

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH 2025



NATION | 4

Contribution of Northeast most important in making developed India, says Shah

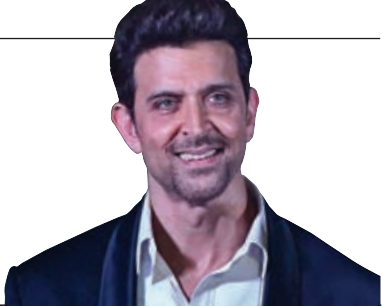


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US and Canada trade war escalates as Trump doubles tariffs on metals imports

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Hrithik Roshan suffers injury while shooting a song for his film *War 2*



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Cricketer Shubman Gill at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai after his return from Dubai on Tuesday. — PTI

Airtel ties up with SpaceX to bring Starlink Net in India

New Delhi: Telecom major Bharti Airtel on Tuesday said that it signed a pact with SpaceX to bring Starlink's high-speed Internet to its customers in India. With this agreement, Airtel and SpaceX have set a stage for further exploring opportunities for both companies to enhance their business offerings in India. However, the deal depends on SpaceX getting regulatory approval from authorities to sell Starlink services in the country. Under this pact, both Airtel and SpaceX are also learnt to have explored options in offering Starlink equipment in Airtel's retail stores, Starlink services via Airtel to business customers. **Full report on Page 7**

Govt puts 5-year ban on Mirwaiz's party, 1 more

New Delhi: The Awami Action Committee, headed by Kashmir's cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, and Jammu and Kashmir Ittihadul Muslimeen, led by Masroor Abbas Ansari, were on Tuesday banned by the Centre for their alleged anti-national activities. **Full report on Page 4**

Militants hijack train in Pak, over 450 hostage

Quetta (Pakistan): Armed militants held over 450 train passengers hostage on Tuesday in an ongoing siege claimed by a separatist group behind rising violence in southwestern Pakistan. "Over 450 passengers are being held hostage by gunmen," a senior railway official said. — **AFP** **Full report on Page 6**

COUNTERPOINT



I am wearing this wig to avoid arrest... I am an immigrant from Mexico!

WEATHER

Max: 34°C
Min: 21°C
RH: 34%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Mostly cloudy

ASTROGUIDE

Krodhi: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Masam
Shukla Trayodasi till 9.13 am
Star: Makha till 4.05 am
Varjyam: 3.10 pm to 4.54 pm
Durmuhurtham: 12.02 pm to 12.49 pm
Rahukalam: 12 pm to 1.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.28 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.33 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 5.45 PM
MOONSET TODAY 4.58 AM

■ PM gets highest civilian award ■ Delegation-level talks today

Modi tells diaspora: Mauritius isn't just a partner, it's family

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

For India, "Mauritius is family and not just a partner country", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said at an Indian diaspora event in the island nation's capital Port Louis. Later in the evening (IST), the Prime Minister held talks with Mauritius PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam. The two PMs will hold formal delegation-level talks on Wednesday, which will be followed by the signing of key pacts, after which Mr Modi will attend the 57th National Day celebrations in the afternoon as the chief guest.

Welcoming Mr Modi at the diaspora event, Mr Ramgoolam pitched for increased Indian investment in Mauritius. He announced the nation's highest civilian award — the Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean (GCSK) — for Mr Modi.

"Thanking Mauritius for the honour on behalf of the people of India, the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi hands over Overseas Citizen of India cards to Mauritius President Dharam Gokhool and his wife Brinda Gokhool in Port Louis on Tuesday. — PTI

▶ **THANKING MAURITIUS** for the honour on behalf of the people of India, the Prime Minister, while speaking in Hindi, Bhojpuri and English, said that 'India always stands with Mauritius'

Prime Minister, while speaking in Hindi, Bhojpuri and English, said that "India always stands with Mauritius", whether it be "investment, infrastructure, commerce or crisis

response". He also highlighted the historical, cultural and religious ties that bind the two nations. The Prime Minister pitched India as a "proud partner" of Mauritius in capacity-building. He said India had always been a first responder to Mauritius in times of crisis and the first to celebrate the successes of the Indian Ocean nation. He recalled how India had rushed one lakh vaccines to Mauritius during the Covid pandemic.

▶ **THE PM** also mentioned the emotional attachment between the people of Mauritius and Bihar, from where most of the indentured labourers from India were brought to Mauritius by the British to work in plantations

Mr Modi also spoke about the inking of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) four years ago between the two nations, which had given Mauritius preferential access to the Indian market that "boosted growth and created jobs". He also pointed out that Mauritius is at the centre of India's vision for security and development in the Indian Ocean Region, as part of the vision Sagar (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

Mr Modi announced that a "Girmitiya" (reference to Indian indentured labourers of the 19th century and their descendants in various parts of the world) database will

■ **Turn to Page 4**

Kharge's 'thokenge' jab in RS stirs row, LoP clarifies

■ 'Bid to create regional divide' ■ Nadra seeks apology

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

The Rajya Sabha witnessed an uproar on Tuesday over an unparliamentary remark by Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, who apologised to the Chair while clarifying that it was meant for the government that was "trying to create a regional divide" in the country.

The Congress leader's statement in the Rajya Sabha came while he was speaking about education minister Dharmendra



Mallikarjun Kharge

Pradhan after his remark against the Tamil Nadu government pertaining to the issue of the three-language policy under the National Education Policy (NEP).

"This is a dictatorship. I request you (deputy

▶ **THE CONG** leader's statement came while he was speaking about the education minister after his remark against the Tamil Nadu government pertaining to the issue of the three-language policy under the NEP

Chairman) with folded hands to allow me (to speak). *Aapko kya kya thokna hai thik se thokenge, sarkar ko bhi thokenge.*" Mr Kharge said.

Leader of the House and Union minister

■ **Turn to Page 4**

US intel chief Tulsi Gabbard in India soon

■ Will hold talks with top leaders in Delhi ■ To address Raisina Dialogue March 18

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON, MARCH 11

America's new national intelligence chief Tulsi Gabbard is all set to visit India soon. She is likely to be in New Delhi on March 16-18. This will be her first visit after assuming her new role under the Trump administration. Ms Gabbard, a known friend of India, is expected to hold talks with the Indian leadership during her

visit. It may be recalled that the previous Joe Biden administration had been constantly needling India on the alleged foiled plot to kill pro-Khalistan extremist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, and New Delhi will no doubt be breathing easier now.

It is leant, meanwhile, that among her other engagements in the Indian capital, Ms Gabbard will address the Raisina Dialogue on March 18. She was invited to do so by Prime Minister



Tulsi Gabbard

Narendra Modi, the *New York Times* has reported. This is an annual event organised by the New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation in association with the min-

istry of external affairs.

In a post on social media platform X, Ms Gabbard said: "I am #WheelsUp on a multi-nation trip to the Indo-Pacific, a region I know very well having grown up as a child of the Pacific. I'll be going to Japan, Thailand, and India, with a brief stop in France enroute back to DC. Building strong relationships, understanding, and open lines of communication are vital to achieving President

■ **Turn to Page 4**

Global intel chiefs will hold talks in India Sun

New Delhi: America's new national intelligence chief Tulsi Gabbard, Canadian spy chief Daniel Rogers and Britain's M16 boss Richard Moore will be among top global intelligence czars converging in India this weekend to attend a security conclave, people familiar with the matter said on Tuesday. — **PTI** **■ More on Page 4**



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy with Saudi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the Royal Palace in Riyadh on Monday. — AP



Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta during the Holi celebrations in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Guns not way to bring peace, PM must visit Manipur: Opp.

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

The Congress on Tuesday targeted the government on the Manipur crisis, saying the Centre failed to bring peace at gunpoint and urged PM Narendra Modi to visit the strife-torn state and listen to the people's apprehensions and concerns.

"From the last two-and-a-half years, you have been trying to restore peace through guns but have failed. You should stop using guns to bring peace and talk to the people of Manipur," said Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi while initiating a discussion on the Manipur budget.

The Opposition leader said the Manipur budget should have been discussed in the state Assembly, but President's Rule has been imposed.

The BJP defended the imposition of President's Rule, saying the decision was not forced on the state but was taken out of compulsion. **■ More on Page 3**

New bill in LS on foreigners' entry and immigration

■ Opp. says it's 'anti-Constitution' ■ Stiff rules for long-stay visitors

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

The Immigration and Foreigners Bill 2025, seeking to streamline various services related to immigration and foreigners, including their entry, exit and stay in the country, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, with the Opposition dubbing it to be violative of the constitutional provisions.

Rejecting suggestions that Parliament lacked the legislative competence to bring the bill, minister of state for home Nityanand Rai said that the Central government has all the rights under the Union list to bring legislation on the subject. Mr Rai asserted that while tourists were welcome to come to India, it was the government's responsibility to ensure peace and sovereignty of the nation remain intact.

Opposing the bill at the introduction stage, Congress MP Manish Tewari said that the bill is violative of multiple provisions of the

▶ **REJECTING SUGGESTIONS** that Parliament lacked the legislative competence to bring the bill, Nityanand Rai said that the Central govt has all the rights under the Union list to bring legislation on the subject

Constitution and various laws.

"The bill violates the principle of fundamental rights and the government may use the provisions of the proposed law to deny entry to those who are not in sync with the ideology of the ruling dispensation of the day," Mr Tewari said.

Opposing the introduction of the bill, TMC MP Saugata Roy said that the proposed law could prevent the inflow of talent from outside in various fields.

Before formally introducing the bill in the Lok Sabha, Mr Rai said that the draft law seeks to correct overlapping and duplicate provisions in prevailing laws governing immigration and **■ Turn to Page 4**

3 charred to death as hut catches fire in Anand Vihar

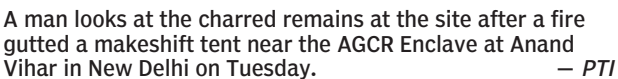
BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 10

Three men, including two siblings, were charred to death when a massive fire gutted a makeshift hut near the AGCR Enclave at Anand Vihar in east Delhi on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday. Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta, who visited the spot, announced a compensation of ₹10 lakh to each affected family and assured the family members of all possible assistance and assured proper investigation into the incident.

"We have registered an FIR at the Anand Vihar police station under Section 106(1) (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Multiple teams have been formed to probe the incident," DCP (Shahdara) Prashant Gautam said.

The Delhi Fire Service received a distress call at 2.22 am on Tuesday and dispatched three fire tenders to the scene. The flames were brought under control by 2.50 am, a fire official said. **■ More on Page 2**

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11



“We have registered an FIR at the Anand Vihar police station under Section 106(1) (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Multiple teams have been formed to probe the incident,” DCP (Shahdara) Prashant Gautam said.

The deceased and another labourer, who reportedly worked with Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL), lived in the makeshift hut located near a DDA plot in Manglam Road, the statement said.

"They reportedly used a small container of diesel placed on a cooler stand to light the hut. Nitin, the survivor, said that around 2.00 am, Shyam Singh woke up and noticed the fire. He tried to unlock the door but failed. As the blaze intensified, Nitin managed to survive by jumping off the wall boundary and sustained minor injuries," the statement said.

AVINASH PRABHAKAR JHA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

The initiative aims to transform the stretch of the Yamuna in Delhi into a hub for eco-friendly cruise operations. To ensure sustainable and non-polluting water transport, electric-solar hybrid boats — each capable of carrying 20-30 passengers — will be deployed as river-cruise vessels. These boats will feature bio-toilets, public announcement systems, and life jackets for passenger safety.

Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta said people would soon witness the ferry services on Yamuna as the MoU has been signed with the Central government will take tourism in the city to a new height.

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

These findings have been flagged in the 2024 World Air Quality Report, compiled by Swiss air quality tech firm IQAir. As per the report, Byrnihat, a town on the

Meteorological conditions combined with a toxic cocktail of vehicular emissions, crop-burning, firecrackers, and other pollution sources create a deadly smog that

To add to the woes, India is ranked as the fifth most polluted nation globally, with its average AQI 10 times higher than the WHO-recommended safe limit of $5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

ous to the smooth flow of traffic by distracting traffic and poses a safety challenge to the pedestrians and vehicles. Deaths caused by the collapse of illegal hoardings are not new in India," the court said.

SHORT TAKES

Never did vengeful politics: Andhra CM

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday told Assembly that he never engaged in vengeful politics but warned that people violating law and order will be dealt with severely. Addressing the House, the chief minister claimed that TDP coming to power is synonymous with law and falling in place in the state. "I am very clear. I never engaged in politics with vengeance. Even now I will not do it. At the same time, those who violate law and order will be dealt with severely. I am warning again, whoever it may be," Mr Naidu said. Alleging that law and order was not upheld in the previous Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP regime, the TDP supremo claimed that there was no protection to government assets or free movement of people back then. The CM also called upon the people of the state to use women's protection app called Shakti. — PTI

Didn't join Sena out of fear, says ex-MLA

Mumbai: Former Congress MLA Ravindra Dhangekar, who joined the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena on Monday night, denied on Tuesday that he switched loyalties due to BJP's pressure. Mr Dhangekar came into the limelight after winning the Assembly bypoll in 2023 from the Kasba Peth seat, which is traditionally a BJP stronghold. He said people in the BJP tried several times to get his wife arrested in connection with a land dispute case but asserted that he does not fear the saffron party. The Congress and the Shiv Sena(UBT) have alleged that he joined the Shiv Sena because of the fear of the ED. After Mr Dhangekar joined the Shiv Sena, Pune city Congress president Arvind Shinde accused him of switching sides due to personal interests, fear, and political temptations.

JD-U MLA's 'lewd conduct' draws flak

Patna: The Opposition RJD in Bihar on Tuesday trained its guns at the JD(U) over a purported video showing an MLA of the ruling party singing a bawdy number and making lewd gestures at a woman artiste. The episode involves Gopal Mandal, a multiple-term JD(U) MLA from Gopalpur in Bhagalpur district, who was in news a few years ago when he scandalised co-passengers on board New Delhi-bound Rajdhani Express by moving around in his undergarments. In the latest purported video, which has gone viral on social media, Mandal was seen pasting a currency note on the cheek of a dancer at a function organised in his constituency ahead of Holi, however, could not independently verify the authenticity of the video. — PTI

C'GARH CHIEF SECY AMONG 33 FOR CIC POSITION

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
RAIPUR, MARCH 11

Chhattisgarh chief secretary Amitabh Jain is among 33 applicants who have been shortlisted for the vacant post of state Chief Information Commissioner (CIC), to be selected through an interview, officials said on Tuesday. The interview for the coveted post is scheduled to be held on March 26, a notification issued by the state general administration department said. Mr Jain is scheduled to retire on June 30 this year and may opt for voluntary retirement from service (VRS) if he is selected for the post, tenure of which is three years, a senior bureaucrat disclosed to this newspaper, unwilling to be quoted. According to official sources, a search committee headed by additional chief secretary (home) of the state government Manoj Pingua was constituted to scrutinize the applicants for the post as per the eligibility criteria fixed for it. The other members of the committee were senior IAS officers Niharika Barik, Sonmomi Vora and Avinash Champavart. A candidate should have at least 30 years of experience in fields such as administration, social activity and journalism, as per the eligibility criteria for the post.

■ Poll body seeks suggestions on ways to strengthen processes

Amid claims of fake votes, EC invites parties for interaction

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

Amid controversies over duplicate voter ID numbers and allegations of discrepancies in electoral rolls, the Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday invited suggestions from all national and state political parties by April 30 for any unresolved issues at the level of electoral registration officers (ERO), district election officers (DEO) and chief electoral officers (CEO).

The issue of duplicate numbers has also found an echo in Parliament with Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi demanding a discussion in the House on the issue of voter lists on which several political parties have raised certain questions. Raising the issue during



BJP leaders Om Pathak, Sukanta Majumdar, Amit Malviya and others come out after meeting Election Commissioners at Nirvachan Sadan in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Zero Hour, Mr Gandhi said the entire opposition has been demanding a discussion on voter lists.

In a bid to iron out the differences, the poll body has invited the party presidents and senior leaders of political parties for consultations with them to clear doubts and take their suggestions on ways

to strengthen electoral processes.

In an individual letter issued to political parties, the Election Commission has said that while the suggestions can be given through emails, the individual meetings will be held at a mutually convenient time.

Earlier, during a confer-

ence last week, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar had instructed chief electoral officers, district election officers and electoral registration officers of all states and Union territories to hold regular interactions with political parties, resolve any suggestions received in such meetings strictly within the legal framework already in place, and submit an action taken report to the commission by March 31.

The poll panel also urged political parties to proactively use this mechanism of decentralised engagement. Political parties are one of the key stakeholders amongst 28 stakeholders identified by the commission as per the Constitution and statutory framework covering all aspects of electoral processes.

■ No peace in state at gunpoint, urge Modi to visit state: Gaurav Gogoi

Opp. slams Centre over Manipur crisis

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

The Opposition parties on Tuesday targeted the government on the Manipur crisis, alleging that the Centre had failed to bring peace at gunpoint in Manipur, and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the state and listen to the apprehensions and concerns of the people.

However, the BJP defended the imposition of President's Rule in Manipur, saying the decision was not forced on the state but was taken out of compulsion.

Lok Sabha proceedings were also adjourned briefly in the evening as Congress members protested against a remark by BJP member Sambit Patra on Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi.

"Northeast is a sensitive region. It is a border region. People's sensitivity is involved. For the last two and a half years, you have been trying to restore peace through guns, but you have failed. You should stop using guns to bring peace and talk to the people of Manipur," said Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi on Tuesday while initiating a discussion on the supplementary demands for grants, excess grants, and the Manipur budget.

He said that the Prime Minister should visit Manipur and listen to what are the fears in the mind of the people of Manipur. He said the Manipur budget should have been discussed in the state Assembly, but President's Rule has been imposed in the state. He

Action to be taken if MGNREGA funds misused: Shivraj

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

Amid the war of words between TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee and treasury bench members over the stoppage of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) funds for West Bengal, the government on Tuesday warned of strict action if MGNREGA funds were misused or the guidelines for the implementation of the scheme were not followed.

Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also informed the Lower House that the government is ready to provide ₹6,000 annual cash benefit under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi to all eligible farmers who are not part of it yet.

said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should apprise the House about the rationale for the imposition of President's Rule in the state.

"What is the state of Vidhan Sabha in the state — is it dissolved or in suspended animation?" the Congress leader sought to know.

BJP members, including Nishikant Dubey, objected to Mr Gogoi's extensive reference to the situation in Manipur and cited rules to point out that the Congress leader should stick to the demands for grants and the state budget.



BJP MPs Jagdambika Pal and Kangana Ranaut during the Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

■ Tamil 'no one's monopoly': Pradhan in RS 'Govt not trying to impose any language, take anyone's rights'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday reiterated that the Centre is not trying to impose any language or take anyone's rights through the National Educational Policy (NEP). He also lashed out at the Opposition for claiming that the NDA government was trying to divide society through the imposition of Hindi.

The minister, while replying in the Rajya Sabha on a discussion on the working of his ministry, said the Narendra Modi-led government

wants to take the country forward along with Tamil Nadu. He also asserted that Tamil is "no one's monopoly", as he cited several examples of the promotion of the language by the Modi government.

He stressed that India is a multilingual country and that the government will never hurt anyone's feelings based on the language. The education ministry has come under fire from the Tamil Nadu government, which alleges that the Centre wants to impose Hindi through the three-language policy under the NEP, a charge vehemently rejected by Mr Pradhan.

Mr Pradhan said that the

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

Delegations of Trinamul Congress (TMC), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Tuesday met the Election Commissioners to formally hand over their a memorandum carrying their doubts, grievances and suggestions. While agreeing to look into their issues, the EC also asked the parties to send their election related agents for training of election laws, rules and process to be conducted by the poll body.

Raising the issue of the duplicate EPIC numbers, the TMC has alleged this was done with an intention to influence the West Bengal Assembly elections next year. The BJD has been alleging discrepancy in vote count and has been asking EC to clarify the variations. The BJP

▶ **RAISING THE** issue of the duplicate EPIC numbers, the TMC has alleged this was done with an intention to influence the West Bengal Assembly polls next year

too has separately in a petition claimed that West Bengal has over 13 lakh duplicate voters with 8,415 people having similar EPIC numbers are registered as voters.

It is learnt that the EC informed BJD delegation that political parties are important stakeholders who are involved at every stage of the electoral process and as per the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, the record of votes polled in all booths is already given to the Polling Agents of all candidates as per Form 17C.

Apart from its ongoing contention on duplicate

EPIC, the TMC in its five page memorandum to EC on Tuesday also alleged duplicate Aadhar cards were made for registration of fake voters. The TMC has claimed that since concerns have been raised in several states about "arbitrary" deletion of names of voters from electoral rolls and addition of new names, the EC should put in place a mechanism where a separate list of deletions, new additions and modifications are made public for better transparency.

The EC told TMC that all concerns, including duplicate EPIC numbers, duplicate, shifted and dead voters and illegal migrants, will be resolved by each booth level officer and concerned electoral registration officer with active participation of booth level agents appointed by all political parties.

NEP a 'destructive Nagpur plan', will not accept it: Stalin

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR
and D. SEKAR
CHENNAI, MARCH 11

Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin on Tuesday dubbed the National Education Policy a "destructive Nagpur plan" and reiterated that the state would not accept it even if the union government was to provide ₹10,000 crores.

Addressing a government event at Chengelpet near here, Mr Stalin said: "Yesterday, you would have seen parliamentary proceedings on television. He is talking arrogantly that Tamil Nadu would be provided ₹2,000 crores only if Hindi and Sanskrit are accepted. Who? It was Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan."

Nagpur hosts the headquarters of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological mentor of the BJP. The chief minister said the NEP envisaged public

examinations for children, a Neet-type of entrance test for arts and science and engineering colleges, privatise education and pave the way for Union government's domination in education.

That Tamil Nadu was fighting persistently against the BJP's "conspiracies" was something that they could not endure, which was evident from the verbal attack on people of Tamil Nadu in Parliament by Pradhan, Mr Stalin said. The minister was forced to withdraw his remarks by the war cry raised by Tamil Nadu members, he said and congratulated them on behalf of the people.

The MPs had proved that they would fight for the rights of the state without fearing for anybody and also gave a fitting reply to all those who asked what the 40 members from the state would do in Parliament when they were elected, he said.

BJD chief Patnaik will attend TN CM's meet on delimitation

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 11

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) confirmed on Tuesday that its president and former Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik will participate in the upcoming meeting on delimitation and electoral constituency reorganisation, convened by Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin.

The announcement came after DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran, accompanied by Tamil Nadu's industries minister TRB Rajaa, met Mr Patnaik in Bhubaneswar to extend an official invitation for the meeting. The discussion is scheduled to be held in Chennai later this month.

Mr Patnaik reportedly assured Mr Maran of his participation.

Bastar event to display tribal culture

Raipur, March 11: "Bastar Pandum 2025", a first of its kind event, is set to kick off in Chhattisgarh's Bastar on Wednesday to showcase

rich art, culture, and tradition of the local tribes in the region. The 22-day-long event aims to preserve the art, culture and tradition.

■ Congress MLA suspended Odisha Assembly in turmoil as BJP, Cong MLAs clash

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 11

The Odisha Assembly descended into chaos on Tuesday as MLAs from the ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress exchanged blows during Question Hour, marking an unprecedented low in the state's legislative history. The disruption led Speaker Surama Padhy to suspend Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati for seven days on charges of "unruly" behaviour and causing damage to Assembly property.

The Speaker's action followed repeated disruptions caused by Bahinipati, who had climbed onto the Speaker's podium and broken the microphone on Monday, creating pandemonium. Despite warnings, the MLAs allegedly continued his

disruptive behaviour on Tuesday, prompting the suspension.

Tensions have been running high in the Assembly since Monday, with the Opposition Congress and the BJD standing firm on their respective demands. The Congress has been pressing for action over an alleged rise in crimes against women and children in the state over the past nine months.

Meanwhile, the BJD has been demanding clarification from chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi regarding a controversial remark by BJP MLA Jayanarayan Mishra. Mr Mishra, who represents Sambalpur, recently described Sambalpur's accession to Odisha as a "historical blunder" and voiced support for the formation of a separate state named Koshal.



Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

at a time when the state continues to recover from nearly two years of ethnic conflict and recent violence as well. "The Centre remains committed to the faster economic recovery and restoration of law and order in the region," she said.

Ms Sitharaman also promised over ₹35000-crores expenditure for Manipur, reaffirming the Centre's commitment to providing full financial support for Manipur's economic development. On Monday, she tabled the Manipur budget for 2025-26, outlining an expenditure of ₹35,103.90 crores,

marking an increase from ₹32,656.81 crore in the current financial year. Following the proclamation issued under Article 356 of the Constitution on February 13, 2025, legislative powers in the state are currently being exercised under the authority of Parliament.

This allocation was made during her response to the combined discussion on supplementary demands for grant (SDG) second batch 2024-25, demands for excess grants for 2021-22, the Manipur Budget 2025-26 as well as SDG (Manipur) 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority			
NOIDA Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201301 (U.P.) Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.in			
E-TENDER NOTICE			
E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & https://etender.up.nic.in . Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.			
A) Fresh-Tender Work:-			
S. N.	Jobs No.	Name of the Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
1	45/DGM/SM (WC-1) / 2024-25	M/o Drain (C/o Rain Water Harvesting in front of DND Loop Sector-16A side on Expressway), Noida.	10.71
2	27/DGM/SM (WC-6) / 2024-25	D/o Sector-117 (C/o Shade on Electric Meter Pannel in Shri Krishna Apartment Society Sector-117), Noida.	12.15
The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 27.03.2025 up to 5.00 PM . Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 28.03.2025 at 11.00 AM .			
महत्वपूर्ण सूचना— नवीन औद्योगिक औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण के अधिसूचित क्षेत्र में शासन से स्वीकृत मास्टर प्लान एवं उत्तर प्रदेश औद्योगिक क्षेत्र विकास अधिनियम, 1976 के विपरीत प्लॉटिंग या किसी भी प्रकार का अन्य निर्माण पूरी तरह अवैध है। जनसामान्य को आगाह किया जाता है कि इस प्रकार की अवैध कॉलोनिजों एवं अवैध निर्मित भवनों में नूतन/अपार्टमेंट/दुकान/गोड्डाउन/फार्माहाउस की खरीद-फरोख्त से पूर्णतः सचेत रहें तथा कोलोनाईज़र के लुभावने एवं भ्रामक विज्ञापनों से बचें। साथ ही नोएडा अधिसूचित क्षेत्र के हिण्डन एवं यमुना नदियों के दूध क्षेत्र (Flood Plain Zone) में अनधिकृत / अवैध प्लॉट एवं फार्म हाऊसों के कारोबार में संलग्न भूतकियाओं के चंगुल में न फँकें।			
Sector-6, NOIDA CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA			Dy. General Manager (Civil) NOIDA

SHORT TAKES

Didn't join Sena out of fear, says ex-MLA

Mumbai: Former Congress MLA Ravindra Dhangekar, who joined the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena on Monday night, denied Tuesday that he switched loyalties due to BJP's pressure. Mr Dhangekar came into the limelight after winning the Assembly bypoll in 2023 from the Kasba Peth seat, which is traditionally a BJP stronghold. He said people in the BJP tried several times to get his wife arrested in connection with a land dispute case, but asserted that he does not fear the saffron party. The Congress and the Shiv Sena (UBT) have alleged that he joined the Shiv Sena because of the fear of the Enforcement Directorate. After he joined the Shiv Sena, Pune city Congress president Arvind Shinde accused him of switching sides due to personal interests and fear.

Man chased, killed on busy road in UP

Lakhimpur Kheri: A 20-year-old man was chased and shot dead by around five assailants on a busy road near a police outpost in Mishrana locality here, an officer said on Tuesday. The incident happened on Monday evening, when Lucknow range inspector-general (IG) Prashant Kumar was in the city to review the law and order situation ahead of Holi. According to the police, the youth, identified as Amogh Seth, a resident of Seth Colony in Hathipur, was rushed to a hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries. A book store employee, Aditya Kashyap, was also injured when the attackers opened fire as the youth took shelter in the shop, they said. Mr Kashyap is said to be out of danger. The assailants fled the spot after the incident, the officer said. — *PTI*

4 killed as vehicle falls into J&K gorge

Jammu: Four persons were killed and eight others injured on Tuesday when a vehicle they were travelling in skidded off the road and rolled down into a deep gorge in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district, officials said. The accident took place near Gangode area in the district when the driver reportedly lost control over the tempo traveller, causing it to roll into the deep gorge. Immediately after the mishap, local police and SDRF personnel rushed to the spot to carry out rescue operations, they said. Three persons died on the spot, and one died en route to hospital, officials added. Eight injured persons were shifted to the hospital. "The vehicle was on its way from Jammu to Mahore. It rolled into deep gorge. In the mishap, three persons died on the spot, and one died on the way to the hospital. Six out of eight injured persons have been shifted to Jammu," said SSP Reasi Paramvir Singh. — *PTI*

New bill on immigration, foreigners

■ **Continued from Page 1** foreigners in the country. The legislation is aimed at streamlining various services related to immigration and foreigners, including their entry, exit and stay in India. The entry, stay and exit of foreigners from India are currently governed by the Registration of Foreigners Act 1939 and the Foreigners Act 1946. While Indian visas of all categories to foreigners can be granted in physical or sticker form by Indian missions or posts located abroad, the bureau of immigration (BoI) grants electronic visas under seven categories to people from 167 countries. Besides, visa-on-arrival is granted by immigration authorities at six designated airports to nationals of three countries -- Japan, South Korea and the UAE (only for such UAE nationals who had earlier obtained e-visa or regu-

US intel chief Tulsi Gabbard in India soon

■ **Continued from Page 1** Trump's objectives of peace, freedom and prosperity. First stop: Honolulu, where I'll visit IC partners and INDOPACOM leaders, and our troops engaging in training." She represented Hawaii in the US House of Representatives for eight years. Ms Gabard is also Hindu by faith and is of Samoan origin. She had also previously served in the United States armed forces.

■ Believe in non-violent resistance: Top cleric contests charge
Govt bans Mirwaiz's party, 1 more for 5 years under UAPA

YUSUF JAMEEL
JAMMU, MARCH 11

The Centre on Tuesday declared two more political organisations of Jammu and Kashmir as "unlawful associations" and banned them under Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967, for a period of five years each on the plea that they are involved in activities that threaten India's sovereignty, integrity, and security.

The two organisations — J&K Awami (People's) Action Committee (AAC), headed by Kashmir's chief Muslim preacher Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, and J&K Ittihad-ul-Muslimeen (IUM), led by Shia cleric and politician Moulvi Masroor Abbas Ansari — have also been accused of

SC: Pay salary to consumer body officials without delay

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

The Supreme Court has directed all state governments to immediately pay the salary and perquisites of the chairpersons and members of the state and district consumer redressal bodies as per extant rules.

A bench of Justices Abhay S. Oka and N. Kotiswar Singh also directed the Centre to take a call on amending the Consumer Protection (Salary, allowances and conditions of service of President and Members of the State Commission and District Commission) Model Rules, 2020. "We direct all the state governments to ensure that without prejudice to various contentions raised in this group of cases, salary and perquisites as per existing state rules shall be immediately paid to the chairpersons/members," the SC said. The top court said in case there was no decision from the Centre on the prospective amendment, the bench would "consider exercising power under Article 142 of the Constitution". In its March 5 order, the bench said, "In the event compliance is not made by some of the state governments, the parties concerned are free to hand over a note to that effect to the learned amicus curiae so that the court can pass an appropriate order."

Strongly condemn the ban on Awami Action Committee... it has unwaveringly stood by the people of J&K advocating their aspirations and rights through completely non-violent and democratic methods and calling for peaceful resolution of the Kashmir conflict.
— **Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, ACC chief**

propagating anti-India narratives, mobilising funds for separatist movements, and inciting violence in J&K.

In a post on X, Union home minister Amit Shah wrote about the banning of these two organisations, saying they were found inciting people to cause law and order situations, posing a threat to the unity, and integrity of Bharat.

"Anyone found involved in activities against the

nation's peace, order, and sovereignty is bound to face the crushing blow of the Modi govt," Mr Shah said.

The Mirwaiz has, however, contested the MHA's charge and said that his organisation completely believes in non-violent resistance and seeks a resolution of the Kashmir conflict through dialogue and deliberation.

Reacting to the MHA's move, the Mirwaiz wrote on X, "Strongly condemn

the ban on Awami Action Committee... it has unwaveringly stood by the people of J&K advocating their aspirations and rights through completely non-violent and democratic methods and calling for peaceful resolution of the Kashmir conflict through dialogue and deliberation, for which its members suffered jails and incarceration and even martyrdom".

The Mirwaiz added, "This move seems part of the continuation of the policy of intimidation and disempowerment that is being followed vis-a-vis J&K since August 2019. The voice of truth may be suppressed through force but will not be silenced".

"Strongly condemn the unjustified & unfair ban on Ittihad-ul-Muslimeen," Mr Ansari posted on X.

Global intel chiefs to converge in India for crucial talks Mar 16

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

Top intelligence chiefs of 20 countries, including the US, the UK, Australia, Germany, New Zealand and Canada will converge in the national capital to attend a security conclave on Sunday.

The security and intelligence conference will be chaired by national security adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval. US director of national intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, Canadian spy chief Daniel Rogers and Britain's MI6 boss Richard Moore will be

among the top spymasters attending the event, sources said.

The agenda of the conclave is to deliberate on ways to boost intelligence sharing for combating terrorism and various transnational crimes besides securing the logistics chain in the Indo-Pacific, they said.

Ms Gabbard is visiting India as part of a multinational tour of Japan, Thailand and France. Her visit marks the first high-level visit to India by a top official of the Donald Trump administration.

The deliberations are also likely to cover various global challenges including the Russia-Ukraine war and the conflict in West Asia.

On the sidelines of the conclave, Mr Doval is expected to hold one-on-one meetings with his counterparts from several leading countries.

Ms Gabbard is also expected to bring up the need for expanding cooperation between the two countries in the Indo-Pacific with an overall focus on dealing with China's increasing muscle-flexing in the region.

■ Top court reinstates woman as sarpanch
SC: Babus cannot be allowed to 'frustrate grassroots democracy'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

Upholding the Bombay high court order reinstating a woman as the sarpanch of a Maharashtra village, the Supreme Court has underlined that bureaucrats couldn't be allowed to "frustrate grassroots democracy".

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N. Kotiswar Singh said, "We have given judgments in two to three cases where babus were found to be misbehaving with the elected representatives. This is happening typically in Maharashtra. These babus should be under the elected representatives.

■ **KOKALE WAS** aggrieved with the June 7, 2024 order of the collector confirming her resignation from the sarpanch's post

These bureaucrats cannot be allowed to frustrate the grassroots democracy."

The SC also came across instances of bureaucrats trying to open old cases to disqualify elected representatives, especially at the grassroots level.

"They (bureaucrats) try to open old cases like your grandfather has encroached upon government land and hence you are disqualified," Justice Surya Kant told the counsel for Archana Sachin

Bhosale, whose election as the sarpanch was set aside by the HC on January 29.

Reinstating Kalavati Rajendra Kokale as the sarpanch, the SC upheld the HC quashing the June 7, 2024 order of the collector of Raigad district declaring a vacancy for the post of sarpanch in village Ainghar, Taluka-Roha and appointing a returning officer to conduct the election. "We are inclined to agree with the view taken by the high court... We uphold and affirm the continuation of respondent number 1 (Ms Kokale) as the duly elected pradhan of the gram panchayat, Ainghar Taluka-Roha, district Raigad," the bench said.

Role of N-E vital in building developed India, says Shah

Region close to PM's heart ■ Govt wants its development

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said the contribution of the north-eastern region will be crucial in the making of developed India. Mr Shah highlighted the region's immense potential for global tourism.

"Northeast contributed over 20 per cent to India's GDP before Independence," Mr Shah said.

Lauding the intelligent youth and hardworking tribes of the region, he said, "The Northeast is a priceless gem of Indian culture, enriched with a rich heritage."

Mr Shah highlighted the diversity of the Northeast with over 220 tribal groups, 160 plus resident tribes, 200 plus languages, 50 unique festivals, and 30 globally renowned dance



Amit Shah

leled craftsmanship, handicrafts, and cuisine.

"Despite its many unique qualities, the Northeast lagged in development due to past periods of misinformation and conflicts that fueled terrorism and separatism. Violence, shutdowns, drugs, blockades, and regionalism fragmented the Northeast, not only distancing it from the rest of the country, but also creating divisions among its own states. As a result, the region remained underdeveloped for 40 years, with terrorism and

forms. The region has 78 unique musical instruments, over 100 traditional attire, and unparalleled handicrafts, and cuisine. "Despite its many unique qualities, the Northeast lagged in development due to past periods of misinformation and conflicts that fueled terrorism and separatism. Violence, shutdowns, drugs, blockades, and regionalism fragmented the Northeast, not only distancing it from the rest of the country, but also creating divisions among its own states. As a result, the region remained underdeveloped for 40 years, with terrorism and

separatist groups being the biggest obstacles to progress," he said. Mr Shah stressed that the Northeast has always been a priority for the BJP government and a dedicated ministry for the region was established during Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure as PM. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has placed the Northeast at the core of every government initiative, he said.

A key achievement of the Modi government is reducing the gap between the Northeast and the rest of India. By 2027, all north-eastern state capitals will be connected via rail, air, and road networks, he said, adding that a single-window system has been implemented to accelerate the region's development, backed by a substantial budget.

U'khand govt launches heli services to 4 new hill towns

AGE CORRESPONDENT
DEHRADUN, MARCH 11

Uttarakhand government on Tuesday lauched four new heli services extending domestic air connectivity to Nainital, Bageshwar, Mussoorie and Haldwani. So far 13 hill towns in Uttarakhand have been connected with domestic air services under the Centre's Udaan Scheme.

"Udaan scheme to increase air services in the hill towns will provide impetus to tourism and economic development in the state. Better air connectivity will bring positive changes in the lives of local people. Besides being sought after tourist areas Bageshwar, Nainital and Mussoorie are also important cultural and spiritual destinations of the state. The natural beauty, serene valleys, lush green mountains, historical temples and rich culture of these areas attract global tourists," said chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, as he inaugurated the helicopter services from Dehradun to Bageshwar, Nainital and Mussoorie and another between Haldwani and Bageshwar.

The CM said heli services to these hill areas will reduce journey time from present 8-10 hours to one hour. Besides, in case of emergency, people living in the far off hills will also get much needed help, Mr Dhami added.

'In 15-20 years, India will need 30K pilots'

Will create multi-model system: Naidu

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

Civil aviation minister K. Rammoohan Naidu said on Tuesday that the Centre is working on a "template model" to set up more airports to handle the increasing air traffic and expanding aircraft fleet. Mr Naidu said the government plans to have dedicated airports for cargo and flying training organisations.

He added that India will need 30,000 pilots in the next 15-20 years as domestic airlines have more than 1,700 planes on order as they expand their network.

On the sidelines of an event in the national capital, Mr Naidu said the government is looking to create a multi-model system and that there are a lot of technical aspects involved.



K. Rammoohan Naidu

"Land is a challenge in many places... We are trying to ensure air connectivity to all regions and wherever possible, we can taper down the land requirement... (for instance like having) a small airport where we can operate an ATR," he said.

Meanwhile, while responding to queries related to recent incidents involving Air India, Mr Naidu said whenever there are issues, those are discussed and feedback is also sought from the airline concerned. "If there is any breaking of law, then we take action, penalise them and ensure that things happen in the right way," he said.

No talks with Sambhal cops over Friday's namaz: Masjid

Sambhal (UP), March 11: The Shahi Jama Masjid Committee in Sambhal on Tuesday denied any discussion with the police administration regarding the timing of Friday prayers that coincide with Holi celebrations on March 14.

The committee clarified that they will announce the prayer timing independently in the coming days.

Sambhal has been on alert after riots broke out on November 24 last year, following a survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid. Four

people were killed and several including police personnel were injured in the clashes.

Talking to reporters, Shahi Jama Masjid Committee president Zafar Ali said neither he nor any representative from the committee was present at the peace committee meeting convened by the administration. "We have not been in touch with the police administration and no discussion has taken place regarding the timing of the Friday prayers," he said. — *PTI*

Mauritius is family: Modi

■ **Continued from Page 1** be prepared to compile details of towns and villages in India from where these labourers left during the British Raj and where they settled across the world.

The PM also mentioned the emotional attachment between the people of Mauritius and Bihar, from where most of the indentured labourers from India were brought to Mauritius by the British to work in plantations.

The Prime Minister also mooted the organisation of a World Girmitiya Conference to pay tribute to the legacy of these brave people who underwent so much suffering in their lives and chart the geographical routes that these indentured labourers took from their motherland. He pointed out that "to further strengthen these bonds, a special carve-out for Mauritius has been made whereby Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards can be made available to the seventh generation of the people of Indian origin in Mauritius".

Mr Modi also presented OCI cards to Mr Ramgoolam and his wife Veena Ramgoolam.

Highlighting the religious ties between the two nations, Mr Modi pointed to the happiness among the people of Mauritius when the Ram temple in Ayodhya was inaugurated in January last year and the fact that a half-day leave had been announced by the Mauritius government to cele-

brate the grand occasion. He also mentioned that pilgrims from Mauritius had also participated in the Maha Kumbh that culminated recently and that he had brought along the holy water from the Maha Kumbh that would be offered at the "Ganga lake" in Mauritius.

After his arrival at Port Louis in the morning, Mr Modi was welcomed in Bihar's tradition of "geet gawai". He later called on the Mauritius President Dharambeer Gokhool. After the talks, the Mauritius President hosted a state lunch in honour of the Prime Minister. He presented "makhana" (foxnut) from Bihar as a gift to Mr Gokhool, a Banarsi silk saree to the First Lady Vrinda Gokhool and an idol of Lord Ganesha.

In a statement on the engagements earlier in the day, New Delhi said, "The two leaders exchanged views on deepening the special and close bilateral ties between India and Mauritius."

New Delhi added: "Prime Minister paid homage today at the Samadhis of Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam and Sir Anerood Jugnauth at Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam Botanic Garden, Pamplemousses. Mr Modi was accompanied by Mr Ramgoolam for the wreath-laying function."

Following the wreath-laying ceremony, the two Prime Ministers planted a tree under the initiative "*Ek Ped Maa ke Naam*" in the historic garden.

K'taka to probe DGP rank cop in actress case

Bengaluru, March 11: The Karnataka government has appointed additional chief secretary Gaurav Gupta to probe the role of DGP rank officer K. Ramachandra Rao, if any, in the alleged gold smuggling activity of his step daughter and Kannada actress Ranya Rao.

Chief minister's office informed media on Tuesday that an order appointing Mr Gupta was issued on Monday night. The government also ordered a CID investigation into the alleged lapses and dereliction of duty of police officers at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), Bengaluru. Ramachandra Rao is presently serving as the managing director of the Karnataka state police housing and infrastructure development corporation.

The government order said, "ACS Gaurav Gupta has been appointed as the investigating officer." The investigating officer should commence the investigation immediately and submit its report within a week, the order said. — *PTI*

THE ASIAN AGE

12 MARCH 2025

Stop ‘weaponising’ funds to force states to toe line

The Union government’s reluctance to fulfil the requirements of democracy and the country’s federal Constitution, and its propensity to weaponise Central funding to force its agenda on states, have led to unpleasant and avoidable exchanges in Parliament, requiring the intervention of the chair and the expunging of remarks of a Union minister, which is a rare occurrence. It is time the government did a rethink on this policy in the larger interest of democracy and the welfare of the people.

The Union government putting conditions for funding welfare schemes, especially those related to health and education, on states requiring them to adopt its policies runs counter to the federal principles of the Constitution. The purse strings are indeed with the Union government, especially after the country rolled out the Goods and Services Tax, and the position taken by the finance commissions, the constitutional body mandated to devise the formula for fund sharing, of late has not helped the cause of the states either, leaving them at the mercy of the Union government. But it cannot be the reason for the Union government to release funds arbitrarily.

The Union government is the proponent of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. It may be remembered that education was originally on the State List of the Constitution and was subsequently shifted to the Concurrent List. However, the NEP, as a policy, has no legal backing affording it pre-eminence over state policies. Still, the Union government wants an unwilling Tamil Nadu government to adopt it, with its concomitant three-language formula which the state has been resisting for decades; it has said the state would be deprived of funds of over ₹2,000 crores under various Central schemes. And worse, the Union education minister now berates the state and the members of Parliament from there for taking a position contrary to that of his government.

The Union government has denied funds to other states too for refusing to fall in line and follow its policies. The Kerala health minister was heard telling the state Assembly last week that funds to the state under the National Health Mission for the financial year 2023-24 were held back because the state government refused to rebrand its healthcare infrastructure, which it has built over centuries, as per the Union government’s directives.

It is time Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the best champion the cause of cooperative federalism can have in our country today, intervenes and settles the issues in such a way that it enhances the prestige of the idea he espouses. The Union government can indeed lay the larger framework of policies but it must let the states build on it to serve the larger interest of their people. As a political party, the BJP can always propagate the virtues of the Central policy, including the three-language formula, in Tamil Nadu and win their confidence. But until such time comes, it must respect the decision of state governments to make their choices. At the end of the day, the Constitution defines India that is Bharat as a union of states.

Can Carney reset India ties?

The economist and former central banker Mike Carney is all set to become the Prime Minister of Canada. He comes in at a tumultuous time when US President Donald Trump’s tariff obsession is going to test the world, especially Canada and Mexico against which stiff tariffs on imports into the US are in place already.

Where Mr Carney’s appointment as PM by the Liberal Party will be most welcomed is India with which a positive resetting of ties is now on the cards. Canada’s relationship with India, dating back a couple of centuries, hit a nadir in Justin Trudeau’s rule after he took the floor in parliament and charged India with carrying out a hit on a Khalistani sympathiser on Canadian soil.

The self-destructive rule of Mr Trudeau in which he cavorted with radical political elements to stay in power at the head of a coalition government may have reached a natural conclusion in his being removed from the PM’s post for lack of confidence in the Liberal Party which his father Pierre had led for decades with distinction.

The assassination charge, never followed up by credible evidence that would stand judicial scrutiny, may have died a natural death considering the change of regime in Washington after the defeat of the censorious Joe Biden government that seemed to do the tango with Mr Trudeau on this matter of extraterritorial killing by the Indian government.

The new Canadian PM comes armed with deep knowledge of economics and high finance as he has headed not only the Canadian federal bank but also the Bank of England. As one steeped in such knowledge he can prove resourceful in the trade war that Donald Trump has started by levying tariffs on imports into the world’s biggest economy that threaten to disrupt global trade.

Mr Carney’s first task would be to consolidate his party’s recent gains in people’s ratings and lead his party into the coming federal election against a Conservative Party that had gained much from Mr Trudeau flirting with the party of the Sikhs and leading Canadians suffering increasingly from a rising cost-of-living index.

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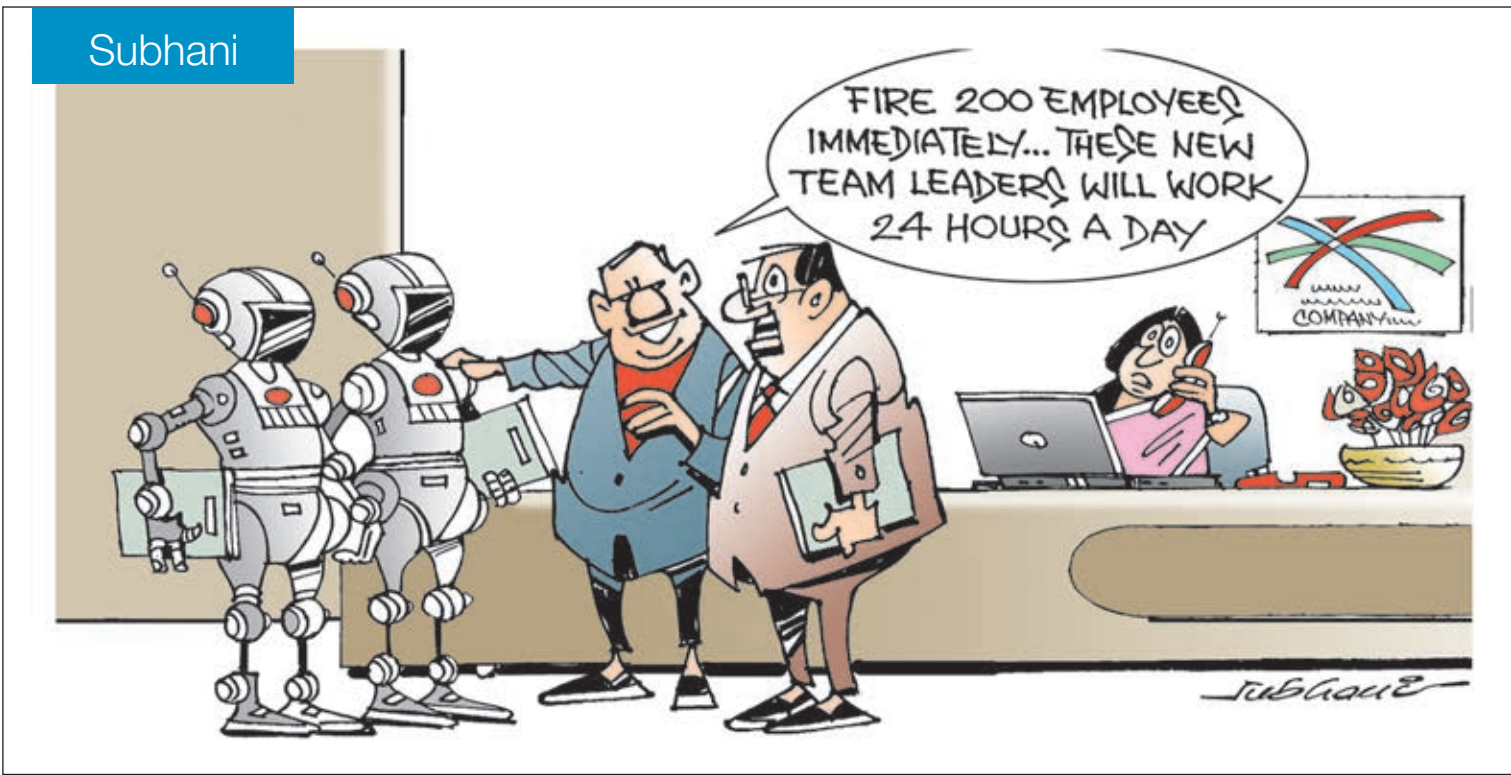
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Subhani



Dressing down at Oval: A power statement by Kyiv



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

Not since Baroda’s Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III flung a sartorial bomb into the Delhi Durbar of 1911 have attire and attitude caused so much consternation in high places as the recent fiasco in the Oval Office of the White House. Not that it’s at all surprising that the American vice-president should emerge as Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s strident critic. James David Vance may be a white American politician but his gifted Hindu Brahmin vegetarian wife’s roots are in the Telugu heartland of Andhra Pradesh. It being no secret that catch-as-catch-can upwardly mobile Indian immigrants are not noted for cultural sensitivity, some crassness may have rubbed off on Mr Vance who gave Ukraine’s President a dressing down for not dressing up in Donald Trump’s honour.

Clearly, Mr Vance missed the symbolic defiance of Mr Zelenskyy’s military-style black sweatshirt adorned with Ukraine’s trident. Asia’s sartorial signals are usually more muted like Vijayalakshmi Pandit’s khadi sarees which were reputedly smooth as French silk. However, there’s nothing subtle about the flamboyant turbans and waistcoats with which Narendra Modi is transforming the political stage into a Hindu durbar where those who are not *dwijas* are *mlechhas*. Pakistan carried prenatal exclusiveness to extremes with Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s sister abandoning the sarees on which she had been weaned for the salwar-kameez she deemed more Pakistani even before Pakistan was born. In contrast, Jinnah’s wife, caring nothing for political messages, draped herself in two (or was it three?) Liberty

scarves, according to Lady Willingdon, who feared the scantily-dressed Mrs Jinnah might catch a cold.

Contrary to what people might think, such symbolism didn’t begin with that shrewd but saintly master of statecraft, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who when asked if he had tea with the King-Emperor George V in Buckingham Palace wearing only his trademark loin cloth, famously retorted: “His Majesty wore enough for both of us!” The Bengali revolutionary, Jatindra Mohan Sengupta, an anglicised barrister from Cambridge and Middle Temple who became mayor of Calcutta, and is revered as Deshapriya, “Lover of the Land”, probably first used a sartorial semaphore. Deshapriya’s political adversaries sought to malign him with the cartoon of a man swilling whisky in black tie and dinner jacket while a bearer held out his khadi dhoti, kurta and chaddar. The caption, “Meeting *ka kapra*”, which has passed into the language, speaks of other countries as well.

Like Prime Minister Modi’s telltale waistcoat which betrays his unacknowledged debt to Jawaharlal Nehru, China’s ubiquitous Mao jacket — which Jiang Zemin tried to banish when launching his “Going Global” policy — still lurks in some august Beijing wardrobes. The immaculate Xi Jinping, for instance, has been known to discard his smart Western suit and dust down a Mao jacket for the most politically pregnant occasions.

It is possible that Mr Vance’s tirade was really to demand visual reciprocity and prevent Mr Zelenskyy from stealing a march over his host. As guardian of Mr Trump’s dignity, he may have been trying to ensure that the President wasn’t

Of course, Mr Zelenskyy could have told the officious and offensive Mr Vance whose main purpose seemed to be to ingratiate himself with his boss that his own soldier’s attire was not mandatory for all freedom-fighters

thwarted in his mission to annex Greenland, discipline Canada, Panama and Mexico, cut Europe down to size, earn Vladimir Putin’s approbation and, being a transactional politician, also make a penny from Ukraine’s natural resources.

We know from Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa’s novel, *The Leopard*, that the old order’s death knell was sounded when the town’s plebeian mayor turned up in full evening dress at the Prince of Salina’s ball where the prince himself always received guests in informal attire. The radical mayor’s outfit warned that a revolution was brewing. Although roles were reversed at the Delhi Durbar, the Gaekwad’s appearance in white cotton instead of strings of diamonds and emeralds sent similar alarm bells ringing throughout the Raj. It wasn’t only that His Highness’s cotton might have been seditious khadi. His casual stroll towards the throne and the perfunctory bow he sketched before turning his back on Their Majesties, swinging a swagger stick as he walked jauntily away, were as mutinous as the mayor’s glad rags. Watching the filmed sequence which is regularly screened at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, no one can tell whether the Gaekwad was being his simple self, deliberately aiming a deadly insult at the King-Emperor, or whether — as he claimed — he was overcome with confusion in that glittering throng of bejewelled potentates. All one knows is that reciprocity alone would have achieved nothing. In any case, the King-Emperor could

hardly be expected to clamber down from his throne to the chant of an adapted “*Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram, Jitna kapra, utna kam*” slogan and bow three times to his vassal from Baroda. Parity must adjust to a natural order in which poverty also has a price, as the irreverent Sarojini Naidu naughtily reminded Gandhi.

Of course, Mr Zelenskyy could have told the officious and offensive Mr Vance whose main purpose seemed to be to ingratiate himself with his boss that his own soldier’s attire was not mandatory for all freedom-fighters. An army may rely on foot soldiers to fight but it also needs generals and field-m Marshals. If Mr Zelenskyy identifies with the humblest defenders of Ukraine’s independence, there is nothing to stop friends from assuming the grander rank they feel is their due. Mr Trump should be flattered to be designated an honorary field-marshal of the Ukrainian Army with an appropriately ornate uniform that his good friend in Delhi’s Panchavati, aka 7 Lok Kalyan Marg, would undoubtedly be happy to design.

First, however, the now obsequious Mr Vance must restore his own credentials. Eight years ago he derided the President as an idiot, which the latter may not have forgotten or forgiven since he told Fox News recently that it is “too early” to tell whether the vice-president can run for President in 2028. Nor can Mr Vance claim an upsurge of popular support since people remember that when he was running for the Ohio Senate in 2022, he told a podcast: “I have got to be honest with you. I don’t really care what happens to Ukraine one way or the other.”

That also seems to be Mr Trump’s attitude since his second coming. Hapless Ukraine must fend for itself while the so-called Leader of the Free World plays footsy with the reincarnation of the Soviet challenger.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

NO MORE DOLES!

The inability of the Maharashtra government to fulfil the promise made during elections of ₹2,100 to be given to the *ladki bahins* comes as no surprise. All political parties have been making promises to the electorate of giving away cash for nothing even if the state finances wouldn’t permit. Realisation has just hit the government that it is in no position to deliver on the promises. How the electorate is going to view this remains to be seen. It would come as no surprise if beneficiaries, especially in rural areas, demand an explanation from bank employees as to why the said amount has not been credited to their accounts!

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

CRISIS AHEAD?

ALL IS not well for the Indian rupee which depreciated by 38 paise, its steepest fall in over a month, to close at 87.33 (provisional) against the US dollar on March 10 due to volatile crude oil prices amid tariff uncertainties worldwide and an unabated outflow of foreign funds. A sell-off in the domestic equity market hit sentiments adversely. The latest RBI data released on Friday showed the country’s forex reserves dropped by \$1.781 billion in the week ended February 28. Due to a weak Indian economy under the current government, the rupee is falling continuously against the US dollar.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

GOOD NEWS

INDIA’S INFLATION rate likely fell below four per cent in February 2025 for the first time in six months, driven by lower food prices, especially vegetables, pulses, and cereals. Economists estimate inflation at 3.98 per cent, down from 4.31 pc in January, aligning with the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) target. With fresh produce entering the market, inflationary pressures are easing, and the average inflation rate for 2025 is expected to be around 4.8 pc. This decline may prompt the RBI to consider a 25-basis-point rate cut, supporting economic growth and strengthening consumer purchasing power.

Amarjeet Kumar
Hazaribagh

Maleeha Lodhi



Social media has amplified untruths: Big Tech making us shallow thinkers

Among the paradoxes of our era is that globalisation has been connecting the world and also fragmenting it. The world is more interconnected than ever before but atomised. This has been accentuated by the ever-growing but complex and crowded media landscape. In the information age, trivia and falsehood compete with information to engage our attention, challenging us to separate the two and focus on what is factual and really important. Moreover, profusion of information does not necessarily mean an accretion in knowledge.

There is now a growing body of literature that deals with information and communication technology. Some books extol its benefits and virtues while others express scepticism and point to its dangers and detrimental consequences. A compelling new publication, *Superbloom: How Technologies of Connection Tear Us Apart* by Nicholas Carr, belongs firmly to the latter category. Carr has written several books on the impact of technology on people’s lives and thinking. His previous work, *The Shallows*, analysed what the internet was doing to our brains, in which he argued it was seriously affecting our ability to think deeply even as it was opening new vistas for us. His new book takes that conversation forward and expands on it by examining how digital communication technology — information systems, online platforms and tools that include smartphones, the Internet, comput-

ers, social media and artificial intelligence — are influencing and changing the lives of people and societies.

All these connections that enable people to receive so much information and messages at unprecedented speed and scope should broaden minds, and create more understanding and harmony. It is assumed that by making communication more efficient a lot of problems can be fixed.

But, Carr argues, it hasn’t turned out this way. Speed and intensity in the flow of information and stimuli force people to rely on intuitive thinking based on biases. It robs them of the ability to tap into deeper analysis. It has undermined careful reading, reasoned analysis, methodical evaluation and contemplative inquiry. “Attention splinters, understanding grows thin,” he posits, adding “rather than levelling barriers to knowledge, it becomes a barrier itself”. This results in mental shortcuts and shallow thinking.

Carr takes readers on a fascinating journey through the history of technological advancement, starting with the invention of the telegraph to present-day large-scale communication networks along with the profits made by giant, unaccountable tech companies. He draws on psychology and sociology to buttress many of his observations. Every advance in media, he writes, was accompanied by “millenarian rhetoric”. Each time, claims were made about how the world would become a better, friendlier place with peo-

ple joined in happy brotherhood. Personal diplomacy would be rendered obsolete, crises averted and wars prevented. None of this, of course, happened. Therefore, Carr asserts, “we had been telling ourselves lies about communication and about ourselves”.

He reserves his most scathing critique for social media and the tech companies that run them. The consequences of this have yet to be fully fathomed. More than promoting facts and truth, social media amplifies falsehoods and hostility. Shorn of communication barriers, it brings people’s worst instincts into play. The “ugly content that pervades the social media” he also attributes to tech companies and the role played by algorithms. They choose content to stir strong emotions that create a slippery slope compelling people to be drawn even more into the “feed”.

While close bonds can be formed online, that and other benefits don’t outweigh the drawbacks, including psychological harm. Carr questions the narrative that digital media is a democratising vehicle, which to him overlooks how it breeds extreme views, polarisation and fanaticism. He argues it is more conducive to authoritarian movements and cults of personality. Communication media, he claims, is anything but politically neutral. It spawns asymmetries of power as it determines what we know and therefore shapes our thinking in the process.

Some of Carr’s assessments about digital tech-

nology bring to mind a very readable and insightful book published much earlier. This saw it producing another kind of outcome — loneliness, both personal and political. *The Lonely Planet*, by British economist Noreena Hertz, had a different focus, as the title of her book indicates, but it also considered the damaging effects of communication technology and social media. Of course, what she described as a global pandemic of loneliness — defined as a feeling of being unsupported in a social and familial context and also by fellow citizens, governments and the state — was ascribed to a conflation of diverse factors and events. They included “structural and institutional discrimination”, an urbanisation wave, rise of neoliberalism and fundamental changes to how we live.

But Hertz also assigned an “integral role” to social media and smartphones in making people “more angry and tribal”. In analysing “digital distraction”, she used research findings to press the case that technology and social media are also contributing to the loneliness crisis. Smartphones “fragment our attention”, estrange us from people and “create a splintered self” — among other damaging effects she mentions. Apart from pushing people into isolated digital bubbles, social media is creating a meaner, more aggressive world.

— By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

HIGHWAY BUS
CRASH KILLS 12
IN S. AFRICA

Johannesburg, March 11: At least 12 people died and 45 were injured when a bus overturned on a highway in the South African city of Johannesburg on Tuesday, emergency services said. Emergency crews were trying to lift the bus back onto its wheels to see if any more victims were trapped underneath it, said William Nthladi, a spokesperson for the city's Ekurhuleni Emergency Management.

The crash happened on a highway near Johannesburg's main O.R. Tambo International Airport.

MEDICAL COPTER
CRASH KILLS 3 IN
MISSISSIPPI

Madison County, March 11: A medical transport helicopter crashed in Mississippi on Monday, killing a pilot and two hospital workers on board, officials said.

A spokesperson for the University of Mississippi Medical Centre confirmed the deaths of everyone on board the flight. The AirCare copter was not carrying any patients when it crashed in Madison County, north of the capital of Jackson, the university said in an earlier statement. Families of the three victims were notified, but authorities didn't release names to protect privacy.

POPE OUT OF
DANGER, MAY BE
DISCHARGED

Vatican City, March 11: Pope Francis was reported to be in good spirits on Tuesday after the Vatican declared he was out of danger and could even be discharged in the near future after almost one month in hospital with pneumonia.

The 88-year-old head of the Catholic Church has been in Rome's Gemelli hospital since February 14 with pneumonia in both lungs and has suffered several respiratory crises that sparked real fear for his life.

After a week of improvements, the Holy See on Monday evening said his prognosis was no longer at risk.

FORMER PERU
PREZ ON HUNGER
STIR OVER TRIAL

Lima, March 11: Former Peruvian President Pedro Castillo said on Monday that he was beginning a hunger strike in protest of the start of an oral trial against him for the alleged crime of rebellion. The prosecution has requested 34 years in prison for the former president.

Castillo, detained since December 7, 2022 after a televised speech in which he declared the dissolution of Congress and his intent to rule by decree, said on his social networks that he has begun a hunger strike to protest "injustices committed against me."

PORTUGAL'S GOVT
LOOKS SET TO
LOSE TRUST VOTE

Lisbon, March 11: Portugal's minority government was in danger of falling on Tuesday as Parliament prepared to vote on a confidence motion, with an overwhelming majority of opposition lawmakers saying they will choose to oust the centre-right administration.

That would bring Portugal's third general election in three years at a time when Europe's security and economy are under threat.

The government asked for the confidence vote, saying it was needed to dispel uncertainty about its own future amid a simmering political crisis.

AL-SHABAAB
ATTACKS SOMALI
HOTEL, KILLS 6

Mogadishu, March 11: A car bomb exploded on Tuesday at a hotel in the central Somali city of Beledweyne in a militant attack that killed at least six people, including two prominent traditional elders, according to witnesses.

The explosion targeted the Cairo Hotel, which houses traditional elders and military officers currently involved in coordinating the government's offensive against the militant group al-Shabab.

The blast triggered intense gunfire as attackers stormed the hotel.

Ukraine, US talk partial
truce in war with Russia

Three killed in attack as Moscow shoots down 337 drones

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, March 11: Ukraine said talks with the United States in Saudi Arabia began "very constructively" on Tuesday, with a partial ceasefire with Russia on the table hours after Kyiv conducted its largest drone attack on Moscow in three years of war.

Three people were killed in the attack as a total of 337 drones were downed over Russia, including 91 over Moscow region and 126 over Kursk region. US secretary of state Marco Rubio and Ukraine's foreign minister Andriy Sybiga attended the meeting in Jeddah — which Russia was not participating in — as President Donald Trump ramped up pressure on Ukraine to end the war that began with Russia's 2022 invasion.

The talks come just days after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's public dressing-down at the White House, after which the United States cut off military aid, intelligence sharing and access to satellite imagery. Ukraine is hoping the offer of a partial ceasefire in the sky and at sea will persuade Washington to restore the assistance.

"We are ready to do everything to achieve



Fuel reservoirs fire following a Russian drone attack near Odesa, Ukraine, on Tuesday. — AP

peace," Ukrainian presidency chief of staff Andriy Yermak told reporters.

Kyiv said the "largest drone attack in history", in which hundreds of drones slammed into Moscow and other areas, was intended to push Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to the aerial and naval ceasefire. "This is an additional signal to Putin that he should also be interested in an air truce," said Andriy Kovalenko, a national security council official responsible for countering disinformation. — AFP

WESTERN OFFICIALS: PUTIN KNOWS
HIS UKRAINE TERMS WON'T BE MET

Brussels, March 11: Western security officials said Russian President Vladimir Putin has no intention to compromise on demands on land, peacekeepers and Ukraine's neutrality in any peace talks, complicating President Donald Trump's efforts to secure a credible settlement.

Putin has made deliberately "maximalist" demands ahead of negotiations

RUSSIA SAYS
RETAKEN DOZEN
SETTLEMENTS

Paris, March 11: French President Emmanuel Macron was on Tuesday to address a meeting of military chiefs from 30 European and Nato countries willing to contribute to security guarantees for Ukraine after any negotiated truce with Russia.

Macron has said Tuesday's meeting will be held in coordination with the Nato military command. — AFP

to end the war, which he knows will likely be unacceptable to Ukrainians and other Europeans. The Russian leader is prepared to continue fighting if he doesn't get his goals, said the officials, who asked not to be named. The assessment of Putin's intent casts doubt if he is serious about negotiating a realistic and lasting peace settlement with Ukraine. — Bloomberg

INDIAN STUDENT
GOES MISSING
ON VACATION

New York, March 11: A 20-year-old Indian student has gone missing while on vacation in the Dominican Republic and US federal law enforcement agencies are working with authorities in the Caribbean country in the probe into her disappearance.

Sudiksha Konanki is a citizen of India and a permanent resident of the United States. A student at the University of Pittsburgh, Konanki was vacationing with five female college friends at a resort in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, when she went missing on March 6, the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office said in a statement on Monday.

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) said it continues to assist and support the US federal law enforcement agencies working with the Dominican National Police and others to determine Konanki's whereabouts and what may have happened to her.

Konanki was on a spring break trip in Punta Cana and was last seen in the early morning of March 6.

"The ongoing investigation includes wide-ranging search efforts, along with a review of surveillance video and telephone records. Interviews are also continuing with anyone who may have seen or been with Konanki before she went missing," the LCSO statement said. — PTI



Sudiksha Konanki

BLA takes claim after
attack on Baloch train

Karachi, Quetta, March 11: Armed militants held hundreds of train passengers hostage on Tuesday in an ongoing 'hijack drama' claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), which is fighting for independence and accuses outsiders of profiting from the region's wealth, behind rising violence in southwestern Pakistan.

"Over 450 passengers onboard are being held hostage by gunmen," Muhammad Kashif, a senior railway government official in Quetta, the capital of the province, said. While, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed that it seized control of the train by derailing it, killed six security personnel and took over 100 passengers, including active duty personnel, into custody.

In a statement, the BLA warned that if the Pakistan military launches an operation, "all hostages will be executed". The group is banned in Pakistan, the UK and the US.

Jaffar Express, with around 500 passengers on board in nine coaches, was on its way from Quetta to Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa when it was fired on between Gudalalar and Piru Koneri areas, according to officials.

Official data on casualties was not available, but security sources said that the train driver and several passengers were injured in the gunfire.

"There are reports of intense firing at a Jaffar Express, which was heading from Quetta to Peshawar, between Pehro Kunri and Gadalar, Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind said. Rescue teams and security forces have reached the scene, and an operation is underway to track down the assailants. Emergency has been declared in the local hospitals. — PTI

HINDUS SEEK
SECURITY FOR
HOLI IN MULTAN

Peshawar, March 11: A Pakistan-based Hindu rights organisation on Tuesday urged the government to ensure foolproof security and necessary arrangements for the community members to celebrate Holi and other festivals at the ancient Prahladpuri Temple located in Multan city of Punjab province.

Prahladpuri Temple is dedicated to Hindu deity Narasimha. — PTI

Nabbed Palestinian's
deportation blocked

New York, March 11: A US judge on Monday ordered that Palestinian Columbia student Mahmoud Khalil not be deported for now as part of US President Donald Trump's crackdown on some anti-Israel protesters, and set a court hearing in the case for Wednesday.

Trump publicly denounced Khalil and said more arrests would follow. He has been moved to a federal jail for migrants in Louisiana to await deportation proceedings, according to his lawyers and a US detainee database. Demonstrators on the



A worker adjusts an anti-smog dust suppression sprayer installed at a construction site in Lahore. — AFP

Pak ranks world's 3rd
most polluted country

Islamabad, March 11: Pakistan ranked the third most polluted country in 2024 when it faced unprecedented smog, according to a report on Tuesday.

According to Swiss air technology company IQAir's 2024 World Air Quality Report, Chad topped the rankings for the most polluted country, followed by Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and then India, Dawn reported.

Pakistan last year witnessed unprecedented smog levels, especially in Punjab, where the situation was declared a "calamity" and around two million people had to seek treatment for resulting health issues. The govern-

ment took various steps to combat pollution, including imposing lockdowns and closing schools.

For Pakistan, the average concentration of particles less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5) was 73.7 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³) — nearly 15 times higher than the safe levels set by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the report said.

Despite the record smog, Pakistan's average pollution remained the same as in 2023, it added. In the Central and South Asia region, Pakistan was second — behind Bangladesh — with Lahore, Multan, Peshawar and Sialkot among the 15 most polluted cities. — PTI

PAK AMBASSADOR
TO TURKMENISTAN
DEPORTED FROM LA

Islamabad, March 11: The US authorities denied entry to Pakistan's ambassador to Turkmenistan and deported him from Los Angeles, a media report said on Tuesday. Ambassador K.K. Wagan, who holds a valid US visa and all necessary travel documents, was stopped at Los Angeles airport by US immigration authorities, The News quoted diplomatic sources as saying.

"Ambassador K.K. Wagan was deported from the US. He had an immigration objection which led to his deportation," a senior foreign ministry official said.

The officials forced him to return to his last port of departure, raising concerns about diplomatic protocol and the nature of the decision. — PTI

PIA WILL BE SOLD
BY JULY: IMF GETS
PAK'S ASSURANCE

Islamabad, March 11: Pakistan has assured the IMF of selling the Pakistan International Airlines by July after a botched attempt to sell the national flag carrier last year, according to a media report on Tuesday.

The PIA has been running into losses and as part of reforms urged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government was putting on the block its stake, ranging from 51 to 100 per cent.

No serious buyer made the bid when the effort was made in October last year. The only offer of Pakistani Rs 10 billion by a local real estate developing company was rejected by the government. An IMF team is in Pakistan to review the \$7 billion loan programme approved last year. — PTI

PARL. ABSENCE OF
CHINA LAWMAKER
DUE TO INFECTION

Beijing, March 11: The third-ranked leader of China's ruling Communist Party was absent on Tuesday from a key parliamentary session he had been due to open, with his stand-in attributing the absence to a respiratory infection.

Zhao Leji, 68, was not among the senior party leaders in the Great Hall of the People, marking the first time in almost two decades that a member of the Politburo Standing Committee was not at the event.

"Chairman Zhao Leji requested leave from this afternoon's meeting due to a respiratory infection," said Li Hongzhong, vice chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, as he opened the plenary session.

"I was entrusted ... to preside," he told more than 2,000 delegates gathered in the hall's main auditorium for the parliamentary meetings, set to conclude on Tuesday.

It was a departure from the Communist Party's customary secrecy regarding the health of senior leaders. "It's certainly unusual for China's NPC speaker to miss the single most important occasion of the year," said Wen-Ti Sung, an analyst of Chinese politics at the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub. — Reuters

ENVIRONMENTAL | DEGRADATION

UK government launches probe into accident to find next steps

Ships blaze, spill feared after North Sea crash

Grimsby, United Kingdom, March 11: Fires were raging on Tuesday after a cargo ship laden with toxic materials slammed into a tanker carrying flammable jet fuel in the North Sea, as questions mounted about how the accident happened.

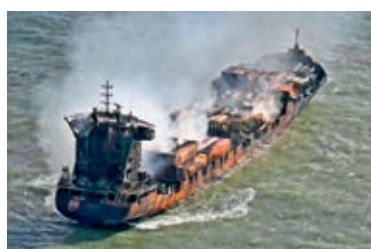
There were also growing fears that any spill from the collision could harm the local environment and coastline, home to seals, porpoises and some protected waders and waterfowl.

BBC images on Tuesday

showed a large hole in the side of the *Stena Immaculate* tanker as huge plumes of thick, black smoke rose from the stationary ships with smaller boats dousing the vessels with water.

The fires were "still going on" nearly 24 hours after the Portuguese-flagged *Solong* cargo ship ploughed into the *Stena Immaculate* tanker, anchored about 10 miles (16 km) off the northeastern port of Hull, nearby Grimsby port chief executive Martyn Boyers told AFP.

One crew member was



also still missing, he said.

The *Stena Immaculate* was on a short-term US military charter with Military Sealift Command, according to a spokesperson for the com-

Smoke rises from the *Solong* cargo ship in the North Sea, off England's coast of Withersea, on Tuesday, after it collided with the *Stena Immaculate* tanker. — AFP

mand that operates civilian-crewed ships for the US defence department.

Crowley, the US-based operator of the tanker, said the crash had "ruptured" the ship's tank

"containing A1-jet fuel" and triggered a fire, with fuel "reported released".

The UK government's Marine Accident Investigation Branch has launched a probe into Monday's

accident to determine the next steps.

The UK Coast Guard halted search operations late on Monday after rescuing 36 crew members from both ships. — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	74,102.32	-0.02
Nifty 50	22,497.90	0.17
S&P 500*	5,610.01	-0.08
Dollar (₹)	87.21	-0.14
Pound Sterling (₹)	112.81	0.07
Euro (₹)	95.19	0.45
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	85,932▲513	0.60
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	70.27	1.43
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.694	-0.007
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.217	0.004

* As of 8:30 PM IST

IL&FS launches Roadstar InvIT units on NSE

Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS) listed the Roadstar Infra Investment Trust (RIIT) InvIT units on NSE on Tuesday. The listing of RIIT follows the distribution of InvIT at an enterprise valuation of ₹8,592 crore. This is for the first time that six stressed road assets have been listed through the InvIT route reflecting IL&FS Group's ability to effectively use diverse financial instruments for debt resolution.



Bajaj launches electric 3-wheeler brand GoGo

Bajaj Auto on Tuesday introduced a game changing electric three-wheeler brand called Bajaj GoGo. The first batch of 51 units of Bajaj GoGo rickshaws were delivered and it received 200 bookings in Lucknow. "UP is the country's largest EV market, hence, Lucknow provides the ideal backdrop for GoGo's launch, ushering the future of urban mobility to the nation's heart," Bajaj Auto said.

Hindustan Zinc inks deal with Serentica

Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd on Tuesday said that it has entered into a pact with Serentica Renewables for supply of up to 530 MW of green electricity. The power delivery agreement (PDA) increases Hindustan Zinc's renewable energy up to 530 MW from previously signed pact of 450 MW, increasing the overall green energy contribution to over 70 per cent of its total power requirement.

JSL investing ₹700 crore in decarbonisation

Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL) on Tuesday said it is in the process of investing ₹700 crore in decarbonisation projects to achieve its net-zero goals by 2050. The investments will continue over next five years to set up various environment-friendly projects, which include renewable energy, green hydrogen, biodiversity conservation, waste management and adoption of carbon capture technologies, JSL said.

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IndusInd share plummets 27%

Bank reports discrepancy in forex derivative portfolio, could impact net worth by ₹1,530 cr

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MARCH 11

The country's fifth largest private lender IndusInd Bank saw its shares plummet nearly 27 per cent on Tuesday after it reported a massive discrepancy in the forex derivative portfolio which could lead to an adverse impact on its net worth by ₹1,530 crore, inviting downgrades from analysts and shaking investor confidence.

The discrepancy, spanning over five years, is expected to reduce the bank's net worth by 2.35 per cent as of December 2024, according to its exchange filing.

Further, IndusInd Bank said that it shall take the hit through profit and loss (P&L) which, coupled with accelerated provisions on the micro-finance portfolio, shall push the bank into losses during the January to March quarter (Q4) of the current financial year. The bank has appointed an external auditor to confirm the actual impact. The RBI, it added, is aware of the issue.

Airtel to provide Musk's Starlink

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

Telecom major Bharti Airtel on Tuesday said that it signed a pact with SpaceX to bring Starlink's high-speed Internet to its customers in India.

With this agreement, Airtel and SpaceX have set a stage for further exploring opportunities how both the companies can enhance business offerings in India. However, the deal depends on SpaceX getting regulatory approval from authorities to sell Starlink services in the country.

Under this pact, both Airtel and SpaceX are also learnt to have explored options in offering Starlink equipment in Airtel's retail stores, Starlink services via Airtel to business customers, opportunities to connect communities, schools and health centres among other facilities across India, even in the rural belts of the country. In a statement, Airtel said this agreement is subject to SpaceX receiving authorisations to sell Starlink's satellite communications-based services in India.

"Working with SpaceX to offer Starlink services to Airtel customers in India is a significant milestone and further demonstrates the company's commitment to next-generation satellite connectivity," said Bharti Airtel managing director and vice chairman Gopal Vittal.

"This collaboration enhances our ability to bring world-class high-speed broadband to even the most remote parts of India, ensuring that every individual, business, and community has reliable Internet. Starlink will complement and enhance Airtel's suite of products to ensure reliable and affordable broadband for

AUDIT TRAIL

- Discrepancy, spanning over 5 yrs, is expected to reduce bank's net worth by 2.35% as of Dec. 2024.
- Bank appoints external auditor to confirm actual impact.



Amid huge selling pressure, stock entered oversold zone with its relative strength index slipping to 27.8.

Industry does not expect deposit mobilisation to be impacted due to IndusInd issue.

Developments at IndusInd are big worry because negative derivatives' disclosure has potential to unnerv investors more than a back-dated non-performing loans disclosure.

THE BANK will report net profit for current quarter as well as for the full financial year, despite the hit on the bottom line due to discrepancies discovered in derivative portfolio.

SUMANT KATHPALIA, MD and CEO, IndusInd Bank

cial year. The bank has appointed an external auditor to confirm the actual impact. The RBI, it added, is aware of the issue.

The stock of the lender ended 27.17 per cent lower on the BSE at ₹655.95, after hitting a four year low of ₹649. Amid huge selling pressure, the stock entered the oversold zone with its relative strength index slipping to 27.8 in

the current session. On the NSE, it slipped 27.06 per cent to ₹656.80. The stock has experienced a steep fall over 58 per cent from the peak of ₹1,576.35 on the NSE.

Investor wealth shranked by ₹19,059 crore on BSE as market cap of the bank fell to ₹51,102 crore against ₹70,161 crore in the previous session.

In an interview to a news

channel, Sumant Kathpalia, MD and CEO, IndusInd Bank, said that the bank will report net profit for the current quarter as well as for the full financial year, despite the hit on the bottom line due to discrepancies discovered in the derivative portfolio.

Addressing investor concerns, IndusInd International Holdings Ltd (IIHL) chairman Ashok Hinduja

US tech stocks lose \$1 trn in value on recession worries

New York, March 11: US Technology shares suffered their biggest one-day plunge since 2022, as investors ditched longtime market leaders on rising worries the economy is headed for a recession.

The Nasdaq 100 Index plunged 3.8 per cent with Monday's selling wiping out more than \$1 trillion in value.

Tesla tumbled 15 per cent, widening its loss this year to 45 per cent, while Nvidia lost 5.1 per cent and has erased more than \$1 trillion in market value in two months.

The tech wreckage comes after a weekend that saw US administration officials and President Donald Trump himself suggest that the American economy is set to slow.

The change in language from the campaign trail, when Trump promised tariffs on day one that would pay for tax cuts without disrupting the growth, has sparked a frenzied repricing of risk assets.

"Sell your winners, embrace the bear case and duck and cover," said Michael Bailey, director of research at Fulton Breakfield Broenniman.

VALUE EROSION

BASKET OF PROFITLESS TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES TUMBLE 6.6% AND IS DOWN 23% IN 2025.

- Tesla tumbles 15%, widening its loss this year to 45%. It shed nearly \$600 billion off its value so far in 2025.
- With exception of Meta, all the Mag 7 stocks are in red for the year.
- Nvidia lost 5.1%, saw \$1 trillion erode in market value in 2 months.
- Selloff has been extreme in speculative corners of the market.

By virtually any accounting, the winners until recently had been megacap tech. Nvidia, Microsoft, and Apple soared to valuations north of \$3 trillion. Amazon and Alphabet weren't far behind. Even Tesla saw its market worth top \$1 trillion.

For weeks, Wall Street had been cautiously moving from tech to more defensive sectors as on-again, off-again trade policies unnerved investors at same time inflation proved sticky. That rotation accelerated Monday after unnerving comments on growth over the weekend.

The selloff has been even more extreme in the speculative corners of the

market. A basket of profitless technology companies tumbled 6.6 per cent on Monday and is down 23 per cent this year. The gauge is on pace for the worst quarter since 2022.

With the exception of Meta, all the Mag 7 stocks are in the red for the year, with Nvidia down double digits and Tesla shedding nearly \$600 billion off its value so far in 2025.

"All of these stocks were priced for perfection across the board," said James Abate, chief investment officer at Centre Asset Management LLC. "Clearly you have a market that's in the process of de-risking."

— Bloomberg

Mkts end flat after battling volatility

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MARCH 11

Domestic market overcame negative global cues from sharp meltdown in the US market on recession possibilities led by technology stocks and closed flat after early morning fall by more than half a per cent.

The Sensex recovered from day's low of 73,663 points to close at 74,102.32 down by just 12.85 points while Nifty-50 closed at 22,497 up by 37.60 points after an early morning fall to 22,314.70. Broader markets were mixed with BSE mid-cap index up 0.72 per cent while BSE small-cap index gained 0.70 per cent.

IT stocks faced the heat of US tech stocks sharp fall as BSE IT index fell the most at 0.87 per cent followed by financials with Bankex down by 0.36 per cent mainly triggered by sharp fall in IndusInd Bank while BSE realty index gained 3.92 per cent.

"Markets ended mixed in a choppy trading session with Nifty erasing its losses towards close due to selective buying. Weakness in Asian and US markets indices kept the mood cautious, while strong foreign fund outflows cou-



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pled with volatile currency and global economic uncertainty continue to make investors risk averse," said Prashanth Tapse, senior VP - Research, Mehta Equities.

Foreign portfolio investors were net sellers of equities worth ₹2,823 crore while domestic institutions were net buyers of equities worth ₹2,001 crore.

"Market seems to be in a place where the intensity of selling has reduced as a lot of negatives seem to be priced in but there are still known unknowns around the trade policy which is keeping the rebound in check," said Satish Chandra Aluri, analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk.

Diamonds woo China buyers

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, MARCH 11

China has returned to the diamond market for the first time after the pandemic. India hopes that this will help gems and jewellery exports bottom out and see positive growth in FY26.

The Hong Kong International Jewellery Show that ended on March 8 saw active participation by Chinese buyers. Chinese buyers were conspicuously absent in similar shows after pandemic.

"We have seen Chinese buyers along with those from Vietnam and Cambodia were active in the show for the first time after the pandemic. China used to control around 22 per cent of global diamond demand and in the past few years it had come

down to almost nothing as gold demand had picked up. We expect our exports to Hong Kong, through which Chinese buyers reroute Indian diamonds, to improve in the coming months," said Vipul Shah, past chairman of GJEPC.

According to Sabyasachi Ray, executive director of GJEPC, social media campaigns in China too had contributed to the

lull in the diamond market in past few years. However, De Beers and leading Chinese jeweller Chow Tai Fook have been working to improve the customer perception.

Indian exports of diamonds had dropped from \$9.3 billion in FY19 to \$4.3 billion in FY24. Hong Kong is second largest market for Indian cut and polished diamonds.



India fintech investments top APAC

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, MARCH 11

India was the top economy in the Asia Pacific region to attract investments in fintech in 2024, despite investments in sector edging lower to \$4.1 billion.

Among the large economies of the region, China and India saw decline in investments, but India remained the top destination attracting funds.

Total fintech investment in India slipped from \$4.4 billion to \$4.1 billion, while China saw a drop

from \$2.6 billion to just \$687 million between 2023 and 2024. However, the largest deals in the region were recorded in countries other than China and India.

The \$334 million investment into DMI Finance from Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group was one of the largest deals in India. Niwas Housing Finance, Mintifi and Finova Capital were the other fintech companies that received funding in 2024.

In the Asia Pacific region, Australia saw fin-



tech investment more than double from \$839 million to \$2.1 billion year-over-year, while investment in Japan held steady at \$662 million.

Total fintech investment in the ASPAC region fell to \$11.4 billion in 2024 — the

lowest level seen since 2014. The decline was driven by several factors, including geopolitical uncertainties associated with changes to governments globally, the continued focus on efficiency and cost cutting among many corporations, and the continued softness in China's fintech sector.

While the payments sector remained quite a hot area of investment throughout the region, lending-focused solutions continued to struggle, according to KPMG.

Zydus in talks to buy stake in Amplitude

Mumbai, March 11: Zydus Lifesciences on Tuesday said it has entered into exclusive negotiations to acquire a majority stake in

France-based Amplitude Surgical for 256.8 million euros.

The company has entered into negotiations with PAI Partners, Amplitude Surgical's management, as well as two minority shareholders to acquire 85.6 per cent of the company's share capital, the Ahmedabad-based drug maker said.

Amplitude Surgical is a European MedTech leader in high-quality, lower-limb orthopaedic technologies. The company provides numerous value-added innovations to best meet the needs of

patients, surgeons and healthcare facilities. This includes the design and development of knee and hip prostheses.

In fiscal year ended June 30, 2024, Amplitude Surgical generated sales of 106 million euros and Ebitda of 27.1 million euros on a consolidated basis.

"We believe this was a natural extension in the field of medical technology. Our commitment to quality excellence, continuous investments in R&D and expertise in manufacturing will guide our foray into highly specialised MedTech products, adding a new dimension to our operations," Zydus Lifesciences managing director Sharvil Patel said.

— PTI

New Delhi, March 11: Coinbase Global has registered with India's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), allowing the cryptocurrency exchange to offer trading services in the country.

The American firm plans to roll out its retail trading platform in India later this year, with additional investment and product offerings to follow, according to a Tuesday statement.

This is Coinbase's second attempt to expand into India. In 2022, the company had integrated with India's unified payments interface (UPI) to allow customers to purchase cryptocurrencies using rupees.

But just three days into the launch, Coinbase disabled the service after the entity that runs UPI said it was not aware of any digital-assets exchange using the network.

"India represents one of the most exciting market opportunities in the world today, and we're proud to deepen our investment here in full compliance with local regulations," said John O'Loughlin, Coinbase's regional managing director for APAC in a statement.

— Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

MI denied direct entry to WPL final

Mumbai: Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru ended an otherwise disappointing season on a positive note, denying Mumbai Indians a direct entry into the final of the Women's Premier League with an 11-run win here on Tuesday. The result helped table toppers Delhi Capitals secure a direct berth in the final of the competition, which will be held here on March 15, while MI will take on Gujarat Giants in the eliminator on March 13 at the same venue. DC have now entered the summit clash for the third consecutive time and would hope that coveted title doesn't elude them.

Batting first, RCB rode on skipper Smriti Mandhana's 37-ball 53 and useful contributions from Ellyse Perry (49 off 38 balls), Richa Ghosh (36 off 22) and Georgia Wareham (31 off 10) to post a commanding 199 for three.

In reply, MI were stopped at 188 for nine. Both MI and Delhi finished the league engagements with five wins each, but the latter had better net run rate.

— PTI

Brief scores: Royal Challengers Bengaluru 199/3 (Smriti Mandhana 53, Ellyse Perry 49 not out, Richa Ghosh 36, Georgia Wareham 31 not out) beat Mumbai Indians 188/9 (Nat Sciver-Brunt 69, Sneha Rana 3/26, Kim Garth 2/33).

Satwik & Chirag, Sen drop 5 spots

New Delhi: Star shuttler Lakshya Sen and the celebrated men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty dropped five places each, leaving no Indian men's representation in the world's top 10, according to the latest BWF World Rankings released on Tuesday. Lakshya, a former world number 6, slipped to 15th following a series of sub-par performances this season.

Meanwhile, Satwik-Chirag, the former world No. 1 men's doubles pair, fell to 12th from seventh last week. For the Asian Games champions, this marks the first time since November 2021 that they are outside the top 10.

In women's singles, double Olympic medalist P. V. Sindhu also dropped one place and is now ranked 16th.

The women's doubles pair of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand was the only bright spot for India, maintaining a spot in the world's top 10 at ninth. — PTI

Ahead of IPL, NZ rest T20 regulars

Wellington: New Zealand have rested a majority of their T20 regulars for the home series against Pakistan with the IPL around the corner. The series, comprising five T20Is, begins March 16 while the IPL begins March 22.

Michael Bracewell, who was one of the main performers for New Zealand in the Champions Trophy, will lead the side in the absence of Mitchell Santner. Besides Bracewell, six more players in the T20 squad featured in the 50-over Champions Trophy. Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra and white-ball captain Santner were unavailable for selection due to IPL commitments. Kyle Jamieson and Will O'Rourke have been included only for the first three games of the series, as the selectors seek to manage the workload of the pace bowlers returning from the Champions Trophy. — PTI

Rajnigandha Polo emerge champs

New Delhi: Rajnigandha Achievers edged past Suján Indian Tigers 6-5 in the final to lift the Radha Mohan Rajinder Mohan (RMRM) Gold Vase Cup at the Jaipur Polo Grounds here on Tuesday. This is the sixth consecutive win for the Rajnigandha at the event. Rajnigandha Achievers showcased an impressive comeback, sealing their victory with two crucial goals in the final chukker. The final chase was nothing short of a nail-biter, with both teams battling neck and neck till the last chukker. Shamsheer Ali was instrumental in Rajnigandha's success, scoring the opening goal, the equaliser and ultimately, the winning goal.

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MASTER PLAN

Challenging two-year cycle to start for coach Gambhir

New Delhi, March 11: People who know Gautam Gambhir, describe him as someone "boringly consistent", someone who has not even changed his eating pattern in the last 20 years.

An experiment is out of question.

He loves wearing his denims for casual gatherings and it has not changed for years. But when it comes to cricket, his brain is always ticking and seeking solutions to various strategic problems.

It has been eight months since Gambhir took charge of the national team after Rahul Dravid ended his stint with the T20 World Cup triumph in July.

The man from Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar has witnessed some heart-breaking and baffling defeats as well as success. He has seen both ends of the spectrum with high of Champions Trophy and low of six Test losses.

The CT win has come like a breath of fresh air and 'Guru Gambhir' will get a chance to analyse the big picture as Indian cricket is expected to undergo a sea-change in the next two crucial years.

It won't be wrong to say that Gambhir has completed his probation period and will get into a phase where he would have three distinct challenges, starting with the Test tour of England.

That will be, as usual, right after the T20 spectacle known as IPL with no time for preparation.

His second big challenge will be the 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka where Suryakumar Yadav's men will be defending their title.

And last but certainly not the least is 2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa, which will be a heluva challenge.

If one segregates Gambhir's coaching across formats, he has already built a fabulous core for the T20 team with Surya at the helm.

Even as Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja walked into the sunset in shortest format, their absence was hardly felt as the new brand of cricket that India has been playing in T20 is earning them fans globally.



India head coach Gautam Gambhir (left) interacts with K. L. Rahul during a training session in Dubai on Friday.

— PTI

● The Champions Trophy win has come like a breath of fresh air and 'Guru Gambhir' will get a chance to analyse the big picture as Indian cricket is expected to undergo a sea-change in the next two crucial years.

He has unearthed a gem in Abhishek Sharma.

When Varun Chakravarthi and Jasprit Bumrah would bowl during a global meet (World T20) those eight overs would be a nightmare for batters. Sanju Samson has found his mojo although Rishabh Pant will be around and so would be

Yashasvi Jaiswal.

There is a prolific power-play wicket-taker in Arshdeep Singh and at least three seam all-rounders in Hardik Pandya, Nitish Kumar Reddy and Shivam Dube.

Surya and Axar along with Hardik are old guards in this team. It is a team which has all its

bases covered and is running on auto-pilot with a tweak here and there.

But it is the other two formats where Gambhir, the strategist, the disciplinarian and the man-manager would have to merge for results.

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have made it clear that they are not retiring from ODIs anytime soon.

But during the 2027 World Cup Gambhir won't have the option of using four specialist spinners and create magic with totals in range of 240-250.

— PTI

ONE SHOULD ALWAYS AIM FOR INDIA CAP, NOT IPL: PANT

New Delhi, March 11: India wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant feels the lure of the IPL is understandable but budding cricketers should always focus on playing for the country as "everything else" follows thereafter. Pant, who was part of India's triumphant Champions Trophy squad but did not get a game, made his international debut back in 2017.

"Since childhood, I had only one dream — to play for India. I never even thought about playing in the IPL. I think today, people are more focused on the IPL. Of course, it's a great platform, but I believe that if your goal is to play for your country, everything else — including the IPL — will eventually fall into place," Pant told JioHotstar.

"If you have that bigger mindset, success will follow. I always believed that I would play for India one day, and God has been kind. At 18, I got the opportunity to make my debut, and I am grateful for that," said the 27-year-old.

Pant is known for flamboyant style of play and some of his trademark shots include a one-handed six with the bat often slipping out of his hands.

— PTI

ICC UNLIKELY TO OFFER ANY EXPLANATION TO PAK BOARD

Dubai/ Karachi, March 11: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is unlikely to receive any "formal clarification" from the ICC on the perceived snub during the closing ceremony of the Champions Trophy in Dubai. The controversy erupted when Sumair Ahmed, who is chief operating officer of the PCB and was the tournament director of the Champions Trophy, was not invited on stage for the final presentation.

However according to ICC sources, the PCB won't be given any formal explanation.

"If the PCB mandarins look up, even ICC CEO Geoff Allardice wasn't present on stage. The reason is protocol," said the ICC source.

"Sumair Ahmed is an employee of the PCB and not an office-bearer. Also please check when has a tournament director been on stage for presentation?"

"We can give an example. ICC's new head of operations and communications Gaurav Saxena was once Tournament Director for Asia Cup in Dubai. Was he on stage for final presentation," an ICC source said.

— PTI

ALL ENGLAND | CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sen advances, Prannoy exits

Birmingham, March 11: India's Lakshya Sen fought his way back to reach the second round of the All England Championships on Tuesday, while compatriot H. S. Prannoy was eliminated in the opening round of the men's singles competition here.

Lakshya, ranked 15th in the world, came from behind to defeat Chinese Taipei's world No. 37 Su Li Yang, with a 13-21, 21-17, 21-15 win in the opening round of the Super 1000 event.

The 23-year-old from Almora will face Indonesia's third seed Jonatan Christie next. Lakshya had defeated Christie en route to his fourth place finish at the Paris Olympics last year.

Prannoy, a bronze medalist at the 2023 World Championships and Asian Games, struggled against France's Toma Junior Popov, who is ranked 17th. Prannoy fought for 53 minutes before going down 19-21, 16-21.

In the mixed doubles, Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath had a tough outing against China's world No. 7 pair of Guo Xin Wa and Chen Fang Hui, losing

6-21, 15-21 in 51 minutes.

After losing the first game, Lakshya and Yang battled fiercely till 17-17 in the second game, with the Indian taking advantage of three errors from Yang at the net to register four straight points and roar back into the contest.

In the decider, Lakshya led 11-9 at the interval, and though Yang drew level at 15-15, Lakshya finished strong, winning the last six points with a body blow, two powerful returns, and a few more mistakes from Yang.

Earlier in the day, the 32-year-old Prannoy, ranked 29th, had his chances in the opening game, leading 6-1 and 15-12, but faltered in the face of the relentless pressure of Popov, who turned the game around from 16-18 to 19-18 before taking the game.

— PTI

AFTER 15 MONTHS, MINISTRY REVOKES WFI SUSPENSION

New Delhi, March 11: The Sports Ministry has revoked the suspension imposed on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), ending the months of uncertainty surrounding the sport and paving the way for resumption of activities, including selection trials for the upcoming Asian Championship in Amman.

The ministry had suspended the WFI on December 24, 2023 for lapses in governance and procedural integrity by the new body, which was elected on December 21. It had asked IOA to form an ad-hoc panel to run the affairs of the Federation.

The Sanjay Singh-led body had announced the conduct of Under-15 and Under-20 National Championships in Nandini Nagar, Gonda — the stronghold of former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh — and the choice of venue irked the government since the former BJP MP was facing charges of sexual harassment.

The ministry, in its order issued on Monday, said that the WFI has taken compliant measures, so in larger interest of the sport and athletes, the ministry has decided to lift the suspension.

— PTI

PREMIER | LEAGUE



Newcastle United's Bruno Guimaraes (left) celebrates after scoring against West Ham during the English Premier League match in London on Monday.

— AP

NEWCASTLE SINK WEST HAM TO REIGNITE TOP FOUR BID

London, March 11: Newcastle reignited their bid to qualify for the Champions League as Bruno Guimaraes sealed a controversial 1-0 win at West Ham on Monday.

Brazil midfielder Guimaraes struck in the second half as West Ham's claims for a foul in the build-up were ignored.

Eddie Howe's side are up to sixth place in the Premier League, level on points with fifth-placed Manchester City and two points behind fourth-placed Chelsea.

A top four berth will guarantee Newcastle return to the Champions League after missing out this season.

Even finishing fifth could be enough to ensure qualification for Europe's elite club competition depending on the results

of the remaining English clubs in continental action.

After losing three of their last five matches, the Magpies' restorative victory was perfectly timed ahead of their second League Cup final appearance in three seasons.

Newcastle, beaten by Manchester United in the League Cup showpiece in 2023, face Premier League leaders Liverpool in the final at Wembley on Sunday.

The Tyneside club are aiming to win their first major trophy since the 1969 Inter-Cities Fairs Cup and their first domestic prize since the 1955 FA Cup.

"One of our best wins of the season, not in terms of performance but desire and heart," Howe said.

— AFP