100 per cent farmer registration. Acting on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's instructions, district magistrates will review progress daily in the run-up to the drive.

The Revenue Department has been directed to issue standard operating procedures (SOPs) to revenue officers to ensure the correction of land ownership records in line with Aadhaar.

The Yogi government has set a target of over 2.88 crore



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath

farmer registrations. So far, around 1.45 crore farmers, more than 50 per cent of the target have been registered. Bijron leads the state with over 58 per cent registrations, followed by Hardoi (57.84%), Shravasti (57.47%), Pilibhit (56.89%) and Rampur (56.72%), plac-

Security forces intensify crackdown on militancy, drugs and crime in Manipur

NIBIR DEKA
NEW DELHI

Security forces and Manipur Police have intensified their counter-insurgency and anti-crime operations across the state, resulting in multiple arrests of militant cadres, drug smugglers, and offenders over the past two days.

On August 19, security forces arrested a self-styled Corporal of the Kangleipak Communist Party (Military Federal Line), identified as Lourembam Suraj Singh (26) alias Lamjingba, from his residence in Wangkhei Angom Leikai under Porompat Police Station, Imphal East. He was involved in extortion activities in the valley areas. A mobile phone and an Aadhaar card were recovered from him.

Earlier, on August 18, police arrested another active KCP (MFL) cadre, Sapam Surendra Meitei (27) alias Eronbi alias Naocha alias Thoinaoba, from the vicinity of Minut-hong bridge in Imphal West. He was allegedly engaged in



Representative image of security forces

collecting extortion money from shops, businesses and the public.

In a separate intelligence-driven operation on August 19, an active cadre of KCP (PWG), Md. Satabuddin alias Jiten (33) of Khurai Heikru Makhong Masjid Maning, was arrested from his locality under Heingang Police Station, Imphal East.

Manipur Police achieved a significant breakthrough against narcotics trafficking on August 19 with the arrest of two smugglers, Lungousiem of Songpi Kholui village and Ngamminlal of Songpi village, near Pioneer Camp

along NH-102B in Singhat Police Station, Churachandpur district.

From their possession, police seized: 111 soap cases containing brown sugar, weighing around 1.3 kg, a Yamaha MT 15 two-wheeler (MN OIAF 9857), and a Mahindra Bolero (MN O4AF 5742).

Separately, on August 18, police arrested Kshetrimayum Naoba (34) of Kwaikethel Ningthemkol, Imphal West, and recovered 288 bottles of Codeine Phosphate from his E-Rickshaw (MN01A/J9040), used for transporting the contraband.

'BJP sold jobs, we shut that door forever,' says Himachal CM Sukhu

TDG NETWORK
SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Wednesday hit back at the Opposition in the Assembly, accusing the previous Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government of selling jobs and presiding over rampant corruption.

He said his government had "shut the door" on such practices and was committed to creating transparent employment opportunities.

"During the BJP's tenure, jobs were sold, and corruption was at its peak. Our government has closed that door forever. Recruitment in education and other departments is now happening in a transparent manner," Sukhu said, intervening during the discussion on unemployment and jobs on the third day of the monsoon session.

He added that the only change in contractual hiring was renaming it as "job trainee" appointments.

The Chief Minister recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised two crore jobs, while the Congress, in its election manifesto, had assured five lakh jobs for youth over five years.

"We are working to not only provide jobs within the state but also create opportunities abroad. For the first time, a separate Overseas Employment Department has been established to facilitate this," Himachal CM said.

Listing employment achievements since his government took office, CM Sukhu said thousands of youth had been appointed.

According to him, over 3,000 TGT (Arts, Medical, Non-Medical) teachers ap-

Latehar, West Singhbhum identified as LWE-hit J'khand districts: Nityanand Rai

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has identified two districts in Jharkhand - Latehar and West Singhbhum as Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) affected, according to a written answer in the Rajya Sabha today by Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai.

Over the past five years, the Centre has allocated Rs 936.50 crore to Jharkhand under three major schemes aimed at tackling LWE challenges and improving infrastructure and development in the affected regions. The schemes include the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme, Special Central Assistance (SCA) Scheme, and Special Infrastructure Scheme

(SIS).

The government highlighted several initiatives undertaken in Jharkhand's LWE-affected districts with special focus on expansion of road network, telecom connectivity, financial inclusion, education, and skill development.

For road connectivity, 2,927 km of roads have been constructed. For Telecom expansion: 1,589 mobile



Left-Wing Extremists.

towers have been commissioned. For Financial inclusion: 1,240 post offices, 349 bank branches, and 352 ATMs opened across most LWE-hit areas. For Skill development: 16 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and 20 Skill Development Centres have been made functional, and for quality Education in tribal blocks, 47 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) have

been made functional.

To ensure effective utilisation of funds and timely progress, the Centre has put in place monitoring mechanisms through different central-level committees.

These include the SRE Standing Committee for the SRE scheme, the Project Clearance Committee for the SIS, and the Central Level Committee for the

SCA Scheme.

Meanwhile, Nityanand Rai on August 12 informed the Lok Sabha in a written reply about decline in violence perpetrated by "left wing extremists," saying that violence incidents and resultant deaths of civilians and security forces, have come down from high of 2010 by 81 per cent and 85 per cent, respectively, in 2024.

DELHI BJP CHIEF SACHDEVA SAYS CM REKHA 'STABLE' FOLLOWING ATTACK

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta attacked during Jan Sunvai, BJP confirms stability.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Following the attack on Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, state BJP chief Virendraa Sachdeva informed that her condition is "stable" and was examined by the doctors. He said that CM is a "strong" lady and she has not cancelled her programs. Sachdeva said that a man approached her and presented her papers during the Jan Sunvai on Wednesday morning. The accused tried to pull CM Gupta towards him, following which there was a little "jostling". The Delhi BJP chief said that the accused was nabbed by the police and the investigation is underway. "During Jan Sunvai this

ATTACK ON DELHI CM REKHA GUPTA

- BJP chief Sachdeva says Rekha Gupta is "stable" after incident.
- Man grabbed CM's hand during Jan Sunvai, causing minor jostling.
- Delhi ministers Sirsa and Mishra term attack a conspiracy, cowardly act.
- CM resting but refuses to cancel programs, vows governance will continue.



Delhi BJP chief Virendraa Sachdeva informing media that her condition is "stable" and was examined by the doctors on Wednesday.

morning, CM was speaking with the public like she always does. A man approached her, presented some paper and suddenly held her hand while trying to pull her towards him. During this, there was a little jostling...People

nabbed him. Who is he, and all other details are being investigated by the Police... The CM is stable. Doctors have examined her. I have met her, she is a strong woman...It seems that she suffered a light blow to her head...The slap or stone-

throwing stories are fabricated...Such incidents in politics are condemnable... Jan Sunvai will continue. CM is resting right now but she has said that she will not cancel her programs," Virendraa Sachdeva told reporters.

Delhi Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa also condemned the attack on CM Rekha Gupta, terming it a "conspiracy" by her rivals. He further believed that all facts regarding the incident would come after police investigation. "I strongly condemn the attack on the CM during Jan Sunvai. She worries for Delhi day and night. This is a conspiracy by rivals, they can't tolerate that a CM remains amid the public for hours, that she meets people at her residence. So, there seems to be a political conspiracy behind this. Delhi Police is investigating this. All facts will come out," Sirsa said in a self-made video. Another Delhi Minister Kapil Mishra said that the attack on CM Rekha Gupta was a "cowardly" act and

'How are citizens of Delhi safe if CM herself is unsafe?'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi on Wednesday condemned the attack on Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, stressing that if the Delhi CM is unsafe under central-controlled policing, the safety of ordinary citizens remains in serious doubt. "...We have seen past incidents where the Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal faced these kinds of attacks. At that time, the BJP used to celebrate those attacks. The law and order challenge has entered the doorstep of the sitting CM of the capital of this country. It is extremely worrisome, and questions need to be raised to the Home Ministry since Delhi Police & the law and order come under them...How are the citizens of Delhi safe if the CM herself is unsafe?... I am hoping that the Home Ministry will finally wake up to the cause being made by the citizens of Delhi," Chaturvedi told ANI.



Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi condemning attack on Delhi CM at press event on Wednesday

Reacting to the incident, BJP MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat said, "...This is really unfortunate. I have full faith that Rekha Gupta ji will continue to work for the people of Delhi." Following the attack on Rekha Gupta, state BJP chief Virendraa Sachdeva informed that her condition is "stable" and was examined by the doctors. He said that CM is a "strong" lady and she has not cancelled her programs. Sachdeva said that a man approached her and presented her papers during

the Jan Sunvai on Wednesday morning. The accused tried to pull CM Gupta towards him, following which there was a little "jostling." The Delhi BJP chief said that the accused was nabbed by the police, and the investigation is underway. "During Jan Sunvai this morning, CM was speaking with the public like she always does. A man approached her, presented some paper and suddenly held her hand while trying to pull her towards him. During this, there was a little jostling...People nabbed him. Who is he, and all other details are being investigated by the Police... The CM is stable. Doctors have examined her. I have met her, she is a strong woman...It seems that she suffered a light blow to her head...The slap or stone-throwing stories are fabricated...Such incidents in politics are condemnable...Jan Sunvai will continue.

BJP leaders condemn attack on Delhi CM Rekha Gupta; allege conspiracy

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

BJP leaders on Wednesday strongly condemned the attack on Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta during a Jan Sunvai, calling it a "cowardly" act and alleging a larger conspiracy by the Opposition to derail her public outreach program. BJP MLA Satish Upadhyay said that people will not forgive such a "mindset." "The ill intent and hatred with which the Delhi CM was attacked during Jan Sunvai today is very cowardly. People of Delhi will never forgive such a mindset. Delhi CM is serving the people day and night. She will neither be scared by such attacks nor cower down. She will continue serving Delhi. Such people



BJP MLA Satish Upadhyay said that people will not forgive such a "mindset." Upadhyay said in a video message. Former BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri alleged a "conspiracy" to derail the CM's outreach program and claimed that the probe will reveal that the accused of the incident will be an "activist" belonging to Congress or AAP. "This was done as per a conspiracy to derail Rekha

ji from meeting the public. The PM has asked all public representatives to connect with the public. Due to this, there is frustration in the Opposition. I am 100 per cent certain the probe will reveal that he (the accused) was an activist belonging to Congress, Aam Aadmi Party or communist parties...This incident is condemnable," Bidhuri told ANI. BJP MP Rekha Sharma termed the incident an attempt to "scare and threaten" the CM. "This is a very serious issue. It is shocking that someone attacked a CM when she was at Jan Sunvai...It can be the action of a man whose party/organisation is not happy with the way the CM is working and meeting people. Maybe they wanted to

scare and threaten the CM. Rekha Gupta will not be scared and sit at home..." she said. Delhi Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said that the accused had conducted a recce of Gupta's Shalimar Bagh residence for 24 hours before the attack. "He spent the night in the nearby Civil Lines area, and when he came this morning, he did not have any papers in his hand. There was no such issue, and he attacked as soon as he met her," he told reporters. Another Delhi Minister, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, said the CM was "stable" and that the accused had also shot videos of her residence. "The CM is stable. The attacker was doing a recce for the last 24 hours.

'Highly condemnable': Kejriwal on attack on CM

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party convenor Arvind Kejriwal condemned the attack on Delhi CM Rekha Gupta stating that in democracy there can be differences of opinion, but there is no place for violence. He expressed confidence in the Delhi Police to take appropriate action on the matter and wished for CM Rekha Gupta's well-being. "The attack on Delhi's Chief Minister Rekha Gupta is highly condemnable. In a democratic system, differences of opinion and opposition are acceptable, but there can be no place for violence. I am confident that the Delhi Police will take appropriate action. I hope the Chief Minister is completely safe and healthy," Kejriwal wrote on 'X'. AAP Delhi chief Saurabh



Aam Aadmi Party convenor Arvind Kejriwal condemning the attack on Delhi CM Rekha Gupta on Wednesday.

Bharadwaj also expressed disappointment over the incident stating that there is no place for such an attack in society and these are not the principles taught by Mahatma Gandhi. He further raised questions on the group "patronising" the violence mentioning that violence is not only when the Chief Minister is attacked, but

also when the police took violent actions against SSC students and teachers. "This is condemnable. There is no place for any kind of violence in our society. This was taught to us by Mahatma Gandhi. The question is which group is patronising violence. Violence is not only when a CM is attacked, but also when police action is tak-

en against SSC students and teachers. The farmers protested for their rights, but the police took violent action against them - this was also violence. The police have no right to treat citizens in this manner", Saurabh Bharadwaj said in a self-made video. Bharadwaj further referred to a previous incident when a BJP supporter attacked Arvind Kejriwal during election campaign. He recalled that at time the BJP people said that the Delhi people are upset with him; however, in CM Rekha Gupta's case his party will not do the same. "During an election program, a BJP supporter had attacked Arvind Kejriwal. At the time, the BJP said that the person was a civil defence volunteer who was upset with Arvind Kejriwal.

Atishi calls Kejriwal arrest difficult phase, vows to fight BJP

TDG NETWORK
PANAJI

AAP leader Atishi has described former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) last year as a "very difficult phase" for the party, but insisted that it only strengthened their determination to fight the BJP "till their last breath." Talking to media in Goa on Tuesday, Atishi said that when Kejriwal was taken away by ED sleuths in connection with a money laundering case in March 2024, she returned home with a sinking heart but an even firmer resolve. "When Arvind Kejriwal ji was arrested, I remember reaching home that night



File photo of Atishi with Kejriwal at a press conference just before his arrest in liquorgate.

and thinking—whatever may happen now, we will fight against the BJP till our last breath," she said, when asked if after Kejriwal's arrest she thought it was all over. The AAP, being a relatively small party, was held together not merely by politics but also by deep

personal bonds, the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly maintained. "We are friends, family, colleagues—we built this party together. When one after another our leaders went to jail, it was not only about the person who was arrested. We used to look at their

Talking to media in Goa on Tuesday, Atishi said that when Kejriwal was taken away by ED sleuths in connection with a money laundering case in March 2024, she returned home with a sinking heart but an even firmer resolve.

families, I could see the health of Manish Sisodia's wife deteriorating when he was in jail," she recalled. On the arrest of AAP's national convenor Kejriwal, Atishi argued that if he had intended to indulge in corruption, he would never have left the post of Income Tax commissioner. Instead, she said, he dedicated himself to public life, even at the cost of his per-

sonal health. "These days, I have heard IRS officers opting for Voluntary Retirement Scheme because they have either purchased a hotel in London, Paris or have a property there," she quipped. "But here is a man (Kejriwal) who has sacrificed so much for this country, even his personal health," said Atishi, who is also AAP's in-charge for Goa.

HC raps civic bodies over Tihar sewer mess

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday pulled up civic authorities over unclean sewer lines in Tihar Central Jail, remarking that judges had been "reduced to municipal commissioners" while dealing with such issues. A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela was hearing a petition filed by lifer Sonu Dahiya, who claimed that inmates were forced to live in "unhygienic living conditions" due to persistent drainage problems. "Can you understand the problem faced by the



inmates due to sanitation problem of sewage lines? We have been reduced to municipal commissioners," the bench told a Public Works Department (PWD) official present in court. The judges questioned why sewer lines laid in 2024 had still not been connected to the main sewage system. "You received letters from the prison authorities per-

taining not only for ensuring connecting sewer lines to main sewer line but also regarding cleaning," the court asked. The PWD official responded that a tender had been issued for cleaning the sewer lines. At this, the bench expressed its displeasure, noting: "You float the tender during the mid of the monsoon... Should we summon the authority responsible for approval (of tender)?... How long would it take for you to clean (the sewage lines)?" The official told the court that, as a temporary measure, cleaning of sewer lines had begun and would be completed by August 25.

Three workers killed in Daryaganj building collapse

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Three workers were killed after a three-storey building collapsed near Sadbhavana Park in central Delhi's Daryaganj on Wednesday, officials said. The deceased were identified as Zubair, Gulsagar and Taufiq, who were working at the site when the structure caved in, according to police. All three were trapped under the debris and declared dead after being taken to hospital. "Information about the incident was received at 12.14 pm, following which a police team, four fire tenders and rescue officials



Teams from NDRF joining the rescue operation soon after the incident, working alongside Delhi Police, fire brigade personnel and DDMA staff.

rushed to the spot. The injured were moved to Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital. Civic authorities, including the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), have been informed.

Over 50 schools receive fresh bomb threats

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A few days after several schools received bomb threats, over 50 schools have received another bomb threat mail in the national capital region in the early hours of Wednesday, police officials have informed. According to Delhi police, a group identifying itself as "Terrorisers 111" sent an email to various schools, including DAV public school, Faith academy, doon public



school, Sarvodhaya vidyalaya, and others demanding USD 25,000. The same group had allegedly demanded USD 5,000 in cryptocurrency after sending various bomb threats

on August 18. The group sent a bulk email to the principals and administration staff of various schools, claiming that they have "breached their IT systems" and will detonate bombs within 48 hours across school premises. "We are the Terrorisers 111 group. We have planted explosives inside your building, and others across the city. Devices include high-yield C4 bombs and timed charges placed in classrooms, auditoriums, staff rooms, and school buses, designed to cause maximum casualties. We have breached your IT systems, extracted student and staff data, and compromised all security cameras. We are

monitoring your actions in real time. Transfer 2000 USD to Ethereum address within 48 hours, or we will detonate the bombs," the email read. "Evacuate all schools and suspend operations immediately to avoid loss of life. Any attempt to contact authorities will trigger immediate detonation and public release of your sensitive data. Terrorisers 111 Group does not forgive or forget. Payment is your only option to prevent disaster. Act now," the email added.

BIHAR ELECTION 2025

NITISH TRANSFERS RS 456 CRORE TO FLOOD-HIT FAMILIES

Nitish Kumar transfers relief funds to lakhs of Bihar's flood-hit families.

TDG NETWORK
PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday transferred over Rs 456 crore directly to the bank accounts of more than 6.51 lakh families affected by the recent flood. Each family hit by the deluge received Rs 7,000 as gratuitous relief, according to a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) here.

The amount was transferred at a function held at the official residence of the CM in Patna. "A total sum of Rs 456.12 crore was transferred directly to the bank accounts of 6,51,602 flood-affected families in 12 districts," the CMO

RS 456 CRORE FLOOD RELIEF TRANSFER

- Over 6.51 lakh families in 12 districts received Rs 7,000 each.
- Total relief sum of Rs 456.12 crore transferred directly via DBT.
- CM had recently raised relief per family from Rs 6,000 to Rs 7,000.
- Officials instructed to stay alert as heavy rains may continue in September.



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar transferring over Rs 456 crore directly to the bank accounts of more than 6.51 lakh families affected by the recent flood on Wednesday.

statement said.

The CM had recently announced an increase in the gratuitous relief money from Rs 6,000 per family to Rs 7,000. A large number of people have been affected by the floods in Bihar, where several rivers are in spate due to tor-

rential rain in the past 24 hours, officials said on Wednesday.

The affected districts include Bhojpur, Patna, Saran, Vaishali, Samastipur, Begusarai, Lakhisarai, Munger, Khagaria, Bhagalpur and Katihar, the statement said.

The CM also directed officials to remain alert as rain is expected in September. Those who were present in the meeting included Disaster Management Minister Vijay Kumar Mandal, Chief Secretary Amrit Lal Meena, Development Commis-

The affected districts include Bhojpur, Patna, Saran, Vaishali, Samastipur, Begusarai, Lakhisarai, Munger, Khagaria, Bhagalpur and Katihar, the statement said.

sioner Pratyaya Amrit, Water Resources Department's Principal Secretary Santosh Kumar Mall and other senior officials of the state government.

NDA plans Bihar drive to counter Rahul campaign

TDG NETWORK
PATNA

The National Democratic Alliance will launch a joint organisational campaign from October 23 to strengthen coordination among its partners and bolster its push to retain power in Bihar, as the opposition bloc led by Rahul Gandhi intensifies its poll outreach. Fourteen committees have been set up, with BJP and JD(U) leaders equally sharing leadership.

With assembly polls due in October-November, the committees will organise workers' meetings across the state in two phases — August 23 to 25 and August 28 to 30 — covering 83 locations across Bihar's 243 constituencies. The committees will include leaders from BJP, JD(U), LJP (Ram Vilas), Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular), and Rashtriya Lok Morcha.

BJP leaders chairing the committees include Deputy Chief Ministers Samrat Chaudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, state president Dilip Kumar Jaiswal, Union ministers Giriraj Singh and



With assembly polls due in October-November, the committees will organise workers' meetings across the state in two phases — August 23 to 25 and August 28 to 30 — covering 83 locations across Bihar's 243 constituencies.

Nityanand Rai, state minister Mangal Pandey, and Lok Sabha MP Sanjay Jaiswal. The JD(U) leaders heading committees include national working president Sanjay Jha, Union minister Ram Nath Thakur, state president Umesh Singh Kushwaha, and state ministers Vijay Chaudhary, Shrawon Kumar, Ashok Choudhary, and Ratnesh Sada.

Each of the 14 panels

will have seven members, including MPs and ministers, to mobilise grassroots workers from across the NDA. Leaders said the meetings are designed to project unity among allies and craft a collective narrative, something seen as lacking in the 2020 polls when Chirag Paswan's LJP damaged JD(U)'s fortunes by fielding candidates against it.

Voter list controversy unfolds in UP, Bihar: Investigations reveal discrepancies, baseless claims

TDG NETWORK
NAWADA

A series of complaints were filed regarding the deletion of voter names from electoral rolls in various districts of Uttar Pradesh, including Kasganj, Jaunpur, Barabanki, and Nawada in Bihar. However, investigations into these complaints have revealed discrepancies and baseless claims.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is facing criticism over the deletion of voter names from electoral rolls in various constituencies; however, investigations reveal discrepancies in some cases.

A complaint was filed regarding the deletion of 8 voter names in the Amanpur Assembly Constituency. An investigation revealed that seven voters had duplicate entries, and one name was removed due to the voter's death. The names of the seven voters are still present in the voter list. "A complaint was received via email

regarding the incorrect deletion of the names of 8 voters under the 101 Amanpur Assembly Constituency of Kasganj District. The investigation revealed that the names of 7 voters were listed twice in the voter list, and one name was deleted as per the rules," posted DM Kasganj on X.

"The names of these 7 voters are still present in the voter list today. Due to the death of one voter, their wife had filled out Form 7, based on which the deceased's name was removed," added DM Kasganj.



Resident of Bihar whose name was incorrectly deleted from electoral rolls during SIR.

A complaint alleged erroneous deletion of 5 voter names in the Jaunpur Assembly Constituency. However, the investigation revealed that all 5 voters had passed away before 2022, and their names were removed as per the rules.

"A complaint was received via email regarding the erroneous deletion of the names of five voters under the Jaunpur Assembly Constituency 366 in Jaunpur district. All five mentioned voters had passed away before the year 2022. This was confirmed by the family members of the deceased voters, local residents,

and the local councillor. The names of the deceased have been duly removed as per the rules. Therefore, the aforementioned complaint is completely baseless and misleading," posted DM Jaunpur on X.

Affidavits were received regarding the deletion of 2 voter names in the Kursi Assembly constituency. The investigation found that both voters' names are registered in the voter list.

"Affidavits from 2 voters of the 266-Kursi Assembly constituency in Barabanki district were received regarding the erroneous deletion of their names from the voter list. The investigation found that the names of both the aforementioned voters are registered in the voter list," DM Barabanki posted on X.

This comes after the Samajwadi Party has raised concerns over the deletion of voter names, alleging potential errors and voter suppression. Akhilesh Yadav, leader of the Samajwadi Party, has demanded

that the ECI provide an affidavit stating that the digital receipt sent to them is authentic.

"The Election Commission is claiming that they have not received the affidavits provided by the Samajwadi Party in UP; they should check the acknowledgment receipt issued by their own office as proof of receipt of our affidavits. This time, we demand that the Election Commission provide an affidavit stating that the digital receipt sent to us is authentic, otherwise, not only the 'Election Commission' but also 'Digital India' will come under suspicion. If BJP goes, truth will prevail!" said Yadav.

Meanwhile, in Bihar's Nawada, a complaint was filed by Subodh Kumar, alleging the removal of his name from the electoral roll. However, the investigation revealed that his name was never recorded in the electoral roll, and he did not submit the required form to claim his voting rights.

Congress is with infiltrator voters: BJP's Dubey

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Amid Congress' relentless campaign against alleged electoral malpractice, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Nishikant Dubey levelled his own "vote theft" charge against the Opposition on Wednesday, claiming that the opposition party is supporting "Bangladeshi infiltrator muslim voters."

The BJP leader gave multiple alleged examples of 'Vote chori' by Congress, one them he said by 'hurriedly' calling an election after the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984. Posting about the allegations on X, he also mentioned that doubts over Rajiv Gandhi's election were raised, where it was alleged that trucks full

of voters were being ferried in Amethi in the 1981 and 1984 elections.

Claiming that the former PM Indira Gandhi was still registered as a voter in 1984, and 1989, Dubey posted on X in Hindi, "Even after Indira Gandhi's death, she was a voter in 1984 and 1989. Today, Rahul Gandhi is telling the public about his own misdeeds, Congress's hand is with Bangladeshi infiltrator Muslim voters."



BJP leader Nishikant Dubey

On October 31, 1984, former PM Indira Gandhi was assassinated, just 2 months later, on December 24, 27, and 28, general elections were held. Questioning the "hurry" with which the Election Commission announced the polls, his post added, "October 31, 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated, the flames of her pyre had not even cooled, and the Election Commission announced the Lok Sabha elections on November 13, 1984, elections in such a hurry?" In another post, calling into question the election of Rajiv Gandhi, the BJP leader highlighted an SC order which ruled on allegations of corruption and electoral malpractice by Congress to manipulate results in the Amethi constituency.

Missing MP woman found near Nepal border, cites marriage pressure

TDG NETWORK
BHOPAL

A 29-year-old woman, Archana Tiwari, a lawyer and civil judge aspirant, who went missing while travelling on Narmada Express on August 7, was found from Nepal border in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri, a Government Railway Police (GRP) official said on Wednesday.

According to the GRP, the woman was travelling on the Narmada



Express on August 7 to reach her hometown, but when she did not arrive, her brother, Ankush Tiwari, lodged a missing complaint with the GRP

Katni on August 8. Later, the case was transferred to GRP Rani Kamalapati station in Bhopal, where a formal missing case was registered on August 9 and began investigation into the matter.

GRP Superintendent of Police (SP), Rahul Lodha said, "The woman Archana Tiwari who was travelling on berth number 3 of coach B3 of Narmada Express on August 7 and efforts were on to trace her after the missing complaint.

UP's Jalalabad renamed Parshurampuri, MoS Prasada thanks Shah

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Jitin Prasada, on Wednesday extended his gratitude to Home Minister Amit Shah for granting permission for the name change of Uttar Pradesh's Jalalabad to Parshurampuri.

In a post on social media X, Prasada stated that the decision made under the guidance and leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was a moment of pride for the entire Sanatani community.

"Heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the Honorable Home Minister Shri @AmitShah ji for granting permission to change the name of Jalalabad in Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, to 'Parshurampuri'!

Sincere gratitude, reverence, and congratulations to the respected Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji and the Honorable Chief



File photo of Jitin Prasada with Home Minister Amit Shah at his residence.

"Heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the Honorable Home Minister Shri @AmitShah ji for granting permission to change the name of Jalalabad in Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, to 'Parshurampuri'!

Minister Shri @myogiadityanath ji! This decision, made under your guidance and leadership, has provided a moment of pride for the entire Sanatani community," the post read.

"Millions of salutations at the feet of Lord Parshuram ji! It is only by your grace that I could become an in-

strument in this sacred task. May your gracious gaze remain upon the entire world," the post further read.

Earlier in the day, Home Minister Amit Shah introduced the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2025, in the Lok Sabha.

Ahmedabad: Class eighth student dies after being stabbed in school

TDG NETWORK
AHMEDABAD

A class eighth student died during treatment after he was stabbed during a quarrel with another student on August 19, police said on Wednesday.

According to Joint Commissioner of Police Jaipal Singh Rathore, the accused was detained following the incident; however, the family of the victim and other members of the Sindhi community gathered near the hospital.

He informed that the investigation is underway into the matter and heavy police force has been deployed near the hospital.

"Two students entered into a quarrel and one of them stabbed the other. Police registered an FIR yesterday itself. The accused was detained. During treatment, the injured child died. So, his family, parents of other students and the Sindhi community have gathered here. Police personnel are here in adequate numbers.



Further investigation is being done...The deceased child hailed from Sindhi community and the main accused is from Muslim community," he said.

Following the incident, Poonam, whose two daughters study in the school, alleged similar incidents in the school in the past two years. Poonam said that she complained to the school authorities regarding the incident but they didn't take any action.

She alleged that boys speak indecent language in the school bus whereas knives and mobile phones are found in their bags.

"Two of my daughters' study in this school. This is not just today's incident. For the past two years, such incidents have been coming to light. I have complained twice.

Public wants SIR: BJP MLA Dutta backs voter roll revision in Odisha

TDG NETWORK
BHUBANESWAR

BJP MLA from Balasore Manas Kumar Dutta has welcomed the Election Commission's decision to begin the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Odisha, saying the exercise had been a "long-standing demand of the common people."

Speaking to ANI on Tuesday, Dutta said, "The start of



8) BJP MLA from Balasore Manas Kumar Dutta

SIR (Special Intensive Revision) in Odisha has been a long-standing demand of the common people. It will be initiated by the Election

Commission in September. The Election Commission is working in the interest of the country."

Targeting the Congress and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) for opposing the exercise, Dutta called their stance a "feudal mindset." "Congress and BJD are displaying a feudal mindset. They think that if they lose, the Election Commission is wrong, and if they win, the EVM is fine.

SENSEX GAINS 213 POINTS, NIFTY TOPS 25K

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Indian stock markets on Wednesday closed with both benchmark indices higher after recovering from early losses. Sensex rose 213.45 points, or 0.26 per cent, to settle at 81,857.84, while the NSE Nifty 50 gained 69.90 points, or 0.28 per cent, ending at 25,050.55. Over the past five sessions, the Sensex has advanced around 2.3 per cent and the Nifty about 2 per cent, lifted by optimism around proposed Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms. Experts note that strong domestic inflows and stable global cues have further strengthened investor confidence. According to Ashika Institutional Equities - Ashika Stock Broking, markets opened on a cautious note but steadily gained ground. "Sentiment was buoyed after China, India's largest trading partner, kept its key interest rate unchanged, a move that signals policy stability and carries potential



implications for India's trade outlook. On the technical front, Nifty decisively broke past its crucial resistance at 25,000 and continued to hold firm above this mark, further boosting investor confidence," it said. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited, highlighted that the rally was supported by domestic factors but cautioned about external risks. "The Indian market sustained its positive momentum, supported by strong domestic inflows and favourable macro tailwinds. However, rich valuations and external risks, particularly the U.S. tariffs and sanctions on the purchase of Russian crude, continue to pose chal-

lenges. Hence, greater visibility on U.S. trade policy and the path of earnings recovery will be critical," he said. Nair also pointed out that global markets are awaiting cues from the release of the US Federal Reserve's FOMC minutes and Fed Chair Jerome Powell's upcoming address at Jackson Hole. Sudeep Shah, Head of Technical and Derivatives Research at SBI Securities, noted the significance of Nifty reclaiming 25K mark. "The benchmark indices Nifty has continued its northward journey for the fifth consecutive trading session. Most noteworthy, it has ended the session above the psychosocial level of 25,000 mark.

RUPEE RISES BY 6 PAISE AGAINST US DOLLAR

Mumbai: Rupee pared initial losses and settled on a higher note at 87.07 (provisional) against the US dollar, up by 6 paise on the back of a rise in risk appetite in global markets. Forex traders said easing tensions over trade tariffs and hopes of peace between Russia and Ukraine enthused investors. Moreover, the proposed GST reforms and a recent credit rating upgrade by a foreign agency have bolstered confidence in the Indian economy. Rupee declined in the first half of the day on a positive US dollar and recovery in crude oil prices. However, the domestic currency recovered losses on gains in domestic stock markets and possible foreign fund inflows, traders added. The local unit opened lower at 87.16 but later recovered losses to hit a high of 86.98 against the greenback, as GST rationalisation and easing worries over additional tariffs by the US supported investor sentiment.

GOLD DROPS RS 400 TO RS 1 00 020

New Delhi: Gold prices dropped Rs 400 to Rs 1,00,020 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday due to continuous selling by stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 1,00,420 per 10 grams in the previous market close. In the local market, gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped Rs 350 to Rs 99,700 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday. It had closed at Rs 1,00,050 per 10 grams on Tuesday. "Gold prices extended losses on Wednesday as the US dollar continued to trade with minimal gains, surging to a one-week high. A decline in the geopolitical risk premium followed a positive outcome from President Donald Trump's meetings with Vladimir Putin, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and European leaders.

FM meets GST GoMs, explains need for tax reform

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday presented to GoMs from states her government's plans for sweeping reforms in the GST regime that involves slashing tax rates and easing compliance burden for businesses. The GoMs on rate rationalisation, insurance taxation and compensation cess will over two days deliberate on the Centre's 'next-gen' GST reforms under which tax will be levied at 5 and 18 per cent rates. A special 40 per cent rate has been proposed on 5-7 items, including sin goods. GST is currently levied at 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent. While food and essential items are either at nil or 5 per cent rate, luxury and demerit goods are in 28 per cent slab, with a cess on top of it. The finance minister's address to the GoMs was for about 20 minutes during which she elaborated on the



Centre's proposal, a source said. She explained the necessity for GST reforms to the states, the source added. The group of ministers (GoM) on compensation cess was set up to decide on the future of compensation cess post the loan repayment period. Besides, the GoM on insurance was deliberating on reducing tax rates on health and life insurance premium. The rate rationalisation GoM was mandated to suggest changes in slabs and rates and also remove duty inversion faced by certain sectors. The GoM on

GST rate rationalisation is scheduled to meet again on August 21. As per an SBI Research report, the proposal, if implemented, could result in revenue loss of about Rs 85,000 crore a year. For the current fiscal, the loss to revenue is estimated at Rs 45,000 crore assuming the new tax rates are implemented from October 1. The Centre's proposal once approved by the GoMs will be placed before the GST Council, comprising ministers from Centre and all states, in its meeting next month. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced rollout of the GST reforms by Diwali. The SBI Research report estimated that the effective weighted average GST rate came down from 14.4 per cent at the time of inception to 11.6 per cent in September 2019. Given the current rationalisation of rates, the effective weighted average GST rate may be 9.5 per cent.

Goyal lauds govt's commitment to 'Make in India' vision

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a social media post, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal, has praised the government's consistent push for "Make in India", which has attracted multiple global MNCs to India. "Our Government's consistent efforts to drive quality transformation for producing best-in-class products under the 'Make In India' vision have found strong support from multinational companies," he said. Reacting to a video shared by German company Hafele, Goyal praised their commitment to India's manufacturing drive under the "Make in India" initiative. The minister highlighted how global firms are increasingly aligning with India's push for quality-led production and local sourcing. "One such group is the German company Hafele, whose commitment to local sourcing and manufacturing in India for the global market highlights the im-



port of various Quality Control Orders (QCOs) in strengthening our journey towards a Viksit Bharat," Goyal said. Hafele, a well-known German brand in interior solutions and home appliances, has laid out plans to increase its local sourcing from India. Frank Schloeder, managing director of Hafele, outlined the company's roadmap stating, "At Hafele, we are proactively committed to the Make in India vision and are in the process of transitioning our supply chain, significantly increasing the share of products we source locally from 10

per cent today to 30 per cent by the end of 2025 and 50 per cent soon after. This journey includes setting up our own manufacturing footprint in India, while also partnering with suppliers who reflect our strong quality mindset." He further explained that Hafele's collaborations are already showing results. "We would like to thank DPIIT, the Ministry of Commerce, for facilitating this collaboration and supporting our efforts to strengthen the partner landscape in India," Schloeder said. Underscoring the company's long-term vision, Schloeder added that Hafele's "German quality mindset aligns well with the Indian government's efforts to uplift product and service standards. By complying with QCOs, Indian manufacturers can produce best-in-class products, and together we should aim to manufacture from India for the world. Hafele remains firmly committed to this quality-led transformation, and we fully support the Honourable Prime Minister's vision of Viksit Bharat."

EAEU sign Terms of Reference to launch FTA negotiations

TDG NETWORK
MOSCOW

India and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation signed the Terms of Reference (ToR) here on Wednesday to launch negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), according to a statement. The ToR was signed by Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Government of India, Ajay Bhadoo, and Deputy Director, Trade Policy Department, Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), Mikhail Cherekaev. During his visit, Additional Secretary, Department of



Commerce, Government of India, Ajay Bhadoo also called on Minister in Charge of Trade, EEC, Andrei Slepnev. The heads of negotiation groups apprised the Minister about the milestone achieved with the signing of the ToR and discussed next steps to formally launch the negotiation process, including organizational aspects of the

future trade deal. Both sides noted the growing trade turnover between India and the EAEU, which stood at USD 69 billion in 2024, registering a 7 percent increase over 2023. With a combined GDP of USD 6.5 trillion, the proposed FTA is expected to expand market access for Indian exporters, support

diversification into new sectors and geographies, enhance competitiveness against non-market economies, and deliver significant benefits to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). "The ToR provides the framework for negotiations and is expected to unlock untapped trade potential, increase investments and establish a stronger, durable India-EAEU economic partnership. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the early conclusion of the agreement and to building a long-term institutional framework for trade cooperation," commerce ministry statement said.

India's core industries recorded 2% growth in July

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) increased by 2.0 per cent (provisional) in July, 2025 as compared to the Index in July, 2024, Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a statement. The production of Steel, Cement, Fertilizer and Electricity recorded positive growth in July, 2025. The ICI measures the combined and individual performance of production of eight core industries viz. Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement and Electricity. The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27 percent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). The summary of the Index of Eight Core Industries is given below: Coal - Coal production (weight: 10.33 per cent) de-



clined by 12.3 per cent in July, 2025 over July, 2024. Its cumulative index declined by 3.1 per cent during April to July, 2025-26 over corresponding period of the previous year. Crude Oil - Crude Oil production (weight: 8.98 per cent) declined by 1.3 per cent in July, 2025 over July, 2024. Its cumulative index declined by 1.7 per cent during April to July, 2025-26 over corresponding period of the previous year. Natural Gas - Natural Gas production (weight: 6.88 per cent) declined by 3.2 per cent in July, 2025 over July,

2024. Its cumulative index declined by 2.6 per cent during April to July, 2025-26 over corresponding period of the previous year. Petroleum Refinery Products - Petroleum Refinery production (weight: 28.04 per cent) declined by 1.0 per cent in July, 2025 over July, 2024. Its cumulative index declined by 0.3 per cent during April to July, 2025-26 over corresponding period of the previous year. Fertilizers - Fertilizer production (weight: 2.63 per cent) increased by 2.0 per cent in July, 2025 over July, 2024.

RBI shifting towards principle outcome-based regulations Dy Guv Rao

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank is gradually shifting towards principle and outcome-based regulations that will give operational flexibility to regulated entities (REs) and tailor their activities to their unique needs, said central bank deputy governor M Rajeshwar Rao. There is no perfect regulatory approach, however, principle and outcome-based regulation is generally found to be more suitable for mature markets, he said while addressing the DoPT MDP on Financial Market Regulations at the Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIM-K) on Monday. Nevertheless, even developed economies use rule-based framework when it comes to safeguarding interests of consumers, he said. "We, at the Reserve Bank

are gradually shifting towards principle and outcome-based regulations, as it gives operational flexibility to the REs for conduct of their operations and tailor their activities to their unique needs, while adhering to the regulatory framework for delivering the outcomes expected from them," Rao said. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) uploaded his speech on its website on Wednesday. The deputy governor noted that regulators are often confronted with complex challenges while framing regulations, necessitating adoption of a forward-looking approach. Addressing emerging risks calls for nuanced and adaptive strategies to ensure resilience. "Regulators must adopt a more proactive mindset to help build a financial system that is both resilient and adaptable.

TSMC secures USD 2.23 billion in global subsidies in first half of 2025

TDG NETWORK
TAIPEI

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) has received USD 2.23 billion (NTD 67.13 billion) in subsidies from the governments of the United States, Germany, Japan and China during the first half of 2025, according to a Focus Taiwan report. As per the report, financial data compiled by the world's largest contract chipmaker showed that USD 1.17 billion (NTD 35.15 billion) in aid was granted in the first quarter of this year, followed by USD 1.06 billion (NTD 31.98 billion) in the second. These subsidies, combined with USD 2.49 billion (NTD 75.16 billion) received in 2024, pushed the total aid from the four governments to USD 4.7 billion (NTD 142.29 billion) over the past 18 months. TSMC stated that the funds were allocated for property purchases, equipment, factory construction, and operational expenses to



support its global expansion strategy. The subsidies were tied to agreements signed by TSMC's subsidiaries with local governments where the company has invested. In the United States, TSMC Arizona Corp. is building three advanced semiconductor plants worth USD 65 billion. The first fab began mass production in late 2024 using 4-nanometer technology. Construction of the second fab has been completed, with commercial production using the 3-nanometer process expected soon. Work has also started on a third facility, which will adopt 2-nanome-

ter and AI6 process technologies. TSMC has pledged to invest an additional USD 100 billion in the coming years to build further fabs, assembly plants, and a research and development center in Arizona. In Japan, TSMC's joint venture, Japan Advanced Semiconductor Manufacturing, Inc. (JASM), launched mass production at its first fab in Kumamoto at the end of 2024. Plans for a second fab are underway, though local infrastructure development has slowed progress amid resident concerns over traffic congestion.

GST 2.0 rationalisation expected to boost consumption

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The recent rationalisation of Goods and Services Tax (GST), also being referred to as GST 2.0, is expected to provide a significant boost to consumption in the current financial year, according to a report by the State Bank of India (SBI). The report estimated that the GST 2.0 regime, while

involving an average revenue loss of Rs 85,000 crore, has resulted in a substantial consumption boost of Rs 1.98 lakh crore. It stated "The GST 2.0 regime....is estimated to have boosted consumption by Rs 1.98 lakh crore." The report also highlighted that when combined with the income tax cuts announced earlier, the overall impact is even more pronounced. To-

gether, both measures are expected to add nearly Rs 5.31 lakh crore to consumption expenditure in the economy, which translates into around 1.6 per cent of GDP. The SBI analysis highlighted that the measures introduced in FY26 have contributed to a measurable uplift in household demand. The income tax rate cut alone, which resulted in a revenue loss of about Rs 1

lakh crore, enhanced household disposable incomes. This measure led to an additional Rs 3.33 lakh crore of consumer spending. In the case of GST, the report said that consumption could see a boost of around 0.6 per cent. To evaluate the demand-side effect of the Rs 85,000 crore GST revenue shortfall in FY25, the analysis modelled it as an effective reduction in indirect taxes

borne by households and firms. A decline in GST collections lowers the tax burden, thereby increasing disposable purchasing power. The mechanics of this operate in two stages, according to the report. In the first round, households spend a fraction of the tax cut equal to their marginal propensity to consume (MPC). With MPC at 0.7, the initial

injection of consumption is estimated at Rs 70,000 crore. This direct spending further triggers induced rounds of consumption, amplifying the overall impact through the tax multiplier effect. The report noted that such an outcome points out the importance of a carefully designed tax policy in stimulating domestic demand. While direct tax cuts directly support household

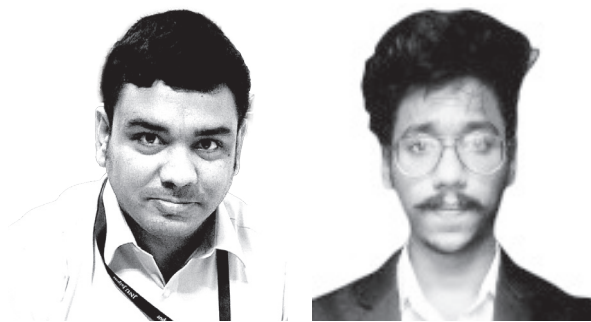
incomes, broad-based indirect tax reforms such as GST 2.0 could have a deeper and more immediate impact on consumption dynamics. Even without adjustments in revenue loss, the report suggested that the Rs 45,000 crore shortfall is likely to be more than compensated by the potential revenue gains from the GST cut. An estimated consumption boost of Rs 5.5 lakh crore,

with an effective tax rate of around 9.5 per cent, could generate additional GST revenue of Rs 52,000 crore. This would be equally divided between the Centre and states at around Rs 26,000 crore each. The report further pointed out that on average, the Centre has exceeded its projected tax revenue by Rs 2.26 trillion in the last four years, indicating fiscal space to absorb such reforms. (ANI)

FREE SPEECH ON TRIAL: JUDICIAL SENSITIVITY AND THE LIMITS OF CRITIQUE

OPINION

DR.S.KRISHNAN AND
RANVEER SINGH RATHORE



‘Whoever the person may be, however high be or she is, no one is above the law notwithstanding how powerful or how rich be or she may be’. This is the basic principle of the concept of ‘Rule of Law’, which asserts the supremacy of law and puts everyone on equal footing. It is the basic principle of governance of any liberal and democratic society. The judiciary, which is the central pillar of democracy, is the guardian of the Rule of Law. It holds a crucial position in the order and the maintenance of democracy. The recent proceedings of the Ajmer District court in

Kamlesh Mandoliya v. Vikas Divyakirti have reignited the national debate over a fault line in modern Indian Jurisprudence: how do we reconcile robust public criticism of our institutions with the urgency to protect individual and collective reputations? When a YouTube video allegedly authored by a coaching institute founder Dr. Vikas Divyakirti sparked criminal defamation proceedings u/s 353 (2), 356 (2) & (3) of the *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita*, and section 66 A (b) IT Act (for online transmission), it pave the way for an extensive debate about free speech, judicial sensitiv-

ity, and the chilling effect of sweeping defamation laws. Justice Manmohan Chandel taking cognizance of the matter observed *prima facie* evidence linking Divyakirti’s remarks about judges and judicial system with malicious intent. At this initial stage though, the judge explicitly noted that one only need to ask whether the allegations warrant further action, not whether guilt is proven citing *Sonu Gupta v. State of Haryana [(2015) 3 SCC 424]* and *Nupur Takwar v. CBI [(2012) 11 SCC 465]*. However, the court’s detailed remarks suggest an unusually low threshold for finding harm to the judiciary’s “dignity, impartiality, and reputation”. The order raised concerns that such content “could create distrust and confusion among the general public” about the judicial system. Dropping other charges, the court took cognizance of the offence u/s 356 (1)(2),(3) (4) *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita* 2023, and ordered Dr. Divyakirti to appear in person. To sum up, the court treated a general criticism of judicial appointments as equivalent to a serious offence. Instead of robust debate, it appears that the court is focused on protecting its own image.

RELATION OF MEDIA WITH JUDICIARY –

LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

The relationship between the judiciary and the media is an interplay of transparency, accountability, and the integrity of the judicial process. The media (press), referred to as the “fourth estate,” plays a very crucial role in informing the public, shaping opinions, and holding the Government machinery, leaders and institutions accountable. However, this relationship can sometimes lead to conflicts, particularly when media coverage influences public perception and judicial proceedings. The defense of Dr. Divyakirti’s offensive remarks against the judicial officers and legal professionals was twofold, first, he insisted on the authenticity and the authorization of the video, claiming it to be a third-party made edit, which extracted and reposted it without his consent. Second, he sought multiple exceptions u/s 356 (1) and the protection of Article 19 (1) (a). These defenses invoked landmark precedents like *S. Khushboo v. Kanniammal (2010 5 SCC 600)* on *locus standi*, and *Subramaniam Swamy v. Union of India (2016 7 SCC 221)* on balancing free speech with reputational rights. In contrast, the court bluntly rejected the freedom of speech claim. Citing *Re Arundhati Roy (2002)* and

Re Prashant Bhushan (2020), it observed that while freedom of expression is protected, it “does not extend to speech that insults or undermines the dignity of courts”. The court emphasized that Dr. Divyakirti had not apologized or taken remedial steps thus degrading his credibility. Practically, a policy critique in a lecture hall or a provocation in a social media post might land its speaker in a criminal dock. This brings the two main aspects of democratic discourse under scrutiny. First, academic freedom: more often than not, academic professionals like Dr. Divyakirti routinely dissect policy and legal norms on multiple platforms including digital ones. If expressing a critical opinion from a podium or dissecting judicial appointments in a coaching session risks criminal sanction; think-tanks, universities, and professional institutes may self-censor. This cripples the very essence of scholarship which revolves around probing, scrutinizing and sometimes offend entrenched sensibilities. Second, journalistic and civic critique: a belief that designating media as the forth pillar of democracy will constitute it functional is merely a hoax unless they have been armed with the

necessary freedom to name, criticize, and lampoon authorities including public figures and bodies. A nebulous “imputation” standard, untethered to falsity or malice, chills that freedom. Editors may readily spurn stories about judicial inefficiency, fearing criminal contempt or defamation claims. **CRITICISM OR INTOLERANCE—WHAT LOWERS THE AUTHORITY OF COURTS?** Criticism of the judiciary, particularly in relation to freedom of speech, often revolves around the use of contempt of court laws and the potential for these to stifle dissent. While the judiciary plays a crucial role in upholding the rule of law, concerns are raised about the balance between protecting judicial authority and ensuring citizens can freely express their opinions about the courts. When it comes to criticism, the apex court itself has stated that every authority is subject to public scrutiny. The free and open criticism increases the accountability of the judiciary towards the people. In several judgments, the Supreme Court has tried to establish a fair balance between free speech and contempt jurisdiction. In *C. K. Daphtary v/s Gupta (1971)*, Supreme Court stated that

though the existing law of criminal contempt comes within reasonable restriction, it does not mean that one cannot express one’s ire against the judiciary for the fear of contempt. In many other judgments, the Supreme Court stated that it is necessary to balance two greats, but occasionally conflicting principles of freedom of speech & expression, and the fair fearless justice. It is said that judges are supposed to be men of fortitude who can thrive in a hardy climate. The freedom of expression is said to be one of the basic conditions for the progress of advocacy and for the development of everyone - including legal fraternity practicing the profession of law. Restriction on the freedom of speech and expression can be imposed if it exceeds the reasonable and fair limit and amounts to contempt of court. It is interesting to note that Indian judges have been touchier in the cases of contempt of court as compared to English judges. For example, in the case of *Balogh v. Court Crown*, the defendant said to the judge, “You are a humourless automaton. Why don’t you self-destruct?” The judge just smiled but didn’t hold him liable for contempt of court. In an instance where a person tagged judges as ‘fools’, Fali

S. Nariman asked Lord Templeman that why the person isn’t tried for contempt of court, he answered that they (English judges) don’t take notice of such comments. It is the judiciary that needs to understand the importance of criticism of any judicial action and not to hold every such act as contempt of court. **WAY AHEAD** While it is to be noted that all citizens of India are guaranteed the right to freedom of speech and expression, contempt of court is indeed one of the reasonable restrictions that can act as a rider on this right. In an era in which social media are full of critics, commentators and observers who deem it necessary to air their views in many unrestrained and uninhibited ways, the higher judiciary should not really be spending its time and energy invoking its power to punish for contempt of itself. If the contempt has to continue, a review mechanism within the judiciary should be there as a safeguard against judicial tyranny. *Dr.S.Krishnan is an Associate Professor in Seedling School of Law and Governance and Mr. Ranveer Singh Rathore is a 4th year student of BALLB, Seedling School of Law and Governance, Jaipur National University, Jaipur.*

‘Coded Commanders’ are ‘new General’ as AI takes centre stage in warfare

OPINION

DR.S.KRISHNAN AND
RANVEER SINGH RATHORE



Warfare is no longer confined to trenches, tanks, and territorial lines. The battlefield of the twenty-first century has shifted to codes, algorithms, satellites, and quantum signals. In this new age, decisions are not just taken by generals in command rooms but also by machine learning systems parsing terabytes of real-time data. The United States and China have embraced this transformation with clarity and urgency, pouring unprecedented resources into artificial intelligence, cyber dominance, quantum networks, and unmanned systems. For India, a nation with strategic imperatives across two hostile borders and maritime vulnerabilities, the urgency is far greater. The question is not whether India should modernize but whether it can do so fast enough to ensure survival in wars where the first shots may be fired in cyberspace or space, not on land.

ALGORITHMS AT WAR: HOW AI IS RE-WRITING COMMAND AND CONTROL
Artificial intelligence has

become the defining marker of military modernisation. The United States leads in the integration of AI into its command and control systems, combining battlefield simulations with predictive analytics to give commanders decision superiority. In war-gaming scenarios, American forces rely on AI to identify enemy vulnerabilities, optimise troop movements, and execute precision strikes with minimal human latency. AI-driven ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) is already a reality in the Pentagon’s doctrine, where unmanned systems feed vast amounts of battlefield data into real-time decision networks. China, meanwhile, is aggressively pursuing what it calls “intelligentised warfare.” Beijing has directed enormous resources into AI-driven war-gaming, electronic warfare, and predictive decision-making systems. Chinese companies, operating in close synergy with the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), are designing AI tools for faster battlefield simulations, autonomous targeting, and even psychological operations powered by big data profiling. China’s approach is systemic, linking civilian research institutions with military applications in a model of state-directed innovation that accelerates military readiness. India, though making strides through defence startups and research agencies, is still at the early stages of AI integration. Initiatives

like AI-based battlefield management systems, predictive logistics, and indigenous drone platforms are promising. Yet the scale remains modest compared to the U.S. and China. Bureaucratic hurdles, lack of seamless data sharing between services, and a fragmented ecosystem of research and defence industry limit India’s ability to operationalise AI at a decisive scale. The danger is that while India builds pilots and prototypes, adversaries are already deploying AI in live conflict scenarios.

INVISIBLE BATTLEFIELDS: THE CYBER DOMAIN AS THE NEW FRONTLINE

If AI is the brain of future warfare, cyber is its bloodstream. The United States commands perhaps the most mature offensive cyber capability in the world, with U.S. Cyber Command operating as a fully-fledged warfighting unit. From disrupting ISIS propaganda networks to launching precision cyber strikes on adversarial infrastructure, the U.S. has demonstrated that cyber power can substitute or supplement conventional military campaigns. Its doctrine of “persistent engagement” ensures that adversaries are always on the defensive, never secure in their digital networks. China, in contrast, has perfected the art of cyber-enabled espionage and long-term infiltration. From the theft of intellectual property to the sabotage of strategic networks, Chinese cyber units have shown skill in operating below the threshold of open warfare. Beijing uses cyber tools as both a strategic equaliser and an enabler of hybrid warfare, penetrating supply chains, financial systems, and critical infrastructure of rivals. The Chinese state’s close ties with

its technology giants give it both reach and plausible deniability in global cyber operations. India’s cyber posture, though evolving, remains predominantly defensive. The creation of the Defence Cyber Agency and increased focus on protecting critical infrastructure are steps in the right direction. But India still lacks a clearly articulated offensive cyber doctrine. Without credible offensive capacity, deterrence in cyberspace is weak. Adversaries perceive India as a soft target for asymmetric attacks, whether through ransomware, espionage, or sabotage. To secure its position, India must invest not just in firewalls but in the capacity to strike back decisively in cyberspace.

QUANTUM DAWN: THE RACE TO SECURE THE UNSEEN

Quantum technology represents the next seismic shift in warfare, promising secure communication, ultra-fast computing, and unprecedented decryption capabilities. The United States has taken significant strides in quantum computing and encryption, particularly in military-grade applications aimed at securing command networks and disrupting enemy cryptography. China, however, is arguably ahead in this field. With its successful demonstration of satellite-based quantum communication, Beijing has established itself as a leader in secure communication networks that are resistant to interception. Its investment in quantum radar, capable of detecting stealth aircraft, underscores the disruptive potential of this technology. In the quantum race, China’s blend of state direction, academic research, and military application is creating a formidable edge.

India has begun its journey, with ISRO experimenting with quantum key distribution and several research projects under the National Mission on Quantum Technologies. Yet, these remain early-stage efforts. India must bridge the gap between laboratory research and military deployment, or risk falling irreversibly behind. Quantum technology is not a distant frontier; it is a race already underway. The winners will control the most secure communications and potentially render traditional stealth and encryption obsolete.

BEYOND GRAVITY: MILITARISATION OF SPACE AND MULTI-DOMAIN CONVERGENCE

The future battlefield is no longer confined to land, sea, and air—it now extends into outer space. The United States has institutionalised its space dominance through the establishment of the U.S. Space Force, focusing on satellite swarms, orbital surveillance, and counter-space weapons. The ability to dominate the orbital layer provides the U.S. unmatched intelligence, communication, and navigation superiority. China, too, has invested heavily in counter-space capabilities. Its successful tests of anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, development of satellite-killer systems, and integration of space warfare into its strategic doctrine indicate a clear ambition: to deny adversaries the use of space while ensuring its own freedom of action. Beijing views space not as a supporting domain but as a decisive one. India demonstrated its ASAT capability in 2019 through Mission Shakti, a milestone achievement. However, India’s space militarisation remains reactive

rather than proactive. While ISRO’s technological prowess is undeniable, translating this into military-grade space dominance is still an unfinished agenda. Without deeper integration of space assets into tri-service operations, India risks lagging in a domain that may determine the tempo of future wars.

HYPERSONICS, UNMANNED SYSTEMS, AND THE FUTURE ARSENAL

Hypersonic weapons and unmanned systems represent the sharp edge of next-generation arsenals. The United States has advanced programmes in hypersonic glide vehicles and missile defence systems capable of intercepting them. Its use of unmanned aerial systems in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond demonstrates both maturity and operational dominance in drone warfare. China has already tested hypersonic glide vehicles, reportedly achieving manoeuvrability and speeds that alarmed Pentagon analysts. Its focus on unmanned stealth combat platforms and drone swarms signals a strategy aimed at overwhelming adversaries with speed and quantity. India is developing hypersonic technology in collaboration with Russia through the BrahMos-II project, and indigenous drone capabilities are expanding through startups and defence initiatives. However, the scale and pace remain modest compared to the U.S. and China. Without sustained investment and ecosystem support, India risks staying on the margins of the hypersonic and unmanned revolution.

INDIA’S ASCENT: PROMISE AMIDST THE PARADOX
Despite these challenges, In-

dia is not without promise. The Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative has galvanised indigenous defence R&D, fostering a new generation of startups and innovators. Collaborations with France, Israel, and the U.S. are enhancing India’s technological ecosystem, particularly in drones, sensors, and AI-driven systems. India’s demonstrated ASAT capability, growing cyber command structures, and expanding AI research are significant achievements. Yet, India’s paradox remains: ambition without full-scale integration. Budgetary limitations, bureaucratic inertia, and siloed functioning of the tri-services impede the transformation. Unlike the U.S. with its unified command structures or China with its state-driven civil-military fusion, India struggles with fragmented execution. The danger is not the absence of vision but the inability to operationalise it at scale and speed.

THE WAR OF TOMORROW: A GLIMPSE INTO THE CONVERGING FUTURE

The battlefield of tomorrow will not be a linear clash of armies but a converging storm of technologies. AI will drive real-time decision-making, quantum systems will secure communications, cyber operations will paralyse enemy infrastructure, space assets will control orbital dominance, and hypersonic weapons will compress decision timelines to seconds. The victor will be the nation that integrates these domains seamlessly, achieving decision superiority before the adversary can even respond. For India, this means making bold choices. Incremental progress will no longer suffice. The wars of tomorrow will be algorithmic, unmanned, and multidomain.

A military that lacks AI-driven command networks or quantum-secured communications risks paralysis. A state without offensive cyber capabilities risks humiliation without a single bullet fired. India must therefore prioritise disruptive innovation, accelerate civil-military integration, and invest not just in catching up but in leapfrogging where possible.

FROM CATCH-UP TO LEADERSHIP: INDIA’S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

India stands at a crossroads. The choice is stark: remain a reactive power that struggles to match adversaries’ innovations, or transform into a proactive power capable of shaping the rules of next-generation warfare. The stakes are existential, for wars in this new era are not merely about territory but about national survival, economic security, and geopolitical relevance. The United States and China are already scripting the doctrines of algorithmic wars. For India, the task is not simply to avoid falling behind but to create a distinct path that leverages its democratic innovation, technological talent, and strategic geography. The journey will be difficult, but the imperative is clear: in an age where wars are won before the first shot is fired, India must move from catch-up to leadership—or risk becoming a spectator in the wars that will define the twenty-first century. “Prof. Dr. Nishakant Ojha, a leading strategist in defence and national security, is globally recognized for his expertise in AI, cyber warfare, and quantum defence. Trusted advisor to governments, he dissects modern battlefields with rare clarity, positioning India’s security discourse against China, the United States, and emerging threats.”

IMPEACHING THE ELECTION UMPIRE: INDIA'S REPUBLIC-ERA STORY

India's election umpire faces an unprecedented impeachment push, exposing the Constitution's high removal bar and the autonomy-versus-accountability tension in the world's largest democracy.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Two days ago India's Opposition (the I.N.D.I.A. bloc) announced plans to table an impeachment motion against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, accusing him of bias after he demanded Rahul Gandhi retract allegations of election "vote theft" with a sworn affidavit. At a press conference, Kumar dismissed Rahul's claim as "an insult" to the Constitution and insisted Gandhi must either "submit a signed affidavit or apologise" for his charges. The Opposition has condemned the CEC's remarks as "ludicrous" and out of character for an impartial election authority. Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi warned colleagues that "our democracy is alive solely because of [the right to vote] - [and] the Election Commission is the protector of this right," implying that Kumar's conduct threatened public faith.

Parliamentary removal of a CEC is extremely difficult. By constitutional design, the CEC can only be removed by impeachment on grounds of "proved misbehaviour or incapacity" via a special motion in Parliament. That motion must be supported by at least 50 members in the Rajya Sabha or 100 in the Lok Sabha and then passed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting in both Houses. In practice, this supermajority has never been secured - President Pratibha Patil famously rebuffed CEC N. Gopalaswami's 2009 recommendation to oust Election Commissioner Navin Chawla, noting that the CEC's advice was **not binding**. As one former CEC, T.S. Krishnamurthy, wryly observed, "If there is a constitutional provision, let the opposition employ it," but without the ruling party's support an impeachment motion "would lack numbers". In short, the I.N.D.I.A. bloc's threat - even if formally tabled - faces long odds under India's entrenched protections for the Election

Commission.

CONSTITUTIONAL ORIGINS AND FOUNDING ELECTIONS

The Election Commission of India was established by **Article 324** of the Constitution (1950) as an independent constitutional body. Article 324 mandates a Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and such other commissioners as the President decides, with the exclusive duty to "superintend, direct and control" elections to Parliament, state legislatures, and the President/Vice-President. In fact, the ECI was constituted on January 25, 1950 - one day before India's Constitution came into force - underscoring its foundational role. To guard its autonomy, Article 324(5) provides that the CEC "shall not be removed...except in like manner and on the like grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court". Former CEC V.S. Sampath explained this was done "to give autonomy" - hence the CEC has the same status as a Supreme Court judge, and needs a two-thirds parliamentary vote for removal.

The first CEC, **Sukumar Sen** (1950-54), faced the monumental task of India's maiden general elections (1951-52). His office meticulously prepared electoral rolls and polling arrangements for ~170 million eligible voters (85% illiterate) in an era of scarce infrastructure. Ingenious solutions - custom steel ballot boxes, indelible ink, radio education campaigns - were devised to ensure a credible vote. Eventually ~8,00 million people turned out (45.7%), giving Congress a sweeping majority. Sen later recalled that he insisted

TDG EXPLAINER

on rigorous standards (e.g. special bridges and ink for remote areas) despite pressure for speed. The image below shows Sukumar Sen at work:

In its early years the ECI was a lone-wolf body: the CEC was the sole commissioner from 1950 until the Election Commission (Conditions of Service) Act 1989 formally introduced additional Election Commissioners. Since 1989, the Commission has operated with three members (one CEC and two ECs). All are appointed by the President (on the advice of the Union cabinet), and may only be removed as per Article 324(5) (like judges). This constitutional framework - independent appointment plus high removal bar - was meant to keep elections "out of the hands of the government of the day" (as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar insisted).

ELECTORAL REFORMS UNDER KEY CECS

Over the decades, successive CECS have driven major reforms and also sparked controversy by their zeal. T.N. Seshan (10th CEC, 1990-96) is the most celebrated reformer. Known for his no-nonsense style, Seshan aggressively enforced the Model Code of Conduct and curtailed illegal practices. He insisted on **mandatory photo voter IDs** (introduced in the 1993 Representation of the People Act), banned booth loiterers, campaign excesses, liquor distribution, and misuse of official machinery. One journalist

noted that Seshan "cleaned up Indian elections" by making politicians fear enforcement. (He famously quipped "You are very corrupt-corrupt" to raucous audiences.) His reforms included the indelible ink rule and strict scrutiny of election expenditures. In the photo below, Seshan is shown in 1993 - the year he instituted voter ID cards nationwide.

The Model Code of Conduct itself has a longer history. It originated in 1960 (during a Kerala assembly election) and was first formalized by the ECI as the "Minimum Code" in 1968. The Code (which is not statutory law but has quasi-legal standing) imposes constraints on parties and candidates during polls - a cornerstone of India's orderly campaigns today. Seshan's successors have continued this tradition. For instance, CEC **Syed Yousuf Raza** (Y.S. Quraishi, 2008-11) advocated legally backing the Code to penalize breaches more effectively.

Other reforms include the gradual rollout of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) starting in 1998, expansion of postal ballots and proxy voting for the disabled, and revisions of electoral rolls (such as the intensive revision drives in recent years). Former CEC B.B. Tandon introduced the maximum age of 65 for EC members; current law sets terms of six years or until 65, whichever is earlier. Throughout, the Election Commission has prided itself on inclu-



Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan (in office 1990-96) became known for ushering in strict electoral reforms and enforcement. (File)



CEC Gyanesh Kumar. (File)

cess".

KEY CONTROVERSIES

● **1952 First Election:** Conducting the inaugural general election involved unprecedented logistics. Sukumar Sen's team overcame literacy barriers by inventing new symbols and educational campaigns, ultimately delivering a 45.7% turnout among 170 million voters. No major disputes arose over the process itself - it is remembered as a successful start for independent India.

● **1990-96, T.N. Seshan Era:** Seshan's radical enforcement of rules courted both praise and ire. Many politicians chafed at his rigidity (some branded him "authoritarian"), yet he drastically reduced vote-buying and election violence. His tenure set a new norm that the CEC could suspend elections and even recommend disqualification for code violations.

● **2006-09, Gopalaswami-Chawla Clash:** In a rare intra-EC showdown, CEC N. Gopalaswami accused fellow Commissioner Navin Chawla of bias (Gopalaswami alleged Chawla favored a certain party) and recommended his removal. This triggered litigation over the removal process: the government forwarded Gopalaswami's petition to the President rather than the CEC (as Article 324 implied), and in 2009 President Pratibha Patil ultimately **rejected** the recommendation. The episode revealed ambiguity: only the CEC can initiate remov-

al of other ECs, and even then the President must act on CEC advice (which in 2009 the President declined to do).

● **2013-2022, EVM and Roll Debates:** In recent years, opposition parties have repeatedly questioned EVM security (claiming machines can be hacked) and alleged mass deletions from voter rolls. The ECI has defended its technology, even inviting international experts to certify EVM integrity. Meanwhile, the Commission's special summary revision drives (e.g. Bihar SIR 2024) have triggered protests when large numbers of names were purged. Each controversy tests the Commission's fact-finding powers and transparency - as reflected in the current row.

● **2024-25 "Vote Chori" Row:** The latest flashpoint began when Rahul Gandhi accused the ECI of "vote theft" in a Karnataka constituency. CEC Gyanesh Kumar's counter-demand for proof led to a public clash. Opposition leaders now threaten an unprecedented impeachment motion. Rahul Gandhi has himself protested what he calls partisan enforcement, noting that the ECI demanded an affidavit from *him* but had not required one when BJP leader Anurag Thakur made similar allegations. Trinamool's Mahua Moitra scolded Kumar: "it is not the job of the CEC to attack the Opposition; your job... is to address the valid queries raised". CPI(M)'s John Brittas ac-

cused the "new ECI" of acting as the ruling party's "B-team," alleging a "diabolical design" to alter voter rolls nationwide (from Kerala to Jammu). These sharp charges underscore the high stakes: controlling the integrity of India's elections means controlling the lifeblood of democracy.

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

India's election system stands out internationally in scale and structure. As a 2013 Brookings analysis noted, India's electorate (~900 million eligible voters, ~780 million actual turnout) **vastly** exceeds that of entire continents: Europe (~449 million) or North America (~324 million). The U.S. presidential electorate is far smaller, and American voting is done in a single day nationwide. By contrast, India's parliamentary elections may span six weeks to mobilize its 800,000 polling stations. Strobe Talbott of Brookings highlighted this by quip: "In short, there is a very big difference between the Indian system and our own here in the United States where... we know before we go to bed at night who has won".

Structurally, many democracies also employ independent election bodies. India's design - a single, top-level Election Commission (one CEC + two ECs) insulated by constitution - is relatively unique. For example, the **United Kingdom** created its Electoral Commission by Parliament in 2000; it is a statutory multi-member body appointed by the Crown on advice of the Commons. (It regulates campaign finance and sets election standards, but with different powers and a later establishment date.) In the **United States**, there is no national election commission; instead election administration is decentralized to states, and federal law (via the Help America Vote Act of 2002) improved uniform standards. Countries

like **Canada** (Elections Canada) and **Australia** (Australian Electoral Commission) have bodies akin to India's ECI. Universally, these bodies are meant to be independent. India's CEC even enjoys the same rank as a top Supreme Court judge - a status mirrored in other places by requiring legislative supermajorities or judicial review for removal. In sum, while modalities vary, democratic norms demand that election administrators be shielded from partisan pressures.

SO FAR...

Since 1950, India's Election Commission - led by its CEC - has been central to the nation's democratic journey. From Sukumar Sen's pioneering efforts in 1952 to T.N. Seshan's 1990s crackdown on malpractices to today's debates over electronic voting and voter rolls, the ECI has repeatedly confronted challenges and controversies. The recently mooted impeachment motion against CEC Gyanesh Kumar may never succeed (given the high constitutional bar), but it underscores the uneasy balance between accountability and independence. As former CEC Y.S. Quraishi warned, India has "the most powerful Commission in the world" - yet one with a "defective" appointment system. Debates over reform (such as a judicial-like selection collegium) continue. Through it all, however, the Commission remains the guardian of India's voting rights. As voices in Parliament reminded us, if elections are the bedrock of democracy, "the Election Commission is its protector". The memories of past struggles - the engineering feats of 1952, the stern injunctions of 1990s CECS, the testimonies of politicians past and present - paint a vivid picture: India's election story is one of continual reform and contest, writ large against the world's largest electorate.



3. Sukumar Sen, India's first Chief Election Commissioner (in office 1950-54), photographed during preparations for the 1952 election. (File)

siveness (all adults can register) and transparency (scrutiny by the Supreme Court, introduction of *Form 17C* counting certificates, etc.). As Sampath noted, the Commission strives so every adult Indian gets "an opportunity of participating in the electoral pro-

KEY EVENTS
1950: Article 324 establishes the Election Commission [EC]. Sukumar Sen becomes 1st CEC (Jan 25).
1951-52: India's first general election (Jan-Feb 1952) - massive polling with new ballot symbols.
1968: First Model Code of Conduct issued (as "Minimum Code").
1990-96: T.N. Seshan serves as CEC, introducing voter IDs and rigorous enforcement.
1998: All electronic voting machines (EVMs) deployed nationwide.
2006-09: N. Gopalaswami [CEC] vs. Navin Chawla [EC] controversy over alleged partisan bias; President rejects removal order.
2024-25: I.N.D.I.A. bloc threatens impeachment of CEC Gyanesh Kumar over "vote theft" claims.
Size of India's gamer base: ~488 million online gamers (2024), per FICCI-EY.

UDAIPUR: THE CITY OF LAKES THAT MIRRORS ROYAL REFLECTIONS

TDG NETWORK

Often referred to as the “Venice of the East” and the “City of Lakes,” Udaipur is Rajasthan’s glittering gem nestled among the Aravalli Hills. Known for its regal palaces, timeless heritage, and romantic charm, what truly sets Udaipur apart is its stunning collection of lakes—natural and man-made—that offer tranquility, beauty, and a deep cultural significance.

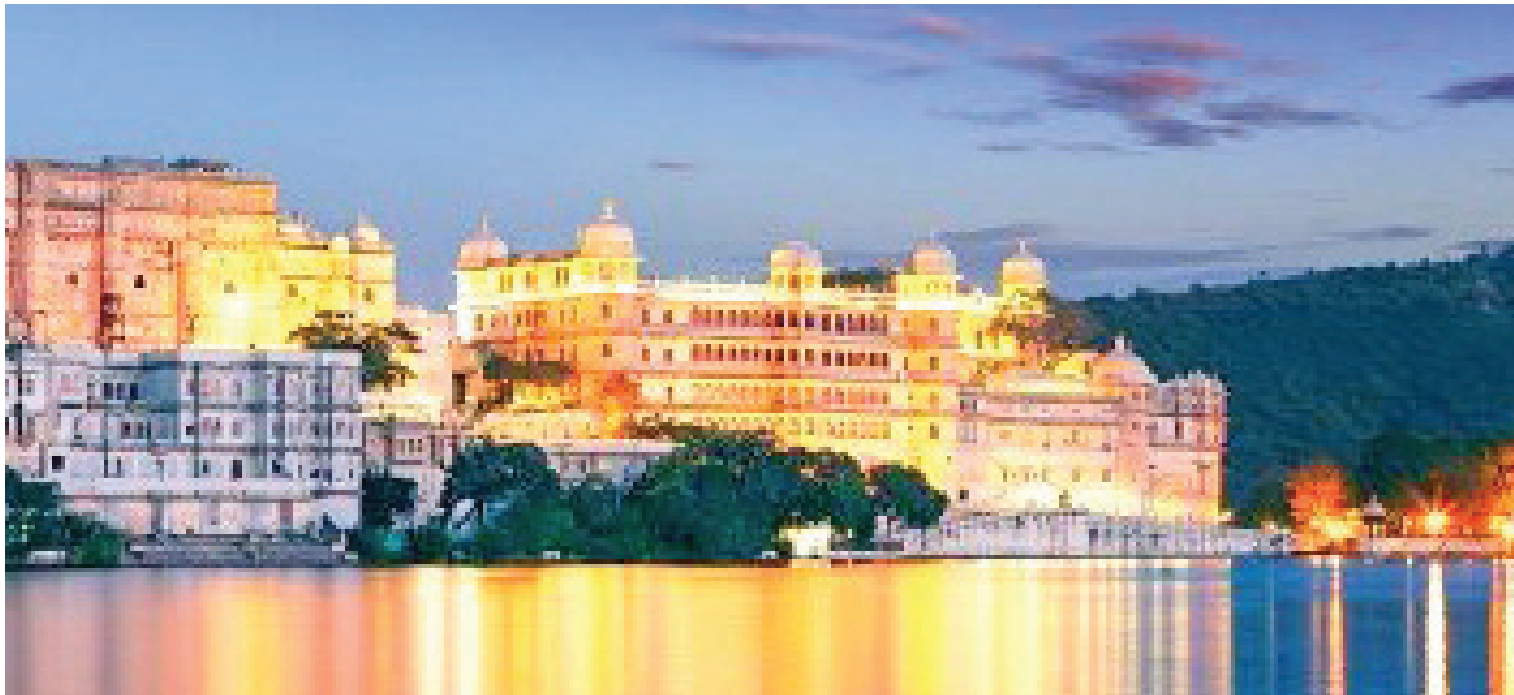
LAKE PICHOLA: THE CROWN JEWEL OF UDAIPUR

Among all the lakes, Lake Pichola is arguably the most famous and photographed. Built in the 14th century by a local Banjara tribesman and later expanded by Maharana Udai Singh II, the lake is surrounded by architectural marvels. The shimmering waters reflect the City Palace, Jag Mandir, and Taj Lake Palace, offering a view straight out of a fairy tale.

Boating on Lake Pichola, especially at sunset, is an ethereal experience. As the sky glows in shades of orange and pink, the palaces appear to float in golden light, creating a moment of pure magic. A boat ride usually takes you past the Jag Niwas (now the luxury Taj Lake Palace) and ends at Jag Mandir, where you can disembark and explore.

FATEH SAGAR LAKE: SERENITY WITH A MODERN TOUCH

To the north of Lake Pichola



lies Fateh Sagar Lake, built in the late 1600s by Maharana Fateh Singh. Surrounded by wooded hills, it offers a peaceful escape with fewer crowds. The lake has three islands, the largest being Nehru Park, a charming garden island with a café and lush landscaping—reached via boat. Fateh Sagar is also popular for evening walks along the promenade, cycling paths, and street food stalls serving spicy local treats like mirchi bada and bread pakora. It's the perfect mix of serenity and urban leisure.

LAKE BADI: UDAIPUR'S HIDDEN GEM

Less commercialized and tucked away from the main tourist circuit is Lake Badi. Built by Maharana Raj Singh I in the 17th century to combat famine, it remains



one of Udaipur's cleanest and quietest lakes.

What makes Lake Badi special is its untouched natural beauty. There are no boat rides, palace hotels, or crowds—just calm water, a stony embankment, and surrounding Aravalli hills. It's ideal for travelers seeking solitude or wanting to enjoy sunrise yoga, peaceful reflection, or a scenic drive along the Badi Road.

LAKE UDAI SAGAR: A TALE OF HISTORY AND PEACE

Located around 13 km from Udaipur city, Uda Sagar Lake was commissioned by Maharana Udai Singh in the mid-1500s, even before the city was fully established. The lake served both as a water source and a military asset, given its strategic location.

Although not as frequent-



ed by tourists, the lake has historical importance—it was near this lake that several significant battles were fought, including the one between Maharana Pratap and the Mughals. Today, it remains a quiet spot that offers a glimpse into Udaipur's layered past.

DOODH TALAI LAKE: WHERE MUSIC MEETS THE WATERS

Adjacent to Lake Pichola, the small but significant Doodh Talai Lake offers panoramic views of the City Palace, Lake Pichola, and Jag Mandir. The lake is flanked by two popular attractions—Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Park and Manikya Lal Verma Garden. From the top of the hill, visitors can capture stunning vistas of the lakes below. Doodh Talai also houses



the Musical Garden, where fountains dance to traditional Rajasthani music in the evening—a delightful experience for families and couples.

GOVERDHAN SAGAR LAKE: WHERE LOCALS UNWIND

Located on the outskirts of Udaipur, Goverdhan Sagar Lake is lesser-known but loved by locals. This artificial lake is peaceful and clean, with recent renovations including walking paths, benches, and children's play areas. A small boat ride service is also available.

With fewer tourists, Goverdhan Sagar is perfect for picnics, evening strolls, and casual outings with friends or family. It adds to the diversity of Udaipur's water bodies, showing how lakes are still deeply woven into local life.

A LIVING WATER HERITAGE

Udaipur's lakes are more than just scenic spots; they represent the vision of sustainability and community planning by the Rajput rulers. Each lake was built not just for aesthetics but for

rainwater harvesting, irrigation, drinking water, and maintaining the local ecosystem.

Together, these interconnected lakes form a complex water management system that's centuries old—a remarkable example of environmental foresight.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

The best time to explore Udaipur's lakes is from October to March, when the weather is cool and pleasant. The monsoon season (July–September) is also beautiful, as the lakes brim with rainwater and the Aravallis turn lush green.

Udaipur's lakes are the soul of the city—mirroring not only the grand palaces but also the deep-rooted traditions and natural elegance of Rajasthan. Whether you're gliding across Lake Pichola, catching a sunset at Fateh Sagar, or simply sitting by the calm waters of Badi Lake, the experience is bound to leave you enchanted.

For travelers seeking beauty, history, and peace, the lakes of Udaipur offer an unforgettable journey through royal reflections and timeless tranquility.

Travel educates us: Lessons beyond the classroom



MURARI GUPTA

They say, “Travel is the only thing you buy that makes you richer.” While textbooks teach us facts, travel teaches us perspective. Whether it's a stroll through ancient ruins, a meal shared with locals, or a solo backpacking trip across continents, travel offers an immersive education that no classroom can fully replicate.

In a world where formal education is often equated with degrees and exams, travel reminds us that learning can happen anywhere—especially when we step outside our comfort zones.

1. CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY

One of the most immediate and profound lessons travel offers is exposure to different cultures, customs, and ways of life. Reading about another culture in a book is informative—but living it, even briefly, is transformative. You learn how people greet each other, what gestures are considered respectful or rude, and how food, language, and traditions shape daily life.

Travel teaches us that our way is not the only way. It breaks down prejudices and assumptions. Whether it's removing shoes before entering a temple in Thailand or participating in a tea ceremony in Japan,

these experiences deepen our understanding of human diversity.

2. HISTORY COMES ALIVE

History in a classroom can often feel distant or dry. But when you stand at the edge of the Colosseum in Rome, walk along the Great Wall of China, or visit the forts of Rajasthan, history becomes real and tangible. You feel the weight of the past and the legacy of human civilization.

Travel helps us connect the dots between what we've read and the reality of the world. Museums, heritage sites, old cities, and monuments all tell stories that are richer when experienced firsthand.

3. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Even if you don't become fluent in a new language, travel sharpens your communication skills. You become more aware of non-verbal cues, tone, and expressions. You pick up local phrases, learn to ask for directions, order food, or bargain in a market.

More importantly, travel teaches you how to listen actively and communicate across barriers. In the process, you realize that language is more than words—it's about connection and mutual respect.

4. GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENTAL UNDERSTANDING

Travel gives context to geography like no textbook can. Climbing a Himalayan trail teaches you about mountain ecosystems. A visit to the Amazon rainforest opens your eyes to biodiversity and conservation. Explor-



ing a coastal village shows you the real-life impact of rising sea levels and climate change.

You also gain awareness of how humans live in harmony—or in conflict—with nature. This kind of learning fosters a sense of environmental responsibility that often sparks deeper interest in sustainability and

global issues.

5. PROBLEM SOLVING AND ADAPTABILITY

One missed train, a language misunderstanding, or a lost reservation—travel comes with its fair share of challenges. But each problem becomes a lesson in resilience and quick thinking. You learn to adapt, to be pa-

tient, and to stay calm under pressure.

Travel teaches you that not everything goes as planned—and that's okay. These lessons in adaptability are invaluable in life and work, helping you become more independent and resourceful.

6. EMPATHY AND



HUMAN CONNECTION

Meeting people from different walks of life fosters empathy. When you live among locals, share meals with strangers, or listen to a guide's personal story, you begin to see the world through their eyes. Travel reminds us of our shared humanity, despite differences in race, religion, or nationality. Often, the most memorable moments of travel are not the landmarks, but the people we meet along the way—host families, fellow travelers, local shopkeepers—who shape our journey and leave a lasting impact.

7. SELF-DISCOVERY AND CONFIDENCE

Travel is also a journey inward. Especially when you travel solo, you confront your own fears, beliefs, and limits. Navigating a new city, making decisions, or even

managing a tight budget all contribute to self-growth.

You begin to trust your instincts, become more open-minded, and gain confidence in your ability to navigate unfamiliar situations. This kind of experiential learning fosters maturity and broadens your worldview.

8. BREAKING ROUTINE: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Everyday life can become routine. Travel shakes you out of that cycle. It challenges your assumptions, renews your curiosity, and allows you to see life from a fresh perspective. Sometimes, stepping into another world makes you appreciate your own more—or gives you the clarity to make changes in it.

Travel often teaches us what truly matters—experiences over possessions,

people over things, presence over productivity.

A WORLD FULL OF TRAVEL LESSONS

The world is filled with classrooms—and they're not always defined by walls, desks, or whiteboards. They're crowded streets, quiet forests, bustling bazaars, and peaceful monasteries. Every journey brings with it new lessons, new challenges, and new reflections.

In a time when global understanding is more important than ever, travel remains one of the most powerful tools for education, empathy, and enlightenment. Whether it's across the globe or in your own country, travel isn't just about places—it's about perspectives. And the more you explore, the more you learn—not just about the world, but about yourself.

ISRAEL TO MOBILIZE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF RESERVISTS FOR EXPANDED GAZA OPS

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM

Israel's military said Wednesday it would call up tens of thousands of reservists and extend the service of others for an expanded military operation in Gaza City.

Defense Minister Israel Katz approved plans to begin a new phase of operations in some of Gaza's most densely populated areas, Israeli's military said Wednesday. The scheme, expected to receive the final approval from the chief of staff in the coming days, includes calling up 60,000 reservists and extending the service of an additional 20,000 currently serving.

In a country of fewer than 10 million people, the call-up of so many reservists carries both economic and political weight and comes days after hundreds of thousands rallied for a ceasefire.

This comes as negotiators scramble to bring Israel and Hamas to agree to a ceasefire ending 22 months of fighting, while international leaders and rights groups warn an expanded assault could



An Israeli armoured personnel carrier (APC) manoeuvres on the Israeli side of the border with Gaza, Israel

Israel approves plan to 'erase' Palestine

Jerusalem : Israel approved a major settlement project on Wednesday in an area of the occupied West Bank that the international community has warned threatens the viability of a future Palestinian state.

Israel has long had ambitions to build on the roughly 12-square-kilometre (five-square-mile) parcel known as E1 just east of Jerusalem,

but the plan had been stalled for years amid international opposition.

Critics say the settlement would effectively cut the West Bank in two, undermining hopes for a contiguous Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital.

Last week, Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich backed plans to build some 3,400 homes on

the ultrasensitive tract of land, which lies between Jerusalem and the Israeli settlement of Maale Adumim.

"I am pleased to announce that just a short while ago, the civil administration approved the planning for the construction of the E1 neighbourhood," the mayor of Maale Adumim, Guy Yifrach, said in a statement Wednesday.

deepen Gaza's humanitarian crisis, with most residents displaced, neighborhoods in ruins, and communities facing the threat of famine.

A military official, speaking on the condition of anonymity in line with military regulations, said that troops will operate in parts of Gaza City where they have not yet been deployed and where Israel believes Hamas is still active. Israeli troops in the Zeitoun and Jabaliya — a built-up refugee camp in Gaza City — are already preparing the groundwork for the expanded operation.

Gaza City is both Hamas' military and governing stronghold and one of the last places of refuge in northern Gaza, where hundreds of thousands are sheltering. Israeli troops will be targeting Hamas' vast underground tunnel network there, the official added.

Although Israel has targeted and killed much of Hamas' senior leadership, parts of the militant group are actively regrouping and carrying out attacks, including launching rockets towards Israel, the official said.



A worker takes part in a clean-up operation after two weeks of monsoon rains triggered flooding in the area, Quezon City, Philippines

Syrian, Israeli diplomats met in Paris to discuss 'de-escalation': Report

AGENCIES
DAMASCUS

Syria's foreign minister met with an Israeli diplomatic delegation in Paris on Tuesday to discuss "de-escalation and non-interference in Syria's internal affairs", state news agency SANA reported.

The latest in a series of US-mediated talks resulted in "understandings that support stability in the region", the agency said.

Washington has been at work in recent weeks to try to resolve security issues in Syria and Lebanon, which its ally Israel says have prompted it to take military action.

Despite a truce reached last November, Israel has continued to hit targets of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah group in Lebanon, and it has occupied territory and hit targets across



Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani (L) attended a diplomatic meeting in Paris with Israel's Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer to discuss de-escalation of violence in Syria

Syria since last year's fall of dictator Bashar al-Assad.

Tuesday's meeting in Paris follows one between Syrian Foreign Minister Assad al-Shaibani and Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer in Baku in late July, and another meeting in Paris before that. Israel and Syria have technically been at war since 1948, and the

talks also discussed reviewing a disengagement accord from 1974 that created a buffer zone between the two countries. "These talks are taking place under US mediation, as part of diplomatic efforts aimed at enhancing security and stability in Syria and preserving the unity and integrity of its territory," the agency said.

Netanyahu slams Albanese as 'weak' on Palestine

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday brushed off accusations from his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu that the Australian leader is a "weak politician who had betrayed Israel" by recognizing a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu's extraordinary public rebuke came after an Aug. 11 announcement by Albanese that his government's recognition of a Palestinian state will be formalized at the United Nations General Assembly in September. The announcement was followed by tit-for-tat cancellations of Australian and Israeli visas.

"History will remember Albanese for what he is: A weak politician who betrayed Israel and abandoned Australia's Jews," Netanyahu posted on



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (File photo)

social media Tuesday. Albanese responded pointedly Wednesday: "I treat leaders of other countries with respect. I engage with them in a diplomatic way."

"I don't take these things personally," Albanese said. "Increasingly there is global concern, and global concern because people want to see an end to the cycle of violence that we have seen for far too long. That is what Australians want to see as well."

Australian Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke further inflamed Israel's anger Monday by canceling the visa of far-right Israeli lawmaker Simcha Rothman, a member of Netanyahu's coalition, who planned an Australian speaking tour.

Rothman is a member of the Religious Zionism party, which supports continuation of the war, the mass relocation of Palestinians through what it describes as volun-

Macron denounces Netanyahu's 'abject' remarks that he fuelled anti-Semitism

Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron denounced Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks as "abject" and "erroneous" in response to Israel Prime Minister's accusations that his intention to recognise a Palestinian state is fuelling anti-Semitism.

Tensions between Israel and traditional allies escalated in recent weeks following Macron's pledge

last month — a move followed by Britain, Canada and Australia but strongly opposed by Israel.

Macron's strong comments come as Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday brushed off Netanyahu's accusations that the Australian leader is a "weak politician who had betrayed Israel" by recognising a Palestinian state.

tary migration and the reestablishment of Jewish settlements in Gaza.

Burke on Wednesday accused Netanyahu of "lashing out" against Australia as

he had done against Britain, Canada, France, Ireland, Norway and Spain over recognition of a Palestinian state. Burke denied Albanese was weak.

Pakistan, China, Afghanistan hold high-level meeting in Kabul

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Top diplomats from Pakistan, China and Afghanistan committed their countries to stronger anti-terrorism co-operation during a meeting Wednesday in Kabul aimed at boosting political and economic partnership, Pakistan's foreign ministry said.

The three sides also "reaffirmed their commitment to deepening collaboration in trade, transit, regional development, health, education, culture, and combating drug trafficking," according to a statement from Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad.

The parties also reaffirmed



Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (File photo)

an earlier agreement to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan, the statement added.

It provided no further details on the meeting among Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and top

Taliban officials, hosted by the Taliban government in Kabul. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor involves improving road and rail links between China's western Xinjiang region and Pakistan's Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea.

China's Xi makes second-ever visit to Tibet as president

AGENCIES
TAIPEI, TAIWAN

Chinese leader Xi Jinping made a rare visit to Tibet on Wednesday to mark the 60th anniversary of the consolidation of Beijing's long-contested rule over the Himalayan territory.

Xi arrived in Tibet's regional capital of Lhasa, where he "received a warm welcome from people of various ethnic groups" who waved bouquets of flowers and danced "to joyful rhythms," the Xinhua News Agency said. The agency said Xi urged the building of a "modern so-

cialist" Tibet "that is united, prosperous, civilized, harmonious and beautiful."

Communist forces occupied Tibet in 1951. In 1965, Mao Zedong's single-party dictatorship established the Tibet autonomous region. Decades of political repression followed, including the demolition of some Buddhist monasteries and the imprisonment of monks. Recent years have seen the large-scale migration of majority Han Chinese to the high-altitude region, the virtual closure of Tibet to journalists and foreigners.

Bus crash in Afghanistan kills more than 70 Afghans returning from Iran

AGENCIES
GUZARA, AFGHANISTAN

The death toll from a collision between a bus carrying Afghan migrants returning from Iran and two other vehicles in western Afghanistan has risen to 76, a provincial official said on Wednesday.

"Seventy-six citizens of the country... lost their lives in the incident, and three others were seriously injured," Mohammad Yousuf Saeedi, Herat provincial govern-

ment spokesman, said in a statement.

The dead were transferred to a military hospital, with more than a dozen children among those killed, army statements said.

Many of the bodies were "unidentifiable", said Mohammad Janan Moqadas, chief physician of Al-Farooq Army Corps Hospital.

Police in Guzara district outside Herat city, where the accident took place on Tuesday night, said the bus

collided with a motorcycle and a truck carrying fuel, sparking a fire.

An AFP journalist on Tuesday night saw the burnt shell of the bus on the road hours after the accident.

The bus was carrying Afghans recently returned from Iran to the capital Kabul, Saeedi told AFP on Tuesday.

At least 1.5 million people have returned to Afghanistan since the start of this



People inspect a burned-out bus that collided with a truck and a motorbike Tuesday evening, causing a massive fire and killing at least 70 people, including children, most of them Afghans returning from Iran, in western Herat province, Afghanistan

year from Iran and Pakistan, both of which have sought to force migrants out after decades of hosting them, according to the UN migration agency.

Many of those returning spent years outside the country and arrive without a place to go and carrying few belongings, facing steep challenges to resettle in a country facing endemic poverty and high unemployment.

The state-run Bakhtar

News Agency said Tuesday's accident was one of the deadliest in the country in recent years.

Traffic accidents are common in Afghanistan, due in part to poor roads after decades of conflict, dangerous driving on highways and a lack of regulation.

In December last year, two bus accidents involving a fuel tanker and a truck on a highway through central Afghanistan killed at least 52.

UKRAINE SECURITY TALKS A ‘ROAD TO NOWHERE’ WITHOUT US: RUSSIA

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

Russia has warned that attempting to resolve security issues relating to Ukraine without the participation of Moscow is a “road to nowhere”, days after European leaders met United States President Donald Trump to discuss security guarantees for Kyiv.

“We cannot agree with the fact that now it is proposed to resolve questions of security, collective security, without the Russian Federation. This will not work,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Wednesday. “I am sure that in the West and above all in the United States they understand perfectly well that seriously discussing security issues without the Russian Federation is a utopia; it’s a road to nowhere.”

The minister’s comments come two days after Trump hosted Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy alongside prominent European leaders at the White House, and days after



Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says any potential summit between Russian leader Putin and Ukraine’s Zelenskyy ‘must be prepared in the most meticulous way.’

Trump met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska.

Trump is trying to steer Putin and Zelenskyy towards a settlement more than three years after Russia invaded its neighbour, but major obstacles remain.

The Russian official said any summit between Putin and Zelenskyy “must be prepared in the most meticulous way” so the meeting does not lead to a “deterioration” of the situation around the conflict.

Lavrov also accused European leaders of making “clumsy attempts” to change the US president’s position

on Ukraine.

“We have only seen aggressive escalation of the situation and rather clumsy attempts to change the position of the US president,” he said, referring to Monday’s meeting.

“We did not hear any constructive ideas from the Europeans there,” Lavrov added.

Russia has wanted the leading European nations to directly negotiate with Moscow over Ukraine’s security matters, and Russia has long rejected the prospect of NATO forces being deployed as part of a potential peace deal.

RUSSIAN SHELLING ON UKRAINIAN CITY KILLS THREE

KYIV: At least three people were killed in a Russian artillery attack on the eastern Ukrainian city of Kostiantynivka, local officials said on Wednesday, as Moscow’s troops advance to encircle the strategic hub in Ukraine’s industrialised Donbas region.

Another four people were wounded in the attack, which Governor Vadym Filashkin said involved eight strikes from a multiple rocket launch system and targeted a local market.

He called on residents to evacuate the city, which has come increasingly

under attack as Russian forces close in from three sides.

On Tuesday alone, Filashkin added, Russian forces dropped 10 guided bombs on Kostiantynivka, which has long served as a crucial logistics hub for Ukrainian troops defending a key swath of the front line.

“The Russians are deliberately striking to kill and maim as many civilians as possible,” he said in a statement.

Russia has denied targeting civilians, but thousands have been killed since its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

President Trump on Tuesday floated the idea of the U.S. providing air support as part of security guarantees for Ukraine, as he continues his quest to help end the three-and-a-half-year war in Eastern Europe. The White House said Tuesday that the president has “definitively” ruled out putting

U.S. boots on the ground in Ukraine.

On Monday, seven European leaders and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with Trump at the White House, where security guarantees and next steps toward achieving a truce were discussed.

Trump: Ukraine deal will take me to heaven

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said he hopes brokering peace between Russia and Ukraine will land him a spot in heaven.

Speaking with Fox and Friends just one day after hosting European leaders, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, at the White House, Trump hinted that helping end the war could also benefited him. The leaders met as Trump continues to push for an end of the war between Russia and Ukraine.

“If I can save 7,000 people a week from being killed, I think that’s pretty– I want to try to get to heaven if possible, I’m hearing that I’m not doing well. I am really at the bottom of the totem pole,” Trump joked.

“But if I can get to heaven, this will be one of the reasons,” he added.

One of Trump’s campaign promises was to broker peace between the two countries and end the war that began more than three and a half years ago when Russia invaded Ukraine.



France’s President Emmanuel Macron, from left, President Donald Trump, Italy’s Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Germany’s Chancellor Friedrich Merz participate in a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders in the East Room of the White House.

US TROOPS WON’T BE SENT TO HELP DEFEND UKRAINE: TRUMP

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Tuesday offered his assurances that U.S. troops would not be sent to help defend Ukraine against Russia after seeming to leave open the possibility the day before.

Trump also said in a morning TV interview that Ukraine’s hopes of joining NATO and regaining the Crimean Peninsula from Russia are “impossible.”

The Republican president, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other European leaders

held hours of talks at the White House on Monday aimed at bringing an end to Russia’s war against Ukraine. While answering questions from journalists, Trump did not rule out sending U.S. troops to participate in a European-led effort to defend Ukraine as part of security guarantees sought by Zelenskyy.

Trump said after his meeting in Alaska last week with Russian President Vladimir Putin that Putin was open to the idea of security guarantees for Ukraine.

NATO defence chiefs hold ‘candid discussion’ on security guarantees for Ukraine

AGENCIES
BRUSSELS

NATO defense chiefs held a “candid discussion” Wednesday about what security guarantees they could offer Kyiv to help forge a peace agreement that ends Russia’s three-year war on Ukraine, a senior alliance official said.

Italian Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, the chair of NATO’s Military Committee, said that 32 defense chiefs from across the alliance held a video conference

amid a U.S.-led diplomatic push to end the fighting.

He said there was a “great, candid discussion” in the call. “I thanked everyone for their always proactive participation in these meetings: we are united, and that unity was truly tangible today, as always,” he wrote on social platform X without providing further details.

Assurances that it won’t be invaded again in the future are one of the keys for getting Ukraine to sign up for a peace deal with Russia. It wants Western help for its

military, including weapons and training, to shore up its defenses, and Western officials are scrambling to figure out what commitments they might offer.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov chided efforts to work on security arrangements in Ukraine without Moscow’s involvement.

“We cannot agree with the fact that it is now proposed to resolve collective security issues without the Russian Federation. This will not work,” Lavrov said Wednesday,

according to state news agency RIA Novosti.

Russia will “ensure (its) legitimate interests firmly and harshly,” Lavrov added at a news conference in Moscow with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi.

U.S. Gen. Alexis Grynke-wich, NATO’s supreme allied commander Europe, took part in the virtual talks, Dragone said. U.S. Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was also due to participate, a U.S. defense official said.

Trump slams US museums for focus on ‘how bad slavery was’

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

“The Smithsonian is OUT OF CONTROL, where everything discussed is how horrible our Country is, how bad Slavery was, and how unaccomplished the down-trodden have been — Nothing about Success, nothing about Brightness, nothing about the Future,” Trump wrote.

He was referring to the Smithsonian Institution, an independent organization that operates 17 museums, galleries and a zoo located across the country, which receives public funding, and which he has previously accused of espousing a “corrosive ideology.”

The transatlantic slave trade from Africa to the Americas spanned three centuries, and has been referred to as the United States’ “original sin.”

The country’s South fought to maintain slavery in the 1861-1865 Civil War, but lost.



President Donald Trump has waged a pressure campaign for US museums to celebrate American exceptionalism

WH STARTS TIKTOK ACCOUNT AS PLATFORM IN US LEGAL LIMBO

Washington : The White House launched a TikTok account on Tuesday, as President Donald Trump continues to permit the Chinese-owned platform to operate in the United States despite a law requiring its sale.

“America we are BACK! What’s up TikTok?” read a caption on the account’s first post on the popular video sharing app, a 27-second clip.

The account had about

4,500 followers an hour after posting the video. Trump’s personal account on TikTok meanwhile has 110.1 million followers, though his last post was on November 5, 2024 -- Election Day.

TikTok is owned by China-based internet company ByteDance.

A federal law requiring TikTok’s sale or ban on national security grounds was due to take effect the day before Trump’s inauguration on January 20.

Since then African Americans have fought for their civil rights, including in the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, which forced a new national reckoning on the darker parts of US history.

“The Museums throughout Washington, but all over the Country are, essentially, the last remaining segment of “WOKE,” Trump wrote in the Truth Social post, using his shorthand for leftist social justice movements.

For months now, Trump has disparaged cultural institutions, which have worked to bring more diversity to exhibits and programming in recent years, highlighting women, people of color and queer culture.

Last week, the White House posted a letter to its website saying the administration plans to target eight major museums for “comprehensive internal review” in an effort to “celebrate American exceptionalism”.

SAIL SPECTACLE



Tall ships take part in the 50th Sail Amsterdam festival, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Spain battles one of its most destructive fire seasons even as its heat wave eases

AGENCIES
MADRID

Spain tackled several major wildfires Tuesday in one of the country’s most destructive fire seasons in recent decades, despite temperatures dropping across the Iberian Peninsula.

Thousands of firefighters aided by soldiers and water-bombing aircraft fought fires tearing through parched woodland that were especially severe in northwestern Spain, where

the country’s weather agency AEMET reported a still “very high or extreme” fire risk — particularly in the Galicia region.

The fires in Galicia have ravaged small, sparsely populated towns, forcing locals in many cases to step in before firefighters arrive.

Firefighting units from Germany arrived in northern Spain on Tuesday to help fight the blazes, Spain’s Interior Ministry announced. More than 20 vehicles were deployed to

help fight an ongoing blaze in Jarilla in the Extremadura region that borders Portugal, the ministry said.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez visited the area Tuesday and spoke of the heat that has fueled the fires. Temperatures across Spain dropped by about 4 degrees Celsius (about 7 degrees Fahrenheit) Tuesday after a 16-day heat wave with several days above 40 C (104 F), Spain’s weather agency reported.

“Science tells us, common



Residents battle a fire advancing toward Rebordondo village, near Ourense, in northwestern Spain,

sense tells us too, especially that of farmers and ranchers, of those who live in rural areas, that the climate is changing, that the climate emergency is becoming more and more recurrent, more frequent and has an ever greater impact,” Sánchez said.

In Galicia, land management has also played a role. Large stretches of unmanaged vegetation and depopulated villages in forested land have led to the buildup of wildfire fuel, said Adrian

Regos, an ecologist at the Biological Mission of Galicia, a research institute.

The fires in Spain have killed four people this year and burned more than 382,000 hectares or about 1,475 square miles, according to the European Union’s European Forest Fire Information System. That surface area is more than twice the size of metropolitan London, more than six times the 2006-2024 average for land burned during the same period, according to EFFIS.

Air quality deteriorated across large parts of Spain over the past week as a result of the wildfires, data from the EU’s Copernicus climate monitoring agency showed. Smoke from the Iberian Peninsula fires reached France, the UK, and Scandinavia, it said.

Several fires have been caused by human activity. Police have detained 23 people for suspected arson and are investigating 89 more, Spain’s Civil Guard said Tuesday.



Pope Leo XIV arrives for his weekly general audience, at The Vatican.

Pope seeks prayers to end wars

AGENCIES
VATICAN CITY

Pope Leo XIV asked people to fast on Friday to pray for peace and justice in the Middle East and Ukraine, issuing a special appeal as he returned to the Vatican from summer vacation.

At the end of his weekly general audience Wednesday, Leo recalled that Friday is a special feast day dedicated to the Virgin Mary. He urged Catholic faithful to spend the day fasting

and “praying that the Lord grants peace and justice, and dries the tears of all those who are suffering as a result of the armed conflicts underway.” Leo has called for ceasefires in Gaza and Ukraine and for dialogue to achieve peace. Wednesday marked Leo’s first day back at the Vatican after a period of vacation at the papal summer retreat in Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome.

Going forward, the pope has some important ap-

pointments including special audiences for the Vatican’s 2025 Holy Year and the Sept. 7 canonization of the Catholic Church’s first millennial saint Carlo Acutis.

At the end of Wednesday’s audience, Leo received a special gift: A Ping-Pong table decorated with his papal coat of arms. Leo, an avid tennis player, gamely picked up a paddle and bounced a ball on it, but the ball rolled into the net.

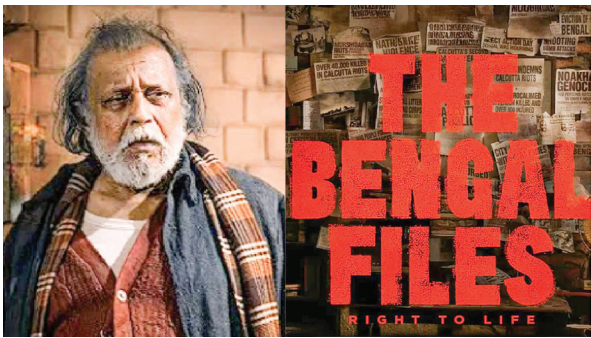
'OPPOSING WITHOUT SEEING IT': MITHUN REACTS OVER 'THE BENGAL FILES' ROW

AGENCIES
MUMBAI

Filmmaker Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri's directorial 'The Bengal Files', which focuses on the events of the Direct Action Day and the 1946 Calcutta killings, has landed in controversy even before its release.

Actor-turned-politician Mithun Chakraborty discussed the controversy surrounding the trailer launch of 'The Bengal Files' in Kolkata, expressing surprise at the entire ruckus without even watching the film. He also blamed the ruling party in the state, saying everything was "planned".

Speaking to ANI, he said, "Everything was planned, but it was so surprising to



me, without even seeing the trailer, without even seeing anything, they are opposing it for what? To face the truth? So, that is the problem. Nothing else."

On August 18, during a press conference in Delhi, the ace filmmaker revealed that "FIRs have been filed by ruling party members" on the makers. Speaking about it, the 'Disco Dancer' actor added, "In Bengal,

FIRs are distributed like kurmura (Puffed rice). Agar TMC ka koi chota mota bhi hoga na police station mein jayega FIR karo bolega, kar dega. So, it was like that. So, never mind. If the FIR has been done, he (Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri) will fight it back. No problem"

The film explores the communal violence in undivided Bengal during the 1940s, including events like the 1946

Direct Action Day and the Noakhali riots of 1946.

Chakraborty lashed out at the critics, saying, "Everybody is scared of the truth. That is the thing," adding that the young generation should know about the truth.

"It's 1947, even before my birth, which we don't know about. The next generation should know about it what happened during Noakhali..or what about the great Calcutta killings..what happened..We read a line..What happened? You don't want to know the truth?..." he said.

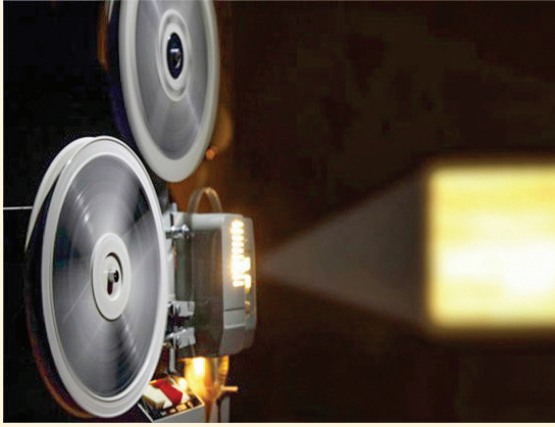
'The Bengal Files' features actors Mithun Chakraborty, Anupam Kher, Darshan Kumar, and Pallavi Joshi. It is focused on the events of the "Direct Action Day," aiming to unveil the "most brutal chapter" of Indian history.

Assamese filmmaker's debut feature film selected for Busan Film Festival

AGENCIES
GUWAHATI

Assamese director Mahharshi Tuhin Kashyap's debut feature film 'Kok Kok Kookkook' has been selected for the 30th edition of the Busan International Film Festival in South Korea for its Vision Asia section.

Produced by the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI) of Kolkata, the movie is a magic realist horror drama, a press release said on Wednesday. The film explores the intense lives of migrants



struggling for identity against the backdrop of a gritty yet scenic city.

Known for his distinctive use of magic realism and

poetic imagination, Kashyap who used to be known as a short film maker, brings forward a deeply personal yet universal

story set in his hometown Guwahati in Assam.

"This film is dedicated to the people of Assam, who once celebrated diversity without hesitation. I fear times and minds are changing," the director said.

He hoped that this film stands as a "testament of my existence, and of those who fight for identity every day".

Kashyap, an alumnus of SRFTI, developed the film as his final dissertation project under the mentorship of filmmaker Dominic Sangma.

'Fallout Season 2' teaser unveils

AGENCIES
LOS ANGELES

The 'Fallout season 2' teaser trailer debuted on Tuesday at Gamescom 2025 and gave fans a first look at what's coming next in the post-apocalyptic drama.

The second season of the hit Prime Video series will premiere on December 17, 2025, with new episodes releasing weekly until the finale on February 4, 2026. The trailer showed the action moving to New Vegas, a familiar setting for fans of the video game series.

As per a press release, during the event, attended by more than 5,000 people, executive producers Jonathan Nolan, Geneva Robertson-Dworet, and Graham Wagner joined stars Ella Purnell and Aaron Moten on stage to talk about the next chapter of the story. A new character was also revealed; Justin Theroux will play Robert House. The teaser also gave the first glimpse of the Deathclaw, one of Fallout's most feared creatures.

Take a look Season one of Fallout' became one of Prime Video's

most popular shows, drawing more than 100 million viewers worldwide. Season two picks up after the dramatic finale of season one and follows Lucy, Maximus, and The Ghouls as they journey through the Mojave wasteland and into New Vegas.

The series, based on the iconic video game franchise, explores survival in a world

two centuries after a nuclear apocalypse. Alongside Purnell and Moten, the cast includes Walton Goggins, Kyle MacLachlan, Moises Arias, and Frances Turner.

Season two of Fallout will be available in English and dubbed in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam across 240 countries and territories on Prime Video.



The series, based on the iconic video game franchise, explores survival in a world two centuries after a nuclear apocalypse. Alongside Purnell and Moten, the cast includes Walton Goggins, Kyle MacLachlan, Moises Arias, and Frances Turner.

Mahesh Babu's daughter Sitara warns followers about fake profiles

AGENCIES
MUMBAI

Superstar Mahesh Babu's daughter Sitara Ghattamaneni has spoken out strongly against the growing number of "fake" and "spam" accounts impersonating her on social media.

Sitara, on Tuesday, took to her social media to warn her followers, friends, and well-wishers to be "cautious" of such impersonators, adding that Instagram is her "only official account" and the only place



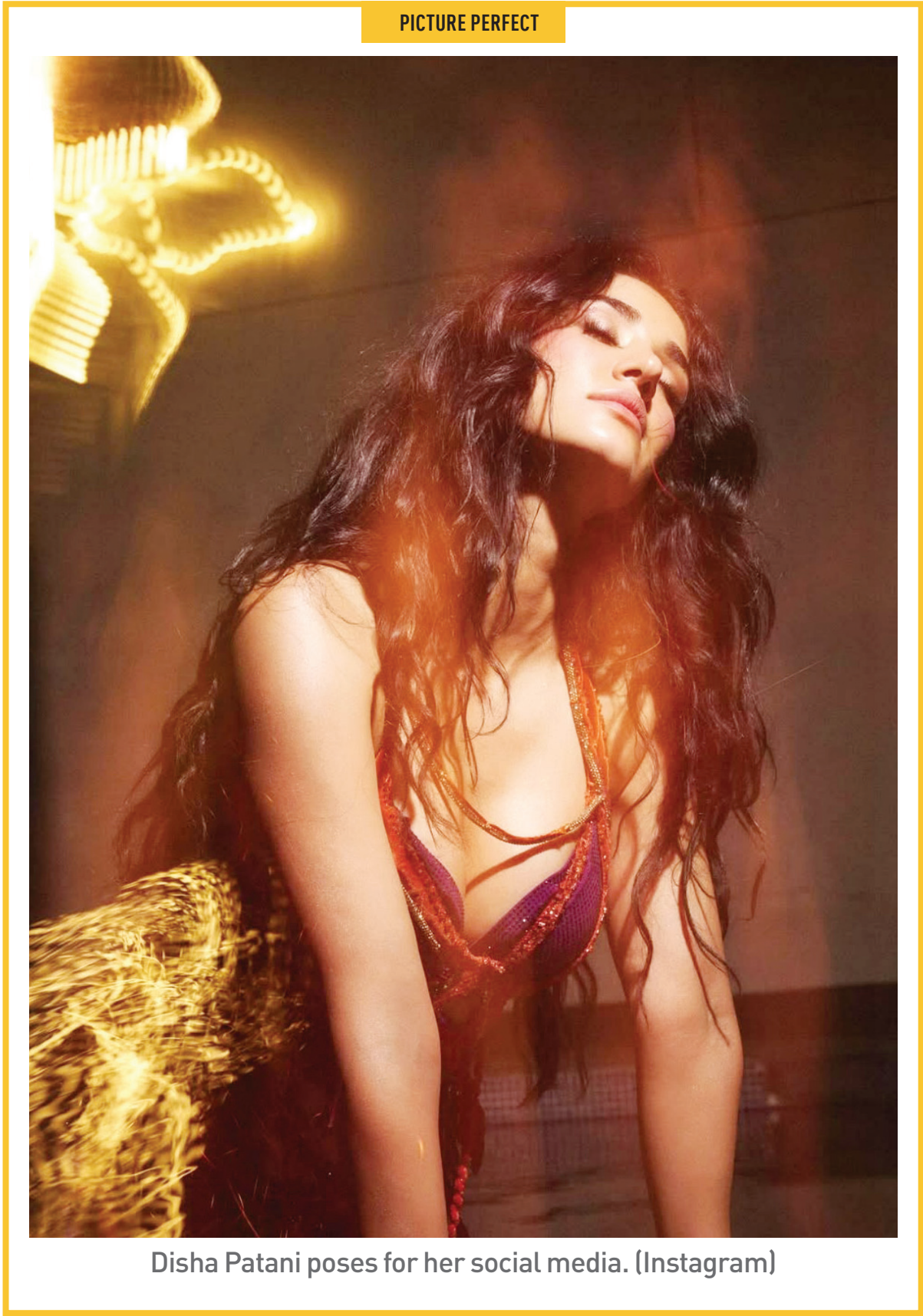
where she connects with people.

"It has come to my no-

tice that several fake and spam accounts are being created under my name.

I would like to clarify to all my friends, family, and well-wishers that I am only active on Instagram. This is my only official account and the only medium through which I connect. I am not present on any other social media platforms. Please be cautious and avoid engaging with any other accounts claiming to be me," read her Instagram post.

Take a look Sitara has a strong presence on Instagram, where she regularly shares personal moments, family up-



Disha Patani poses for her social media. (Instagram)

BRAIN PICKING



The whole point of creativity is that it has no boundaries of language, region, and age.

— ADITI RAO HYDARI

(Indian Actress)

Chris Martin plans to keep Coldplay's kiss cam at concerts

AGENCIES
LONDON

Coldplay frontman Chris Martin seems to have no plans to give up the famous "kiss cam" at the band's shows, even after it led to a viral scandal involving former Astronomer CEO Andy Byron and the company's ex-HR head, Kristin Cabot.

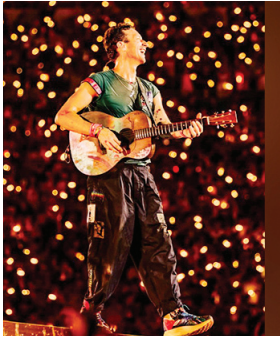
According to Page Six, Martin, during Coldplay's "Music of the Spheres" World Tour stop in Hull, England, addressed the crowd about the incident that unfolded last month in Massachusetts.

"We've been doing [the Jumbotron] for a long time, and it is only recently that it

became a... yeah," Martin told the crowd, hinting at the viral incident.

"Life throws you lemons, and you've got to make lemonade. So, we are going to keep doing it because we are going to meet some of you," he added.

The singer also interacted with fans, reading out signs



from the crowd. Spotting one fan who had attended multiple shows, Martin thanked him for attending the show "three times in three months."

"You were at that Boston gig," the "Fix You" singer said. "Well, OK, thank you for coming again after that debacle," he added, referring to the moment when Byron and Cabot were spotted canoodling on the "kiss cam" during the band's tour stop at Gillette Stadium in Massachusetts last month.

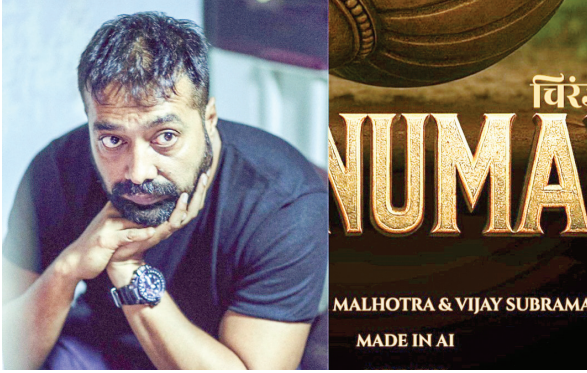
The whole drama began on July 16 when Andy Byron and Kristin Cabot appeared on the "kiss cam" during a Coldplay concert at Gillette Stadium.

Kashyap hits out at producer of AI-generated film 'Chiranjeevi Hanuman'

AGENCIES
MUMBAI

Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap hit out at Vijay Subramaniam, producer of the upcoming AI-generated film 'Chiranjeevi Hanuman - The Eternal.'

The film, announced on Tuesday by Abundantia Entertainment and Collective Media Network's His-



toryverse, is being promoted as India's first "Made-in-AI" theatrical release.

Taking to Instagram, Kashyap lashed out at Subramaniam and questioned his commitment to creators. Referring to Subramaniam as the head of a talent agency that represents writers, directors, and actors, Kashyap accused him of putting profits before creativity. He

also added that agencies are "only interested in making money" and suggested that turning to AI proves that artists are being undervalued.

"Congratulations @vijay-subramaniam84 . Here is the man heading the @lifecat-collectiveartistsnetwork that represents artists, writer, directors , now producing a film made by AI .

MS Dhoni unveils Asian Footwears' Quantum 2.0 signature collection

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Legendary cricketer and Asian Footwears' brand ambassador MS Dhoni today unveiled the company's all-new signature and premium sneaker collection, designed to combine high fashion, unbeatable comfort, and long-lasting durability. The line-up includes Hyper Cushion and PowerKick sneakers, the Wonder Walk- walking range, the Mojo- premium sneaker line, and the Quan-



tum 2.0 -Signature Collection. Designed in-house, state-of-the-art, BIS-certified footwear testing and design laboratory, these mod-

els reflect a perfect fusion of style and performance, created for consumers who want a global aesthetic at an affordable price point.

VOLVO EX30 FIRST DRIVE REVIEW

SYED SHIRAZ SHAH

Volvo India recently invited a select few auto journalists to drive their latest offering in India, the EX30, in Jaipur. It was a beautifully conducted first drive where each journalist got ample time to sample the car. The price hasn't been revealed yet as the actual launch would happen sometime next month and the deliveries would begin in October. Therefore, other than the price, this story would tell you everything you need to know if you're contemplating to buy this vehicle. I'll start with the design first.

DESIGN

The EX30 looks unmistakably a Volvo. There's careful restraint in the overall design, which means there are no snazzy cuts and creases to make it look like a UFO. It looks how a proper car designed by humans, and not robots, should look. It has a smooth, pleasing form that will age well without appearing boring at any point in time. I say that because I wasn't really expecting it to turn a lot of heads during the drive, but it managed to turn almost all of them in its direction. That's a win for Volvo, and also for you if you're someone who loves attention. If you aren't that type, try getting your EX30 in White, and you might be able to get some relief from prying eyes. I still don't guarantee that though...

INTERIORS

I don't guarantee a lack of attention because not only does the vehicle look good, the onlookers would want to peep further inside due to its different interiors. For starters, there is no conventional instrument cluster behind the steering wheel, and the steering wheel itself is not your regular circular unit. When people said you can't reinvent the wheel, they didn't say anything about the steering wheel, right? Volvo took that challenge seriously.

Coming back to the instrument cluster, or the lack of one behind the steering wheel, what you get instead is a silent nanny monitoring your eyes, and your attention level via them, to ensure your safety and of those too who are around your car. In fact, Volvo takes the safety of the planet seriously too, which is why almost the entire cabin has been made using recycled material. But don't be fooled for even a millisecond into thinking that then there must have been compromises made in the quality of the interiors or in the fit and finish, because there have been none—everything inside (and outside too) still feels properly premium and robust.

Plus, there's some intelligent and innovative space management done by Volvo in this one. For example, there is no conventional glovebox at the passenger side, but there is



Photos: Syed Shiraz Shah & Volvo India

one in the center and you can even lock it via a PIN like you do to lock your phone. But that's still not as clever as this one—the armrest between the front seats conceals a retractable compartment that has two cupholders, and I love the fact that it has been incorporated so thoughtfully where you can either extend it completely (to use both cupholders), or partially (to use just one), or slide it back completely into the armrest when you don't need it. In fact, even when fully extended, it doesn't cause any hindrance in operating the touchscreen that's actually the main interface to use almost every function in the car.

And that's a bit of a problem. No, not the retractable compartment, but the fact that almost every function has been crammed into the touchscreen, which, by the way, also has a dedicated section (the top strip) for the speedo, odo, and other readouts that you normally find in a regular instrument cluster behind the wheel.

It would have still been okay, but I was really irritated to learn that even to adjust the mirrors I will have to not only fiddle around with the touchscreen, but also use the buttons on the steering wheel simultaneously. Let's just revert to normal buttons for these essential functions, Volvo. Not everyone is so highly ambidextrous.

Another complaint I have is that the auto park (Park Pilot Assist in Volvo

and a rocky-plus-bushy section on the other side with barbed wire fencing. The Volvo ignored the open field completely, like most good candidates get ignored by HR, and wanted to park on the other side. Thankfully, because it's a Volvo, it automatically braked in time (just an inch before the barbed wire fence) and asked me to clear the obstacle before resuming the parking maneuver. I wasn't carrying a shovel, pliers, gardening scissors, and dynamite sticks, so I couldn't obey the Swede command.

Moreover, it would only do perpendicular parking and not parallel parking. Come on, Volvo, when our homegrown manufacturers are doing better here, I expect YOU to develop this feature to a level where I can just get out of the car and it parks itself before sending me a text on the lines of "your Volvo is parked safely, have a good date, er, day sir!"

Speaking of dates, you and your better half would be absolutely comfortable in the front seats. The rear seats are a notch underwhelming in comparison. The seat-squab base is angled too deep towards the rear, whereas the seat-back is too upright with no recline adjustment. The former wouldn't be an issue if the latter could be adjusted. That said, this is what I could gather at first glance. Sometime next month, I will try to get the vehicle again from Volvo and request one of my elderly family members to sit at

I would also test the real-world range of the EX30.

Oh, before I forget, please note that, thankfully, the power windows are still operated by physical buttons; the left control stalk on the steering column is for the lights (switching on fogs; switching the main headlights' mode from Auto to ON, etc., and headlight level adjustment, is still via the screen though), indicators, and wipers, while the right stalk is your gearshift lever (like in Mercs). And this car's rain-sensing wipers happen to be the absolute best I have experienced yet. A drop of water on the windshield and they wipe it away without any delay. Generally, only mothers have such OCDs around cleanliness and safety...

PERFORMANCE, RIDE QUALITY, AND HANDLING

Spoiler Alert! This entire section is a 10/10. The performance is fantastic; the ride quality is sublime, and the handling will keep you entertained at all occasions. Volvo claims a 5.3 s time for the zero to hundred sprint. My best run yielded a time of 5.0 seconds! I was able to find a closed road with zero traffic, where I also conducted a 160–0 km/h braking test. The EX30 accomplished that in an eye-popping 4.8 seconds!

It's the same story when you want to overtake—immediate rush of power is always a given, and you don't shy away from utilising it to the max because you know the car will stop in a jiffy when required, without any drama whatsoever. The

handling too, like I mentioned earlier, will keep you entertained. Just set the steering mode to Firm (there are three settings, which, if I remember correctly, are called light, normal, and firm) and you can try to emulate Ewy Rosqvist in the twisties. The steering rack isn't from a Polestar, but it's still quick and predictable enough for you to have fun. What helps matters immensely is the impeccable chassis behaviour. The EX30, for a crossover, stays quite flat in corners, allowing you to bring out the repressed rally fanatic in you. Yes, it's an RWD, and you would love taking the gravel sections in it...

Another feather in the EX30's cap is the astounding ride quality at high speeds. The mavericks at Volvo R&D have got the damping and spring rate absolutely spot on for this car. At pedestrian speeds, you'll soon learn that the suspension feels a tad firm, but as the speeds rise, it magically swallows the worst potholes without any complaints. Like I said earlier, full marks to Volvo here!

SAFETY

Talking about safety in a Volvo is like sitting in God's lap and asking him about theism. They invented most of that stuff, right? Moreover, if I start mentioning the entire list of active and safety features you get in the EX30, I won't be able to finish this article today.

Therefore, it would just suffice to say that even this Volvo carries the whole suite of safety features that you expect from a Volvo, and then some, to maximise the delay of your face-to-face meeting with your maker.

VERDICT

As you might have already gathered by now, the EX30 is a fantastic car—its Gen Z quirks (everything in the touchscreen) notwithstanding. The 69 kWWh

battery pack's claimed range (WLTP) in this car is 480 km, and you may expect me to check that soon. Also, don't worry about the lack of noise. The brilliant sound system will keep you happy, and there are numerous shades of ambient lighting to elevate your mood otherwise too.

Most importantly though, the EX30 excels in the core traits (performance, handling, and ride quality) that make a car a great car, which in turn makes it one of those rare electric cars that would appeal to even the staunch petrolheads as yours truly here.

Now, keeping the price tempting, at least initially, is the only thing left for Volvo to accomplish. It's highly unlikely that they would price it at under 45 lakh rupees onroad, but if they somehow manage that, the EX30 would create a lot of problems for many vehicles both above and under this price mark.



The Death of Forgetting: Rethinking life and work in the age of AI memory



THE NEXT
ABHISHEKANAND

The Human Gift of Forgettingfulness

Forgetting is often framed as weakness. We misplace names, lose track of dates, or fail to recall events. Yet psychologists argue that forgetting is not a defect but a feature of the human mind. It allows us to heal, to forgive, and to move forward.

Memory that is too sharp can trap us in the past, revisiting every wound with relentless precision. Forgetting, paradoxically, is what keeps us sane.

The AI Contrast: A World That Never Forgets

Artificial intelligence inverts this human condition. Algorithms do not fade, falter, or forgive. Every photo, search query, chat, or digital footprint is stored, retrievable, and analysable.

An AI-powered system can recall a ten-year-old message with the same clarity as a ten-minute-old one. What humans blur with time, AI preserves with exactness. This permanence is not neutral - it is already reshaping how individuals, families, and organisations relate to memory itself.

Psychological Shifts in Daily Life

The erosion of forgetting is not confined to boardrooms and businesses - it enters the texture of everyday life.

- **Personal Relationships:** Old conversations, resurfacing at the wrong time, can destabilise trust.

A poorly chosen phrase from years ago may suddenly reappear, reframed by algorithms in ways that humans had long since moved beyond.

- **Digital Childhoods:** Children born today will never know the privilege of unrecorded mistakes. Every photograph, every note, every online action will be archived. This raises profound questions: how will adulthood feel when adolescence is permanently preserved?

- **Grief and Closure:** In a society where AI systems can recreate the voices or likeness of those who have passed away, the human process of letting go is altered. The line between memory and presence grows thinner, with implications for how we process loss.

Professional and Organisational Impacts

The workplace is equally affected.

- **Accountability Without Expiry:** Every draft, every miscalculation, every experiment is stored. Employees may feel constrained, knowing that no mistake will fade into obscurity.

- **Creativity at Risk:** Innovation thrives on trial and error. If every error is permanently catalogued, organisations risk cultivating a culture of hesitation.

- **Performance Management:** Managers, armed with detailed digital trails, may equate permanent



The Death of Forgetting



Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robot

memory with performance, missing the larger human context. The subtle ability to forgive mistakes, to

see potential beyond past errors, could diminish. **Cultural Implications in India**

In a country like India, where oral traditions and selective memory have historically played a central

role, the shift is particularly stark. Our stories, folklore, and even family narratives thrive on adaptation and omission.

AI introduces rigidity - a fixed record of what "actually" happened. This could redefine how communities remember, celebrate, or even contest history. The long-held belief that "time heals" faces a direct technological counterpoint.

Designing for Digital Forgetting

The challenge is not to reject AI's permanence but to integrate mechanisms that mimic human forgetting. Enterprises, governments, and individuals will need to design frameworks that restore balance:

1. **Time-Bound**



New Data Norms and Ethical AI

Data Policies: Just as human memory fades, data retention policies must allow digital records to expire unless explicitly required.

2. **Context-Sensitive Systems:** AI should learn to prioritise relevance. Not every stored memory must be surfaced; context should dictate recall.

3. **Ethical Safeguards:** Legal and regulatory frameworks must protect individuals from the psychological burden of permanent exposure. In healthcare, education, and governance, this becomes especially urgent.

4. **Right to Be Forgotten:** Europe has already experimented with laws allowing individuals to request data deletion. India, too, may need to explore similar protections as AI-driven permanence grows.

The Path Forward for Enterprises

For Indian enterprises, the erosion of forgetting offers both promise and peril. On one hand, permanent memory aids compliance, efficiency, and data-driven decision-making. On the other, it risks overwhelming employees and customers with the weight of permanence. The way forward requires balance:

- Recognising that humane policies - allowing mistakes, learning curves, and second chances - remain as critical as efficiency.

- Ensuring that AI deployments are accompanied not only by technical standards but also by ethical and psychological guardrails.

- Training leadership to view memory not as an archive of past errors but as a guide for future potential.

Final Thoughts

The age of artificial intelligence challenges one of the deepest human traits: the ability to forget. If forgetting is essential for healing and growth, then a society without forgetting risks losing its capacity for forgiveness.

The future will not be defined only by how much AI remembers, but by how wisely we decide what it should forget.

Abhishek Anand, Founder of Skill Bud Technologies Pvt. Ltd., a technology company specializing in Website Development, Digital Marketing, CGI Ads, Social Media, and emerging technologies including AI, AR/VR, and Generative Content under his brand Generative Crafts.

How agentic AI is helping manage the human-machine workforce in 2025



SAHIL THAKUR

Companies, across industries, aren't just using artificial intelligence to speed up routine work—they're building entire teams where humans and smart AI "agents" collaborate every day. This new shift, fuelled by agentic AI, is changing how work gets done, and what's possible for businesses around the world. Instead of replacing humans, smart machines are enabling humans to leverage technology in order to save time & focus on high value tasks.

One of the biggest changes is how smarter allocation of tasks is assigned between humans and machines. With agentic AI, more than 60% of new enterprise AI deployments in 2025 include technology that "thinks for itself" and actively decides who—or what—should handle a particular task. Instead of managers micromanaging every detail, AI instantly matches tasks to people or digital agents based on their strengths, speed, and current workload. For example, a 2025 McKinsey report found that smart division of labour increases productiv-



Agentic AI

ity by up to 30% in companies using agentic AI.

AI agents can run thousands of parallel processes and make decisions in real time, so bottlenecks and task hand-offs run smoothly regardless of scale. This capability is especially valuable for organizations grappling with hybrid or remote work setups. As per a recent study, an organization can reduce the time spent on complex tasks by up to 85% with the help of Agentic AI, letting the staff focus on high-value, creative work instead of repetitive tasks.

Agentic AI can track employee's actual skills and performance, not just job titles. This means whenever a challenge arises, it instantly chooses the best-suited person or agent, optimizing both results and employee engagement. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s "Future of Jobs Report 2025", 39% of current job skills are predicted to be outdated or transformed by 2030, so skill tracking is urgent. AI isn't just matching skills to tasks—it's supporting lifelong learning, giving employees AI-powered

recommendations for new training, and adapting as people learn and grow.

Modern agentic systems operate like a vigilant coach. They constantly monitor both human and machine performance, quickly spotting when something isn't working as it should or if productivity drops. They do this seamlessly, in the background, giving just enough support without making anyone feel watched or micromanaged. For example, DHL cut operational costs by using agentic systems to spot and fix workflow slowdowns

immediately.

Transparency is also an important feature of these systems. Because agentic systems document every decision and action they take, everyone (from junior staff to regulators) can audit what happened and why it happened. This builds trust and keeps organizations compliant with data and labor laws.

The agentic AI market is on track to exceed \$48 billion by 2030, growing at over 57% per year as businesses race to harness these benefits. 45% of Fortune 500 companies are piloting agentic AI, and 29% have already rolled out agentic systems for key tasks in 2025. In India alone, agentic AI adoption is expected to grow 383% in two years, yielding a projected productivity boost of 41.7%.

Agentic AI isn't a distant fantasy—it is already changing & shaping the way we work today. By intelligently sharing tasks, managing complex workflows on its own, matching jobs to the right skills, and encouraging on-going learning, agentic AI is helping humans and machines become real partners. The organizations that will succeed are the ones that combine this technology with understanding, proper training, and openness, building a strong and lasting collaboration between people and machines for the future.

The author is the Director & Head of TEB Grassik Search.

Revolutionizing admission workflows with smart voicebot technology

SARVAGYA MISHRA

India's higher education sector is transforming at a rapid pace, with more than 58,000 institutions now serving a large and diverse student body. The addition of almost 2,400 institutions in 2021-22 alone indicates the dynamism of the sector's growth. With growing competition and intensity of admission cycles, timely communication and one-on-one interaction are no longer viable at scale. Institutions require smart, responsive solutions that are not only responding effectively but also proactively engaging. This is where intelligent voicebot technology is quietly revolutionizing admission processes.

Traditional Bottlenecks

Manual counsellor-driven systems still in use by institutions tend to suffer from disjointed communication, excessive lead attrition, and excessive query resolution delays. Counsellors at peak times are overwhelmed with lead verification, redundant FAQs, and follow-ups, resulting in poor turnaround and lost opportunities. Generic, delayed responses may anger students and erode institutional reputation. These outdated processes not only slow admissions down but also diminish the personalised touch that students now expect from higher education in-



stitutions.

Smart Admissions Support

Voicebots have emerged as powerful tools for managing large volumes of applicant interactions around the clock. These AI-powered agents are built to reduce Turnaround Time (TAT) through instant lead verification and eliminate wait time through real-time responses, improving both Average Handling Time (AHT) and Customer Satisfaction (CSAT). With speech engines trained in Indian languages and local inflections, they ensure communication is smooth and inclusive. These systems enable institutions to automate routine tasks, release human counsellors to engage in strategic student interaction and high-value decision-making.

Engagement At Scale

Modern voicebots provide much more than reactive assistance. They assist institutions in creating and building leads, validating candidate information, and executing drip marketing campaigns by means of automated outbound calls. With call transfer capabilities in real time, they facilitate second-level guidance in the first conversation it-

self, increasing candidate confidence and making communication effortless. Institutions can customize the voice flow, words, and tone via a no-code, DIY platform—allowing them complete control of the interaction process with minimal technical dependencies.

Future-Ready Ecosystem

Based on Gartner's 2022 customer service and support survey, more than half of the organizations today utilize conversational AI for client-facing positions. For educational institutions, this represents a crucial move toward smart automation. Voicebot ecosystems not only streamline operations but also provide a frictionless admission process for future students. With the education sector in India growing further, those organizations that are making an investment in such future-proof solutions are poised to expand communication, improve candidate experiences, and deliver improved results in the age of digital-first.

The same is attributed to Mr. Sarvagya Mishra, Founder & Director Superbot it's an AI-powered voice agent startup

ASIAN SHOOTING C'SHIP: INDIA WINS 2 GOLD, 3 SILVER

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Girish Gupta's gold in the 10m air pistol men youth event ensured India ended competition day one of the 16th Asian Shooting Championship Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, on a profitable note, as per a release from NRAI.

The 17-year-old shot 241.3 in the final, finishing ahead of compatriot Dev Pratap. The 14-year-old shot 238.6 for silver. India thus earned two gold and three silver medals on day one after Kapil Bainsla had won the junior men's air pistol gold, and both the senior and junior men's teams had won silver medals each.

The Indian pair of Saurabh Chaudhary and rising teenager Suruchi Inder Singh clinched the 10m air



Girish Gupta wins 10m air pistol gold. (Agencies)

pistol mixed team bronze, beating Chinese Taipei 17-9. The duo aggregated 578 in qualification to make the medal round, adding to the individual bronze that double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker had won in the women's 10m air pistol

competition on Tuesday. Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini, through a telephonic conversation, congratulated Kapil Bainsla on winning the gold medal. The Indian pair of Anmol Jain, Saurabh Chaudhary and Aditya Malra also

added to the tally, winning silver in the men's 10m air pistol team event. Competing at the Shymkent Shooting Plaza, the trio tallied 1735-52x to finish behind China's Hu Kai, Changjie You and Yifan Zhang, who took gold with 1744-51x.

Iran bagged the bronze medal with 1733-62x.

In the individual competition, Anmol Jain was the lone Indian to make the cut for the final round after finishing ninth with 580-17x. India's Amit Sharma (588-24x) topped the qualifying rounds, while Varun Tomar (584-24x) was fourth, but both were shooting for Ranking Points Only (RPO). Aditya Malra was 13th in qualifying with 579-20x, while Olympian Saurabh Chaudhary was 21st with 576-15x. Anmol finished sixth in the final with a score of 155.1. Hu Kai won gold, with Korea's Suhyeon Hong and Iran's Amir Jorharikhou completing the podium.

The Indian senior squad for the Asian competition comprises 35 members competing for medals in 15 events.

Anand vs Kasparov, Gukesh vs Carlsen locked for Clutch Chess

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Indian great Viswanathan Anand will revive his iconic rivalry with Russian stalwart Garry Kasparov, while world champion D Gukesh will go up against familiar foe Magnus Carlsen in Clutch Chess exhibition matches come October in St Louis, USA.

Kasparov and Anand last squared off in 2021 in the Croatia Rapid and Blitz competition at Zagreb where the Russian had emerged victorious. The two have clashed 82 times across formats in their illustrious careers with Kasparov leading in all of them and 30 games ending in draws.

"Two former world champions, Garry Kasparov and Viswanathan Anand, go head-to-head in a special Clutch Chess (Legends) exhibition match from (October 7 to 11). This once-in-a-



Viswanathan Anand (FILE PHOTO)

generation clash celebrates the legacy of two chess greats and officially launches the month of reopening festivities," the St Louis Chess Club stated in a press release.

"The exhibition match will be the first event held in the Club's enhanced facility, reaffirming the city's role as the chess capital of the United States and a global leader in the game." The event will feature a USD 144,000 prize fund to be awarded across a 12-game Chess960 (Fischer Random) match between the

two icons. The games will be played at rapid and blitz time controls and "with an innovative scoring system designed to captivate both players and fans." Days after this, there will be a Clutch Chess: Champions Showdown from October 27 to 29 at the same venue.

The lineup features World No.1 Carlsen, World No.2 Hikaru Nakamura, World No.3 Fabiano Caruana, and Gukesh in what will be the highest-rated chess tournament of the year.

AGENCIES
NEW YORK

After winning the Cincinnati Open on Monday, Iga Swiatek teamed up with Casper Ruud in the US Open Mixed Doubles Championship. The pair advanced to the semi-final as they defeated Americans Madison Keys and Frances Tiafoe 4-1, 4-2 without losing a set.

They will now face Jessica



Iga Swiatek and Casper Ruud are through to the US Open mixed doubles semi-finals (Getty)

Pegula and Jack Draper in Wednesday's semifinals, who cruised after registering a 4-1, 4-1 quarterfinal victory

against Mirra Andreeva and Daniil Medvedev in Ashe.

Earlier in the first round of the competition, Pegula and Draper defeated Emma Raducanu and Carlos Alcaraz 4-2, 4-6. After the match, Casper shared his thoughts on the victory. "I had to sacrifice [golf] for mixed doubles," said Ruud as quoted by the US Open website.

After the match, Iga Swi-

atek also expressed her feelings where she said, "It's good we're playing tennis, because I'm terrible at golf!"

England set to tour Sri Lanka before T20 World Cup 2026

AGENCIES
LONDON

England is set to visit Sri Lanka, the co-host of next year's T20 World Cup, for a white-ball tour, in the build-up to the marquee event.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) released a statement on Wednesday to announce that the Three Lions will contest in three ODIs and as many T20Is from January 22 to February 3, next year. In the last edition of the T20 World Cup, England endured a heartbreak in the semi-finals against India, who eventually went on to



lift the title.

"England Men will tour Sri Lanka for two white-ball series ahead of the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup in early 2026," the ECB said in a statement.

The tour will begin with three ODIs on January 22

and will conclude on January 27. The ODI action will be followed by the T20Is from January 30 and will run till February 3. As of now, the venues of the six white-ball fixtures have yet to be confirmed by Sri Lanka Cricket.

England will reap massive benefits from playing in the sub-continent, considering the T20 World Cup will be hosted in India and Sri Lanka. Under the refined leadership of Harry Brook, a rejuvenated England white-ball side will tussle for their third crown, having won it in 2009 and 2022.

The next year's tour of Sri Lanka will be England's first in over seven years. In their past exploits, England trounced the Lions to stand triumphant in the ODI leg in 2018. Riding high on the success in the 50-over format, England marched towards

victory in the lone T20I.

England and Sri Lanka's last encounter in the shortest format of cricket dates back to the former's T20 World Cup-winning campaign in 2022. England overwhelmed Sri Lanka with a convincing four-wicket win in the group stage.

Before entering the arena to grapple for victory against each other, Sri Lanka will embark on a journey to Zimbabwe for a white-ball series, beginning on September 6. On the other hand, England will host South Africa, with the series set to kick off on September 10 in Cardiff.

Women's DPL: Central Delhi Queens reach finals

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The Women's Delhi Premier League witnessed high drama at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, where Central Delhi Queens pulled off a nail-biting 1-wicket win against North Delhi Strikers on Wednesday.

Chasing 118 for victory, the Queens were pushed to the brink before holding their nerve in the very last over. The chase began on a shaky note, with the

Queens stumbling to 43/4, as the Strikers' bowlers struck at regular intervals.

Monika emerged as the key batter, keeping her side in the hunt with a gritty 36 off 39 balls. Her dismissal via a run-out, however, left the Queens under pressure, still requiring runs from the lower order, said the release.

The game went down to the wire in the final over with the Queens needing 14 runs with just two wickets in hand. They managed

12 off the first five deliveries before Parunika Sisodia was stumped on a wide ball from Nazma.

With two needed from two, tension gripped the ground. Priya Mishra, walking in last, lofted the ball straight to mid-on, only for the fielder to put down the chance as it went to the boundary to hand the Queens a dramatic victory with just one ball to spare.

For the Strikers, Nazma starred with the ball, taking 3 for 24 in 3.5 overs.

India thrash Nepal 7-0 in SAFF U17 Women's C'ship

AGENCIES
THIMPHU

A clinical India thrashed Nepal 7-0 in their opening match of the SAFF U17 Women's Championship, with three players scoring a brace each, here on Wednesday.

Nira Chanu Longjam (25th, 56th), Abhista Basnett (16th, 41st), and Anushka Kumari (37th, 62nd) scored twice, while captain Julian Nongmaithem (45+1) struck once to ensure a flawless start to India's campaign.

The Young Tigresses raced to a commanding 5-0 lead by half-time, leaving Nepal

no room for recovery in what was a one-sided affair from the outset.

Nepal didn't allow India to assert their dominance from the first whistle. But it was only a matter of time before the Young Tigresses' cohesive structure, the result of months of training since January, began becoming evident. The midfielders gradually began dictating tempo, finding incisive passes and carving through Nepal's defence with sharp distribution, while the forwards constantly found pockets of space to create havoc.

The backline, though test-



India storm Nepal 7-0 in SAFF U17 Women's Championship opener (AGENCIES)

ed early, remained compact and resilient. Goalkeeper Munni produced a solid display, securing a clean sheet and marshalling her defence with confidence.

Set-pieces proved to be a significant weapon for India. The breakthrough came in the 16th minute after a poor backpass resulted in a corner. Shveta Rani swung in a dangerous delivery from the left, and Nepal custodian Jharna Dumrakoti fumbled under pressure. Abhista was quickest to react, slotting home from close range.

India doubled their advantage in the 25th minute.

Anushka slipped a beautifully weighted pass behind the defence for Nira, who still had work to do. The striker powered home a low drive, beating the stretching Dumrakoti.

Anushka then turned scorer in the 37th minute, racing onto a through ball and showing great composure to beat the keeper and make it 3-0.

Four minutes later, Abhista made it a brace. A pass from Anushka intended for Nira was deflected by Anshu BK, but Abhista latched onto the loose ball and fired home a precise finish to extend the lead to 4-0.

On the stroke of half-time, India added their fifth. A goalmouth scramble following another corner saw Julian react swiftly and tuck the ball into the net, sparking wild celebrations from the bench. Even with the result virtually secured, India showed no signs of slowing in the second half. In the 56th minute, Nira found herself unmarked and unleashed a fierce shot to complete her brace and take the scoreline to 6-0.

The seventh came in the 62nd minute, this time a display of team interplay. Abhista teed up Nira at the edge of the box.

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Samson's chances in 'danger' after Gill inclusion: Ashwin

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Former India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin believes that right-hander batter Sanju Samson's chances in the playing XI are in "a bit of danger" after the inclusion of Shubman Gill in the team for the upcoming Asia Cup 2025 from next month.

Team India for the Asia Cup 2025 was unveiled on Tuesday, with skipper Suryakumar leading the squad and Shubman Gill as his deputy, with several major names missing out. The squad was announced during a press conference attended by T20I skipper Suryakumar and chief selector Ajit Agarkar, which was held after a selection meeting which also featured the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary Devajit Saikia.

Speaking on his YouTube channel, 'Ash ki Baat', Ashwin said, "What will make me even more sad is that there are high chances that you have announced him as the vice-captain, so Sanju Samson's place is in a bit of danger. The matter is sealed. Sanju is not going to play because Shubman Gill will play. If you want to play Gill, you have to play him at three, and Sanju will open the batting, but that too is



India's Ravichandran Ashwin and Shubman Gill celebrate the wicket. ANI

Uthappa on Iyer's exclusion

New Delhi: Former Indian cricketer Robin Uthappa expressed concern over Shreyas Iyer's omission from India's Asia Cup squad, saying that not having a player who played an integral role in India's ICC Champions Trophy in the team "seems strange". Iyer's omission from the

squad after a bumper Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 season with Punjab Kings (PBKS) as captain has been one of the biggest talking points after the announcement of the Asia Cup squad was made by skipper Suryakumar Yadav and chief selector Ajit Agarkar on Tuesday.

not going to happen."

Samson also delivered solid returns and found a new lease of life as an opener for the Indian side alongside Abhishek. Since the last T20 WC, in 31 T20s and 30 innings, he has scored 908 runs at an average of 33.62, with a strike rate of 157.09, with three centuries and three fifties. Jitesh Sharma

has been chosen as a backup wicketkeeper-batter for Sanju Samson, who found a new lease of life as a T20I opener for Team India with three centuries in quick succession. He last played T20Is for India in January last year, scoring 100 runs in nine matches across seven innings at an average of 14.28.