

# Across State

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## 'We made history for a reason tonight'

### Donald Trump claims victory in stunning comeback

#### Florida

Republican Donald Trump claimed victory in the 2024 presidential contest after Fox News projected that he had defeated Democrat Kamala Harris, which would cap a stunning political comeback four years after he left the White House.

"America has given us an unprecedented and powerful mandate and we made history for a reason tonight," he said early on Wednesday to a roaring crowd of supporters at the Palm Beach County Convention Center, flanked by his vice presidential running mate, Senator JD Vance, Republican leaders and members of Trump's family.

He also spent several minutes praising Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, who pumped some \$120 million into backing Trump's campaign. Trump has said he will appoint Musk to lead a government efficiency commission.

Other news outlets had yet to call the race for Trump, but he appeared on the verge of winning after capturing the battleground states of Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Georgia and holding leads in the other four, according to Edison Research.

Harris did not speak to her supporters, who had gathered at her alma mater Howard University. Her campaign co-chair, Cedric Richmond, briefly addressed the crowd after midnight, saying Harris would speak publicly on Wednesday.

"We still have votes to count," he said.

The former president was showing strength across broad swaths of the country, improving on his 2020 performance everywhere from rural areas to urban centers.



Republicans won a US Senate majority after flipping Democratic seats in West Virginia and Ohio. Neither party appeared to have an edge in the fight for control of the House of Representatives where Republicans currently hold a narrow majority.

Trump went into Election Day with a 50-50 chance of reclaiming the White House, a remarkable turnaround from January 6, 2021, when many pundits pronounced his political career to be over. That day, a mob of his supporters stormed Congress in a violent attempt to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

Trump picked up more support from Hispanics, traditionally Democratic voters, and among lower-income households that have keenly felt the sting of price rises since the last presidential election in 2020, according to exit polls from Edison.

Trump won 45% of Hispanic voters nationwide, trailing Harris with 53% but up 13 percentage points from 2020.

About 31% of voters said the economy was their top issue, and they voted for Trump by a 79%-to-20% margin, according to exit polls. Some 45% of voters across the country said their family's financial situation was worse off today than four years ago, and they favored Trump 80% to 17%.

Global investors were increasingly pricing in a Trump win late on Tuesday. U.S. stock futures and the dollar pushed higher, while Treasury yields climbed and bitcoin rose - all flagged by analysts and investors as trades that favor a Trump victory.

No matter who won the election, history was in the making.

Trump, 78, the only president to be impeached twice and the first former president to be criminally convicted, would also become the first president to win non-consecutive terms in more than a century and would be the oldest presidential candidate ever elected.

If elected, Harris, 60, the first female vice president, would become the first woman, Black woman and South Asian American to win the presidency.

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## One more person held in Baba Siddique murder case



### Mumbai

The Mumbai police on Wednesday arrested one more person in connection with the murder of NCP leader and former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique, an official said. The crime branch has apprehended the accused, the official said without elaborating. This is the 16th arrest in the case, the official said. Baba Siddique (66) was shot dead by three gunmen near his MLA son Zeeshan Siddique's office in Mumbai's Bandra area on October 12. Jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's brother Anmol Bishnoi is allegedly said to be behind the murder of Baba Siddique.

# Jarange-Patil's decision to withdraw from polls will help MVA, says Cong leader

### Mumbai

Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange-Patil's decision to withdraw from the Assembly elections will benefit the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), Congress leader Dhiraj Deshmukh said.

Jarange-Patil is from Marathwada and the impact of his agitation has been highest in this region. Deciding not to field candidates will benefit the MVA in all the 46 seats in Marathwada, he added.

Deshmukh, who is the Congress candidate from Latur Rural seat, said, "It would be wrong to view Jarange-Patil as a leader of one community, instead what he says applies to all communities dependent on agriculture in the state," he said. "Farmers of this region are more vulnerable

to drought, which happens once every four years," he said.



The agrarian crisis, particularly soyabean selling below Minimum Support Price (MSP), along with absence of job opportunities and new industries allegedly going to Gujarat are going to be major issues this election.

Jarange-Patil and his movement, Deshmukh said, would have the

was the epicentre of the Jarange-Patil movement," he said.

reduced to caste," he said.

Jarange-Patil, whose agitation for inclusion of Maratha community in the OBC category has seen widespread support, has decided to go back on his earlier decision to field candidates for the Assembly elections. His decision has been welcomed by both MVA and Mahayuti.

Rebellions by candidates have posed serious problems in many seats but Deshmukh said voters prefer candidates from the main parties. Deshmukh said the Congress has made Sachin Pilot the in-charge of Marathwada. "Each constituency is unique and we are going to the voters by taking into consideration the local issues," he said.

maximum effect in the Marathwada region. "The Anna Hazare movement in Delhi and its effect could be seen in the rise of AAP in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana. Similar sentiments would be reflected in Marathwada given this

Asked if the movement, which was based on the demand to include the Maratha community in the OBC category, would see consolidation of non-Maratha castes, Deshmukh replied in the negative. "All questions must not be

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## Mumbai cops arrest man from Karnataka for threat message to Salman Khan

### Mumbai

The Mumbai police on Wednesday arrested a man from Karnataka for allegedly sending a threat message to Bollywood actor Salman Khan along with a demand for Rs 5 crore on traffic police's helpline, an official said.

The 35-year-old accused, Bhikaram Jalaram Bishnoi, a resident of Haveli in Karnataka, was held by a team of the Worli police station here on Wednesday following his interrogation, he said.

Bishnoi, who is originally from Jalore in Rajasthan, had sent a threat message on the WhatsApp helpline of the Mumbai traffic police control room



on Monday night, the official added.

The threat message read, "If Salman Khan wants to stay alive, he should go to our temple and apologise or pay Rs 5 crore. If he does not do so, we will kill him; our gang is still active." The message

sender claimed he is the brother of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, he said.

A case was registered at the Worli police station against the accused person, the official added.

"During the investigation, it came to light that the accused hailed from Karnataka, following which a team of Worli police was sent to apprehend him. Bishnoi was nabbed late on Tuesday and after his interrogation, he was placed under arrest by the Worli police," he said.

Bishnoi was produced before the local court for transit remand, the official said, adding that he is being brought to Mumbai.



# 'Not Days, but How Many Hours...', SC Asks Ajit Pawar NCP to Issue Disclaimer in Newspapers in 36 Hours on Symbol

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar-led faction to publish a disclaimer in newspapers, including Marathi ones, that allocation of "clock" symbol issue was pending, saying the court is not keen giving him days instead "asking in how many hours you can do this?"

The matter came up for hearing before a bench comprising justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta, and Ujjal Bhuyan. Senior advocate A M Singhvi, representing the Sharad Pawar faction, submitted that the clock symbol has been used by Sharad Pawar for the last three decades and the symbol is closely associated with him.

Senior advocate Balbir Singh, representing the Ajit Pawar faction, contended before the court that his client



was complying with all conditions, which were imposed by the apex court regarding the use of 'clock' symbol.

The bench queried Singh, "why are you taking time for publishing disclaimer in newspapers?.....we are not giving you days, we are asking how many hours you

can do this?" Singh replied that it can be done within a few days. However, the bench made it clear that the disclaimer should be published in newspapers maximum within 36 hours.

The apex court was hearing the Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar led factions over the purported use and misuse of the "clock" symbol. The apex court suggested both the groups to focus on voters instead. "Don't waste your energy in courts. You both should go and be with the voters to woo them," the bench told the counsel representing the factions.

Sharad Pawar filed an application seeking to restrain the Ajit Pawar faction from using the 'clock' symbol in the upcoming Maharashtra assembly elections.

The apex court, earlier this year before the 2024 Lok Sabha election, directed NCP

to include a disclaimer in all the campaign materials that the use of the 'clock' symbol is pending before the court.

During the hearing today, Singhvi argued that the Ajit Pawar faction should not piggyback on his client and use any symbol other than the clock in the upcoming elections.

"If you find the clock is being misused, what will happen will I come to the lordships everyday in the middle of the elections saying that clock is being misused....", said Singhvi, adding that your court's arrangement has failed. Singhvi said they keep saying Sharad Pawar is our God and added they are violating the order passed by the court more than 6 months' ago. Singhvi pointed out that they have banners without the disclaimer.

## Rahul Surrounded By 'Urban Naxals', Flaunts Red-Cover Constitution: Devendra Fadnavis



Kolhapur

Ahead of the Maharashtra assembly elections, deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of aligning with 'urban Naxals' and also took a dig at Gandhi for flaunting a red-cover Constitution instead of the traditional blue.

"Rahul Gandhi is surrounded by urban Naxalites and people who create chaos. It seems that chaos is being spread in the name of Bharat Jodo Yatra. Gandhi flaunts a red-cover Constitution in

his hand. The Constitution must be respected. But why is the copy red in colour?" he asked adding that the red aligns more with Left-wing extremist ideologies than democratic values.

According to the home minister, 'urban Naxals' aim at polluting minds, instilling chaos and losing faith in the government's institutions and systems. Gandhi holds Constitution while supporting anarchy and chaos, he alleged.

Fadnavis further said that Gandhi travelled from Kashmir to Kanyakumari under the Bharat Jodo Yatra and many organisations had associated with it. "These are radical Leftists and if you look at their goals and working methodologies it will be evident that they are working to spread anarchy in the society," he said.

Earlier, the BJP leader had taken a dig at Gandhi over his 'Samvidhan Sammelan', saying it reflects his insincerity towards the Constitution. He accused Gandhi of doing "drama" and said that people would no longer buy such acts.

## In poll-bound Maharashtra, Rahul Gandhi bats for caste census, says its real meaning is 'justice'

Nagpur

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi once again advocated for a caste census on Wednesday while setting a poll plank for the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the Maharashtra Assembly elections. He said the first aim is to conduct the caste census and break the 50 per cent reservation limit.

"There are meetings going on in Delhi about caste census. They are discussing how to do it and whether to do it or not. But Let me tell you, the caste census will happen, and the 50 per cent limit (on reservation) will go. This will be our first step to safeguard the Constitution," said Gandhi at the Nagpur edition of 'Samvidhan Samman Sammelan' in Maharashtra, which goes to poll on November 20, followed by the counting on November 23.

"Caste census is just a name. The real meaning of it is nyay (justice)," said Gandhi, who has been highlighting the need for a caste census over the last few months.

"Modi ji (Prime Minister Narendra Modi) accuses me



of dividing the nation when I talk about caste census. In reality, I am merely telling the country that 90 per cent of our people are not part of the country's growth. They are not in the judiciary, bureaucracy or companies. They are labourers and workers being put in jails. This (caste census) will bring out the real picture of India," said the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha.

The Congress leader said when Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar wrote the Indian Constitution, he ensured that the ideas that had existed in India for thousands of years became part of it.

"It is the philosophy of life. When discussing Ambedkar or Gandhi,

we don't talk about an individual... Because when Ambedkar spoke, he was not one person. He spoke for crores of others. He spoke about the grief and hardships of others. When India asked Dr Ambedkar to draft the Constitution, the country wanted him to mention the hardships and grief of the oppressed in it," said Gandhi.

He said the Constitution envisages values such as equality, and respect for all religions, castes and languages. Criticising the ruling BJP and its ideological fount Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), he said when both organisations attack the Constitution, they are effectively attacking the "voice of India."



# J-K Assembly Seeks Restoration Of Special Status, Passes Resolution

## Srinagar

The Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly Wednesday passed a historic resolution seeking the restoration of the special status for the erstwhile state.

On day three of its maiden session, the Union Territory Assembly witnessed a dramatic turn as Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary introduced the resolution seeking the restoration of the special status J&K enjoyed under Article 370.

The resolution, which calls for reinstating the special constitutional provisions for the erstwhile state, was passed with a majority vote amid strong opposition from the BJP legislatures.

Choudhary, speaking on behalf of the government, defended the resolution, which he read aloud to the Assembly: "This Legislative Assembly reaffirms the importance of the special status and constitutional guarantees, which safeguarded the identity, culture, and rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and expresses concern over their unilateral removal. This Assembly calls upon the Government of India to initiate dialogue with elected representatives of people of Jammu and Kashmir for restoration of special status, constitutional guarantee and to work out constitutional mechanisms for restoring the provisions. This Assembly emphasises that any process



for restoration safeguards both national unity and the legitimate aspirations of people of Jammu and Kashmir".

As soon as Choudhary introduced the resolution, the house witnessed a ruckus as LoP Sharma opposed it, saying the parliament had already abrogated Article 370 and the same cannot be restored. Last month, ETV Bharat had reported about Omar Abdullah-led government's plan to introduce the resolution.

Wednesday's resolution gained backing from National Conference legislatures, including Health Minister Sakina Itoo, who seconded the motion. Additionally, independent MLAs Sheikh Khursheed and Shabir Kullay, People's Conference (PC) chief Sajad Lone, and three PDP legislators voiced their support,

strengthening the government's position in the House.

Despite mounting support for the resolution, BJP leaders, led by Sharma, continued to raise objections, questioning the shift in legislative priorities and arguing that the motion was introduced without adequate notice.

BJP lawmakers criticized what they described as a "last-minute" change to the day's agenda, sparking protests that disrupted the session. All 28 BJP legislators staged a dramatic protest in the house, terming the NC-led government's resolution as "anti-national". The lawmakers stormed into the well of the house, voicing their strong disagreement with the decision and calling it a "betrayal" of national interests.

Amid the uproar, BJP leader

Sham Lal Sharma climbed onto a table in the well, accusing the National Conference of "manipulating" the sentiments of Jammu and Kashmir's people "since 1947". "Yesterday, you spoke a different language. Article 370 is final. This political gimmick won't work. From Sheikh Abdullah to Omar Abdullah, emotional blackmail has been routine," Sharma said, urging the Speaker to maintain independence and avoid siding with any political party.

BJP MLAs chanted "Jahan Huway Balidan Mukherji, woh Kashmir hamara hai" (The Kashmir where Mukherji was martyred is ours), "August 5 Zindabad," and "Anti-national agenda nahi chalega" (Anti-national agenda won't prevail), along with chants of "Bharat

Mata ki Jai" and "Jai Shri Ram."

Leader of the Opposition Sunil Sharma further alleged that the NC government intended to change the name of the historic Shankaracharya Hills to Takht-e-Sulaimani, calling it part of a "larger agenda" that BJP members vowed to resist. "We will not allow this," BJP MLAs shouted.

Speaker Abdur Rahim Rather called the resolution to a vote, resulting in its passage by a majority. However, the persistent protests from BJP members forced the Speaker to adjourn the Assembly for 15 minutes to restore order.

The resolution addresses the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5, 2019, when the central government annulled Article 370 and reorganized the region into two Union Territories: Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. The National Conference, in its Assembly election manifesto, committed to advocating for the restoration of statehood and the region's special status.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had indicated on day 1 of the maiden Assembly session that the treasury benches would table their resolution seeking special status. It was PDP's Waheed Ur Rehman Para, however, who stole the show on that day as he moved a resolution against the abrogation of Article 370.

# Supreme Court Rules LMV Driving Licence Holder Can Drive Transport Vehicle Weighing Upto 7,500 Kg

## New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that a person holding a driving licence for a light motor vehicle (LMV) is also entitled to drive a transport vehicle having an unladen weight below 7,500 kilograms.

The verdict was delivered by a five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud. The legal question had given rise to various disputes over payment of claims by insurance companies in accident cases involving transport vehicles being driven by those possessing licences to drive LMVs.

The five-judge bench led by CJI and comprising justices Hrishikesh Roy, P S



Narasimha, Pankaj Mithal, and Manoj Misra had reserved the verdict on August 21. During the hearing, the Attorney General R Venkataramani, representing the Centre, had contended before the

court that the consultations to amend the Motor Vehicles (MVs) Act, 1988 are almost complete. He had submitted that the proposed amendments are yet to be tabled in the Parliament and this can be done only

in the winter session of the Parliament.

Today, the apex court said if the gross vehicle weight is within 7500 kg, the quintessential common's man driver with LMV license can also drive a transport vehicle.

Justice Roy, pronouncing the judgment on behalf of the bench, said we are able to reach such a conclusion as none of the parties in this case has produced any empirical data to show that LMV drivers driving transport vehicles is a significant cause for road accidents in India. Justice Roy said that road safety is a serious public issue globally and 1.7 lakh persons were killed in India due to road accidents.



## CBSE Disaffiliates 21 Schools, Downgrades Six In Delhi, Rajasthan

**New Delhi**

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has disaffiliated 21 schools due to a significant number of non-attending students from Classes IX-XII, and downgraded six schools from senior secondary to secondary level across Delhi and Rajasthan, the CBSE official said on Wednesday.

According to CBSE, the decision was taken following surprise inspections in 27 schools across Delhi and Rajasthan. The practice of dummy/non-attending admissions contradicts the core mission of school education, compromising students' foundational growth. To address this issue, CBSE has taken decisive action to combat the proliferation of dummy schools and send a clear message to all affiliated institutions to resist the lure of accepting dummy or non-attending admissions. The Board will strive to ensure that schools adhere to lawful and ethical educational practices.

The CBSE conducted a series of surprise inspections in 27 affiliated educational institutions across Rajasthan and Delhi on September 3. The prime objective of the surprise checks was to ascertain that schools were operating in compliance with the norms of regular attendance of students as per affiliation and examination byelaws of the Board, it said.

The Board emphasised that dummy or non-attending schools undermine educational integrity and issued show-cause notices, allowing schools to respond within 30 days.

The vital observations of the surprise inspection committees in regard to the irregularities were communicated as a report to the respective schools. The replies submitted by the schools were examined in detail by the Board and based on the findings supported by videographic evidence this action has been taken, it added.

## Indian Army Gets A Shot In The Arm In J&K; Inducts 'Asmi' Pistol For Northern Command

**Jammu**

In a significant push to Centre's Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign, the Indian Army has approved the purchase of 550 indigenous Asmi machine pistols for close-range combat after acquiring an equal number of these guns previously, the Army said on Tuesday.

The Asmi machine pistol is touted to be a game-changer for soldiers in close combat and will be provided to soldiers posted in the Northern Command to strengthen the army's power along the strategic China-Pakistan border.

In a post on X, a spokesperson for the Additional Directorate General of Public Information of the Indian Army said, "In a significant boost to the nation's

Atmanirbharta initiative, Indian Army inducted 550 'Asmi' machine pistols into Northern Command". According to the



ADG PI, the weapon which has been developed by Colonel Prasad Bansod of the Indian Army in collaboration with DRDO is being manufactured indigenously by Lokesh Machine Hyderabad. "The 'Asmi' machine pistol is

a robust, compact and reliable weapon designed for close quarter battles and specialised operations.

Its unique semi-bullpup design

allows for single-handed operation both as a pistol and submachine gun. This 100 percent Made-in-India weapon's induction demonstrates the unwavering commitment of the Indian Army towards Atmanirbhar Bharat to propel the Nation towards self sufficiency in defence manufacturing," the ADG PI. Close combat, or close-range battle, typically involves small, lethal, and lightweight weapons. In such situations, Asmi is expected to prove highly effective.

**Ranchi**

A total of 683 candidates are in the fray for the November 13 elections to secure seats in the 82-member Jharkhand assembly. This election will also test the luck of veteran politicians including former speaker and chief minister.

As the BJP-led NDA and JMM-led INDIA alliances gear up for a neck-and-neck battle, the political rhetoric has already charged up.

The first phase will see a clash of the titans as former chief minister Champai Soren is taking on JMM's Ganesh Mahali, while six-time Ranchi MLA and former speaker C P Singh will try his luck against his JMM counterpart Mahua Maji.

Mithilesh Thakur, considered to be the most influential minister of the Hemant cabinet, is contesting from Garhwhah which is readying for a triangular contest between Thakur, BJP's Satyendranath Tiwari, and SP's Girinath Singh. There is a probability of a direct contest between Congress nominee K N Tripathi and BJP's Alok

## Jharkhand Set For A Clash Of The Titans In First Phase Of Poll



Chaurasia in Daltoganj. But the independent candidature of Inder Singh Namdhari can turn the tide.

Saryu Rai is contesting on a JDU ticket from Jamshedpur West against JMM minister Banna Gupta. There is a possibility of a tough fight between the duo. On the other hand, Jamshedpur East might throw up an interesting contest between Raghuvar Das's daughter-in-law Purnima Sahu and former state president of Congress and former IPS Dr Ajay Kumar.

The first phase will also see 73 women candidates vying for spaces in the assembly. Candidates like former education minister Dr Neera Yadav, Geeta

Koda, Shilpi Neha Tirkey, Amba Prasad, and Purnima Das are prominent among them.

RJD's Subhash Prasad Yadav is taking on Dr Neera Yadav of BJP in Koderma. Similarly, BJP's Sunny Toppo will take on Shilpi Neha Tirkey in Mandar. Geeta Koda, wife of former chief minister Madhu Koda, contesting on a BJP ticket from Jagannathpur, will face Sona Ram Sinku of Congress.

Overall, there is a possibility of a tough fight in the first phase of the Jharkhand assembly elections and as the election campaign gains momentum the heavyweights are holding their breaths in the last leg.

## Cabinet approves Rs 10,700 crore equity infusion in FCI to cope with increased operations

**New Delhi**

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved increasing the equity capital of Food Corporation of India (FCI) by Rs 10,700 crore. The decision was taken keeping in mind the fact that there has been an increase in the scale of operations owing to steady rise in MSP and procurements made by the state-owned entity, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

The equity infusion has been done for the current financial year (2024-25) and the decision is aimed at bolstering the agricultural sector and ensuring

the welfare of farmers nationwide.

"This strategic move shows the government's steadfast commitment to supporting farmers and fortifying India's agrarian economy," Vaishnaw added.

He further said that it is a significant step towards enhancing the operational capabilities of FCI in fulfilling its mandate effectively.

FCI resorts to short term borrowings to match the gap of fund requirement. This infusion will help to lower the interest burden and will ultimately reduce subsidy of the government.



## Cabinet approves PM-Vidyalaxmi scheme to provide financial aid to meritorious students

New Delhi

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the PM-Vidyalaxmi scheme to provide



monetary support to meritorious students so that financial constraints do not prevent them from pursuing quality higher education, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

As per the scheme, anybody who gets admission in quality higher education institutions (QHEIs) will be eligible to get collateral free, guarantor-free

loan from banks and financial institutions to cover the full amount of tuition fees and other expenses related to the course.

The scheme will be applicable to the top QHEIs as determined by the NIRF rankings, including all HEIs, government and private, that are ranked within the top 100 in NIRF in overall, category-specific and domain-specific rankings, state government HEIs ranked in 101-200 in the NIRF and all Central Government-run institutions.

"This list will be updated every year using the latest NIRF ranking, and to begin with 860 qualifying QHEIs, covering more than 22 lakh students to be able to potentially avail benefits of PM-Vidyalaxmi, if they so desire," an official statement read.

## Former British PM Rishi Sunak, wife offer prayers at Raghavendra Swamy Mutt in Bengaluru

Bengaluru

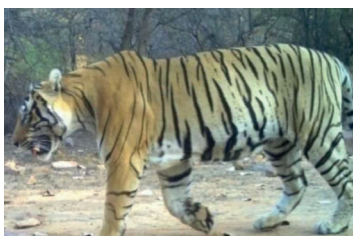
Former British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty offered prayers at Raghavendra Swamy Mutt in Jayanagar here. The couple was accompanied by Sunak's in-laws -- Infosys co-founder N R Narayana Murthy and Sudha Murty, who is a Rajya Sabha member. Photos of the couple seeking blessings of Guru Raghavendra Swamy have surfaced on social media platforms. They also participated in the temple's traditional rituals during their visit on Tuesday.



## Ranthambore Tiger Reserve In Rajasthan Grapples With Overcrowding As Tiger Population Soars

Bharatpur

Once sprawling and ample, the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan, is now home to a bustling tiger population that has outgrown its boundaries, housing 35% more tigers than its capacity. A total of 77 tigers are now occupying a sanctuary designed to accommodate approximately 56. This surge in numbers, attributed to both natural births



and successful conservation efforts, has led to plans for the relocation of some tigers to nearby reserves.

Chief Conservator of Forests

(CCF) Anup K. R. said, "The reserve has a capacity for around 56 tigers within its 392-square-kilometer area. Currently, we have about 21 more tigers than the ideal population, and this situation requires periodic transfers to other sanctuaries." CCF Anup added that preparations are underway to shift two tigers each to the Mukundra and Ramgarh Visdhari Tiger Reserves, with relocation pending NTCA approval.

## Home-cooked meals become dearer in October

New Delhi

Both vegetarian and non-vegetarian home-cooked meals became costlier in October due to a pick-up in vegetable prices, a report said on Wednesday.

The cost of a vegetarian thali increased by 20 per cent to Rs 33.30 per plate compared to the year-ago period and was also up from Rs 31.30 in September primarily due to the surge in vegetable prices, a division of rating agency Crisil said.

The monthly 'roti rice rate' report said onion prices were up 46 per cent on year in October, while potato prices were up 51 per cent primarily due to the continuing rains, which led to lower arrivals and also impacted harvests in Maharashtra and Karnataka, it said.

The report said the prices of tomatoes more than doubled to Rs 64 per kg from Rs 29 per kg in the year-ago period as rains impacted the arrivals, the report said, adding that prices of this commodity are likely to stabilise from November with supplies from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh.

The report said vegetable prices have a 40 per cent weightage in the overall thali cost and hence fluctuations impacted the overall costs.

Prices of pulses which have an 11 per cent weight in a vegetable meal, were up by 11 per



cent during the month due to lower opening stock, lower stock pipeline and festive demand, the report said, adding that a cool-down in prices is expected from December on fresh arrivals.

An 11 per cent drop on year in fuel cost helped restrict the jump in meal costs, the report said. In the case of a non-vegetarian thali, a 9 per cent decline in broiler prices which accounts for half of the thali cost led to a relatively slower uptick in costs, the report said.

A home-made non-veg thali cost Rs 61.60 in October as against Rs 59.30 in the month-ago period and Rs 58.60 in the year-ago period, the report said.

Vegetable prices, which account for 22 per cent of the non-veg thali costs, also influenced the overall non-veg thali cost, it said.

## Buddhism shows world how to counter strife, climate crisis: President

New Delhi

The Buddhist community has much to offer to mankind at a time when the world is facing strife and climate crisis, President Droupadi Murmu said on Tuesday.

Inaugurating the first Asian Buddhist Summit, Murmu highlighted that the world, grappling with ongoing conflicts and the climate crisis, could draw valuable lessons from Buddhism's central tenet of 'karuna' (compassion).

"When the world today is facing an existential crisis on many fronts, not only strife but also the climate crisis, the Buddhist community has much to offer to humankind," she said. "The various schools of Buddhism show the world how to counter narrow sectarianism, but their central message remains focused on peace and non-violence."

The President also stressed the need to explore how the teachings of Buddhism could help strengthen Asia and bring lasting peace to the region and the world.



"Indeed, we need to expand the discussion to see how Buddha Dhamma can bring real peace to Asia, and to the world — a peace free from not only physical violence, but also from all force of greed and hatred," she added.

Murmu's comments come at a time when global tensions, particularly the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict and unrest in West Asia, are at the forefront of international discussions.

In her speech, the President also reflected on the preservation of Buddhist literature, noting the vital role played by Chinese and other scholars in translating key Buddhist texts over the centuries.



# Answered all questions, told them truth: Siddaramaiah after deposing before Lokayukta police



## Bengaluru

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said he has answered all questions posed to him by Lokayukta police in the MUDA case and he has told them the "truth".

The CM, who has been named as accused number 1 in the FIR lodged by the Lokayukta police, is facing allegations of illegalities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife Parvathi B M by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority

## (MUDA).

The Lokayukta police on Wednesday questioned Siddaramaiah for about two hours.

"Everything has happened legally, BJP and JD(S) are making false allegations...I have answered all questions posed to me by Lokayukta Police, they have recorded it," Siddaramaiah said.

Speaking to reporters after appearing before Lokayukta

police, he said: "...a false case was made against me, I was questioned, I have told the truth."

Asked whether he has been told by Lokayukta police that he may be asked to appear once again, he said, "No..."

Siddaramaiah appeared before the Lokayukta police in response to the summons issued to him and responded to questions put to him by a team led by Lokayukta Superintendent of Police (SP) T J Udes, official sources said.

They had on October 25 questioned his wife, who has been named as accused number 2.

Siddaramaiah, his wife, brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy and Devaraju -- from whom Swamy had purchased a land and gifted it to Parvathi -- and others have been named in the FIR registered by the Mysuru-located Lokayukta police establishment on September 27.

Swamy and Devaraju have already deposed before the Lokayukta police.

# 100 Pakistan-Backed Terrorists Waiting To Sneak Into India: Intelligence Input



## New Delhi

A high alert has been sounded along the India-Pakistan border following intelligence inputs that at least 100 foreign-trained hardcore terrorists are waiting to sneak into India.

A senior official from the security establishment told ETV Bharat that all the Pakistan-backed terrorists have been trying hard to destabilise peace in Jammu & Kashmir.

"Following the abrogation of Article 370, insurgency had come down in the region. However, ever since a new government was formed in J&K, forces inimical to India's development have been trying to create chaos in the region," the official said.

Quoting an intelligence report, the official further said state actors in Pakistan have asked terrorist handlers to go all out in J&K so that they can create a fear psychosis amongst the people of the region. "Our security forces are also on high alert to foil all nefarious attempts," the official said.

The official further said all security agencies involved in counter-terror operations in J&K have been asked to share terror-related intelligence inputs on a real-time basis.

In a recent meeting with the security agencies held in Srinagar under the chairmanship of Lieutenant General Manoj Sinha, the issue of lack of intelligence inputs was highlighted. All agencies have been asked to work in unison to thwart all possible terror attacks on security forces and civilians.

Indian intelligence agencies have, however, managed to detect 38 launchpads and 14 training

camps set up across the border.

"With the number of terror incidents on the rise, there is already a high alert along the international border with Pakistan. We have reports that at least 100 terrorists are waiting across the border to infiltrate into India," the official said.

While Pakistan-backed terror outfits always try to pump terrorists into Indian territory ahead of the winter, this year, the attempts would be even more aggressive, the official said.

With most of the top commanders and foot soldiers exterminated by the security forces, Pakistan would be looking to have a greater presence in Jammu and Kashmir, the official added. "One of the main reasons for a spurt in the number of terror attacks in J&K is that they want to keep the security forces engaged to divert attention from the border areas to make it easy for the ultras to infiltrate," the official said.

Pakistan usually looks to increase the number of infiltrations at this time since it is difficult to do so once the winter sets in. It is worth mentioning that the Indian Army has also installed new anti-infiltration grids along the Line of Control (LoC).

These grids comprise state-of-the-art equipment, thermal imagers and night vision cameras to keep a tab on any suspicious activities.

"The grids consist of advanced UAVs, motion sensors and spotter scopes. This technology will ensure the immediate detection of any breach. These grids are also equipped to detect and shoot down enemy drones," another official, privy to the development, said.

# Congress MP Praniti Shinde Says MVA Stable, Unlike Chaotic Mahayuti

## New Delhi

The Congress has adopted a micro-management strategy for the November 20 Maharashtra polls and will set up Maha Vikas Aghadi Coordination Committees, war rooms and observers on all 288 Assembly seats. The local war rooms will be manned by the functionaries of the alliance partners Congress, Shiv Sena UBT and NCP-SP and coordinate with the AICC central war room, along with similar setups of the allies.

The alliance leaders said the coordination of the local teams belonging to the three parties had been tested during the Lok Sabha elections a few months ago and will be repeated in the assembly polls as well. "The MVA is stable as compared to the chaotic Mahayuti. We had very good coordination between the alliance workers during the Lok Sabha elections and will

carry it out during the upcoming assembly elections as well. There are local coordination teams and war rooms in all the 288 seats. We special observers for every seat and district besides the AICC observers for the five zones across the state. A team of senior leaders would monitor the polls from Delhi," Congress Solapur Lok Sabha MP Praniti Shinde told ETV Bharat.

"The edge that MVA had over the Mahayuti in the Lok Sabha polls resulted from coordination and joint strategies. The MVA had some seat-sharing issues, but they were resolved amicably between the alliance partners. The MVA is fighting the BJP on all the seats and will defeat it," she said.

Out of the total 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra, the MVA won 30, including 14 of Congress, which emerged as the single largest party against 17 of NDA, down from

41 in 2019. Though the national election results had shown the vote share of the NDA at 43.5 per cent was very close to MVA's 44.9 per cent, in terms of the Assembly polls the MVA had an edge on 157 seats against NDA's 128 seats.

The MVA unity Shinde said would be displayed on November 6 during the MVA rally in Mumbai and over the coming days as the joint campaign would roll across the state.

Before that, MVA coordination showed in Kolhapur where Congress Lok Sabha MP Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj welcomed Shiv Sena UBT Uddhav Thackeray, who launched his poll campaign from the area. Later, addressing a rally, the former chief minister expressed confidence that grand old party leader Satej Patil would win all the six assembly seats for the opposition alliance.



# Healthcare A Cornerstone Of Viksit Bharat Goals, Says NITI Ayog Official

## New Delhi

Emphasising the crucial role of healthcare in India's journey to achieve Viksit Bharat goals by 2047, VK Paul, a member of NITI Aayog, highlighted the government's commitment to re-energising and modernising the primary healthcare sector.

Addressing the FICCI HEAL 2024 event, Paul noted that healthcare will be the foundation of India's future growth, contributing not only to public well-being but also to the country's economic transformation, with a vision of a \$32 trillion economy and a significant rise in per capita income.

In his keynote address, Paul underscored the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare, describing it as a field where India aims to lead globally. "AI for health leadership belongs to India," he stated, envisioning India as both a major consumer and creator of AI-driven health technologies.

He urged the healthcare industry to collaborate on validating AI tools to ensure their efficacy and safety, encouraging the sector to adopt innovation responsibly. He also spoke about the government's focus on increasing life expectancy to over 85



years by 2047 and improving access to healthcare facilities, including raising the physician and hospital bed ratios.

He highlighted Ayushman Bharat's expansion to cover senior citizens, introducing the Ayushman Bharat Vay Vandana Card to extend healthcare access and dignity for citizens over 70. The session's theme, 'Swasth Bharat, Viksit Bharat,' brought to light the importance of innovation in healthcare.

LS Changsan, additional secretary at the Ministry of Health and Family

Welfare, emphasised the critical role of the private sector in driving innovations and reducing healthcare costs to make healthcare accessible even in the remotest regions.

This aligns with the government's vision of healthcare equity across India, promoting health for all in line with the ideals of a developed nation. International perspectives were shared by Prof Jonathon Robin Gray, Director of Innovation and Improvement at Cardiff & Vale University Health Board, who encouraged

India's youth to take on leadership roles in healthcare management and innovation. He proposed a global platform to foster young leaders in healthcare through conferences, fellowships, and communities of practice, underscoring the value of collaborative learning.

Industry leaders further emphasised technology's transformative power in healthcare. Dr Harsh Mahajan, Chair of the FICCI Health Services Committee, highlighted advancements in AI, machine learning, and predictive analytics as drivers of accessible, quality healthcare under the banner of Digital India and Swasth Bharat.

Dr Anupam Sibal, co-chair of the committee, called for continued partnerships and collaboration to drive innovation and create impactful solutions for India's healthcare challenges.

As India advances toward its 2047 goals, the healthcare sector's role as an enabler of societal and economic growth is clear. Through collaboration, innovation, and the strategic use of technologies like AI, the government and private sector are working hand-in-hand to shape a healthier, more prosperous future for all Indians.

## India Updates In-Flight Wi-Fi Rules: Connectivity Now Based On Safety, Not Altitude

### New Delhi

The Indian government recently clarified new regulations for in-flight Wi-Fi use, specifying that passengers can access internet services only after their devices are approved for use at an altitude of 3,000 metres or 10,000 feet. This update, issued under the amended Flight and Maritime Connectivity Rules, 2024, aims to enhance passenger connectivity while ensuring compliance with safety guidelines.

According to the revised rules, Wi-Fi services will be available only when the cabin crew permits the use of electronic devices such as phones, tablets, and laptops, typically after the plane has reached the specified altitude.

"Notwithstanding the minimum height in Indian airspace referred to in sub-rule

(1), internet services through Wi-Fi in aircraft shall be made available when electronic devices are permitted to be used in the aircraft," the statement by the Ministry of Communications read.

The 2018 Flight and Maritime Connectivity Rules mandated that mobile communication services could only be accessed above 3,000 meters. The primary reason for this requirement is to avoid potential interference with terrestrial networks, including mobile phone signals on the ground when an aircraft is at lower altitudes. The newly notified rule, called Flight and Maritime Connectivity (Amendment) Rules, 2024, continues to uphold this altitude requirement, while also aligning connectivity permissions with existing

flight safety protocols.

As part of these regulations, service providers are also required to ensure that mobile communication services comply with the altitude threshold. This additional measure supports safe and efficient connectivity across Indian airspace.

This update brings in-flight Wi-Fi connectivity in India into closer alignment with global standards. Many international airlines follow similar guidelines, where internet services are accessible once the aircraft has reached cruising altitude and electronic devices are permitted for use. Passengers in Indian airspace can connect to in-flight Wi-Fi once the plane reaches an altitude of 3,000 meters and the crew approves device usage.

## Jharkhand Assembly Elections 2024: BJP Expels 30 Leaders For Rebellious Activities

### Ranchi

Ahead of the two-phase assembly elections, Jharkhand BJP has expelled 30 rebellious leaders for six years for filing nominations against the candidates authorised by the saffron party. The instruction was issued by state president Babulal Marandi.

The expelled leaders were helming important positions with greater responsibilities. More such stern actions are expected as the party has decided to become harsh with leaders involved in anti-party activities.

According to sources in the party unit, some leaders miffed with the ticket distribution have been pacified by the senior leaders but still some are crossing the party line. The BJP is in the process of identifying the

members who can sabotage the party's prospects in the upcoming polls.

The tribal state is bustling with political activities as national and senior leaders across party lines are descending here to attend rallies in support of their respective party candidates.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said the BJP was a mighty rocket that would take Jharkhand to newer heights, terming the JMM-led coalition Diwali's "fused crackers". Addressing an election rally in Ranchi's Hatia, Singh said it was amply clear who would form government in the state after Chief Minister Hemant Soren's proposer Mandal Murmu deserted the "sinking ship" of JMM to join the BJP.



## Trump's 'America First' agenda may lead to higher tariffs on Indian auto, textiles, pharma: Experts

New Delhi

With Donald Trump all set to become US president, Indian exporters may face high customs duties for goods like automobiles, textiles and pharmaceuticals if the new US administration decides to pursue the 'America First' agenda, opined trade experts.

Experts also said that Trump could also tighten H-1B visa rules, impacting costs and growth for Indian IT firms.

Over 80 per cent of India's IT export earnings come from the US, making it vulnerable to changes in visa policies.

The US is India's largest trading partner, accounting for over USD 190 billion of annual trade.

Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) founder Ajay Srivastava said that Trump may extend tariffs beyond China to include India and other countries.

Trump had earlier called India a "large tariff abuser" and in October 2020 labelled India as the 'tariff king'.

These remarks suggest that Trump's second term could bring tougher trade negotiations. he said.

"His America First agenda would likely push for protective measures, such as reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods, potentially adding barriers for key Indian exports like automobiles, wines, textiles, and pharmaceuticals. These increases could make Indian products less competitive in the US, impacting revenue in these sectors," Srivastava said.

However, a tougher US stance on China could create new opportunities for Indian exporters, he added.

The bilateral trade in goods stood at USD 120 billion in 2023-24 as against USD 129.4 billion in 2022-23.

A GTRI report had earlier stated that according to WTO's World Tariff Profiles 2023, the US also imposes high duties on items like dairy products (188 per cent), Fruits and vegetables (132 per cent), cereals and food preparations (193 per cent),

oilseeds, fats and oils (164 per cent), beverages and tobacco (150 per cent).

International trade expert Biswajit Dhar said that Trump would increase tariffs in various sectors as he has to follow his call for MAGA (Make America Great Again).

"With Trump coming to power, we are going to enter a different era of protectionism," Dhar said adding sectors like electronics may get a hit.

He added that as earlier Trump has walked out of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), there could be dark clouds on IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity).

The 14-nation bloc was launched in Tokyo by the US and other Indo-Pacific countries on May 23, 2022.

"Let us see what he does with IPEF," Dhar cautioned and added that nothing is expected to move in the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) DG Ajay Sahai said that "we could expect Mr Trump to push for more balanced trade. But trade disputes might arise around tariffs".

Going by the increasing trend of protectionism, Sahai said, the same would continue with tighter immigration rules.

Agneshwar Sen, Partner-Tax and Economic Policy (International Trade), EY India said it may be expected that the US will use high tariffs strategically to onshore manufacturing and change current supply chains.

India could face higher tariffs on exports like textiles, chemicals, pharma and auto/engineering products, Sen said.

"India would have to either seek alternative markets (which will be difficult) or retaliate with its own tariffs on US exports. Alternately, we must be ready for a trade deal that is attractive to the US while not just protecting our current interests but creating newer ones," he added.

## Six Indian Americans Win Elections Of Us House Of Representatives

Washington

Six Indian Americans have won the elections to the House of Representatives, increasing their number from five in the current Congress.

Indian-American lawyer Suhas Subramanyam created history by becoming the first from the community to be elected from Virginia and the entire East Coast.

Subramanyan defeated Mike Clancy of the Republican Party. He is currently a Virginia State Senator. There is a possibility that the number of Indian Americans in the House of Representatives increased to seven as Dr Amish Shah was leading by a slender margin against his Republican incumbent in the first Congressional District of Arizona.

"I am honoured and humbled that the people of Virginia's 10th District put their trust in me to take on the toughest fights and deliver results in Congress. This district is my home. I got married here, my wife Miranda and I are raising our daughters here, and the issues our community faces are personal to our family. It is an honour to continue serving this district in Washington," Subramanyam said.

Subramanyam, who previously served as a White House Advisor to President Barack Obama, is a Hindu by faith and is popular among Indian Americans nationwide.

He joins the 'Samosa Caucus' in the Congress that currently



comprises five Indian Americans – Ami Bera, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Ro Khanna, Pramila Jayapal and Shri Thanedar. All the five existing Indian American members were re-elected to the House of Representatives.

Shri Thanedar was re-elected for the second consecutive term from the 13th Congressional District of Michigan. He won it for the first time in 2023. Raja Krishnamoorthi won the seventh Congressional District of Illinois for the fifth consecutive term.

While the battles for control of the White House and Congress remain close, I am honoured that the people of Illinois' 8th District have extended my contract to represent them in Congress," Krishnamoorthi said.

"My parents came to this country with little more than a dream for their family's future and the faith that they could achieve it here in America," Krishnamoorthi concluded. "Despite some hard times, we did."

"My mission in Congress is to fight for all the other families that are pursuing their dreams, no matter where they come from, how they worship, or the number of letters in their names... there are 29 in mine." So did Ro Khanna who represents the seventeenth Congressional District of California and Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, who represents the seventh Congressional District of Washington State.

A physician by profession, Dr Ami Bera is the senior-most Indian American Congressman representing the sixth Congressional District of California since 2013. He was re-elected for the seventh consecutive term.

In Arizona, Shah from the Democratic Party was slightly ahead of his Republican Party's incumbent David Schweikert. He has 132,712 votes as against his rival's 128,606 votes when 63 per cent of the votes were counted.

## Trump's Victory: Modi looks forward to strengthening India-US ties

New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Donald Trump are set to work together again after Trump's victory in the 2024 US presidential election. Their alliance, which began in 2017, has been marked by strong diplomatic ties and strategic cooperation.

Modi congratulated Trump on his win, posting on X, "Heartiest congratulations my friend @realDonaldTrump on your historic election victory." He expressed his eagerness to collaborate and strengthen the India-US Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership, promoting global peace, stability, and prosperity.

Their relationship has been built on mutual admiration and cooperation. In February 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Donald Trump joined forces in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, in an event that resembled an election rally for Trump. The

aim was to connect with the influential Gujarati and Indian community, a crucial demographic in US elections. This gathering was part of Trump's efforts to woo Indian-American voters, and Modi's presence lent significant weight to his campaign.

Just six months prior to this event, Modi and Trump shared the stage at the "Howdy Modi" rally in Houston, Texas, in September 2019 where Modi cheered for Trump, "Abki baar, Trump sarkar". This visit happened just a month after the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in August. Trump did not win, the November 2020 election, losing to Joe Biden, but did not go into oblivion.

But the two never lost touch with each other. Trump in his race to presidency this year praised Modi and has always referred to him as a 'good friend'.



# Trump's historic return

A cacophonous US election has concluded with a historic return to office for Donald Trump. As the Democrats reflect on what might have been, Trump becomes the first US president in almost 130 years to win non-consecutive terms. With the Republican party also securing a majority in the Senate, the scene is set for a more inward-looking America with broader geopolitical and economic consequences for the rest of the globe.

In a highly polarised election, Trump was able to cut through a clutch of swing states, including North Carolina, Georgia and Pennsylvania. Disappointingly for Kamala Harris, she wasn't able to land a convincing message with the undecided voters. Support from women and the younger demographic turned out to be lower than anticipated. Biden's poor approval ratings clearly hurt her and she was unable to convincingly set out a differentiated prospectus. Conversely, Trump was able to rally his base. Other politicians might have been sunk by two

impeachments and a convicted felony, but in Trump's case, it only propelled his supporters with more vigour.

Trump's success was underpinned by his consistency of message. He continued to draw on his original pitch to "Make America Great Again". This time around, he also promised to "Make America Affordable Again". He appealed to the "forgotten majority", workers across the Rust Belt, putting their concerns uppermost in a battle against Washington insiders. The irony of a billionaire putting forward an anti-establishment prospectus continued to be part of the appeal. Trump was consistent in his aim to reduce immigration, advance a protectionist trade policy and realign foreign policy.

In an age where politicians are notorious for breaking manifesto commitments, Trump looked to act as he promised. Voters relied on evidence from his first term. Recalling his first term, the electorate was aware that

Trump took a hard line on immigration, signed executive orders to support domestic products, left the Trans-Pacific Partnership, withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, challenged NATO and exited the Paris climate change accord.

He outlined an "America First" vision where multilateralism was deemed surplus to requirements. Voters were aware that it was also Trump who dared to be muscular with China. It was also during his earlier presidency that there were overtures to North Korea and an entente achieved between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. That said, it was hard to ignore the manifest coarseness that marked Trump's initial presidency. His strong-man tendencies had more in common with autocrats such as Putin and Orban than a "leader of the free world".

// satyasya paramah nidhānam //

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*Well done is better than well said.*  
-Benjamin Franklin

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THE Indian government's notice to Wikipedia, citing complaints of bias and inaccuracies, questions whether it should be treated as an intermediary or a publisher. This distinction could fundamentally alter its obligations under Indian law. The move is aimed at addressing alleged "editorial bias" from a small group of contributors. It follows a defamation case in the Delhi High Court where an Indian news agency has claimed that Wikipedia portrayed it as a government propaganda outlet — a description that the agency has contested as defamatory.

Wikipedia's open-editing model, which allows anyone to modify content, is both a strength and a vulnerability. It fosters knowledge-sharing but also

## Wikipedia vs India

### The struggle over bias and responsibility



opens the door to potential misuse. India's Information and Broadcasting Ministry has argued that Wikipedia's current editorial controls create a bias that undermines its claim of neutrality. The Delhi High Court had in September echoed these concerns, cautioning that Wikipedia could not merely rely on disclaimers to evade

responsibility if defamatory edits remained unchecked. The crux of this issue lies in the global platform's intermediary status. As an intermediary, Wikipedia is generally protected from liability for user-generated content.

However, India's demand that Wikipedia be classified as a publisher would impose

stricter regulations, requiring it to ensure accuracy and neutrality actively. Such a shift could affect Wikipedia's operations in India, which boasts of being one of its largest user bases. The clash reflects the larger question of free speech versus content responsibility in the digital age. As platforms like Wikipedia play an increasingly influential role in shaping public opinion, finding a balance between open access to information and accountability is critical. India's demand for stricter oversight may encourage other countries to reconsider how they engage with international digital platforms. The case also points to the challenges global platforms face when adapting to local laws and cultural expectations.



## Boost to madrasas

### SC gives precedence to rights of minorities

THE Supreme Court's decision to uphold the constitutional validity of the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education Act, 2004, has sent out a strong message that the rights of minorities will be safeguarded at any cost. The Muslim community in UP, a BJP-ruled state which has become synonymous with bulldozer justice, has every reason to hail the verdict.



The madrasas in the state had been under threat after the Allahabad High Court scrapped the 20-year-old law earlier this year, stating that these schools violated the constitutional tenet of secularism. The apex court has set aside the HC verdict, thus ensuring that lakhs of students will not be shifted to conventional institutions.

Madrasas have been on the 'hit list' of the saffron party in recent years not only in UP but also in states such as Assam and Madhya Pradesh. The National

Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has also been in the thick of things; last month, it wrote to the chief secretaries of all states and union territories, recommending that madrasa boards be closed down, state funding to the institutions be stopped and the children studying there be enrolled in 'formal' schools. The NCPCR's unconvincing

contention is that the education imparted to children in madrasas is not 'comprehensive' or 'proper'; the commission has gone to the extent of accusing these schools of not complying with provisions of the Right to Education Act.

It is hoped that the SC ruling will help in curbing the brazen vilification of madrasas. These institutions are being targeted on the pretext that they are breeding grounds for religious fanatics and terrorists. Weeding out the black sheep is no doubt important, but attempts to dismantle the entire madrasa system reek of intolerance and hatred. Such nefarious moves are undermining the secular credentials of India, aptly described by the Supreme Court as a melting pot of cultures, civilisations and religions.

## Trouble in Canada

### Trudeau govt letting anti-India elements run riot

THE deplorable violence at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton has laid bare Canada's inept handling of a sensitive situation. This is a new low for the Justin Trudeau government, which has been recklessly burning bridges with India following the murder of Khalistan activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar last year. Trudeau

Canadian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister David Morrison's allegation that Home Minister Amit Shah ordered a campaign of violence, intimidation and intelligence-gathering targeting Sikh separatists in that country has raised India's hackles. The charge — dismissed as absurd and baseless by New Delhi — has also emboldened



pro-Khalistan Canadians to up the ante against the Indian government. Their anti-India protests have put them on a collision course with Indian-origin Canadian citizens who wear the Tricolour on their sleeve.

Canada, which proudly regards itself as a peace-loving land of opportunities, needs to deal firmly with those who threaten communal harmony and public order. It must crack down on troublemakers

and rabble-rousers, no matter which community they belong to. Allowing the misuse of Canadian territory to spew venom against India — all in the name of freedom of expression — is undermining the Trudeau government's diplomatic and democratic credentials. At stake is the safety and security of the law-abiding members of the diaspora. No less important are earnest efforts to salvage India-Canada ties before it's too late.

has condemned the temple incident, saying that every Canadian has the right to practise his or her faith freely and safely, but he owes an explanation for letting anti-India elements have their way with impunity. The allegation that the police targeted Hindu devotees and tried to protect Khalistan supporters has added fuel to the fire.

Hindu-Sikh tensions in the Maple Country are closely linked to the deterioration in India-Canada relations.

## Pollution crackdown

### Punjab's bold move on stubble fires

THE Punjab Government's decision to initiate criminal proceedings against officials and register FIRs against farmers involved in stubble burning marks a decisive turn in tackling the pollution crisis that chokes North India every winter. This shift, spurred by the Supreme Court's sharp rebuke and demand for immediate action, reflects an urgent recognition of the responsibility to protect public health. Year after year, stubble burning has been met with ineffective penalties and selective enforcement, allowing the hazardous practice to persist. The apex court's intervention has exposed these loopholes, asserting that citizens have a fundamental right to clean air, and calling on Punjab to enforce accountability.

The punitive measures now directed at officials responsible for preventing farm fires in their jurisdictions signal a break from the past pattern of lip service to pollution control. This step holds promise for real change, with officials and farmers alike held accountable. While

Punjab has taken a firm stance against stubble burning, it has not disregarded the financial constraints of the farming community. With nearly 32 lakh hectares under paddy cultivation, primarily managed by small-scale farmers, Punjab's request for Rs 1,200 crore from the Centre to fund crop residue management is a critical step. Alternatives to stubble burning, though essential, require costly



machinery that many marginal farmers simply cannot afford, leaving them with few options.

Yet, the Centre's delay in approving these funds threatens to stall Punjab's proactive efforts. For any meaningful

and lasting change, the strong stance that Punjab has adopted must be a part of a sustained, collaborative approach between the state, the Centre and farmers. The state

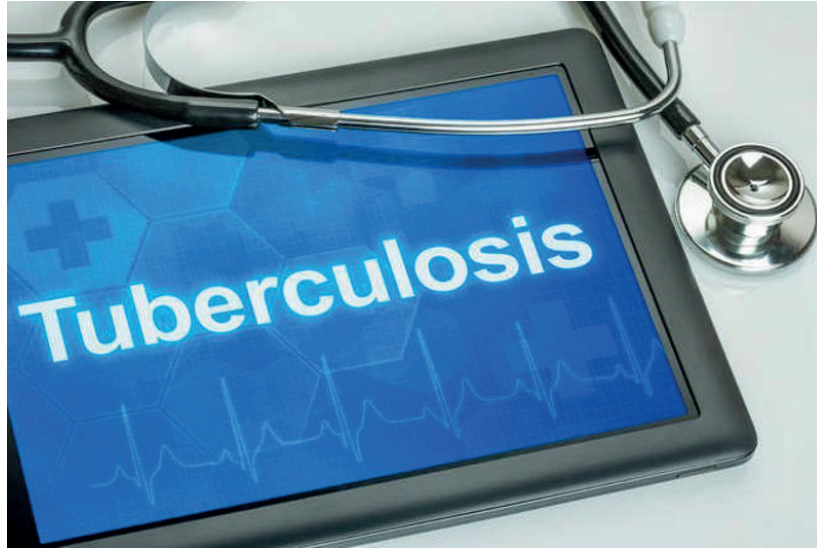
government's focus on accountability, combined with adequate support for sustainable methods, is the only way forward to ensure a pollution-free future for all.



# India's TB crisis

## Surge in cases, drug resistance threaten goals

THE latest 'Global Tuberculosis Report' by the WHO paints a bleak picture for India, which now accounts for 26 per cent of the world's TB cases. This statistic alone underscores the challenges facing India's National TB Elimination Programme, set against a backdrop of rising multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), a public health crisis in its own right. India recorded 2.55 million new TB cases in 2023, its highest since TB monitoring began in the 1960s. MDR-TB complicates the situation further, with India housing the largest global burden. MDR-TB, resistant to essential drugs like isoniazid and rifampin, often arises from



treatment mismanagement and requires longer, costlier and more toxic medications.

Unfortunately, only 44 per cent of the MDR-TB cases

receive adequate treatment.

This stark gap reveals the strain on India's health infrastructure and the impact on patients whose access to quality care

remains inconsistent. Despite a nearly 90 per cent treatment coverage rate, the costs of treating and managing TB are catastrophic for many households in India. Around 20 per cent of the patients face expenses that exceed 20 per cent of their annual income. Moreover, funding for TB has dwindled by over \$130 million in recent years, putting India's ambitious goal of eliminating TB by 2025 increasingly out of reach.

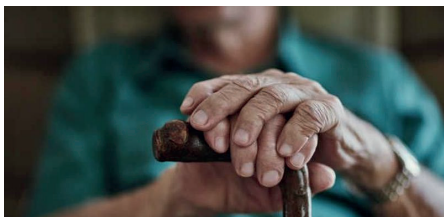
Reaching this goal will require more than improved diagnostics and treatment

coverage. The government must bridge funding gaps and tackle the socio-economic factors driving TB, including poverty, undernutrition and limited healthcare access. Furthermore, increasing awareness about MDR-TB and expanding the use of newer treatment regimens, like the BPaLM, could be game-changers. The TB crisis makes urgent action imperative. Without robust investment and coordinated efforts, TB will continue to thwart India's health goals and global ambitions. For the world, defeating TB isn't just a matter of health; it's a test of our shared commitment to tackling one of humanity's oldest and deadliest diseases.

## Senior citizens' care

### Politics undermines public health scheme

THE recent expansion of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) to provide health coverage to citizens aged 70 and above is a significant move in India's public health landscape. However, the rollout on public health has sparked



a public spat between the Centre and Opposition-led states, particularly Delhi and West Bengal. PM Narendra Modi has claimed that these state governments have opted out of the scheme due to "political interests".

This tension raises a pressing question: should public health, especially for vulnerable senior citizens, be subject to political manoeuvring? Ayushman Bharat offers an annual coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per family. It is a boon for many elderly individuals whose healthcare needs are often financially

crippling. However, notably, this welfare measure differs from the ones prevailing in Western countries. Out-of-pocket expenses in India remain quite high. The scheme's curative approach lags behind the preventive care systems seen in the west, where comprehensive, tax-funded programmes prioritise proactive health interventions.

In contrast, Delhi's health model has garnered international praise for its accessibility and preventive care focus. However, by refusing Ayushman Bharat, states like Delhi may deny their elderly residents an additional safety net. For senior citizens facing health crises, any opportunity for comprehensive health coverage can be life-changing. The political impasse only undermines their wellbeing. Healthcare for seniors must transcend the political divide. A pragmatic approach could integrate elements from both the Delhi and Ayushman Bharat models, ensuring efficient, accountable and accessible healthcare across states. A national framework that reflects a commitment to all citizens, regardless of state politics, is needed.

## Import dependency

### Self-reliance a work in progress in defence sector

AMID the Centre's push for self-reliance (aatmanirbharta) in the defence sector, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has invoked a penalty clause against US aerospace giant General Electric (GE) over the 18-month delay in the supply of aero-engines for the Tejas Mark-1A jets. The delay has serious implications for the Indian Air Force (IAF) as the Ministry of Defence-owned HAL will be able to supply only two Tejas jets against the 18 scheduled for the ongoing financial year. It was in 2021 that GE had signed a \$716-million contract with HAL to supply a total of 99 F404 engines for the Tejas jets, but tardy delivery has been a major stumbling block. The IAF is already facing a challenging situation as it has 31 squadrons of fighter jets against the requirement of 42.

The GE case underscores India's dependency on foreign manufacturers and suppliers, some of which have faltered in meeting deadlines and honouring

commitments. The imposition of a penalty is expected to send out a strong message to them to get their act together. However, it is imperative for the country's defence industry to augment its production capacity and offer a wider range of quality products, besides ensuring timely delivery to the armed forces.

Considering the perennial threat posed by neighbours China and Pakistan, the Army, IAF and the Navy have to remain battle-ready round the clock. Making them wait inordinately for critical equipment can be perilous. Even as the country ambitiously looks to boost its defence exports, meeting domestic requirements should be the top priority. The 'Make in India' programme must be bolstered through greater emphasis on research and development. Defence PSUs ought to play a bigger role to spur indigenisation. 'Make for the world' is a long-term goal. As of now, efforts to reduce the import bill should be intensified.



## NITI Aayog member: Health sector will be base of 'Viksit Bharat'



### New Delhi

NITI Aayog member Prof VK Paul on Tuesday said the government was committed to fully re-energising the primary healthcare sector to take it to the next level.

Addressing the 'FICCI HEAL-2024' in New Delhi, Prof Paul said 'Viksit Bharat' also means a \$32 trillion economy along with the rise in per capita income from \$2,500 to \$18,000. "Healthcare system is going to be the base of the 'Viksit Bharat' vision to be realised by 2047. Besides, AI for health leadership also belongs," he added and urged the industry to come forward in this.

## Wedding season business expected to surge 41 per cent to Rs 6 lakh crore: Confederation of All India Traders

### New Delhi

The upcoming wedding season in India which will extend from November 12 till December 16 is likely to generate business worth nearly Rs 6 lakh crore from 48 lakh weddings which constitutes a 41 per cent increase over the corresponding figure of Rs 4.25 lakh crore recorded for 35 lakh weddings last year, according to a study carried out by the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT).

From 11 auspicious dates the previous year, this year's season would have 18 dates which is expected to fuel the business growth, with Delhi alone expected to see Rs 1.5 lakh crore business across 4.5 lakh weddings this year, estimates compiled by CAIT show.

CAIT estimates 10 lakh weddings involving spending of Rs 3 lakh per wedding, 10 lakh weddings with Rs 6 lakh per wedding, 10 lakh weddings with Rs 10 lakh per wedding, 10 lakh weddings with Rs 15 lakh per wedding, 7 lakh weddings with Rs 25 lakh per wedding, 50,000 weddings with Rs 50 lakh per wedding, and 50,000 weddings with Rs 1 crore or more per wedding.

CAIT's Veda and Spiritual Committee convenor Acharya Durgesh Tare said the auspicious wedding dates for this season are November 12, 13, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, and 29 and December 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 16. Following this period, there will be a pause of about a month before the season resumes from mid-January to

March 2025.

"The study has also highlighted a shift in consumer purchasing behaviour, with people increasingly opting for Indian products over foreign goods, reflecting the success of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Vocal for Local' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) vision," said CAIT's Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal.

He said wedding expenses are divided between goods and services, with main expenditure areas in goods including jewellery (15 per cent), clothing (10 per cent), electronics and appliances (5 per cent), dry fruits, sweets, and snacks (5 per cent), groceries and vegetables (5 per cent), gift items (4 per cent), and other goods (6 per cent).

## Now, I-T officers can waive, reduce your interest dues

### New Delhi

The Income Tax Department has allowed tax officials to either waive or reduce interest payable by a taxpayer, subject to specified conditions.

Under Section 220 (2A) of the Income Tax Act, if a taxpayer fails to pay the tax amount specified in any demand notice, he/she is liable to pay interest at 1 per cent per month for the period of delay in making the payment.

The Act also empowers the department's Principal Chief Commissioner (PrCCIT) or Chief Commissioner (CCIT) or Principal Commissioner (PrCIT) or Commissioner-rank officers to reduce or waive the amount interest due to be paid.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) through a circular dated November 4 has specified the monetary threshold of the interest that can be waived or reduced by the tax officers.

Accordingly, a PrCCIT-rank officer can decide on reducing or waiving due interest of over Rs



1.5 crore. For interest due above Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1.5 crore, CCIT rank officer will decide on the waiver/reduction, while PrCIT or Income Tax Commissioners can decide on interest due up to Rs 50 lakh.

The power of reduction or waiver of the interest payable under Section 220 (2A) would be subject to satisfaction of three specified conditions — payment of such amount has caused or would cause genuine hardship

to the assessee; default in interest payment was due to circumstances beyond the control of the assessee; the assessee has cooperated in inquiry relating to assessment or proceeding of the recovery of any amount due from him.

Nangia & Co LLP Partner Sachin Garg said: "The CBDT's move is expected to facilitate expeditious disposal of applications by a taxpayer for waiver or reduction of interest under Section 220."

## Disclose details for direct, regular mutual fund plans separately, orders Sebi

### Mumbai

Markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday introduced separate disclosure requirements for expenses, half-yearly returns, and annualised yields in both direct and regular mutual fund (MF) plans, along with a colour-coded system for the existing risk-o-meter.

Aimed at improving investor protection and providing clarity around MF disclosures, these requirements will become effective from December 5. It will allow investors to easily compare the cost and performance of the two types of plans.

In a circular, Sebi directed MFs to separately disclose expenses, half-yearly returns, and annualised yields for direct and regular plans. The Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI)



will standardise these formats with Sebi.

Sebi has introduced a colour-coded system for the existing risk-o-meter. In case of any changes in a scheme's risk-o-meter level, MFs have been asked to inform investors of risk-level adjustments through email or SMS and display the current and revised risk levels in these notifications.



## Reliance Jio IPO likely to hit market in '25



### Mumbai

Reliance Industries Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani is aiming to list the group's telecom business, Jio, next year, Reuters reported on Monday citing two people in the know.

According to the news report, Jio is valued by analysts at over USD 100 billion.

The report said that the conglomerate planned to launch its retail unit's IPO "much later". The report added that Reliance Industries' chief Ambani hadn't updated his IPO timelines after saying in 2019 that Reliance Jio and Reliance Retail would "move towards" a listing within five years.

## We are in touch with US authorities to clarify issues: MEA on sanctions on Indian entities

### New Delhi

In the wake of the US imposing sanctions on several individuals and entities, including from India, for allegedly supporting Russia's military-industrial base, the MEA Saturday said New Delhi is in touch with Washington to clarify issues.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, in response to a query during his weekly briefing, also said India has a "robust legal and regulatory framework" on strategic trade and non-proliferation controls.

"We are also a member of three key multilateral non-proliferation export control regimes," he added.

"In keeping with India's established non-proliferation credentials, we are working

with all relevant departments and agencies to sensitise Indian companies on applicable export control provisions as also inform them on new measures



being implemented that could impact Indian companies in certain circumstances," Jaiswal said.

The US has imposed sanctions on 275 individuals and entities, including 15 from

## SEBI allows MFs to invest in foreign funds with Indian securities exposure

### Mumbai

Markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Monday allowed mutual funds (MFs) to invest in overseas mutual funds or unit trusts (UTs) that invest a specific portion of their assets in Indian securities. This is subject to the total exposure to Indian securities by such overseas funds not exceeding 25 per cent of their net assets.

The new framework will come into force with immediate effect. "Indian Mutual Fund schemes may also invest in overseas MF/UTs that have exposure to Indian securities, provided that the total exposure to Indian securities by these overseas MF/UTs shall not be more than 25% of their assets," said the circular.

The move was aimed at facilitating ease of investment in overseas MF/UTs, bringing transparency in the manner of investment, and enabling MFs to diversify their overseas investments, SEBI said in a circular.

Also, MF schemes are required to ensure that all investors' contributions to an overseas MF/UT are combined into a single investment vehicle without any

side vehicles. The corpus of an overseas MF/UT should be a blind pool (ie common portfolio) with no segregated portfolios, ensuring all investors have equal and proportionate rights in the fund.

According to the circular, all investors in the overseas MF/UT have pari-passu (equal footing) and pro-rata rights in the fund, ie they receive a proportionate share of returns/gains from the fund.

## White collar hiring grew 10% in October

### New Delhi

White collar hiring activity witnessed a growth of 10 per cent year-on-year in October mainly driven by a rise in recruitment in sectors, including oil and gas, pharmaceuticals, FMCG, and IT, a report said on Monday.

The Naukri JobSpeak Index, India's leading indicator of white-collar hiring activity, demonstrated robust growth in October, reaching 2,733 points compared to 2,484 in the same month of 2023, marking a significant 10 per cent year-on-year increase.

Key sectors, including oil & gas (18 per cent), pharma/biotech (12 per cent), FMCG (8 per cent), and IT (6 per cent) emerged as primary drivers of this positive trend, with AI/ML roles showing exceptional growth at 39 per cent year-on-year, the report stated. Hiring in the IT sector showed positive growth in four out of the seven months this financial year, auguring well for balance of year trends, added the report. The Naukri JobSpeak is a monthly Index representing the state of the Indian job market.

## Nearly 98 pc Rs 2,000 banknotes returned; Rs 6,970 crore worth notes still with public

### Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday said 98.04 per cent of the Rs 2,000 banknotes have been returned to the banking system, and only Rs 6,970 crore worth such notes are still with the public.

On May 19, 2023, the RBI announced the withdrawal of Rs 2,000 denomination banknotes from circulation.

The total value of Rs 2,000 banknotes in circulation was Rs 3.56 lakh crore at the close of business on May 19, 2023. It has declined to Rs 6,970 crore at the close of business on October 31, 2024, the RBI said. "Thus, 98.04 per cent of the Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation as on May 19, 2023, has since been returned," it said in a statement.

The facility for deposit and/or exchange of the Rs 2,000 banknotes was available at all bank branches till October 7, 2023. However, this facility is still available at the 19 issue offices of the Reserve Bank.



## Warm October saw rise in power consumption

### New Delhi

India's power consumption rose marginally by about one per cent to 140.47 billion units (BU) in October compared to a year ago, mainly due to heavier base effect.

In the year-ago period, the power consumption grew by over 22 per cent to 139.44 BU from 113.94 BU in October 2022. The highest supply in a day (peak power demand met) dipped to 219.22 GW in October from 221.53 GW in the year-ago month.

The peak power demand touched an all-time high of about 250 GW in May this year. The previous all-time high peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023.

## Apple sets all-time revenue record in India



### Mumbai

iPhone maker Apple has set an all-time revenue record in India and observed a double-digit growth in iPad sales in the country in the September quarter, senior officials of the company said on Friday.

The company reported an over 6 per cent growth in total net sales to USD 94.93 billion during the reported period from USD 89.49 billion a year ago.

"We also set September quarter segment revenue records in the Americas, Europe and the rest of Asia Pacific, as well as in a large number of countries,

including the United States, Brazil, Mexico, France, the UK, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and we continue to be excited by the enthusiasm we're seeing in India, where we set an all-time revenue record," Apple CEO Tim Cook said during the company's earnings call.

Cook said Apple also opened two new stores — one in Mumbai and the other in Delhi — in the country during the quarter.

"We can't wait to bring four new stores to customers in India," he said.

In early October, Apple

## Commercial LPG up Rs 62/cylinder

### New Delhi

Jet fuel, or ATF, price on Friday was hiked by 3.3 per cent and rate of commercial LPG used in hotels and restaurants increased by Rs 62 per 19-kg cylinder in the monthly revision done in line with international oil price trends.

The aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was increased by Rs 2,941.5 per kilolitre, or 3.3 per cent, to Rs 90,538.72 per kl in the national capital, according to state-owned fuel retailers. The hike comes after two rounds of reduction that had taken the rates to their lowest this year.

Oil firms also increased the price of commercial



LPG by Rs 62 to Rs 1,802 per 19-kg cylinder. This is the fourth straight monthly hike in commercial LPG prices.

## GST records second-highest collection at Rs 1.87 lakh cr in October

### New Delhi

Gross GST collection in October rose 9 per cent to over Rs 1.87 lakh crore, the second-highest ever, on pick-up in domestic sales and improved compliance.

The Central GST collection stood at Rs 33,821 crore, State GST at Rs 41,864 crore, Integrated GST at Rs 99,111 crore and cess at Rs 12,550 crore during the month.

As per the government data released on Friday, the total gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue grew 8.9 per cent to Rs 1,87,346 crore. In October 2023, the mop-up was at Rs 1.72 lakh crore.

October 2024 recorded the second-best GST mop-up. The highest ever collection was in April 2024 at over Rs 2.1 lakh crore.

During the month under review, GST from domestic transactions grew 10.6 per cent to Rs 1.42 lakh crore, while revenues from tax on imports rose about 4 per cent to Rs 45,096 crore.

Refunds worth Rs 19,306 crore were issued during the month, registering 18.2 per cent growth over the year-ago period.

After adjusting refunds, net GST collection grew 8 per cent at over Rs 1.68 lakh crore.

Deloitte India Partner MS Mani said the buoyancy in GST collections is on account

of an excellent combination of festive season sales and increased compliance.

"The driver appears to be domestic supplies... While many large states have recorded an increase in GST revenue above 9 per cent, some of them and many of the smaller states have shown a below average increase, which would be an area of concern for those states," Mani said.

EY Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal, however, said the single-digit growth in monthly GST collections signals a cooling-off period, indicating a potential slowdown in consumer spending in India, which surged in the previous fiscal year.

He said the November collections would show a better picture of the festive demand and the performance of the automobile sector would be crucial in determining the short-term trend.

"While the festive season is expected to boost collections, the overall outlook for the near future remains cautious despite short-term uncertainties, the long-term prospects for GST collections remain promising due to India's expanding consumer base and the government's pro-growth policies," Agarwal said.

KPMG Indirect Tax Head & Partner, Abhishek Jain, said the collections depict the robustness of the economy.

## SUVs steer festive season sales

### New Delhi

The festival season brought cheers to passenger vehicle makers having a wide range of SUVs and MPVs in their portfolio, as they experienced strong sales momentum in the category. This is evident from auto wholesales or dispatches to dealerships from the factory floor in October.

For example, although Maruti Suzuki witnessed an overall decline of 5 per cent in YoY sales in October, however, in utility vehicles segment it registered an increase of over 21 per cent in October.

The carmaker sold 1,59,591 units in the domestic market last month in comparison to 1,68,047 units in October 2023. However, Maruti Suzuki's utility vehicle segment showed strong growth in October, with total sales reaching 70,644 units, compared to 59,147 units in the

same month last year. This significant increase reflects the rising popularity of models such as the Brezza, Ertiga, Fronx and Grand Vitara. On the contrary, the mini and compact segment witnessed a significant decline of 19.5 per cent in sales.

Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL), registered total domestic sales of 55,568 units in October, registering a growth of 0.8 per cent. Commenting on HMIL sales, Tarun Garg, Whole-time Director and Chief Operating Officer, HMIL said, "We witnessed a strong demand for our SUV portfolio during the festive period, leading to our highest-ever monthly SUV sales at 37,902 units, including highest ever monthly domestic sales of the Hyundai Creta at 17,497 units. SUVs remain a cornerstone of our lineup, representing an impressive 68.2 per cent of our total monthly sales in October."



# Historicising the Arthaśāstra: Early Fiscal-Military States in South Asia

A passive role for the state was anathema to Kautilya. For the Arthaśāstra's author (or authors) the state had a positive role: to improve all aspects of life of its people, including their knowledge and the spirit of anvīkṣiki (enquiry), ensure yogakṣema, (prosperity through agriculture, trade, and husbandry), and enable progress on the paths of dharma, artha, and kāma—righteousness, prosperity, and aesthetics, respectively. This called for public expenditure, with a strong supervisory role of the state, even though much of the work was carried out through the agency of various śreṇīs. The Arthaśāstra also insists upon a fair and diligent, not grasping and rapacious, revenue and taxation mechanism, stressing the establishment of a corps of public servants—administrative, revenue, judicial, military, indeed in all aspects of the state's and the community's life—manned by people selected and promoted for their ability and not for their family status or connections; in other words, a meritocracy.

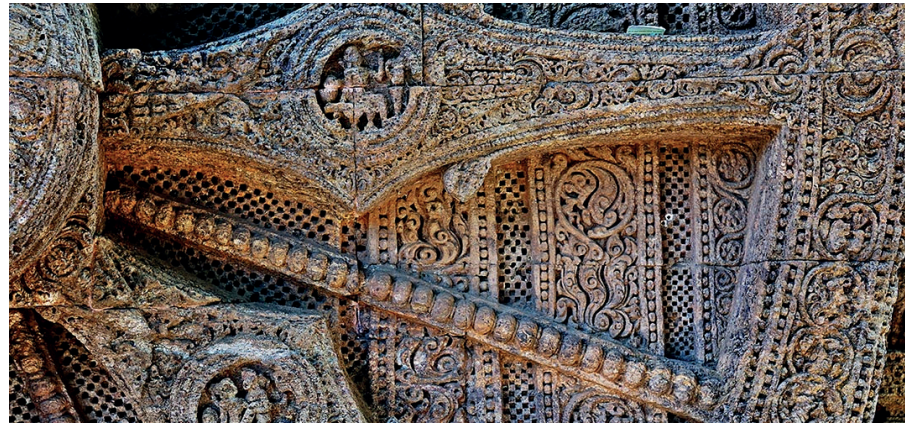
Just as the king (prince) wielded force (whether actively or passively) in coming to power and ensuring continuity, he must ensure, in Kautilya's view, through judicious use of his authority to discipline (daṇḍa; i.e., the rod) adherence to the social aims mentioned earlier. But Kautilya insists that the daṇḍa (whose importance was widely acknowledged at the time) be used with consideration and self-discipline, eschewing both overuse, which could lead to terror, and underuse which could cause anarchy. This goes back to the nature of the king who must not turn a tyrant but work towards the betterment of the populace.

The king was the symbol of the state and social authority, and all other authority derived from him; he was by his own authority sovereign, and required no ratification by religious agencies. Therefore, he is advised to evolve laws and rules wisely, having considered usage and practice and consulted elders and other experts, because once issued, laws would be inviolate. In other words, the king of the Arthaśāstra was not merely a passive maintainer of dharma and peace, but an active agent in the betterment of the populace, regulating all aspects of social life (including payments to priests in the sacrificial religion). Being such a ruler required the king to be learned, adept in philosophical texts, perhaps a philosopher himself. This view of the king's authority comes close to monism, but given that the diverse power groups in his kingdom had only been subjugated, not stamped out, the definition "pluralistically determined monism" appears more apt.

## Emergence of the 'Modern' State

What the Arthaśāstra envisaged can be compared to the modern state which emerged in 1,500–1,700 CE in Europe. Prior to this, power in Europe was largely diffused among local authorities such as barons and other feudal lords, churches, peasant communities, and independent cities, all of which insisted on autonomy and authority to wage war without reference to the king. The king's protocol priority was shaky, with little lien over local authorities, and he could rule only by consensus. Such a diffused situation started changing with the advent of pike-armed infantry and firearms from the 12th century, which increasingly thwarted the supposedly invincible knightly cavalries. Kings who could recruit such infantries, and also organise

cannonry, could not only drive feudal cavalry off the battlefield but also squeeze feudal classes out of their castles. Starting with some comparative advantage in violence, kings had



concentrated authority and sidelined regional powers by the 16th century; this was the culmination of feudalism that established the state's monopoly over violence.

## PART II

Even so, it would be erroneous to suppose that kingly authority arose solely through coercion and use of military power; rather, armies only strengthened the bargaining positions of kings in implicit negotiations and compromise. The 16th-17th centuries were an age of discovery, of world-ranging exploration, the rise of global commerce, the influx of specie and bullion, and global wars, which local power holders also wanted to capitalise upon; they were eager to cooperate with the king. Kings tried to create organisations to harness resources, including human and societal resources, to participate in these global conflicts—such participation determined their kingdoms as great powers. They sought standing armies, and geared their economies for sustained use of these armies by subjecting their populace to high taxes and implementing fiscal innovations such as national debt or credit-providing institutions, which is the simplest definition of the fiscal-military state.

The term 'fiscal-military state' was conceived by historians working on 18th-century Britain, a period when the process had fully caught on. It was natural that early studies of the fiscal-military state would focus on Britain, which was precocious among such states vying for world domination. However, in his *War and State in Early Modern Europe*: Spain, the Dutch Republic, and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States, 1500–1660, Jan Glete also studied the earlier states that demonstrated such characteristics. Taken holistically, it is seen that the term 'fiscal-military state' is far more nuanced than its simplistic definition as a state that could deploy an efficient revenue mechanism to sustain a standing army for prolonged conflict.

Applied to more mature forms of such states, such as Britain, the simple definition gets fleshed out: such states were more than just wielders of armies, having taken over most social responsibilities (such as security, communications, and irrigation) from regional and social institutions, and able to implement long-term social policies. Their centralised webs of bureaucratic departments

could enforce shared interests by adjusting conflicting priorities of stakeholders through cooperation and negotiation. To Glete, it was this ability to provide organisation sustained

through ability to control and tax, rather than coercion/consensus, that transformed the relationship between state and society into the fiscal-military state.

States also grew into impersonal or extra-personal institutions, with regular administrative and military services manned by officers loyal to state policies and not to individual kings or dynasties. These men, largely from commoner classes, had chosen administration, bureaucracy, or the military as a career, and held their positions by royal authority and not social origin or inherited position. This impersonal existence enabled not only sustenance of long-term policies, but also accumulation and institutionalisation of experience; generals commanding armies did not need to start afresh for each campaign unlike earlier, when much of their energies were spent in managing coherence of their hastily levied and squabbling forces. Institutionalisation of government offices also led to impersonal offices, where men could function keeping their private positions separate, and from which they could safely retreat without a successor having to resort to violence.

States functioning this way found they could harness social energies better, ensuring education, betterment of human capital through economics and knowledge, and providing better life experience for their citizens. Various sections of society could now cooperate with, and respect their obligations to, one another. Such developments were increasingly formalised by the time of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 which acknowledged the inviolate sovereignty of the state from without, and its monopoly over violence within. So too, the development of civic inheritance in England after the Glorious Revolution of November 1688 allowed it to meet many of the goals mentioned earlier in a sustained manner.

The fiscal-military state was obviously more than a mere seller of protection, a function that regional power holders had also performed earlier despite not having standing armies, though such protection was local, subjective, and temperamental. Rather, it was through a complex interplay of the demand for protection, stability, economy, and human capital development, and the supply of organisation and leadership that the modern fiscal-military state emerged. Even among these states, various bargains between what was sacrificed and what was gained were

negotiated, leading to different kinds of states in different arenas. Britain depended more on consensual means (where the peerage held back against the king, and commoners against both, and yet cooperated, at least after the Glorious Revolution), whereas states such as Prussia, Russia, and France were far more autocratic.

## Empirical Evidence from Magadha and Contemporary States

At the theoretical level, it can be seen that most aspects of Kautilya's envisaged state were indeed features of the European fiscal-military states in their more mature forms. Conventionally associated with the Mauryan Magadha kingdom—though the text does not once mention either—the Arthaśāstra is in fact a gist of centrist doctrines that emerged in the Gangetic plains during the mid-first millennium BCE, duly complemented by works such as the Nītisāra. The Arthaśāstra provides no empirical data, but such data can be gleaned, albeit imperfectly, from a close reading of the substantial body of literature of that time that has survived, including Buddhist texts, Greek accounts, and several Purāṇas, which can help discern causal mechanisms at work in the socio-political arena. Taking this critical realist approach, the sub-sections that follow examine the available information, and arrange it as per the principal features of the fiscal-military state.

## Anarchy and the Rise of State Power

The earliest picture of the Indo-Gangetic region is one of chaos, with 50 or more independently identifiable Vedic tribes consolidating into fewer janapadas (footprints of the tribe) of dispensations ranging from tribal to oligarchical. The territorial diversity of South Asia determined how these janapadas behaved. The Indo-Gangetic Divide around Delhi-Mathura, with the Punjab in the north and the Deccan in the south, were arid regions, while the Gangetic plains east of the Divide and the coastal plains surrounding the Deccan were comparatively more humid. As a result, the former was open and pastoral, while the eastern plains were covered in dense primeval forests (mahāvana) and tended towards sedentary agriculture (increasingly possible as iron axes could clear the forests and ploughshare turn the heavy soil).

Though the demarcation is not absolute, and features of the former could be found in parts of the latter, and vice versa, there were a few consolidated tracts of homogeneous ecospheres. The Gangetic plains had tracts of forests, urbanities, and sedentary agriculture in clearings, and arid scrub or grasslands, all in close proximity. Some janapada groups were mobile, and long tracks across these ecospheres from west to east can be discerned in the case of some of them, such as the Mālava/Malla or the Aśvaka. Though each janapada was named after a tribe, they comprised diverse groups following different lifestyles, not all of whom were equally ready to acknowledge authority; for example, nomadic pastoralists on arid stretches are difficult to tax and govern. This created what the late Dutch Indologist Jan Heesterman called the 'inner frontier', with central authority finding it difficult to extend throughout a janapada.

TO BE CONTD..



# BRICS has moved from a 'talk shop' to a 'talk mall'

The BRICS Summit, held in the Russian city of Kazan on 22-24 October, marked a new phase in the development of BRICS, with five new members—Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—joining the grouping's top-level meeting for the first time. The grandeur of the Kazan Summit was also enhanced by the BRICS Outreach Programme, as Russia managed to bring together officials from nearly 40 countries, including the United Nations Secretary-General and heads of regional organisations. Although, whether this means an evolution of BRICS, is still an open question.

Throughout its existence, the grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa has consistently generated divergent opinions regarding its significance. One view is that it is a significant initiative by non-Western powers united in their efforts to reform global financial institutions. Given the economic potential of its member states, two of which—India and China—are set to dominate the global economy in the near future, BRICS is seen as a forum to be reckoned with. From another perspective, however, the effectiveness of BRICS has so far been limited. Although the five nations have created an institutionalised platform with numerous working groups and exchange mechanisms, also establishing the New Development Bank, the net impact of their discussions has been rather modest. The lack of coherence in devising a common strategy and the low ratio between the number of meetings and their outcomes has led some observers to describe BRICS as little more than a "talk shop."

The lack of coherence in devising a common strategy and the low ratio between the number of meetings and their outcomes has led some observers to describe BRICS as little more than a "talk shop."

The issue of BRICS' expansion has seemingly overtaken all other matters on the Kazan Summit agenda. The media, both from the West and from the BRICS countries, focused their attention on the issue of geographic representation at the forum and whether this demonstrates that Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, were not isolated.

If one sees through the hype surrounding the high-level attendance, there are three takeaways from the forum. One notable departure from previous summits is that Russia was successful in pushing through the issue of sanctions in its final declaration. It is well known that India has been reluctant to mention this in bilateral and multilateral documents with Russia over the past decade. China, too, although active in helping Moscow circumvent the restrictions, has restrained from bringing up this topic publicly at



BRICS. The Beijing Declaration of 2022 made no reference to sanctions, and the Johannesburg Joint Statement of 2023 mentioned them only in passing, referring to their detrimental impact on agricultural trade. In stark contrast, the Kazan Declaration contains two passages condemning "unilateral coercive measures, including illegal sanctions, on the world economy, international trade and the achievement of the sustainable development goals" and "unilateral economic and secondary sanctions that are contrary to international law," including a joint "call for their elimination."

This might reflect a shift in the approach of previously cautious BRICS members, moving from a reserved critique of sanctions' impact on several key projects (e.g., Chabahar port) to a more assertive public stance against sanctions. With Iran as a new member of the grouping, and Belarus and Cuba gaining partner country status, the axis of sanctioned countries is expanding and the issue will continue to loom large on the BRICS Plus agenda. However, most of the BRICS members are still highly globalised and involved in Western financial markets, so they are likely to comply with any restrictions imposed on the rest of the BRICS (primarily, Russia and Iran). The recent US' decision to impose sanctions on nearly 400 entities and individuals from countries such as

China, India, Malaysia, Türkiye, Thailand, Switzerland, UAE and others is a "serious message to both the governments and private sectors of these countries" conveying Washington's commitment to countering the evasion of restrictions against Russia.

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The second key insight is that BRICS nations are struggling to align their positions on geopolitical issues. The situation in West Asia was the main security-related topic in the joint statement, despite differing stances among the members on matters such as the Israel-Hamas conflict and the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. For instance, the strong language against Israeli actions does not fully reflect the positions of all member states, including India. In contrast, the Russia-Ukraine war was referenced briefly, indicating that Moscow as the host had taken steps to narrow the gaps in opinion.

Russia is sending mixed signals about its intentions with the BRICS agenda. While echoing some of its partners' sentiments that BRICS should not become an anti-Western club, Moscow is also using this platform to drive a wedge

between the West and the Global South, and to lambast Western capitals for "blatant protectionism, manipulation of currency and stock markets, [...] relentless foreign influence ostensibly promoting democracy, human rights, and the climate change agenda." On paper, some of these points may resonate with its partners, including India, but in practice, as Russia finds itself in a full-blown confrontation with the United States and Europe, its rhetoric goes too far compared to other BRICS members (with the possible exception of Iran).

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The third takeaway from the summit is that, while interbank cooperation is gaining momentum, Moscow's key economic initiatives will take a long time to implement. The BRICS Cross-Border Payment Initiative (BCBPI), a plan to launch a new multinational platform that would include a financial messaging component, and allow for the conduction of settlement via tokens backed by either national or digital currencies, has not yet received a positive response from other members. An important indicator of Russia's partners' reluctance to move forward with this new solution

was their decision to send junior officials to the BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Banks Governors meeting in Moscow. The difference in approach is obvious. While Russia perceives the creation of an alternative payment system as the need of the hour, other members are more cautious to move away from the US dollar and Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT). Like links in a chain, the development of the BRICS Grain Exchange and further, a larger trading platform for other commodities, appears to be a long-term prospect that will depend on the ability to agree on currency settlement and insurance issues.

The challenges facing BRICS are clear. Before its member states can act in unison, they must align their positions, a task that becomes more difficult with the addition of new countries. As BRICS has grown in size and ambition, and is on its way to embracing more partner countries with different agendas and identities, it remains a challenge for the grouping to transition from words to deeds. The Kazan Summit has hinted that the BRICS is being refashioned into a new 'talk mall' where representative exchanges on critical geo-economic and geopolitical issues do not necessarily translate into tangible decisions.



# An Indo-European realignment

It's uncommon for two European heads of state to visit India within 24 hours of the other's departure. However, as soon as the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz wrapped up his three-day visit to India from 24-26 October, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez arrived in India on 28 October, commencing his bilateral visit.

While this was Chancellor Scholz's third trip to India in two years, it was the first visit by a Spanish head of state in 18 years, seven years after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Spain in 2017. Both leaders were accompanied by high-level ministerial and business delegations.

The seventh Indo-German Inter-Governmental Consultations chaired by Scholz and Modi resulted in 27 agreements on trade, migration, defence, critical technologies and innovation, and targeted new initiatives like the Green Hydrogen Roadmap. On the other hand, Sanchez's visit yielded eight outcomes that include setting up a fast-track mechanism for investments, closer cooperation in rail transport, and cultural exchange programmes.

The seventh Indo-German Inter-Governmental Consultations chaired by Scholz and Modi resulted in 27 agreements on trade, migration, defence, critical technologies and innovation, and targeted new initiatives like the Green Hydrogen Roadmap.

Similar agendas, different destinations. Traditionally, India's largest defence deals in Europe were conducted with France. Nonetheless, strengthening defence ties with India was at the top of both Scholz's and Sanchez's agendas. Both Germany and Spain are seeking to capitalise on India's lucrative market for defence partnerships and exports due to an ease in regulations for foreign entrants and the entry of local private sector companies in the defence space.

Germany's Thyssenkrupp and Spain's Navantia are in competition to co-produce six conventional submarines with Indian firms. Sanchez's stopover in Vadodra, Gujarat, saw the inauguration of the Airbus and Tata Aircraft Complex. This facility is set to produce 56 C-295 aircraft for the Indian Air Force in a deal worth US\$2.5 billion, out of which 16 aircraft will be assembled in Seville and 40 in Vadodra. This partnership between Airbus Spain and Tata Advanced Systems, expected to create thousands of local jobs in India, is touted as "the largest contract awarded by India in the defence sector." On the other hand, Germany's policy to relax licence requirements for arms exports to India, coupled with ambitions to finalise a Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement between the two armed forces, is a game changer. European countries are catapulting themselves as reliable security partners for India while simultaneously boosting the "Make in India" programme and initiatives to indigenise defence production, weaning New Delhi off Russian arms dependencies.

The two leaders had markedly different



itineraries, albeit similar agendas. Scholz stopped at New Delhi and Goa, while Sanchez visited Vadodra and Mumbai. In Mumbai, Sanchez met with industry leaders and film studios to explore the Spanish film industry's cooperation with Bollywood. Meanwhile, Scholz's Goa pitstop supported Indo-German naval activities, with German frigate Baden-Württemberg's port call and Frankfurt am Main's joint exercises with the Indian Navy.

European countries are catapulting themselves as reliable security partners for India while simultaneously boosting the "Make in India" programme and initiatives to indigenise defence production, weaning New Delhi off Russian arms dependencies.

Despite being Europe's economic powerhouse, the German economy has staggered in recent years, with growth shrinking by 0.3 percent in 2023. Meanwhile, the Spanish economy—the EU's fourth largest—has remained relatively stable, with a growth rate higher than the average eurozone and low inflation rates due to less dependencies on Russian gas. India's bilateral trade with Germany surpassed US\$30 billion in 2023, while figures for Spain during the same period totalled US\$10 billion. Recognising the scope for future growth, both Scholz and Sanchez also reaffirmed their commitment to the advancement of the EU-India Free Trade Agreement negotiations.

Global tensions, especially the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, held a place in India's discussions with both leaders. Nevertheless, the ability to work together and insulate their engagements from differences on these issues has proven the solidity of India's ties with European partners. Against the backdrop of differing

positions on the Russia-Ukraine war, India and Germany signed the comprehensive Green and Sustainable Development Partnership in May 2022. Given Spain's unique successes in the area of renewable energy, a partnership along similar lines would be useful. Germany's decision to increase visas for skilled Indians from 20,000 to 90,000 in a bid to attract migrant talent to fill gaps in its workforce espouses demographic and economic synergy.

On China, which has emerged as India's top security challenge, both Scholz and Sanchez have assumed relatively moderate positions as opposed to EU's more assertive approach. Germany is often perceived as the weakest link in the EU's approach, preferring to rebalance trade ties with Beijing over security and other considerations. Meanwhile, Sanchez was the first European leader to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping in March 2023 after the latter visited Moscow that same month. He visited China again in September this year, seeking to ease EU-China trade tensions. Just a few weeks ago, Germany voted against the EU's tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, while Spain abstained. Yet, asymmetrical economic ties (Germany had a 23.18 billion euros worth of trade deficit with China in 2022, while Spain had a trade deficit of almost 34 billion euros the same year), China's unfair trade practices and growing wariness of the risks associated with over-exposure to China, has resulted in greater scrutiny and conditionality in doing business with China. This is being accompanied by attempts to diversify trade with other large markets such as India.

Against the backdrop of differing positions on the Russia-Ukraine war, India and Germany signed the comprehensive Green and Sustainable Development

Partnership in May 2022.

Both Germany and Spain's interest in maintaining a free and secure Indo-Pacific and efforts in strengthening their presence in the region, amid concerns of Chinese assertiveness, has led to a strategic convergence with India. Before Scholz arrived in India, the German government released its "Focus on India" policy paper that laid out an ambitious future-oriented agenda for engagement with India. Sanchez, too, announced the Spanish government's goal of launching a new Asia strategy with India at its core.

Domestic shifts within Germany and Spain have also contributed to an increased engagement with India. In the case of Germany, its abandonment of the previous mercantilist policy of Wandel durch Handel in favour of diversifying its dependencies on more like-minded nations and a broader Zeitenwende has enabled it to shed its post-war reticence in matters of security. In Spain's case, domestic issues, including Catalan separatism, economic strife, and political turbulence, meant it lacked the bandwidth to pay attention elsewhere. Despite that, more proactive policies, underpinned by a stable economy, have characterised Madrid's approach to the world recently beyond its traditional spheres of engagement in Europe, Latin America, and North Africa.

In recent times, India has ramped up its engagement with European countries and sub-regions. At the same time, India's rapidly growing economy, defence ambitions, skilled workforce, and functioning democracy mean that India will remain attractive to a wide range of countries in Europe.



# Depsang to Kazan: Emerging détente between China and India

The fact that an agreement between China and India to move forward on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) was in the works has been anticipated in both capitals. Since late 2022, both governments have pursued a *modus vivendi* for disengagement at Depsang and Demchok, with the issue discussed threadbare in the Corps Commanders' meetings. The 17th Corps Commanders' meeting on 20 December 2022 marked a critical point. Following the establishment of five buffer zones in Eastern Ladakh and the Yangtse clash on 9 December 2022, the meeting provided an in-depth dialogue on the disengagement frameworks and probable solutions. In the next two years, these frameworks were substantially refined by both militaries which received the political endorsement this year.

This agreement has initiated the disengagement process at both remaining locations. As discussed below, a review of the lead-up to the Kazan agreement, its specifics on the ground and perspectives on this agreement from China, indicates that within strategic and political constraints, the agreement is a constructive restart for both states, though tempered with cautious optimism.

The buffer zones and their complexities By September 2022, China and India had established five buffer zones at Pangong Tso Lake from Fingers 4-8, Gogra, Hot Springs, Kugrang Nullah and the Galwan Valley. This belt of buffer zones was aimed to separate both forces from their face-to-face deployments and was located mostly on the Indian side of the LAC, creating a distance of 3–10 kilometres between both sides and establishing restrictions on human patrolling or grazing temporarily. Only electronic surveillance was allowed. The denial of grazing received substantial criticism in India as these areas were traditional grazing grounds for the local population. However, the Indian government argued that if they could not patrol or graze in these buffer zones, neither could the Chinese and that ensured stability and peace in these areas.

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The negotiation for achieving a similar *modus vivendi* in Depsang and Demchok proved difficult. The standoff in these two places was a legacy issue, starting in 2008-09 and eventually becoming a part of the 2020 Galwan Clash discourse. After surveying this area in September 2013, the Shyam Saran Committee reported that the Chinese were not allowing the Indian Army patrol units to access patrolling points 10 to 13 in the Depsang bulge area and creating difficulties for patrols in the Sirijap and Demchok area. Therefore, these two locations proved to be the toughest to negotiate.

Nevertheless, the Indian establishment displayed adept negotiation skills, finally securing the Kazan Agreement. This accord avoids creating buffer zones in the area, allowing staggered patrolling by small patrol units from both sides. Indian troops can

finally access patrolling points 10 to 13 in this region again.

## Economic foundation for the political agreement

Since the 2020 clashes, China-India relations have stagnated, marked by minimal engagement across trade, economics and regional political fronts. India, stepping away from its oft-professed neutral politics, has actively engaged in the Malabar Exercises and the QUAD, aligned closely with the United States (US), while restricting Chinese investments, apps, and airlines. India has often adopted positions countering China. Beijing believes India has become detrimental to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Southern Asia and withheld support from multiple Chinese economic initiatives namely, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China-Myanmar

The border agreement with India has received intense attention within China's strategic community. The big question everyone tends to ask "Now that India's Modi has given a thumbs up, will China and India turn the page in terms of bilateral ties." In the Chinese assessment, this is a substantial achievement, a hard-won success. It is being argued that this ice-breaker will revitalize China-India relations and can potentially open up new space for cooperation between the two countries on the global stage. For example, some Chinese scholars believe the Kazan meeting will pave the way for greater cooperation between China and India on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) platform. There are talks about PM Modi personally attending the summit in China next year and opening up a new chapter in bilateral cooperation.



Economic Corridor, and the China-Nepal India Corridor.

Beijing believes India has become detrimental to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Southern Asia and withheld support from multiple Chinese economic initiatives namely, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and the China-Nepal India Corridor.

China-India trade, however, has remained strong. Consequently, India's trade deficit has grown over the last three years, often crossing US\$ 100 billion a year. In addition, foreign direct investment (FDI) in India has dropped substantially, to less than US\$30 billion in the last financial year. The Indian Finance Ministry has, therefore, expressed concerns, prompting the Indian Chief Economic Advisor, Anantha Nageswaran, to advocate for renewed engagement with China in the 2024 Economic Survey. China, meanwhile, is in difficult terrain as its industrial overcapacity, high unemployment rate and collapsing real estate sector, along with severe societal repression by a paranoid Chinese state, has created a volatile economic environment. The Kazan Agreement is, thus, viewed as a mutually beneficial pact to reduce hostilities and reestablish a working arrangement to minimise the potential for bilateral conflict.

## Opinions in China on the agreement

Chinese scholars argue that true reconciliation with India will require greater patience and sincerity, as the border issue is complex, involves sovereignty issues, and is subject to interference from third parties or external forces. Liu Zongyi, director of the South Asia Research Center at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS), argued that although there have been some positive developments in bilateral ties, it will still take some time for the relationship to recover. Since India's great power ambitions and its overall strategic goals of outcompeting China have not changed much, China needs to exercise caution, particularly Chinese companies still need to adopt a cautious attitude when investing in India.

## Final evaluation

The general feeling in China is that although both states have reached a preliminary agreement to disengage, the future development path of China-India relations is still full of potholes and slippery slopes. The two sides still face the possibility of a sudden escalation in conflicts and differences because the borderline has not yet been fully determined.

China will keep a keen eye on how India can maintain good relations with China while maintaining cooperation with the United States in the future.

In addition, the future direction of the China-US-India trilateral relationship is full of uncertainty. The US elections, scheduled for November 2024, will also impact China-India relations. China will keep a keen eye on how India can maintain good relations with China while maintaining cooperation with the United States in the future.

Similarly in India, the disengagement at Depsang and Demchok is ongoing, and the patrolling may begin around Diwali. However, hereafter both sides must negotiate de-escalation and de-induction and future access and patrolling in existing buffer zones. The completion of this process will bring back a modicum of sensitivity towards each other's red lines and may generate mutual respect. The Kazan Agreement, in sum, has reduced the animosity and mistrust and opened the scope for bilateral cooperation. The trust between both Indian and Chinese militaries, however, is a long way ahead.



# Sharda Sinha: Voice of Chhath falls silent, the songs live on

Her songs echoed with the sounds of generations of folk singers who came before her, her voice earthy and imbued with the memory of home. Sharda Sinha, also called 'Begum Akhtar of Mithila', was the melody behind Chhath Puja and many a celebration in the region – and outside it too.

The singer, whose voice became synonymous with the folk songs woven in the rich tapestry of everyday culture of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, died on Tuesday night following a long battle with multiple myeloma. It was just four days after her 72nd birthday on November 1.

That today is the first day of Chhath celebrations, a festival she was always associated with, is just one of the strange twists of life and fate.

For millions, at home or thousands of miles away anywhere, hers was the voice that tugged at the heart and called out Chhath, a festival dedicated to the sun god and the biggest in the region's cultural calendar. She always released a song during the festival and did so this year too notwithstanding her ill health.

A trained classical singer who effortlessly melded the folk in her many songs, Sinha was hailed as the voice of her people and often called 'Bihar Kokila'.

The Padma Bhushan recipient, whose career spanned more than five decades, lent her voice to songs in Maithili, Bhojpuri and Magahi languages. Some of her popular tracks are "Chhathi Maiya Aayi Na Duaariya", "Kartik Maas Ijoriya", "Ho Deenanath", "Barh Re Jatan Se", "Dwar Chekai", "Patna Se", and "Koyal Bin".

Sinha, mourned by many who grew up listening to her songs, will also be remembered for her Bollywood songs, including "Taar Bijli" from "Gangs of Wasseypur-II", "Babul" from "Hum Aapke Hain Koun" and "Kahe Toh Se Sajna" from "Maine Pyar Kiya".

She is credited for providing dignity to the classical expression of folk music or "lok geet", overlooked and sometimes lost



in the noise of what's defined as mainstream, as well as promoting its popularity among the masses as well as the classes.

"Wasseypur" composer Sneha Khanwalkar described Sinha's voice as "pure wine" and recalled how they first met.

"Anurag (Kashyap) suggested, 'Do you want to try Sharda ji?' So I went to her house and I sang a few lines to her. She brought out her harmonium and sang those lines so I thought this is the best..." Khanwalkar recalled in a video about the making of the film's music.

Sinha, who had been suffering from multiple myeloma since 2017, had been on oxygen support in the intensive care unit of the Institute Rotary Cancer Hospital (IRCH), the cancer institute of AIIMS, since October 27.

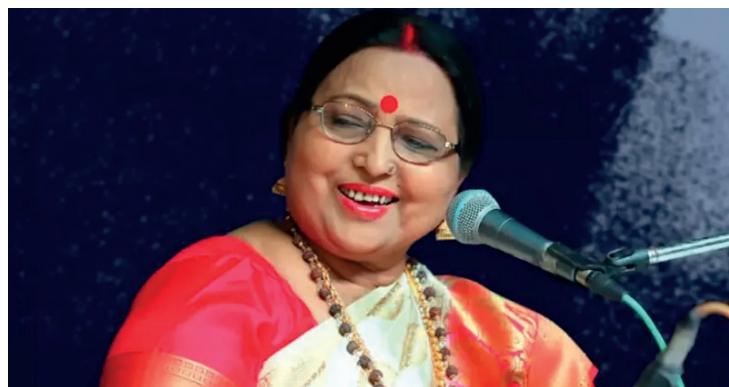
It has been an incredibly difficult time for her family, and her children Vandana and Anshuman, who kept fans updated about her health through social media.

Just weeks ago, they lost their father Braj Kishore Sinha to brain haemorrhage after a fall. It was a hard blow for the already ailing Sinha.

Born on November 1, 1952 in Bihar's Supaul district, Sinha was initiated into classical music by Pandit Raghu Jha, an eminent

khayal singer of Panchgachiya Gharana. She then trained under Pandit Sitaram Hari Dandekar, a khayal virtuoso and later from Panna Devi, a contemporary of 'Malika-e-Ghazal' Begum Akhtar and an exponent of thumri and dadra.

Lyricist Hriday Narayan Jha, Sinha's frequent collaborator, said the singer would leave no stone unturned when it came to her craft and would consult with elders of her family before recording the songs.



"I am proud to have written songs for Sharda Sinha. She did full justice to those songs, even made them better. That's the reason people connect so much with her voice. She received many big offers to sing songs for Hindi films but she never made any compromises with her folk singing style," Jha added.

Sinha was a Nritya Visharad



(Manipuri) and also held a master's degree in Indian classical music-vocal and a Ph.D. She has also been the recipient of Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 2000, the Padma Shri in 1991, and the Padma Bhushan in 2018.

Sinha became a rage when she came out with her debut Maithili number "Dularua Bhaiya" back in 1971.

A tribute to poet Vidyapati, known as Maithil Kokil, in 1983 earned her recognition in countries such as Russia, China, the UK and the US. Sinha made sure to keep up with the changing times.

dedicated to folk voices, I am called Sharda."

As a cultural ambassador of the Government of India, Sinha performed in many countries, including Mauritius, Germany, Belgium and Holland. The singer, who joined All India Radio in the 1980s, was a "top grade" artiste of the state-owned public radio broadcaster.

She also performed at All India Radio concerts and cultural festivals across India. Sinha also served the Department of Music, Women's College, Samastipur (L.N.M.U. Darbhanga) Bihar for more than four decades.

Over the years, she received various honours besides the Padma awards. These include the Rashtriya Devi Ahiliya Samman, Bihar Kala Puraskar, Bihar Ratna, Bhojpuri Ratna, Mithila Vibhuti Samman.

Her son Anshuman manages the Sharda Sinha Art & Culture Foundation in his mother's name.

According to her official YouTube page, the foundation aims towards "showcasing and preserving various aspects of culture of Bihar primarily and culture of north India in general.

She turned 72 on Diwali day and breathed her last on day one of Chhath... the voice and the artiste forever intertwined with both days for her legions of fans. In death as in life, Sinha will play on.

She would often share videos of her songs, tribute to music legends like Lata Mangeshkar and festive greetings on her official YouTube channel, which has close to 75,000 subscribers.

Her bio on Instagram, which has 269,000 followers, reads: "I sing the folk tradition in folk tunes. I hum the emotion of my mind in songs, completely



## IFFI to celebrate centenaries of Raj Kapoor, Tapan Sinha and Mohd Rafi

The International Film Festival of India (IFFI) will mark the centenary of four icons of Indian cinema — Raj Kapoor, Tapan Sinha, Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR) and Mohammed Rafi — at its upcoming 55th edition, the organisers said on Monday.

The gala, which will be held in Goa, will also present restored versions of their timeless classics during its nine-day run. The opening ceremony of IFFI, set to take place on November 20, will pay tribute to these legends, accompanied by an audio-visual presentation, bringing their cinematic journeys to life.

“The 55th IFFI’s centenary celebrations are a homage to the enduring influence of Raj Kapoor, Tapan Sinha, Akkineni Nageswara Rao and Mohammed Rafi on Indian cinema. By bringing together art, history, and interactive experiences, IFFI seeks to inspire future generations through the legacies of these luminaries,” a press release stated. At the festival, ANR will be feted on November 22, Kapoor on November 24, Rafi on November 26, and Sinha on November 27.

A restored version of the 1953 movie Devadasu, which cemented Telugu film icon ANR’s place in the annals of cinematic history, will be screened at the gala. His birth centenary was celebrated on September 20. Sinha, one of the most prominent Bengali cinema directors in the 1970s and 1980s, forming a quartet with Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen, will be honoured with the

presentation of his 1976 classic Harmonium. His centenary was observed on October 2.

IFFI will showcase a digitally restored Awaara (1951), headlined and directed by Kapoor, known as the Showman of Indian Cinema. Rafi will be celebrated for his songs in the 1961 film Hum

Dono, which will be screened in its enhanced audio and visual restoration. The birth centenaries of Kapoor and Rafi will be commemorated officially on December 14 and December 24, respectively.

During its course, the festival will hold in-depth panel discussions and in-conversation sessions with esteemed guests and family members, who will provide unique insights

into the lives of the four cinema legends. In a special tribute, IFFI will unveil a unique My Stamp dedicated to these luminaries, along with a Caravan of Songs, a musical journey featuring 150 songs by Kapoor and Rafi, and 75 songs associated with Sinha and ANR.

A curated exhibition, featuring rare memorabilia, photographs, and artefacts from the lives of ANR, Kapoor, Sinha and Rafi, will also be open to audiences.

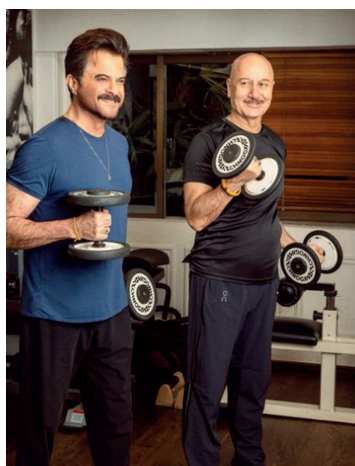
On the days dedicated to each personality, there will be thematic activities, including quizzes, planned throughout the Entertainment Arena. A sand art illustration by renowned artist Sudarshan Pattnaik, as a tribute to the legendary artistes, will also be on display as part of the centenary celebrations. IFFI will come to a close on November 28.

## ‘Young boy at heart’: Anil Kapoor praises Anupam Kher as they turn gym-buddies

Bollywood star Anil Kapoor has lauded Anupam Kher’s hard work and said that a Hindi medium boy managed to cross over and make his mark in Hollywood is a testament of his hunger to make a mark. He even shared moments from the gym working out together.

Anil took to Instagram, where he shared a string of pictures of the two working out in the gym. The first image has the two posing together for the camera. The second picture shows the two stars doing a plank workout.

In the third photograph, Anil is seen doing a leg workout while Anupam is exercising his back. In the last image, the duo is seen working on their biceps



and toning it.

For the caption, he wrote: “Anupam Kher is the joker in the pack, a chameleon who can do anything. That fact that a Hindi medium boy managed to

cross over and make his mark in Hollywood is a testament of his hunger to make a mark, to make his family proud with his work. I have been extremely fortunate to work with him and know him personally...”

“At 69, Anupam is a young boy at heart and trust me, I can vouch for the fact that he can push himself at the gym too! All the best Anupam Kher for #Vijay69.. by celebrating your 40 years in cinema, the entire industry is saluting you... We love you.”

Last month, Anupam shared details about the injuries he suffered while making his upcoming film “Vijay 69.”

## ‘Immense sense of belonging’, says Big B as he visits Siddhivinayak, Babulnath temples



Megastar Amitabh Bachchan spent his day seeking blessings at Siddhivinayak and the Babulnath temple in Mumbai.

The actor took to his blog, where he mentioned: “A day filled with religious divinity, prayer and seeking the blessings of the Almighty .. Visits to the temples of Siddhivinayak .. Babulnath and the immense sense of belonging after ..Belief .. May there be peace and love ever.”

The Siddhivinayak Mandir was originally built by Laxman Vithu and Deubai Patil in

November 1801. The temple is dedicated to Ganesha. It has a small mandap with the shrine for Siddhi Vinayak.

Talking about the Babulnath Temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva, it is one of the oldest temples in Maharashtra Girgaum Chowpatty area. Shiva in the form of the Lord of the Babul tree is the main deity in this temple. The faithful climb up to the mandir and obtain Darshan of the shivling and obtain blessings of the Lord.

## Diljit Dosanjh professes love for India during Jaipur tour

Punjabi sensation Diljit Dosanjh, during his Dil-Luminati Tour, expressed love for the country and said yeh pagdi hamari shaan hai. The singer-actor took to Instagram, where he shared a reel from his team’s profile. In the video, Diljit was joined by a fan on stage, who was sporting a traditional Rajasthani turban.



Diljit was heard saying, “Inki pagdi ke liye zor daar taaliya. Yeh pagdi hamari shaan hai. Yeh humari desh ki khoobsurati hai... (Please clap for his turban. The turban is our pride. This is the beauty of our country.)”

“Har do-teen chaar ghante baad humaari boli, khaana change hojata hai. Yeh humaari desh ki beauty hai. (In every two-three hours our language and food changes. This is the beauty of our country.)” He then talked about his love for the country.

“Aur hum jaahan jaahan se hai —koi Jaipur se hai, Koi Gujarat se hai, Delhi se hai, Haryana se hai, Punjab se hai — Hum sab ko pyaar karte hai. Aur hum sab ke saath is desh ko pyaar karte hai. Marwariyo ke liye zor daar taaliyon. (And wherever we are from — Jaipur, Gujarat, Delhi, Haryana or Punjab — We love all. And together we love our country. Please clap for my Marwari brother.)”



# Border-Gavaskar Trophy: Wounded lions

Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood believes India's confidence would have been shaken by the shocking series loss to New Zealand, but the "sleeping giant" can mount a strong comeback in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy starting later this month.

India suffered a humiliating series whitewash after losing the third match by 25 runs to New Zealand in Mumbai on Sunday, the first time in their Test history, which goes back to 1933.

"It might awaken a sleeping giant, so to speak. We'll see that when they come out," Hazlewood said.

Not only did the drubbing at home mark one of the darkest moments in India's Test cricket history, it has also significantly impacted the Rohit Sharma-led side's chances of qualifying for next year's World Test Championship (WTC) final.

Three back-to-back losses meant that India have lost their top spot to Australia in the WTC standings. India are now faced with a tough task of winning four of their five matches against Australia to qualify for their third consecutive WTC final without relying on external results.

"It's obviously better than losing 0-3 than winning 3-0, easily. The confidence might have taken a bit of a hit. A lot



of them have been out here, but there are a few batters who haven't, so they'll be a bit unsure of what to expect," Hazlewood said. "I don't think you can read too much into it. The results are obviously good for us in a way."

Hazlewood's fellow quick Scott Boland also thought the India side that turns up on the opening day of the first Test at Perth on November 22 could be an altogether tougher proposition to the team that meekly folded against the Black Caps.

"I think the conditions are so different," he said. "Obviously, the last couple of times India's come to Australia, they've done really well. Yeah, there's so much more bounce here. I think the way they'll structure up their team (might) be completely different

to what you see over in India."

Hazlewood, who is a part of Australia's three-pronged pace attack along with Mitchell Starc and skipper Pat Cummins, lauded his Trans-Tasman rivals for achieving something no other team has been able to do. "Credit to the Kiwi boys. They played outstanding cricket. To win 3-0 in India is unbelievable. It's hard enough to win one game there, let alone every match of the series," Hazlewood said.

Hazlewood said "everything is falling into place" for Australia as the series approaches. "It's just a huge series. Every time we play India, it's right up there with the Ashes," Hazlewood said. "I think the crowds will be massive. I think the TV ratings could be huge. (There is talk) it could be the biggest ever."

## Australia series could decide Rohit Sharma's Test future: Srikanth



India must start planning for Rohit Sharma's successor if the team do not play well in their five-Test series in Australia as the captain could well retire from the longest format, former skipper Krishnamachari Srikkanth has said. Rohit retired from T20 Internationals after delivering India's second World Cup trophy in June but the 37-year-old has struggled for form and admitted to his leadership lapses in the recent 3-0 home Test whitewash by New Zealand.

India head to Australia needing to win four out of their five Tests to reach a third successive World Test Championship final next year and could be without Rohit for the opener for personal reasons. "You have to start thinking ahead. If Rohit

Sharma doesn't do well, I think he himself will retire from Test cricket, for all you know," Srikkanth said. "He'll play ODIs only. He has already left T20I cricket. We have to keep in mind that he's also ageing."

Rohit has scored 4,270 runs in Test cricket at an average of 42.27 but his recent form has come under the microscope. He has made only one half-century in his last 10 innings, with six single-digit scores, and was guilty of playing reckless shots at important moments against the Black Caps. Srikkanth, also a former chief selector, said the skipper was right to accept his shortcomings in a press conference. "That's the first move of a player to get back to rhythm. Accepting your fault is very important," he said.

## Pro boxer Mandeep Jangra wins world title

Indian professional boxer Mandeep Jangra won the World Boxing Federation's super featherweight world title after defeating Britain's Conor McIntosh in the Cayman Islands.

The 31-year-old, who trains under former Olympics silver medallist Roy Jones Jr and has faced only one defeat in his professional career so far, had the upper hand in most rounds.

He delivered powerful punches from the outset, maintaining his stamina throughout the 10 rounds, while the British boxer struggled to keep pace. McIntosh did try to make a comeback, but Jangra continued to maintain the upper hand in most rounds.

"This is one of the biggest victories of my career. I am thankful to my sponsor, chief coach Roy Jones, assistant coach Asa Beard and Angel," Jangra said.

"I have worked hard for years to achieve this. It is a matter of pride for me that I could bring glory to the country."

The Haryana boxer, who made his professional boxing debut in 2021, hopes the title will inspire more Indian pugilists to turn professional.

"I think this title will open the way for other boxers of the country and they will also decide to make a career in professional boxing. Our boxers are good and there is no dearth of talent in them. If they get good promoters and managers, they can also become world champions," Jangra said.

Jangra has won 11 out of his 12 fights in his professional career with seven being knockout victories. He had a decent run in the amateur circuit as well and won a Commonwealth Games silver medal in the 2014 Glasgow edition.





# Mission 2036 Olympics: After months of discussions, India submits 'Letter of Intent' to IOC

India has submitted a 'Letter of Intent' to the International Olympic Committee's Future Host Commission, expressing its desire to host the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is the country's first concrete step in its ambitious plan after months of informal dialogue with the IOC. The letter was submitted by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on October 1, according to a source in the sports ministry.

"This monumental opportunity could bring substantial benefits, fostering economic growth, social progress and youth empowerment across the country," the source added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had first talked about his government's aspiration to host the 2036 Olympics last year. A decision on the host will not be taken before the IOC elections next year and India will also have to face competition from several other nations such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, who are positioning themselves as strong contenders to host the sporting spectacle.

However, with the submission of a 'Letter of Intent', the nation has progressed from "Informal Dialogue" to the "Continuous Dialogue" stage of the host election process.

In this stage, the IOC conducts a "feasibility study" of the progress of projects associated with the Games in the



potential host country.

"As part of the Feasibility Assessment, independent sources in a wide-ranging number of areas are taken into consideration, including in human rights, through Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), and sustainability, through the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)," the IOC states on its official website.

The next phase of the process would be "Targetted Dialogue", which would require the submission of an edition-specific formal bid, which would be assessed by the Future Host Commission. The process would finally end with a host election.

India's plan has been backed by current IOC head Thomas Bach. The last time India hosted an international multi-sport extravaganza was the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi. But for the 2036 Olympics, Ahmedabad is being seen as a frontrunner to be the host city.

India's top sports administrators, including IOA president PT Usha, were at the Paris Olympics earlier this year to lobby for the country. It is also learnt that India would be pushing for the inclusion of indigenous disciplines if the bid is successful.

The Sports Authority of India's Mission

Olympic Cell (MOC) has even presented a detailed report on the measures needed for a successful bid to new sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya.

In this document, MOC has identified yoga, kho kho, kabaddi, chess, T20 cricket and squash for inclusion in the Games if the country gets to host the quadrennial extravaganza.

However, the IOA is also mired in controversy owing to a tug of war between Usha and the body's Executive Council, which has steadfastly refused to ratify the appointment of her choice for the CEO's position, Raghuram Iyer.

## Internal conflict won't affect commitment to host Olympics: Usha

Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president PT Usha insisted that its commitment to host the 2036 Summer Games "remained steadfast" despite the "internal challenges" her organisation has been facing due to her feud with the Executive Council members. "Despite some internal challenges within the IOA, our commitment to hosting the 2036 Summer Games remains steadfast. The IOA remained in continuous contact with the IOC and I am optimistic that India will be viewed as a gracious host," Usha said.

## Novak Djokovic withdraws from ATP Finals

Novak Djokovic won't defend his ATP Finals title after ruling himself out citing an injury, leaving the season-ending event without a member of the Big Three of men's tennis for the first time in 23 years.



"I was really looking forward to being there, but due to ongoing injury I won't be playing next week," Djokovic wrote on social media, without specifying what the problem is. "Apologies to those who were planning to see me."

The eight-man tournament begins Sunday in Turin, Italy.

Djokovic has won the ATP

Finals a record seven times. He beat current No. 1 Jannik Sinner for the title last year.

Roger Federer, who announced his retirement in 2022, won the event six times after making his debut in 2002; Rafael Nadal, who is retiring after playing in the Davis Cup this month, was the runner-up twice at the ATP Finals but never won it.

## Harmanpreet Kaur rises to 9th, Smriti Mandhana remains 4th in women's ODI rankings

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur climbed to the joint ninth spot while opener Smriti Mandhana remained fourth in the latest ICC Women's ODI rankings, released here on Tuesday.

Kaur, who played an important part in her team's six-wicket victory over New Zealand in the third ODI of their ICC Women's Championship series in Ahmedabad, had slipped three slots after the first two matches.

However, her 59 not out off 63 balls pushed her back into the top 10.

Left-hander Mandhana, who won the player of the match award for her knock of 100, added 23 rating points to reach a tally of 728, just five less than Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu in the list led by Natalie Sciver-Brunt of England with 760 rating points.

Wicketkeeper Yastika Bhatia moved up from 48th to 45th after chipping in with 35 runs, while for New Zealand, Brooke



Halliday's knock of 86 lifted her 12 spots to 24th position and Georgia Plimmer's 39 runs took her from 85th to 74th position.

In the bowling chart, seasoned spinner Deepti Sharma gained important rating points after helping India win the series 2-1.

Deepti, who had already

attained a career-high 687 rating points last week while consolidating her second place among bowlers, added 16 more to reach 703 rating points after her haul of 3/39 to hold on to the second spot.

England's left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone enjoys a huge lead at the top with 770 rating points.

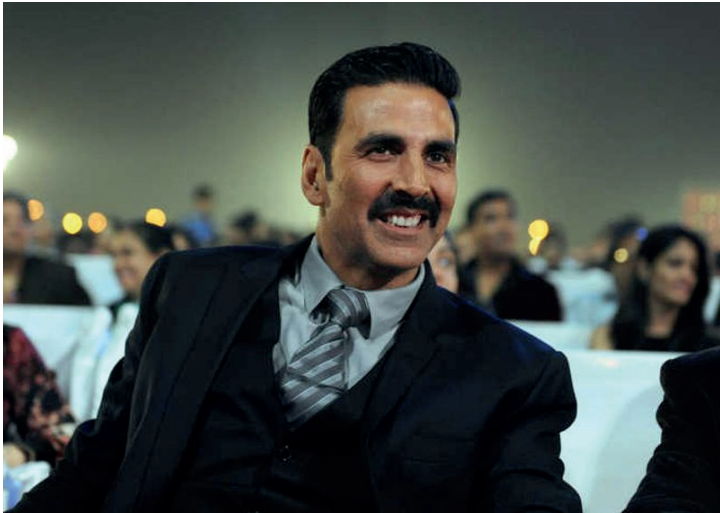
India pacer Renuka Singh was up four places to 32nd while Saima Thakor (up 20 places to joint-77th) and Priya Mishra (up six places to 83rd) also progressed.

India are placed in third position in the ICC Women's Championship standings with 25 points while New Zealand are sixth with 20 from 21.

Australia and England are at the top with 28 points each, from 18 and 21 matches, respectively.



## Akshay is a 'proud husband' as wife Twinkle's book gets shortlisted for award



Bollywood star Akshay Kumar has called himself a "proud husband" after his "brilliant" author wife Twinkle Khanna's book "Welcome to Paradise" got selected for an award.

A true cheerleader, Akshay took to his Instagram, where he shared a link to vote for Twinkle's book for the award.

He captioned it: "Proud husband alert! My brilliant wife's Welcome to Paradise has been

shortlisted for the Crossword Books Award in the fiction category. If you like her work, now's the time to show some love and cast a vote."

"Welcome to Paradise" is Twinkle's fourth book. It has a collection of five short stories, each with a central female character.

On the film front, Akshay was seen in the recently released "Singham Again" by Rohit

Shetty.

The third installment from the "Singham" franchise has a motley of stars. It has Ajay as Bajirao Singham, Ranveer Singh as Simmba, Akshay Kumar as DCP Veer Sooryavanshi, Kareena Kapoor as Bajirao Singham's wife Avni, Deepika Padukone as police officer Shakti Shetty, Ravi Kishan, Jackie Shroff and Tiger Shroff.

Arjun will be seen playing the role of antagonist named Danger Lanka. The film will have a contemporary spin to the "Ramayana" and was released on Diwali on November 1.

He also has "Housefull 5" produced by Sajid Nadiadwala. "Housefull 5" promises to bring together an impressive array of seasoned actors, including Riteish Deshmukh, Abhishek Bachchan, Sanjay Dutt, Fardeen Khan, Nana Patekar, Chunky Panday, Jackie Shroff, Dino Morea, Jacqueline Fernandez, Nargis Fakhri, Sonam Bajwa, Chitrangda Singh, and Soundarya Sharma.

## Actor Shah Rukh Khan says he has quit smoking

Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan, who used to be a heavy smoker, has revealed that he has finally kicked the habit.

The actor shared the health update with his admirers who gathered to celebrate his 59th birthday on Saturday at an auditorium in Mumbai.

In a video from the event shared by his fan club on X, Shah Rukh can be heard saying: "There's a good thing - I'm not smoking anymore, guys. I thought I won't feel so breathless after quitting smoking, but I still feel it (the side-effects). Inshallah, that will also get ok."

In 2012, the actor drew flak for smoking in public during an IPL match between his team Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals, but escaped with a paltry fine of Rs 100 after he pleaded guilty before a court in Jaipur.



At a media event in 2017, Shah Rukh said he was planning to quit smoking and drinking for the sake of his children Aryan, Suhana, and AbRam.

At Saturday's fan event, Shah Rukh also promised fans to entertain them for at least next 10 years.

"I want to make special films for the next 10 years. I really want to entertain all of you happily," he said.

The actor will next be seen in "King", directed by Sujoy Ghosh. The film will also star his daughter Suhana

## House full: Kartik Aaryan is happy that his mom is not getting tickets for Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3



**Mumbai**

Kartik Aaryan recently shared a light-hearted moment about his mother, Mala Tiwari, struggling to secure tickets for his latest release Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3.

On Sunday, Kartik posted an adorable video of his mom trying to book tickets on BookMyShow, but she hadn't managed to get a seat yet. Sharing the amusing clip, Kartik wrote in the caption, "Mummy ko bhi nahi mil rahi tickets. So happy to have this problem."

In the video, Kartik's mom is seen sitting on a couch, telling him about her difficulty getting tickets. She humorously says, "I feel like posting 'hey Bhagwan meri aankhein taras gayi hai yeh film dekhne ko.'" Kartik then playfully asks, "Ab tickets kaha se book kare?"

Meanwhile, the Dhamaka actor has been sharing fun videos with his co-stars Madhuri Dixit and Vidya Balan on social media, adding to the buzz around the film. Directed by Anees Bazmee, Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3 was released in theatres on November 1. The horror-comedy clashed with Rohit Shetty's Singham Again at the box office.

The horror-comedy has received mixed reactions from audiences. Film critic Taran Adarsh reported that Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3 earned Rs 36.60

crore on its opening day, marking Kartik's biggest opener to date. Adarsh tweeted, "Kartik Aaryan vs Kartik Aaryan: BB3 takes massive lead... Day 1 biz... 2024: #BhoolBhulaiyaa3 Rs 36.60 cr, 2022: #BhoolBhulaiyaa2 Rs 14.11 cr, 2020: #LoveAajKal Rs 12.40 cr, 2023: #SatyaPremKiKatha



Rs 9.25 cr (Thursday), 2019: #PatiPatniAurWoh Rs 9.10 cr, 2019: #LukaChuppi Rs 8.01 cr, 2015: #PyaarKaPunchnama2 Rs 6.80 cr, 2023: #Shehzada Rs 6 cr, 2024: #ChanduChampion Rs 5.40 cr."

The film also stars Madhuri Dixit, Sanjay Mishra, Triptii Dimri, and Rajpal Yadav among others.