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14,264 labourers died from 2018 to 2022: Union Minister to Abhishek Banerjee

Deputy Commissioner Dilip Chauhan inaugurated Green Mentors Inc's Global Office at the Iconic Trump Building, Wall Street, New York



(Our Staff Reporter) New York – Green Mentors Inc., a global leader in sustainable education, proudly inaugurated its first U.S. office at the iconic Trump Building, 40 Wall Street, New York—an architectural landmark that once stood as the tallest building in the world. This significant event coincided with Basant Panchami, a day that celebrates knowledge and wisdom, reflecting the organization's commitment to education in the face of modern challenges.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by prominent dignitaries, including: Their participation underscored the vital collaboration between public service and nonprofit initiatives aimed at

addressing climate change and promoting environmental stewardship.

Dr. Virendra Rawat expressed the organization's mission, stating, "Our vision is to make America great again through the power of environmental responsibility and ecological consciousness. Every student must accept accountability for their future, and every school must nurture Nature Champions to lead the sustainability movement." With over 15 years of experience in green education across 45 countries, Green Mentors Inc. operates with special consultative status at ECOSOC, United Nations.

Deputy Commissioner Dilip Chauhan praised Green Mentors for its alignment

with New York City's sustainability goals. "New York City thrives on visionary leaders and businesses committed to shaping a greener future. Green Mentors' mission aligns perfectly with our city's efforts to tackle climate change and advance green technology," he stated, highlighting the city's investments in green infrastructure and clean energy.

The inaugural event also showcased Green Mentors Inc.'s key programs, including:

- ****Green Accreditation for Schools and Universities**** – Supporting institutions in integrating sustainability into their curricula.

- ****Green Teacher Training &**

- Curriculum Development**** – Empowering educators with climate-focused teaching strategies.

- ****Green Graduate Program**** – Certifying university graduates and facilitating their placement in green enterprises worldwide.

- ****Green Jobs & Workforce Development**** – Committed to connecting qualified graduates with millions of green jobs available across India, China, and the U.S.

With its new headquarters in New York, Green Mentors Inc. is poised to expand its mission across the United States, partnering with schools, universities, and businesses to drive impactful climate education and workforce development.

Defaming Punjab: Is it a scripted conspiracy?

Interacting with a batch of participants from Indian Institute of Democratic Leadership (IIDL) at Vice-President's enclave on Wednesday, the Vice-President, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar stressed on the significance of expression and dialogue, stating, "We take pride, we are mother of democracy. We are all this democracy, but are we justifying that claim? If I look around.... I'm a worried man. The political climate in the country is alarmingly worrisome. Political parties have no meaningful dialogue amongst themselves. They do not deliberate on issues of Nationalism, Security or Development. You will find a confrontational stance solidifying. Disturbance has been weaponized as a political strategy, and look at the kind of language used from all quarters—right, left and centre that not only belittles the Indian mind, but tarnishes the fair name of our civilization."

"I am concerned as Vice-President of the country that the expression and dialogue, these twins, fundamental to blossoming of any democratic value, are fast receding in background.

People are judgmental. They have a view. I am alone right, all others are wrong, without listening to the other point of view", he added.

It shows that in the present scenario how pained the soul of the worthy Vice-President is! We can't say why the Vice-President has reacted so, but the statement of BJP leader Parvesh Verma style

persons surely might have stained some effect on this version.

What Parvesh Verma Said?

In an update on January 22, Wednesday, The Tribune, an English Daily quoted that Verma had said in Delhi on Tuesday, "Thousands of vehicles with Punjab

registration plates are roaming around here (Delhi). Who are in those vehicles? Preparations for celebrating January 26 (Republic Day) are going on here (in Delhi). What something big are they going to do here that could put our security system at risk." This reportedly quoted version of Parvesh Verma has boiled the political atmosphere and the political leaders have slammed Verma with red mouth.

In a release of Aam Adami Party, on

January 21, responding to the statement of Verma, Punjab Chief Minister, Bhagwant Mann, quoted stating on his X account, "Delhi is the capital of India, and people from every state live here. Vehicles from every state move freely across the country, and there is no restriction on their movement. BJP's statement questioning the presence of Punjab-registered vehicles in Delhi is not only appalling but also deeply insulting to Punjabis. They are insinuating that Punjabis are a threat to national security simply because of their state of origin. This is unacceptable and an insult to the patriotism of every Punjabi." CM Mann further questioned the BJP's priorities saying, "Home Minister Amit Shah cannot secure the country's borders nor prevent illegal infiltrations of thousands of Bangladeshis and Rohingyas. Yet, he and his party leaders label Punjabis traveling to Delhi as a security threat.



Rajasthan decides to rename Vice-Chancellors from 'Kulpati' to 'Kulguru'

The Bhajan Lal Sharma-led BJP government in Rajasthan has decided to change the Hindi designation of university Vice-Chancellors from 'Kulpati' to 'Kulguru'.

The Rajasthan government has approved a bill in the state assembly to change the Hindi designation of university Vice-Chancellors from 'Kulpati' to 'Kulguru'. The English title will remain 'Vice Chancellor'.

This decision was one of several key initiatives approved by the Bhajan Lal Sharma-led state cabinet on Tuesday. The government will bring the Rajasthan Universities Laws (Amendment) Bill to implement these changes.

Other decisions by the cabinet include introducing a new textile and apparel policy, a data centre policy, and a logistics policy aimed at promoting industrial and economic development in the state. The government also approved a new youth policy to achieve the goal of a developed Rajasthan by empowering and enabling the youth, officials said. It also decided to introduce the Rajasthan Land Revenue



(Amendment Validation) Bill to accelerate the development of RIICO industrial areas and amend personnel welfare and service rules.

According to Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel, who briefed the cabinet on the decisions, the state government aims to establish a global

manufacturing hub in the textiles and apparel sector, with the Rajasthan Textile and Apparel Policy-2025 moving in this direction.

The Rajasthan Data Centre Policy-2025 will encourage the establishment of data centres in the private sector in Rajasthan, aiming to develop a world-class data centre ecosystem in the state and make Rajasthan a major destination in the data centre sector, the minister added.

The minister further stated that the Rajasthan Logistics Policy-2025 was approved by the cabinet to promote industrial development in the state and reduce logistics costs by enhancing connectivity.

A proposal to amend the Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha Secretariat (Recruitment and Conditions of Service) Rules-1992 and add a new entry to create the position of chief editor in the Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha Secretariat was also approved by the BJP government.

AAP MLA charged for misbehaving with woman, 'blowing kisses' during campaign



Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) legislator Dinesh Mohaniya on Tuesday was charged for allegedly misbehaving with a woman, making inappropriate gestures and blowing flying kisses at her while campaigning for Delhi Assembly elections, police said. The police have registered a case against the AAP MLA from Sangam Vihar on charges of molestation and sexual harassment.

The woman claimed in her complaint that Mohaniya blew flying kisses at her while campaigning. She further provided a video of the incident to support her claims. This incident comes

amid Delhi going to elections today. The three-time MLA from Sangam Vihar has been fielded from his constituency yet again.

Mohaniya is no stranger to controversies. Last year, he was booked for allegedly hurling abuse at a roadside fruit seller in his constituency. In his defence, Mohaniya said that he had only asked the fruit seller to move away as he had set up his shop in front of a clogged sewer, obstructing the work of civic workers. Mohaniya further claimed that more such complaints may surface ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections.



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Rs 5 lakh cash recovered from employee working at Delhi Chief Minister's office

Cash worth Rs 5 lakh has been recovered from an employee working at Delhi Chief Minister Atishi's office, police said on Tuesday. However, AAP denied the charge, calling it a conspiracy to defame the party ahead of Assembly elections in the national capital on Wednesday.

A video from the incident showed a bag full of cash inside a car and the employee, identified as Gaurav, standing outside it. He said he worked for Atishi, in the MTS (Multi-tasking Department) in the Delhi government. Gaurav, a resident of Faridabad, said the cash was "personal" and that it was related to a house sale. "I have sold my house and bought another. This cash payment is related to that. I can give you all the proof regarding it," Gaurav told India Today TV. According to Delhi Police sources, an investigation of Gaurav's mobile phone revealed that he was in contact with Atishi's Personal Assistant, Pankaj. They discussed details of different wards in Delhi and how much money was to be given to whom



and where, using code words, police claimed.

We received a call that some people had been caught with Rs 5 lakh. Our team reached the spot, and the Flying Squad Team (FST) handed over two men, namely Gaurav and Ajit. As per preliminary information, both are associated with the Delhi Chief Minister's office. We are investigating the source of the money, where it came from, and where they were taking it," Delhi Police CDP Ravi



Kumar Singh said.

The police further added, "One of the men works as an assistant to the Chief Minister's PA, while the other is a driver".

Both Gaurav and the car driver have been taken into police custody.

AAP strongly rejected the charges, calling them a plot by the BJP on the eve of the election. "This is completely planted. The person seen in the video has clearly said that this is his own money," the party said.

The party alleged that it was the BJP that distributed money to voters in Delhi while the police turned a blind eye. It also added that another car with cash and a Punjab Sarkar board found in Delhi was also a ploy by the BJP.

"Where money is actually being distributed, Delhi Police is unable to see anything. BJP members are openly distributing money in slums, but Delhi Police has turned a blind eye. A few days ago, BJP members parked a car with a fake Punjab number plate. Delhi Police then claimed that cash was seized from it, while in reality, it was a conspiracy to defame the AAP, the party said.

Delhi is set to vote on Wednesday in the crucial assembly elections, where AAP, BJP, and Congress are engaged in a three-way fight. While the BJP is eyeing a bid to retain power, the AAP is hopeful of holding onto its stronghold. Congress is also confident of emerging as a surprise winner. The counting of votes is scheduled for February 8.

Mumbai court denies anticipatory bail to woman in online investment fraud case

Zakir Khan and his wife, Ayesha Zakir Khan, are accused of defrauding several investors through a scheme that promised high returns via a platform called 'Right Capital App'.

A Mumbai court has rejected the anticipatory bail application of a woman accused in a Rs 1.96 crore investment fraud case, citing the possibility of her tampering with evidence, with her husband also being an accused in the case.

The case involves allegations that Zakir Khan, the husband of Ayesha Zakir Khan, defrauded several investors through a scheme promising high returns via a platform called 'Right Capital App'.

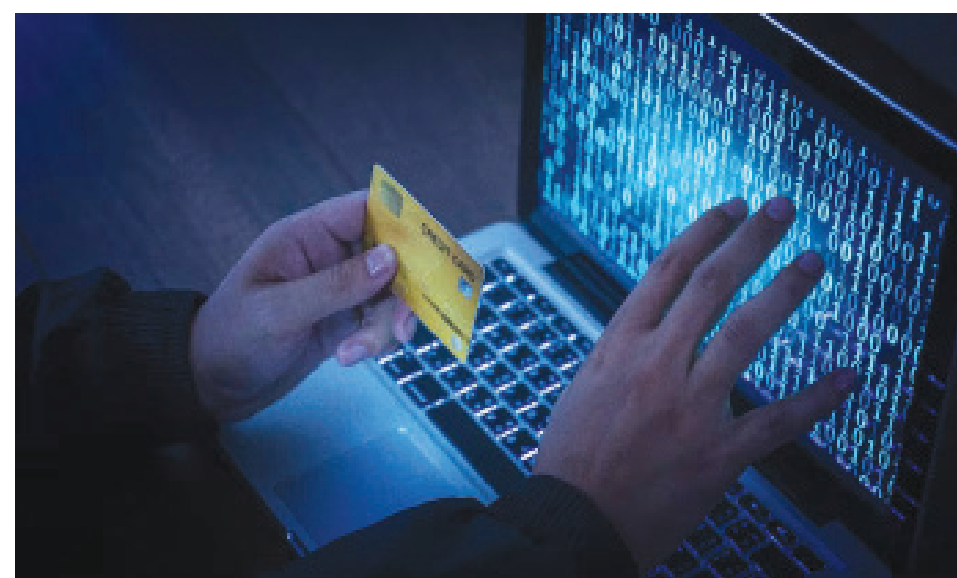
According to the complaint, the accused duo lured investors between October 2023 and November 2024, assuring them of lucrative returns. The complainant himself invested Rs 13.6 lakh, while 32 others collectively invested over Rs 1.96 crore. Initially, investors were able to view their funds and accumulated profits on the app. However, after November 2024, all data on the platform disappeared. When they reached out to Zakir Khan, he assured

them that the company had suffered losses but promised their funds would be restored.

As time passed, neither the money nor the app data was recovered, and the accused stopped responding to calls, raising suspicions of fraud. Subsequently, a case was registered against the couple.

Opposing Ayesha Khan's bail plea, Additional Public Prosecutor PB Bankar argued that substantial evidence linked her to the scam. Financial records showed that Rs 60,000 had been transferred to her bank account by the complainant, while an additional Rs 10 lakh was allegedly handed over to her in cash. Furthermore, bank transactions with other investors reinforced her involvement in the scheme.

It was also alleged that Ayesha Khan was untraceable at her registered address and had failed to cooperate with the police investigation. The court observed that recovering the misappropriated



funds and retrieving deleted digital data required custodial interrogation.

Considering the scale of the fraud and the risk of evidence tampering, the court deemed anticipatory bail inappropriate and dismissed her plea, which was filed through advocates Abid Sayyad and Asif Shaikh. "Considering the huge amount

embezzled, there is every possibility of the applicant absconding and tampering with evidence," the judge said.

The court ruled that the allegations were serious and warranted a detailed investigation. It directed the police to continue the investigation and ensure the accused's cooperation in the case.

Mujibur Rahman's Dhaka House Vandalised, Set On Fire By Mob In Bangladesh

Witnesses said several thousand people rallied in front of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's house in Dhaka, which was earlier turned into a memorial museum.



A large group of protesters on Wednesday vandalised and set on fire Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence in Dhaka during a live online address of his daughter and deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina. Witnesses said several thousand people rallied in front of the house at the capital's Dhanmondi area, which was earlier turned into a memorial museum, since early evening following a social media call for "Bulldozer Procession" as Hasina was supposed to make her address at 9 pm (BST).

Hasina delivered her address organised by the Awami League's now-disbanded student wing Chhatra League and called upon the countrymen to organise a resistance against the current regime. "They are yet to have the strength to

destroy the national flag, the constitution and the independence that we earned at the cost of lives of millions of martyrs with a bulldozer," Hasina said in an apparent reference to Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus's incumbent regime, installed by the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement.

She added: "They can demolish a building, but not the history ... but they must also remember that the history takes its revenge." The student movement earlier promised to scrap Bangladesh's 1972 Constitution as they promised to bury the "Mujibist constitution" while some far-right groups also suggested change of the national anthem adopted by Sheikh Mujib-led post-independence government.

The house became an iconic symbol in

Bangladesh history as Sheikh Mujib largely led the pre-independence autonomy movement for decades from the house while during the successive Awami League rule when it was turned into a museum, foreign heads of state or dignitaries used to visit in line with state protocol. The 32 Dhanmondi residence was set on fire earlier on August 5 last year when Hasina's nearly 16-year Awami League regime was toppled and she secretly left the country along with her younger sister Sheikh Rehana for India on a Bangladesh Air Force flight. Hasina said she and her only surviving sibling had donated their ancestral house to a trust as a public property, turning the building into Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, as Sheikh Mujib was fondly called

"Bangabandhu" or "Friend of Bengal" since the late 1960s when his movement for autonomy from Pakistan turned into a mass upheaval in 1969.

He was killed along with most of his family members in a coup staged by a group of junior or mid-ranking military officers on August 15, 1975 when Hasina and Rehana were in Germany.

The deposed premier in a slight emotion-choked voice said that the Pakistani troops also looted the house during the 1971 Liberation War but did not demolish or set it on fire.

"Today, this house is being demolished. What crime it had committed? Why they were so afraid of the house... I seek justice from the people of the country. Didn't I do anything for you?" she said.

Witnesses said a group of army troops emerged at the scene to persuade the protesters but they were greeted with boos. The protesters first damaged a mural of the assassinated leader on the building's boundary wall and wrote "There won't be 32 anymore".

A key-organiser of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, Abdul Hannan Masud, meanwhile, called for the demolition of all residences belonging to former Awami League MPs and ministers in a Facebook post proposing new buildings be constructed on those sites. Earlier in the day, convenor of the platform Hasnat Abdullah warned Bangladesh media outlets against broadcasting Hasina's speech, saying it would be seen as facilitating her agenda. In her speech, Hasina, however, said the ordinary students were used by Yunus for an orchestrated movement to grab the state power and urged them to go back to their studies to build their future to serve the country.

Taliban minister 'forced to flee Afghanistan' after speech in support of girls' education

A senior Taliban minister who expressed support for reversing the ban on girls' education in Afghanistan appears to have been forced to flee the country.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony in Khost province, near the Afghan-Pakistani border, on 20 January, Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, the Taliban's deputy foreign minister, criticised the government's ban on girls attending secondary schools and higher education. "There is no excuse for this – not now and not in the future," Stanikzai said. "We are being unjust to 20 million people.

"During the time of the prophet Muhammad, the doors of knowledge were open for both men and women," he said. "There were such remarkable women that if I



were to elaborate on their contributions, it would take a considerable amount of time." After this speech, and reports of Stanikzai criticising him, the Taliban's supreme

leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, allegedly ordered the minister's arrest and issued a travel ban, which pushed Stanikzai to leave Afghanistan for the United Arab Emirates. Stanikzai confirmed to local media he had left for Dubai but claimed it was for health reasons. The Taliban were contacted for comment but did not respond. Since the Taliban's takeover in 2021, the rights of women and girls to education, work, travel and appearing in public have been severely curtailed. Last month, the international criminal court's chief prosecutor requested arrest warrants for the Taliban's supreme leader and Afghanistan's chief justice on the grounds that their persecution of women and girls in Afghanistan is a crime against humanity.

'All-weather friendship' with Pakistan is increasingly becoming a liability for China

As the Spring Festival concludes, China welcomes its first foreign leader in the Year of the Snake—Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari. His visit, immediately following the Lunar New Year holidays, carries deep symbolic resonance. Traditionally, the Spring Festival is a time for family reunions and close bonds in China—a metaphor that underscores the close, familial ties Islamabad seeks to cultivate with Beijing. A Shanghai-based commentator, Chen Yingqiang, linked Zardari's trip to the fallout from US President Donald Trump's decision to freeze foreign aid. He highlighted Pakistan's efforts to salvage the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its preference for China to mediate between Pakistan and the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan. Yet, despite its seemingly momentous nature, this visit has received scant coverage in China's mainstream media and little discussion on platforms like Weibo, suggesting waning public interest in Pakistan and, by extension, in China-Pakistan relations. Meanwhile, a spate of



terrorist attacks targeting Chinese nationals involved in Chinese-funded projects, particularly along the CPEC, has only deepened Chinese scepticism regarding Pakistan's reliability as a key partner. A few years ago, Lin Minwang, a researcher at Fudan University's Institute of International Studies, argued that China-Pakistan relations were strategically consistent and relatively

obstacle-free. He noted that Pakistan had consistently supported China at pivotal historical junctures—transcending traditional alliances in favour of strategic calculus. Today, however, that assessment appears increasingly divorced from the prevailing narrative. At present, Pakistan is far more vocal about the "ironclad" nature of its alliance with China than China itself. Pakistani officials have prominently underlined the

sustainability and strategic importance of the CPEC. On Monday, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reiterated that "CPEC is a vital cornerstone of Pakistan's economic development and regional connectivity." These assertions serve not only as internal affirmations but also as reminders to China of Pakistan's strategic importance, particularly in the contest with India. But does this rhetoric mark the end of the era of an "all-weather friendship"? Chinese discourse might offer some clues.

Safety concerns for Chinese nationals While China's state media may underreport these issues, online discussions reveal mounting concerns over the safety and discrimination faced by Chinese nationals in Pakistan. Numerous videos circulating on Chinese social media show hotels in Pakistan refusing accommodation to Chinese individuals and highlighting racist remarks directed at them. However, the more critical issue remains the safety of Chinese workers engaged in CPEC projects.

US Woman, 33, Ghosted By Teen Boyfriend In Pakistan Camps Outside His House

A US woman travelled to Pakistan to marry her teenage boyfriend whom she met online, but her wedding plans took a bizarre turn when the boy's family rejected the relationship.

Onijah Andrew Robinson, 33, who has two children, flew from New York to Karachi to meet 19-year-old Nidal Ahmed Memon. Mr Memon's family did not approve of the marriage, leaving Ms Robinson stranded in Pakistan with an expired visa, The New York Post reported. Refusing to leave, Ms Robinson camped outside Mr Memon's Karachi house, which she found locked and abandoned.



The story came to light when Pakistani activist and YouTuber Zaffar Abbas highlighted Ms Robinson's plight on social media, prompting Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori to extend his support, help with her expired visa, and arrange a ticket back to the US. Despite this assistance, Ms Robinson refused to leave and began making a series of increasingly bizarre demands. She held press conferences, offering updates on her situation and commentary on Pakistan.

She also demanded \$3,000 per week from Mr Memon and demanded Pakistani citizenship, according to a Times of India report. In another interview, she claimed to

be married to Mr Memon and stated that they were planning to move to Dubai soon and start a family.

Her demands escalated, with Ms Robinson requesting \$100,000, including \$20,000 in cash, from the Pakistani government that week. When questioned about the purpose of the money, she said, "It's against my religion to tell y'all my business." Her rapidly changing statements raised

concerns. Ms Robinson's son, Jeremiah Andrew Robinson, claimed his mother had bipolar disorder and was mentally ill. He also said that his sibling also tried to convince her to return to the US but their efforts went in vain. Following her son's claims, Ms Robinson was admitted to the psychiatry department at Karachi's Jinnah Post Graduate Hospital for a mental health evaluation. She is finally returning to the US after spending months in Pakistan, according to The Independent.

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f t y i

Bhutan King wears saffron kurta, takes holy dip at Maha Kumbh

Joined by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck performed rituals, including offering 'arghya' to the Sun, before taking the holy dip.

(News Agency)- Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck visited the Maha Kumbh on Tuesday and took a dip at the Triveni Sangam.

Accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the king performed rituals like offering 'arghya' to the Sun before taking the dip. Wangchuk, who was wearing the traditional dress of Bhutan when he landed at the airport, changed into a long saffron-coloured kurta and pyjama when he entered the waters.

Wangchuk and Adityanath were accompanied by Uttar Pradesh cabinet ministers Swatantra Dev Singh and Nand Gopal Gupta during the dip along with Vishnuswami sect leader Jagadguru Santosh Das Maharaj, also known as Satua Baba. Adityanath also guided him through the ceremonial bath and religious rituals at Triveni Sangam, according to an official statement.



Following the dip, the Bhutan King visited the revered Akshayvat, a symbol of eternity in Hindu tradition, and Bade Hanuman Temple to offer prayers. Both leaders also explored the Digital Maha Kumbh Experience Centre. The King, who arrived from Thimphu to Lucknow

on Monday, was warmly received by CM Adityanath before proceeding to Prayagraj for the pilgrimage.

The Bhutanese King arrived in Lucknow on Monday and was welcomed with cultural performances by artistes. Later, he reached the Raj Bhavan and was

hosted by Governor Anandiben Patel. He paid floral tributes to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi.

The governor and the chief minister held detailed discussions on India-Bhutan relations with the King. The government said the King's visit will prove to be an important step towards further strengthening India-Bhutan friendship and cultural relations, the statement said.

The King and Queen of Bhutan visited Delhi in December 2024 and, in March 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first leader to be honoured by Bhutan with its highest civilian honour, the 'Order of Druk Gyalpo'. More than 54 lakh devotees took a dip at the Maha Kumbh by 12 noon on Tuesday. Overall, more than 37.50 crore devotees have taken the holy dip since the mega fair's commencement on January 13, according to the state government.

"Couldn't Stop Ourselves": Pak Hindus Visit Maha Kumbh, Take Dip In Sangam



(News Agency)- Drawn by the spiritual grandeur of the Maha Kumbh, a group of 68 Hindu devotees from Pakistan's Sindh province arrived in Prayagraj on Thursday and took a holy dip at the Sangam, praying for the peace of their ancestors' souls.

According to the UP Information Department, the devotees performed rituals at the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati, offering prayers for their

forefathers.

Mahant Ramnath, who accompanied the group, said they had first visited Haridwar, where they immersed the ashes of nearly 480 ancestors and performed rituals before coming to the Maha Kumbh.

Speaking at the Shri Guru Karshni camp in Sector 9, Sindh resident Gobind Ram Makheja told PTI, "Ever since we heard about the Maha Kumbh in the last two or three months, we had a deep longing

to visit. We simply couldn't stop ourselves from coming."

He added, "Last April, 250 people from Pakistan visited Prayagraj and took a dip in the Ganga. This time, 68 people from six districts of Sindh -- Ghotki, Sukkur, Khairpur, Shikarpur, Karkot, and Jatabal -- "have come, including nearly 50 first-time visitors." Describing his experience, Makheja said, "It is a joyous, overwhelming feeling. I have no words to express it. Tomorrow, we will take

another holy dip. Being here makes us proud of our Sanatan Dharma heritage." Surbhi, an 11th-grade student from Ghotki, said it was her first time in India and at the Maha Kumbh.

"For the first time, I am getting to deeply understand and witness my religion. It feels wonderful," she shared.

Priyanka, a homemaker from Sindh, echoed similar sentiments. She said, "This is my first time in India and at the Maha Kumbh. Seeing our culture here is a divine experience. We were born and raised among Muslims in Sindh. Contrary to media portrayals, there isn't much discrimination against Hindus there. But witnessing our heritage in India is an unparalleled experience." On the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Niranjana Chawla from Sukkur said, "In Sindh, the situation isn't such that people would apply for Indian citizenship. However, in certain areas like Rajasthan (on Pakistan's side), Hindus do face some difficulties." Chawla, who works in the construction sector, urged the Indian government to simplify the visa process.

Hundreds of women raped and burned to death after Goma prison set on fire

(News Agency)-Hundreds of women were raped and burned alive during the chaos after a Rwandan-backed rebel group entered the Congolese city of Goma last week.

The female inmates were attacked in their wing inside Goma's Munzenze prison during a mass jailbreak, according to a senior UN official.

The deputy head of the UN peacekeeping force based in Goma, Vivian van de Perre, said that while several thousand men managed to escape from the prison, the area reserved for women was set on fire.

Images taken shortly after Rwandan-backed M23 rebels reached the centre of Goma reveal vast plumes of black smoke rising from the prison on the morning of 27 January. Although details of the incident are scarce, the atrocity appears to be the worst of the recent M23-led conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. UN peacekeepers, however, have been unable to visit the prison to investigate further because of restrictions imposed by the M23 rebels, meaning the identity of the perpetrators remains unclear.

On Tuesday, it emerged that about 2,000 bodies were still awaiting burial in Goma after M23 fighters seized Goma, capital of the DRC's North Kivu province, on 27 January.

Van de Perre, who is now based in Goma with thousands of UN peacekeeping troops deployed to protect citizens, said: "There was a major prison breakout of 4,000 escaped prisoners. A few hundred



women were also in that prison.

"They were all raped and then they set fire to the women's wing. They all died afterwards."

This week the UN office of the high commissioner for human rights (OHCHR) warned that sexual violence was being used as a weapon of war by rival armed groups in Goma.

The city, home to more than one million people, is under the total control of M23 forces. But in an unforeseen development late on Monday, the militia announced a unilateral "ceasefire".

Until then, fears had been mounting that Rwanda was determined to take more territory from its vast neighbour, with M23 forces steadily heading south towards Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province 120 miles (190km) from Goma.

A statement from a political-military coalition called the Alliance Fleuve

Congo (Congo River Alliance) – of which M23 is a member – announced it had "no intention of taking control of Bukavu or other localities". Responding to news of the unexpected ceasefire, Van de Perre said: "I hope it stays that way because they [M23] were already moving in the direction of Bukavu with reinforcements and heavy weaponry, which can be seen passing [along] the streets in Goma.

"If they retreat, that's good news. Otherwise, we'll have a new clash with potentially thousands of additional deaths."

She said M23 may have had a sudden rethink after reinforcements from Burundi arrived in Bukavu and a nearby airport was used by the Congolese air force.

"The Burundians have sent 2,000 extra troops to Bukavu, and they are very good fighters. I think M23 is currently

rethinking their next steps."

Despite evidence to the contrary, Rwanda denies it is backing the M23 or that its forces have crossed into eastern Congo.

However, Van de Perre, part of the UN peacekeeping force known as Monusco, said her colleagues had spotted Rwandan soldiers during patrols.

Van de Perre urged the UN security council to increase the pressure on Rwanda. "We really need to get back to the negotiating table. And that is only possible if the members of the security council and other important countries exert enough pressure on Rwanda and Congo," she said.

Previously, another senior UN official had speculated that the DRC's neighbour wanted to annex a chunk of DRC larger than Rwanda itself. "This is a long-term policy to get the broader Kivu area into the sphere of Rwandan influence and, later, under complete administrative control," they said.

Speaking before the ceasefire was announced late on Monday, Van de Perre said she was anxious about reports that groups were preparing for a counter-attack. "We already have reports that in certain places people are gathering and organising," she said.

Van de Perre said she was in "constant dialogue" with M23 officers in charge of Goma and that humanitarian conditions in the city were dire. Crossing the city was difficult, she said. "They [the M23] allow us to bring food and water to our bases, but apart from that we can barely move around."

How A Three-Way Trade War With China, Mexico And Canada Could Weaken The US

(News Agency)-The United States and China have officially kicked off a trade dispute that could either be a short-lived skirmish or a prolonged and painful trade war. The conflict began when the US imposed a 10% tariff on all Chinese goods, prompting China to retaliate with tariffs ranging from 10% to 15% on certain US products, including coal, liquefied natural gas, crude oil, agricultural machinery, and large-displacement cars.

China's countermeasures, set to take effect on Monday, also include adding two American companies, Illumina and PVH Group, owner of Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger, to its unreliable entities list. This move severely limits the companies' ability to operate in China, citing violations of normal market trading

principles.

The situation remains uncertain, with some experts speculating that the two



nations may agree to postpone further action to engage in dialogue. Clark Packard, a research fellow at the Cato Institute's Herbert A. Stiefel Center for

Trade Policy Studies, warned that if a deal isn't reached, the conflict could escalate rapidly, per CNN. "If a similar

deal isn't reached, then I think it has the potential to be fairly intense," Packard said.

The tariffs imposed by the US could lead to higher prices for American consumers, affecting a wide range of goods, including consumer electronics, toys, and apparel. Additionally, the

increased costs of importing raw materials, such as rubber, plastic, and chemicals, could negatively impact American businesses.

The conflict may also have far-reaching consequences, including job losses in both China and the US. Morgan Stanley economists predict that the US will impose additional tariffs on China later this year, which could lead to further retaliation from China.

A potentially more devastating scenario is a three-way trade war involving the US, China, and other nations, such as Mexico and Canada. Citibank economists warn that this could lead to significant economic contraction in the US, with the economy predicted to shrink by 0.8% this year and -1.1% next year. China's economy would be impacted less this year and next as compared to the US, despite heavy tariffs, on the other hand, the economies of Mexico and Canada will be hit majorly as compared to the United States.

El Salvador Offers To Jail Deportees From US Of Any Nationality, But At A Cost

(News Agency)-El Salvador has offered to incarcerate American convicts and illegal migrants of any nationality deported from the United States at Latin America's largest maximum security prison. But, Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele's proposal comes with a price tag and legal challenges --ones that US President Donald Trump's administration is considering to tackle.

After meeting US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday, Bukele offered to lock up convicts "of any nationality", sent by the United States, at the facility known as CECOT, where prisoners live crammed in windowless cells, sleeping on metal beds with no mattress, forbidden from having visitors and kept under watch 24 hours a day.

Iron-fisted Bukele, who enjoys sky-high approval ratings for his sweeping crackdown on violent gangs, said that El Salvador wanted to give the United States a chance to "outsource part of its prison system."

Trump Considering El Salvador's Proposal

Trump on Tuesday backed El Salvador's offer despite clear legal problems with such an outsourcing under American law. "If we had the legal right to do it, I would do it in a heartbeat," he told reporters in the



Oval Office.

"It's no different than our prison system, except it would be a lot less expensive, and it would be a great deterrent," Trump added.

He said he would negotiate payment, which would decrease costs for the United States but help fund El Salvador's own mass incarceration.

Trump said that shipping criminals to El Salvador would be "a very small fee compared to what we pay to private prisons."

"Frankly, they could keep them, because these people are never going

to be any good," Trump said.

Trump's top envoy Rubio, who met Bukele on Monday, also said the Trump administration would review the proposal but acknowledged legal issues. "We'll have to study it on our end. There are obviously legalities involved," Rubio told reporters a day afterwards in Costa Rica, where he headed after El Salvador.

"We have a constitution, we have all sorts of things, but it's a very generous offer," Rubio said. He welcomed the offer saying, "No one's ever made an offer like that."

El Salvador's Offer

Elaborating on Bukele's offer, Rubio said apart from Salvadoran deportees who illegally entered the US, El Salvador will also "accept for deportation any illegal alien in the United States who is a criminal from any nationality, be they MS-13 or Tren de Aragua and house them in his jails"-- referring to two notorious transnational gangs with members from El Salvador and Venezuela.

In addition, Bukele "has offered to house in his jails dangerous American criminals in custody in our country, including those of US citizenship and legal residents," Rubio said.

Legal Challenges

The US Constitution forbids "cruel and unusual punishment" and promises due process. There is little precedent in modern times for a democratic country to send its own citizens to foreign prisons. Moreover, US citizens who were born in America enjoy legal protection from deportation.

However, there are some cases where naturalised citizens - those who were not born in the US and who obtained US citizenship after birth through a legal process - can have their citizenship revoked. This generally happens in the case where the person in question used fraud to obtain citizenship in the first place.

Trump Administration To Fire Over 9,700 USAID Staff Amid Row: Report

(News Agency)-President Donald Trump's administration plans to keep fewer than 300 staff at the U.S. Agency for International Development out of the agency's worldwide total of more than 10,000, four sources told Reuters on Thursday.

Washington's primary humanitarian aid agency has been a target of a government reorganization program spearheaded by businessman Elon Musk, a close Trump ally, since the Republican president took office on January 20.

The four sources familiar with the plan said only 294 staff at the agency would be allowed to keep their jobs, including only 12 in the Africa bureau and eight in the Asia bureau.

"That's outrageous," said J. Brian Atwood, who served as head of USAID for more than six years, adding the mass termination of personnel would effectively kill an agency that has helped keep tens of millions of people around the world from dying.

"A lot of people will not survive," said Atwood, now a senior fellow at Brown University's Watson Institute.

The U.S. Department of State did not respond to a request for comment.

With Trump and Musk, the world's wealthiest man, leveling false accusations that its staff were criminals, dozens of USAID staff have been put on leave, hundreds of internal contractors have been laid off and



life-saving programs around the globe have been left in limbo.

The administration announced on Tuesday it was going to put on leave all directly hired USAID employees globally, and recall thousands of personnel working overseas.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio had said the administration was identifying and designating programs that would be exempted from the sweeping stop-work orders, which have threatened efforts around the globe to stop the spread of disease, prevent famine and otherwise alleviate poverty.

Implementing partners of USAID are facing financial trouble on the back of stop-work orders from the State Department.

MERGING USAID WITH STATE

The overhaul will upend the lives of thousands of staff and their families.

The administration's goal is to merge USAID with the State Department led by Rubio, who Trump has made acting USAID administrator. However, it is not clear that he can merge the agencies unless Congress votes to do so, since USAID was created and is funded by laws that remain in place.

USAID employed more than 10,000 people around the world, two-thirds of them outside the United States, according to the Congressional Research Service (CRS). It managed more than \$40 billion in fiscal 2023, the most recent year for which there is complete data.

Sources familiar with events at the agency on Thursday said some workers had begun receiving termination notices.

The USAID website said that as of midnight on Friday, February 7, "all USAID direct hire personnel will be placed on administrative leave globally, with the exception of designated personnel responsible for mission-critical functions, core leadership and specially designated programs." It said essential personnel expected to continue working would be informed by Thursday at 3 p.m. EST.

Thousands Flee Santorini As Dozens Of Earthquakes Rattle Greece's "Instagram Island"

Greece PM Mitsotakis has urged residents to remain calm as authorities deal with "a very intense geological phenomenon".

(News Agency)-Thousands of residents have fled the island of Santorini after a swarm of earthquakes shook the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea on Tuesday morning. According to the BBC, over 300 earthquakes have been recorded in the past two days near the island, and Greece's Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization (OASP) has estimated that the intense seismic activity may continue for many more days if not weeks. Around 9,000 residents have already left the island. Authorities have closed the schools and warned against large indoor gatherings. Greece Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has, however, urged calm.

Santorini, dubbed Greece's "Instagram Island," attracts millions of visitors yearly but is only home to around 2,000 permanent residents. In recent days, many of the locals have



fled the island for the safety of the mainland, and for those who've decided to stay in Santorini, Greek officials have warned them to stay alert in the coming days due to the increasing seismic activity.

Over the past three days, hundreds of tremors with a

magnitude of 3.0 or more have been recorded in the Aegean Sea, between Santorini and the nearby islands of Amorgos and Ios, as per the BBC. No major damage has been reported on the island so far, but emergency measures are being taken as a precaution. Schools on the island

will remain closed until Friday and residents have been urged to avoid large indoor gatherings. "Everything is closed. No one works now. The whole island has emptied," an 18-year-old local resident told Reuters news agency before boarding a vessel. On Monday, Greece PM

Mitsotakis urged residents to remain calm as authorities deal with "a very intense geological phenomenon". Separately, Santorini's Mayor, Nikos Zorzos, said the island was prepared for seismic activity that "may last many weeks". The island must approach it "with patience and calm", he said, per the outlet. He added that plans were in place to build shelters and provide food for the population should larger tremors emerge. Authorities have said that the recent quakes were related to tectonic plate movements instead of volcanic activity. Seismologists consider the recent tremors to be minor. However, preventive measures have been put in place in case a larger earthquake occurs.

Notably, Santorini is no stranger to tremors. Its most recent large quake - with a 7.5 magnitude - struck in 1956, killing at least 53 people and injuring more than 100 others.

Putin Says Talks With Ukraine Possible, But Not With Zelensky

US President Donald Trump has put pressure on both sides to end the nearly three-year conflict, saying last week that Zelensky wanted to negotiate a "deal" to stop the fighting.

(News Agency) - Tech millionaire Bryan Johnson, known for his anti-ageing research, walked out of a podcast recording with Zerodha co-founder Nikhil Kamath midway, citing poor air quality. He said the pollution caused his "skin to break out in a rash" and left his "eyes and throat burning."

On his recent India visit, the 47-year-old recorded an episode for Mr Kamath's podcast "WTF" at a five-star hotel with an air purifier. Despite wearing an N95 mask, he left midway, unable to tolerate the room's air quality, which had an AQI of around 120. At one point during the discussion, Mr Johnson remarked, "I can't see you over there," when asked about India's air quality.

Confirming the incident on X, Mr Johnson said, "When in India, I did end this podcast early due to the bad air quality."

Praising Mr Kamath as a "gracious host," he explained the room was circulating outside air, rendering his air purifier ineffective.

By the time he left, Mr Johnson noted the indoor AQI had climbed to 130, with PM2.5 levels at 75 micrograms per cubic metre - equivalent to smoking 3.4 cigarettes over 24 hours. He added that after just three days in India, the pollution triggered a rash, along with persistent eye and throat irritation.

Mr Johnson criticised how deeply normalised air pollution has become in India. "People would be outside running. Babies

and small children exposed from birth. No one wore a mask, which can significantly decrease exposure. It was so confusing," he wrote.

He questioned why India's leadership had not declared air pollution a "national emergency" and cited studies on air pollution's health effects. "The evidence shows that India would improve the health of its population more by cleaning up air quality than by curing all cancers," he said.

Over To America Drawing a comparison, he said that while pollution was India's silent crisis, obesity was America's. "When I returned to the US, my eyes were fresh to see what is normalised to me. I saw obesity everywhere. 42.4 per cent of Americans are



obese, and because I was around it all the time, I had been mostly oblivious to it," he said. Last month, Bryan Johnson shared tips on tackling air pollution in India. In a post on X, he claimed that solving air pollution in India would save more lives than curing cancer. His associate, in a video, demonstrated measures they

took in Mumbai, including using portable air quality monitors, keeping car windows shut, wearing N96 masks, and carrying portable air purifiers. On Monday, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) revoked Stage 3 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) as Delhi's AQI dropped below 300.

"There Won't Be Anything Left": Trump's Warning If Iran Assassinate Him

Trump made the comment as he signed a memorandum reimposing the tough policy of sanctions against Iran, similar to during his first term.

(News Agency)-US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said he was planning to reinstate what he called the "maximum pressure" policy against Iran over allegations that it is trying to develop nuclear weapons. However, Trump also said he hoped the policy will "hardly have to be used."

Trump made the comment as he signed a memorandum reimposing the tough policy of sanctions against Iran, similar to during his first term.

The memorandum instructs every department in the US government to design sanctions on Iran, especially in relation to nuclear activities, a White House aide told



Trump at the signing ceremony. This will give Trump "all of the possible tools" to prevent Iran from being a "malign actor," the aide said.

Trump expressed some regret for the severe measures, saying: "This is one that I'm torn about. Everybody wants me to sign it. I'll do it. It's very tough on Iran."

"Hopefully I'm not going to have to use it very much," he said. "I'm unhappy to do it, but I really have not so much choice because we have to be strong."

"We will see whether or not we can arrange. We'll work out a deal with Iran and everybody can live together," he said.

Trump also announced that if he were assassinated by Iran the country would be "obliterated."

"I've left instructions if they do it, they get obliterated, there won't be anything left," he said.

"Walked 45 Kilometres, Saw Bodies On The Way": Indians Deported From US

(News Agency)- Long-haul flights to South America, violent seas in tottery boats, hikes through treacherous terrain, dark cells at the US-Mexico border and a deportation flight back to India - the promise of an American dream fell flat for 104 Indian migrants who returned to India after US President Donald Trump's hardline stance on illegal immigration.

Harvinder Singh, a native of Punjab's Tahli village in Hoshiarpur district, said he was promised a work visa in the US by agent whom he paid Rs 42 lakh. At the last minute, Singh was told the visa did not come through and was later put on consecutive flights from Delhi till Qatar and then Brazil. "In Brazil, I was told I will be put on a flight from Peru, but there was no such flight. Then taxis took us further to Colombia and further to the beginning of Panama. From there, I was told a ship will transport us, but there



was no ship either. This is where our donkey route, which lasted two days, began," he told reporters.

After walking through a mountainous route, Singh and the migrants accompanying him were sent in a small boat into the deep sea towards the Mexico border. In the four-hour sea journey, the boat carrying them capsized, leading to the death of one of the persons accompanying him. Another died in the Panama jungle. All this while, they survived on

meagre portions of rice. Darapur village's Sukhpal Singh also faced a similar ordeal, travelling 15 hours by sea route, and walking 40-45 kilometres through hills that were flanked by deep-treacherous valleys. "If someone got injured, they were left to die. We saw many bodies on the way," he said. The Jalandhar district native was arrested in Mexico, just before he could cross the border to enter the US. "We were lodged in a dark cell for 14

days, and we never saw the sun. There are thousands of Punjabi boys, families and children in similar circumstances," he said, appealing to people to not try moving abroad through wrong routes.

A US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal immigrants from various states landed in Amritsar on Wednesday, the first such batch of Indians deported by the Donald Trump government. Of them, 33 each were from Haryana and Gujarat, 30 from Punjab, three each from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and two from Chandigarh, sources told PTI. Nineteen women and 13 minors, including a four-year-old boy and two girls, aged five and seven, were among the deportees, they said.

Among them was Jaspal Singh, who claimed that their hands and legs were cuffed throughout the journey and they were unshackled only after landing at

the Amritsar airport. He had been assured by a travel agent that he would be sent to the US in a legal way, with the price pegged at Rs 30 lakh. He was taken to Brazil, where he stayed for six months, before being captured by the US Border Patrol on January 24.

Kanubhai Patel, whose daughter is among the deportees, claimed she had gone to Europe for a vacation with her friends a month ago. "I have no idea what she planned after reaching Europe. The last time we talked with her was January 14. We have no idea how she reached the US," said Patel, a resident of Chandranagar-Dabhla village in Gujarat's Mehsana district.

Family members of the illegal immigrants from Punjab said they took huge loans to facilitate their travel to America hoping for a bright future but now face crushing debt. They now seek strict action against those agents.



Trump Says US "Will Take Over Gaza Strip" After Meeting With Netanyahu

The US will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it, too. We'll own it. And be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other weapons on this site," Trump said.

(News Agency)-President Donald Trump made an extraordinary proposal for the United States to "take over" the Gaza Strip, as he hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for crucial talks on the truce with Hamas.

Trump also doubled down on his call for Palestinians to move out of the war-battered territory to Middle Eastern countries like Egypt and Jordan, despite the Palestinians and both nations flatly rejecting his suggestion.

"The US will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it, too. We'll own it," Trump told a joint press conference with Netanyahu.

Trump said the United States would get rid of unexploded bombs, "level the site" and remove destroyed buildings, and "create an economic development that will supply unlimited numbers of jobs and housing for the people of the area."

But Trump appeared to suggest that it was not Palestinians who would return there. "It should not go through a process of rebuilding and occupation by the same people that have really stood there and fought for it and lived there and died there and lived a miserable existence there," he said.

He said Gaza's two million inhabitants should instead "go to other countries of interest with humanitarian hearts."

Netanyahu hailed Trump as the "greatest friend Israel has ever had."

He said the US president's Gaza plan could "change history" and was worth "paying attention to."

- 'Great force' -

Egypt and Jordan have flatly rejected Trump's suggestion of moving Palestinians from Gaza.

The Palestinian envoy to the United Nations meanwhile said world leaders should "respect" the wishes of Palestinians.

Gazans have also denounced Trump's idea. "Trump thinks Gaza is a pile of garbage -- absolutely not," said 34-year-old Hatem Azzam, a resident of the southern city of Rafah.

The US president has claimed credit for securing the first six-week phase of the Israel-Hamas truce after more than 15 months of fighting and bombing, and he was expected to urge Netanyahu to move to the next phase aimed at a more lasting peace.

Netanyahu earlier said "we're going to try" when asked how optimistic he was about

moving on to phase two.

He hailed Trump's "great force and powerful leadership" in sealing the original ceasefire deal, and took a swipe at former president Joe Biden, with whom he had tense relations over the death toll in Gaza. "When the other side sees daylight between us -- and occasionally in the last few years they saw daylight -- it's more difficult. When we cooperate, chances are good," Netanyahu said.

Israel said hours ahead of the White House talks it was sending a team to mediator Qatar to discuss the second phase of the agreement.

Hamas said Tuesday negotiations for the second phase had begun, with spokesman Abdel Latif al-Qanou saying the focus was on "shelter, relief and reconstruction".

Under the first phase of the ceasefire, Palestinian militants and Israel have begun exchanging hostages.

Eighteen hostages have been freed so far in exchange for some 600 mostly Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.

The war began when Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, taking into Gaza 251 hostages, 76 of whom are still held in the Palestinian territory including

34 the Israeli military says are dead.

Families of the Israeli hostages have been urging all sides to ensure the agreement is maintained so their loved ones can be freed.

Since the Gaza ceasefire took effect on January 19, Israel has launched a deadly operation against militants in the occupied West Bank's north.

UN aid agency UNRWA -- which is now banned in Israel -- warned that the heavily impacted refugee camp of Jenin was "going into a catastrophic direction".

On Tuesday, the Israeli army said a gunman killed two soldiers before being shot dead in an attack south of Jenin.

The truce has also led to a surge of food, fuel, medical and other aid into Gaza, and allowed people displaced by the war to return to the north of the Palestinian territory.

Hamas's October 7 attack resulted in the deaths of 1,210 people on Israeli side, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.

Israel's retaliatory response has killed at least 47,518 people in Gaza, the majority civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. The UN considers these figures as reliable.

Russia-Ukraine conflict is a masterclass in 21st-century warfare

Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, which completes three years on 24 February 2025, has had profound political, strategic, and tactical implications that have reshaped the global order and the way military conflicts are conducted in the 21st century. As the Russia-Ukraine war enters its fourth year, several crucial lessons emerge, offering insights into the dynamics of international relations, modern warfare, and military doctrine. One of the most significant political outcomes of the war has been the strengthening of NATO and the European Union, both of which have demonstrated a remarkable degree of unity in supporting Ukraine. This underlines the importance of alliances in ensuring national security. NATO's coordinated response reinforced the principle that a unified international community can help limit violence through diplomatic isolation and military support. Yet, at the same time, it has exposed the shortcomings of international institutions such as the United Nations.

Next, the Russia-Ukraine war has highlighted how economic sanctions influence contemporary geopolitics. Extensive sanctions on Moscow targeted sectors such as finance, energy, technology, and defence, severely impacting the nation's economy and degrading its war waging capabilities. However, Russia managed to pivot to alternative markets – particularly in Asia – and took steps to mitigate the impact by adapting its economic structures. While the sanctions have undoubtedly hurt Russia, they have also exposed the limitations of forcing change in large, resource-rich states that can find ways to circumvent such penalties. Information warfare has been as intense as the physical conflict itself. Both Russia and Ukraine (with the backing of the West), have engaged in a fierce battle for control of the global narrative. Ukraine, led by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his trademark T-shirt, effectively used social media, traditional media, and high-profile international speeches to galvanise support and appeal for international aid. He has emerged as an international symbol of resistance who effectively used diplomacy and public relations to secure arms, financial support, and humanitarian assistance.

Similarly, and with some success, Russia used state-controlled media and information warfare campaigns to promote its version of the war both domestically and internationally. The Russia-Ukraine war has highlighted the increasing importance of information warfare, where control over narratives can influence public opinion and even

shape the outcome of the conflict. Even now, the rights and wrongs of this war remain ambiguous.

Ukraine's resistance, bolstered by a strong national identity has shown that democracies, despite their inherent vulnerabilities, can effectively mobilise in the face of external aggression. The war has also showcased the importance of political cohesion, effective leadership, and the mobilisation of civil society in times of crisis. Democracies can exhibit extraordinary solidarity and resilience when their sovereignty is threatened, especially if they have well-established democratic norms and institutions.

Strategic lessons

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was characterised by a highly ambitious plan to capture Kyiv within days. However, Russia's failure to achieve strategic surprise, combined with the slow pace of mobilisation and logistical challenges, allowed Ukraine to mount a much more effective defence than anticipated. Ukraine's ability to quickly activate its forces, rally its population, and receive rapid international assistance from NATO countries was pivotal in stalling Russia's initial advances. In modern warfare, the element of surprise is crucial, but success depends on the ability to rapidly execute well-coordinated operations while maintaining their tempo.

One of the most profound strategic lessons from the conflict is the importance of logistics and the ability to sustain military operations over long periods. Russia's initial overextension and failure to properly manage its logistics networks were significant factors in its setbacks during the early phases of the war. Ukrainian forces could better leverage Western arms shipments and maintain their supply chains despite the administrative challenges posed by the country's large size and the character of the conflict.

Despite Russia's numerical superiority in troops, armour, and artillery, Ukraine's success in resisting and even pushing back Russian forces illustrates the limitations of conventional warfare in the modern age. The use of asymmetrical tactics, such as sabotage, guerrilla warfare, and the strategic targeting of supply chains and command centres, allowed Ukraine to counterbalance Russia's military might effectively. Conventional military superiority might not always be decisive. Asymmetrical tactics, well-executed intelligence operations, and the use of advanced technology such as drones and cyber capabilities can level the playing field against a larger and more heavily armed adversary.

BY GEN MM NARAVANE (RETD)

The Death Of The 'Liberal Elite' Should Shock No One

Democracy—widely believed to be the Western world's crowning achievement, the jewel in its crown so to speak, and the bedrock of its long-held cherished values—is proving remarkably adept at unsettling itself. This most precious system, designed to reflect the will of the people, is now ushering in governments led by far-right parties, riding high on a wave of discontent that currently sweeps across Europe and much of the Western world. As a result, the liberal West is feeling unsettled.

The year 2024 saw elections across the world. The results have been nothing short of transformative—or troubling, depending on one's vantage point. Far-right parties are now part of governments in seven European Union (EU) member states: Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Slovakia. Yet, this trend is not confined to who holds the reins. In Germany, the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) breached a post-War taboo, claiming a historic victory in Thuringia's state elections. This marks the first time since World War II that a far-right party has led a state government in the country. In the run-up to the national election on February 23, polls place the AfD as the second most popular party, a sobering reality for proponents of Germany's hard-won democratic stability. Meanwhile, in France, Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) is edging closer to the political mainstream, buoyed by successes in the European Parliament elections. For liberal democrats, her party's growing momentum is a source of palpable unease, a harbinger of possible

triumphs in future national elections.

The Values That Built Europe

For those who have spent decades building and defending Europe's post-war governance model, rooted in democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the far-right's ascendancy is more than a political shift. It is a profound reckoning. These movements are accused of exploiting the very freedoms that democracy guarantees, such as the right to organise, the power of dissent and the electoral voice of the disillusioned. Liberals lament that the democratic principles meant to guard against extremism are proving their most effective enabler. Democracy, for all its virtues, is once again proving it is as fragile as it is resilient.

A Global Phenomenon

However, the rise of far-right movements is not limited to Europe. Across continents, these groups are reshaping political discourse, fuelled by widespread economic discontent, cultural erosion and a growing distrust in traditional institutions. Their rhetoric often resonates with a common theme: traditional elites are out of touch, and only they can restore national pride and greatness. In the US, Donald Trump's return to the White House under the familiar banner of "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) has reignited this narrative on a global scale. It is safe to say that his victory serves as a symbol of strength for far-right movements worldwide, challenging the liberal democratic order established in the wake of World War II.

By Syed Zubair Ahmed

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DeepSeek Shows Why Nandan Nilekani Is Right

By Dinesh Narayanan

The Indian government wants to deploy huge amounts of capital and resources to build its own models of artificial intelligence (AI) to compete with global firms, and finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman just gave the idea a more than 1,000% backing.

IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced last week that half a dozen startups were working on a foundational AI model for India and it would be ready within eight to 10 months. India had procured about 18,600 high-end graphic processing units, including Nvidia's Hoppers, for them. Vaishnaw's announcement had an edge of urgency after Chinese startup DeepSeek created a minor earthquake in the AI world with its ridiculously cost-efficient model, R1. Minister Sitharaman raised the budgetary allocation for the national AI Mission to Rs 2,000 crore from Rs 173 crore last year, much of which is likely to be directed at building Large Language Models (LLMs).

The Bharat OS Experience India's past efforts at indigenously designing and making



foundational technology building blocks, such as a home-grown operating system (Bharat OS), went nowhere. The system was buggy and efforts to popularise it were largely stymied. Tech systems often improve with use, but BOS never got a shot at it. India's efforts to produce semiconductors, despite first embarking on it via a cabinet decision in 1976 to set up the Semiconductor Complex Ltd, never really took off despite trying to lure global leaders with massive incentives.

Even private entrepreneurial

attempts at replicating globally popular tech products or services, such as short-video apps, a la TikTok, or a Twitter clone, only ended up burning millions of venture funds. India has typically achieved scaling up of local products by erecting tariff walls, the latest case in point being homegrown wearables companies making headphones. India's track record suggests that building AI models could also run up against scaling and capital challenges. A better strategy might be what Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani

proposed last year. Nilekani said that India should not waste time building another LLM or Large Language Model, a kind of artificial intelligence that can speak the human language, the most popular one being OpenAI's ChatGPT. "Let the big boys in the (Silicon) Valley do it, spending billions of dollars. We will use it to create synthetic data, build small language models quickly, and train them using appropriate data," Nilekani said. He is right.

Can India Do An IT Encore?

Nilekani has seen the trajectory of the Indian software industry and what India is capable of. He was there when it was birthed by Rajiv Gandhi, Jairam Ramesh and Sam Pitroda. Pitroda has recounted how he convinced Jack Welch, the then chief of General Electric, to hire Indian companies to write software for the multinational giant. The first contract was worth \$10 million. It spawned an industry that exported software services worth \$205 billion in 2024. The IT industry employs about 5.4 million people. It

formed the bedrock of the modern Indian economic miracle.

There is a slim chance, if it plays its cards right, that India can do an encore, as AI will transfer the power of programming to anyone with an LLM. It could also be the disruption that rips apart the country's socio-economic fabric with rampant joblessness and social inequality.

The Spectre Of Automation

In a recent NBER (National Bureau of Economic Research) paper titled Technological Disruption in the Labor Market, economists David J. Deming, Christopher Ong, and Lawrence H. Summers wrote that AI could be a general-purpose technology on the scale of prior disruptive innovations, such as steam and electricity. The economists, who crunched US labour data going back to 1880, found that the years spanning 1990 to 2017 were less disruptive than any prior period. However, the illusion of a stable labour market in that period is because the past changes were too profound.

What Dangers Does India Face From A China-Pak-Bangladesh Troika

By Tara Kartha

Turbulence in Bangladesh now seems to be the rule rather than the exception. Protests by multiple groups are now almost a daily issue, including not just students of various universities but also madrasa teachers and the general public. Meanwhile, the 'students' of the Anti-Discrimination Movement are criticising the interim government, indicating that Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus and his men may be increasingly isolated even as they use every reason in the book to delay elections. As Yunus and party try to overturn all the policies of Sheikh Hasina, particularly with regards to India, the question that has to be asked is whether a direction taken by an unelected government can be sustainable or not.

Pakistan Wades In

Entirely unexpectedly, Pakistan has chosen to wade into this chaos, fishing in troubled waters for possible gains. Immediately after the fall of the Hasina



government, Syed Ahmed Maroof, the High Commissioner of Pakistan, met Yunus and held meetings with officials, including fisheries advisor Farida Akhter, education advisor Bidhan Chandra Roy, finance advisor Salehuddin Ahmed, and advisor on religious affairs, AFM Khalid Hossin, with the envoy calling for the restoration of direct flights and meeting a team from US-Bangla Airlines for the purpose. That started almost immediately when a Panama-flagged vessel, MV Yuan Xian Fa Zhan, operated by a Chinese shipping company, docked in

Chattogram in November, bringing goods like ceramic and raw material from Pakistan to Bangladesh. This was the first direct cargo movement between the two countries. A second consignment followed in December, with the Bangladeshi authorities removing a clause that requires physical inspection of any cargo arriving from Pakistan.

A Flurry Of Visits

The bonhomie was also apparent at a December meeting in Cairo between Yunus and Sharif, where the former asked for a settlement of issues since 1971. This incidentally

includes the repatriation of over 2 lakh stranded Urdu-speaking people who were full Pakistani citizens before the Liberation. Prior to this, Yunus had invited Shahbaz for a meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September for a ceremony commemorating Bangladesh's 50th year as a member of the United Nations. It had key Pakistani officials in attendance, including Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, and Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi. Further acts of 'friendship' included removing security checks on incoming Pakistanis, which was done through the Home Ministry, overseen by known India-baiter Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Md. Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, under whose tenure there had been much bad blood on border policy.

The Pakistani High Commissioner has also remained extremely active, inviting the Bangladesh army to pay a visit—which they did, through a delegation led by

Lieutenant General SM Kamrul Hassan (Principal Staff Officer). That Bangladesh did not send a high-level officer might showcase its caution in this area. Rawalpindi remained unfazed. It sent to Dhaka a team led by Major General Shahid Amir Afsar, the ISI's Director-General of Analysis and earlier Pakistan's defence attache in Beijing. Incidentally, he is said to speak fluent Chinese. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar is expected to visit Bangladesh soon, even as a Joint Business Council has been set up this January. The next move could be the actual supply of defence equipment, offered to Bangladesh, especially the JF-17, not to mention the already announced training programme for Bangladeshi army senior officers. It's all moving very fast, despite political chaos within Pakistan and terrorist attacks almost daily. This is Rawalpindi exploiting its opportunity to the full before an elected government comes in.



There's A Five-Letter Word Haunting Trump

By Ajay Kumar

You don't want to fall into the trap of romanticising the East as Orientalists, steeped in Christianity and its binaries of good and evil, have done over the last 200 years. But a well-known Chinese invocation comes to mind as one absorbs the beginnings of the second Trump presidency: may you live in interesting times. All times are interesting for those living through them; our generation is no different. However, one may allow oneself the indulgence that the post-Trump II world would be more interesting than, say, the post-World War II years.

Partly, this is because Trump is upending much of the global institutional structure the US primarily created post-World War II: the United Nations and its many offshoots, which serve as global watchdogs and regulators on socio-economic issues, and the Bretton Woods institutions, which underpin global trade and finance. Just as importantly, the US commitment to lowering tariffs to increase market access for poorer countries in wealthier markets is also in question.

A Much Stronger China

More significantly, a tectonic shift has been underway as China awakens, bringing with it the disruptions Napoleon once apprehended. China is not a status quo power—indeed, no emerging superpower is when there is only one other around. But China also represents a culture, an imagination, and therefore a morality and civilisational view that the Christian West, steeped in notions of Right and Wrong and One Truth, struggles to comprehend.

How will Trump II handle a China that is much stronger than it was eight years ago? Not only has China advanced technologically in key strategic sectors despite sanctions introduced by Trump

and expanded by Biden, but it has also gained adherents to its alternative worldview—one that debunks Western-style democracy and prioritises order, stability, and material progress.

Tough Against Immigrants And Deep State

Trump returned to power because he was seen as more competent in handling the economy, reducing prices, cracking down on illegal immigration, and restoring faith in government by dismantling and refashioning it. His campaign made explicit promises to his MAGA base: mass deportations of the “15–20 million” undocumented immigrants, dismantling the “Deep State” that “stole” the 2020 election and pursued “illegal prosecutions” against him, seeking vengeance against those who opposed him, and rewarding loyalty as never before in a constitutional democracy.

In his inaugural address and his first days in office, he has done exactly as he promised, disappointing neither his loyalists nor his critics. His speech invoked the imperial America of the late 19th century when it had expanded its territory—this time, with real estate targets including Panama and Greenland. On his first day in the Oval Office, he signed 26 executive orders (EO), the most ever by a president, addressing a wide swath of campaign commitments. Though many of these EOs face legal and legislative hurdles, the rapid pace has continued, reshaping the US government to align with the MAGA worldview both domestically and internationally. The intent was to shock and awe—to announce to the world that there was a new Big Chief in Washington.

Two Sticky Decisions

Two decisions have particularly inflamed his critics: the launch of the

cryptocurrency World Liberty Financial and the meme coin TRUMP on the eve of the inauguration, along with President Trump's blanket pardon of the perpetrators of the January 6, 2021, assault on the Capitol. Critics argue that because cryptocurrencies allow for anonymous transactions, Liberty provides a pathway to those seeking to strike deals with the transactional president—offering financial gratifications for favourable policy tweaks without anyone being the wiser. The meme coin TRUMP and Liberty, in this view, serve as emblematic tools of a presidency that blends governance with personal financial gain.

The launch inevitably became controversial when it was erroneously reported that the Trump family had made \$500 million through the sale of crypto “tokens”. In reality, TRUMP quickly gained a market capitalisation of \$13 billion, and the Trump Organization earned \$7 million in “liquidity fees”. Critics argue this is only the beginning; by the time Trump leaves office, his target, they claim, is to swell the family fortune by \$5 billion.

Blatant Pardons

Trump's pardon of the January 6 rioters, including those convicted of assaulting police officers, continues to enrage his critics. Even The Wall Street Journal, otherwise largely supportive of Trump editorially, was critical, citing its own poll that found that nearly six in 10 Americans opposed pardoning the convicts. The pardon was also unexpected—one, because Trump had stated the pardons would go through a vetting process, and two, because Vice President J.D. Vance had publicly assured everyone before the inauguration that convicted individuals would not be pardoned. Reportedly, as the staff laboured through the vetting process, an impatient Trump declared,

“This is taking too long, eff it, I will pardon the whole lot and also show J.D. who is boss.”

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the case of General Mark Milley, retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. During his campaign, Trump suggested Milley had committed treason and should be put to death. Milley was pardoned by Biden to prevent a court-martial, but he now faces an inquiry for “insubordination” while serving as Joint Chiefs Of Staff (JCS) under Trump. The objective: humiliate Milley by “demoting” him in retirement. Milley had reassured his Chinese counterpart post-Capitol insurrection that Trump was not planning an attack on China in his efforts to undo the 2020 election results. He also publicly supported a peaceful transition of power. Trump has frequently referenced Biden's pardons of family and friends, as well as his political opponents. “Biden pardoned his entire family even as I was making my inaugural speech,” Trump quipped. His continued focus on Biden is evident in an executive order directing federal agencies to investigate whether the Biden administration committed illegal acts to curb freedom of speech and to take “remedial measures” if proof is found. Ominously, Trump said gleefully on Fox News that Biden had not pardoned himself.

Trump's executive order delaying the ban on TikTok was classic Trump. The ban, written into law by an overwhelming majority in the House and upheld by the US Supreme Court, was postponed by 75 days under the guise of “national security” considerations. However, in typical Trump fashion, he admitted publicly that the real reason was TikTok's role in helping him win the election. The platform had significantly influenced young voters to switch their votes to Trump.

Union Budget:

Keeping The Kingmakers Happy



By Amitabh Tiwari

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, by effectively making income up to Rs 12 lakh tax free, has presented a dream budget for India's middle class. Leaving more money in the hands of taxpayers, the step is expected to boost demand, kick off a multiplier effect, increase private investment and stimulate GDP growth.

The middle class, which accounts for about 31% of India's population and makes up a core support block of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was beginning to feel discontented due to the huge tax burden on it. Reeling from high inflation, low wage growth not sufficient to cover the price rise, high taxation and meagre household savings, the taxpayer was feeling cheated to some extent. The fact that personal income tax collections had exceeded corporate tax collections had also added to the frustration.

'Middle Class's Energy'

The latest budget offers a huge relief against many of these concerns. Announcing the revised tax structure applicable under the new tax regime, Sitharaman said, "The middle class provides strength for India's growth. This government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, has always believed in the admirable energy and ability of the middle class in nation-building. In recognition of their contribution, we have periodically reduced their tax burden...Right after

2014, the 'nil' tax slab was raised to Rs. 2.5 lakh, which was further raised to Rs. 5 lakh in 2019 and to Rs. 7 lakh in 2023. This is reflective of our government's trust in the middle-class taxpayers," she added.



The new structure will substantially reduce the tax burden of the middle class. There will be no income tax payable on income of up to Rs. 12 lakhs. This limit will be Rs. 12.75 lakh for salaried taxpayers due to a standard deduction of Rs. 75,000. The revised tax rate structure is as follows: nil tax for Rs. 0-4 lakh; 5% for Rs. 4-8 lakh; 10% for Rs. 8-12 lakh; 15% for Rs. 12-16 lakh; 20% for Rs. 16-20 lakh; 25% for Rs. 20-24 lakh; and 30% for income above Rs. 24 lakh.

Lose Some, Win Some

To illustrate, a taxpayer in the new regime with an income of Rs. 12 lakh will get a benefit of Rs. 80,000 in tax (100% of tax payable as per existing rates). For those earning more than Rs 12 lakh a year,

tax slabs will kick in progressively. In effect, taxpayers earning Rs. 12 lakh can expect to save around Rs. 7,000 a month, those earning Rs. 18 lakh will save around Rs. 6,000, and those earning Rs. 25 lakh may save around Rs. 9,000.

With these changes, the Central government will forgo Rs. 1 lakh crore in direct taxes. However, the bulk of this money in the hands of taxpayers is likely to be spent on consumption, thus in a way leading to higher demand for goods

and services. A section of this could also be recouped in the form of indirect taxes, such as GST, by the government.

Private consumption accounts for more than 60% of India's GDP. However, over the last few years, especially after the post-COVID-19, it had grown at a very slow pace—around 4% in FY 2023-24—dragging the overall GDP growth down to a 6% level. Without a consumption boost, it would be hard for the economy to return to 8% GDP growth levels. The government perhaps realised this, that despite giving a tax break to the corporate sector in 2019, private investment as a percentage of the GDP had been sluggish. The government had so far been focusing on the supply side all these years, concentrating on boosting private investments that account for around 30% of the GDP, ignoring the 60%. Also, the private sector has long blamed low demand and low operating rates/capacity utilisation (in the 70s) for their dull approach towards new investments.

Getting Into Action

Now, with these tax breaks, the middle class is expected to get into action by consuming more and setting into motion a multiplier effect. The Rs. 1 lakh crore stimulus is expected to provide a fillip to demand, and, in turn, lead to a rise in the operating rates and capacity utilisation of corporates. The increase in demand for goods and services will also kick in an investment cycle, providing a boost to GDP growth.

The announcements are also politically significant in the backdrop of the Delhi assembly elections. It has been trying to woo the middle class in the capital, which tends to swing between the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the Lok Sabha and assembly elections.

The party has long been targeting the AAP on the alleged liquor scam and the 'Sheesh Mahal' controversy in order to rock the AAP's anti-corruption plank and sway its middle-class support.

Politically, the BJP hopes this budget could sway the kingmaker middle class in Delhi and propel it to power. And, on the economic front, the growth stimulus can provide the foundation for getting India back to 8% GDP growth levels. It's a win-win.

Union Budget Shouldn't Be Afraid Of Betting On Aerospace

By Vikram Rai

Over the last decade, India's sustained focus on infrastructure development, job creation and the rising middle class with higher disposable income has significantly improved its global economic standing, moving it from the 10th rank by GDP in 2014 to the fifth-largest today. The aviation and aerospace sector has been crucial, increasing its GDP contribution from around 3% in 2014 to 7% in 2024. This growth is due to the increase in operational airports from 74 to 157, a three-fold growth in domestic passengers, the successful privatisation of Air India, and the launch of the regional connectivity scheme, UDAN.

As the Indian economy aims to overtake Japan and Germany to be No. 3 in the world in three to four years, here's a bold prediction: our aviation and aerospace industry can fly us there sooner — as early as fiscal 2027. It is time for us to think bigger about airlines, airport infrastructure and aerospace manufacturing, and maintenance, repair, and operations (MRO) and how they can be transformational for India.

India's Potential

1. High Multiplier Effect: According to industry research, investments in aviation and aerospace have a significantly higher multiplier effect (3.1x) on GDP compared



to other sectors. For every Rs 1,000 crore invested, the return is over Rs 3,100 crore, boosting direct and indirect jobs with an employment multiplier of six.

2. Growth Template from China: Thirty years ago, China had 850 civilian aircraft, growing to about 8,000 today. India currently has around 800 planes, with over 1,700 on order by 2028. By 2027, India is expected to add \$1 trillion to its GDP, necessitating efficient transportation to harness this growth.

3. Policy changes to unlock potential: While the government will address ways to increase consumer spending, aviation-specific measures, such as a government-backed credit guarantee

scheme to encourage lessors to lower rates for regional airlines, will be a welcome relief.

Time It Right

Given the GDP growth, the timing and context are ideal for India to enhance its focus on aviation and aerospace. Can airlines become an affordable travel option for millions of Indians, competing with rail and intercity road travel? The rapid growth in the sector suggests that this may be achievable.

The number of civilian aircraft, which has doubled over the past decade, will further treble by 2028, extending the aviation map to 220 airports. Industry forecasts predict that air traffic growth in India will

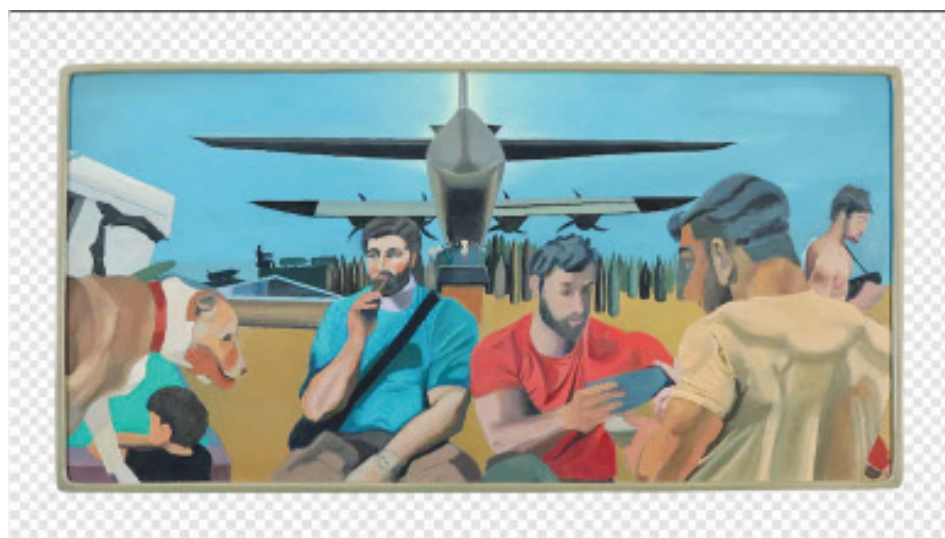
be nearly 7% until 2040, outpacing regions like Southeast Asia (5.5%), China (5.4%), Africa (5.4%), and Latin America (4.8%). India is already the third-largest domestic air passenger market globally, behind only the US and China.

Make In India, Fly It Global

India has made significant progress in aerospace manufacturing in recent years, including big wins in defence aviation. Leading global air framers either operate large-scale manufacturing in India or source parts worth billions of dollars from the country. At GE Aerospace, we are investing Rs 240 crore to expand our multi-modal factory near Pune, which supplies components for the G90, GENx, GE 9X, and LEAP engines. This follows a significant increase in our sourcing from India since 2018.

That said, India needs to move up the aerospace manufacturing value chain. Revisiting performance-linked incentives (PLI) schemes, similar to those in place for drone manufacturing, could be beneficial. A long-term goal is to attract aircraft makers to set up factories in India, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has envisioned. In the medium term, expanding the group of Tier 1, 2, and 3 manufacturers in India is a realistic and sustainable vision.

Can We Put Tasma Pah To Sleep?



By Mohd Asim

In the legend of Sinbad the Sailor, there is a story of Peer e Tasma Pah. It goes like this:

On the fifth voyage of Sinbad, he is alone on an island after a shipwreck. Wandering the island, he comes across an old, dishevelled man babbling in a language Sinbad did not comprehend. This creature was Peer e Tasma Pah. He had shoestring legs and was unable to get up and walk. He begged Sinbad to carry him on his shoulders and get him some water and food. Sinbad hoisted him

up on his shoulders out of sympathy. Once Tasma Pah was seated, he tightened his legs around Sinbad's neck, to the point of choking him. He would then not leave Sinbad for even a minute and dictate him around. It is said that Sinbad carried the old man on his shoulders for months. The dreadful monster never slept. He kicked and slapped but Sinbad could do nothing at all. It took a magical wine, Mushroob, which made the old man drowsy put him to sleep. Finally, he fell off Sinbad's shoulders.

Are we all in the grip of a Tasma Pah?

Are we being dictated and conditioned by a sinister complex, a war machine, a capitalist cartel?

The questions race through one's mind as one takes a walk through the dimly lit LTC gallery at Delhi's Bikaner House. Lights focused only on a clutch of paintings that are framed like innocuous mobile screens. You feel you are looking into your phone screens. The vivid images are all too familiar.

Young men willing away their time at the tea stalls, at a madaan, in their drawing rooms, engrossed in their smartphones. Every painting has a foreground and a background. In the foreground are young, well-built men going about their usual business. The background is war scenes, destruction, drones, missiles, bombs, soldiers. The two are separate but together. The war is no more a bad thing. It's a spectacle that's beamed live into our drawing rooms, on our cellphones, making us numb and immune to its horrors.

It's like a mobile game where friends take pleasure in killing each other. Robots and fictional figures blow each other up on phone screens. Blowing up humans, razing houses, bombing schools, all look

the same on the evil screen. Who has the time or attention to be shocked or to mourn? It's all just 15-second content. The next reel or the next image will demand a different reaction or emotion. Digital decadence at its worst. Men are machines. Humans are just metadata. Drones hover like demons in the paintings. The joystick that controls the drone is the modern-day arrow in the quiver of Paris (In The Iliad, Paris is responsible for starting the Trojan War). Modern day Paris can make a quick killing even on a holiday. The war machine has got a new toy. The drone can kill a "target" miles away. The killer sees the action on a small screen. Humans become shadowy figures on the screen. The targets. Click, boom, gone. Game over. In another work, a young soldier gleefully posts a selfie from the warzone strutting on a little girl's bike. He tags a caption: 'Mother, you would be proud. Killing is fun'. The image appears on millions of phones. Killing becomes normal. No one is shocked anymore.

Years ago, the image of Aylan Kurdi washing ashore lifeless shocked the world. Now, dead and bleeding children are normal.



Trump's Deportation Spree Means Little To Geopolitics

By Chetan Rana

Barely a week into his second administration, US President Donald Trump has set out to fulfil many of his populist election promises, including pulling his country out of the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization (WHO), renaming the Gulf of Mexico, and recognising only two sexes and scrapping DEI policies. But it's his anti-immigration and deportation orders that have had the most

visible impact on the streets. Trump and his likes have fuelled social anxieties and channelised them against the 'other' – often the minorities and immigrants. The use of military planes for deportation and the public nature of arrests of migrants frames them as a legitimate security threat to American society. Trump has called anti-immigration and deportation a move to protect America from 'invasion'. Cabinet members as well as other

Republican leaders have not stopped short of using dehumanising language, and Trump has further supplemented these moves with direct diplomatic pressure on source countries. The obvious flashpoint of this move was the public spat between Trump and Colombian President Gustavo Petro, who had initially refused to take in the deportees. However, the POTUS arm-twisted the Colombian government into accepting the

migrants with punitive tariffs. Though disruptive, these moves are a continuation of the policies Trump had initiated in his first stint. While millions of migrants and refugees move towards precarity because of these executive orders, whether this will have any substantial effect on international politics remains debatable. Continuity From Trump 1.0 To 2.0 - Even in Trump's first stint (2017-2021), immigration was one of the top agendas in his

campaign. Between 2017-2021, Trump introduced stricter vetting mechanisms, imposed a racist travel ban and constructed barriers, or 'the wall', along its Southern border. Four years forward, in a flurry of executive orders, the new Trump administration seems to be escalating those policies. The US refugee admissions programme has been indefinitely suspended, leaving over 20,000 refugees stranded.

Why Indian Farmers' Unions criticizing the Central Budget?

By JAG MOHAN THAKEN

Praising that the announcements made for the farmers in the Budget 2025-26 tabled in the Parliament on the very first day of February by the Union Minister for Finance, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that this budget will lay the foundation for a new revolution in the agricultural sector and the entire rural economy. PM Modi highlighted that under the PM Dhan-Dhanya Krishi Yojana, irrigation and infrastructure development will take place in 100 districts. He emphasized that increasing the limit of the Kisan Credit Card from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh will provide greater assistance to farmers.

Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, the finance minister, said that this program aims to enhance agricultural productivity; adopt crop diversification and sustainable agriculture practices; augment post-harvest storage at the panchayat and block level; improve irrigation facilities and facilitate availability of long-term and short-term credit. This program is likely to help 1.7 crore farmers.

Announcing the 'Mission for Cotton Productivity', Smt. Sitharaman highlighted that the five-year mission will facilitate significant improvements in productivity and

sustainability of cotton farming, and promote extra-long staple cotton varieties. She said the mission will benefit lakhs of cotton growing farmers as the best of science & technology support will be provided to farmers.

Here arises the question, if PM Modi's statement – 'This budget will lay the foundation for a new revolution in the agricultural sector and the entire rural economy', is the indicative of the farmers' welfare budget, then why the farmers under the banner of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Majdoor Morcha (KMM) are agitating even after the budget at Punjab-Haryana border at two places since February 13, 2024 and the farmer leader Dallewal is still continuing his hunger strike started from November 26? Shouldn't they step back after this so much miraculous budget?

What the Farmers' leaders say?

Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) leader and National Vice-President of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), Dr Inderjeet Singh says that the union budget has totally belied the hopes and expectations of farmers as the announcements pertaining to the farm sector are disappointing.

"Farmers were expecting reduction in input cost, debt relief

by way of loan waiver, MSP legal guarantee on the basis of C-2+50%, farm implements exempted from GST and withdrawal of National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing etc. out of which none has materialized."

Dr. Singh adds that there is a decrease in allocations on food security, irrigation, MGNREGA, PM Fasal Bima Yojana etc. Kisan Samman Nidhi amount has also not been enhanced. Reacting over the enhancement in credit limit, Dr. Inderjeet states that as far as increase in amount of loan on credit card is concerned it is itself and admission of the extent of indebtedness. Apart from this there is no provision for a large number of tenant farmers who cultivate lands on lease and have no supportive mechanisms.

Commenting on 'Mission for Cotton Productivity', announced in the budget, Dr. Inderjeet Singh says, "Purported emphasis on crop diversification by giving emphasis to cotton and pulses is a hoax as area under cotton cultivation is depleting fast due to spurious seeds sold by private companies that is prone to insect infestation. Similarly pulse producing farmers are not being given MSP and they had to make distress sale of Moong and other pulses."

Trump Hates 'Tariff Walls'. Why Is He Building One For America?

By Kanwal Sibal

US President Donald Trump continues his internal and external political warfare. His internal cleaning-up operations and external muscle-flexing have consequences for the rest of the world, including India.

Deporting illegal migrants is on top of Trump's agenda. The number of Indian illegal migrants is significant. India has already stated that after verification, these undocumented migrants will be taken back. Trump has been most impatient about the expulsion of Latin American illegal migrants. He has strong-armed Colombia to forthwith accept deportation by US military planes under threat of imposing tariffs, a blanket ban on visas, etc. While buckling under Trump's ultimatum, the Colombian president has responded with an emotionally indignant protest.

What Complicates Things For India
In India's case, these dramatics are absent, but the issue was raised by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio with India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, when the two met on January 2. Trump, too, has weighed on the subject, saying that he had discussed the issue with Prime Minister



Narendra Modi during their phone call. He said that India "will do what's right" when it comes to taking back Indian immigrants who came to the US illegally. That illegal migrants from India in the US are the fourth-largest in number complicates the atmospherics around the issue of legal migration from India under the H-1B programme, of which India is the biggest beneficiary. The programme is now under scrutiny and there may be some tightening in the guise of reforming the scheme. Other than this, the PR aspect of illegal migrants flown back to India in droves will be problematic for

the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government as the opposition will project it as a foreign policy failure, which it is not, by any means.

Spillover In Europe—And India

Illegal migration has become an increasingly sensitive issue in Europe in view of rising incidents of terrorism, law and order issues, lack of assimilation, and so on. This has led to Right-wing, nationalist parties gaining political strength in European countries, much to the dismay of Left-leaning and centrist liberal forces. The robust way Trump is dealing with the issue is already fuelling

demands for stronger action against illegal migrants in Europe. Marine Le Pen of the right-wing French party RN is already calling for emulating Trump by deporting illegal Algerian migrants. Europe, however, lacks the muscle power required for this, the kind Trump can exercise.

Reports that India, too, is likely to introduce an "Immigration and Foreigners Bill" to crack down on illegal immigration into the country, have appeared, though the dimensions of this problem in India and the legal and administrative means at our disposal impede robust solutions.

Trump's determination to roll back the 'woke' agenda in the US, with all its excesses, especially gender identity, fluidity and surgery issues, as well as DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) programmes, will have an international impact, including in India, where these agendas have begun to take root as a result of the impact on our society of Western, liberal-Left socio-economic currents. In Europe, gender issues have become deeply embedded in political and social discourse, and therefore, these issues will divide Trump's America and the EU.

Can Bangladesh-Pakistan Warming Be A Threat To South Asia?

By Syed Ata Hasnain.

The geopolitical landscape of South Asia is currently abuzz with discussions on the renewed warmth in Pakistan-Bangladesh relations. In India—and consequently, much of the world—the perception of this relationship is deeply shaped by historical events, particularly those of March 1971, when the Pakistan Army launched genocidal attacks on intellectuals at Dhaka University and others who championed the cause of Bangladeshi independence. The images of December 1971, culminating in Pakistan's surrender and the triumphant return of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Dhaka in January 1972, further reinforce this perspective.

Old Assumptions Die Hard

Given these historical narratives, a long-standing assumption has taken root in the Indian psyche that after Pakistan's division into two nations and its decisive military defeat—marked by the surrender of 93,000 prisoners of war—it no longer posed a significant military threat to India. Another widely held belief is that Bangladesh, owing its birth as a nation to India's intervention and sacrifices in the 1971 Indo-Pak War, would remain perpetually grateful and maintain strong



ties with India. While Indo-Bangladesh relations have remained largely positive over the decades, certain factors—such as the assassination of Sheikh Mujib in 1975, the sheltering of separatist leaders from India's Northeast in Dhaka, and the persistent issue of illegal migration—have occasionally strained perceptions. Nevertheless, the idea of Bangladesh realigning with Pakistan after 54 years remains inconceivable to many.

Over these five decades, India has played a pivotal role in Bangladesh's economic growth through trade, investment, infrastructure projects,

energy cooperation, technical training, financial aid, and policy support. These contributions have significantly enhanced Bangladesh's economic capabilities and global standing. However, does a regime change in Dhaka now position India as an adversary in the eyes of Bangladesh's leadership? The brutal history of the Pakistan Army's actions in 1971—rape, torture, and genocide—seems to have faded from collective memory. The recent high-profile visits between Pakistan and Bangladesh appear to challenge the longstanding Indo-

Bangladesh partnership.

The Goings-On In Chittagong

One of the most notable visits was that of a six-member high-level delegation from the Bangladesh Army to Rawalpindi, led by Lt Gen Kamrul Zaman, Principal Staff Officer of the Bangladesh Armed Forces Division—effectively the second-in-command after the Chief. Shortly thereafter, Pakistan's ISI Director General of Analysis, Maj Gen Shahid Amir Afsar, along with other senior officials, visited Dhaka. Unconfirmed reports suggest that this delegation travelled to Rangpur, a cantonment near the Siliguri Corridor—an area often perceived as India's Achilles' heel, though perhaps not as vulnerable as it is made out to be. The delegation also visited Chittagong and held meetings with tribal leaders.

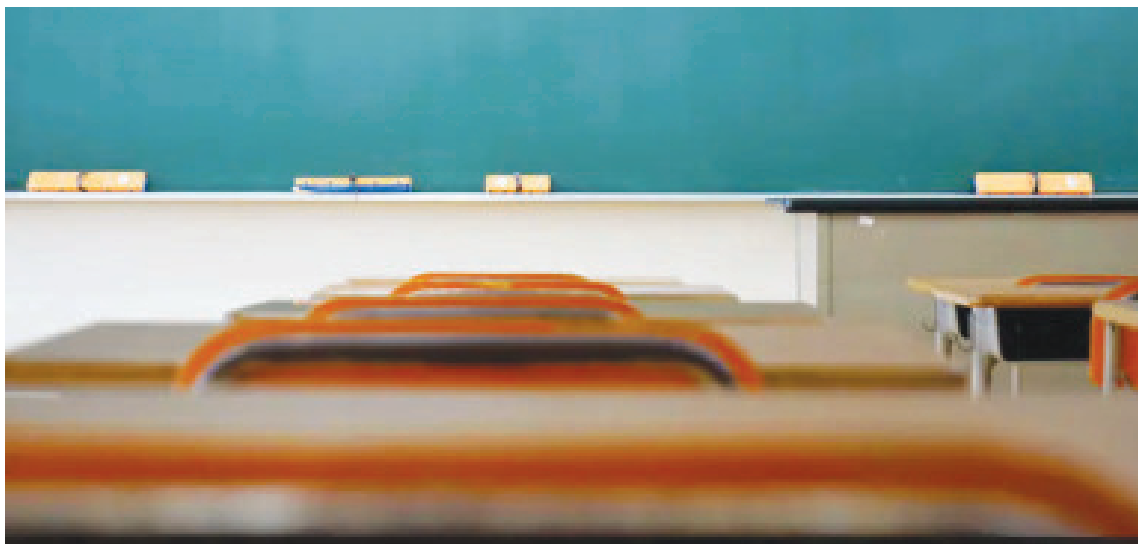
A fundamental truth in international relations is that a change in regime does not automatically render the people of one nation hostile to another. However, the new Bangladesh government—questionably constituted as it is—seems intent on shifting the subcontinental balance. The hastily arranged exchanges between Bangladesh and Pakistan, particularly the visits to Rangpur and

Outdated Laws Are Stifling India's Private Universities

By Suresh Prabhu, Shobhit Mathur

A war between the US and China has broken out for the next phase of technological dominance over the world. If India does not up its innovation game, we will once be relegated to being mere consumers of technology. Our best bet is our young talent in universities. But do they have an enabling educational environment, or is India on track to lose its historic demographic advantage?

In the contemporary landscape of higher education, India's private universities are being stifled by a web of outdated and restrictive regulatory constraints. These regulations, crafted decades ago, were designed in an era when the government sought to maintain strict oversight over private institutions and protect student interests from exploitation. However, as the higher education sector evolves rapidly, these very regulations have become roadblocks to innovation. It is time policymakers recognised the need to unshackle private universities, granting them the autonomy to innovate, respond to industry needs and provide students with the skills they require to navigate a fast-



changing world.

A Web Of Regulatory Bodies

The first major hurdle facing private universities is the multiplicity of regulatory bodies. For instance, a BTech programme run by a university must adhere to the standards set by both the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and the State Higher Education Department, each with its own set of requirements. This multiplicity of regulations leads to discrepancies. The result is a confusing framework that hampers the flexibility and adaptability of universities, preventing them from offering dynamic courses that meet the

demands of today's rapidly evolving job market.

Accreditation is another critical area where the regulatory framework falls short. The lack of diverse accrediting bodies—the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) being the only one—limits universities' ability to differentiate themselves based on their unique strengths. The current accreditation process is heavily input-based, rather than focusing on the outcomes that matter most to students, such as learning experiences, graduate employability, and industry-relevant skills.

A significant area of concern is the strict faculty qualification

and recruitment norms. While maintaining academic standards is important, these regulations leave little room for flexibility in hiring. The "Professor of Practice" model allows some industry professionals to teach, but their number is capped at 20%, severely limiting the ability of universities to bring in real-world expertise. Allowing the institution to decide on faculty qualifications—rather than imposing rigid academic criteria—would enable universities to create a teaching staff that is both academically accomplished and industry-savvy.

Land Constraints

Similarly, land and infrastructure norms present a barrier. Universities must meet specific land size and infrastructure requirements, many of which are not only financially burdensome but also impractical in urban areas, where top-tier faculty and their families prefer to live in good neighbourhoods with quality schools. The high costs associated with acquiring land in such areas often limit the ability of universities to invest in improving academic quality and research.

Private universities are constrained when it comes to student intake approvals too. Regulatory bodies determine how many students can be admitted to a programme, limiting the ability of institutions to expand based on demand. Universities should be free to set intake numbers based on market realities. Further stifling innovation are regulations around off-campus and distance education programmes. Universities wishing to offer courses outside their main campuses or in alternative formats face additional regulatory hurdles, limiting their ability to cater to diverse student needs.

Makhanas For Poll-Bound Bihar

By Bharti Mishra Nath

Bihar is the envy of other states. It scooped up a bonanza in Budget 2025. That it was going to be a Bihar-focused budget was hinted by the Madhubani-style fish motifs on the cream-coloured sari worn by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as she came to Parliament on February 1. Fish motifs are integral to the art form originating from the Mithila region of Bihar. The sari was a gift from artist Dulari Devi, a Padma Shri awardee. Bihar and its regions were mentioned eight times in Nirmala Sitharaman's speech. Not just Bihar, the Budget went an extra mile to reel in Bihari voters in Delhi too. Delhi votes on Wednesday (February 5), long before Bihar holds an election in November.

A big pie for Bihar

Budget 2025 has given a major impetus to Bihar's growth prospects with the announcement of new greenfield airports, a Makhana Board, a National Institute of Food Technology, the expansion of IIT-Patna, promotion of tourism around key



Buddhist centres, and support for the Western Kosi canal.

These initiatives aim to enhance the state's infrastructure, improve connectivity, and support the local economy, especially benefiting farmers and businesses involved in makhana production.

This is the second consecutive Budget full of sops for Bihar. Last year, Bihar was rewarded as Nitish Kumar helped in the

formation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third government after the BJP fell short of a majority.

Last year, a stack of development projects FOR BIHAR, worth around Rs 58,900 crore, was announced in the Budget. It included a 2,400 MW power plant and flood management projects. Plans to develop highways, expressways, expansion and maintenance of existing roads were also

announced.

Yet both state and national highways in Bihar remain in a poor condition, needing significant restoration.

A comprehensive investment in the road network would facilitate smoother freight transport for industrial and agricultural produce. It will also spur growth in both industrial and agricultural sectors, ultimately enhancing employment opportunities and benefiting Bihar's economy.

Bihar produces almost 85-90% of India's makhana (lotus seeds or foxnuts) and the move is expected to benefit farmers of the Mithilanchal region including districts such as Madhubani, Darbhanga, Sitamarhi, Samastipur, Purnea, and Katihar. Makhanas are currently processed and packed outside the state.

More than a million farmers - many from EBCs (extremely backward classes) - are involved in makhana cultivation. The JD(U)-BJP coalition performed well in these regions in the 2020 Bihar election.

Broken Dreams-Shame and Shackles

Pictures of the first group of Indian immigrants deported by the Trump administration on a military aircraft, handcuffed and legs chained on the long flight home has outraged public opinion. With Parliament in session, the opposition was up in arms, forcing foreign minister Subramanyam Jaishankar to make a statement in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. The optics are terrible for the Narendra Modi government that prides itself in taking the India-US relations to unprecedented heights. India has a "comprehensive global strategic partnership covering almost all areas of human endeavour....", is how the MEA describes its current relations with the US.

military aircraft, in such an abrupt manner is not acceptable." As Jaishankar pointed out in his statement, this is not the first time

on a nationalist anti-immigrant plank. He had promised to throw out illegal "criminals, rapists, murderers and drug peddlers" immediately after taking

deportees are treated with some amount of dignity. Jaishankar assured Rajya Sabha that India would do so. The whole incident has left a bad taste.



And yet, the Donald Trump government has bundled out undocumented migrants of a "friendly country". No one is batting for people entering the US illegally, and Washington has every right to throw them out. But this does not mean that Indian citizens have to be humiliated and chained to their seats on a nearly 20-hour flight from Texas to Amritsar. The fact that the US is doing it to illegal migrants from across the world is of little comfort.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor made the point succinctly: "We are protesting precisely this issue, that the manner in which the US did what they did was really unacceptable. We believe they have a legal right to deport people who are illegally in their country. And if they are proven to be Indian nationals, we have a legal obligation to admit them, to accept them in our country. But the manner in which it was done, in handcuffs, squeezed into a

Indians without valid documents have been sent back from the US. The process has been on from 2009. The minister gave the exact numbers: 2009, number of deportees 734, 2010-799, 2011-597, 2012-530, 2013-515, 2014-591, 2015-708, 2016-1303, 2017-1024, 2018-1180, 2019-2042, 2020 - 1889, 2021-805, 2022-862, 2023-617, 2024-1368 and 2025-104.

Much is being made of the fact that the deportees were sent back on a military aircraft and shackled like criminals. But Jaishankar insisted that the procedure remained the same. "This is applicable to chartered civilian aircraft as well as military aircraft. There has been no change, I repeat, no change from past procedure for the flight undertaken by the US on 5 February 2025."

But this time around, the deportees were not sent home quietly. Donald Trump won the 2024 elections

office. So every plane load of migrants sent out was given maximum publicity. In fact the first video of the Indian deportees chained and handcuffed were released by the US Border Patrol on X with the words: "USBP and partners successfully returned illegal aliens to India, marking the farthest deportation flight yet using military transport. This mission underscores our commitment to enforcing immigration laws and ensuring swift removals. If you cross illegally, you will be removed." Cracking down and taking action against illegal immigrants is all part of Donald Trump's nativist domestic politics. But it has also hurt Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nationalist image. Though it is a fact that the Indian nationals sent out have broken US law, making a spectacle of their humiliation does not suit Modi. India will have to engage with the US government and ensure that the

However the bottom line is that overall bilateral ties will not be affected. The Modi government cries itself hoarse over illegal migration from Bangladesh. Now that the friendly government of Sheikh Hasina is no longer in power in Bangladesh, there will be many in the wider Hindutva fold who would like the government to take a leaf out of Donald Trump's play book send illegal Bangladeshi migrants by the plane loads to Dhaka. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Washington next week for a meeting with Donald Trump, tricky issues like tariffs and migration will be on the table. How the two sides negotiate the bumps in the relationship is not clear. But so long as Trump regards China as America's principle rival, India will remain relevant as a balancing factor in Asia. But if Trump and Xi Jinping cut a deal, that would be another story.

48 Below Age Of 25 In First Batch Of Illegal Indian Immigrants From US

Amritsar: A US military aircraft carrying first batch of 104 illegal Indian immigrants, with the highest number of 30 each were from Haryana and Gujarat, reached Amritsar in Punjab on Wednesday.

A total of 30 deportees were residents of Punjab. The US military C-17 aircraft landed at Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport amid tight security. Two people each were from Uttar Pradesh and Chandigarh, while three from Maharashtra. The deportees include 25 women and 12 minors, with the youngest passenger being just four years old.

Forty-eight people are below the age of 25. The flight, which took off from Texas on Tuesday, also carried 11 crew members and 45 US officials overseeing the deportation process. A senior Punjab official said that most deportees from the state belong to Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Tarn

Taran, Jalandhar, Nawanshahr, Patiala, Mohali and Sangrur. Some of them had entered the US illegally, while others overstayed their visas. They were deported on the C-17 plane that took off from San Antonio, Texas.

This was the first round of deportation of illegal immigrants that coincided with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington next week. This will be PM Modi's first



visit after Donald Trump took over as US President for the second time. External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar had earlier said that New Delhi is open to the "legitimate return" of Indian nationals living illegally

abroad, including in the US. India has expressed readiness to accept these migrants, post-verification, EAM Jaishankar conveyed this to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio last month. "For the first time in history, we are locating and loading illegal aliens into military aircraft and flying them back to the places from which they came," President Trump told reporters last month. Punjab NRI Affairs Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal has expressed disappointment over the US decision to deport the Indians, saying they have contributed to the US economy and should have been granted permanent residency, instead of being deported. Approximately 7,25,000 illegal immigrants from India live in the US, making it the third-largest population of unauthorised immigrants after Mexico and El Salvador, according to data from the Pew Research Centre. Many people from Punjab, who are now facing deportation, had entered the US through the "donkey route" or other illegal means by spending lakhs of rupees. The US administration has launched a crackdown against illegal immigrants after Trump became the President.

How Many Indians Deported From US In Last 15 Years? S Jaishankar Shares Data

Amid the Opposition clamour on discussing the deportation of over 100 illegal Indian immigrants by the US, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday said that such actions by the US authorities were "not new", and revealed the data of the deported Indians in the last 15 years. A total of 15,756 illegal Indian immigrants have been deported to India from the US since 2009, the minister told the Rajya Sabha.

"The process of deportation (by the US) is not new... it has been there for years. This is not a policy applicable to only one country. Our focus should be on the crackdown on illegal migrants... We are engaging with the US to ensure deportees are not mistreated," the minister said.

According to the data shared by Mr Jaishankar, 2019 saw the most number of Indians being deported by the US (2,042), followed by 1,889 in 2020, the year when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world.

Here is the year-wise data of Indians deported from US:

2009: 734
2010: 799
2011: 597
2012: 530
2013: 515
2014: 591
2015: 708
2016: 1,303



2017: 1,024
2018: 1,180
2019: 2,042
2020: 1,889
2021: 805
2022: 862
2023: 617
2024: 1,368

2025 (till February 5): 104

A US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed in Amritsar on Wednesday, the first such batch of Indians deported by the Donald Trump government as part of a crackdown against illegal immigrants. Of them, 33 each are from Haryana and Gujarat, 30 from Punjab, three each from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and two from Chandigarh.

Many of these migrants had spent a

huge amount of money, often obtained through loans, on promises of legal entry into the US. Instead, they endured gruelling, multi-country treks arranged by human traffickers.

As the Indians landed, many horror stories followed about the manner in which they were transported from the US to India. A video shared by the US Border Patrol showed the migrants being handcuffed and their legs shackled as they were forced to do a shuffled walk which is more commonly associated with hardened criminals.

The manner of these deportations triggered a furious response from opposition MPs in India, who have attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the government. The opposition even questioned why the Centre could

not send a plane to bring back its citizens in a "humane manner".

"We are the fifth-largest economy in the world... when countries like Colombia, which don't even figure in the top 10, can send an aircraft and bring their citizens back with dignity, what stops our government from sending an aircraft? We don't have a shortage of these," Trinamool MP Saket Gokhale said, referring to Colombia and its stand-off with the US on the migrants' issue.

Mr Jaishankar, responding to these criticisms in Parliament said that the deportations by the US are organised and executed by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

"Deportations by the US are organized and executed by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) authorities. The standard operating procedure for deportation by aircraft used by ICE has been effective since 2012. I repeat, that is effective from 2012 and provides for the use of restraints. However, we have been informed by ICE that women and children are not restrained. Further, the needs of deportees including during transit, related to food and other necessities, including possible medical emergencies are attended to. During toilet breaks, deportees are temporarily unrestrained if needed in that regard," he said.

Darien Gap: Deadly 97-Km Jungle Crossing That Migrants Brave To Reach US

The United States recently deported 104 Indian migrants, handcuffed and shackled for a nearly 24-hour flight back to India. The deportation came after US President Donald Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration, a topic he recently discussed with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a phone call, AP reported.

The illegal journey into the US often involves dangerous crossings through multiple countries, including the treacherous Darien Gap - a vast, roadless jungle that connects Colombia and Panama.

What Is the Darien Gap?

The Darien Gap is a 97-km stretch of dense rainforest, swamps, and mountains. It is the only break in the Pan-American Highway - a road system stretching from Alaska to Argentina. This impenetrable region has long been avoided due to its extreme terrain, harsh climate, and lack of infrastructure. But for migrants desperate to reach the US, it has become an unavoidable gateway.

Those crossing the Darien Gap face steep mountains, muddy swamplands,

fast-moving rivers, and dangerous wildlife. The jungle is home to venomous snakes, jaguars, and deadly insects.

However, the most significant threats are from criminal organisations that control the route. The smuggling networks, drug cartels, and armed groups demand payments, rob migrants, or subject them to violence. The 'Donkey Route' through Darien Gap - Many Indians attempting to enter the US illegally follow what is known as the 'donkey route'. This involves travelling to countries such as Central American nations like Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala where visas are easy to obtain. From there, they make their way to Mexico and then attempt to enter the US, often with the help of coyotes (human smugglers) who charge thousands of dollars for the dangerous crossing.

This method has become increasingly popular as direct air routes to the US become harder due to stricter visa regulations. Smugglers, mafia gangs, and organised crime syndicates take advantage of these migrants,

promising them safe passage but often abandoning them in life-threatening conditions.

Scale of migrants crossing the Darien Gap - In recent years, the number of people crossing the Darien Gap has skyrocketed. In 2023, over 5.2 lakh migrants made the journey - more than double the figure from the previous year. By 2024, over 3 lakh had already crossed, though the numbers had slightly declined due to increased enforcement efforts, Reuters reported. A decade ago, only a few thousand people attempted this crossing annually. Today, it has turned into a high-risk migration highway, with people from Venezuela, Haiti, Ecuador, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India making the perilous trek. The journey can take anywhere from 7 to 15 days, with migrants facing food and water shortages, disease, and rampant crime. Many do not survive. Humanitarian Crisis in the Darien Gap The Darien Gap remains a humanitarian disaster, with 312 migrant deaths or

disappearances reported from 2015-2022 and 229 more between 2021 and 2023. In 2023 alone, MSF (Medecins Sans Frontieres, also known as Doctors Without Borders) treated 676 sexual assault victims, with 233 cases recorded in early 2024. Overcrowded shelters lack essentials like food, water, and medical aid, leaving many migrants stranded. Social media misinformation, often driven by smugglers, fuels crossings.

With more migrants using this passage, the impact on local communities and the environment has also been devastating. Indigenous villages along the route are overwhelmed with people, while deforestation and pollution are worsening in the fragile jungle ecosystem.

The region is also a major hub for human trafficking and cartel activity. Colombia's Gulf Clan, one of the most powerful drug cartels, controls smuggling operations. They reportedly earned \$57 million from migrant crossings in just the first 10 months of 2023.

No words: Court tears into CBI, probe agency for inaction in financial fraud case

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday expressed strong dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) and the CBI of their handling of a multi-crore financial scam case, and directed them to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the allegations.

"We have no words to demonstrate the conduct of the Investigating Agencies-- EOW as well as CBI. We may say, we are disappointed," said the bench of Justices Revati Mohite-Dere and Prithviraj Chavan, as it was hearing a plea seeking a probe into big-ticket financial fraud by businessman Anand Jaikumar Jain.

Complaints filed with the EOW in 2021 and 2023, accused Jain, the director of Jai Corporation Ltd, of misappropriation of public funds, fraudulent trading, money laundering, and round-tripping of funds through shell companies. An activist, Shoaib Richie Sequeira, who filed a Public Interest

Litigation, alleged that investor funds worth Rs 4,255 crore and additional public funds were funnelled through offshore accounts and shell companies to evade scrutiny. The High Court remarked, "We feel that there will be no fair and impartial investigation into the alleged crimes either by the EOW or by the Superintendent of Police, CBI, EOW and hence, a special team needs to be constituted by the Zonal Director CBI to ensure efficient investigation into offences of such magnitude". "The need to instil confidence in the investigations and consequently, in the administration of justice, is of utmost concern. The case in question has national and international ramifications," the bench added. The High Court bench criticised the EOW for simply forwarding complaints to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) without conducting any preliminary enquiry.



14,264 labourers died from 2018 to 2022: Union Minister to Abhishek Banerjee

Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee has sought data on the number of labourers across the country who have died in the past five years. In response, Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje said 14,264 labourers have died in the past five years from 2018 to 2022.

Raising the issue in Parliament, Banerjee questioned whether the Centre has any data on the number of labourers' deaths in hazardous industries and construction sectors across the country in the past five years. He also sought details of the

fatalities year-wise and industry-wise. He further asked for the details of the total amount of compensation disbursed to the families of the labourers who died during the said period, and the number of cases of compensation which are still pending, state-wise. The Diamond Harbour MP also enquired the details of the measures taken by the government to ensure workplace safety and timely disbursement of compensation to the affected families.

Replying to Banerjee, Minister of State for Ministry of Labour and Employment

Shobha Karandlaje said the number of labourers' fatalities from 2018 to 2022 were 1,154, 1,127, 1,050, 988 and 1,053, respectively, as per the data received from the states and Union Territories.

She said the Centre enacted the Factories Act, 1948, which provides for the safety, health and welfare of workers working in factories registered under law.

The Factories Act, 1948 is enforced by the respective state governments through the Chief Inspectors of Factories (CIFs) /Directorates of

Industrial Safety and Health (DISH) in their respective sphere.

Karandlaje said the Chief Inspectors of Factories (CIF) and the Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health (DISH) were empowered to take legal action against the occupier and manager of the factory for violating the provisions of the act. In the case of the construction sector, she said, provisions of the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Condition of Service) Act, 1996 stipulate all measures to ensure the welfare, safety and health of construction workers.

Why did Hindenburg go after Adani Group? Nathan Anderson breaks silence

Hindenburg Research founder Nathan Anderson spoke for the first time about why the US-based short-selling firm decided to investigate the Adani Group. In an interview with news agency PTI, Anderson said the decision was based on "red flags" raised by some media groups.

He also said the decision to shut his firm was not because of any legal or any other threat, but due to workload. And that he stands by all its reports, including the one against Adani Group. "We initially saw media articles outlining red flags, took a closer look, and just kept following the evidence," he said in the interview.

The Hindenburg report, released in January 2023, accused the Adani Group of using offshore companies to inflate revenue and manipulate stock prices while accumulating debt. Adani Group had repeatedly denied all allegations in

the report. The report led to a sharp fall in the stock prices of Adani Group companies, wiping out over USD 150 billion from their market value. However, over time, the group managed to recover a major portion of the losses.

Addressing claims that Hindenburg's report was an attack on India's economic growth, Anderson rejected the allegations.

"We have always believed in India's potential and view market transparency and strong corporate governance as key factors that can fuel India's growth story," he said.

Adani Group strongly denied the allegations made in the report and called it a deliberate attempt to damage its reputation. The matter reached the Supreme Court, which later ruled that no further investigation was needed beyond the ongoing probe by market regulator Sebi.

Anderson termed as "goofy conspiracy" the attempts by some to link Hindenburg with alleged anti-India groups like OCCRP and George Soros, saying his outlet never commented on them as it followed the policy of not feeding into "silly conspiracy theories".

In January, Anderson announced that he was shutting down Hindenburg Research. He clarified that the decision was not due to legal or personal threats, but due to workload. "As to why I retired, is all in the letter. It is not based on any threat, health issue, personal issue, or otherwise," he said.

Many questioned why Anderson did not step away and let someone else run Hindenburg. He responded by saying that the brand was too closely tied to him.

"Hindenburg is basically synonymous with me. If it was a software application or a bicycle factory, you could sell the

application or the factory. But when it's research driven by me, you can't really just hand that off," he explained.

Despite shutting down Hindenburg, Anderson maintained that all the firm's reports, including the one on Adani Group, were accurate. "We 100 per cent stand by all of our research findings," he said.

However, he hinted that his former team might continue working under a different brand. "I am happy to support the team if they want to launch a new brand, which I expect they will," he said.

On allegations of being in cohorts with OCCRP and George Soros, he said, "Of course not, but we have a policy of not feeding into silly conspiracy theories. When the main response to 100+ pages of evidence (presented in the report against Adani Group) is a goofy conspiracy, we view it as a sign that we were right on the mark."

BJP Set For Delhi 'Wapsi', 3 More Exit Polls Predict Big Election Win

The BJP has been tipped to win - by a margin of six - the 2025 Delhi Assembly election, according to NDTV's updated poll of exit polls. Fresh data, from Today's Chanakya, Axis My India, CNX, released Thursday evening predicts a return to power in the national capital, for the first time since 1998.

The Axis My India poll expects Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party to win between 45 and 55 of Delhi's 70 seats, while CNX is even more gung-ho, giving the BJP between 49 and 61 seats.

The former gives the ruling AAP 15 to 25 seats, the latter 10-19.

And Today's Chanakya gives the BJP 51 seats to the AAP's 19.

Health warning: Exit polls are often wrong. Neither of the three has any expectation from the Congress, giving it a solitary (maybe) seat, which emphasises the point on which all 12 exit polls agree - that the party continues to flop in Delhi. The updated



poll of exit polls now gives the BJP 42 of 70 seats - six more than required to form the government. Arvind Kejriwal's AAP, battling for what would be an impressive third consecutive triumph in Delhi, is expected to get only 27 - a big fall from the 67 it won in 2015 and 62 in 2020. The Congress? Just one seat. A prediction which, if it holds true, will again spotlight

the party's apparent inability to work with fellow opposition parties. The Congress and the AAP were expected, in the run-up to the Delhi polls, to join forces (as they have on the national stage) to defeat the BJP.

But that alliance never came to pass, mirroring the events that preceded last year's Haryana election, in which the

Congress' state leaders refused to countenance any deal with the AAP. The Congress was eventually thumped in Haryana too.

Meanwhile, back to Delhi and the 10 exit polls announced last night.

Seven of those 10 also predicted a big win for the BJP. People's Pulse, Poll Diary, and People's Insights were the most optimistic, predicting a low return of 40 and a high of 60 between them.

Chanakya Strategies, DV Research, JVC, and P-Marq also predicted BJP wins. The AAP, however, has firmly rejected the exit poll data, pointing

out they had been similarly written off before each of their wins in 2015 and 2020. AAP leader Sushil Gupta told news agency ANI,

"This is our fourth election... every time exit polls did not show AAP (winning, but) Arvind Kejriwal has worked for the people of Delhi. We will see the results in favour of AAP and we will form the government..."

DK Boss: The Kingpin of Jamtara's Cyber Underworld

Jharkhand Police uncovered a sophisticated cybercrime syndicate led by multiple individuals using the alias "DK Boss." The network operated from Jamtara, developing and distributing malicious APKs to steal financial data. The investigation, led by ASP Raghendra Sharma, linked over 415 cybercrime cases across India,

with losses exceeding Rs 11 crore.

Key Findings: The group created fake banking and government apps, mimicking SBI, Canara Bank, PNB, PM Kisan Yojana, and PM Fasal Bima Yojana. These malicious apps

gained remote access to victims' phones, capturing OTPs, banking details, and messages. The scammers used a centralized control panel to manage stolen data, including 2,700 victims and 2.7 lakh messages.

Arrests and Operations:

Six key members were arrested, including Mahboob Alam, Safaiddin Ansari, Aarif Ansari, Jashim Ansari, Sk Belal, and Ajay Mandal. Police seized 14 mobile phones, 23 SIM cards, 10 ATM cards, Rs 1,08,800 in cash, two cars, a laptop, a DSLR camera, and a drone. The network

frequently changed locations and used fake SIM cards for encrypted communications.

How the Scam Worked: Mass Targeting: Malicious apps were sent via WhatsApp to thousands of users. Remote Access: Once installed, scammers accessed victims' bank accounts and OTPs without their knowledge. Money Laundering:

Fraudsters used dummy accounts sourced from labor contractors to move stolen funds. Tech Expertise: The group used Java programming and ChatGPT to bypass antivirus checks. Police Crackdown & Future Action: A month-long operation tracked the scammers across Jharkhand, Haryana, and Kashmir. Further investigation is underway to identify other syndicate members and potential collaborators. The Jamtara cybercrime network has been a hub for digital fraud in India, and authorities continue efforts to dismantle its operations.



Court's 'last chance' warning to Kangana Ranaut in Javed Akhtar's defamation case

A Mumbai court on Tuesday granted actor and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut "one last chance" before issuing a non-bailable warrant against her, as she skipped a mediation meeting to settle the long-standing defamation case between her and Bollywood lyricist Javed Akhtar.

The actor, through her advocate Rizwan Siddiquee, informed the Bandra court that she was attending Parliament, which prevented her from appearing.

However, advocate Jay K Bhardwaj, appearing for Akhtar, filed an application seeking the issuance of a non-bailable warrant against Ranaut to ensure her presence. Bhardwaj pointed out that Ranaut had been absent on nearly 40 key dates when she was required to be present in court.

The court directed Ranaut's counsel to file a reply to the application, and the advocate opposed the issuance of the warrant. However, the Magistrate decided to give Ranaut one "last chance" before proceeding with the warrant.

The legal battle between Ranaut and Akhtar stems from a meeting held at Akhtar's residence in March 2016. At the time, Ranaut and actor Hrithik Roshan were in the news over exchanged emails, which had

escalated into a public spat. Akhtar, reportedly close to the Roshans, took it upon himself to hold a meeting with Ranaut and allegedly asked her to apologise to Roshan.

Ranaut did not respond immediately. However, in 2020, following actor Sushant Singh Rajput's alleged suicide, Ranaut described the 2016 meeting with Akhtar during a televised interview. Akhtar found the interview defamatory and subsequently filed a defamation complaint against Ranaut.



The legal dispute intensified when Ranaut filed a counter-complaint against Akhtar, alleging that he attempted to coerce her into apologising under undue pressure. This proceeding against Akhtar has since been stayed by the Dindoshi Sessions Court.

In December 2024, both Ranaut and Akhtar had decided to opt for mediation. However, this has not yet taken place and was scheduled for Tuesday. While Akhtar appeared before the Magistrate's court, Ranaut was occupied with parliamentary duties and could not attend.

Study decodes how grey matter in mothers' brains undergoes changes during pregnancy



A new research shows that 94 per cent of the grey matter in the brains of mothers undergoes changes during pregnancy. The

team from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) found that there is a reduction and partial recovery of almost 5 per cent of grey matter in 94 per cent of the total grey matter volume of the brain, especially in regions linked to social cognition. The study analysed the brains of women during pregnancy for the first time using neuro-imaging techniques. The study, published in the journal *Nature Communications*, included non-pregnant mothers, whose partners were pregnant, to distinguish biological effects from those caused by the experience of being a mother. Researchers from UAB, the Gregorio Marañón Health Research Institute and the Hospi-

tal del Mar Research Institute together, with other prestigious international institutions, were part of the study. The findings reveal a dynamic trajectory in the brain during pregnancy and postpartum, significantly linked to the steroid hormone fluctuations inherent to pregnancy, and to the psychological well-being of the mothers.

The findings revealed that, during the first pregnancy, gray matter volume in the brain is reduced by up to 4.9 per cent, with a partial recovery during the postpartum period. "These changes are observed in 94 per

cent of the brain, being particularly prominent in regions linked to social cognition," said the study. The study also demonstrated, for the first time, that the evolution of these morphological changes in the brain is associated with fluctuations in two estrogens hormones that increase exponentially during pregnancy and return to basal levels after delivery. The researchers observed that a greater increase and subsequent decrease in estrogen levels is associated with a greater decrease and subsequent recovery of brain grey matter volume.

Cardiovascular risk underestimated for people in HIV, finds global study

A team of US researchers has found that for people with HIV, current risk models underestimated cardiovascular events in both women and black men in high-income countries. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality globally, posing a particularly significant threat to people with HIV (PWH), according to new study published in the journal *Lancet HIV*. Previous studies have called into question whether these commonly used prediction models perform well among people with HIV, and there remains a gap in understanding of what these scores mean for PWH in low- and middle-income countries

(LMICs).

Researchers from Massachusetts General Hospital, a founding member of the Mass General Brigham healthcare system, in collaboration with an international team of investigators, conducted a study to evaluate how well existing atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD) risk estimates could be used to predict cardiovascular outcomes in global populations with HIV.

Their prospective cohort study used data from Randomized Trial to Prevent Vascular Events in HIV (REPRIEVE) to analyse individuals with HIV who were from low-, middle-, and high-income countries across several continents.

The researchers found that for those in REPRIEVE, current risk models underestimated cardiovascular events in both women and black men in high income countries (HICs), while overestimating cardiovascular events for all PWH in LMICs.

"These findings allow researchers to fine-tune cardiovascular disease prediction models for people living with HIV," said Patrice Desvigne-Nickens, a medical officer within the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

"Assessing the accuracy of these predictions in subgroups of the population is possible because of carefully developed outreach and enrolling a diverse study population – repre-



senting all people at risk," Desvigne-Nickens added. According to Steven Grinspoon, chief of the Massachusetts General Hospital Metabolism Unit in the Endocrinology Division of the Department of Medi-

cine, this study underscores the need for nuanced, region-specific and population-specific CVD prediction models that accurately reflect cardiovascular risk for PWH, including those living in LMICs.

Can popping supplements help you manage your PCOS?

The internet is obsessing over supplements as a way to manage and even treat PCOS.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) affects millions of women worldwide, but its exact cause remains a mystery. Many women grapple with its symptoms, from excessive facial hair growth to hair loss (yes, we get the irony), acne, irregular periods and more. To manage these symptoms, women often seek remedies that range from lifestyle changes to wellness teas to even medications.

Among these, supplements, especially for PCOS, are getting a lot of attention online. These supplements promise a way to manage these symp-

toms, and some also claim that they can help you heal your PCOS. But can supplements really help you or is it a big fat scam?

How PCOS impacts women's body

In simple terms, PCOS is a hormonal disorder that commonly affects women of reproductive age. Dr Anjana Singh, director of obstetrics and gynaecology at Fortis Hospital, Noida, explains that PCOS is characterised by enlarged ovaries with small cysts on their outer edges. Symptoms include unexplained weight gain, ex-

cessive facial hair, discolouration of skin on the neck, and missed periods. "Patients of PCOS may experience weight gain, especially around the belly, along with fatigue and fertility issues," adds Dr Rohan Palshetkar, head of unit at Bloom IVF. Women with PCOS are also more prone to diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Although the exact cause is unknown, factors like genetics, insulin resistance, and inflammation are believed to play a role.

Now, PCOS doesn't just im-



pair physical health; it often takes a toll on mental well-being too. Women with PCOS frequently report higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression,

which can further complicate symptom management. Addressing these emotional challenges is just as crucial as managing physical symptoms.

Understanding Maha Kumbh

By OPS Malik

Kumbh, or Maha Kumbh, is celebrated every 12 years at four different locations in India. Among them, Prayagraj, where the Ganga, Yamuna, and the invisible Saraswati rivers meet, is the most important. This confluence is known as Triveni. During these occasions, massive congregations of devotees gather at these riverbanks to take a ritual bath in the holy waters. In these moments, all differences—whether of creed, color, age, sect, or region—disappear as people bathe together. These congregations are often referred to as Melas. The Kumbh is fundamentally a peaceful gathering of people, with only a few focused on publicity or glamour. Extensive arrangements are made to ensure the smooth movement of millions of pilgrims, as well as their safety. The success of these efforts hinges on finding a balance between the people's aspirations and beliefs and the need to ensure their safety and smooth transit to and from the sacred sites. Therefore, it is essential to understand the entire ecosystem of the Kumbh holistically. For the purposes of this article, we will focus on the Prayagraj Kumbh. The People's Aspirations The Kumbh Mela is linked to the Hindu mythological story of

the churning of the ocean, known as Samudra-Manthan, where the Devas and Asuras churned the ocean to obtain the nectar of immortality (Amrit). The Amrit was placed in a Kumbh (pot), and during the struggle that followed, drops of the nectar fell at four locations. These places were sanctified, and they became the sites for the Kumbh Mela every 12 years. Astrologically, the Kumbh Mela occurs when the positions of certain planets align with those at the time of the original event. The positions of the Sun and Jupiter are particularly significant.

Hindus believe that bathing in the rivers during these auspicious moments serves two main purposes: the washing away of sins and the attainment of Moksha (liberation). Motivated by these beliefs, millions of pilgrims gather at the sacred sites to take the holy dip.

The Challenge of Crowd Management

The greatest challenge of the Kumbh Mela lies in managing the massive crowds. Driven by a strong desire, the pilgrims aim to bathe at the same sacred site, often at the same time. Effectively managing the crowds to ensure their safety is the main goal of the arrangements. Since



the Kumbh lasts approximately 45 days, with six key bathing days, it is a long-term event that requires highly detailed planning. The key challenges include:

Security

Sanitation and public health

Safe and efficient movement of pilgrims

Transport logistics

These challenges begin as soon as the Mela preparations commence, often after the rains, and grow progressively. It is crucial for all concerned to remain vigilant and avoid complacency. Various SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) are developed, but the central challenge remains

crowd management.

Lessons From 2001 Maha Kumbh

During the 2001 Maha Kumbh, the first of the millennium and free from incidents, the guiding principle for crowd management was established: "Stagger in Time and Space". Accordingly, emergency and contingency plans were devised. Additional bathing ghats were constructed upstream on the Ganga River, and pilgrims were encouraged to bathe there, as the waters in the Sangam region were equally sacred. Though this measure had limited appeal, it

helped alleviate some of the pressure on the main bathing area, the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati. The Sangam area itself became a focal point during the Mela. The confluence, referred to as the Sangam Nose, is the epicenter of the Kumbh Mela, and most people want to bathe there. This area is relatively small, with a major portion reserved for the Akharas, who have their own ritual baths. The space for general pilgrims is limited, and access to the Yamuna River is restricted due to its depth and hazards. As a result, the area for bathing at Sangam is much smaller than most pilgrims anticipate.

SPECIAL FEATURE

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital's survivorship portal gives researchers free and unparalleled data analysis

Co-corresponding authors of the Cancer Discovery paper on the St. Jude survivorship portal (L to R): Xin Zhou, PhD, Jinghui Zhang, PhD, and Yutaka Yasui, PhD.

Scientists from St. Jude Children's Research Hospital have announced the first data portal for sharing and analyzing pediatric cancer survivorship data. The portal integrates data involving whole genomic sequencing, treatment exposure and outcomes—creating an unprecedented research system that houses 400 million genetic variants from over 7,700 childhood cancer survivors.

The portal is free to use and open access as a part of the St. Jude Cloud ecosystem. Research at St. Jude has been instrumental in increasing childhood cancer survival rates over the past 61 years, and today approximately 85 percent of childhood cancer patients in the U.S. are successfully treated and alive five years post-diagnosis.

This growing population of survivors is at risk of developing a wide range of adverse health effects that can be linked back to their cancer or its treatment. Such outcomes include premature mortality, organ dysfunction, secondary cancers and psychosocial challenges, among others. By studying this unique population of childhood cancer survivors, investigators can gain insight into how to best tailor therapy up-front and provide screening and support later in life to avoid adverse outcomes.

"With the portal, with just one click, you can make new discoveries," said co-corresponding

author Jinghui Zhang, PhD, St. Jude Department of Computational Biology. "In the past, people would spend weeks downloading, analyzing, organizing and summarizing data into figures — now you can do all that in just minutes."

Some new findings from the data in the Portal include:

Platinum chemotherapy has been used for decades to treat cancer and is known to cause hearing damage, but the data in the portal were able to show that not all types cause the same amount of damage.

- Gene mutations are associated with placing cancer survivors of African ancestry at greater risk for developing heart disease later in life.

- A novel association was discovered between mental health, age and limb amputation. Receiving an amputation at an older age (teenage compared to earlier childhood) is associated with increased resilience against poor mental health.

"There are half-a-billion clinical data points in the portal, hundreds

of terabytes of genetic data supported by dynamic and interactive visualization analysis," said Xin Zhou, PhD, St. Jude Department of Computational Biology.

"We aren't just sharing data," said Yutaka Yasui, PhD, St. Jude Department of Epidemiology and Cancer Control. "We are facilitating the analysis and visualization of data and making it free to anyone — that's a tremendous resource for the cancer survivorship community." About 15,000 children are diagnosed with pediatric cancer each year in the United States. The most common childhood cancers include leukemia, lymphoma, and brain tumors. However, there are over 100 different types of cancers that occur in children.





'80-Hour Workweek, No Girlfriend': Bill Gates' Microsoft Story

For Bill Gates, autism meant being hyper-focused, result-oriented and, in his early days, being willing to code on first-generation PCs for days on end, to the point where he fell asleep with exhaustion.

By: Vishnu Som

About two hours from Los Angeles, Palm Springs is a desert resort city - arid and beautiful with the San Jacinto mountains as a scenic backdrop.

Bill Gates has a home here, within an upscale Golf and Resort Community.

In early January, the Microsoft co-founder met me in Palm Springs, a short drive from his home, for what would be a very personal, intense conversation on a project very dear to his heart - Source Code: My Beginnings - part one of what may end up being a three-part memoir.

In Source Code, the most intimate look at his growing up years, Bill Gates makes an astonishing statement - "If I were growing up today, I probably would be diagnosed on the autism spectrum. In the time of my childhood, the fact that some people's brains process information differently from others wasn't widely understood."

I asked the billionaire philanthropist if he was willing to speak some more on this intensely private part of this life. "I still rock [my legs] a bit, which is kind of characteristic of, they call it self-stimulation. So, you know, I have to catch myself because it can make people nervous if I'm sitting doing that. So, no, I don't think it ever goes away. It'd be harder to diagnose now because it's less acute and I've learned, you know, how to shape my behaviour."

Autism encompasses a range of

symptoms, including difficulties with social interaction, repetitive actions, heightened or reduced sensory responses, and distinctive cognitive traits. Every individual is impacted in different ways. Some may exhibit exceptional abilities in some domains.

For Bill Gates, autism meant being hyper-focused, result-oriented and, in his early days, being willing to code on first-generation PCs for days on end, to the point where he fell asleep with exhaustion.

"Well, I knew there was something different. I give the example that they asked us in sixth grade to write a report, and I picked a small United States state called Delaware. You know, I ended up turning in a 200-page report, and the other kids were turning in five to 10-page reports. And I was kind of embarrassed. Wow, you know, did I go nuts over this thing? You know, teachers were always a little confounded at where I was so capable and also yet so distracted. You know, I literally had teachers at one stage say to me, we should skip you ahead one or two grades, or a teacher say, no, we should hold you back so you can be more mature."

Computing, for Gates, was a means to feed his focus and his drive to achieve tangible results. Early generation code using BASIC (Beginner's All Purpose

Symbolic Instruction Code) was one of the most impactful programming languages for personal computers through the seventies. The outcomes of writing thousands of lines of code were brutal - you either hit a homerun (software which worked), or you went back to the drawing board if the code crashed.

"I was lucky enough to be exposed, starting with the terminal when I was 13 at Lakeside High School, the private school I was lucky enough that my parents sent me to. I was given a chance to write and then various people tell me, 'okay, that's really good or that's not good enough.' And so, I had thousands of hours of it and I loved it because it had this sense of correctness, of purity that you immediately know, did you have it right?"

For a large part of his early years, Gates struggled with interpersonal relationships in school while enjoying an extremely close relationship with his parents and grandparents. "My social skills, particularly with people my own age, other than a few nerdy boys like me, were very slow to develop. And so I had, you know, the advantages of kind of that intense focus, but some of the deficits as well. And, you know, it befuddled my parents and teachers a little bit."

Friendships, when they did happen, were intense.

"At the beginning of eighth grade, I started

noticing this certain kid at the lower school. He was hard to miss. Tall, with unruly brown hair, Kent Evans had a deep cleft lip and spoke with a slight impediment. Later I would learn that as a baby, his lip and palate were so badly deformed Kent's parents had to feed him with an eyedropper," says Gates. "Looking back now, I think those earlier challenges helped seed a fearlessness that would manifest itself again and again in the too-short time I knew him."

Kent Evans was Bill Gates' closest confident in school, a partner-in-crime, a supporter who always had his back. There are 182 references to Kent Evans in the book.

Gates' life came crashing down when he lost Kent.

"I retreated into myself watching a slideshow in my mind's eye, taking through images of recent days, grasping for evidence that what I had heard wasn't true. He died tragically," he says in Source Code.

"My childhood really only had this one traumatic event in it. I'd had grandparents die, but at a pretty old age. And I'd never even contemplated the idea that somebody close to me, not to mention my very best friend, would just be killed," says Gates. "It was just so shocking, you know, the headmaster called me up, made sure my parents were with me.



8 Game-Changers In Union Budget 2025

By Amitabh Kant

On February 1, 2025, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled her record eighth Union Budget in the Indian Parliament, setting a progressive roadmap for India's transformation into 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

This budget, which encompasses a comprehensive strategy with a focus on agriculture, MSME, investment, and exports, will significantly stimulate economic growth while addressing both immediate and long-term challenges.

Boosting Disposable Income

Central to the 2025 budget is the reform in personal income tax—the biggest of which we have seen in many years. By exempting incomes up to ₹12 lakh from taxation—up from the previous ₹7 lakh bracket—the government has put ₹1 lakh crore back into the pockets of the people. This move will boost disposable income across the board, thereby fuelling consumption and creating a ripple effect across the economy that supports GDP growth.

This will supercharge the economy's primary engine while also reducing bureaucratic hindrances and the long-standing grievances of India's middle class by effectively championing a socio-economic justice that will resonate strongly with millions.

Fiscal Deficit Goals

Second, India's commitment to fiscal consolidation is both visionary and necessary. By pegging the fiscal deficit at 4.4% of GDP by FY26, the government is reassuring current and prospective investors that India is on a path of sustainable economic governance. This balance of growth and fiscal discipline is crucial in maintaining macroeconomic stability—a key factor for attracting foreign direct investments.

As economic shocks and instabilities continue to upend parts of the world, India's prudent fiscal management will signal a steady and fertile market, creating confidence among global investors and positing India as the top destination to grow industry and infrastructure.

Boost To Labour-Intensive Sectors

Third, by reviving key labour-intensive sectors like textiles, leather, toys, and food processing, India is killing two birds with one stone. These sectors are positioned to absorb

large portions of the workforce, effectively addressing unemployment while enhancing skill development. In particular, the initiative to develop tourism by enhancing infrastructure and simplifying travel processes, including visa-free travel for specific groups, will have a vast multiplier effect—boosting significant job creation and regional development across the board.

In tourism, the emphasis on developing the top 50 tourist destinations in partnership with various states creates a dual benefit of economic and cultural enrichment. The policy enhancements in this sector can unlock dormant potential, transforming India into a hub of global tourism that celebrates and monetises its diversity.

Revamping PPPs In Infra

Fourth, revamping public-private partnerships (PPPs) in infrastructure will inject new life into long-standing projects that require innovative solutions and fresh capital. The Rs. 10 lakh crore Asset Monetization Plan is a proactive approach to maximising resource efficiency and ushering in a new era of infrastructural development.

A Nuclear Focus

Fifth, the ambitious energy transition plan, with a strong focus on nuclear energy, is a clear marker of India's commitment to environmental sustainability and energy independence. The goal of developing 100 GW of nuclear energy by 2047, combined with an allocation of ₹20,000 crores for research on small modular reactors, is the government's concerted effort to modernise India's energy landscape. Additionally, proposed amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act will catalyse private sector participation, encouraging innovation and investment.

The Fund Of Fund Scheme

Sixth, the budget places a strong emphasis on innovation, with a ₹10,000 crore replenishment for the Fund of Fund Scheme (FFS), doubling its total to ₹20,000 crore and boosting domestic venture capital for startups through Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs). Launched in 2016, the FFS has transformed initial scepticism into measurable success, with ₹11,688 crore committed through 151 AIFs that have catalysed a capital pool

exceeding ₹91,000 crore. The FFS is a game-changer in providing essential growth capital to early-stage companies.

As a major plus, the establishment of a dedicated Fund of Fund for DeepTech indicates a concerted effort by GoI to employ advanced technologies to drive economic progress. Innovations in AI, quantum computing, and biotechnology are taking centre stage in this new digital world, and strategic investments will sharply enhance India's global competitiveness. The National Geospatial Mission, for its part, will also modernise infrastructure through the integration of geospatial data, in turn, improving urban development and land management. By creating a comprehensive geospatial database, India will be able to undertake informed decision-making and resource allocation, increasing efficiency across sectors.

Improving The Ease Of Business

Seventh, the budget's focus on regulatory reforms is an extension of the Narendra Modi government's sustained efforts to make India a more business-friendly environment. The newly established High-Level Committee for Regulatory Reform is another step towards eliminating bureaucratic inefficiencies that have long stifled innovation and investment. The committee will audit current financial regulations and their impacts on the sector's growth, showing India's willingness to adapt policies in alignment with evolving economic realities. The Investment Friendliness Index of States is a proven method of incentivising regional governments to cultivate attractive investment conditions. As we witnessed with the Aspirational Districts Programme, goal-driven competition among states leads to a healthier economic environment overall, encouraging both domestic and foreign investments to flow into various regions, instead of being concentrated in a few metropolitan areas.

Budget 2025: What's Better Than Reforms? Execution

By Aditya Sinha

Reforms are often seen as the engine of growth, but the term now covers both genuine structural shifts and superficial interventions that merely redistribute inefficiencies. True reform enhances economic freedom, reduces transaction costs and aligns incentives toward productivity. It was seen in Margaret Thatcher's privatisation drive, which unleashed market forces in the UK. In contrast, Japan's post-bubble financial "reforms" preserved inefficiencies, prolonging stagnation. Beyond policy changes like deregulation and trade liberalisation, process reforms are equally vital. Douglas North's institutional economics underscores that long-term growth depends on improving the mechanisms that govern economic transactions, as exemplified by the US Interstate Commerce Act (1887), which redefined market efficiency, and India's GST reform, whose success hinges on continuous process improvements. As Ronald Coase emphasised, reducing transaction costs is central to market efficiency—reforms must not only remove distortions but also simplify processes that enable smoother economic functioning. Reform, therefore, is not a one-time event but a continuous recalibration of institutions, incentives, and mechanisms. The Union Budget reflects this ongoing reformist orientation, pushing for efficiency, competitiveness, and fiscal sustainability. The Budget sets a reform-oriented agenda across six key areas—taxation, power sector, urban development, mining, financial sector, and regulatory reforms—each strategically targeted to enhance India's growth potential and global competitiveness over the next five years. If implemented properly, these reforms aim to unlock efficiencies, attract investments, and streamline governance to create a high-growth economic environment. 'Trust First, Scrutinise Later' Tax reforms have played a



significant role in simplifying compliance and improving the ease of doing business. Over the past decade, faceless assessment, a taxpayer charter, faster refunds, and the 'Vivad se Vishwas' scheme have reduced litigation and enhanced voluntary compliance. The Budget builds on these efforts with a 'trust first, scrutinise later' approach, ensuring a more taxpayer-friendly regime. The Finance Minister has announced that the New Tax Bill will be introduced next week, marking one of the most significant overhauls of the direct tax system in recent decades. A key advantage of

this reform is its potential to drastically reduce tax-related litigation. According to the Ministry of Law's Legal Information Management & Briefing System (LIMBS), which tracks cases involving the Union government, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has been entangled in approximately 60,000 pending tax cases across various courts and tribunals. The majority of these disputes are before the High Courts, contributing to judicial backlogs and delays. Why A Simplified Tax Code Is Crucial A streamlined and simplified tax code—potentially reducing both

the number of chapters and the overall word count—would enhance tax certainty. Fewer words translate into fewer opportunities for ambiguous interpretations and legal disputes. While it is challenging to undertake at this stage, the government should ideally have conducted a comprehensive review to identify the specific provisions that generate the highest volume of litigation. Eliminating or restructuring these contentious sections should be a top priority to ensure a more predictable and efficient tax regime. In addition to the proposed reforms in indirect taxes, there is a pressing need to address complexities within the Goods and Services Tax (GST) framework. Currently, India's GST system operates with a four-tier structure, featuring rates of 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%. This multiplicity of tax slabs contributes to compliance challenges for businesses and administrative burdens for tax authorities. However, implementing such rate rationalisation falls under the jurisdiction of the GST Council—a constitutional body comprising the Union Finance Minister and state finance ministers.

Achieving consensus within this council is essential, as states must agree to any proposed changes. A more straightforward tax structure would alleviate the burden on businesses, promote a more transparent and predictable tax environment and contribute towards economic growth. The Existing Insurance Framework Apart from this, the financial sector remains critical to sustaining economic growth, and the Budget introduces several initiatives to strengthen capital flows, deepen financial inclusion, and improve regulatory efficiency. The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit in the insurance sector will be increased from 74% to 100%, but only for companies reinvesting all collected premiums in India. This move will boost long-term financing for infrastructure and social security. However, while this reform encourages greater foreign participation, a comprehensive review of the existing insurance regulatory framework is necessary to address structural inefficiencies and ensure a balanced approach to market liberalisation.

Plea in High Court against Drone Federation India over allegations of forgery

An RTI activist has filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) alleging forgery and regulatory manipulation by Drone Federation India (DFI), and has sought a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the matter.

The PIL, filed on January 29, 2025, by activist Tej Pratap Singh, accuses DFI of fabricating official documents, including a No Objection Certificate (NOC), to circumvent legal barriers and rebrand itself as 'Drone Federation of India'. The petition argues that the forged document, submitted to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), falsely implied government recognition, misleading both industry stakeholders and the public.

The PIL also highlights concerns over DFI's influence in the UAV sector, accusing the organisation of engaging in lobbying tactics to manipulate tender processes in favour of select member companies, thereby stifling fair

competition. Additionally, DFI's acquisition of office space in the former Air India Building has raised further suspicion, with claims that the tenancy was secured through questionable recommendations.



Although the MCA has begun an inspection into the case, critics argue that the investigation is facing delays due to DFI's alleged ties with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MOCA). The PIL stresses the need for immediate action, insisting that only a CBI-led probe can bring transparency and hold those responsible accountable.

If proven guilty, DFI's leadership could face serious legal consequences under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023, with charges under sections 61, 316, 336, 337, 338, and 340—all of which are considered cognisable and non-bailable offences. Despite the severity of the allegations, DFI has remained silent on the matter, refusing to issue any official statement.

FBI Strikes 'The Manipulators' in Major Cyber Crackdown, 17 Million Americans Affected



As Google deploys AI-driven hacking bots, hackers battle among themselves, and the FBI remotely wipes malware from U.S. victim computers, the global war against cybercrime is intensifying. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has now confirmed that 17 million Americans have been affected by the latest FBI

crackdown—Operation Talent—which has taken direct aim at criminal hacking networks. Among the biggest targets in this operation is a shadowy group known as The Manipulators, which has now suffered a major blow.

FBI Cracks Down on Dark Web Marketplaces

According to unsealed seizure warrants,

Operation Talent was a joint effort by the FBI and international law enforcement agencies against illicit dark web marketplaces. The operation successfully seized multiple servers linked to Cracked, a notorious cybercrime marketplace. Key findings from the investigation reveal:

Cracked has been active since March 2018.

The marketplace facilitated the sale of stolen login credentials, hacking tools, malware-hosting servers, and cyber fraud services.

It boasted over four million users, with 28 million posts advertising cybercrime tools and stolen data.

The platform generated approximately Rs 33.2 crore in illicit revenue.

At least 17 million Americans were directly impacted by stolen credentials and cyber fraud linked to Cracked.

Pakistan-Based Cybercrime Networks Raided

As part of the global offensive, authorities have also conducted a separate raid targeting 39 Pakistan-based cybercrime marketplaces allegedly operated by The Manipulators. This elusive group has been linked to major hacking operations and fraudulent activities. Cybercrime Crackdown Gains Momentum

The latest actions by the FBI and international agencies signal an escalation in efforts to dismantle cybercrime networks. With AI-driven cybersecurity measures and law enforcement aggressively pursuing hackers, the battle against online crime is heating up.

Authorities warn that cybercriminals continue to adapt, making it crucial for individuals and businesses to stay vigilant against cyber threats.

Concern for India as Trump orders State Dept to 'modify or rescind' Chabahar sanction waivers



In what could be a potential setback for India's connectivity projects with Central Asia, US President Donald Trump has directed his administration to "modify or rescind" sanction waivers for the Chabahar Port project in which India has a stake.

It was in November 2018 that India received a sanction waiver for the port project from Trump during his first term.

Only last year, India and Iran, after ironing out several legal issues, signed the 10-year port deal that would allow the state-owned India Ports Global Private Limited to manage and operate a terminal in Iran's Chabahar. Now, ahead of PM Narendra Modi's potential White House visit that could happen as early as next week, Trump has ordered his administration to apply

"maximum pressure" on Iran to "end its nuclear threat, curtail its ballistic missile programme and stop its support for terrorist groups".

"The Secretary of State shall modify or rescind sanctions waivers, particularly those that provide Iran any degree of economic or financial relief, including those related to Iran's Chabahar port project," said the

'National Security Presidential Memorandum' executive signed by Trump.

Chabahar is a strategic asset for New Delhi as it would allow access to Afghanistan by circumventing Pakistan.

India earlier received a narrow waiver on the Chabahar port from Washington D.C. due to its importance in the reconstruction and economic development of Afghanistan in November 2018.

However, now, the Taliban are back in power in Afghanistan. Though India does not recognise the Taliban regime, it maintains a technical mission in Kabul.

During the only call between Modi and Trump after the latter's official inauguration, the US President urged India to ensure "fair" trade and check the illegal migration of Indians to the US. He urged India to purchase more American-made security equipment, too.

Now, the issue of the sanctions waiver around Chabahar is likely to figure in talks between Modi and Trump going forward. The US President, during his first term (2017-2021), applied a strategy of "maximum pressure" on Tehran after walking out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA was an agreement struck between Tehran and a number of Western nations under President Barack H. Obama to limit Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief. From August 2018 till the end of his term in 2021, Trump had introduced over 1,500 new sanctions on Iran.

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Netflix India 2025 Line-Up:

Among More, Shah Rukh Khan And Saif Ali Khan's Sons' Debut Shows



Streaming giant Netflix on Monday unveiled its ambitious line-up of projects for 2025, including debut series by Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan, Saif Ali Khan's new movie and his son Ibrahim Ali Khan's maiden film, as well as the new chapters of its beloved shows "Kohrra" and "Delhi Crime".

Shah Rukh Khan was the surprise of the event as he came to unveil "The Ba***ds of Bollywood", which marks son Aryan's debut as a director and creator.

Shah Rukh and Gauri Khan's daughter Suhana Khan has already started her career as an actor with the streamer's 2023 film "The Archies".

"It is my prayer that even if they get 50 per cent of the love that I have received, then it will be a lot for them," said the 59-year-old superstar.



Produced by Gauri Khan under the banner Red Chillies Entertainment, "The Ba***ds of Bollywood" follows an ambitious outsider and his friends as they navigate the larger-than-life yet uncertain world of Bollywood.

Saif Ali Khan, who was injured in an intruder attack at his home last month, was one of the early stars to present his film "Jewel Thief - The Heist Begins". Co-starring Jaideep Ahlawat, the film is a heist drama by filmmaker Robbie Grewal and Kookie Gulati.

Dressed in denims with a bandage on his neck, Saif joined Ahlawat and producer Sidharth Anand to announce the film, which will make its debut on Netflix.

"It feels very nice to be standing here in front of

you. And it feels very nice to be here. I'm very excited about this movie," said Saif.

"Siddharth and I have been talking about this film for a long time, and I've always wanted to do a heist film and a film like this, I couldn't have asked for a better co star," he added.

Producer Karan Johar was another high profile guest at the event and announced two movies from Dharmatic Entertainment, the digital arm of his banner Dharma Productions.

The first film is "Nadaaniyan" with Ibrahim and Khushi Kapoor, who also made her acting with Netflix's "The Archies".

Johar said the film will introduce audiences to a "new face of romance".

"I have come to present the new face of romance. If you want to see true chemistry, you will get that in the picture. They are truly smashing together. When I saw it, I really felt that FOMO of being young again. Such a young, fun, high-spirited, high-energy film and this new age romance, you will get that in this film," he added.

The movie is directed by Shauna Gautam.

While "Nadaaniyan" is about young love, Johar's second film for the streamer, "Aap Jaisa Koi", is a slightly more mature take on love and romance. Starring R Madhavan and Fatima Sana Shaikh, the movie is directed by Vivek Soni of "Meenakshi Sundareswar" fame.

"Dhoom Dhaam", starring Pratik Gandhi and Yami Gautam, is releasing on February 14.

The films slate also includes "Test", starring Nayanthara, Sidharth and Madhavan, and "Toaster", the debut production venture Rajkumar Rao and wife Patralekhaa.

Netflix also revealed the first looks of the next chapters of its beloved shows "Kohrra 2" and "Delhi Crime" season three as well as "Rana Naidu 2".

Rubina Dilaik brings out her inner 'desi girl' in Indian ensemble

Popular television actress Rubina Dilaik flaunted her "desi" side as she looked every inch gorgeous in a mustard-hued Indian ensemble.

Rubina took to her Instagram, where she shared a handful of pictures of herself dressed in a mustard coloured traditional kurta set with delicate pearls, embroidered flowers, lace trims at the hemline and sleeves. the caption, she wrote: "Desi Girl" along with a heart emoticon. Rubina always brings her best fashion foot forward on social media. Just a few days ago, she posted a picture of herself wearing an aquamarine coloured dress paired with a jacket.

For the caption, she wrote: "Month of love its (heart emoji) is... Hi #february (sic)."

Currently, Rubina can be seen on the second season of the popular

reality show "Laughter Chefs", where she has teamed up with singer Rahul Vaidya. For the unversed, the two were last seen together in another reality show, "Bigg Boss 14".

The latest season of "Laughter Chefs" will see some new faces like Mannara Chopra, Samarth Jurel, Rubina, Abhishek Kumar, and Samarth, along with some familiar faces such as Sudesh Lahiri, Krushna Abhishek, Kashmira Shah and Rahul Vaidya. "Laughter Chefs Season 2" premiered on January 25 this year.

The last season of the show featured Aly Goni, Krushna Abhishek, Kashmera Shah, Bharti Singh, Jannat Zubair, and Arjun Bijlani, flaunting their culinary skills. With the previous season being such a huge success.

Talking about the actress, she

married her longtime beau Abhinav Shukla, an actor, in 2018. When she had entered the controversial reality show "Bigg Boss 14", the two had talked about how they wanted to walk their separate ways. In 2023, the couple welcomed twin girls whom they have named Jeeva and Edhaa.

On the professional front, Rubina started her work on the small screen with "Chotti Bahu". She then appeared in shows such as "Saas Bina Sasural", "Punar Vivah - Ek Nayi Umeed", "Devon Ke Dev...Mahadev", "Jeannie Aur Juju" and "Shakti - Astitva Ke Ehsaas Ki".

Rubina had also participated in "Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi 12" and "Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa 10". She made her film debut in 2022 with "Ardh" starring Rajpal Yadav and Hiten Tejwani.



Neha Sharma shared her 'best place to be' during weekends



Neha Sharma never fails to raise the temperature with her Instagram posts, and her most recent update is proof. The actress used social media to give a sneak peek into her blissful Sunday. The 'Yamla Pagla Deewana 2' actress was seen posing on her couch, wearing nothing but an oversized white shirt, along with white socks. "Best place to be..Happy Sunday!", Neha Sharma captioned the post. The diva's Insta post also included a picture of a delicious cake, along with a video of a wide range of beautiful flowers. Mesmerized by the sizzling pictures, a netizen commented, "Sunday is happier thanks to u!! You are so Pretty and always make me smile @nehasharmaofficial." The other

comment read, "Cute face" An Insta user penned, "Beautiful" Before this, Neha Sharma compiled a special birthday post for her sister Aisha Sharma as she turned 33 on 25th January 2025. The stunner shared a string of fun pictures of the sister duo, along with the following words, "Turn your magic on, to me she'd say...Everything you want's a dream away...Under this pressure, under this weight...We are diamonds...Here's to being diamonds together & whenever the world pressures you, you know that I have got your back, now and forever. Happy birthday @aishasharma25." Moving ahead, Neha Sharma will soon be seen in the highly discussed drama, "De De Pyaar

De 2." Helmed by Anshul Sharma, the film is a sequel to the 2019 film "De De Pyaar De.", starring Ajay Devgn, Rakul Preet Singh, and Tabu. While Rakul Preet Singh will reprise her role as Ayesha Khurana, Ajay Devgn will be seen as Ashish Mehra once again. Additionally, R. Madhavan has also been roped in to play Dev Khurana, Ayesha's father in the film. Additionally, the cast of "De De Pyaar De 2" will also include Tabu, Jimmy Shergill, Alok Nath, and Inayat Sood in significant roles, along with Tamannaah Bhatia and Prakash Raj in cameo appearances. "De De Pyaar De 2" is expected to be released on 14th November 2025.

Hina Khan reveals the most 'wonderful person' she knows



Hina Khan has always been extremely vocal about her relationship with boyfriend Rocky Jaiswal. Recently, the actress used social media to shower praises on the 'wonderful person'. She recently shared a post on her Instagram stories that read, "Name a wonderful person you know who was born in February month." Replying to his, Hina Khan mentioned below, "The best Human @rockyj1 Your Birthday month has officially begun Saint Valentine." Rocky Jaiswal will turn 38 on the 14th of February 2025. Prior to this, Hina Khan penned a special post, calling Rocky Jaiswal, 'the best human in her life.' The 'Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai' actress took to her official Instagram and shared a couple of unseen pictures of the couple's journey together over the years. The diva further penned a long appreciation note for her beau Rocky Jaiswal on the photo-sharing app. She wrote, "For the Best Human I know ! He shaved his head when I shaved and he only let them grow when mine started growing back. To the man who looks after my soul, To the man who always says I GOT YOU."

Hina Khan further added, "To the man who is always by my side even if there are hundred reasons to give up.. To this selfless man who only knows how to hold on. we have been with each other through so much.. through every thick n thin. We truly have lived a lifetime together and have stood with each other. From seeing through the toughest of times when we faced challenges in health during the pandemic." For those who do not know, Hina Khan has been battling stage-3 breast cancer.

Shilpa Shetty shows how to achieve balance with Bosu ball workout

Actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra has shared a motivating workout video to kickstart the week, showcasing how to achieve balance with a Bosu ball. The actress and fitness enthusiast demonstrated the effectiveness of this core-strengthening exercise. With her post, Shilpa encourages her fans to embrace balance as part of their fitness routine and start their Mondays with a strong foundation. Taking to her Instagram handle, the 'Dhadkan' actress shared a video of herself working out with a Bosu Ball. For the caption, Shilpa wrote, "Mondays are for BALANCE A Bosu Ball workout targets your core and stabilizing muscles, improving balance, strength, and coordination. It challenges your body on an

unstable surface, activating multiple muscle groups, enhancing functional fitness, and reducing injury risks while building overall stability and strength. #MondayMotivation #SwastgRahoMastRaho #BosuBallWorkout #BalanceYourWay #Balance." In the video, the 'Hungama 2' actress explained how a Bosu Ball workout challenges the body on an unstable surface, activating multiple muscle groups. She highlighted its ability to enhance functional fitness, reduce injury risks, and build overall strength and stability. Known for her dedication to fitness, Shetty often shares inspiring photos and videos from her intense workout routine on social media. A few days ago, she dropped

a video of her taking up the squat challenge and wrote in the caption, "Squat, squat till you get those glutes! What's a challenge without a little struggle? Third attempt, but I got it done! Set the tone for your week—push your limits and surprise yourself! #SquatChallenge #MondayMotivation #SwasthRahoMastRaho #GlutesOnFire." On the professional front, Shilpa Shetty was last seen in the Amazon Prime Video series 'Indian Police Force,' where she played the role of Delhi Police Special Cell Chief Tara Shetty IPS. She also starred in the 2021 comedy film "Hungama 2." Directed by Priyadarshan, the film also starred Paresh Rawal, Meezaan Jafri and Pranitha Subhash.



Deva: Why Bollywood Loves Bachchan, But Not His Rebellion

Mumbai Police was all about its climax. Roshan Andrews' seminal 2013 thriller moved towards a finale so audacious, it felt like a glimpse into the future. A twist not just ahead of its time, but one that cemented Malayalam cinema's conceit: to tell stories that don't just unfold but upend, where character is inseparable from conscience, and narrative from the world it dares to reflect. A conclusion that not only

was always inevitable; if only we had been watching closely, with the right gaze. It revealed Antony as a tragic figure, his aggression a smokescreen, his violence a performance—a desperate attempt to conform to the rigid architecture of masculinity. The weight of scrutiny forces him into an existence dictated by fear. So, like any great thriller, its denouement was shaped by a resolution that was not just a



conclusion but a consequence. Like any great thriller, it was crafted with both flair and spine. And, like any great thriller, it left us with a surplus of technique over gimmickry, of subtextual depth over textual highlights.

When someone chooses to adapt it, or worse, remake it, it should be obvious that the climax is untouchable. The setting can shift, the narrative can bend,

sealed the film's denotative arc but opened endless connotative readings. A revelation that Antony (Prithviraj), a police officer wrestling with the weight of his hidden sexuality, takes the most dramatic step by killing his own colleague to shield a secret the world had already taught him to dread. Mumbai Police Was Depth Over Highlights Unlike those thrillers where twists exist simply to shock, this one existed to disarm. And unlike those thrillers in which revelations feel abrupt, imposed, or sensational, this one

characters can be reshaped, but that final revelation must remain unchanged. It isn't meant to be reimagined, but only replicated, with fidelity. Its essence preserved, its weight undisturbed. No wonder, Mumbai Police was written in reverse, every plot point taken from the inevitability of its climax—much like Christopher Nolan's Memento (2000). It's a screenwriting feat so meticulously crafted that the only real task is to honour what's already on the page.