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The Researchers'

NEWS BOX

Europe's participation 'needed' in ending conflict with Ukraine: Putin

World Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday that Russia was not opposed to Europe's involvement in Russia-US peace talks aimed at settling the conflict in Ukraine, but noted that Brussels had long rejected any dialogue with Moscow. Putin, interviewed on Russian state television, also said US President Donald Trump was approaching the Russia-Ukraine conflict rationally and not emotionally. Russia and the United States held an initial round of talks on Ukraine last week in Saudi Arabia. Ukraine and Kyiv's European allies were not invited, sparking objections from both. Putin said it was logical for Europe to take part in talks on a settlement to the three-year-old conflict. "Their participation in the negotiating process is needed. We never rejected that, we held constant discussions with them," Putin said. "At times, on the pretext of inflicting on Russia a battlefield defeat, they were the ones who refused contact with us. If they want to come back, that's fine. He said negative reactions to the talks in Riyadh had been "emotional and void of any kind of logic". "And why? Because in order to resolve complex and difficult questions, including the Ukrainian issue, Russia and the United States must make the first step. And that first step must be devoted to raising the level of trust between our countries. And that is what we did in Riyadh. "The Ukraine conflict had been discussed, he said, "but not in its essence. We simply agreed that we get to it. And here we are not rejecting the participation of European countries." Putin also said he approved a suggestion that Russia and the United States could discuss deep cuts -- up to 50% -- in military spending. "We could come to an agreement with the United States. We're not against that," Putin said. "The idea seems like a good one to me. The United States reduces theirs by 50% and we reduce ours by 50%. And China could join us later if it wishes."

Nearly 40% of US government contracts cancelled by DOGE are expected to produce no savings

WASHINGTON. Nearly 40% of the federal contracts that the Trump administration claims to have cancelled as part of its signature cost-cutting program aren't expected to save the government any money, the administration's own data shows. The Department of Government Efficiency run by Elon Musk last week published an initial list of 1,125 contracts that it terminated in recent weeks across the federal government. Data published on DOGE's "Wall of Receipts" shows that more than one-third of the contract cancellations, 417 in all, are expected to yield no savings. That's usually because the total value of the contracts has already been fully obligated, which means the government has a legal requirement to spend the funds for the goods or services it purchased and in many cases has already done so. "It's like confiscating used ammunition after it's been shot when there's nothing left in it. It doesn't accomplish any policy objective," said Charles Tiefer, a retired University of Baltimore law professor and expert on government contracting law. "Their terminating so many contracts pointlessly obviously doesn't accomplish anything for saving money. "Dozens of them were for already-paid subscriptions to The Associated Press, Politico and other media services that the administration said it would discontinue. Others were for research studies that have been awarded, training that has taken place, software that has been purchased and interns that have come and gone. n administration official said it made sense to cancel contracts that are seen as potential dead weight, even if the moves do not yield any savings. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. In all, DOGE data says the 417 contracts in question had a total value of \$478 million. Dozens of other cancelled contracts are expected to yield little if any savings.

US refuses to blame Russia for Ukraine war, splitting with European allies in UN votes

UNITED NATIONS. In a dramatic shift in transatlantic relations under President Donald Trump, the United States split with its European allies by refusing to blame Russia for its invasion of Ukraine in votes on three UN resolutions Monday seeking an end to the three-year war. The growing divide follows Trump's decision to open direct negotiations with Russia on ending the war, dismaying Ukraine and its European supporters by excluding them from the preliminary talks last week. In the UN General Assembly, the US joined Russia in voting against a Europe-backed Ukrainian resolution that calls out Moscow's aggression and demands an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops. The US then abstained from voting on its own competing resolution after Europeans, led by France, succeeded in amending it to make clear Russia was the aggressor. The voting was taking place on the third anniversary of Russia's invasion and as Trump was hosting French President Emmanuel Macron in Washington. It was a major setback for the Trump administration in the 193-member world body, whose resolutions are not legally binding but are seen as a barometer of world opinion. The US then pushed for a vote on its original draft in the more powerful UN Security Council, where resolutions are legally binding and it has veto power along with Russia, China, Britain and France. The vote in the 15-member council was 10-0 with five European countries abstaining—Britain, France, Denmark, Greece, and Slovenia. The dueling resolutions also reflect the tensions that have emerged between the US and Ukraine.

Money not seen in our records: Bangladesh official on \$29 million USAID grant

On February 16, the Elon Musk-led US Department of Government Efficiency announced its decision to cut \$723 million in foreign aid funding, which included \$21 million for India and \$29 million for Bangladesh.



World In its first reaction to the raging USAID funding controversy, Bangladesh said that the \$29 million grant allotted to the South Asian nation to strengthen its political landscape "was not seen in our records". In its announcement on February 16, the Elon Musk-led US Department of Government Efficiency announced its decision to slash \$723 million in foreign aid funding as part of its broader budget

overhaul plans. The funding included the \$29 million grant for Bangladesh, as well as \$21 million for India aimed at "increasing voter turnout". The announcement has led to a massive political row in India, as Trump hinted at election interference and questioned the

requirement of such funds. Meanwhile, Md Anwar Hossain, Director General of Bangladesh's NGO Affairs Bureau, said, "We have not seen the amount of money in our records". The bureau is a Bangladesh government body which facilitates the activities of NGOs operating across

Bangladesh with foreign assistance. "Donald Trump said about \$29 million. We have not identified that amount come through the NGO Affairs Bureau. Because if they can tell which NGOs are involved, then we can identify them. But overall, the money is not yet seen in our NGO Affairs records. I cannot tell if they have sent money into the country without bypassing the NGO Affairs Bureau," he added. The Bangladesh government official also confirmed that more than 75 NGOs in the country not only receive funding from the American aid agency, but also donations from US-based donors. "USAID mostly helps with projects involving the Rohingya and these are still in operation, not suspended," he stated. Hossain went on to explain that "if foreign donors donate directly to the registered NGOs, only then can we keep a record of the money. USAID brings in money through government channels, which is then distributed to agencies. This is not reflected in our NGO Affairs records".

Five minutes to midnight, warns Germany's Merz as Trump moves US closer to Russia

World Germany's election winner Friedrich Merz warned the United States on Monday against turning its back on allies but also urged Europeans to build up their own defence capabilities, saying it was now "five minutes to midnight for Europe". His comments underscored the turmoil engulfing the transatlantic alliance since the re-election of US President Donald Trump and fears he could strike a deal with Russia over Ukraine while Kyiv and Europe just watch from the sidelines. Merz's conservatives are looking to quickly form a government after winning a national election on Sunday but face tricky coalition talks and the prospect of an obstructive parliament after far-right and far-left parties surged. Time is pressing for Europe's ailing largest economy. German businesses are demanding help to



remain globally competitive, society is split over migration and the new government must also deal with a confrontational Trump administration threatening tariffs as well as a hostile Russia and an assertive China. "And what we also see with the greatest concern, of course, is the attempt (by Trump) to make a deal with Russia on Ukraine over the heads of the Europeans, over the heads of Ukraine," Merz told a press conference. "It will come as no surprise to you when I

say that this is unacceptable both for Ukraine and for Europe," Merz said, adding it would be difficult if those who put "America First" actually made their motto "America Alone". His conservative bloc wants to ally with Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD), who came in third, after the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) surged to a historic second place. But Merz's bid for an alliance with the SPD comes after a bruising campaign that highlighted deep policy divisions, in particular over migration. The SPD, smarting from its worst post-war result, may set a high price for any deal. The AfD and the radical Left Party jointly secured one-third of seats in the new parliament, enough to block constitutional changes needed to loosen state borrowing limits - changes that some economists say are crucial to reviving the flagging economy.

I've done hideous things: French ex-surgeon on trial for mass child sex abuse

World A former French surgeon went on trial Monday charged with raping or sexually assaulting almost 300 patients, most of them children at the time, in one of the country's largest child sex abuse cases. Judge Aude Buresi declared the hearing in the western city of Vannes open as Joel Le Scouarnec, 74, took his place in the dock. "I've done hideous things," Le Scouarnec told the court. He was "perfectly aware that these wounds cannot be erased or healed" and that he was ready to "take responsibility" for his actions. The former surgeon has already been in jail after being found guilty in 2020 of abusing four children, including two of his nieces. In the latest trial, Le Scouarnec faces allegations that he assaulted or raped 299 patients, many while waking up from anaesthetic or during post-op checkups, at a dozen hospitals between 1989 and 2014. "I've been waiting for this moment for a long time," said one of the victims, Amelie Leveque, 42. She added, however, that she was "afraid" to see the former doctor. Two hundred and fifty-six of the victims were under 15, with the youngest aged one and the oldest 70. Le Scouarnec's lawyer, Maxime Tessier, told

Democratic, Republican senators' resolution on Ukraine amid Trump's stance shift

Resolution expresses solidarity with Ukraine, seeks Kyiv's role in talks Resolution reaffirms US support for Ukraine's sovereignty This comes amid Donald Trump's major shift in stance on Ukraine war



Washington DC A group of Democratic and Republican US senators will offer a resolution backing Ukraine on Monday, amid fears that President Donald Trump could make a deal with Moscow that leaves Kyiv on the sidelines three years after Russia launched its full-scale invasion. The resolution, seen by Reuters, expresses solidarity with the people of Ukraine, offers condolences for the loss of tens of thousands of its citizens and seeks a role for Kyiv in any ceasefire talks. Its introduction comes as transatlantic

relations are roiled by Trump's shifting stance on the war. The Republican President last week criticised Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, suggesting Kyiv had started the war, and started talks on ending the war with Russian officials but without Kyiv or European allies. The resolution was led by Senator Jeanne Shaheen, the ranking Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, and Republican Senator Thom Tillis. The two lawmakers visited Ukraine last week, along with Democratic Senator Michael Bennet. It has at least 12 backers, including such senior Republicans as Mitch

McConnell, the party's former Senate leader; Roger Wicker, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, as well as Democrats Dick Durbin, a member of the party's leadership, and Bennet, a Democratic foreign relations committee aide said. "The Senate emphasises that Ukraine must be a participant in discussions with the Russian Federation about Ukraine's future," the resolution said. The measure does not specifically back Nato membership, but reaffirms US support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and "supports Ukraine's efforts to integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures". In an emailed statement, Shaheen said, "As Vladimir Putin's illegal and brutal full-scale invasion enters its fourth year, I'm proud to introduce this bipartisan resolution that clearly states our unwavering support for and solidarity with the Ukrainian people and condemns Russia's aggression."



the court his client admitted to the "vast majority" of the charges. The proceedings come just two months after Dominique Pelicot was convicted of enlisting dozens of strangers to rape his heavily sedated wife Gisele Pelicot, who has since divorced him and become a feminist hero for refusing to be ashamed. Like Pelicot, Le Scouarnec documented his crimes, noting his victims' names, ages and addresses and the nature of the abuse. "MAJOR PERVERT" In his notes, the doctor described himself as a "major pervert" and a "paedophile". "And I am very happy about it," he recorded. The trial will be held in public, but seven days of testimony from victims who were targeted while minors will be held behind closed doors. The victims "expect nothing from Mr. Le Scouarnec", lawyer Marie Grimaud told reporters. But, she added, "they are hoping to regain a little dignity, humanity and above all consideration from the justice system, because until now, the judicial violence has been extremely significant." She expressed regret that the victims would be relegated to a separate room during the trial. If convicted, Le Scouarnec faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. French law does not allow sentences to be added together even when there are multiple victims.

Fired US government workers hunt for new jobs but struggle to replace their old ones

NEW YORK: HIRING: Park ranger. SEEKING: Nuclear submarine engineer. WANTED: Sled dog musher. If they seem unlikely postings, they probably are. But a laid-off federal worker can dream. Axed from jobs not easily found outside government, thousands of federal workers caught in President Donald Trump's cost-cutting efforts now face a difficult search for work. "If you're doing, say, vegetation sampling and prescribed fire as your main work, there aren't many jobs," says Eric Anderson, 48, of Chicago, who was fired Feb. 14 from his job as a biological science technician at Indiana Dunes National Park. All the years of work Anderson put in—the master's degree, the urban forestry classes, the wildfire deployments—seemed to disappear in a single email dismissing him. He's hoping there's a chance he's called back, but if he isn't, he's not sure what he'll do next. He was so consumed with his firing that he broke a molar from grinding his teeth. But he

knows he's caught in something larger than himself, as the new administration unfurls its chaotic cost-cutting agenda. "This is someone coming in and tossing a hand grenade and seeing what will happen," he says. The federal job cuts are the work of the Department of Government Efficiency, headed by billionaire Elon Musk, who has been tearing through agencies looking for suspected waste. No official tally of firings has been released, but the list stretches into the thousands and to nearly every part of the country. More than 80% of the federal government's 2.4-million-person civilian workforce is based outside of the Washington area. Cathy Nguyen, 51, of Honolulu, was laid off last month from her job at USAID, where she helped manage the PEPFAR program, which combats HIV/AIDS. Her firing not only brought the turmoil of finding new health insurance, halting saving for retirement and her kids' college education, and trimming spending for things like the family subscription to

Disney Plus—it also has forced her to reconsider her career goals. PEPFAR is a landmark effort that stretches across dozens of countries and is credited with saving some 26 million lives. Nothing rivals it. So where does a former PEPFAR worker go? "It's requiring me to rethink how I want to spend my professional life," Nguyen says. As specialized as Nguyen's work has been, Mitch Flanigan may have her beat. Flanigan, 40, was assigned to the sled dog kennels at Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska until he was fired Feb. 14. It never brought a huge paycheck, but where else could he get to work as a dog musher against such a breathtaking panorama? He has appealed his firing with the US Merit Systems Protection Board. "I still kind of want to fight for the job that I lost," he says. "I'm not really making much money, it's just fun and it's a unique thing to be a part of." A November report from the Federal Salary Council, which advises on government pay, found that federal salaries

were one-fourth lower than those in the private sector. A Congressional Budget Office report released last year found pay disparities depended on workers' education. Federal workers with a high school diploma or less outearned their private-sector counterparts with 17% higher wages, the CBO found. That edge disappeared among better-educated workers. Workers with bachelor's degrees had wages 10% lower than the private sector and those with professional degrees or doctorates earned 29% less. Federal benefits were vastly better than the private sector for the lowest-educated workers, the CBO found, and about even for the highest-educated workers. Many laid off from federal positions were drawn by stability, benefits and, more than anything, the opportunity to do work they might not be able to do anywhere else. Now, everyone from diplomats to public health workers are flooding the job market looking for suitable positions.

Significance of Mahashivratri: Understanding Lord Shiva's Role and Worship



by Sinil Bajpai

Kanpur: The journey of life begins with our first words, learned from our parents and later from our Guru, encompassing terms like Ishwar, Allah, God, worship, prayer, and sadhna. These words form the foundation of faith in a higher power, whether referred to as Ishwar, Parameshwar, Allah, or God, representing the creator, protector, and destroyer of the universe. In Hinduism, the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh (Shiva) embodies the processes of creation, preservation, and destruction. Brahma is the creator, Vishnu nurtures life, and Mahesh, or Lord Shiva, is the destroyer. The cycle of life is often



seen as a journey from birth (Brahma) to death (Mahesh), with Lord Vishnu guiding the journey in between, sustaining life. While birth and death are one-time events, Lord Vishnu's influence is constant throughout life. In this cycle,

death, or 'Kaal', is often feared, but Lord Shiva, also known as Mahakaal, controls and governs it. His epithet 'Mrityunjay' signifies his power over death and his ability to grant victory over it. Lord Shiva is revered for his

boundless generosity and compassion. His followers believe that when Lord Shiva is pleased, he fulfills every wish. His role as the controller of Kaal signifies that all worldly possessions are transient, and death is a part of the natural

order, determined by Shiva's grace and will. This is exemplified by the mythological tales of Shiva granting boons to both gods and demons, only to take them back when they misused his gifts. In India, Lord Shiva's worship

holds immense spiritual significance and Mahashivratri, celebrated on the 14th day of the dark fortnight of the month of Falgun, is considered the most important festival dedicated to him. It is believed that on this day, the universe was created from Shiva's Agni Linga during his marriage to Goddess Parvati. Devotees observe strict fasting, Rudrabhishek, and prayers, both in India and among the Indian diaspora worldwide. The spiritual essence of Mahashivratri is also rooted in the belief that true grace from Lord Shiva can only be attained when an individual transcends the dualities of life, becoming 'impotent' in a spiritual sense—meaning transcending the material differences of man and woman, and achieving oneness with the divine. This, according to spiritual teachings, is the path to receiving Shiva's blessings.

BSNL Launches Rs 797 Recharge Plan with 300 Days Validity, Unlimited Calling



New Delhi: BSNL, the government-run telecom provider, has introduced a new affordable recharge plan aimed at offering users extended validity at a low cost. The Rs 797 recharge plan promises 300 days of validity, making it an attractive option for those looking to keep their SIM card active for a long period without paying hefty charges. While private telecom companies have been raising prices of their recharge plans, BSNL continues to offer value-driven options at older, affordable rates. For users who don't require excessive data or calling, this Rs 797 plan offers a balanced mix of benefits. It includes unlimited free calling on all networks and 2GB of daily data for the first 60 days. This adds up to a total of 120GB of high-speed data during the initial period of the plan. Additionally, users will receive 100 free SMS daily for the first two months. After the 60-day mark, while the calling and data benefits reduce, the plan ensures uninterrupted service for the full 300-day duration.

This new plan further enhances BSNL's commitment to providing cost-effective solutions for its customers while maintaining competitive pricing in a market where many private operators have raised their tariffs.

Bokaro Litterateurs Pay Tribute to Late Writer Pranesh Kumar



Bokaro: Renowned writer and Vice President of Jharkhand Janwadi Lekhak Sangh, Pranesh Kumar, passed away on February 20, 2025, after a long battle with cancer. To honor his legacy, a heartfelt condolence meeting was held at poet-storyteller Prahlad Chandra Das's residence in Sector 4F on Monday evening, attended by prominent litterateurs from Bokaro.

Remembering his contributions, poet Gopal Prasad noted Pranesh Kumar's role as an editor for several publications and his versatile poetry, both in verse and free verse. Prahlad Chandra Das recalled his significant involvement in the organization, emphasizing his support for emerging writers. Kumar Satyendra, State Secretary of JLS Jharkhand, highlighted his unwavering dedication to literature despite his untimely departure.

The evening saw tributes from poets including Shanti Bharat, Shyam Sundar Kewat, Pradeep Kumar Deepak, and Vasundhara Bharti, all remembering Pranesh's invaluable impact on the literary world.

48-Hour Akhand Harinam Mahayagya Begins at Baba Niranjan Nath Shiv Mandir



Bokaro: The 44th annual festival at Baba Niranjan Nath Shiv Mandir in Sector 6D commenced on Monday with a grand Jal Yatra. Ugranath Jha from the organizing committee shared that, as in previous years, a 48-hour Akhand Harinam Mahayagya is being held, continuing until Mahashivratri.

The chanting started at 11 am on Monday and will conclude on Wednesday at 12 noon. The festival will conclude with a grand Shiv Baraat tableau at 4 pm, followed by the ceremonial marriage of Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati, and distribution of Prasad in the evening.

Pandit Rana Jha Mesmerizes Audience with Classical Performance at Bokaro



Bokaro: A mesmerizing evening of classical music unfolded at the Bokaro Sangeet Kala Academy on Monday, with the highlight being a soul-stirring performance by renowned classical singer Pandit Rana Jha. Hailing from Delhi, Pandit Jha, a recipient of numerous prestigious awards including the Surmani Samman, Mithila Ratna Samman, and Sangeet Shiromani, captivated the audience with his enchanting rendition of Raga Puriya Dhanashree.

His performance also featured two deeply emotional bhajans: Nanak's Jagat Mein Jhoothi Dekhi Preet and Brahmaand's Jisko Nahi Hai Bodh Guru Gyan Kya Kare, leaving the crowd spellbound. Jha was supported by Dr. Rakesh Ranjan on tabla, and Sanhita Bhattacharya and Gauri Jha on tanpura.

The evening began with a performance by Gauri Jha, who earned applause for her rendition of Raga Kalavati, accompanied by tabla player Amit Sarkar. This was followed by Vibhu Shankar Mishra's graceful presentation of Chota Khayal Ab Kaun Rijhabal Jaye Re in Raga Yaman, with Dr. Rakesh Ranjan on tabla and Hareknath Goswami on harmonium.

Pandit Rana Jha emphasized the importance of practice in music, stating that mastery can only be achieved through continuous dedication. The event was warmly welcomed by Arun Kumar Sinha, the administrator of the academy, and was conducted by musician Prasenjit Sharma. The evening concluded with a vote of thanks by Arun Pathak.

Ex-Congress MP Sajjan Kumar Gets LI for 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots, Killings...

New Delhi: Delhi's Rouse Avenue Court today sentenced former Congress leader Sajjan Kumar to life in prison for his involvement in the 1984 Anti-Sikh riots, specifically the killing of a father and son in Saraswati Vihar. The sentencing follows his conviction on February 12 for the double murder.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja handed down the life sentence, convicting Kumar on several charges, including murder (Section 302) and destruction of property by fire (Section 436), all in connection with an unlawful assembly under Section 149 of the Indian Penal Code.

The victims of the riots had advocated for the death penalty for Kumar, seeking justice for the heinous acts committed during the violence.

Kumar, who was already serving a life sentence following his 2018 conviction in a separate anti-Sikh riot case, received this new sentence after the Rouse Avenue Court reserved its order on February 21.

21 AAP MLAs Suspended in Delhi Assembly Amid Protests Over Portraits and CAG Reports

New Delhi: Tensions escalated in the Delhi Assembly on Tuesday as Speaker Vijender Gupta suspended 21 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), including prominent leaders such as Atishi, Gopal Rai, Imran Hussain, and Vishesh Ravi.

The suspension was imposed after the opposition members engaged in unruly behavior during an address by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena.

The controversy began when the Lieutenant Governor was speaking about the Delhi government's future policies and focus areas, including corruption-free governance, women empowerment, and clean drinking water. During his speech, AAP MLAs started sloganeering over the alleged removal of portraits of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and revolutionary Bhagat Singh from the Chief Minister's office, a claim that has been denied by the ruling BJP.

Despite repeated calls for order by Speaker Gupta, the opposition members continued their protests, leading to the suspen-



sion. In response, Delhi Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh moved a motion to take action against the protesting MLAs, which was passed through a voice vote. The suspended MLAs were barred from participating in the remaining sessions of the ongoing assembly proceedings. Following the suspension, AAP lawmakers held protests outside the assembly.

The issue of the portrait removal has added fuel to the ongoing political conflict between the AAP and BJP. AAP leaders, including Atishi, condemned the move, questioning

the BJP's decision to replace the portraits of Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh with one of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Atishi remarked, "Is PM Modi bigger than Dr. BR Ambedkar?"

We will continue our protest until Ambedkar's portrait is reinstated." Adding to the political tension, the presentation of the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) report earlier in the session also sparked a heated exchange. The report included allegations of corruption against former

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, specifically related to the controversial liquor policy. The BJP has accused Kejriwal of involvement in a scam linked to the policy, intensifying the standoff between the two parties.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Assembly session has been extended by two more days, with both parties gearing up for further debates and protests. The developments highlight the growing divide between the BJP and AAP as the political climate in Delhi remains charged.

CBSE to conduct Class 10 board exams twice a year starting from 2026

New Delhi: In a major shift in the examination system, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has approved draft guidelines for conducting Class 10 board exams twice a year, starting from 2026.

This decision is in line with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), which advocates for multiple opportunities to reduce the high-pressure nature of board exams.

Under the proposed schedule,



the first phase of the exams will be held from February 17 to March 6, while the second phase will take place from May 5 to 20.

Both phases will cover the complete syllabus, providing

students with two opportunities to improve their performance. However, practical and internal assessments will only be conducted once to maintain consistency across both phases.

The draft guidelines will be open for public feedback until March 9 before receiving final approval. A senior CBSE official confirmed that students will be assigned the same examination centers for both attempts, and the exam fees for both phases will be collected at the time of application. "The two editions will also serve as supplementary exams—no separate exams will be conducted under any circumstances," the official added.

PCA advocates reactivation of Press Council in India



by Nava Thakuria

Guwahati: Press Club of Assam (PCA) expresses worries that the country's statutory and quasi-judicial body to safeguard the press freedom remains non-functional for nearly five months. PCA in a statement insisted on constituting the 15th Press Council (of India) as the term of the 14th Press Council expired on 5 October 2024. It also demanded to empower the PCI bringing the news channels and digital platforms under its jurisdiction and giving a new meaning

as Media Council of India. Mentionable is that the PCI is an autonomous body, initially set up in 1966 under the Press Council Act 1965 and later re-established in 1979 following the Press Council Act 1978 with a primary objective to preserve the press freedom and also improve the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India. India today nurtures nearly 100,000 publications (endorsed by the Registrar of Newspapers for India) in various frequencies and languages including English. The largest democracy on the globe with its billion plus population also supports nearly 400 satellite news channels along with thousands of portals, whatsapp channels and other digital outlets.



Terming the delay in the constitution of a new council as surprising, various media bodies in India alleged that the PCI has been turned into a non-func-

tional entity over the last few months. The council enjoys a three-year term and the continuity broke last year as the chairperson did not initiate to consti-

tute a new council on time. A recent statement of Mumbai Press Club (MPC) alleged that 'at the core of the crisis was an attempt to oust two important and

active journalist bodies (namely MPC and Editors Guild of India) from their representation. The MPC also wrote a letter to Union information & broad-

casting minister Ashwini Vaisnav requesting his intervention and necessary direction to the PCI chairperson.

"As the PCI discharges its functions primarily through adjudications on complaints received against a particular newspaper/news agency or an editor/working journalist alleging professional misconduct deteriorating the standard of journalistic behaviours, it needs to be in an alert mode always," said PCA president Kailash Sarma, working president Nava Thakuria and general secretary Hiren Ch Kalita, adding that the PCI is also empowered to make observations if the conduct of any authority including the government is found interfering with the guaranteed

freedom of the press.

It may be mentioned that the PCI comprises a chairman (by convention a retired Supreme Court judge is assigned) and 28 members where 13 individuals represent the professional journalists out of whom 6 need to be editors of newspapers and 7 working journalists. Another 6 members represent the management of newspapers (including the owners), 2 each taken from the big, medium and small newspapers, whereas 1 member represents the news agencies. Two houses of Indian Parliament send 5 members, and 3 individuals are nominated by the University Grants Commission, Bar Council of India and Sahitya Academy from the fields of education, law and literature respectively.

BJP leaders contradicted themselves in Muda scam probe, reveals Lokayukta report

The Lokayukta report revealed that Karnataka BJP leaders who led a padayatra against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over the Muda scam have given contradictory testimonies to the agency, effectively backing him.

New Delhi. Karnataka BJP leaders who fiercely opposed the Mysore Urban Development Authority (Muda) scam in the assembly and even staged a padayatra against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's alleged involvement have provided statements to the Lokayukta that contradict their previous claims. The Lokayukta recorded statements from over 10 current and former MLAs and MLCs as part of its investigation into the Muda site

allocation case. Politicians from across party lines, including BJP and JD(S) leaders, gave testimonies that suggest the site allocation to Siddaramaiah's wife, Parvathi, followed standard procedures and was not influenced by political pressure. India Today has exclusively accessed these statements.



BJP leaders' Lokayukta statements contradict public claims. Muda scam probe reveals no political pressure in site allocation. Siddaramaiah's wife's land deal followed 50:50 policy.

Among those who testified were JD(S) leader GT Devegowda, BJP leaders SA Ramdas and B Harshavardhan, Congress MP G Kumar Nayak, and MLA Tanveer. GT Devegowda, a political rival of Siddaramaiah for 18 years, stated that he was unaware that Parvathi was the Chief Minister's wife at the time of the site allocation.

He further clarified that the distribution of sites had historically followed a 50:50 allocation policy, which was introduced during the BJP's tenure. He also confirmed that MLA Yathindra, son of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, did not play

an active role in Muda meetings regarding the matter. Former Minister BN Bache Gowda, who served as Urban Development Minister from 1996 to 1998, stated that he had signed off on a postal application regarding land allocation but had no further involvement or knowledge of political influence in the case. Former Minister SA Ramdas, a

Muda member from 2018 to 2023, too, confirmed his attendance at a crucial 2020 meeting where the 50:50 site allocation was discussed but denied any memory of Yathindra's participation or exertion of pressure in decision-making. One of the key points of contention in the case is the alleged role of Yathindra Siddaramaiah. While the complainant, Snehmaya Krishna, has accused him of influencing the allocation process, the Lokayukta has not recorded his statement, raising questions about the investigation's scope.

BJP leader B Harshavardhan, a former MLA from Nanjangud, recalled that the Muda commissioner had presented Parvathi's compensation site allocation for discussion and that Muda chairman HV Rajeev had specifically mentioned her as Siddaramaiah's wife. However, he affirmed that Siddaramaiah, who was the opposition leader at the time, did not exert any pressure.

Court summons Lalu Yadav, sons Tejashwi and Tej Pratap in land-for-jobs case

New Delhi. A Delhi court on Tuesday summoned RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav, his son Tej Pratap Yadav and daughter Hema Yadav in connection with the CBI case linked to the land-for-jobs 'scam'. The Rouse Avenue court also issued fresh summonses to Lalu's younger son and former Bihar deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav and asked them to appear on March 11. The court issued the summonses after taking cognisance of the CBI's final chargesheet in the corruption case. The agency has named 78 people, including 30



government officials, in the case. Lalu Yadav and his two sons have already got bail in the money laundering case being probed by the ED.

The alleged scam dates back to Lalu Prasad's tenure as Union Railway Minister between 2004 and 2009. The CBI's case pertains to the alleged transfer of land at cheap rates to the RJD chief and his family members in return for appointments in Group D jobs in Central Railways.

The CBI registered a case in May 2022 against Lalu, his sons and daughters, and wife and former Chief Minister Rabri Devi.

India achieves 88% self-sufficiency in ammunition production: Defence Minister

Rajnath Singh announced that India has achieved 88 per cent self-sufficiency in ammunition production. He urged tech innovation in AI, cybersecurity, and digital growth to drive progress.

New Delhi. Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said that India's defence exports have reached Rs 23,000 crore in 2023-24 and the country has achieved 88 per cent self-sufficiency in ammunition production. Outlining further strides in the defence sector, he said India aims to reach the target of a '50,000 crore by 2029. Rajnath Singh was attending the 16th Foundation Day of IIT Mandi where he encouraged increased technological progress in AI warfare, cybersecurity, native AI chip manufacturing, and quantum technology to boost India's defence. He called on IIT Mandi and other institutions to take the initiative in researching and progressing in these critical areas. The Minister urged students to adopt technology innovation and facilitate India's aspiration of becoming a developed country by 2047 by adopting the IIT (Initiate, Improve, and Transform) mantra.



"We need AI-driven war doctrine, indigenous AI chips for defence and fire belts for cyber security", he mentioned. Emphasising India's rapid technological growth, he predicted that the sector will reach \$300-350 billion in the next five years. Singh encouraged young innovators to lead in AI, machine learning, and digital technology rather than merely adapting to global trends.

"Researchers of IIT Mandi are doing good work on Robotics, Drone technology, AR-VR technology and will contribute enthusiastically in these sectors and other similar cutting edge technologies in coming times," the minister added. He also spoke about the prosperity of India's digital economy and mentioned that our telecommunication industry is the second-largest globally and that UPI has set global standards for digital payments.

Shashi Tharoor's praise for Centre, selfie with Piyush Goyal amid rift buzz

New Delhi. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor's another praise of the Narendra Modi-led government over a trade deal with the UK and a selfie with Union Minister Piyush Goyal has once again brought to focus his souring of ties with the party and fuelled a buzz over his future. In the post, a beaming Tharoor is seen standing next to a smiling Goyal - who a few years ago had famously said he doesn't understand the Congress veteran's "foreign accent".

"Good to exchange words with Jonathan Reynolds, Britain's Secretary of State for Business and Trade, in the company of his Indian counterpart, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. The long-stalled FTA negotiations

have been revived, which is most welcome," Tharoor tweeted. The former UN diplomat-turned-politician's recent praise for Congress's political rivals has not gone down well with the Congress leadership. Earlier this month, Tharoor lauded the Pinarayi Vijayan-led Left government in Kerala for its policies on ease of doing business and cutting red tape.

It was followed by Tharoor welcoming the outcome of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States and his meeting with Donald Trump - a line that differed with the Congress. He also appeared to have ruffled the feathers of the Kerala Congress by highlighting the "absence of a



leader" in the unit. The remark, coming a year ahead of the Kerala elections, saw the knives being out against the Thiruvananthapuram MP.

The string of developments came against the backdrop of Tharoor apparently being unhappy about being sidelined in the party. The Congress's pushback was

immediate and last week, Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi held a closed-door meeting with the four-term MP in Delhi.

Even though Tharoor has refuted rumours of him jumping ship, the combative leader warned the Congress that he had "options" if it did not require his services. "If the party wants me... I will be there. If not, I have my own things to do. You should not think I don't have any options," he said. Amid the row, the CPI(M) wasted no time in extending its hand to the Congress veteran, with senior leader Thomas Isaac saying that Tharoor "will not be an orphan in Kerala politics" if he quit the grand old party.

AAP's Delhi liquor policy led to Rs 2,002 crore revenue loss, says CAG report

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India report on the now-scrapped Delhi liquor policy scam was tabled in the Assembly today by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

New Delhi. A report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has revealed that implementation of the now-scrapped liquor policy by the former Aam Aadmi Party-led government in Delhi resulted in an overall Rs 2,002 crore revenue loss. The report was tabled in the Delhi Assembly today by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta as AAP MLAs opposed its presentation, leading to their suspension.

The liquor policy scam, which involved massive financial irregularities in its formulation, led to the arrests of top AAP leaders, including party chief Arvind Kejriwal, his former deputy Manish Sisodia, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh and former Delhi Minister Satyendar Jain. The incumbent BJP government in Delhi has announced that it would table all the 14 pending CAG reports during the ongoing Assembly session. Meanwhile, the CAG report on the liquor



policy, which covered a period of four years from 2017-18 to 2020-21, also revealed that the Delhi government faced a revenue loss of approximately Rs 890 crore due to failure to re-tendering surrendered licences, while delay in action led to losses worth Rs 941 crore due to exemptions granted to zonal licensees. Some of the top irregularities mentioned in the report are as

follows: **VIOLATIONS IN AWARDING LICENCES**

The audit report found that the Kejriwal-led AAP government could not ensure the implementation of Rule 35 of the Delhi Excise Rules, 2010, which prohibits the issuing of multiple licences. While some retailers retained licences until the expiration of the policy, others surrendered them early.

There was also no provision for licence holders to give advance notice before surrendering, which led to supply disruptions. Meanwhile, the government also issued licences without checking the requirements related to the Excise Terms and Conditions, the report claimed.

"It was observed that licences were issued without ensuring solvency, submission of audited financial statements and data regarding sales, and verification of criminal antecedents," it added.

Uddhav Sena attacks BJP over USAID funds: 21 million used to win 2024 polls

Shiv Sena (UBT)'s mouthpiece Saamana has accused the BJP of misusing USD 21 million from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to manipulate the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

New Delhi. Shiv Sena (UBT)'s mouthpiece Saamana has accused the BJP of misusing USD 21 million from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to manipulate the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and sway the Haryana and Maharashtra Assembly polls. The party has demanded an investigation, alleging that foreign funds were funnelled into India's electoral process to buy votes and engineer political defections.



The controversy began after a video surfaced of US President Donald Trump questioning the allocation of USAID funds for voter turnout in India. Speaking at a meeting of US state governors, Trump expressed disbelief, saying, "USD 21 million going to my friend Prime Minister Modi in India for voter turnout. We are giving USD 21 million for voter turnout in India. What about us? I want voter turnout too." Saamana did not hold back, claiming that if a similar case had emerged in another

country, its leader would have been forced to resign. "Where did the money from America go?" the editorial questioned, demanding that a joint parliamentary committee under Supreme Court supervision be formed to investigate the matter. It further alleged that the BJP used the funds to buy votes and destabilise governments, particularly in Maharashtra. "The same money could have been used to buy MLAs and MPs in Maharashtra," the editorial said, referencing

Mahayuti's thumping win in the state.

"Trump, in his fun and casual way, ended up revealing the truth. President Trump, thank you!" Shiv Sena (UBT) said.

The Congress, too, has jumped into the fray, urging Prime Minister Modi to respond to Trump's claim. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara said, "PM Modi must talk to his friend, President Trump, and strongly refute the allegation that America was about to give USD 21 million to him and India for increasing voter turnout."

Khara also pointed to data analysis showing that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) had disbursed USD 2.9 billion to India between 2001 and 2024, with USD 1.3 billion-or 44.4 per cent-allocated during the BJP-led NDA regime (2014-2024). Meanwhile, the Congress-led UPA government (2004-2013) received USD 1.2 billion, or 41.3 per

Uddhav Sena accuses BJP of misusing \$21 million from USAID for elections. Claims BJP swayed Maharashtra, Haryana elections using foreign funds. Saamana demands investigation into foreign funds in Indian elections.

cent of the total grants. He further noted that USAID had played a significant role in key PM Modi-era initiatives, stating, "USAID started the Cashless India campaign in October 2016, a month before demonetisation was announced." He added that even the much-publicized Swachh Bharat Abhiyan had "a USAID stamp", as the agency partnered with the Indian government in 73 cities.

The transformation more women teachers could bring

The participation of women in India's teaching workforce has seen a significant transformation over the years. According to the latest data from the Unified District Information System for Education, the number of women school teachers increased from 47.1 lakh (49.98 percent) in 2018-19 to 52.3 lakh (53.34 percent) in 2023-24. Women first surpassed the halfway mark in 2019-20, and their representation has steadily grown.

However, disparities persist between private and government schools, with private institutions showing a higher rate of women teacher participation—a 20 percent rise in recent years. Important reasons for this could be their urban-centric locations, which reduce commuting challenges and perhaps better facilities. However, these positions often come with lower salaries, reflecting societal perceptions of women as secondary income earners. Among government schools, states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab lead in female teacher representation—at 78, 67 and 64 percent of the respective totals.

Higher education remains a male-dominated domain. Data from the 2021-22 All India Survey on Higher Education shows that women constitute only 43 percent of faculty members. Globally, women dominate teaching roles in primary and secondary education but face a significant drop in tertiary education. According to Unesco, 68 percent of primary and 54 percent of secondary teachers are women, but only 41 percent of tertiary educators are female. In countries like Latvia and Russia, women represent over 80 percent of primary teachers, while in Sub-Saharan Africa, the figure drops to 41 percent due to systemic and cultural barriers. In India, women's underrepresentation in higher education reflects deeper societal biases, such as gender discrimination, lack of mentorship, and the disproportionate burden of household responsibilities.

Many scholarly studies have demonstrated the positive impact of female teachers on students' academic and emotional development. Women bring unique strengths such as empathy, communication skills and nurturing abilities that foster supportive learning environments. Moreover, gender balance among teachers reflects an equitable and inclusive society, and research shows that students, particularly girls, perform better when taught by female educators. Female teachers also play a critical role in addressing sensitive issues like menstruation taboos and child marriage, which often impede girls' education in developing countries. However, systemic challenges such as inadequate salaries, unsafe transportation, workplace harassment, and expensive certification processes deter women from entering or advancing in the teaching profession. The dual burden of professional and household responsibilities further limits their capacity for career growth. To address these challenges, institutions must implement family-friendly policies, such as flexible work hours and childcare support. Governments must adopt targeted measures to address these barriers and promote gender equity in education. Providing housing allowances, transport facilities, and enhanced safety measures for women in remote schools can significantly improve their participation. Expanding financial aid for women pursuing education degrees and offering leadership training can empower women to take on administrative roles.

Bangladesh's initiative to provide stipends for female teachers in rural areas is a successful model worthy of emulation. Addressing regional disparities and incentivising women's participation in underrepresented areas would not only improve gender parity but also enhance the overall quality of education. In early childhood and primary education, female teachers are particularly effective. Studies in educational psychology highlight that classrooms led by female teachers show a 20 percent higher rate of inclusive participation. Women often integrate social-emotional learning and employ cooperative teaching methods that cater to the diverse needs of students.

Rooting for distinct branches on a strong tree

This wasn't the first time that the separation of powers was questioned while selecting the chief election commissioner. Where should the line be drawn, by whom?

India's 26th Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has taken charge. There was expected political noise before and during the appointment of Gyanesh Kumar, and that noise is not to be frowned upon in a democracy. One has to only see the combativeness of the confirmation process for President Donald Trump's nominees in the US to value this noise. Having said that, let us get into the quality of the noise generated. Rahul Gandhi, who was on the panel to select the CEC, handed over a dissent note. His primary objection was that the selection panel should have included the Chief Justice of India (CJI), or the government should have waited until the top court decided on a petition that demanded it. The matter was to come up before the court on February 19 (it was not posted for judgement though), but the sitting CEC was retiring on February 18. Therefore, the selection panel met a day before to pick a new CEC. The government's outer layer of defence was in this chronology.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court did not seem to be in any great hurry to hear the petition on February 19. It was reported that both the judge who was to hear it and the solicitor general were tied up with other cases. For some perspective, in a March 2023 judgement, the Supreme Court had included the CJI as a member of the selection panel, but the government had overturned this instantly by amending the law. Interestingly, on February 15, in what looked like perfect timing in a perfect setting, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, speaking at the National Judicial Academy, raised a larger issue of principle. He asked if a CJI should get himself involved in executive appointments. He said the involvement of the judiciary in executive matters presented a "constitutional paradox". He felt there was a need to ensure each institution operated within its own domain. It was a valid question, and an assertion of the separation of powers.

The Dinesh Goswami committee in 1990 had not only recommended that the election commission be a multi-member body, but had also said the CJI should be on the panel to pick the CEC. From 1993 on, the commission became a multi-member body, but no government allowed the CJI to sit on the selection panel. The apparent reasoning here could be, as much as the CEC is expected to be non-partisan, shouldn't the CJI also be kept free from the worldly business of appointments so that he is not mixed up when petitions against the CEC and the

election body lands up before him? Also, if one were to implicitly trust the neutrality of the chair that the CJI occupies, then by definition such trust should be extended to the CEC too. It is entirely possible that the chair quietly places the weight of history and legacy on the occupant and enables him to act independently. At least, that is the trust with which a democracy operates.

When such is the case, should Rahul Gandhi have merely dissented, which is his right, or implant doubt as he did? He had said the CEC appointment was a "midnight operation". Are the two—doubt and dissent—same or is there a line of separation? In the recent past, Gandhi has had a problem with all things related to



elections—electronic voting machines, electoral rolls, the integrity of the election commission, and now, the appointment of a new CEC. To add to this, there is the story of foreign funds to boost voter turnout. To the ghost of George Soros there is now the appendage of USAID. In all fairness, Rahul Gandhi is not the only leader of opposition to embrace distrust wholesomely. L K Advani, as leader of opposition, cast deep doubts on any and all actions of the Sonia Gandhi-Manmohan Singh regime. For instance, Navin Chawla as both an election commissioner and CEC stoked controversy. As a commissioner, he was accused of unabashedly siding with the Congress by his own boss, N Gopalaswami, the CEC. Gopalaswami wrote to the president seeking his dismissal. Not only was he not dismissed, but Chawla

was made the CEC after Gopalaswami's retirement in 2009. Chawla went on to handle the 2009 general election in which, incidentally, the Congress-led coalition retained power. But tragically, under another CEC they appointed, V S Sampath, the Congress coalition was swept out of power in 2014. Similarly, under a CEC the Modi regime appointed in 2018, they saw a spectacular victory in 2019, but under another CEC they appointed in 2022, Rajiv Kumar, they saw an embarrassing loss of majority in 2024.

From 1950 till 1993, the election commission had only a CEC. When the Narasimha Rao government made it a multi-member body, the then strongman-CEC, T N Seshan, opposed the move in the Supreme Court, but lost. Making the CEC a multi-member body was in line with what the Goswami committee had recommended. The commission was indebted to the Justice V M Tarkunde committee that had worked under the guidance of Jayaprakash Narayan in 1974, just when the Emergency was looming.

One part of the Emergency's history is about election fraud petitions and doubts about the overseeing body. After the 1971 elections that gave Indira Gandhi a massive win, there were multiple petitions in the Supreme Court, and the one by Jan Sangh leader Balraj Madhok was particularly sensational because he charged Indira Gandhi with using chemicalised ballots.

The assignments CECs undertook post retirement have also created retrospective doubt on their non-partisan attitude. After all the talk of uprightness, T N Seshan in 1999 contested the Lok

Sabha elections on a Congress ticket against Advani. MS Gill became a minister in the Manmohan Singh government, and V S Rama Devi became a governor. Despite these examples, appointments made by the executive branch have had diverse representation and wider accountability than one directed by the judiciary. For instance, the story of J M Lyngdoh's appointment as election commissioner in 1997 by H D Deve Gowda was a culmination of his peculiar search for a Northeastern Christian candidate. Gowda wanted to signal to the Northeast, where he had politically and emotionally invested heavily, that he had their interests at heart. Lyngdoh turned out to be a shining example of probity and public service. Nobody complained about Deve Gowda.

Surprise choice

BJP snubs top aspirants for Delhi CM's post



Parvesh, son of former Delhi CM Sahib Singh Verma, presumed that he had done enough to bag the top post

In recent years, the BJP has developed a knack for springing a surprise while selecting chief ministers. Delhi is no exception. The party has picked first-time MLA and former councillor Rekha Gupta, dashing the hopes of prominent aspirants like ex-MP Parvesh Verma and three-time MLA Vijendra Gupta. The choice bears the Sangh stamp— Rekha cut her political teeth on the platform of the ABVP, the RSS-affiliated student organisation. The BJP is expecting her to go all out to implement the women-centric schemes spelt out in the party manifesto. These schemes, including the monthly aid of Rs 2,500 each for Delhi's women— Rs 400 more than what the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) promised— played a key role in the BJP's remarkable victory. The decision to choose a lesser-known face underscores the party's strategy to sideline heavyweights, who might become too big for their boots if they are given the all-important chair.

when he defeated AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal. Vijendra, who has now been elected Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, was also fancying his chances after achieving a hat-trick of wins. Both have no option now but to help the CM run the government smoothly, thanks to the party top brass' ability to nip discord in the bud. The template of preferring a low-profile, compliant CM has been tried out by the BJP with success in several states, such as Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Haryana. Yogi Adityanath is a rare one who can hold his own before PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, even as party chief JP Nadda himself remains relegated to the shadows. An impression has gained ground that double-engine governments are being run largely from the Capital. The Rekha Gupta-led dispensation is set to take the same route. And there will be no scope for excuses if the new Delhi government fails to meet the people's great expectations.

Don't choke education budget to enforce NEP

There is near-unanimous consensus in Tamil Nadu against the three-language formula the Centre is trying to enforce through the National Education Policy. Holding back funds allocated for education in the state amounts to coercion

School education has been the subject of many disputes in India, particularly regarding what and how to teach. One recent dispute involves Chief Minister M K Stalin's strong condemnation of the Union government for reallocating funds intended for Tamil Nadu under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) scheme to other, BJP-ruled states. This is not an isolated incident. More and more states ruled by opposition parties have accused the Centre of discrimination in distributing discretionary transfers. The funds due for Tamil Nadu under the SSA were not released on the pretext that the state government had not signed a memorandum for implementing the PM-Shri schools, which requires implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) in Tamil Nadu—which this state and many others have vehemently opposed. Freezing funds that constitute 7-8 percent of the state school education budget to impose a centralising agenda of the Union Government, which directly impacts lakhs of students, isn't just a blot on federalistic ethos, but is also a travesty of Indian democracy. Denying a state funds recommended by the constitutionally mandated 15th Finance Commission—unless it complies with the Centre's arbitrary and legally non-binding policies—is nothing short of authoritarian coercion. The Tamil Nadu government has been implementing a number of commendable aspects of the NEP through schemes such as Ennum Ezhuthum (for foundational literacy and numeracy), Pudhumai Penn (guidance for girl students to get into higher education), and the CM Breakfast scheme, many of which pre-date the NEP's rollout. On a number of fronts the state has surpassed NEP targets. For instance, the NEP aims to achieve a 50 percent gross enrolment ratio by 2030. But Tamil Nadu's GER in 2022 was already 51 percent, making it almost a decade ahead

in implementation. The Tamil Nadu government has primarily objected to the NEP on two grounds: the three-language policy with significant curriculum changes, and implementing the 5+3+4 system. Imposition of the three-language formula is being viewed as a measure to pave the way for Hindi to enter through the backdoor. A 2022 information request revealed that the Kendriya Vidyalayas in Tamil Nadu did not have a single Tamil Teacher. Paragraph 4.5 of the NEP initially states, "The three languages learned by children will be the choice of states and of course the students themselves." But a later part of the clause adds, "so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India". One can only assume that the other language would mostly be Hindi, and not Odia or Bengali. This is why many states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka fear imposition of Hindi through manipulative mechanisms.

But this should not be viewed as a measure to deprive individuals of the opportunity to learn Hindi or any other language. The Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu have never opposed the voluntary learning of Hindi or any other language—they only oppose their direct or indirect imposition. On the contrary, with 5,80,000 students appearing for the Prathmik exams in 2024, Tamil Nadu

has a legacy of large cohorts voluntarily choosing to learn Hindi. Another poignant question is why an education policy should deprive individuals of the freedom to learn international languages such as German, Japanese or Mandarin, given their strong economies face significant labour shortages and are seeking both skilled and unskilled workers from India.



This is pertinent because the Union government is insisting on liberal work visa regimes while negotiating trade agreements with various countries. Limiting access to foreign language learning, thus, impedes its

own policy objectives.

In Tamil Nadu, opposition to the three-language formula is not solely from the ruling party—it has garnered near-unanimous support across party lines, which should be understood as an expression of the collective will of the state's polity. The second point of contention is the NEP's recommendation to conduct public examinations for students in the third, fifth and eighth grades. The World Bank's research has identified that in developing economies, failing school exams is the biggest factor contributing to higher dropout rates, particularly among girls. So, to achieve high literacy, Tamil Nadu decided to introduce the first public exam after the 10th grade. This policy has ensured that the state maintains the highest GER for girls in the higher secondary.

The Centre's approach of directly imposing its ideological agenda on elected state governments through schools reinforces a centralisation fetish that we have seen increase over the last 10 years. The states that were denied funds—Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and West Bengal—are among the top performing states on NEP objectives that include bridging gender and social gaps as well as promoting equal opportunities. Instead of incentivising states that have performed well, the Centre is penalising them. Tamil Nadu is already squeezed for funds, receiving back only 29 paisa for every '1 it contributes to the central kitty. Denial of apportioned funds to such a top-performing state will only hinder India's growth. Countries can prosper only when individual states thrive. What they require is more autonomy and solutions tailor-made for their socio-economic growth.

बिना तैयारी के वेतन वृद्धि के बारे में कहना गलत होता है, जबकि इसके लिए की गई तैयारी कार्य को आसान बनाती है। यहां बताए जा रहे हैं इससे जुड़े कुछ जरूरी बिंदु, जो वेतन वृद्धि की मांग करते हुए हमेशा ध्यान रखने चाहिए।

वेतनवृद्धि का आवेदन क्या सही क्या नहीं

जब आपके वेतनमान से आपके बारे में सही आकलन नहीं हो पाता या लंबे समय तक वेतन बढ़ाने की आपकी प्रार्थना पर ध्यान नहीं दिया जाता तो यह कुछ उपाय हैं, जो इस दिशा में आपको सफल बना सकते हैं। बेशक, कई बार वेतन बढ़ाने के लिए कहना तनाव भरा हो सकता है। हालांकि वेतन बढ़ाने से जुड़ी योजना में निवेश किए गए समय से आपको आपकी मनचाही सैलरी मिल भी सकती है। हमेशा याद रखें, 'सही तरीके से मोलभाव करके आप अपने विरोधी पक्ष पर विजय प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।' फिर भी हममें से अधिकांश लोगों की प्राथमिकताओं में 'सैलरी नेगोसिएशन रिकल्स' नहीं होतीं, लेकिन यह इतना महत्वपूर्ण मामला होता है कि इसे दरकिनार नहीं किया जा सकता।

वेतन वृद्धि के लिए एक योजना बनाएं

इस प्रक्रिया की शुरुआत यह जानने से करें कि अप्रैल और वेतन वृद्धि का समय कब आएगा। इसके बारे में अपने मैनेजर से पहले ही बात कर लें और उन्हें अपनी परफॉरमेंस के बारे में सविस्तर जानकारी दें। अन्य शब्दों में, 'एक आदर्श (आइडियल) के साथ शुरू करके डील

के साथ बात समाप्त करें।'

अपने हुनर और जॉब का आकलन

अपने पिछले कुछ परफॉरमेंस अप्रेजलस एकत्र करें और देखें कि उनमें आपका क्या आकलन रहा है। इसके बाद अपने कौशल, प्रोडक्टिव आउटपुट, उठाई गई अतिरिक्त जिम्मेदारियों और बेहतर या कमतर समय में कंपनी को दिए गए अपने योगदान के आधार पर अपनी वेतन वृद्धि की दावेदारी तैयार करें। यह सभी बिंदु आपके बारे में फैसला लेने में बहुत महत्वपूर्ण मानक साबित होते हैं।

अपने इतर कौशल का भी आकलन करें

वेतन वृद्धि पर बात शुरू करने से पहले मार्केट में अपने हुनर की कीमत भी जान लें। इस बारे में शोध करें और पता लगाएं कि आपके कार्यक्षेत्र में आपके बराबर अनुभव प्राप्त व्यक्तियों का वेतनमान क्या है। नेगोसिएशन प्रक्रिया की जानकारी प्राप्त करें और वेतनवृद्धि में कैश के अतिरिक्त अन्य लाभादि को भी अपनाएं अपने आवेदन के पक्ष में आप विभिन्न तरह के

तथ्य और आंकड़ों की मदद ले सकते हैं। संस्थान के भीतर अपने उज्ज्वल भविष्य पर फोकस करें। बातचीत के समय दिल-दिमाग खुले रखें और तार्किक तरीके से अपने बॉस के दृष्टिकोण से भी सोच कर देखें। वेतनवृद्धि के बारे में अपने आवेदन में सीधी बात और एक निश्चित राशि की बात करें। यदि आपका बॉस आपके आवेदन को नकार देता है तो उनसे विनम्रतापूर्वक पूछें कि आपको उस स्तर पर पहुंचने के लिए और क्या करना होगा? कंपनी के संदर्भ में अपने प्रयासों पर बात करते हुए बताएं कि आप कितने वेतन के हकदार हैं। इन सबके बावजूद अन्य विकल्पों पर भी नजर रखें।

बिल्कुल न करें

वेतनवृद्धि पर इसलिए बिल्कुल बात न करें कि आपको पैसे की जरूरत है। आपकी कोई निजी जरूरत वेतनवृद्धि का कारण नहीं होनी चाहिए। इसके विपरीत, आपके किए गए कार्य के आधार पर ही आपकी वेतनवृद्धि तय होनी चाहिए। याद रखें, जरूरत के आधार पर कभी अच्छा मोलभाव नहीं हो सकता। अपने एमप्लॉयर को किसी अन्य भारी वेतन वाली नौकरी से ब्लैकमेल न करें। एमप्लॉयर कभी आपके हाथों का खिलौना बनना पसंद नहीं करेगा। इसलिए ऐसा कोई काम न करें। वेतनवृद्धि के लिए

नौकरी छोड़ने की धमकी या नोटिस देना कभी सही तरीका नहीं माना जाता। इसलिए किसी नकारात्मक तरीके को अपनाने की बजाय प्रोफेशनल तरीके से पेश आएँ। कभी अस्वाभाविक न हों। ऐसा तब और भी जरूरी हो जाता है, जब आप वेतनवृद्धि से जुड़े तथ्य जानते हों। आपके मित्रों को अधिक वेतन मिलता है, इसे देखते हुए कभी यह मांग न रखें। पहले अपना आकलन करें, उसके बाद ही कोई प्रस्ताव आगे रखें। यह भी न मानें कि आपका कार्य ही आपके बारे में बताएगा। अपने किए काम पर बात करें और उससे जुड़े आंकड़े सामने रखें, क्योंकि इससे आपका सही मूल्यांकन हो सकेगा।

बिना अपॉइंटमेंट के वेतनवृद्धि पर बात करने के लिए अपने बॉस के कमरे में न जा घुसें। इसके लिए जरूरी है कि मीटिंग के लिए सही समय पहले से निश्चित कर लें। बातचीत के दौरान वेतनवृद्धि की बात बिना भावुक हुए पूरी तार्किकता के साथ रखें। रुडयार्ड किप्लिंग ने कहा है, 'यदि आप जो चाहते हैं, वह आपको नहीं मिला तो यह इस बात का संकेत देता है कि या तो आप उसके बारे में गंभीर नहीं हैं या आपने कीमत के बारे में मोलभाव का प्रयास किया है।' लिहाजा, जरूरी है कि आपको पता हो कि वेतनवृद्धि पर बात करते हुए कहा सीमा रेखा खींचनी है।

पिछले एक दशक में प्रबंधन शिक्षा (मैनेजमेंट एजुकेशन) के साथ ही प्रबंधन अभ्यास के क्षेत्र में आमूल-मूल बदलाव आया है। पारिवारिक बिजनेस (फैमिली डोमिनेटेड बिजनेस) भी पेशेवर (प्रोफेशनल) हुआ है। प्राइवेट कंपनियों के मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी (सीईओ) की सालाना सैलरी भी दो करोड़ से 20 करोड़ तक हो गई है।



मैनेजमेंट कंसलटेंसी में बढ़ी नौकरियों की संभावनाएं

युवा प्रोफेशनल्स 40 के उम्र में न केवल सीईओ बन रहे हैं, बल्कि कंपनियों के बोर्ड के मेंबर्स भी हो जा रहे हैं। इनफॉर्मेशन टेक्नोलॉजी के साथ ही वित्तीय सेवाओं और मैनेजमेंट कंसलटेंसी में नौकरियों की संभावनाएं काफी बढ़ी हैं। अब कंपनियों में न केवल सीनियर अधिकारियों को लैटरल इंट्री दे रही हैं, बल्कि उन्हें संस्था में लंबे समय तक बनाए रखने की कोशिश भी कर रही हैं। पहले कंपनियों में मैनेजमेंट ट्रेनीज पर ज्यादा विश्वास करती थीं।

बदलते परिदृश्य में कंपनियों के बोर्ड में गलत मैनेजमेंट प्रैक्टिस सामने आए हैं और कंपनियों इसको लेकर काफी संजीदा हुई हैं। कंपनियों में डेलिगेशंस बढ़ा है, बावजूद प्राइवेट संगठन और फेमिली मैनेज्ड कंपनियों में नीतियों का निर्धारण अभी भी काफी हद तक सेंट्रलाइज्ड (केन्द्रीयकृत) है। कंपनियों के बेहतर परफॉरमेंस के लिए अब प्राइवेट के साथ ही पब्लिक सेक्टर आर्गनाइजेशन भी प्रोफेशनल कंसलटेंट का

उपयोग ज्यादा से ज्यादा से कर रहे हैं।

प्रबंधन शिक्षा में भी बदलाव

प्रबंधन शिक्षा देने वाले बिजनेस स्कूलों की संख्या में तेजी से बढ़ोतरी हुई है। बिजनेस स्कूलों के साथ एमबीए कोर्स की संख्या में भी तेजी से इजाफा हुआ है। मैनेजमेंट के दो साल के कोर्स के अलावा अब वर्किंग एजीक्यूटिव के एक साल का एमबीए प्रोग्राम काफी लोकप्रिय हुआ है। यही नहीं कोर्स कंटेंट में भी बदलाव आया है। सूचना प्रधान शिक्षण की जगह फाइनांस, स्ट्रेटजिक मैनेजमेंट को महत्व मिल रहा है।

भारतीय छात्रों का ग्लोबल एक्सपोजर बढ़ा है। मैनेजमेंट के सभी कोर्स में लड़कियों की संख्या में तेजी से बढ़ोतरी हुई है। प्रबंधन शिक्षा अब डाटा बेस्ड, केस ओरिएंटेड और पार्टिसिपेटिव हो गई है। अधिकतर बिजनेस स्कूल बिजनेस इथिक्स को अपने कोर्स में शामिल कर रहे हैं।

आइएएस के लिए कितने तैयार हैं आप

सिविल सेवा परीक्षा में भाग लेनेवाले युवाओं की संख्या बहुत अधिक होती है, क्योंकि सिविल सेवा उन्हें समाज के लिए कुछ करने का अधिकार देने के साथ-साथ रुतबा और प्रतिष्ठा भी दिलाता है। आइए जानें सिविल सेवा परीक्षा के एक पेपर (सीसैट) की तैयारी के बारे में, जिससे इसमें अच्छा स्कोर किया जा सके।

सिविल सर्विसेस प्रारंभिक परीक्षा के लिए आवेदन और शेष बचे समय में रणनीति के साथ अंतिम तैयारी परीक्षा में सफलता दिला सकती है।

परीक्षा का प्रकार

सिविल सर्विसेस प्रारंभिक परीक्षा में दो पेपर होते हैं। सीसैट और जनरल स्टडीज। दोनों का अपना महत्व होता है। इस बार सीसैट की तैयारी के बारे में, ध्यान रखें, सीसैट ऐसे अभ्यर्थियों के लिए वरदान है, जो किसी भी विषय को रटने की अपेक्षा समझने पर बल देते हैं।

सीसैट की तैयारी

सीसैट (सिविल सर्विसेस एप्टीट्यूड टेस्ट) में 200 अंकों के लिए दो घंटे का समय निर्धारित है। सीसैट के द्वारा सभी विषय के छात्रों को एक समान स्तर पर लाया गया है। इससे रटने की प्रवृत्ति को समाप्त कर अभ्यर्थी की तार्किकता, समझदारी, व्यक्तित्व और उसके अंदर छुपे प्रशासनिक गुणों को देखा जाता है। इसमें अभ्यर्थी की भाषा में पकड़, विभिन्न परिस्थितियों में निर्णय लेने की क्षमता, तीव्र गति से आकलन एवं गणना करने की क्षमता का भी पता चलता है। सीसैट कई भागों में बंटा है। प्रत्येक भाग की तैयारी के लिए अलग-अलग रणनीति अपनाएं।

भाषा-हिंदी/अंगरेजी

सीसैट के प्रथम भाग में हिंदी और अंगरेजी में कॉंप्रीहेंशन दिये जाते हैं। इसमें कुछ पैसेज के आधार पर प्रश्न पूछे जाते हैं। इस पैसेज को सावधानी से पढ़ कर, अच्छे से समझ लें, फिर उत्तर दें, अपने अपने यूपीएससी प्रारंभिक परीक्षा के फॉर्म में भाषा के स्थान पर जिस भाषा का चयन किया है, कॉंप्रीहेंशन उसी भाषा में करें।

गणितीय योग्यता

सीसैट में गणित के सवाल के जरिये आपकी सटीकता की जांच की जायेगी। गणित में एनसीइआरटी की छठी से लेकर 10वीं तक की पुस्तक से प्रश्न होंगे। इनमें प्रतिशत, औसत, आयु समय एवं काम, समय एवं दूरी, संभावना आदि अध्याय मुख्य होंगे। गणित को नियमित अभ्यास के माध्यम से ही बेहतर किया जा सकता है। कुछ चीजों को याद कर लें, जैसे 1 से 50 तक के वर्ग, 1 से 10 तक वर्गमूल

आदि। इसके अलावा गणित के प्रश्न हल करते समय अपने दिमाग को स्थिर रखना अनिवार्य है।

निर्णय क्षमता

निर्णय लेना ही प्रशासक का मुख्य कार्य है। एक अच्छा निर्णय किसी भी समस्या को सदा के लिए समाप्त कर देता है। निर्णय लेते समय समस्या से संबंधित सूचनाएं एवं आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण करते हैं। इसमें आपकी ज्ञान, समझ, धैर्य, पहल करने की क्षमता आदि का पता चलता है। इसीलिए इस प्रकार के प्रश्नों को कई चरणों में बांट कर हल करें।

सम्प्रेषण कौशल

लोक सेवक को जनता, नेता, मीडिया एवं नौकरशाह से बातचीत करनी पड़ती है। इसीलिए प्रत्येक लोक सेवक को विभिन्न व्यक्तियों से विभिन्न समय पर संपर्क / संचार / वार्ता स्थापित करने की कालिटी आनी चाहिए। प्रशासनिक व्यक्ति तथ्य आधारित संचार देते हैं। सभी संचार औपचारिक माध्यम के द्वारा स्थापित हो, इसका ध्यान रखना चाहिए।

तार्किक क्षमता

इस मार्ग में मुख्य रूप से अभ्यर्थी की मानसिक शक्ति की जांच की जायेगी। अधिकतर प्रश्न पहेली के रूप में रहेंगे। इसके लिए आरएस अग्रवाल की पुस्तक काफी उपयोगी है। अधिक अभ्यास के द्वारा कम, समय में प्रश्न को हल किया जा सकता है।

मानसिक योग्यता

यह भी एक प्रकार से रीजनिंग का ही भाग है। इसके अंतर्गत किसी दिये गये आंकड़ों के आधार पर किसी घटना को सिद्ध करना होता है। इसके लिए भी आरएस अग्रवाल की पुस्तक उपयोगी है।

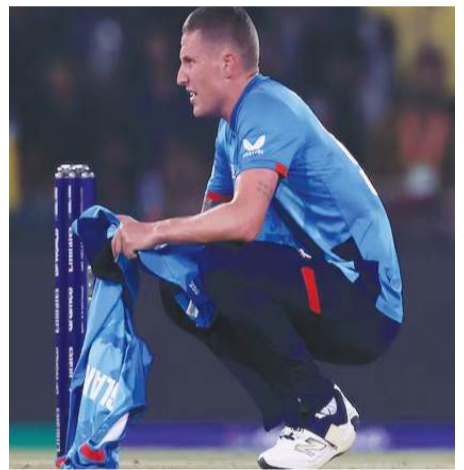
अंगरेजी भाषा और बोध परीक्षण

यह भाग सभी अभ्यर्थियों के लिए केवल अंगरेजी में ही होगा। इसमें कुछ पैसेज के आधार पर प्रश्न पूछे जायेंगे। इन्हें सावधानी से पढ़ कर उत्तर दें। इस भाग में कुछ प्रश्न ग्रांमर से भी रहेंगे, जिसके लिए कोई भी दसवीं वलास की ग्रांमर की किताब की मदद लें। इस भाग की तैयारी के लिए यूपीएससी द्वारा आयोजित दूसरी बहुविकल्पीय परीक्षाओं, जिसमें अंगरेजी के प्रश्न पूछे जाते हैं, के प्रश्नपत्र को लेकर हल करें और बार-बार अभ्यास करें।

NEWS BOX

England's Brydon Carse out of Champions Trophy, Rehan Ahmed named replacement

New Delhi. England suffered a significant setback ahead of their crucial Champions Trophy clash against Afghanistan, as bowling all-rounder Brydon Carse has been ruled out of the remainder of the tournament due to a toe injury. Carse, who featured in England's match against Australia, has been struggling with a recurring left toe issue, forcing him to miss training on Monday. As a result, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) confirmed that the 29-year-old will return to London for further assessment. In Carse's absence, England have named 20-year-old leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed as his replacement in the squad. However, Ahmed is not expected to arrive in Pakistan before England's upcoming must-win encounter against Afghanistan on February 26, making him unavailable for selection in that match. England's campaign has already been under pressure following a defeat to Australia, and their match against Afghanistan now becomes a do-or-die contest to keep their semi-final hopes alive. Carse's injury is a major blow for England, as the all-rounder had been seen as a key seam-bowling option. His toe issue has been a lingering concern, as it had previously ruled him out of the final two ODIs in England's series against India, initially believed to be just a minor blister



problem. With his exit, England will need to make a tactical adjustment in their playing XI. For the Afghanistan clash, England might turn to Jamie Overton as a like-for-like replacement in the playing XI. Overton, who has been in the squad as a backup, is a strong seam option and could join Jofra Archer and Gus Atkinson in England's pace attack. England now face an uphill battle to stay in the competition. With their semi-final hopes hanging in the balance, the Three Lions will need to regroup quickly and find the right balance in their bowling attack to overcome Afghanistan's challenge.

MS Dhoni set to use new bats for IPL 2025, says report

New Delhi. Former Chennai Super Kings captain MS Dhoni is rumoured to reduce the weight of his bat for the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025. Dhoni, who has been retained by CSK as an uncapped player this season, has been training in Ranchi to get match-fit ahead of the season. The legendary wicketkeeper-batter is also expected to attend CSK's pre-IPL camp this year as usual. Dhoni, who usually plays with a bat weighing between 1250-1300 grams, is expected to reduce it by at least 10-20 grams, a *New Indian Express* report suggested while quoting sources. Dhoni used to play with one of the heaviest bats in the cricket circuit during his prime days. "Four bats have been delivered to Dhoni recently by Sanspareils Greenlands Pvt. Ltd., the cricket equipment company from Meerut," a source in the know said. "Each bat



weighs around 1230 grams with the same shape as before," added the source. IPL 2025: Full Schedule Chennai Super Kings' camp at the MA Chidambaram Stadium is not expected to start before March 10. A source in the CSK management revealed that the Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) has strictly mentioned that the Chennai stadium cannot be used before March 9. The schedule of training has not been finalised yet. Anyway, the MA Chidambaram Stadium cannot be used for training purposes till March 9 as the BCCI has given strict instructions to maintain the venue in optimal conditions," a source from CSK management said. Dhoni, at the moment, is training in Ranchi. He has been working with the bowling machine to sharpen his skills. The wicketkeeper-batter played the full season in 2024 but was mostly used far down the order at No.8. Dhoni played several impactful innings, hitting a barrage of sixes in the final two overs of the match.

Champions Trophy: India reach semi-final, Pakistan suffer embarrassing early exit

- ← Pakistan suffered big losses to India and New Zealand
- ← New Zealand beat Bangladesh by 5 wickets
- ← Pakistan will face Bangladesh in Rawalpindi on February 27



New Delhi. India have made it to the semi-finals of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 and Pakistan were shown the exit door from the competition after New Zealand defeated Bangladesh by 5 wickets in Rawalpindi on Monday, February 24. India defeated Pakistan by 6 wickets thanks to a disciplined bowling performance and Virat Kohli's magnificent hundred in Dubai on Sunday, February 23. For Pakistan, it's a huge embarrassment as the defending champions were not able to progress past the group stages in their first ICC tournament at home in 29 years. Reports claim Pakistan are set to sack Aaqib Javed, their coach, after just 3

months into the role. The loss to India saw the team get slammed by the legends. "(It is) useless blaming the system, selectors and all that. The question is, are these selected players short on anything? Does not the PCB take care of them? Are they not paid enough? So where is the passion and fire and professionalism to perform in big matches and tournaments?" Javed Miandad was quoted by the PTI. "Truth is, our players were under pressure even before the match began. Look at their body language, not one of them appeared to be in a mood to dominate Indian

bowlers," he added. Champions Trophy: Full Coverage | Points Table New Zealand needed a win to make it to the semi-finals themselves and were able to overcome a stern test from Bangladesh in the end with ease thanks to Rachin Ravindra's 4th ODI hundred. Bangladesh had started off brilliantly on the day and before Michael Bracewell was able to change the course of the game. Bracewell bowled 10 overs on the trot and picked up 4 wickets for 26 runs in his spell. Najimul Shanto top-scored for Bangladesh with 77 runs, while Jaker Ali's

45 got them to 236 runs for 9 wickets in 50 overs. The Blackcaps had a horrible start to their run-chase as they lost Will Young and Kane Williamson early. Rachin and Devon Conway would steady the ship with a 57-run stand. Tom Latham continued his fine run in the tournament with a well-made 55, which helped Rachin to continue and torment the Bangladeshi bowlers. The win also eliminated Bangladesh from the competition as they lost their 2 matches so far. Pakistan's horror show in Champions Trophy Pakistan came into the tournament as the defending champions, with high hopes of retaining the crown on home soil. However, things would take a turn for the worse in the first game as New Zealand's Latham and Young hit hundreds as they scored 320. Pakistan would lose Fakhar Zaman to an injury and despite the opener coming on, the hosts' lack of intent came back to haunt them in the match. The India game was a do-or-die contest for them and once again slow batting was their undoing as they were bundled out for just 241 runs. The pace attack of Pakistan was toothless in their effort to stop India from reaching the target as Kohli's hundred got India home in the 44th over. This all but sealed Pakistan's exit from the competition and New Zealand's win sealed it.

From freak injury to Champions Trophy 100: Rachin Ravindra reflects on comeback

- ← Mirra Andreeva won the Dubai Tennis Championships
- ← Andreeva beat Clara Tauson 7-6 (1), 6-1
- ← Andreeva will also make her top 10 debut in the rankings



New Delhi. New Zealand batter Rachin Ravindra expressed gratitude towards the team's support staff, including coaches, doctors, and physios, as well as his family, for playing a key role in his comeback from injury. His return was nothing short of spectacular, as he smashed a match-winning century against Bangladesh in the Champions Trophy on February 24. Ravindra's brilliant knock ensured New Zealand's smooth passage into the semi-finals with a comfortable victory. The young left-hander registered his fourth ODI century as the Black Caps cruised into the semi-finals of the Champions Trophy 2025.

This milestone was even more significant considering he had just recovered from a facial injury sustained during a Tri-Series game against Pakistan earlier this month. Speaking after the match, Ravindra credited the unwavering support from his team and family as the driving force behind his successful comeback. "NZ vs BAN, Highlights" "Yeah, definitely freak accident. I think things like that don't really happen too often. I'm very grateful to have a great support crew around me in terms of Black Caps set up, coaches and doc and physio that have been able to come out of it reasonably well and I'm extremely grateful for the love and support of everyone," Rachin Ravindra

said. "I've been showered with so much care and love and really it does make me seriously happy knowing how many people care about me, and I'm very grateful to everyone who's reached out and given their support so thank you for that," he added. Asked to bat first, Bangladesh made a steady start with a 45-run opening stand between Najmul Hossain Shanto and Tanzid Hasan Tamim. However, New Zealand wrestled back control, reducing them to 118 for five in 26.1 overs. New Zealand's chase began on a shaky note as Will Young was bowled by Taskin Ahmed for a duck, followed by Kane Williamson edging one to the keeper, leaving the team struggling at 15 for two in 3.3 overs. Ravindra then took charge alongside Devon Conway, stitching a 57-run stand before Conway departed for 30. After Conway's dismissal, Ravindra and Tom Latham put on a game-defining 129-run partnership for the fourth wicket. Ravindra reached his half-century off 50 balls and accelerated to his century in 95 deliveries. His 112-run knock off 105 balls, laced with 12 fours and a six, also saw him surpass Nathan Astle's record for most centuries (4) by a New Zealand batter in ICC ODI events.

Champions Trophy exit in 6 days: Pakistan end 16-year tournament streak

New Delhi. The Pakistan cricket team's journey in the Champions Trophy 2025 came to an end on February 24 as New Zealand defeated Bangladesh by 5 wickets in Rawalpindi. With the win, the Blackcaps and India made it to the semi-finals of the tournament. Mohammad Rizwan and Co. never looked threatening during the 2 matches that they played and were left to rue a lot of mistakes. Pakistan suffered a big blow before the tournament as opener Saim Ayub was ruled out. His replacement, Fakhar Zaman, went on to suffer an injury during the second ball of the match against New Zealand and was subsequently ruled out of the tournament. The bowling attack also lacked bite in them as Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah were ineffective and kept leaking runs. The lack of a proper spinner to support Abrar Ahmed was also another reason for Pakistan's poor show. Champions Trophy: Full Coverage | Points Table These factors all came together in their 2 matches as New Zealand scored 320 against them in the opening match, with Will Young and Tom Latham scored hundreds. The second match against India saw Pakistan get a good start but they failed to capitalise on it.



I haven't seen a better ODI player than Kohli, he can be the leading run-scorer: Ponting

DUBAI. Former Australian skipper Ricky Ponting said he has not seen a "better player" than Virat Kohli in ODIs, and backed the Indian batting star to go past legendary Sachin Tendulkar as the highest run-getter in the 50-over format. Kohli made an exceptional unbeaten 100, his 51st in ODIs, to guide India to a six-wicket win over Pakistan in a Champions Trophy match here on Sunday. "I don't think I've ever seen a better 50-over player than Virat Kohli. Now that he's gone past me (in run-maker's list) and only two (batters) ahead of him, I'm sure he would want to give himself the best chance to be remembered as the all-time leading run scorer in the game," Ponting told ICC Review. During the course of that hundred, Kohli went past the 14000-run mark in one-dayers, joining former Sri Lankan captain Kumar Sangakkara and



Tendulkar in a rare club. Kohli (14085 runs) is still 4,341 runs behind Tendulkar (18426) and at 36, the champion batter has limited time in his hands to overhaul the latter's mark. But Ponting did not see it as an impossible task for Kohli. "Obviously physical-wise, he's probably as fit as he's ever been and works exceptionally hard on that side of his game. It's crazy when

you think about it, isn't it? Just how good Virat's been over such a long period of time, yet he's still 4,000 runs behind Sachin," he said. "It just goes to show how good Sachin was, but also his longevity in the game. But with someone like Virat, you never write him off. If the hunger's still there, then I'm never going to write him off (to overtake Tendulkar)," the Australian legend added. Ponting said a match against Pakistan often brought the best in Kohli, and termed him as a big match player. "Yeah, 2022 (T20 WC) and now, he stood up against the team that he would probably steel himself the most to play against. When Pakistan had batted first on a tricky wicket, it needed someone at the top of the order to play a match-winning innings like that," he said.

AUS vs SA: Run-fest on cards as Australia, South Africa aim to boost semis hopes

- ← Australia and South Africa come into the contest on the back of wins
- ← South Africa have the edge over Australia in ODI head-to-head stats
- ← The Proteas are waiting to see if Klaasen will be fit for the match

New Delhi. Australia and South Africa come into the contest on Tuesday, February 25 after big wins. The Aussies, were taken apart by Ben Duckett and the England batters for 351, expertly chased down the target to set an ICC event record, thanks to some brilliant batting from Josh Inglis and Alex Carey. South Africa, on the other hand, absolutely dominated dark horses Afghanistan in their opening match in all 3 departments. Many would argue that the win for Australia

against England was all about the aura the Aussies possess when it comes to ICC events. The Australian squad isn't a promising one at the moment as they are missing some big names and the pace attack is relatively inexperienced. Their pace trio of Nathan Ellis, Spencer Johnson and Ben Dwarshius has only 17 caps between them and are leading the charge in the Champions Trophy. In comparison to this, South Africa have a settled 4-member pace attack, led by Kagiso Rabada. The Proteas are also slowly improving when it comes to ICC events as they have reached the final of 2024 T20 World Cup and will take on the Aussies in the World Test Championship final later this year. This is another chance for them to erase the 'chokers' tag as they look to win a big event after the ICC Knockout in 1998. "Yeah, we're quite bullish about our chances. I think - as much as in the Tri Series, we didn't have all our guys, it still was an



opportunity for us to get whatever intel that we can on the conditions, share that information with all the other guys who came in. Fortunately, the guys who came in, they've come in on the back of some good cricket back home. Confidence is good. But yeah, we're quite optimistic about our chances and how far we can go in this competition," said Bavuma at the press conference. The Aussies have won eight ICC

white-ball events since South Africa's achievement in 1998 and always back them in major tournaments. South Africa await Heinrich Klaasen return Probably one player South Africa would want while facing Australia is Heinrich Klaasen. Who can forget that 174 off just 83 balls at Supersport Park in 2023 from the wicketkeeper-batter that blew away Australia. South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma revealed that Klaasen will have a fitness test and a decision will be made accordingly. "Well, I mean, they still have to assess his fitness. There's obviously still the practice today so he'll do his practice today. Mainly he is batting and I guess him and the medical team they'll make a decision accordingly," said Bavuma at the press conference.



Sharvari Wagh

Looks Breathtakingly Gorgeous In Latest Photos, Makes Fans' Heart Skip A Beat



Sharvari is one of the prettiest Bollywood stars and there is no doubt about it. Each time she drops photos of herself on social media, she leaves fans in complete awe. On Tuesday too, Sharvari took to her Instagram handle and shared a glimpse of her recent photoshoot, which is now setting fire online. In these latest clicks, Sharvari was seen flaunting her million-dollar smile in a cream-coloured off-shoulder top. The actress kept her tresses open and opted for minimal accessories and glam makeup. Needless to say, Sharvari looked stunning as always. Soon after the photos were shared, fans rushed to the comments section to praise their favourite rising star. "I love the way she smiles and those moles we should all love to embrace them just like sharvarione of the fans wrote. "The peace her smiling face holds added another. "I feel okay when I see you smile" a third comment read. Check it out here: Meanwhile, on the work front, Sharvari will soon be seen in Alpha. Directed by Shiv Rawail, the film also stars Alia Bhatt in the lead. Previously, Sharvari talked about being a part of the project and said, "I love action as a genre and I binge-watch action movies with my sister! So, when I was offered Alpha, I jumped! In my head I always wanted to do action as an actor. So, I'm getting to live my dream." She also shared that she always believed that action stars have a really fun shooting experience because of all the stunts that they get to do. "I'm now experiencing this feeling first hand and I have to admit that it's supremely fun but physically so taxing. I'm putting in my 200 per cent and I hope people love me in Alpha! I want to become an action star in the near future and so, I'm going for it in Alpha!"

Abhay Verma Shares Sneak Peek From His 'Meta Day' With Peela Nasha 2.0 Co-Star Pragati Nagpal



Abhay Verma has created a name for himself in the entertainment world with his successful horror comedy Munjya and his sincere performance in Ae Watan Mere Watan alongside Sara Ali Khan. The actor was recently seen in Peela Nasha 2.0, a reimagination of the classic song from 1992's Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikander featuring Amir Khan and Ayesha Jhulka. Discussing the same, he participated in an interview with Meta along with his co-star from the song Pragati Nagpal. The 26-year-old actor dropped special moments from the same for his Instafam. Sharing the series of pictures and videos, Abhay wrote, "Merry Meta Day." The images featured the actor posing in the studio. One of them also saw him fixing Pragati's makeup during the interview. The Munjya actor looked dapper in a red leather jacket that he layered over a maroon sweater. He paired these with white trousers and sneakers for a trendy look. The pictures soon caught the attention of Abhay's fans. Reacting to them, one of them wrote, "It's Abhay's world and we are just living in it." Another said, "You look so handsome." Many other fans dropped hearts and fire emojis. Talking about his latest song, Abhay Verma said during an interview with news agency IANS that Peela Nasha 2.0 was his tribute to Aamir Khan whom he considers his 'idol'. He said, "Peela Nasha has been like a love language for me. It's an ode to my idol Aamir sir in my own little way. It was an absolute honour to recreate what these legends had done in a responsible and respectful way and I feel more than fortunate to present this tribute as the face of the song."

Peela Nasha 2.0 is composed by Amaal Malik and sung by Armaan Malik and Pragati Nagpal. The lyrics are penned by Rashmi Virag. Further on the work front, recent reports suggest that Abhay Verma will be sharing the screen with Shanaya Kapoor for Shujaat Saudagar's next project. Filmfare has reported that the upcoming film would be a love story set in Goa and its shoot would begin in March.

Prateik Babbar And Priya Banerjee Sip Champagne, Pose With Pooja Hegde In Unseen Wedding Photos



Ever since Prateik Babbar and Priya Banerjee tied the knot, their wedding pictures have been all over the internet. On Wednesday too, the latter took to her social media handle and shared some of the unseen pictures from the wedding celebration. In these new clicks, Prateik and Priya were seen sipping champagne after getting married. Another photo featured the groom dancing his heart out. He was also seen posing with Vir Das in one of the photographs. The pictures also revealed that actress Pooja Hegde also attended the wedding. Priya was also seen sharing a hearty laugh with Hegde in one of the photos. Check it out here:

Prateik Babbar is the son of the late actress Smita Patil and actor Raj Babbar. He married Priya on February 14. However, to everyone's surprise, his father was not invited to the ceremony. Recently, Prateik's half-brother Arya Babbar



expressed his disappointment, questioning what led to this strained dynamic. "Somewhere we as a family must have failed him," Arya told SCREEN and then added, "Not inviting other members of our family, my mother (Nadira Babbar), my sister (Juhi Babbar), or me could be condonable: maybe we have failed him as a family, although we have never treated him as a stepbrother. Lekin chalo, shaayad humse koi bhool ho gayi ho (Perhaps, we made a mistake). But Papa? Not inviting our Papa, his Papa (Raj Babbar)... how can he do this? Papa is very very hurt. By doing this, Prateik has hurt his mother, the great Smita Patilji, as well. If he stops to think for a moment, he would know that his mother, whom he respects and loves so much, must be very hurt. Would she want this?" Meanwhile, Prateik has not yet revealed why he did not invite his family to his wedding.

Alia Bhatt

Is All Smiles As She Aces The Casual Look In A Chic White Tee And Blue Jeans

Alia Bhatt is loved by fans for not only her stellar acting chops but also for her sense of style. Whether it is high fashion on the red carpet or an easy-going look for her day out in town, Alia Bhatt aces the style game with finesse; her latest casual look is no exception. Alia Bhatt was recently spotted in Mumbai in a casual yet chic look. The actress looked radiant in blue jeans paired with a cream-coloured top. She wore minimal makeup and wore her hair open, framing her face naturally. Have a look here:

Meanwhile, Alia Bhatt has found her latest cinematic obsession, and it's none other than Vicky Kaushal's impressive performance in Chhaava! The actress took to social media to shower praises on Vicky, confessing that she simply can't get over his acting in the historical drama. Ever since Chhaava was released in theatres on February 14, 2025, Kaushal has been receiving praise and love from audiences and celebs alike. The film is also doing great business at the box office. Alia, who has worked with Vicky Kaushal before in Raazi, took to her Instagram handle to re-share a post of Chhaava. Praising the film, she wrote, "Vicky Kaushal! What are you???? Cannot get over your performance in Chhaava! @vickykaushal09."



this, Alia Bhatt is gearing up for Alpha, the seventh instalment in YRF's Spy Universe. Directed by Shiv Rawail, it is the first female-led film in the franchise, starring Alia alongside Sharvari. The action thriller also features Bobby Deol, Anil Kapoor, and Ashutosh Rana, who recently confirmed his return as Colonel Sunil Luthra. Alpha is set to release on December 25, 2025.

