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The Researchers'

NEWS BOX

Chilling Audio Of Moment Doomed Titanic Submersible Imploded Released

World The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has released a chilling audio of the moment the Titan submersible imploded, killing all five passengers instantly as they descended towards the Titanic wreck site. The 20-second audio clip, published on Friday by Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS), features a burst of static, a thunderous boom and then an eerie return to white noise - believed to be the final sounds of the ill-fated submersible. Officials said that boom was the sound of the sub imploding before reaching the Titanic wreck on the bottom of the North Atlantic Ocean on June 18, 2023. According to the New York Post, the recording was picked up by a moored passive acoustic recorder about 900 miles away from where the OceanGate vessel buckled under the water pressure. The US Coast Guard said the clip reveals "the suspected acoustic signature of the Titan submersible implosion." The Titan submersible tragedy in 2023 claimed the lives of five individuals, including renowned British adventurer Hamish Harding, father-son duo Shahzada and Suleman Dawood, French national Paul-Henri Nargeolet, and Stockton Rush, CEO of OceanGate Expeditions. The incident prompted intense scrutiny over the sub's engineering as reports surfaced that the vessel had significant design flaws and was never independently certified for deep-sea travel.

Also Read | Why Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg Was Almost Sentenced To Death In Pakistan

The Titan's mothership had lost communication with the small submersible less than two hours into the dive, triggering a frantic search for the missing vessel. Its debris was discovered four days later by a remotely operated underwater vehicle. In October 2023, the US Coast Guard announced that it had recovered the last pieces of the submersible. Later, investigators concluded that the sub had several structural flaws and safety hazards and had not been independently reviewed - as is standard practice - before setting off for the depths of the ocean. They revealed that the sub was plagued by numerous problems during previous expeditions, including 70 equipment issues reported in 2021 and 48 more in 2022.

Eggs Worth Rs 33,000 Stolen From US Cafe Amid Soaring Prices, Probe On

North Korea is tearing down a key venue that once hosted reunions for families separated by the Korean War, South Korea confirmed on Thursday, calling the move "inhumane." The Mount Kumgang Reunion Centre, which facilitated emotional meetings between long-separated relatives, is being demolished by Pyongyang, Seoul's unification ministry said.

'Trampling on wishes of separated families'

"The demolition of the Mount Kumgang Reunion Center is an inhumane act that tramples on the earnest wishes of separated families," a spokesperson for the ministry stated. South Korea "sternly urges an immediate halt to such actions" and "expresses strong regret," the official added. "North Korea's unilateral demolition cannot be justified under any pretext, and the North Korean authorities must bear full responsibility for this situation."

Decades of separation



Since 1988, more than 133,600 South Koreans have registered as "separated families," meaning they have relatives in the North. However, as of 2025, only around 36,000 are still alive, according to official figures. For years, some families were allowed to meet at the Mount Kumgang resort in planned reunions, but these meetings often depended on political relations between the two Koreas. The last reunion was in 2018. The reunions were a rare chance for aging family members to meet their loved ones after decades apart, but North Korea has frequently used them as a bargaining tool in negotiations with Seoul.

Gas explosion at Taiwan food court kills one and leaves 11 hospitalised

TAIPEI. A gas explosion at a department store in Taiwan on Thursday killed one man and left 11 others hospitalized, fire authorities said.

The blast occurred at the food court on the 12th floor of the Shin Kong Mitsukoshi department store in Taichung City. Among the 11 people who were hospitalized, four had no vital signs, the Taichung Fire Bureau said. Dozens of firefighters were deployed to the scene at about 11:30 am. Parts of the building's exterior were damaged and scattered fragments were strewn on the streets. Taichung mayor Lu Shiow-yeen told reporters at the scene that she felt the shock at her office nearby. She said the fire bureau would focus on a rescue operation first, but an investigation was also underway and officers were checking whether there were other sources of danger.

Video posted on social media and verified by AFP showed the moment of the explosion, with cladding and other debris flying off the building and dust billowing from inside. "I was working in the city government building around 11:30 am and because it's right next to Shin Kong Mitsukoshi department store, I felt a vibration," Lu said.

Tulsi Gabbard confirmed as DNI: Is Tulsi Gabbard of Indian origin

World. Tulsi Gabbard, the newly confirmed Director of National Intelligence (DNI), has made history in multiple ways. As the chief intelligence officer of the United States, she now oversees 18 intelligence agencies, including the CIA and NSA, and serves as the principal intelligence advisor to the president. Beyond the political implications of her appointment, there has been renewed curiosity about her background, particularly whether she is of Indian origin. The short answer is no—Tulsi Gabbard does not have Indian ancestry. She was born in American Samoa to a diverse family background. Her father, Mike Gabbard, is of Samoan and European descent, while her mother, Carol Porter Gabbard, is of European heritage. Despite her lack of Indian lineage, she has a well-documented connection to Hinduism, a faith that is predominantly associated with the Indian subcontinent.

and political life. Raised in a multifamily household, she gravitated toward Hindu philosophy as a teenager, particularly the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. Over time, she aligned herself with the Vaishnava tradition, which emphasizes devotion to Krishna. Her deep commitment to Hinduism has been evident throughout her career—she took her congressional oath on the Bhagavad Gita and has often spoken about the values of karma yoga (selfless action) and bhakti yoga (devotion) in public life. However, her religious background has also sparked controversy, particularly regarding her alleged ties to the Science of Identity Foundation (SIF), a religious organization founded by Chris Butler. SIF, often described as an offshoot of the Hare Krishna movement, has been criticized for its cult-like structure and strict adherence to Butler's teachings. Gabbard's childhood association with the group, along with her family's involvement, has led to speculation about



Butler's influence on her political career. Critics argue that her ties to SIF could raise concerns about bias or external influence in her role as DNI, where objectivity and independence are crucial. Despite these criticisms, Gabbard has sought to distance herself from SIF, stating that she does not follow Butler's teachings and instead identifies as a Vaishnava Hindu. Her supporters argue that her religious

beliefs should not be used against her, especially when many American politicians openly practice their faith. Gabbard's appointment as DNI is groundbreaking not only because she is the first Hindu to hold the position but also because of her unorthodox political trajectory. A former Democratic congresswoman, she later aligned herself with conservative figures and endorsed Donald Trump. Her foreign policy positions, including her willingness to engage with authoritarian leaders and her criticism of US interventionism, have often placed her at odds with both major parties. As she takes on the role of Director of National Intelligence, Gabbard faces significant challenges, including skepticism from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. While her Indian connection remains spiritual rather than ancestral, her leadership in the intelligence community will be closely watched, especially given the ongoing scrutiny of her past affiliations.

Techie Who Lost Bitcoin Worth Rs 6,500 Crore Plans To Buy Landfill Where He Thinks It's Buried

World In a desperate bid to recover his lost fortune, a computer expert is planning to purchase an entire landfill in South Wales, where he believes his hard drive containing 8,000 Bitcoin, worth a staggering \$775 million (nearly Rs. 6,500 crores), is buried. According to the Guardian, James Howells' desperate attempt comes after a 12-year search and a recent high court defeat, which denied him permission to search the landfill.

With the council announcing plans to close and cap the site, and even securing permission for a solar farm on part of the land, Howells' chances of recovering his lost Bitcoin seemed all but lost. However, by buying the landfill, he hopes to gain access to the site and finally retrieve his prized hard drive. "It was quite a surprise to hear of the landfill's closure. I [the council] claimed at the high court that closing the landfill to allow



me to search would have a huge detrimental impact on the people of Newport, whilst at the same time they were planning to close the landfill anyway," he said.

"I expected it would be closed in the coming years because it's 80/90% full - but didn't expect its closure so soon. If Newport City Council would be

willing, I would potentially be interested in purchasing the landfill site 'as is' and have discussed this option with investment partners and it is something that is very much on the table," he added.

What exactly happened? James Howells' multimillion-dollar misfortune began in 2013 when his partner mistakenly threw away a hard drive containing the keys to his Bitcoin wallet. Now buried under 100,000 tonnes of waste in a Newport landfill, the hard drive remains inaccessible despite its growing value.

Halfina Eddy-Evans, the mother of Howells' two teenage sons, told Daily Mail that nearly a decade ago, she took the hard drive to a landfill in Newport, Wales, as part of a cleanup at Howells' request. "Yes, I threw away his rubbish. He asked me to," she explained. "I had no idea what was inside. Losing it wasn't my fault."

OpenAI questions Musk-led USD 97.4 billion takeover bid, citing contradictions

Washington DC [US]. OpenAI's board of directors has raised concerns over a USD 97.4 billion takeover bid led by Elon Musk and others, questioning the rationale behind the proposal, as reported by The New York Times on Wednesday.

On Monday, a group of investors led by Musk made a USD 97.4 billion bid to acquire OpenAI's assets. In response, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman took a jibe at the offer on X, saying, "No thank you, but we will buy Twitter for \$9.74 billion if you want." Musk responded by calling Altman a "swindler." In a court filing on Wednesday, OpenAI argued that Musk's offer contradicted his legal stance in a lawsuit he filed against the company last year. The filing pointed out that Musk had previously asserted that OpenAI's assets must remain with the nonprofit and should not be transferred to another organization for public gain. The company is essentially accusing Musk of hypocrisy. In his lawsuit, he argued that OpenAI must be governed by the nonprofit. Now, OpenAI contends, he is arguing the opposite, The New York Times reported.



As of now, OpenAI's board has not made a formal decision on the offer. Meanwhile, Marc Toberoff, a Los Angeles lawyer who filed the lawsuit against OpenAI on behalf of Musk, said in a statement to The New York Times on Wednesday, "The lawsuit is not about who controls OpenAI. It's about Sam Altman and OpenAI's misconduct." He added, "If OpenAI's board is prepared to stipulate to take the 'For Sale' sign off the charity's assets in its so-called 'conversion,' Musk will withdraw his bid. But, of course, OpenAI will never do that."

Notably, Musk and Altman have been at loggerheads for quite some time. In August last year, Musk filed a lawsuit accusing OpenAI of putting profits before its initial nonprofit mission of advancing AI in a way that benefits all of humanity. This month, a United States federal judge had said that parts of Elon Musk's lawsuit against OpenAI to halt its conversion to a for-profit entity might go to trial, adding that the Tesla CEO will have to appear in court and testify, Al Jazeera reported.

It is, however, pertinent to note that Musk co-founded OpenAI with Altman in 2015 but left before the company took off and subsequently founded the competing AI startup xAI in 2023.

Taiwan detects 6 Chinese aircraft, 8 vessels operating near its waters

Taipei [Taiwan]. Taiwan on Thursday detected six sorties of People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, eight People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels, and one official ship operating around the island as of 6 am (UTC+8).

According to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND), four of the six aircraft sorties crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ).

In a post on X, MND wrote, "6 sorties of PLA aircraft, 8 PLAN vessels and 1 official ship operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today." On Wednesday, 30 PLA aircraft, seven PLAN vessels, and one official ship were detected around Taiwan's territory. Of the 30 aircraft, 23 crossed the median line into Taiwan's northern, southwestern, and eastern ADIZ. Additionally, the MND said that



two US naval vessels sailed through the Taiwan Strait from north to south on February 10.

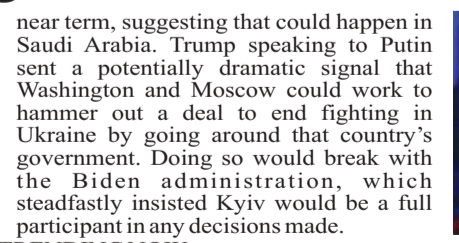
On Tuesday, MND had detected 32 aircraft from the PLA, eight vessels from PLAN, and one official ship operating nearby its shores as of 6 am (UTC+8). The MND noted that 22 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. It also detected two balloons from China. In recent weeks, China had visibly increased its

capacity to conduct amphibious assaults on Taiwan's beaches with new naval equipment. This included the formal launch of an advanced landing helicopter assault (LHA) vessel, unique in the world, and the mass production of floating bridge docks to aid ship unloading during beach landings.

The Taiwan-China conflict remained a longstanding geopolitical issue centred on Taiwan's sovereignty. While Taiwan functioned as a de facto independent state with its own government, military, and economy, Beijing considered it a breakaway province under the "One China" policy. Since the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), when the Republic of China government retreated to Taiwan, China had used diplomatic, economic, and military measures to pressure Taiwan, which continued to assert its independence with strong domestic support. (ANI)

Russian President Putin Agrees To Begin Negotiations On Ending War In Ukraine: US President Trump

World President Donald Trump upended three years of U.S. policy toward Ukraine on Wednesday, saying that he and Russian leader Vladimir Putin had agreed to begin negotiations on ending the war following a sudden prisoner swap. Trump said he spent more than an hour on the phone with Putin and "I think we're on the way to getting peace." He noted that he later spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, but he was noncommittal about whether Ukraine would be an equal participant in U.S. negotiations with Russia. "I think President Putin wants peace and President Zelenskyy wants peace and I want peace," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. "I just want to see people stop being killed." Of his conversation with Putin, Trump said, "People didn't really know what President Putin's thoughts were. But I think I can say with great confidence, he wants to see it ended also, so that's good - and we're going to work toward getting it ended and as fast as possible." Trump noted that he would "probably" meet in person with Putin in the



near term, suggesting that could happen in Saudi Arabia. Trump speaking to Putin sent a potentially dramatic signal that Washington and Moscow could work to hammer out a deal to end fighting in Ukraine by going around that country's government. Doing so would break with the Biden administration, which steadfastly insisted Kyiv would be a full participant in any decisions made.

TRENDING NOW

Asked specifically about Ukraine being an equal member in the peace process, Trump responded, "Interesting question. I think they have to make peace." In another blow to Ukraine's Western-leaning aspirations, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said at NATO headquarters in Brussels that NATO membership was unrealistic for Ukraine. "I don't think it's practical to have it, personally," Trump said later about NATO membership for Ukraine. He added that Hegseth had said "it's unlikely or impractical. I think probably that's true." After Russia invaded Ukraine in February



2022, the Biden administration joined other NATO members in vowing that membership in the Western military alliance was "inevitable." Trump said Wednesday of Russia: "I think long before President Putin, they said there's no way they'd allow that." They've been saying that for a long time that Ukraine cannot go into NATO," Trump said. "And I'm OK with that." Response from Zelenskyy and the Kremlin Despite all that, Zelenskyy sought to put a brave face on what many in Ukraine will see as a major disappointment. In a social media post, he said he had "a meaningful conversation" with Trump that

included discussion of "opportunities to achieve peace" and Kyiv's "readiness to work together at the team level." "I am grateful to President Trump," he said. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the conversation between Trump and Putin covered a good deal of ground, including the Middle East and Iran, but that Ukraine was the main focus. Peskov said Trump called for a quick cessation of hostilities and a peaceful settlement, and that "President Putin, in his turn, emphasized the need to remove the root causes of the conflict and agreed with Trump that a long-term settlement could be achieved through peace talks." "The Russian president supported one of the main theses of the U.S. president that the time has come for our two countries to work together," Peskov told reporters. "The Russian president invited the U.S. president to visit Moscow and expressed readiness to host U.S. officials in Russia for issues of mutual interest, naturally including Ukraine, the Ukrainian settlement."

US President Trump to Announce New Reciprocal Tariffs Ahead of Talks with PM Modi

Washington DC: US President Donald Trump is set to announce new reciprocal tariffs on Wednesday, just hours before his bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The announcement will be made during a news conference at 1 PM, as Trump confirmed the decision on Truth Social, reiterating his aim to "make America great again." Trump, who has returned to office for his second term, described the tariff decision as the "biggest" action taken during his three weeks in office. The move comes amid rising global trade tensions, with Trump advocating for 'reciprocal tariffs'—a system where the US imposes similar tariffs on countries that apply import duties on American goods. Trump has consistently argued that this is "the only fair way to trade." The timing of the announcement aligns with PM Modi's visit to the US, making trade and import duties expected fo-



cal points of their discussions. The new tariffs could signal a shift in the US's trade relationships, including with key allies. Prime Minister Modi, who arrived in Washington on Wednesday for a two-day visit, began his tour by meeting US Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard. Modi hailed Gabbard as a "strong votary" of India-US relations, and the two discussed strengthen-

ing bilateral intelligence cooperation, particularly in areas like counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, emerging threats, and strategic intelligence sharing. Tonight, PM Modi will engage in bilateral talks with President Trump in both restricted and delegation-level formats. Key figures including US National Security Advisor Michael Waltz, Tesla and SpaceX owner Elon Musk, and Indian-

American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy are expected to meet with the Prime Minister during his visit. This marks Modi's first visit to the US since Trump's re-election in November 2024. Modi's arrival follows a successful trip to France and was met with a warm reception by the Indian diaspora, who gathered outside Blair House despite the cold weather.

Unnatural Sex With Wife Without Consent Not an Offence: HC Chhattisgarh



Raipur: The Chhattisgarh High Court has declared that unnatural sex between a man and his adult wife, without her consent, does not constitute an offence. According to reports, the court ruled that if the woman is over the age of 15, such an act cannot be classified as rape under Indian law. The court's judgment specifically stated that unnatural sex cannot be charged under Sections 376 and 377 of the Indian Penal Code. It also referenced amendments to Section 375 of the IPC, explaining that marital rape cannot be considered an offence due to conflicts between the relevant legal provisions.

This decision came in connection with a case where a woman died following an incident of unnatural sex. Medical reports revealed that the woman suffered from peritonitis and rectal perforation. It is also significant to note that marital rape remains unpunishable in India. The issue is currently before the Supreme Court, which is set to hear petitions calling for the criminalization of marital rape. However, the Indian government has argued against such a move, emphasizing the importance of protecting the institution of marriage. The ruling has sparked widespread debate and calls for legal reform in the country.

Income-Tax Bill 2025 Introduced, To Be Sent for Review



New Delhi: The Income-Tax Bill 2025 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Thursday by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The Bill aims to consolidate and amend the existing laws related to income tax, with the goal of simplifying the tax structure for easier understanding by the public. In her address, Sitharaman highlighted that the new legislation is significantly more streamlined than the current Income Tax Act of 1961. She pointed out that the proposed Bill consists of only 536 sections, compared to the 819 sections in the existing Act, and the total word count of the new Bill is almost half that of its predecessor, making it more accessible to ordinary citizens. The Finance Minister also suggested that the Bill be sent to a select committee of Parliament for further review. She proposed that the committee submit its report on the first day of the next parliamentary session. Sitharaman dismissed objections raised by some opposition members, defending the Bill's provisions and reaffirming that the new legislation was designed to be more user-friendly and efficient.

Indian Army Retaliates After Pakistan Ceasefire Violation



Srinagar: The Pakistan Army suffered heavy casualties following retaliation by Indian soldiers after an unprovoked ceasefire violation along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Mendhar sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Wednesday evening, according to media reports. The exact number of casualties on the Pakistan side remains unclear. Pakistani troops reportedly fired 10 to 15 rounds in what has been described as a rare ceasefire violation since the renewed ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan on February 25, 2021. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, two Indian soldiers were killed in action after terrorists launched a suspected Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack in the Akhnoor sector of Jammu and Kashmir on February 11. A day earlier, a soldier was critically injured in a gunfire exchange along the LoC in Rajouri district. The situation along the LoC remains tense, with security forces on high alert amid ongoing cross-border hostilities.

25 Kanpur Police Personnel Booked Under Serious Crimes Including Rape, Forgery

Kanpur: Twenty-five Kanpur police personnel, including an ACP, have been booked for serious crimes such as rape and forgery in cases registered in 2024. Investigations conducted by ACP to DCP level officers have concluded. Joint Police Commissioner (Crime) Vipin Mishra stated that charge sheets have been filed in court, and departmental inquiries have begun. If found guilty, strict action will follow. The accused include nine inspectors, five head constables, and ten constables, as well as ACP Mohsin Khan, who faces sexual harassment allegations by an IIT student. His inquiry is nearing completion, and if found guilty, he may be dismissed. Authorities assure strict measures against those proven guilty to uphold law and order.

BSEB Enforces Strict Rules for Matric Exam; shoes, socks prohibited

Patna: The Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB) has issued strict guidelines for the matriculation exams from February 17 to 25. Students must wear slippers, as shoes and socks are prohibited. Latecomers attempting to enter illegally will face a two-year exam ban and possible criminal charges. Center superintendents allowing unauthorized entry will also face action. BSEB emphasizes these measures aim to maintain fairness and discipline.

DPS Bokaro Students Showcase Talent and Gratitude in Special Assembly



Bokaro: A special assembly was held at DPS Bokaro to mark the conclusion of the academic session before the upcoming Annual Examinations. The event radiated the spirit of the Mahakumbh, with students delivering a mesmerizing dance performance symbolizing the sacred confluence of the Triveni—Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati. The assembly continued with a soul-stirring group song, "O Brijran Dulare," evoking the vibrant colors of Holi. Faiza Athar of Class XI touched hearts with a heartfelt poetry recital on gratitude, reflecting the cherished moments of school life. Prishu Anand (Class XI) delivered an inspiring speech on stress management, offering valuable insights and leaving the audience motivated. The event also featured the highly anticipated announcement of the Best Class and Best House (Cultural) for the academic session 2024-25, adding a sense of excitement and accomplishment. Principal Dr. A. S. Gangwar commended the students for their stellar performances and encouraged them to stay calm and composed during the examinations. He emphasized the importance of self-belief as the key to success.

Kidnapped Man Rescued After Six Months



by Ashok Kumar

Loyabad: Tulsi Manjhi, allegedly held captive for six months, was rescued following a court-ordered investigation. His nephew, Kamlesh Manjhi, filed a complaint in Dhanbad court, leading to the case's transfer to Loyabad police station. Police, led by station in-charge Satyajit Kumar, found Tulsi near Dhanbad's main post office. In his court statement, Tulsi accused Ravi Vidrohi and Narayan Yadav, sons of RJD leader Sukhdev Vidrohi, of imprisoning him, depriving him of contact, and assaulting him for money following his BCCL retirement. After legal formalities, Tulsi was handed to his younger brother, Jogi Manjhi, and his bank account was frozen. Police assured strict action against the accused, with further legal proceedings underway.

Waqf Amendment Bill Report Tabled Amidst Opposition Protests in Parliament

New Delhi: The Joint Committee Report on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024 was tabled in both Houses of Parliament on Thursday, amid fierce protests from opposition parties. In the Lok Sabha, when the House reconvened after a brief adjournment at 2 PM, the report was presented by Joint Committee Chairman Jagdambika Pal. However, the presentation was met with loud protests from opposition members, including those from the Congress, DMK, Samajwadi Party, TMC, and other parties.



In response to the uproar, Union Home Minister Amit Shah stated that the BJP had no objection to the addition of dissent notes in the report, as requested by the opposition. Despite this, opposition members staged a walkout from the House, continuing their protest over the report. Earlier, the Lok Sabha had been adjourned until 2 PM due to disruptions caused by opposition members over the report. As the session re-

sumed on Thursday morning, the opposition created chaos, forcing Speaker Om Birla to repeatedly ask the members to allow the House to conduct its scheduled business. He assured the opposition that they would have a chance to speak once the report was tabled but stressed that the Question Hour was important and the disruption was not appropriate. Despite these efforts, the Speaker adjourned the House until 2 PM. In the Rajya Sabha, the report was tabled by BJP MP Dr. Medha Vishram Kulkarni in the morning session. However, opposition members continued their protests, causing a disruption. Chairman Jagdeep

the report be sent back to the committee if it did not include the dissent notes. Congress leader Nasir Hussain echoed these concerns.

In response, Minister Kiren Rijju refuted the claims, asserting that all proceedings, including dissent notes, were included in the report and its appendix. He accused the opposition of misleading the House. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also backed the government's stance, criticizing the opposition for causing disruption. Leader of the House J.P. Nadda expressed disappointment over the opposition's behavior, calling it irresponsible and contrary to parliamentary traditions. He urged members to respect constitutional provisions and allow the House to function smoothly. Despite the government's response, opposition members in the Rajya Sabha staged a walkout. Later, Nadda questioned the opposition's approach, urging them to reconsider their actions.

PM Modi to Meet Elon Musk at the White House Ahead of Talks with President Trump

Washington DC: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to meet billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk today at the White House, ahead of his bilateral talks with US President Donald Trump. The meeting comes as part of PM Modi's two-day visit to the United States, which began on Wednesday night at the invitation of President Trump. Upon his arrival in Washington DC, PM Modi was welcomed at the airport

by India's Ambassador to the US, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, and other senior officials. PM Modi and Elon Musk have met on several occasions before, including during the prime minister's 2015 visit to San Jose, where the Tesla CEO personally gave him a tour of the company's facility. Before his scheduled meetings with President Trump and Musk, PM Modi held discus-

sions with US Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Tulsi Gabbard on Wednesday. During their conversation, they explored various aspects of India-US relations. "Met USA's Director of National Intelligence, @TulsiGabbard in Washington DC. Congratulated her on her confirmation. Discussed various aspects of the India-USA friendship, of which she's always been a strong votary," PM

Modi shared on X. Later, PM Modi arrived at Blair House, where he was warmly greeted by members of the Indian diaspora, who welcomed him with chants of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and "Modi Modi." The prime minister expressed his gratitude for their heartfelt reception. This visit marks PM Modi's first trip to the US since President Trump assumed office for a second term.



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Manish Kumar

BJP's action plan for Delhi

Cleaning of drains, Central schemes implementation

New Delhi. Just days after securing a thumping victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, the BJP is preparing a 100-day action plan for the national capital, with a focus on implementing schemes of the Central government, including the flagship Ayushman Bharat, and the cleaning of drains to better waterlogging issues during the monsoon season.

Following a meeting on Wednesday, Delhi Chief Secretary Dharmendra directed all relevant departments to prepare the action plan in line with the new BJP government's Vikshit Delhi Sankalp Patra 2025.

According to reports, the plan should focus on targets to be completed within 15 days, month by month and also in 100 days.

As per the action plan, the health department has been directed to prepare a cabinet note to implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which aims to provide free access to health



insurance coverage for low income earners. The Chief Secretary has also ordered officials to prepare another note for desilting and cleaning of drains, including necessary steps to prevent waterlogging during the monsoon season.

All departments are scheduled to submit their initial report today.

The BJP has returned to the national capital after 27 years following the

Following a meeting on Wednesday, Delhi Chief Secretary Dharmendra directed all relevant departments to prepare the action plan in line with the new BJP government's Vikshit Delhi Sankalp Patra 2025.

Aam Aadmi Party's crushing loss in the February 5 elections after its 10-year regime in Delhi.

The AAP, which had 67 MLAs in the 70-member Delhi Assembly, managed to secure only 22 seats. All heavyweights of the party, including AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj, leaders Awadh Ojha and Somnath Bharti, among others, were defeated, except Atishi, who retained her seat. The BJP won 48 seats.

- **BJP plans 100-day action plan for Delhi after Assembly election win**
- **Departments given 15-day, monthly, and 100-day targets**
- **Health department to draft note for Ayushman Bharat implementation**

Congress says Article 174 violated in Manipur, calls it contempt of Constitution

NEW DELHI. The Congress on Thursday said Article 174 that stipulates there cannot be more than a six month gap between two assembly sessions has been "violated" in Manipur and alleged that this is a "deliberate contempt of the Constitution." Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the breakdown of constitutional machinery in Manipur and the agony of the people of the state continues as they still await a visit by PM Narendra Modi, "who goes everywhere but Manipur."

"Article 174 of the Constitution of India states: 'The Governor shall from time to time summon the House or each House of the Legislature of the State to meet at such time and place as he thinks fit, but six months shall not intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session'," Ramesh said on X.

The Governor of Manipur had convened the Assembly session to begin on February 10, 2025 and a no-confidence motion submitted by the Congress was to be taken up, he pointed out.

The CM resigned the previous night and the session was later declared "null and void", Ramesh noted. "Six months have now passed. Article 174 has clearly been violated. This is nothing but deliberate contempt of the Constitution," he said. "It is, however, not surprising because way back on August 1st, 2023, itself the Supreme Court had observed that 'there has been an absolute breakdown of constitutional machinery in the state'. That breakdown and the agony of the people of Manipur continues as they still await a visit by the PM who goes everywhere but Manipur," Ramesh said.



MOTN poll shows Left slowly losing ground in Kerala. Will that be BJP's gain?

New Delhi. Kerala's ruling alliance, the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) will not see a much different outcome than the one in May 2024, if the general elections were to be held today. The India Today-CVoter Mood of the Nation (MOTN) opinion poll predicts that while the LDF might get one seat, just like in 2024, its vote share will see a decline. The MOTN survey forecasts that the Left alliance will have a drop in its vote share. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP created history when Suresh Gopi won the Thrissur parliamentary constituency. The Congress-led

United Democratic Front (UDF) retained its previous tally by winning 18 seats and the LDF won one seat.

The survey also sets up BJP as a possible third alternative in this traditionally bipartisan state, even though the UDF will be the leading seat winner. The India Today-Cvoter Mood of the Nation (MOTN) poll was conducted between January 2 and February 9, 2025, surveying 125,123 individuals across all Lok Sabha segments. The survey included fresh interviews as well as long-term tracking data.

The MOTN survey also shows that



the BJP's vote share will have a noticeable increase of 7 per cent from its 17 per cent in 2024. This increase will be at the cost of the LDF's vote share which will see a drop of 2 per cent. If the Lok Sabha elections were to be held today, the MOTN projects that the BJP's vote share will stand at 24 per cent, the

UDF's at 42 per cent and the LDF at 30 per cent. The UDF and the LDF both will have a drop of 1 and 2 per cent each from that in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

CONGRESS COULD MESS WITH ITS OWN CHANCES?

Nonetheless, it's anyone's guess as to who will win the 2026 Assembly elections, said Rahul Verma, a fellow at the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) told. "Kerala is one of the few states where the Congress party has done relatively well in Lok Sabha, while the Left has continued to hold its ground in the Assembly elections, in the last decade," he said.

Kamal Haasan set for Rajya Sabha as DMK fulfills pact, Udhayanidhi visits him

NEW DELHI. Actor Kamal Haasan is set to become a Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament after the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) decided to nominate him from its quota to the Upper House. Following the announcement, Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin met Haasan at his residence today to congratulate him. Udhayanidhi later shared a message on X, stating, "We met the leader of the Makkal Needhi Maiyam - Kalaigani @ikamalhaasan sir at his residence today as a courtesy. My love and gratitude to Kamal sir for welcoming us warmly and exchanging views on various fields such as politics and art."

Senior DMK leader and Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, PK Sekar Babu, met Haasan in person at his Alwarpet office on Wednesday. The official social media account of Haasan's party Makkal Needhi Maiyam (MNM) later shared images from the meeting on social media, calling it a courtesy visit.

Reportedly, DMK had assured Haasan a Rajya Sabha berth as part of their electoral pact in 2024. Haasan's party Makkal Needhi Maiyam (MNM) did not contest the Lok Sabha elections but extended its full support to the INDIA-bloc led by the DMK in Tamil Nadu. On March 9, 2024, Haasan visited the DMK headquarters, Anna Arivalayam, where he signed an agreement with DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin. Haasan had clarified that his decision to align with the DMK-led bloc was driven by national interest rather than personal political gains. "I have shook hands where it had to be, since this is about the country," he said. "I am not going to contest. But this (INDIA-bloc) alliance will have our full support. Since it is not for a position but for the country." As per the agreement, Haasan was supposed to campaign for the DMK-led alliance in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry for the Lok Sabha polls, in return for a Rajya Sabha nomination from the DMK's quota in 2025. With the tenure of at least six Rajya Sabha MPs, including members from DMK, AIADMK, and PMK, set to conclude by June 2025, the party has now moved forward with its commitment to Haasan. Haasan, considered one of the finest actors in Indian cinema, ventured into politics in 2018 by launching his party, Makkal Needhi Maiyam (MNM).



Himanta Sarma jabs Congress's Gaurav Gogoi, wife over 'Pak link', MP hits back

Himanta Sarma, in a spree of posts on X, has raised Gaurav Gogoi's meeting with then Pakistani High Commissioner in 2015 despite India's protest and alleged that the Congress MP's wife had ISI links.

New Delhi. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Sarma has gone full throttle in attacking his one-time colleague and Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on the issue of his wife retaining her UK citizenship for 12 years and allegations that she was employed by an organisation with links to Pakistan's spy agency ISI. In a spree of posts on X since Wednesday, Sarma, without naming anyone, also flagged Gogoi's meeting with then Pakistani High Commissioner in 2015 despite India's protest. Gogoi, who is also the Congress's deputy leader in Lok Sabha, has rejected the charge of his wife having ISI links as "laughable", calling it a "smear campaign" against him ahead of the 2026 Assam election.

At the centre of the row is Elizabeth Colburn, whom Gogoi married in 2013 after they met in the United States. Elizabeth worked with the Climate Development and Knowledge Network (CDKN) between 2011-2015 and was stationed mostly in



Pakistan. The BJP has alleged that she worked under Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, a former adviser to the Planning Commission of Pakistan, who was linked to the ISI.

"Serious questions need to be answered regarding allegations of ISI links, leading young individuals to the Pakistan embassy for brainwashing and radicalisation, and the refusal to take Indian

citizenship for the past 12 years," Himanta Sarma tweeted.

Sarma's attack on Gogoi started on Wednesday when he tweeted that IFS officers could marry foreign nationals based on the condition that the spouse must acquire Indian citizenship within six months.

He said that the rule doesn't apply to lawmakers. "Allowing a foreign spouse of a lawmaker to retain foreign citizenship for 12 years is far too long. Loyalty to the nation must always take precedence over all considerations," Sarma tweeted in a seeming reference to Gogoi's wife.

Sarma escalated the matter by alleging that a partner of CDKN, where Elizabeth worked, received funding from the Open Society Foundation of American billionaire George Soros. The BJP has repeatedly accused Congress of working with Soros in a bid to destabilise the government.

Trinamool MP Abhishek Banerjee writes to META over Facebook bio altercation

A complaint has been filed by TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee regarding unauthorised changes to his Facebook bio.

Kolkata. Trinamool Congress Member of Parliament (MP) Abhishek Banerjee has raised concerns about a breach of privacy involving his official Facebook page. A complaint has been lodged with META on his behalf, alleging unauthorised access to his official Facebook page and unauthorised alterations to his personal information.

In a letter addressed to META, the parent company of Facebook, Banerjee's legal representative, advocate Sanjay Basu, alleged unauthorised access to his account and the alteration of his personal information. He described the incident as a "serious breach of security" concerning Banerjee's account.

The complaint highlights that Banerjee's official Facebook page originally displayed the following bio: "The Official page of Abhishek Banerjee | Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) | National General Secretary, All India Trinamool Congress." However, on February 11, 2025, it was brought



to his attention that "All India Trinamool Congress" had been removed from his bio. The altered version read: "The Official page of Abhishek Banerjee | Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) | National General Secretary."

In the complaint letter, Basu wrote that Abhishek Banerjee, being a Member of Lok Sabha, holds

a public office and his Facebook account serves not only as a platform for the expression of his personal views but also as an essential channel for communication with his supporters, colleagues and constituents.

The complaint letter to META also stated serious concern over the unauthorised access to Abhishek Banerjee's verified Facebook account, which carries a "Blue Tick" verification. The complaint mentioned that Banerjee's profile was illegally altered without any prior intimation to him, raising significant security and privacy concerns.

Banerjee has demanded that META take immediate action to secure his account and restore his personal details. He has also warned that failure to address the issue promptly could result in legal action against the social media giant.

- **Banerjee alleges Facebook bio was altered without permission**
- **Formal complaint lodged with META citing security breach**
- **'All India Trinamool Congress' removed from his Facebook bio**

Flawed policies have ravaged Manipur

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh, who is under scrutiny for his alleged role in inciting the violence that has plagued the state over the past 21 months, resigned on February 9 following a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The prolonged unrest has not only led to rape, murder and destruction of property on a large scale but also scarred the psyche of the Manipuri people.

The startling quandary of the situation came to the fore recently when Shah claimed that the North-East was once "known for terrorism, infiltration, blockade, drugs, armed trafficking, corruption and national disturbances." He added that "today, it is known for development, connectivity, infrastructure, education, investment and agriculture development." He also highlighted the fact that Central ministers had visited the region over 700 times during the past decade. Virtually addressing an event where appointment letters were given to youths in Agartala (Tripura), he claimed that PM Narendra Modi as well as the Union and state governments were fully committed to Tripura's welfare. There was no word on a similar commitment to Manipur's welfare. Shah earlier met the CM's critic, Panchayati Raj Minister Y Khemchand Singh, and Manipur Assembly Speaker Thokchom Satyabrata Singh. Party MLAs had unequivocally told Satyabrata that more than two-thirds of them were not happy with the current leadership. Calling the turmoil intolerable, they said they could not wait anymore and were going to make some move in the interest of the public and the state. Laying emphasis on the restoration of peace and normalcy, they threatened that something big and unprecedented would happen during the upcoming Assembly session if course correction was not done before that (the session, which was set to commence on February 10, was eventually declared null and void in the wake of Biren's resignation). They also contradicted Shah, who had said in Tripura's context that 2,800 youths getting jobs was an epochal event.

The disquiet and violence since May 2023 repeatedly raised doubts about Biren's leadership, but the party high command, including the PM and the Home Minister, were not inclined to remove him. In the meantime, bickering within the state party unit kept growing. Ten Kuki-Zo MLAs declared their intent to boycott the Assembly session. The BJP's allies, the Naga People's Front and the Janata Dal (United), withdrew support from the state government. Taking advantage of the political crisis, the main Opposition party, the Congress, planned to move a no-confidence motion during the session. The report of the recently appointed Governor Ajay Bhalla, who recently superannuated as Union Home Secretary and is well aware of both the political as well as the law and order situation, must have played a key role in the matter. Things took an intriguing turn when Biren was accused of having played a role in inciting ethnic violence. The Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust moved the Supreme Court, alleging that there were audio tapes that established the CM's complicity. The SC has referred the tapes to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL), giving it six weeks to submit a report. Meanwhile, an analysis conducted by Truth Labs Forensic Services, a private non-profit organisation, has revealed that there is "93 per cent probability" that the voice in the leaked tapes is of Biren. If the CFSL report matches the Truth Labs findings, it will have a huge impact not only on the politics of the state but also at the national level. Biren had been acting at the instance of the BJP high command and the Union Government, which was clear from the fact that despite the carnage that stirred the national conscience, neither the party nor the Centre showed any inclination to remove him — till their leaders' heads could no longer remain above water.

Apart from exerting pressure to get him removed, the Opposition planned an attack on the Central BJP leadership, even as Biren pursued the Modi-Shah politics of Hindutva and unified the Meiteis under this umbrella, while the RSS played a role too

How promises to clean Yamuna can translate into action

If all the STPs and CETPs in Delhi were to function as designed and planned, the state of the Yamuna would massively improve in the city.

THE Yamuna river figured prominently in the just-concluded Delhi Assembly elections. After the BJP's victory, Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured Delhi that the new government would make every effort to clean the river. "It may be a long haul, but Mother Yamuna will surely bless our efforts," he said. Will this help the cause of the river? There is a lot that the Delhi government can do to improve the state of Yamuna. Flow and connectivity are the defining characteristics of any river. The Delhi government can work to ensure that the Yamuna has sufficient freshwater flow downstream from the Wazirabad barrage, where there is none today.

There is also a need to improve the different kinds of connectivity that define the river: longitudinal (between upstream and downstream at various points within Delhi); lateral (between the river and its tributaries and the floodplains); and vertical (for groundwater recharge). On the pollution front, three key areas that need attention are: sewage treatment and performance of sewage treatment plants (STPs); performance of central effluent treatment plants (CETPs) to treat industrial effluents; and proper management of solid waste since a lot of solid waste ends up in rivers when not managed properly. But the Yamuna exists beyond Delhi and the state of the river upstream and downstream has an impact on the state of the river within Delhi. So, for all the above issues, Delhi needs to work with the upstream and downstream states. The Central government has a huge role to play here. The way the Centre deals with the river has a bearing on each of the above aspects of Yamuna. Since the Yamuna is the biggest tributary of the Ganga, the National Mission for Clean Ganga can make a huge impact on its fate. So too can the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, Jal Shakti Ministry — including the Central Water Commission and the Upper Yamuna River Board — the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (which has the Delhi Development Authority under it) and the Central Pollution Control Board. Unfortunately, these central agencies have not performed well enough to give the Yamuna a new lease of life in Delhi.

Delhi has a very high sewage treatment capacity (around 760 million gallons per day) as compared to other cities in India. And yet, the Yamuna is in bad shape in Delhi. The key reason is that the STPs and CETPs are not functioning as designed. The governments have installed STPs with large capacity at huge expenditure but failed to ensure that the plants function as planned. There is no transparency, accountability or participatory management in the governance of the STPs. No one knows why the STPs are not functioning as planned, nor are there any consequences when STPs do not function as planned. If the government is really interested in improving the state of the Yamuna, it needs to address the



governance of the STPs and CETPs. If all the plants in Delhi were to function as designed and planned, the state of the Yamuna would hugely improve in the capital. Sewage, that is a curse now, would become a boon for Delhi as treated sewage can replace freshwater for a number of activities, thus also reducing the demand for freshwater and freeing some freshwater for Yamuna's environment flows. For this, rainwater and local water bodies within Delhi can be used in the way Bengaluru is doing. Rejuvenated water bodies within Delhi can harvest rainfall. In the post-monsoon months, adequately treated sewage can be released in such water bodies, which will help treat it further and also recharge groundwater. The outgoing AAP government had started this process and it can be taken to the next level.

In fact, the new government in Delhi needs to achieve much better rainwater harvesting, which, in turn, can help decrease the demand for freshwater from the Yamuna and, thus, free up some additional water for environment flows in Delhi. It can ensure that all government buildings, parks, roads, bridges, metro stations, schools, colleges, malls, multiplexes, embassies, etc must have functioning rainwater harvesting systems and some of them can also recharge groundwater. The sponge effect of these functioning rainwater harvesting systems would also reduce the floods in Delhi during the monsoons and make rainwater available post monsoon. It will also have an exemplary demonstration effect of functioning

rainwater harvesting systems for others to emulate. The improved state of the river in Delhi will be a boon during Chhath puja and other festivals, it will improve micro-climate and also create a much-needed scenic, peace-giving place for the city dwellers. The state of the Yamuna in Delhi is also affected by the following: dams and diversions of the water; the state of pollution in the river; its flow and connectivity; sand-mining; groundwater use and recharge; state of local water bodies and wetlands; aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity; state and extent of natural forests and state of tributaries of the Yamuna upstream and downstream of Delhi. The pattern and quantum of rainfall and snowfall in the Yamuna basin and the state of glaciers in the upstream are also relevant here. Thus, the Yamuna puzzle has many components. A Delhi water policy can be a key instrument to provide guidance on these issues.

The new government in Delhi can, through the involvement of people, prepare such a policy. Importantly, the BJP is also in power in other Yamuna basin states like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The AAP and the Congress must act as a responsible Opposition in the Delhi Assembly and Parliament and keep the Yamuna issue alive. A lot can and must be done to improve the state of Yamuna in Delhi. The challenge of climate change must also be considered. Let us see what the new government actually does.

Too little, too late

Manipur CM's resignation not enough



Amid the euphoria over its resounding win in the Delhi elections, the BJP has started the process of repairing its battered double engine in strife-torn Manipur. Chief Minister N Biren Singh has finally stepped down, over a month after he tendered a public apology and expressed regret over the deaths and displacement caused by the unrest in the northeastern state. If Biren thought he had done enough to save his chair merely by saying sorry, he was proven wrong. The last straw was the leak of some audio tapes, which include telephonic conversations that purportedly lay bare his role in inciting ethnic violence. All eyes and ears are on the Central Forensic Science Laboratory, which has been ordered by the Supreme Court to verify the authenticity of the tapes and submit a report next month. In a bid to pre-empt possible embarrassment and outrage, the BJP

has prodded Biren to put in his papers. This is practically an escape route for him, considering the gravity of the allegations against him. Much damage

has already been done, and his resignation has come too late in the day. Ethnic violence has claimed over 250 lives in Manipur since May 2023, with both the Central and state governments failing to handle the volatile situation. Biren remained in the saddle even when Imphal burned, while the party top brass kept ignoring the growing clamour for his ouster. What's worse, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has chosen to stay away from the state, giving the impression that Manipur is just a blip on the Centre's radar. A new CM will not make much of a difference on the ground as long as there is a lack of political will to resolve the conflict and bring the perpetrators to book. The people of Manipur are impatiently awaiting justice and peace. The onus is on the Modi government to regain their trust.

Delhi verdict reshapes political equations

While one electoral defeat, especially when fighting a two-term incumbency, does not mean the demise of a party, it is obvious that the people's belief in AAP's promise of alternative politics is over.

The verdict of the Delhi Assembly elections has implications not only for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) but also for the INDIA bloc and the role of freebies in electoral politics. The elections saw the AAP, the BJP and the Congress compete with one another over offering monetary rewards, subsidised utilities and free public transport for different segments of society.

Such strategies being resorted to by the parties underscore the debate between the transient effectiveness of monetary incentives and programmatic politics.

In search of electoral dividends, parties of all hues, when in power, have been shying away from long-term investment of public resources in such primary sectors as education, health, infrastructure, housing and employment generation, which is far more effective in addressing the issues of poverty and deprivation.

Worse, these populist schemes are often personalised as 'guarantees' in the name of the party leader, promoting person-centred leadership, much to the detriment of intra-party democracy. Also, such tall promises are made knowingly, even when the economy of the state concerned is in a precarious condition, which is often the case. The election verdict raises questions about the AAP's future. While one electoral defeat, especially when fighting a two-term incumbency, does not mean the demise of a party, it is obvious that the people's belief in AAP's promise of alternative politics is over. The party, which emanated from the Anna Hazare movement, initially contested elections on the promise of fighting corruption in high places, ending VIP culture and bringing the government nearer to the people. However, over time, it has degenerated into just another political party, having all the vices afflicting other parties. The AAP leadership has been facing allegations of corruption to generate electoral funds,

doing away with intra-party democracy, promoting sycophancy and personal loyalty and adopting the lavish lifestyle of the average political leadership of India. All this has led to a disillusionment among the middle class with the AAP, especially with Kejriwal, who dominated the party. The results show that the AAP has even suffered a decline in the support of lower classes living in underdeveloped colonies and slums despite having provided lots of benefits to them. This can be attributed to the politics of patronage and clientelism that the party promoted. With the top AAP leaders facing serious corruption charges and being restrained by the judiciary, the beneficiaries of AAP's schemes shifted their loyalties to the BJP, which has promised even larger 'benefits' to them. The Delhi elections also raise questions about the future of the INDIA bloc in view of the fact that some Samajwadi Party and Trinamool Congress leaders openly campaigned for AAP candidates and not for Congress nominees. Additionally, the Congress and the AAP contested the poll separately, with the leaders of the two parties levelling allegations against each other.

It is obvious from the results that if the AAP and Congress had fought as allies, it would have certainly helped the AAP win a few more seats, including some of its top leaders. The impression is that the Congress and the BJP are on the same page as far as the agenda of decimating the AAP is concerned. The AAP's decline means a gain for the Congress in Punjab and Delhi. And, for the BJP, it means doing away with a competitive party which not only aims to corner the lower and lower middle class social support base but also plays the softer

version of Hindutva politics. The results also show the importance of the Congress. Despite its decline, apart from the BJP, the Congress is still the only other 'polity-wide' party. This is an important factor in any coalition arrangement against the formidable BJP. It was evident



during the Jharkhand Assembly elections. It would be fair for the AAP to argue that the unique administrative structure of Delhi came in its way of effectively running the state despite enjoying the popular mandate in the past. A multitude of authorities causes jurisdictional issues and complicates policy formulation, coordination and implementation, especially since the AAP and the BJP were at loggerheads with each other. The responsibility for development work and service

delivery overlaps between various government units, creating difficulty in fixing accountability in the eyes of citizens. The contentious role of the centrally appointed lieutenant-governors over the period was another formidable factor that came in the way of governance.

After the Delhi defeat, Punjab is the only state where the AAP is in power now. Given its massive majority in the Assembly, there is no apparent threat to the state government, though some disgruntled leaders would be incentivised to leave the party. However, the fact that the party has come to power in the state on the promise of replicating the 'Delhi model' may cause worries about its future.

As in Delhi, the party has failed to fulfil its poll promises in Punjab, too. Whether it is drugs or the sand mafia, organised criminal syndicates or corrupt officials, they all have survived, if not thrived. While the party has been unable to transfer money promised to women, the subsidies on electricity and other public utilities have increased the indebtedness of the state.

The party state leadership should be alert about a bleak electoral future if it does not take immediate corrective action. The apprehension that the Delhi-based AAP leadership would interfere more in state government affairs may be misplaced as the autonomy of the state unit of the party is likely to increase. If attempted so by a desperate high command, it would be disastrous for the AAP, as regionalism is a strong factor in the identity politics of Punjab.

NEWS BOX

Kevin Pietersen slams England for not training after Nagpur loss

AHMEDABAD. A "gobsmacked" Kevin Pietersen has lashed out at the England team for their lack of practice during their tour of India, stating that the players should have been facing net bowlers and working on their ability to play spin. England endured a disastrous tour, suffering a 4-1 defeat in the T20I series before being whitewashed 3-0 in the ODIs. While England held a couple of training sessions before the tour began in Kolkata with the first T20I, they held one session each in Chennai and Rajkot before the second and third T20Is. But no sessions were held ahead of the fourth and fifth T20Is in Pune and Mumbai respectively.

They also did not hold training sessions before the second and third ODIs at Cuttack and Ahmedabad. "I'm sorry, but I am absolutely gobsmacked that England did not have ONE team practice session since losing the 1st ODI and losing the T20 series," a frustrated Pietersen wrote on his X account.

"How can this be? Seriously, how? I believe Joe Root was the only player to have a net this series, post Nagpur," he added.

England's inability to handle spin has been a glaring issue throughout the series, raising serious concerns ahead of next week's Champions Trophy in Pakistan and the UAE.



"There isn't a single sportsman on this planet who can honestly say, that they'd improve without practicing whilst they're getting beaten. There also cannot be one player in that England side that can sit on the plane leaving India and saying to themselves, they did everything they can to try help England win." "And for that, I'm actually incredibly sad this evening. Losing is fine if you're giving your best to improve everyday and if England didn't train during this series then they didn't try. Heartbreaking for any England fan!" According to reports, England stopped net sessions due to mounting injuries and a packed schedule. "Injuries are part of sport and this schedule is like every bilateral series almost ever played. Injuries are NOT stopping batters from batting against net bowlers and learning the art of playing spin. And that's where they should have been to IMPROVE!" "Trust me on this one as it saved my career against spin!" he added.

IPL 2025: Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar frontrunners for RCB captaincy role

New Delhi. IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bengaluru is set to announce its captain for the upcoming season on Thursday with star batter Virat Kohli and Rajat Patidar being the frontrunners for the position. Kohli was the RCB captain between 2013 and 2021 before stepping down as Faf du Plessis took over.

But RCB released Du Plessis, who was their skipper from 2022 to 2024, ahead of last year's mega auction. The 40-year-old Du Plessis will play for Delhi Capitals this season. Kohli has a fine record as RCB captain, though he could not land them the title. The 36-year-old has led RCB in 143 matches, the second-longest stint as captain after the legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni for Chennai Super Kings. Kohli has 68 wins and 70 losses and four no-results to show as RCB leader. In 2016, Kohli led the franchise to the IPL final, and made 973 runs, to date the highest for a batter in a single IPL season.



In IPL 2024, Kohli was the top run-getter with 741 runs at a strike-rate of 154.

On the other hand, Patidar was among RCB's retained players ahead of the auction and has the experience of leading Madhya Pradesh in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy. The 31-year-old Patidar had guided Madhya Pradesh to the SMAT final where they lost to Mumbai by five wickets. He was also the second highest run-getter, behind Ajinkya Rahane, with 428 from 10 matches at an average of 61 and at a strike-rate of 186.08.

Champions Trophy: Dangerous Afghanistan set for bigger heights on debut

The deadline day for finalising squad for the Champions Trophy is here. With the ICC set to lock-in squads on February 11, Tuesday, will India make changes to its preliminary side

New Delhi. Afghanistan are making their Champions Trophy debut and are the underdogs. But the seven other participating teams in the tournament cannot undermine them by any stretch of the imagination. Under Hashmatullah Shahidi's captaincy, the Afghans have taken giant strides. In the ODI World Cup on Indian soil, they got the better of heavyweights like Pakistan and England, and nearly took down Australia. In the Men's T20 World Cup, they knocked the Aussies out to qualify for the semi-final. Already possessing a strong spin-attack, the Afghans have always strengthened their batting unit, which could pose a massive

threat to the big teams in the Champions Trophy. One shouldn't raise eyebrows if Afghanistan go on to lift the title, the probability of which isn't nil. In the upcoming tournament, Shahidi's men will start their campaign on Friday, February 21, against South Africa at the National Stadium in Karachi. Let's now have a look at how the Afghans can go deep into the Champions Trophy.

The Gurbaz factor: Rahmanullah Gurbaz smacked three hundreds from 11 ODIs in 2024, which fetched him a spot in the ICC ODI Team of the Year.

The youngster was in decent form last year after scoring 531 runs at an average of 48.27 with a top score of 121 against Ireland at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. Having notched eight hundreds and six fifties in only 46 ODIs, Gurbaz has turned out to be a brute force.

Gurbaz takes on the opposition bowlers early on, not letting them settle down. If he takes off in the powerplay, Afghanistan would be on the front foot. Although he struggled a wee bit in the SA20 and ILT20, one would expect him to strike gold for the Afghans. More responsibility on Omarzai

After kicking off his career in the ODI World Cup 2023, Azmatullah Omarzai hasn't looked back. Last year, he won the award for the ICC ODI Cricketer of the Year. In 2024, Omarzai scored 417 runs from 14 ODIs at an average of 52.12 and took 17 wickets with



two four-wicket hauls against Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

In February 2024, Afghanistan lost to Sri Lanka by 42 runs in Pallekele, but Omarzai stole the limelight with an unbeaten 149-run knock off 115 balls, laced with 13 fours and six sixes. Omarzai needs to be on top of his game for the Afghans to perform well on debut. **The spin terror**

Afghanistan have always boasted of a strong spin-attack. Rashid Khan, AM Ghazanfar, Mohammad Nabi and Noor Ahmad have been sensational for them in white-ball cricket. At the age of Ghazanfar, who has an IPL deal with the Mumbai Indians, has two five-wicket hauls in ODIs.

But Ghazanfar won't be a part of Afghanistan's campaign after he was ruled out due to a fracture in his L4 vertebra. In his place, the Afghans have roped in the 20-year-old Nangeyalia Kharote, who has taken 11 wickets and scored 41 runs from seven ODIs. Rashid Khan would be flying high after becoming the all-time leading wicket-taker in T20Is. Nabi might not be as lethal as Ghazanfar and Rashid, but he adds value to their lineup with the truckload of experience he brings. Noor Ahmad hasn't played a lot, but is definitely a wicket-taking option.

Afghanistan Recent form
After the ODI World Cup, Afghanistan have played four bilateral series and won three of them. After being blanked 0-3 by Sri Lanka, the Afghans went on to beat Ireland 2-0, South Africa 2-1 and Bangladesh 2-1. In their last 14 completed ODIs, they won eight

Liverpool's Arne Slot, Jones shown red in chaotic Merseyside Derby vs Everton

Liverpool's Merseyside Derby against Everton ended in chaos with three red cards, a fiery brawl, and Arne Slot's ejection after a dramatic 2-2 draw, leaving tensions high despite Liverpool maintaining their Premier League lead.

New Delhi. Liverpool's Merseyside Derby against Everton ended in dramatic chaos as three red cards, an intense on-field brawl, and a furious exchange between Liverpool manager Arne Slot and referee Michael Oliver overshadowed a thrilling 2-2 draw at Goodison Park on February 13.

Everton stunned the Premier League leaders early, with Beto breaking the deadlock in the 11th minute, sending the home crowd into raptures. However,

Liverpool responded swiftly, as Alexis Mac Allister fired in a 16th-minute equaliser to restore parity. The Reds gradually took control, and it was once again their talisman Mohamed Salah who delivered, putting Liverpool ahead in the 73rd minute. With time running out, it seemed like Arne Slot's men were on course for another crucial three



points. However, Everton had other plans. Deep into stoppage time, James Tarkowski struck a dramatic equalizer in the eighth minute of added time, sending

Goodison Park into wild celebrations and dealing a frustrating blow to Liverpool. But the real drama unfolded after the full-time whistle. Everton's Abdoulaye Doucoure sparked chaos by taunting Liverpool fans, leading to a heated confrontation with Curtis Jones. The altercation quickly escalated, resulting in both players being shown red cards. Tensions continued to boil over as Liverpool manager Arne Slot stormed onto the pitch, confronting referee Michael Oliver in frustration. Slot's aggressive handshake with Oliver saw him receive a straight red card, capping off an extraordinary night. While Liverpool remain atop the Premier League table, the emotional fallout from the heated derby could have repercussions heading into their upcoming fixtures. Slot's potential touchline ban and the suspension of Curtis Jones might prove costly as the title race intensifies.

Jos Buttler backs England teammates after India loss, rejects 'unserious' claims

Jos Buttler defended his England teammates after their 3-0 ODI series defeat to India, dismissing criticism from the likes of Kevin Pietersen and Ravi Shastri, who questioned England's training approach and preparation ahead of the Champions Trophy.

New Delhi. England captain Jos Buttler has defended his teammates following their 3-0 ODI series defeat to India, dismissing claims that the squad lacked seriousness in their preparation. Former England captain Kevin Pietersen and ex-India coach Ravi Shastri were amongst those who criticised the team's approach, pointing out that players



prioritised golf over intense training sessions. After India clinched a dominant series win with a convincing victory in the Ahmedabad ODI, questions were raised about England's commitment and readiness. Many felt that the Brendon McCullum-coached side failed to prepare adequately, leading to their lackluster performances in both the T20I and ODI series. However, Buttler refuted these claims during the post-match press conference, insisting that the

team's training sessions were well-structured and taken seriously. "I'm not sure that's quite true, to be honest. We had a reasonably long tour, a few long travel days. There's been a couple of times we've not trained, but we've certainly done plenty of training throughout the tour," Buttler said.

"We obviously try and create a really good environment, but don't mistake that for a lazy environment or a lack of effort. The guys are desperate to perform and do well and improve," he added. England's famed Bazball approach struggled to make an impact in the white-ball series, raising concerns ahead of the Champions Trophy. The batting unit failed to deliver consistently, with key players unable to step up against a dominant Indian bowling attack. The bowling department, too, lacked penetration, with veteran leg-spinner Adil Rashid standing out as one of the few positives.



Australia has also decided to skip warm-ups, trusting their squad's conditioning and recent performances. In contrast, Pakistan has chosen a rigorous preparation plan, deploying three different "Shaheen" squads for warm-up games against Afghanistan, South Africa, and Bangladesh. Shadab Khan is set to captain a Pakistan Shaheen squad against Afghanistan in Lahore on February 14. On February 17, two Shaheen teams will play simultaneously — Mohammad Hurraira's side will battle South Africa in Karachi, while Mohammad Haris' squad faces Bangladesh in Dubai. Afghanistan, apart from their match against Pakistan's Shaheens, will also play a warm-up fixture against New Zealand on February 16 in Karachi. India's ODI series against England showcased key positives, with batters like Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, and Shreyas Iyer finding form.

Champions Trophy: Spencer Johnson hoping to replicate Mitchell Starc in Pakistan

Australia's Spencer Johnson is hoping that he can replicate senior left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc's heroics during the upcoming Champions Trophy in Pakistan. Johnson has been picked as a replacement for Starc in the squad for the tournament.

New Delhi. Australia pacer Spencer Johnson is hoping that he can replicate Mitchell Starc during the upcoming Champions Trophy in Pakistan. Starc decided to skip the upcoming tournament for personal reasons as Australia will also be without the services of Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood for the tournament, starting on February 19. Johnson was added to the squad as a like-for-like replacement for Starc and was impressive during the first ODI loss against



Sri Lanka on Wednesday, February 12. Johnson, much like Starc, picked up a wicket in his very first over of the match and ended with figures of 2 for 44 in Colombo. Speaking after the match, as quoted by Yahoo! Australia, the 29-year-old said that

he has pictured himself playing a role similar to Starc. Johnson was also confident he would get better in the longer run and will be able to do some of the things that Starc has done in ODI cricket. "While the ball is swinging, it's (the approach) pitch the ball up

and try and hit the stumps," he said. "Guys like Trent Boult (New Zealand) and Starc, left-armers who are aggressive, hopefully it's what I can bring to Pakistan."

"It's something I have pictured in my mind, come in and play a similar role to him (Starc). There was a bit of nerves there."

"I think I am better for the run, it's only my third ODI, hopefully a few more and I'll be able to replicate some of the stuff he's done."

"It's in my hands. Johnson also feels that selection into the playing XI is in his hands and said he wants to force the hand of the selectors and pick him and Starc in the same lineup in the future. "I think it is in my hands, really, if I perform then I'll be around," he said. "It's up to performances, I feel like I am ready to play for Australia and had a little bit of a taste in T20 cricket and now some ODIs." "Heading to Pakistan is exciting and I am ready to go." Australia will face Sri Lanka in the second ODI on February 14, before facing England in their Champions Trophy opener on February 22.

The post shared on Instagram stories served as a reminder that healing is a continuous process and that while the scars of past trauma may remain, it's possible to find hope, embrace joy and cultivate a sense of trust in life.

Natasa Stankovic

Shares Powerful Message On Healing And Trust: 'Not Every Love Hides Pain'

Actress Natasa Stankovic recently shared a poignant message about healing and finding peace even after facing difficult experiences. On Saturday, the actress dropped a post on her social media that highlights the journey of healing and the importance of learning to trust again after experiencing pain. The post shared on Instagram stories also serves as a reminder that healing is a continuous process and that while the scars of past trauma may remain, it's possible to find hope, embrace joy and cultivate a sense of trust in life. The powerful post read, "Your trauma taught you to expect storms, but your healing is teaching you to trust clear skies—to believe that not every hello ends in goodbye, not every quiet holds a storm, not every love hides pain and not every gift carries conditions. Your heart remembers the hurt, but it can learn to welcome joy."

A day ago, Natasa Stankovic dropped a video on her social media giving fans a glimpse of her power-packed fun Friday. In her latest video on Instagram, the actress shows her fitness game by performing an extensive cardio drill using a stepper. Natasa opted for intense variations of workouts, including jumping jacks, jumps on the stepper, front and side movement and step-up workouts while moving sideways with every jump.



Talking about Natasa's personal life, the actress parted ways with her cricketer husband Hardik Pandya in 2024. The two got hitched in May 2020 and renewed their wedding vows according to the Hindu and Christian rituals in February 2023. Hardik and Natasa, who confirmed their separation in July 2024, are parents to Agastya H Pandya. Following their separation, Natasa was brutally trolled by many on social media platforms.

On the professional front, Natasa Stankovic recently appeared in the music video Tere Krke, alongside artist Preetinder. The song was out on October 8 and fans showered her with immense praise for her return to the screen.

Meanwhile, the actress made her on-screen debut with the 2013 film Satyagraha after starring in a few advertisements. In the film, she appeared in the dance number Aiyo Ji. Over the years, the Serbian model made several special and cameo appearances in films like Fukrey Returns, Daddy and FryDay. In 2020, she was last seen in the web show Flesh.



Vicky Kaushal Relishes Litti Chokha At A Street Stall In Patna, Chhaava Actor Says 'Garda Udaa Diya'



Bollywood actor Vicky Kaushal, who will next be seen in the historical drama 'Chhaava', has been busy promoting the film. On Saturday, the actor arrived in Patna, Bihar, and was spotted relishing the local delicacy 'litti chokha' at a street stall, proving that he is a true-blue foodie! The actor shared a video of him gorging on the lip-smacking traditional dish from Bihar, and his simplicity left fans amazed. On Saturday, Vicky Kaushal took to his Instagram to share a video in which he is seen gorging litti chokha at a street stall in Patna. When asked how it tastes, Vicky showed genuine appreciation and replied with a Bihari accent: "Bohot badhiya hai (It's very tasty)." In his caption, the Chhaava actor wrote that he couldn't have missed eating litti chokha in Patna, and added a Bihari phrase 'Garda uda diya,' to express how much he loved it! He also promised some exciting news about Chhaava. "#Patna aakar Litti Chokha kaise miss kar jaayein #Chhaava exciting news coming up!" he wrote. Check out the video below!

Vicky Kaushal also re-shared this post on his Instagram stories, and wrote, "litti chokha was LIT!!!" Vicky has been on a promotional spree, and after Patna, he will be seen promoting Chhaava in Mumbai, on 9th February. He will then be visiting Amritsar, Delhi, and Pune, ahead of the film's release on 14th February. Yesterday, the actor was in Kolkata, and he shared a video of himself speaking in Bengali.

About Chhaava

Chhaava is a historical drama that revolves around the life of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. In the film, Vicky Kaushal is set to portray the character of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the eldest son of the Maratha empire's founder. The film also stars Rashmika Mandanna, Akshaye Khanna, Ashutosh Rana, and Divya Dutta in key roles.

Salman Khan Brings Up Arbaaz-Malaika's Divorce During Podcast With Arhaan: You've To Make It On Your Own



On a recent podcast episode with his nephew Arhaan Khan, Salman Khan got candid, touching upon love, life, and the divorce of his nephew's parents, Arbaaz Khan and Malaika Arora. The Bollywood superstar, who marked his debut in podcast with Arhaan's Dumb Biryani channel, advised the youngster that life is all about finding your own path. Malaika Arora and Arbaaz Khan's shocking separation announcement came in March 2016 after 19 years of marriage. They were officially divorced in May 2017 after tying the knot in 1998. Malaika Arora and Arbaaz Khan met and fell in love in their early 20s.

Briefly addressing Arhaan Khan's parents' divorce, Salman Khan said in the podcast, "This dude out here has gone through his ups and downs. After your mom and dad's relationship



(separation), you have to make it on your own. One day you will have your own family and unit. So this is what you have to work on to have your own family. The culture of having lunch and dinner with family should always be there and there should always be a head of the family, who should be respected."

The chat took a heartwarming turn when Arhaan opened up about his future plans, revealing his dream of starting his own restaurant. With a spark of passion in his voice, he talked about his love for food and creating a space where people could connect over great meals. Salman then asked Arhaan, "If you want to run a restaurant then what's with all the classes you have joined? Fighting, gymnastics... these things you are doing for the restaurant?" On the work front, Salman Khan recently delighted fans with a cameo in Varun Dhawan's Baby John. Up next, he's gearing up for some high-octane drama with the action-packed Sikandar.

Is Athiya Shetty's Pink Rose A Gift From KL Rahul?

Athiya Shetty is eagerly awaiting the arrival of her first child with cricketer husband KL Rahul. As she enjoys this special phase, the mom-to-be has been sharing glimpses of her pregnancy journey with fans. Recently, she marked Rose Day with a sweet post, leaving many wondering if KL Rahul had a thoughtful hand in picking her favourite colour. Taking to Instagram stories, Athiya shared a picture of herself dressed in a soft pink outfit. The off-shoulder top with full sleeves and a relaxed fit complemented her pregnancy glow. Posing gracefully with a pink rose in hand, she kept the giver's identity a mystery. However, fans speculated that the romantic gesture could be from KL Rahul, making the moment even more special.

While she didn't reveal more details, Athiya's subtle post added a touch of charm to her ongoing pregnancy diaries, keeping her followers engaged in her beautiful journey.



The mommy-to-be teamed her look with glam makeup and playfully used the sunshine to flex her pregnancy glow. To round off her look, she chose nearly naked eyeshadow, pink-hued lips and a touch of highlighter to add a bling to her charming appearance. Additionally, she left her tresses open to cascade down her shoulders. KL Rahul shared a few unseen photos from his time in Australia, including a heartwarming snapshot of him adoringly gazing at his pregnant wife, Athiya. Also read:

Athiya Shetty debuts baby bump, spotted hanging out with Anushka Sharma in Australia. For the unversed, KL Rahul met his ladylove in January 2019 through a mutual friend, and they instantly felt a connection. Soon, their likings blossomed into a relationship, and after dating for several years, the duo got married in 2023 at Suniel Shetty's farmhouse in Khandala. Last year in November, the couple announced their good news to their fans in a joint post. They posted a picture message featuring tiny feet and an evil eye. Alongside it, they wrote in the caption, "Our beautiful blessing is coming soon. 2025."

Since then, the couple often post glimpses of Athiya's pregnancy journey. In January 2025, KL Rahul took to Instagram and dropped a series of moments from his visit to Australia with his wife. He was in the country for the 2024-25 Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

