



Prez Vladimir Putin attends a meeting on the development of the rare earth metals industry at the Novo-Ogarevo state residence, Russia



US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth (R) welcomes Saudi Minister of Defense Khalid bin Salman at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia



Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi meets with General Pierre Schill, CEMAT (French Army Chief) during an official visit to France



Jeffrey Ferguson, an Orange County Superior Court judge, who's on trial for allegedly killing his wife at the Santa Ana Courthouse in Santa Ana, California

allovertheworld



Nicole Kidman speaks onstage during the Time Women Of The Year Leadership Forum at The West Hollywood edition in West Hollywood, California, on Tuesday

Ukraine rupture grows as US sides with Russia at UN

AFP, UNITED NATIONS: The United States sided with Russia twice Monday at the United Nations, as they sought to avoid any condemnation of Moscow's invasion of its neighbor three years ago.

The two votes highlighted a seismic shift in the balance of power at the UN, where Washington had steadfastly voted for resolutions that favored Ukraine and condemned Russia, until the abrupt rupture with Kyiv.

UKRAINE CONFLICT As US President Donald Trump stakes out a new position on the Ukraine war, Washington and Russia aligned first at a morning vote at the General Assembly and again at an afternoon vote of the Security Council.

A European-backed text won 93 votes for at the General Assembly and 18 votes against, with 65 abstentions and Washington sided with Moscow and Russian allies Belarus, North Korea and Sudan to vote against the text.

The resolution - which won far less support compared to previous ones on the war -- strongly criticizes Russia, and emphasizes Ukraine's territorial integrity and inviolability of its borders.

Washington drafted a rival resolution amid an intensifying feud between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

But Ukraine's European allies pushed to heavily reword the US text to say that the "full-scale invasion of Ukraine" had been carried out by Russia, meaning Washington ultimately did not vote in favor of its own text.

Kremlin hails 'balanced' US position on Ukraine after UN vote

AFP, MOSCOW: The Kremlin on Tuesday praised Washington's "balanced position" after the US voted with Russia at the United Nations to avoid condemnation of Moscow's campaign against Ukraine.

"The US is taking a much more balanced position which is really aimed at trying to resolve the

Ukraine conflict. We welcome this," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Peskov said comments from European leaders "do not signal balance", adding: "But, perhaps, as a result of contacts between the Europeans and the Americans, somehow Europe will gravitate towards greater balance".

Undeterred, the United States brought the earlier, unchanged text to a vote at the Security Council in the afternoon, securing its passage with 10 votes for and none against - alongside five abstentions. The abstentions were France, Britain, Denmark, Greece, and Slovenia.

Swift end to the conflict? France and Britain notably could have vetoed the resolution, which merely "implores a swift end to the conflict" without blaming Russia.

Several amendments, brought respectively by Russia and European nations, did not pass.

"We acknowledge the constructive changes in the United States position when it comes to the Ukrainian conflict," said Russia's UN envoy Vassily Nebenzya following the vote.

Relations between Washington and Kyiv have rapidly deteriorated following Trump's return to the White House, with the US president claiming Zelensky is highly unpopular and a "dictator".

Trump's growing rupture with Ukraine has caused panic on a continent that has relied on US security assurance for 80 years.

The International Crisis Group's Richard Gowan said the EU won a "moral victory" in the General Assembly, but warned European diplomats will "worry that Russia and the US will route more resolutions on Ukraine through the Security Council - potentially including asking for an endorsement of whatever deal Trump and Putin cook up."

Ahead of the Security Council vote, there was speculation on whether France or Britain would be prepared to wield their first vetoes in more than 30 years.

UK boosts defence budget

AFP, LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer pledged Tuesday to boost defence spending to 2.5% of the economy by 2027, as uncertainty reigns over US President Donald Trump's commitment to European security.

Starmer expressed an intent to eventually reach 3%, a rise of 0.7% from current spending that would mark the biggest increase since the end of the Cold War.

His announcement comes ahead of key talks on Ukraine with Trump in Washington on Thursday.

It will be seen as an attempt to appease the US president who has demanded that European powers pay more for their own security. The UK spent 2.3% of GDP on defence in 2023/24.

Starmer's Labour government had previously committed to increasing defence spending to 2.5%, but had not set a timeline.

The prime minister told parliament the increase would be funded by cutting overseas development aid from 0.5% of gross national income (GNI) to 0.3%.

CLASSIFIED CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

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Thanksgiving

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FROM PAGE 1 & 2

CABLES CUT, INTERNET BLACKOUT SPARKS MAJOR DISRUPTION IN CAPITAL

On Tuesday, several key institutions, including the Panjim Head Post Office, State Bank of India (SBI), and prominent schools in the city, were left without internet. A promoter from a major internet service provider, speaking anonymously, warned that disruptions could escalate further. "If the cable-cutting reaches Patto on Tuesday, which is a key junction serving all of Goa, the impact will be devastating for internet users across the state," the source said.

WANGCHUK URGES PM TO PRESERVE HIMALAYAN GLACIERS

"India needs to take a lead in glacier preservation as we have the Himalayas, and our sacred rivers such as the Ganga and Yamuna come out of them," Wangchuk said.

Stating that he is an admirer of the environment initiatives taken by Prime Minister Modi, especially the 'Mission LiFE' campaign, Wangchuk in his letter urged Modi to set up a commission to assess the state of Himalayan glaciers.

"As we all know, the glaciers of the Himalayas are melting very fast and if this and the accompanying deforestation continues at the current rate, in few decades our sacred rivers like Ganga, Bhramputra and Indus might become seasonal rivers. This may also mean that the next Maha Kumbh might only happen on the sandy remains of the sacred river," Wangchuk said.

POPE CARRIES OUT DUTIES DESPITE CRITICAL CONDITION

Francis also decided to "convene a consistory about the future canonizations."

Francis regularly approves decrees from the Vatican's saint-making office when he is at the Vatican, albeit during audiences with the head of the office, not Parolin. But the calling of a consistory, which is a formal meeting of cardinals, was also significant and forward-looking, given his illness.

No date was set for the meeting. But it was at a banal consistory to set dates for canonisations on February 11, 2013, that Pope Benedict XVI announced, in Latin, that he would resign because he couldn't keep up with the rigors of the papacy. Francis has said he, too, would consider resigning if he found himself in that situation, after Benedict "opened the door" to it and became the first pope in 600 years to retire.

STANDING TALL FOR 200 YRS, BANYAN TREE HAS TO MOVE

When asked about the Khapheswar Temple, which is located near the banyan tree, Pangang clarified that it was not part of the issue under consideration. He noted that decisions regarding the temple's relocation were for the PWD and contractor to determine.

In response to the decision, landscape designer Daniel D'Souza urged caution, emphasising the importance of learning from past mistakes. "Banyan tree cannot be planted in low-lying areas. I suggest that the tree be cut in two parts, which will make it more easy to translocate it. Since summer is approaching, we have to make sure that the trees has a proper canopy," D'Souza said. He also highlighted the importance of following a scientific approach to ensure the banyan tree's survival as summer approaches.

Parag Mody's expert report had recommended that future tree translocations involve qualified professionals with experience in arboriculture and ecological restoration. He also advised that trees should be gradually pruned to reduce stress and maintain an adequate canopy to support regrowth.

VERDICT IN HIGH-PROFILE K'TAKA MINING 'SCAM' ON FRIDAY

The accused also pointed to admissions made by a witness during cross-examination, asserting that the transaction involving the supply of 5,051 metric tonnes (MT) of iron ore was legitimate.

A further submission was made by another defendant on similar grounds. In response, the special public prosecutor representing the Special Investigation Team (SIT)

of the Karnataka Lokayukta requested additional time to clarify details concerning the permit obtained by M/s Adarsh Enterprises, which had been used to transport the iron ore. On Tuesday, the court heard the prosecutor's arguments and ultimately dismissed the submissions made by the two accused.

The mining scam centers on the illegal transportation of nearly 17 metric tonnes (MT) of iron ore from the lease area of M/s S B Minerals, Vyasankere plot, and other mines. The accused allegedly transported the ore to Belekri Port without the necessary permits from the Department of Mines and Geology. The iron ore was then sold to M/s Eagle Traders and Logistics, circumventing legal royalty payments, tax collection at source (TCS), and forest way charges.

The prosecution claims that the illegal operation resulted in a financial loss of over Rs 1.5 crore to the government, while the accused reportedly made illegal profits from the scheme. The case continues to attract attention, particularly due to the involvement of a Goa Minister and his family in the alleged conspiracy.

FATE OF MOLLEM FOREST TRACT TO BE DECIDED TODAY

However, the government's push comes amid strong opposition from scientists, environmentalists, and activists who are urging the REC to reject the proposal and uphold the recommendations of the Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC). The CEC has opposed the project, stating that it poses a severe threat to the biodiversity of the Western Ghats, a globally recognized hotspot for wildlife. The committee has argued that the project would disrupt critical wildlife corridors within the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park, with minimal benefits to railway capacity.

In a letter to the REC, a group of scientists and researchers warned of the irreversible ecological damage that the project could cause, including habitat fragmentation, deforestation, and increased wildlife mortality due to train collisions. "This project threatens not only the fragile ecosystems of the Western Ghats but also the livelihoods and well-being of local communities that depend on these ecosystems," said Dr. Anushka Rege, a scientist specializing in landscape ecology. "Upholding the CEC's recommendation is essential for protecting both the ecological integrity and societal welfare of the region."

Dr. Sinead D'Silva, a researcher from the University of Leeds, pointed out that the project has faced consistent opposition from the people of Goa, who are deeply concerned about its environmental impacts. "If the people of Goa understand the dangers, why is the government pushing forward with it?" she questioned.

The CEC has also questioned its economic justification, pointing to the steep gradient of the existing railway line, which is considered one of the most inefficient in the country. Critics argue that the primary aim of the double-tracking is to facilitate coal transportation, despite the country's shift away from coal imports. Environmental groups also note that Goa's expanding highway network and the new Mopa airport already address the region's transport needs, rendering the railway expansion unnecessary.

As the REC prepares to make its decision, all eyes are on whether it will uphold the CEC's findings and protect the Western Ghats ecosystem or allow the forest land diversion to proceed, advancing the contentious railway project.

COVID SHOT SIDE-EFFECT: SC SEEKS CENTRE'S REPLY ON FRAMING COMPENSATION POLICY

"The COVID-19 was declared a disaster, but the vaccination drive was conducted as per the medical protocol. The AEFI mechanism assesses whether a death is directly linked to the vaccine," she said.

Bhati sought three weeks to respond to the court's suggestion which was allowed by the bench, which posted the appeal of the Centre against a Kerala High Court order for hearing on March 18.

CRUSADER IN NOISE PANEL, BUT MUSIC FEST SHOWS BIG FIGHT AHEAD

Going by the name of Plur, the music festival with no permissions has shocked locals, many of whom have chil-

dren studying for the upcoming Board exams.

Interestingly, there has been a surge in room bookings at home stays in Anjuna and Vagator and as George, a tourist from Kerala, admitted, "Those who had bought tickets for the party that was recently cancelled have been intimidated to come for this party. It is under a new name now and free for us."

Despite finding no mention in the GSPCB affidavit presented to the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court, 9 Bar is mentioned as an operational unit in the affidavit filed by the Police Inspector of Anjuna Police Station in the same case. Significantly, Goa Police on Tuesday registered a case against 9 Bar for violating decibel norms recently, where they played loud music from 10 pm to 6 am.

It is obvious from the ground realities of Anjuna-Vagator that Crasto and others on the NMC will have their task cut out. "The news of Janie's selection and the five-day party are a double-edged sword for many of us. That they have decided to have a party in a residential area where many children are preparing for their final exams shows the involvement of someone powerful. However, with Janie's name being selected, there seems to be hope for the future," said Avelin Fernandes from Anjuna who has been at the receiving end of noise pollution.

"There is a consensus on the name of one person. But we have reservations on the other two," stated Advocate General Devidas Pangam in his opening remarks as the Goa Bench of the Mumbai High Court met for Contempt Petition 12 of 2023 on Tuesday.

"Your Lordship suggested that the name of a retired advocate be taken up," stated the Advocate General, as Amicus Curiae Nigel Costa Frias inquired about the objections to the names of Jeremy Ferriera and Dominic Pereira, the other two names suggested by him.

"Since you all have no problem with the name of the lady, all should consent to the name of the other individual. You all should be able to decide by tomorrow and inform accordingly," suggested Justice Karnik.

"I have no issue if they want to suggest another name. The idea is to have someone who has no bias and a name agreeable to all," observed the Amicus Curiae.

Dominic Pereira, who was part of the previous committee and whose name was mentioned again, refused and instead suggested the name of a non-practicing advocate from Calangute.

"I was removed as member of the NMC the last time on the grounds that I live far away. How can they consider the name of an advocate who lives in Calangute?" wondered petitioner Desmond Alvares.

"It is now clear that the government is hell bent on nominating its own person to the committee to keep providing wrong information. With Crasto in as one member, things are not going to be that easy for them now," said octogenarian Wayne Pereira.

CBSE RECOMMENDS CLASS 10 BOARD EXAMS TWICE A YEAR

"The first and second editions of the board exams will also act as supplementary exams, and no special exams will be conducted in any circumstances," the official added.

The new National Education Policy (NEP) recommended that to eliminate the "high stakes" aspect of the board exams, all students will be allowed to take the exams on up to two occasions during any given school year.

The Board has clarified that no separate supplementary exams will be conducted under this system. Instead, the second session of the Board examination will serve as the supplementary exam for those who wish to improve their scores.

"The list of candidates (LOC) will be finalised in September of the preceding year. This means that for the February 2026 exam, the list will be finalised by September 2025. No new candidates will be allowed to register for the May 2026 exam if they were not part of the September 2025 list," the official said.

"Once the LOC is finalised, candidates will not be permitted to change their subjects. However, there is some flexibility in subject selection. If a candidate wishes to modify their subject choices, they can skip a subject in the first examination (February-March) and opt for a different subject in the second examination (May). However, if a candidate completes all subjects in the first exam, they will have to take the same set of subjects in the second exam if they choose to reappear," the official added.