



Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures while speaking at a Technology Forum in Moscow, Russia



Protesters threw stones at police during a rally against the recent budget efficiency & other policies implemented by President Prabowo Subianto, in Jakarta, Indonesia

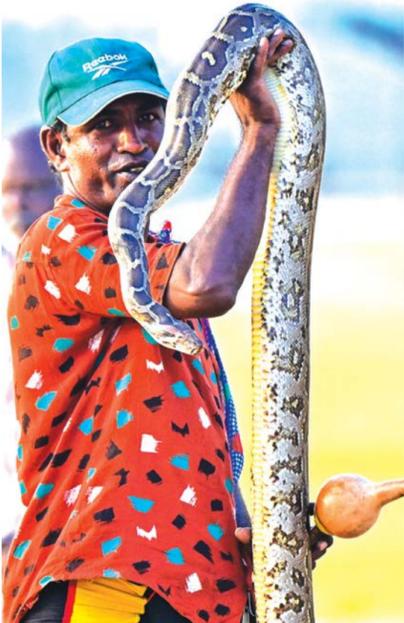


Ice caused by broken a water line and cold temperatures cover vegetation and power lines in Carrolton, Texas



A view shows former Kresty (Crosses) prison on the banks of the Neva river in Saint Petersburg, Russia

allovertheworld



A snake charmer holds a python at the Galle Face promenade in Colombo, Sri Lanka

Georgia charges two suspected of IS links with storing explosives

TBILISI: Georgia charged two people with alleged ties to the Islamic State group with illegally acquiring and possessing explosives, officials said Friday, as authorities crack down on suspected jihadists. Dozens of Georgians - primarily ethnic Chechen Muslims from the Pankisi Valley in the country's northeast, a region known for jihadist recruitment -- have fought alongside IS extremists in Syria and Iraq, according to officials in Tbilisi. The prosecutor general's office said in a statement that "two individuals suspected of possible links to the terrorist organisation Islamic State were charged with the illegal acquisition and possession of ammunition and explosive devices."

Kenyan police officers charged with murder of Indians

NAIROBI: Thirteen Kenyan security officers pleaded not guilty to charges of murdering two Indian men and their Kenyan driver in 2022 in a politically-charged case, their lawyer said Friday. The policemen along with a national intelligence officer and a wildlife warden went before a judge on Thursday over the killing of driver Nicodemus Mwanja Mwangi and the two Indians, identified by prosecutors as Mohamed Zaid Sami Kidwai and Zulfikar Ahmed Khan. "It is a political case. Our clients are innocent," defence lawyer Danstan Omari told AFP. The two Indians were alleged to have worked on Kenyan President William Ruto's successful 2022 election campaign, according to media reports. They were killed and their bodies dumped in the forest in July 2022, weeks before the election, media reported, citing evidence given by investigators in court.

EU summons Rwandan ambassador over DR Congo offensive

BRUSSELS: The EU on Friday summoned Rwanda's ambassador to demand Kigali pull out troops from neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo and stop backing an offensive by the M23 armed group. M23 forces have seized large swathes of the mineral-rich eastern DRC - including the main cities of Goma and Bukavu - in the face of limited resistance from Congolese forces. "The European Union has today summoned the ambassador of Rwanda to the EU due to the ongoing offensive of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and M23 in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)," the EU said in a statement. "The Government of Rwanda must immediately withdraw all RDF troops from the DRC territory and stop supporting the M23 and any other armed group."

Sweden investigating new Baltic Sea cable damage

STOCKHOLM: Swedish authorities said Friday they were investigating suspected damage to an underwater cable in the Baltic Sea, following a string of incidents experts believe are acts of sabotage orchestrated by Russia. Finnish operator Cinia said it had recorded "some disturbance" on its C-Lion 1 communications cable linking Finland and Germany. "However, the disturbance does not affect the functionality of telecommunications connections running in the cable and the data traffic continues flowing normally," it said in a statement, adding that the cause was "still under investigation". The same cable had previously been cut in November last year with suspicions falling on a Chinese ship. A string of incidents involving damage to cables and other infrastructure in the Baltic Sea have occurred in recent months, amid soaring tensions between the West and Russia over Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Cholera kills 15 in western Ethiopia: Health official

ADDIS ABABA: A cholera outbreak in western Ethiopia has killed 15 people and struck more than 200 people this month, a regional health official said Friday, appealing for more medicine. Several regions of Ethiopia and other African countries have been fighting cholera outbreaks in recent weeks, including Sudan and Angola. "Fifteen people have died, and we have 234 cases since the beginning of February," Nigwi Gillo, an emergencies manager in the Gambella region health bureau, told AFP. "The situation is not yet under control and we don't have enough medication currently, and we are asking our partners to provide." Cholera causes severe diarrhoea, vomiting and muscle cramps, and is generally contracted by eating or drinking food or water that is contaminated with the bacterium, according to the World Health Organization.

EAM urges India-China cooperation to uphold G20 integrity

PTI, JOHANNESBURG: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday emphasised the joint efforts of India and China in maintaining the integrity of the G20 amid a "polarised" global situation.

Jaishankar is in Johannesburg on a two-day visit to South Africa to participate in the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

"We should recognise that in a polarised global situation, our two countries have worked hard to preserve and protect the G20 as an institution. This in itself testifies to the importance of international cooperation," he said in his opening remarks at a bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting here.

Wang said after the successful meeting between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kazan in Russia last year, exchanges at all levels between the two countries



Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, in Johannesburg, South Africa

have been restored in an orderly manner, according to a press release issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

The meeting of Special Representatives on border issues have reached a consensus on properly handling specific differences, Wang said. Wang and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval are the Special Representatives for the India-China border mechanism.

The two met in December last year and agreed to

always on the right track, he said. China is willing to work with India to plan commemorative activities for the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and inject new impetus into the development of bilateral relations, he said.

South Africa is hosting the G20 for 2025, with this meeting marking the beginning of a series of engagements scheduled throughout the year.

As the premier forum for international economic cooperation, the G20 plays a critical role in steering the global economy through the significant challenges it faces.

The members of the G20 are: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States, the African Union and the European Union.

No injuries from Israeli bus explosions in suspected militant attack, police say

AP, BAT YAM (ISRAEL): A series of explosions Thursday on three parked buses has rattled central Israel in what authorities suspected was a militant attack. No injuries were reported.

The explosions happened on a day when Israel was already grieving after Hamas returned the bodies of four hostages from Gaza as part of a ceasefire deal. The bus explosions were reminiscent of bombings during the Palestinian uprising of the 2000s, but such attacks are now rare.

Explosives were found on two other buses but did not detonate, police spokesman Asi Aharoni told Channel 13 TV. Israeli police said the five bombs were identical and equipped with timers, and said bomb squads were defusing the unexploded bombs.

Investigators in white coveralls searched for evidence inside the burned-out metal shells of the buses, which blew up in a parking lot in Bat Yam, a city outside Tel Aviv.

The city's mayor, Tzvika Brot, said it was a miracle no one was hurt. The buses had been parked after finishing their routes, he said.

The head of the bus company said they immediately ordered all bus drivers to stop and conduct a "thorough inspection". They resumed their routes once they were found to be safe, Ofir Karni said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he was receiving updates from his military secretary and following the events. The Shin Bet internal security agency was taking over the investigation, police said.

"We need to determine if a single suspect placed explosives on a number of buses, or if there were multiple suspects," police spokesman Haim Sargrof told Israeli TV.

Sargrof said the explosives used Thursday matched explosives used in the West Bank, but he declined to elaborate.

FROM PAGE 1

IN THIRSTY SALIGAO, LEAKING PIPES LET WATER GO TO WASTE

"Sometimes we have to hire tankers, which is very expensive. We've been struggling with this for years, but no one listens," he added

Cajitan Fernandes from St. John Waddo, Marra, Pilerne, highlighted how the situation worsens during the hotter months of April and May. "The government promises 24/7 water supply and the slogan 'har ghar nal har ghar jal' (tap for every house, water for every house), but it is all untrue. We face many hardships. Recently, a water pipeline broke, causing a lot of distress," he said.

The core issue, Fernandes explained, lies in the low water pressure in the pipelines, which prevents water from reaching homes. "If there's no pressure, how can water reach us? It doesn't even reach the kitchen or toilet," he said, adding that a nearby commercial complex's water usage has further exacerbated the problem. "A new complex with multiple flats is drawing water before it even reaches us. This is causing great difficulty for local residents."

Fernandes' family of five, struggling with the inadequate water supply, sometimes resorts to washing clothes in a nearby lake, which is also losing water storage capacity due to deforestation. "The lake is not safe either, as trees are being cut down. We locals are protesting against proposed projects, but the government has decimated Mhadei too," he added.

He also pointed out the disparity between commercial entities and residents. "Commercial complexes have ample resources to hire water tankers, but we, the poor, cannot afford such luxuries. The local MLA had visited last year after a pipeline break, but it took months for repairs to be made. PWD claims they lack manpower. Our borewells have dried up, and the remaining water is unfit for consumption."

Another resident, Bruno De Sousa, also voiced his concerns, stating, "The water we get is muddy and lacks pressure, making it only useful for irrigation. It's impossible for the water to even reach the tanks. Thankfully, I have wells, but I still need to buy drinking water at a cost of Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000 a month."

Prakash Bhandodkar, President of the Pilerne Citizens Forum, explained, "We don't get water regularly. Sometimes it's absent for up to eight days, and when it does come, it's too muddy."

A woman from Verem, who wished to remain anonymous, questioned the inconsistency of the supply, asking, "Why can't we get water daily? Is it so difficult to provide a basic necessity like water every day?"

DOWRY DEMAND NOT NEEDED TO INVOKE CRUELTY CHARGE AGAINST HUSBANDS: SC

Section 498A (Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty) was introduced in the IPC in 1983 with the primary objective to protect married women from cruelty of their husbands or in-laws.

The provision provides a broad and inclusive definition of "cruelty" encompassing both physical and mental harm to the woman's body and in addition, it covers acts of harassment in pursuit of unlawful demands for property or valuable security, including demands related to dowry.

In the present case, the Andhra Pradesh High Court quashed an FIR against man and others in a case by holding that the allegations against the accused did not constitute the offence of cruelty under Section 498A IPC as there was no dowry demand.

Referring to several judgements, the top court set aside the high court's verdict quashing the FIR against them after taking note of the wife's appeal.

The order referred to the statement of objects and reasons for the introduction Section 498A in the IPC in 1983 in Parliament and said it was brought when dowry deaths were on rise in the country.

The bench quoted the statement as saying in Parliament, "The provision was brought to deal effectively not only with cases of dowry death but also cases of cruelty to married women by their in-laws."

INDIAN-ORIGIN KASH PATEL TO TAKE OVER AS FBI DIRECTOR

After his confirmation, Patel posted on X, "I am honoured to be confirmed as the ninth Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Thank you to President Trump

and Attorney General Bondi for your unwavering confidence and support."

"The FBI has a storied legacy — from the "G-Men" to safeguarding our nation in the wake of 9/11. The American people deserve an FBI that is transparent, accountable, and committed to justice. The politicisation of our justice system has eroded public trust—but that ends today. My mission as Director is clear: let good cops be cops — and rebuild trust in the FBI," he said.

He also warned that the agency would hunt down those who seek to harm Americans.

He was the 18th Cabinet official approved by lawmakers since Trump was inaugurated a month ago.

Patel takes the helm of an FBI in flux after the justice department forced out some of its top officials and demanded the names of agents who investigated the 2021 riot by Trump supporters at the US Capitol.

Patel replaces Christopher Wray whom Trump picked in 2017. Wray resigned before inauguration day last month after the incoming Republican president indicated he would fire him.

The role of FBI director is supposed to be a 10-year term. Republicans have defended Trump's pick to lead the FBI, arguing that Patel will bring needed transparency to the FBI and dismissing controversial past statements as hyperbole.

After announcing Patel as his FBI pick, Trump posted on social media calling him "an advocate for truth, accountability, and the constitution".

"Kash is a brilliant lawyer, investigator, and 'America First' fighter who has spent his career exposing corruption, defending justice, and protecting the American people," Trump said.

Meanwhile, Democrats say Patel is a far-right conspiracy theorist with little experience in law enforcement, and someone who would put fealty to Trump above his oath to lead a department that is meant to operate independently.

"(Patel's) poor judgment and lack of experience make him wholly unqualified to keep Americans safe as our FBI Director. I voted no," Senator Martin Heinrich said on X.

"We will vote no," Sen Adam Schiff (D-California) said at the morning news conference.

"Our Republican colleagues, intimidated by this president and threats of primary challenges from the MAGA (Make America Great Again) world, may vote to confirm him. But... they will have to live with that vote."

In his new position, Patel will lead a mammoth organisation with more than 30,000 employees, hundreds of offices nationwide and a sprawling mandate to investigate cases involving national security, terrorism and violent crimes.

Since long before his nomination, Patel has called for profound changes within the FBI. His 2023 book described the bureau as "a tool of surveillance and suppression of American citizens" and said its powers should be dramatically curtailed.

USAID FUNDING ROW: CONGRESS, BJP GO TO WAR

"Facts show all may have jumped the gun. That USD 21 million ... was sanctioned in 2022 for Bangladesh, not India," the Indian Express report said, citing documents.

US President Donald Trump claimed the USD 21 million funding to India for 'voter turnout' was a 'kickback' scheme, as he continued to attack the previous Biden administration over the now cancelled financial aid.

Trump made these remarks while speaking at the Republican Governors Association meeting in Washington DC on Thursday.

"USD 21 million for voter turnout in India. Why are we caring about India's turnout? We have got enough problems. We want our own turnout," he said.

This is the third time within a week that Trump has questioned the funding.

better knowledge about it than him.

The BJP accused the Congress of using external influence in India's election process, ever since the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) announced on February 16 that it had "cancelled" USAID funding of "USD 21 million for voter turnout in India".

"More than USD 2000 million funding came to the government in India from 2004-13 during the erstwhile Congress led UPA rule. And, just USD 1.5 million came during Modi ji's term. It's because they know that Narendra Modi will not sell India and India's interests to any foreign power," he said.

A larger share of the USAID fund came into India during the UPA regime because the Congress can broker the country's sovereignty and its interests, Bhatia alleged.

"While funding for the government (in India) stopped, there was an increase in funding for the NGOs during Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra to strengthen Rahul Gandhi ahead of the polls in an attempt to defeat Narendra Modi (in the Lok Sabha elections)," he claimed.

Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra was aimed at 'breaking India', he charged.

BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya termed the report as "fake news", saying it discusses USD 21 million in funding to Bangladesh in 2022 but "misrepresents" reference to USD-21 million funding tranche to "promote" voter turnout in India.

Addressing a press conference, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera alleged the entire "USD-21 million USAID funds narrative" perpetrated by the BJP, Modi government's ministers, its economic advisor, the party's IT department head, the RSS-BJP ecosystem was done to divert attention from their "own sins" of using foreign funds to destabilise Congress governments in the past.

Citing the report, Khera claimed that the truth has come out that the 'USD 21 million USAID funds' were not given to India, but to Bangladesh.

"Official documents prove that. (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi's best friend Trump had perhaps intentionally or unintentionally made a faux pas through the DOGE. But the fact that the RSS-BJP ecosystem shamelessly latched onto it, without examining the facts, tells you that it wanted to hide its own acts of commissions in damaging India's democracy," he said.

Khera referred to RSS taking CIA's assistance during Emergency and in the run-up to it, besides other instances.

He also alleged that RSS orchestrated the Anna Hazare-Arvind Kejriwal 'India Against Corruption' movement to overthrow the Congress-led UPA government with the help of foreign aid, especially from USAID and Ford Foundation.

"Let it be clear, we do not consider global partnerships, developmental agencies, aid mechanisms, such as the USAID, as unscrupulous. It is the BJP that first started the deep-state narrative and demonising the USAID. However, we have enough evidence that the RSS-BJP has been taking covert assistance from foreign agencies to destabilize Indian democracy and bulldoze our Constitution," Khera alleged.

Meanwhile, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar too voiced concern over the alleged USAID funding for raising voter turnout in India, saying people who allowed such an attack on the country's democratic values should be exposed.

Speaking at an event here, he said the remarks on USAID funding came from a person of authority and that it was a fact that money was given.

"People who allowed such an attack (to allegedly damage the electoral purity) should be exposed," he said.

He also said delivering a body blow to such forces is the "national duty" of people.

Addressing another event, Dhankhar said, "Time has come to thoroughly get into this malaise, this political COVID infiltrated in our society to destroy our democracy. All those involved in this sinister activity, who benefited out of this structured pernicious strategy must be shamed and brought to book, fully exposed."

As the row snowballed, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi said, "The joke is on us as a nation. The Gol went by DOGE revelation, they lapped up President Trump's statement. The media debated it with glee. Neither of them left with any self respect enough to investigate rather than believe all that is being served to them."

TMC leader Saket Gokhale said the BJP held press conferences claiming a big "conspiracy" about election interference in India.

"Turns out the entire 'USD 21 million for voter turnout' thing was an 'error'," he said, accusing the BJP of "lying again for cheap political points".