

'To completely free the Kursk region from the enemy in the nearest future'

Russia says it has retaken Kursk's biggest town as Putin advisor says truce would help Ukraine

MOSCOW, March 13: Russia claimed Thursday that its troops have driven the Ukrainian army out of the biggest town in Russia's Kursk border region, as a senior Kremlin official said that a US-proposed 30-day ceasefire in the war three years after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine would help Kyiv by giving its weary and short-handed military a break.

The Russian Defence Ministry's claim that it recaptured the town of Sudzha, hours after President Vladimir Putin visited his commanders in Kursk and wore military fatigues, could not be independently verified. Ukrainian officials made no immediate comment on the claim.

The renewed Russian military push and Putin's high-profile visit to the town came as US President Donald Trump presses for a diplomatic end to the war. The US Tuesday lifted its March 3 suspension of military aid for Kyiv after senior US and Ukrainian officials made progress on how to stop the fighting during talks held in Saudi Arabia. Trump said Wednesday that "it's up to Russia now" as his administration presses Moscow to agree to the



ceasefire. The US president has made veiled threats to hit Russia with new sanctions if it won't engage with peace efforts. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that US negotiators were on their way to Russia, but he wouldn't comment on Moscow's view of the ceasefire proposal. "Before the talks start, and they haven't started yet, it would be wrong to talk about it in public," he told reporters. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told Fox News that national security adviser Mike Waltz spoke Wednesday with his Russian counterpart. She also confirmed that

Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff will head to Moscow for talks with Russian officials, possibly including Putin.

Russian news agencies reported Thursday that Witkoff's plane had landed in Moscow. It wasn't immediately possible to verify the reports. Senior US officials say they hope to see Russia stop attacks on Ukraine within the next few days.

But Yuri Ushakov, Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy adviser, complained in televised remarks Thursday that a ceasefire would grant a "temporary break for the Ukrainian military."

Ushakov said that Moscow wants a "long-term peaceful settlement that takes into account Moscow's interests and concerns." His comments came a day after his phone call with Waltz. Ushakov's comments echoed statements from Putin, who has repeatedly said a temporary ceasefire would benefit Ukraine and its Western allies.

The US still has about \$3.85 billion in congressionally authorized funding for future arms shipments to Ukraine, but the Trump administration has shown no interest so far in using that authority to send additional weapons as it awaits the outcome of peace overtures.

By signalling its openness to a ceasefire, Ukraine has presented the Kremlin with a dilemma at a time when the Russian military has the upper hand in the war — whether to accept a truce and abandon hopes of making new gains, or reject the offer and risk derailing a cautious rapprochement with Washington.

The Ukrainian army's foothold inside Russia has been under intense pressure for months from a renewed effort by Russian forces, backed by North Korean troops. (AP)

Emirati diplomat identified as having letter from Trump meets Iran's foreign minister

DUBAI, March 13: An Emirati diplomat earlier identified by Tehran as carrying a letter from US President Donald Trump seeking to jump-start talks over Iran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme met Wednesday with Iran's foreign minister in the Iranian capital. It is unclear how Iran will react to the letter, which Trump revealed during a television interview last week. Its intended recipient, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has said he's not interested in talks with a "bullying government."

But Iran struggles with economic woes exacerbated by US and Western sanctions over its nuclear programme, and Trump has imposed more since he took office in January. That pressure, coupled with internal turmoil in Iran and recent direct attacks by Israel, has put Tehran in one of the most precarious positions its theocracy has faced since its 1979 Islamic Revolution.

"America threatens with military action, but in my opinion, this threat is irrational," Khamenei said earlier Wednesday. "Iran is capable of delivering a reciprocal blow, and it will certainly do so."

A sudden visit by an Emirati diplomat Iranian state television showed Emirati official Anwar Gargash meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Tehran. Gargash's visit had not been previously announced. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman earlier said he'd be carrying the letter from Trump. The UAE, home to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, maintains close ties with the United States.

The brief footage shot before the meeting did not show the letter. Gargash and the UAE government did not acknowledge his trip during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan and did not respond to a request for comment. Trump last week acknowledged writing a letter to the 85-year-old Khamenei.

The move recalled Trump's letter-writing to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in his first term, which

led to face-to-face meetings but no deals to limit Pyongyang's atomic bombs and a missile programme capable of reaching the continental US.

The last time Trump tried to send a letter to Khamenei, through the late Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2019, the supreme leader mocked the effort. Abe ended up slipping the envelope under his leg in footage widely shared by Iranian state media to this day. On Wednesday before Gargash's arrival, Khamenei spoke to students during a ceremony in Tehran and called Trump's letter "an attempt to deceive global public opinion." "This person tore apart and threw out of the window finished and completed, and signed, talks," Khamenei said. "How could one possibly negotiate with such a person?"

He added: "If we wanted to build a nuclear weapon, America couldn't stop us."

Iran's uranium is now close to weapons-grade Trump's overture comes as Israel and the United States have warned they will never let Iran acquire a nuclear weapon, leading to fears of a military confrontation as Tehran enriches uranium at near weapons-grade levels of 60 per cent purity — something only done by atomic-armed nations.

Iran has long maintained its programme is for peaceful purposes, even as its officials increasingly threaten to pursue the bomb as tensions are high with the US over its sanctions and with Israel as a shaky ceasefire holds in its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Israel and Iran have traded direct attacks during the Israel-Hamas war, while partners in Tehran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" are reeling after the assassinations of their leaders by Israel.

In Israel, officials have suggested striking Iran's nuclear programme now, something Trump has threatened while insisting he'd prefer reaching a diplomatic deal with Tehran. (AP)

Pak PM visits Balochistan after insurgents attack train

KARACHI, March 13: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday visited the restive Balochistan province to review the law and order situation and to express solidarity with the people there following the Jaffar Express hijacking incident in which 21 civilians and four soldiers were killed.

Sharif's visit comes a day after security forces killed all 33 Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) militants who on Tuesday hijacked the Jaffar Express.

Sharif is accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Planning, Development Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Science and Technology Nawabzada Mir Khalid Magsi and others.

The incident occurred when the train, travelling from Quetta to Peshawar and carrying 440 passengers, was ambushed by BLA militants near the mountainous terrain of Gudalar and Piru Kunri in a

tunnel. They opened fire on the train and held the passengers hostage, prompting the security forces to initiate an operation that lasted two days.

Announcing the completion of the operation, Director General Inter-Services Public Relations Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Wednesday said the armed forces took part in the action against militants who "remained in contact with their facilitators and mastermind based in Afghanistan via satellite phone".

Units from the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), Special Services Group (SSG), Army, and Frontier Corps (FC) took part in the operation, the army's spokesperson said.

Chaudhry said no one can be permitted to make innocent people of Pakistan the victim of their barbarism in the streets, trains, buses or markets because of their misleading ideas and instructions and facilitation of foreign masters.

"Whoever does this, let me say it very

clearly, will be hunted down and brought to justice. Let me also say that this incident of Jaffar Express changes the rules of the game," he said.

The bodies of those killed in the attack will be sent to their native areas after necessary administrative prerequisites.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Thursday lambasted former prime minister Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for "politicising" the incident and misinterpreting the situation on social media.

"We need to rise above political interests and demonstrate national unity (on such occasions)," said Asif.

Asif slammed the former PTI-led government's decision to relocate thousands of fighters from the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to the country.

On the Jaffar Express rescue operation, the minister said, "God forbids, there could have been a lot of casualties, but the security forces eliminated the terrorists. (PTI)

Canada, EU swiftly retaliate against Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs

BRUSSELS, March 13: Major trade partners swiftly hit back at President Donald Trump's increased tariffs on aluminum and steel imports, imposing stiff new taxes on US products, from textiles and water heaters to beef and bourbon.

Canada, the largest supplier of steel and aluminum to the US, said on Wednesday it will place 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs on steel products and also raise taxes on a host of items: tools, computers and servers, display monitors, sports equipment and cast-iron products.

Across the Atlantic, the European Union (EU) will raise tariffs on American beef, poultry, bourbon and motorcycles, peanut butter and jeans. Combined, the new tariffs will cost companies billions of dollars, and further escalate the uncertainty in two of the world's major trade partnerships. Companies will either take the losses and earn fewer profits, or, more likely, pass costs along to consumers in the form of higher prices.

Prices will go up, in Europe and the United States, and jobs are at stake, said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

"We deeply regret this measure. Tariffs are taxes. They are bad for business, and even worse for consumers," von der Leyen said.

The EU duties aim for pressure points in the US while minimising additional damage to Europe. EU officials have made clear that the tariffs -- taxes on imports -- are aimed at products made in Republican-held states, such as beef and poultry from Kansas and Nebraska and wood products from Alabama and Georgia. (AP)

OFFICE OF THE DIPHU MUNICIPAL BOARD:: DIPHU KARBI ANGLONG

No. DMB/Tax/Govt. Value/NIT/2025-26/308/271 Dated Diphu the 13/03/2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tender affixing non-refundable Diphu Municipal Board money receipt worth Rs. 10/- (Rupees ten) only are hereby invited from intending Tenderers for settlement of Bid for the financial year 2025-26. The same shall be received upto 2:00 P.M of 20th March'2025 by the undersigned and shall be opened on the same day in presence of Tenderers or their authorized agents. The Tender Application Form and details particulars of the Items/Groups may be collected from the Office during the office hours. The intending Tenderers shall have to pay Rs. 1,000/- (Rupees one thousand) only against the cost of Tender Application Form.

Enclosed: List of Item/Groups

LIST OF ITEM/GROUP

No.	Name of Item/Group	Govt. Valuation (in Rs)	Earnest Money (1 % Tribal & 2% Non-Tribal)	Remark
A: Market Weekly/Daily				
1	Diphu Daily Market	612150		
2	ASEB Sub-Div. -I	279510		
3	Birla (NH) Daily Market	30030		
4	Bids (Factory) Daily Market	40425		
5	Rongkhelan Daily Market	51975		
6	Pirbi Daily Market	11550		
7	Mentila Daily Market	5775		
8	Rongkinti Daily Market	2887		
9	Police Reserve to Medical College Daily Market Daily Market	3465		
10	Lorulungso Daily Market	92400		
B: Parking Tax				
11	Auto	300300		
12	LMV	157080		
13	Auto-Truck	92400		
14	Taxi	92400		
15	Bus	519750		
16	Truck	150150		
17	Bicycle Parking Tax & License Fee (Tin Ticket)	34650		
18	Handpush Cart (Theta) Parking Tax & License Fee (Tin Ticket)	34650		
C: Other Tolls/Tax/Fees				
19	Expose Tax	150150		
20	Expose Tax	51975		
21	Private Ghumti Tax	63525		
D: SANITATION TAX				
22	Pay & Use Toilet (at 2 nd Floor, Block No. 10	23100		
23	Sky Train (Toralungso Children Park)	165000		
	TOTAL	2,965,297		

Terms & Conditions

The following Terms & Conditions must be fulfilled by the Tenderers. Incomplete Application shall be liable for rejection.

- (a). The Tenderers must furnish Professional Tax Clearance Certificate Valid upto 31-03-2026.
- (b) Trading License duly renewed upto 31-12-2026 must furnish by Non- Tribal Tenderers
- (c) The Tenderers belonging to Schedule Tribe (Hills) must furnish Caste Certificate in lieu of Trading License.
- (d) The Tenderers must furnish GST Registration Certificate.
- (e) The Tenderers must furnish House Tax Clearance Certificate Valid upto 31-12-2026, either of his/her own or parents (from Diphu Municipal Board).
- (f) The Tenderer must furnish Diphu Municipal Board Business Registration Certificate Valid upto 31-03-2026.
- Separate Tender Application Form supported by required documents MIN be submitted against each Group/Item.
- Tender shall not be accepted from any defaulter/false documents
- The selected Tenderers shall have to deposit the settle amount in 1 (one) installment within (Seven) days from the date of issue or declaration of the List/Notice of successful Tenderers, failing which the settlement shall be settled with the next highest Tender of the Diphu Municipal Board may re-settle the Lease of others regular Tenderers at highest rate.
- The selected Tenderers / Party shall have to enter into "DEED OF AGREEMENT" for execution of lease for Collection of Tolls/Tax/Fee on Stamp Paper.
- The authority of the Diphu Municipal Board reserves the right for settlement of any group/item at highest rate with regular tenders and settlement shall be accorded at the direction of the authority of Diphu Municipal Board. The authority of Diphu Municipal Board shall have the right to reject tender for settled for the year 2025-26.
- The name of each Group / Item tendered for and rate offered should be written in "BLOCK LETTER" on the body of the Application Format in every column.
- Tender in prescribe format must be submitted by the Tenderers.
- Once the tender is accepted no request shall entertained for part payment of the Bid amount and shall collect Toll/Tax/Fee as per approved rate.
- No loss or compensation will be entertained that may arise due to any kind of bundh or whatsoever.
- The Lessee shall have to print Money Receipt Book (in triplicate) at his/ her own cost for which no payment will be entertained and to be registered in the office to be certified by the undersigned (the simple of which may be obtained from the office).
- In case, the last date of receipt of sealed tender falls on a holiday that may be notified by Central/State Govt. out of event of "Unexpected Bandh", sealed tender shall be received and opened on the next working days as notified.
- The decision of the authority of Diphu Municipal Board shall be final in any dispute relating to settlement/Cancellation of any Group/Item with the highest Bidders or otherwise or Add/Modify/Alter any Terms & Conditions without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/-

Chairman

Diphu Municipal Board
Diphu:: Karbi Anglong

Memo No. DMB/Fax/Govt. Value/NIT/2025-26/308/271(A)

Dated Diphu the 13/03/2025



AAMIR ON WORKING WITH SHAH RUKH AND SALMAN IN FILM: WAITING FOR THE RIGHT SCRIPT

MUMBAI, March 13: Superstar Aamir Khan on Thursday said he and the other two Khans of Bollywood -- Shah Rukh and Salman -- want to work in a film together and are waiting for the right script to come their way.

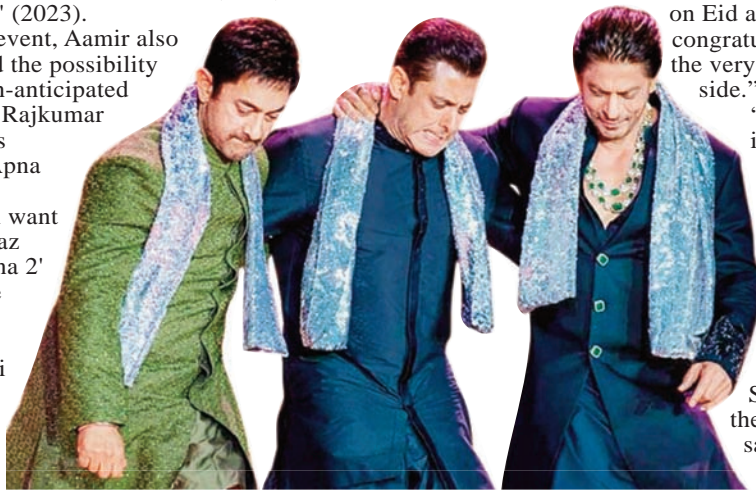
The prospect of the Khan troika appearing in a movie is something the audience is also looking forward to, Aamir said at a meet-and-greet event a day ahead of his 60th birthday.

"Salman, Shah Rukh and I would love to work together... We are waiting for the right script to come. I think the audience also wants to see us together and we have discussed about it as well... If any good story comes (our way), we will definitely do it," the actor told reporters here.

While Aamir and Salman have famously featured in the 1994 cult comedy "Andaz Apna Apna", he has never co-starred with Shah Rukh. Salman and Shah Rukh, however, have featured together in films such as "Karan Arjun" (1995), "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" (1998), "Hum Tumhare Hain Sanam" (2005), and "Pathaan" (2023).

At the event, Aamir also addressed the possibility of a much-anticipated sequel to Rajkumar Santoshi's "Andaz Apna Apna".

"We all want that 'Andaz Apna Apna 2' should be remade... We have told Raj ji that we want to work on



it and I think the audience also wants to watch the film. We are waiting for him. He is working on the script right now," he added.

Aamir also gave an update on his next movie "Sitaare Zameen Par", calling it a "thought sequel" to his 2007 film.

"... The characters and situations are different... According to me, this thought goes 10 times beyond that. One major difference is that 'Taare Zameen Par' makes you cry but this one will make you laugh. It's a comedy, humorous film but sends a meaningful message," the actor said.

"Taare Zameen Par", which marked Aamir's directorial debut, followed the coming-of-age story of a young artistic boy named Ishaan who is dyslexic.

Aamir was last seen in "Laal Singh Chaddha", which was released in 2022.

The actor also wished Salman ahead of the release of "Sikandar", which is arriving in theatres on Eid. "Best wishes to Salman as his film 'Sikandar' is coming on Eid and many many congratulations and all the very best from my side."

"We all are waiting for it. A.R. Murugadoss, with whom I did 'Ghajini' is a fantastic director so, it will be fun to see the combination of Murugadoss and Salman. So all the very best," he said. (PTI)

Ranbir, Alia request paparazzi to not click daughter Raha's pictures

MUMBAI, March 13: In the aftermath of the attack on Saif Ali Khan at his residence early this year, Bollywood star couple Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt on Thursday requested the media not to click photos of their daughter Raha.

In an intimate meet-and-greet with the media days ahead of Alia's birthday on March 15, the actors said they want to ensure the safety of their two-year-old child.

"It might sound like a privilege problem, but as parents, we are trying to protect our child and we will do whatever we can.

"Today, everybody who has a phone, can post anything, and that can spread like wildfire, so that's not in our control. You are like our family, so we can only request you, and you can help us achieve that," Ranbir told reporters here.

When asked if the "Animal" star would take action against those who do not comply with their request, he replied in the negative.

"I was born in Mumbai, and you all are family; it's not that we will take the legal route. Whenever we request you or we give what you guys want, we give our word to each other. It's not like we will file the case," the said.

"We don't want to push for any action, but if someone is repeatedly not adhering, then there's no option," added Alia.

The couple officially introduced Raha to the media during the Kapoor family's Christmas brunch two years ago. At the meet-and-greet, Ranbir also slammed the paparazzi for invading wife Alia's privacy back in 2023.

"Alia was on the balcony, and someone had clicked a photograph from someone

else's building, so that's a wrong thing. It's a line you can't cross; you can't shoot us in our house.

"I understand we are actors and there's some kind of curiosity about an actor's life, but there's a line that you cannot cross. Beyond that, you all are respectful, and we both have known you for so many years," he said.

At the event, Alia also cut a birthday cake in the presence of the media.

The privacy of celebrity children has been a topic of discussion in the era of social media.

According to reports, Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan who is Ranbir's cousin also asked the paparazzi to not click photos of her sons Taimur and Jeh after her husband Saif was injured multiple times in a knife attack by an intruder in January. (PTI)

Daunting yet satisfying: Ranbir Kapoor on reuniting with Sanjay Leela Bhansali for 'Love & War'

MUMBAI, March 13: To be on a Sanjay Leela Bhansali is both tiring and satisfying, says Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor, who is reuniting with the master director on his upcoming feature film "Love & War".

The film is a dream project for Ranbir, who made his debut as an actor with Bhansali's 2007 movie "Saawariya". He is sharing the screen space in the movie with wife Alia Bhatt and "Sanju" co-star Vicky Kaushal.

"'Love and War' is something which is every actor's dream, like to work with brilliant actors like Alia and Vicky, and to be directed under the master Sanjay Leela Bhansali. I worked with him 17 years ago.

"I haven't met a human being who worked so hard, who understands characters, emotions, music, Indian culture, and the Indian value system as much as Sanjay Leela Bhansali. To be on his set is tiring, it is long, and the process can be a little daunting, but as an artist, it is satisfying because he nurtures art, and as actors, it's truly amazing so far," Kapoor told reporters here.

Billed as an "epic saga", the upcoming movie is slated to be released in theatres in 2026.

Bhatt, who previously worked with Bhansali on the 2022 critically-acclaimed "Gangubai Kathiawadi", said it

is blessing to be collaborating with the filmmaker once again.

"Being back on set with Sanjay sir



like he makes you feel that 100 per cent is just the beginning, you've to give way more than that, and you want to be because of how much he gives. Every scene is a key scene.

"So, no day on set is going to be like a chill day. You're giving 100 percent but we're having a great time. It's a blessing to be working under his guidance, and to be working with Vicky and Ranbir, and to see them together, and all three of us, is all fascinating," she added.

The creative process for "Love & War" involves nighttime shoots, a choice that both Kapoor and Bhatt find exhilarating.

"We are shooting a lot at night, so we work at night, and we are mom and dad during the day. So, it's a very interesting combination. We shot 'Gangubai ...' mostly in the night; it becomes like your own world; there's no distraction, and there's no noise," said Bhatt, who shares two-year-old daughter Raha with Kapoor.

In addition to "Love & War", Kapoor will be seen in director Nitesh Tiwari's "Ramayana" alongside south movie stars Sai Pallavi and Yash.

Bhatt will next star in "Alpha", Yash Raj Films' next Spy Universe movie. Co-starring Sharvari, the Shiv Rawail-directed movie will be released in theatres on December 25. (PTI)

'OVERCOMPENSATING' TO PREMIERE ON PRIME VIDEO IN MAY

NEW DELHI, March 13: "Overcompensating", an upcoming college comedy executive produced by music sensation Charli XCX, will premiere on Prime Video on May 15, the streamer announced on Thursday.

The OTT platform has shared first-look images from the show, which is created by and starring Benito Skinner. The series is produced by A24 and Amazon MGM Studios, a press release said.

"Overcompensating" follows the wild, chaotic journey of Benny (Skinner), a closeted former football player and homecoming king, as he becomes fast friends with Carmen, a high school outsider on a mission to fit in at all costs.

"With guidance from Benny's older sister and her campus-legend boyfriend, Benny and Carmen juggle horrible hookups, flavoured vodka, and fake IDs. Deeply funny and personal, the show explores the lengths to which we all overcompensate while on the path to finding out who we really are," read the official plotline.

The show also features Wally Baram, Mary Beth Barone, Adam DiMarco and Rish Shah. Recurring guest stars include Connie Britton, Kyle MacLachlan, Kaia Gerber, Julia Shiple, Tommy Do, Alexandra Beaton, Claire Qute, Elias Azimi and Maddie Phillips.

Scott King serves as showrunner and executive producer. Jonah Hill, Matt Dines, and Ali Goodwin executive produce for Strong Baby. (PTI)



'Brahmastra 2' pre-production will begin post 'War 2' release, says Ranbir Kapoor



MUMBAI, March 13: Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor on Thursday said work on pre-production for the sequel to his much-anticipated movie "Brahmastra" is most likely to begin this year.

Titled "Brahmastra Part One: Shiva", the first movie in the big-budget epic fantasy franchise, featuring Ranbir and Alia Bhatt, hit the screens in 2022. It was directed by Ayan Mukerji.

"'Brahmastra 2' is something that Ayan has been nurturing as a dream for a very long time, the entire story of 'Brahmastra'. He is currently working on 'War 2'. Once the film releases, he is going to start the pre-production of 'Brahmastra 2', it (the film) is definitely happening.

"We haven't announced much of it, but there will be some interesting announcements coming regarding 'Brahmastra 2'," Kapoor told reporters here.

"War 2", starring Hrithik Roshan and Jr. NTR, is scheduled to be released on August 14, 2025, during the Independence Day weekend, as announced by production banner Yash Raj Films.

In 2023, Mukerji announced that the two follow-up movies in the "Brahmastra" franchise will be released in theatres in 2026 and 2027, respectively.

Part one of "Brahmastra" revolved around a deity named Shiva (Ranbir), who sets out on a journey to find the origins of his special powers with Isha (Alia), a woman he falls in love with at first sight.

The film also featured megastar Amitabh Bachchan with special appearances by Shah Rukh Khan and Nagarjuna. It was produced by Star Studios and Dharma Productions. (PTI)

At KKR, new mentor Bravo looks to mix Gambhir's success formula with his own style



KOLKATA, March 13: Charismatic West Indian Dwayne Bravo, who replaced Gautam Gambhir as mentor at Kolkata Knight Riders, on Thursday said he will mix some elements from the former KKR strategist's blueprint with his own distinct style for a successful campaign in the upcoming IPL.

With Gambhir playing a key role behind the scenes, KKR won

their third IPL title last season. The reigning champions have turned to Bravo ahead of the IPL 2025 season, following the departure of Gambhir who is now the head coach of the Indian team.

"Unfortunately, we lost some players. But I think GG had his style, I have my style. We're both successful in our own ways," Bravo said, making it clear that while he respects Gambhir's

legacy, he will bring his own methods to the role.

The former West Indies skipper though admitted to reaching out to Gambhir for insights.

"Definitely, I messaged him a few times and stuff. But again, I will be leaning a lot on these guys because they had a successful formula. And it's important that we follow that formula," he said during KKR's first media interaction

ahead of the upcoming season.

Bravo emphasised the need to study and adopt elements of last season's success and it was necessary to keep the core of the side intact. "I think it's going to be disrespectful of me not to try and find out some of the good things he did last season. But also, the core of the team is here.

"And that's our responsibility, coach, myself, Venky sir to go

back into the auction and try our best to get back. It was our duty to go into the auction and try to get back as much as the same squad of players from the championship-winning team. And we were able to get that," added the 41-year-old.

Having released Venkatesh Iyer earlier, KKR went all out in the auction for the explosive batter and bought him back for Rs 23.75 crore, making him the third most expensive buy, after Rishabh Pant and Shreyas Iyer.

Given his long-standing association with Chennai Super Kings, Bravo's appointment came as a surprise. But the Trinidadian is excited about working with Shah Rukh Khan and hailed KKR as one of the best franchises in the league. "I think it is good to have a boss like Shah Rukh who is definitely really invested in the game. My first thing started off with the Trinbago Knight Riders when he first bought the team.

"I was the happiest person on the planet to know that someone like him showed that interest to buy a team in the Caribbean. But not only in the Caribbean, but my hometown. And I was able to help build Trinbago Knight Riders, one of, to this day, the most successful franchises in CPL history.

"That energy and that vibe, I am going to try to bring that here as well. It is already a successful team. Behind MI and CSK, we have the third most trophies in the cabinet and we look to build on that." (PTI)

The break is working to our advantage, we're ready for WPL final: DC vice-captain Rodrigues

NEW DELHI, March 13: Delhi Capitals vice-captain Jemimah Rodrigues emphasised that the long gap between the last league match and the Women's Premier League final has revitalised the team, and said it will work to her side's "advantage" in the title clash.

The Capitals have qualified for their third straight WPL final after Mumbai Indians were defeated by Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the last league match at Mumbai on March 11.

The Capitals had finished their league engagements on March 7 with a defeat against Gujarat Giants. Hence, they had to wait until the match between RCB and MI to decide the group leaders.

"It's (the gap) actually working for our team. We've had a lot of team bonding sessions and at the same time, this WPL was a bit hectic for us. We did play back-to-back games, we traveled and we played too," Rodrigues said in a virtual press meet on Thursday.

Rodrigues said the DC have had good training sessions in the last six days, and that will stand her team in good stead.

"I think getting this break is, honestly, how I look at it and I think how the team is looking at it, that it's working to our advantage," she said.

The Capitals will meet the winner of the Eliminator between Mumbai and Gujarat Giants in the title clash on March 15.

"So I think sometimes it's nice to have this break and yes, you know, we're ready for the finals. They are looking forward to it. We're prepared well. You know, like the other two years, this year has not been like the smoothest sailing for us. "But like I said in one of the interviews that this team just doesn't know how to give up and we're going to come back stronger this year," she noted. However, the WPL draw meant that the Capitals advanced to the final without having played a single league match at the Brabourne Stadium

Rodrigues patted the opener for keeping her composure during tough times. "Shafali is such an inspiration in the way she's come back. The kind of strike-rate and the kind of impact she's been having for the team. I think it just shows her character," she said.

Shafali has made 300 runs from eight WPL 2025 matches with a strike-rate of 157. "But to be dropped and to come back the way she did, I think hats off to her. I can't wait to see her. I'm sure she'll be back soon in the Indian team too," said Rodrigues. (PTI)

Rodrigues did not read too much into that.

"The thing is that everyone in our team has played on these pitches (in Mumbai). Everyone's pretty familiar with the conditions and the pitches.

"And like I said, we've been having good practice sessions on these off days, which is preparing us well enough to adjust to the conditions.

"The Mumbai pitch is a batter's dream. The outfield's fast. So yeah, I mean, we are really looking forward to it and so are our bowlers. They've come up with their plans," she said.

Rodrigues said the experience of skipper Meg Lanning will help DC in landing their maiden WPL title after defeats in the last two editions. "I think Meg is someone who wants to win, who wants to win every game. The thing I love about Meg, and this is something that I would like to add in myself also. She's calm but aggressive at the same time. And I think as a leader, that's a very, very crucial quality to have.

"She told me last year that as a captain, it's very important that I set the tone for the team. If I stay calm and because everyone's looking up to me and if I am calm, I know the team is calm."

Shafali Verma made a bright return to her run-making ways after a slew of disappointing moments last year, where she was also dropped from the Indian team.

Rodrigues patted the opener for keeping her composure during tough times. "Shafali is such an inspiration in the way she's come back. The kind of strike-rate and the kind of impact she's been having for the team. I think it just shows her character," she said.

Shafali has made 300 runs from eight WPL 2025 matches with a strike-rate of 157. "But to be dropped and to come back the way she did, I think hats off to her. I can't wait to see her. I'm sure she'll be back soon in the Indian team too," said Rodrigues. (PTI)

Malvika loses to Yamaguchi, exits in pre-quarters of All England



BIRMINGHAM, March 13: India's women's singles campaign in the All England Championships ended with Malvika Bansod losing in straight games against two-time world champion Akane Yamaguchi of Japan in the pre-quarterfinals here on Thursday.

World no. 3 Yamaguchi hardly broke a sweat to get the better of world no.28 Malvika 21-16 21-13 in a contest that lasted just 33 min-

utes. Yamaguchi has now extended her head-to-head record against Malvika to 4-0.

Earlier on Wednesday, two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu crashed out of the women's singles event. Against Yamaguchi, Malvika struggled to adjust to the conditions, repeatedly hitting wide, long, and into the net to fall behind early. Despite a few unforced errors of her own, Yam-

aguchi seized the advantage at the mid-game interval with a deft drop shot followed by an accurate placement. The Indian shuttler managed to stay within striking distance till 13-15, but Yamaguchi soon surged ahead, earning a slew of game points before sealing the opening game as Malvika sent another shot wide. The Japanese started the second game strongly, taking a 3-1 lead but Malvika

fought back to level scores at 5-5 and later 8-8.

However, her inconsistency returned, allowing Yamaguchi to go into the interval with a comfortable lead. There was little resistance from Malvika after the change of ends, as Yamaguchi raced ahead, earning eight match points. She closed out the contest with a smash on her second opportunity. (PTI)

F1's Mercedes chief Wolff says he's not looking to sign Verstappen for 2026

MELBOURNE, March 13: Mercedes team principal and chief executive Toto Wolff has denied rumors on the eve of the Australian Grand Prix weekend that he's still seeking to sign reigning F1 world champion Max Verstappen for 2026.

Mercedes, which has a new driver lineup this year that sees rookie prospect Andrea Kimi Antonelli join George Russell, is hoping to emerge from its recent lean spell in F1 that has seen it score just five wins from the last three seasons, four of which came in 2024.

But while Verstappen was reportedly on Mercedes' shopping list last year as a top-gun replacement for its then-outgoing star Lewis Hamilton, Silver Arrows' team boss Wolff says extending Russell's contract beyond 2025 is the priority.

"I think we've said it pretty clearly last year, and (Verstappen) said the same, we need to concentrate on our driver line-up, we need to do (the best with) that we have," Wolff said Thursday in Melbourne.

"I don't flirt outside if I'm in a good relationship, and that is true for this year, too. So, at the moment that is not on any, let's say, radar and I don't plan to shift my concentration away from these guys and make sure that George has a contract (extension) pretty soon and we agree on the final things."

Plenty of decisions to come—Wolff's future driver lineup came into focus this week after McLaren extended its deal with Australian Oscar Piastri, which puts him out of reach during the sport's next big expected grid shuffle in 2027.

"We have had a chat (with Russell) a few weeks ago about what the right timing would be to liaise, and I'm — naively or not

— someone that sticks to what he says," Wolff said.

"These three (including reserve driver Valtteri Bottas) are the combination that I want to go forward with Mercedes, and I have no reasons to doubt that. We're going to find some time, I guess, before the summer."

Russell, a long-time Mercedes protégé who joined the works team in 2022 fresh from three years at Williams, is keen to stay in silver.

"We've had such a long-term relationship, and there's so much trust," Russell said. "We are focused on getting Mercedes back on top and trying to win races, and championships, and to be honest in this sport, the performance speaks." Hamilton: "most exciting period of my life/Hamilton made it clear in Melbourne that he's moved on, following his record-breaking stint with Mercedes, with the seven-time F1 world champion enjoying life at Ferrari as he prepares for his maiden start with the Scuderia.

Hamilton, who'd been powered by Mercedes for his entire F1 career from 2007 to 2024, made a shock switch to Ferrari starting this year, following negotiations with Mercedes in 2023 that saw him offered a shorter tenure to future proof the operation.

Hamilton signed the one-plus-one (option year) deal in August 2023, but made a swift u-turn in January last year to join the Prancing Horse from 2025.

And the veteran Brit has been enjoying every moment spent at Maranello.

"You're looking at things from a different perspective, and that makes it exciting and challenging," Hamilton said Thursday. "This is definitely the most exciting period of my life, I'm really enjoying it, and I'm so excited to get in the car tomorrow." (AP)

Injured head coach Dravid attends Rajasthan Royals' pre-season camp on crutches

JAIPUR, March 13: Despite sustaining a leg injury while playing in a local league match, Indian stalwart and new Rajasthan Royals head coach Rahul Dravid attended the team's IPL pre-season training session, displaying his full commitment.

In a video shared by the franchise in their official social media handle, Dravid was seen making his first appearance at the Royals' camp, arriving in a golf cart before switching to crutches for mobility.

Although his left leg was secured in a medical walking boot, Dravid remained actively involved in the session despite



his injury.

He shook hands with players, before engaging in discussions with young talents like Riyan Parag, and shared a moment with Yashasvi Jaiswal as the young India opener was seen demonstrating shadow shots while seeking the legendary batter's advice.

Seated with crutches in hand, Dravid closely observed the entire session on Wednesday.

The Royals earlier confirmed that Dravid suffered the injury while playing.

"Head Coach Rahul Dravid, who picked up an injury while playing Cricket in Bangalore, is recovering well and will join us

today in Jaipur," posted Rajasthan Royals in 'X' with a photo of a relaxed Dravid flashing a thumbs-up.

Last week, Dravid had injured his left calf muscle while batting for Vijaya Cricket Club against Jayanagar Cricketers in the Karnataka State Cricket Association Group I, Division 2 semifinal for the Sri Nassur Memorial Shield.

The 52-year-old, playing alongside his 16-year-old son Anvay, appeared in discomfort just two deliveries into his innings after reportedly pulling a calf muscle.

Despite the pain, he battled on, scoring 43 off 66 balls in a

crucial fourth-wicket stand with Anvay. However, Vijaya CC ultimately lost the match.

Dravid earlier last month marked his first club appearance in 13 years in a league match.

There, he partnered with Anvay, who impressed with a 60-ball 58, while Dravid chipped in with 10 runs.

Dravid took over as Rajasthan Royals' head coach after his successful stint as India's head coach from 2022 to 2024, which culminated in their T20 World Cup triumph.

He will work closely with captain Sanju Samson and director of cricket Kumar Sangakkara as the Royals. (PTI)

Dortmund aim to bring some of its Champions League success to disastrous Bundesliga campaign

DUESSELDORF (GERMANY), March 13: The two German teams in the Champions League quarterfinals are having very different Bundesliga seasons.

While Bayern Munich is eight points clear at the top and confirmed its domestic supremacy with a 5-0 aggregate win over Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League, Borussia Dortmund is 10th and will likely need a big late-season surge to qualify for next season's Champions League.

Beating Lille in the Champions League on Wednesday eased some of the pressure on new coach Niko Kovac but Dortmund takes on Leipzig on Saturday with both teams desperate for a win.

Key matchups— Dortmund's game against Leipzig on Saturday is a crucial test for Leipzig, too. Two wins from 10 Bundesliga games since the new year have seen Marco Rose's team slide to sixth.

Bayern's Champions League exertions took their toll last week in a shock 3-2 home loss to Bochum. A trip to Union Berlin on Saturday is another tricky test, given Union surprised Eintracht Frankfurt 2-1 last week.

Leverkusen has lost three games in a row for the first time under coach Xabi Alonso. The injury-hit squad can turn things around with a win on Sunday over Stuttgart, itself on a four-game losing run.

Players to watch— When Manuel Neuer hurt himself celebrating last week, it gave 21-year-old Jonas Urbig an opportunity as Bayern goalkeeper. The loss to Bochum last week was a rocky start but Urbig won praise for some solid saves against Leverkusen.

Michy Batshuayi's first Bundesliga goal in seven years wasn't enough as Frankfurt lost to Union last week. Frankfurt could need more goals from the new signing to halt a slide since



Omar Marmoush left for Manchester City. Frankfurt plays Bochum on Sunday.

The pressure is on Stuttgart striker Deniz Undav after seven Bundesliga games without scoring. Undav was a star last season as Stuttgart finished second but now risks being dropped.

Injury list— Star attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz is a big absence for Leverkusen with an

ankle ligament injury.

Defender Mario Hermoso was sent for scans on his shoulder after the Bayern loss, while defender Edmond Tapsoba and midfielder Nathan Tella are doubtful to recover from injuries on Sunday.

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