

6 WORLD

- Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dead at 86
- 10 killed as protesters try to storm US Consulate in Pakistan's Karachi city

7 NATION


- Cong made Puducherry an 'ATM' for 'one family' in Delhi: PM
- Countdown for BJP's exit has begun, says Kejriwal at Jantar Mantar rally

ACCELERATING INFRASTRUCTURE GROWTH IN ASSAM

3,100+ km National Highways expanding seamless connectivity across the state

32,000+ km rural roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, strengthening last-mile connectivity

DEVELOPED ASSAM DEVELOPED BHARAT PM MODI'S VISION



'More eviction drives on cards if BJP retains power'

Himanta accepts 'bulldozer salute' at Jagiroad

JAGIROAD, March 1: Accepting a 'bulldozer salute' during the BJP's 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra', Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday announced that eviction drives would be carried out on five lakh bighas (over 1.65 lakh acres) of land if he returns to power after the assembly polls.

Accompanied by Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia, Sarma began the second day of the party's march, from Jagiroad, and it passed through Morigaon, Raha and Nagaon before ending at Barhampur.

A 'bulldozer salute' was arranged at Jagiroad, with party workers atop 10 bulldozers showering flower petals on Sarma as he passed beneath them.

"Next time, five lakh bighas will be cleared of evictions. This is the message we have given to the people. No Bangladeshi infiltrator will live in peace in Assam," Sarma told reporters from atop his open SUV in front of the lined-up bulldozers.

He said all alleged encroachers in the forests and tribal belt and blocks will be evicted if the BJP returns to



power for the third consecutive term.

On February 19, Sarma informed the Assam Assembly that 1.5 lakh bighas (over 49,500 acres) of land across the state have been freed from encroachment in the last five years.

"You will see that many people will meet me during this yatra. Some will say that he got jobs, some will say he got land. Somebody will

'This great crime will never go unanswered' • Iran retaliates with missiles and drone attacks

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei killed in US-Israeli attack

DUBAI, March 1: Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in a major attack by Israel and the United States, Iranian state media confirmed early Sunday, throwing the future of the Islamic Republic into doubt and raising the risk of regional instability.

President Donald Trump announced the death hours earlier, saying it gave Iranians their "greatest chance" to "take back" their country.

State media reported that the 86-year-old was killed in an airstrike targeting his compound in downtown Tehran. Satellite photos from Airbus showed that the site was heavily bombed.

His death at his office "showed that he consistently stood among the people and at the forefront of his responsibilities, confronting what officials call global arrogance," state TV said.

"Khamenei, one of the most evil people in History, is dead," Trump wrote in a social media post. He warned of "heavy and pinpoint bombing" that he said would continue throughout the week and



even beyond, part of a lethal assault the U.S. has justified as necessary to disable the country's nuclear capabilities.

Iran, which responded to the strikes with its own counterattack, warned of retribution, with the Cabinet saying that this "great crime will never go unanswered." The paramilitary Revolutionary Guard threatened to launch its "most intense offensive operation" ever targeting Israeli and American bases.

The attack opened a stunning new chapter in U.S. intervention in Iran, carried the potential for retaliatory violence and a wider war, and represented a startling flex of military might for an American president who swept into office on an "America First" platform and vowed to keep out of "forever wars."

The killing of Khamenei in the second Trump administration assault on Iran in eight months appeared (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India monitoring situation: Margherita

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, March 1: Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Pabitra Margherita on Sunday voiced concern over the safety of Indian citizens abroad following a major military escalation in the Middle East that has seen coordinated strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran's leadership, including the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Speaking to reporters in Majuli, Margherita said the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and relevant authorities are closely monitoring the evolving situation to ensure the security of Indians travelling or residing overseas.

"In view of the intense situation unfolding in the Middle East, particularly after the significant strikes on Iran, the Ministry concerned is observing the entire scenario with sharp vigilance," he stated. "Instructions (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

21 illegal Bangladeshi migrants sent back: CM

GUWAHATI, March 1: A total of 21 illegal migrants from Bangladesh, including children, were sent back to their country from Assam in the early hours of Sunday, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The push back took place from Sribhumii district of the state, he said.

"Alert eyes. Midnight action. At 12:30 AM sharp, 21 illegal migrants were sent back to their respective country, thanks to the ever-watchful @sribhumipolice," Sarma said in a post on X.

"Apprehended. Documented. Sent back home. Seems like while most people were dreaming, our police were wide awake doing the night shift for the nation. Sleep can wait when duty calls," he added, lauding the police action.

The two photographs shared by the chief minister on X showed at least seven children among the illegal migrants.

The Assam government has been cracking the whip on illegal migrants from Bangladesh, pushing back infiltrators through its borders with the neighbouring nation. (PTI)

UPPL sounds poll bugle at Dotma

Bodoland People's Front holds rally in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, March 1: With the Assembly elections approaching in Assam, political activity has intensified across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), as parties including the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) stepped up their campaigns to mobilise voters.

A grand rally organised by the Pramod Boro-led UPPL at Dotma in Kokrajhar district witnessed large participation from different parts of the constituency on Sunday.

The rally, themed around peace and harmony in BTR, marked the party's formal sounding of the election bugle ahead of the upcoming polls.

Despite losing power in the last BTC elections, the morale of UPPL leaders and workers appeared strong, with thousands joining the procession that began at Dotma Harihu Fwthar, passed through Thulungapuri and culminated at the North Dotma playground.

The large turnout along the roads of the greater Dotma constituency reflected the party's efforts to project its grassroots strength.

Speaking to media persons, UPPL president and former chief executive member of BTR, Pramod Boro, stated that the party is prepared to contest alone in all 15 constituencies under BTC in the forthcoming Assembly elections.

He added that discussions regard-

PM Modi to chair CCS meeting late night; West Asia situation, stranded Indians likely to figure

NEW DELHI, March 1: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security, the highest decision-making body on security and strategic matters of the country, in Delhi on Sunday night, government sources said.

The meeting is understood to have been convened in the wake of the prevailing West Asia situation following the attack on Iran by the United States and Israel and the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"The prime minister will chair a meeting of the CCS on returning to Delhi tonight from his two-day tour of the states. He is expected to land here at around 9.30 pm," a source said.

Modi had visited Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry during the two-day tour.

The prime minister heads the CCS while Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman are its members.

A few top officials are also usually invited to the CCS meeting.

The meeting is likely to discuss the safety of Indian nationals who live in West Asia and also those who are stranded, and how to deal with the situation if it deteriorates, the sources said.

Currently, the airspace of West Asia is almost closed.

With flight services disrupted due to the military escalation in West Asia, hundreds of Indians are stranded in Dubai and other key hub airports, with many of them taking to social media to appeal to the Indian government for assistance.

There are around 10,000 Indian citizens who live, study and work in Iran, while over 40,000 live in Israel. The number of Indians who live in the Gulf and West Asia is about nine million.

India has in the past successfully evacuated thousands of Indians from different parts of the world, including West Asia, amidst conflicts.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Indian missions across the region (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Cong govt to enhance education, healthcare in Assam: Gaurav Oil tanker with 15 Indian crew members comes under attack

DIBRUGARH, March 1: Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on Sunday said education and healthcare systems will be upgraded across the state once his party forms government after the assembly polls.

Leading the 'Samay Paribartanar Yatra' in Dibrugarh district, Gogoi said that when the Congress comes to power in the state, women will get the benefits of different schemes without attending any party meetings.

"We want to create a better environment for education and healthcare in every village, including the tea garden areas. We aim to empower women by promoting small-scale enterprises so that they can become self-reliant," he said.

Gogoi assured that under a Congress government, welfare schemes would be further improved and strengthened.

"The present BJP government gives benefits of schemes to women who attend their party meetings. Once our party

forms a government, all eligible women will receive benefits directly in their bank accounts without having to attend party meetings," he added.

Gogoi said that the Congress remains firmly committed to building a "new greater Assam" by uniting people across all communities, irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

He stressed that the march was not merely a political programme, but a heartfelt effort to (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

NEW DELHI, March 1: A Palau-flagged oil tanker with 15 Indian crew members came under attack from the Iranian military off Oman's Musandam peninsula and four people were injured in the strike, Omani authorities said on Sunday.

Iran has carried out a wave of attacks mainly targeting Israel and American military bases in several Gulf countries after the US and Israel attacked Iran on Saturday.

The Iranian retaliation increased after Tehran announced early Sunday that the

'Moi Eti Nixhasor' Assamese film wins Special Mention at US competition

GUWAHATI, March 1: Assamese feature film 'Moi Eti Nixhasor' on a thief's life on the backdrop of the state's social and political landscape, has won the 'Award of Excellence Special Mention' at the Accolade Global Film Competition, its filmmaker said on Sunday.

Directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Bidyut Kotoky, the movie revolves around Koduwa -- a cunning village thief who navigates social unrest and prejudice with wit and heart.

The 'Award of Excellence Special Mention' is a significant achievement within the US-based Accolade Global Film Competition, which Movie Maker Magazine has named one of the top 25 festivals worth the entry fee, Kotoky said.

"We are deeply honoured by this



recognition from such a prestigious global platform. This award belongs to the entire creative team that brought Koduwa's world to life," he told PTI.

This rare distinction places the

belief that human emotions speak the same language, without showing any respect towards the man-made boundaries, he added.

"Although based in a remote village of Assam and in the not-so-distant past, this story reminds us time and again of the social and political challenges we all face in nearly every country in the time we are living in today," the director said.

"Moi Eti Nixhasor" (Koduwa the Nightbird) is on the life of Koduwa, an enigmatic village thief known for his cunning and wit, but whose honest attempts to improve his life are constantly frustrated by the whims and dictates of the local powers-that-be.

"By the time our story ends, the audience is confronted with a poignant (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

LeT module case: Court extends judicial custody of eight operatives by 14 days

NEW DELHI, March 1: A Delhi court on Sunday extended the judicial custody of eight operatives of an Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) module who illegally entered India and procured forged identity documents by 14 days.

The LeT operatives, seven of whom were Bangladeshi nationals, were produced with heavy security presence at the court, with a previous seven-day judicial custody ending on Sunday.

On February 22, in a major counter-terror operation spanning three states, the Delhi Police dismantled an LeT module.

Umar Farooq, Rubiul Islam, Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Mohammed Saifiyat Hussain, Muhammad Zahidur Islam, Muhammad Liton, Muhammad Ujjal and Muhammad Umar were produced before the court. The arrests followed coordinated raids in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, after investigators traced the group's involvement in putting up "pro-Pakistan" and "pro-terror" posters, featuring photographs of terrorist Burhan Wani at multiple locations in Delhi.

According to the police, the LeT operatives were planning a major terror attack in the country with the support of Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI and terrorist organisations based in Bangladesh.

Police claimed that the module was being handled from Bangladesh by Shabir Ahmad Lone alias Raja



alias Kashmiri, a trained LeT terrorist from Jammu and Kashmir who was previously arrested by the Delhi Police's Special Cell in 2007 in a case involving recovery of arms and ammunition, including an AK-47 rifle and grenades.

Lone, who hails from Kangan in Srinagar, had fled to Bangladesh after his release from Tihar Jail in 2018 and was working to revive the LeT's terror network in India by activating sleeper cells of Bangladeshi operatives residing illegally in the country, they said.

The posters put up in Delhi featured photographs glorifying slain Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorist Wani and carried messages, such as "India stop genocide" and "Free Kashmir", along with Urdu slogans translating to "Hum Pakistani Hain, Pakistan Hamara Hai" and "Kashmiri Ekjut-ta Divas". (PTI)

GST collection grows 8.1 pc to over ₹ 1.83 lakh cr in Feb

NEW DELHI, March 1: Gross GST collection increased by 8.1 per cent to over ₹ 1.83 lakh crore in February, led by higher growth in revenues from imports and improved domestic sales.

Gross domestic revenue rose 5.3 per cent to about ₹ 1.36 lakh crore, while gross import revenue climbed 17.2 per cent to ₹ 47,837 crore.

Total refunds were up 10.2 per cent at ₹ 22,595 crore.

Total net Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection stood at over ₹ 1.61 lakh crore, up 7.9 per cent year-on-year.

Net cess revenue was ₹ 5,063 crore, down from ₹ 13,481 crore in February last year. GST rates on about 375 items were slashed, making goods cheaper, effective September 2025. Also, four tax slabs of 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent were merged into two of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, with a highest 40 per cent slab for a select few ultra-luxury goods and tobacco products.

The GST collections had initially dipped in the first month of tax cut implementation, with revenues declining to ₹ 1.70 lakh crore in No-



vember. The collection rose to ₹ 1.74 lakh crore in December and further to ₹ 1.93 lakh crore in January.

Deloitte India Partner MS Mani said GST collection figures reflect the fact that there has been a consumption uptick that has more than compensated for the rate reductions.

However, the negative growth re-

ported by major states such as Tamil Nadu (-6%), MP (-8%), Rajasthan (-1%), and the single digit growth below the national average of 8% reported by WB (1%) Haryana (2%), UP (5%), Maharashtra (6%) would be a matter of concern for the states and the policy makers, Mani said.

EY India Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said this performance reaf-

firms the strength of India's consumption engine. As structural reforms continue to take hold, these trends highlight a maturing tax ecosystem and a confident domestic market, setting the stage for sustained and inclusive economic momentum. Price Waterhouse & Co LLP, Partner, Pratik Jain said the data indicates that GST has entered into a phase stable and predictable growth, which is encouraging to see.

AKM Global, Lead-Indirect Tax, Iqesh Nagpal said, "February 2026 GST collections are ₹ 1.84 lakh crore, reflecting a seasonal moderation from January's record ₹ 1.93 lakh crore, which had been boosted by the inclusion of October-December quarterly returns."

Manoj Mishra, Partner and Tax Controversy Management Leader, Grant Thornton Bharat said With cumulative collections reaching Rs 20.27 lakh crore, up 8.3 per cent so far this year, the numbers indicate that GST revenues are holding firm even on a high base, reflecting structural stability rather than cyclical spikes. (PTI)

VOC Port to invest ₹ 15,000 cr in Outer Harbour project

TUTICORIN, March 1: VO Chidambaran Port will invest ₹ 15,000 crore in its ambitious Outer Harbour project, which aims to increase overall cargo handling capacity and position Tamil Nadu as a major transshipment hub of southern India, a top executive has said.

The investment is in addition to the ₹ 1,500 crore capex, which has been set aside to upgrade port infrastructure, along with clean projects and deployment of new-age technologies, VOC Port Authority Chairperson Susanta Kumar Purohit told PTI in an interview.

VO Chidambaran Port (VOC Port) is one of the major ports in India, located at Tuticorin in the southern part of Tamil Nadu, with an annual cargo handling capacity of 82 million tonnes per annum (MTPA). It is also one of the oldest operational ports, with trade links dating back to 123 AD.

Sharing future growth plans, Purohit said, "Outer Harbour is our ambitious project, aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for the maritime sector. Our ministry aims to make VOC Port a major transshipment hub of southern India".

To tap the growing opportunities, VOC Port Authority is investing close to ₹ 15,000 crore in the Outer Harbour project, which will add another 4 million tonne per annum (MTPA) cargo handling capacity in two phases by 2027 and 2030, he said.

The port aims to compete with international hubs located in other countries, such as Sri Lanka, Singapore and Indonesia.

As part of the expansion, two berths will be developed with a draft depth of 18 meters, which will be sufficient to handle even the largest container ship.

The berths will be able to handle vessels up to 2.5 lakh deadweight tonnage (DWT). In shipping, DWT is a measure of the total weight of a vessel. On the status of the project, Purohit said a detailed project report prepared for the Outer Harbour project has been submitted to the government for approval.

VOC Port has already signed a tripartite agreement with Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) and Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited to secure the necessary funding, the official said in reply to a question related to finance sourcing. (PTI)

From housewife to 'Boating Wali Didi': Puja Sahu's journey to financial freedom

BISHRAMPUR (CHHATTISGARH), March 1: Puja Sahu, a spirited woman in her thirties, brims with uncontainable ecstacy as she proclaims, "I'm no longer known by my husband's name. I'm Boating Wali Didi now!"

This newfound identity fuels her sense of empowerment and financial independence, a far cry from a few years ago.

Sahu earns her living riding a motor boat in an eco-tourism park in the state of Chhattisgarh, transformed by Coal India's South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) from a rehabilitated, abandoned coal mine into a thriving adventure hub.

The park features a 1,472-hectare site with a large water body, a floating restaurant, boating, and fish farming run by local cooperatives, boosting the local econ-

Iran Crisis: No immediate oil disruption for India; Russia pivot possible if conflict drags on

NEW DELHI, March 1: With crude inventories sufficient to meet at least 10 days of requirements and fuel stocks covering another 5-7 days, India is unlikely to face any near-term disruption in oil supplies from the closure of the key supply route of the Strait of Hormuz, officials said.

Even as rapidly unfolding developments, following US and Israeli military strikes on Iran, including the reported killing of the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader, suggest the conflict may not last very long, New Delhi has contingency plans in place should tensions escalate, top officials and analysts said.

Iran's state media said on February 28 that the Islamic Republic has shut the Strait of Hormuz - one of the world's most critical energy chokepoints through which about a fifth of global oil and gas supplies transit - in response to US and Israeli missile strikes.

The closure for a short duration will not have much impact on India as it already has supplies to meet fuel requirements, they said, adding that in the event of a prolonged disruption or closure of the narrow Strait of Hor-

muz, the country can recalibrate imports, tapping into its diversified supply sources, including increasing purchases of Russian oil.

The immediate fallout is expected to be reflected in oil prices. Brent crude closed the week near seven-month highs at around USD 73 per barrel, after rising roughly 16 per cent since the start of the year. Traders are bracing for heightened volatility next week, with some models pointing to prices moving towards USD 80 a barrel if supply flows are disrupted or face credible threats.

India imports 88 per cent of its crude oil - the raw material for making fuels like petrol and diesel - and about half of its requirement of natural gas - the feedstock for generating electricity, producing fertiliser, fuel for household kitchens and CNG for automobiles - and cooking gas LPG. Kpler vessel tracking data shows that 2.5-2.7 million barrels per day, roughly 50 per cent of India's crude oil import, transits through the Strait of Hormuz, largely sourced from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait.

Besides, as much as 60 per cent of

India's liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports move through the Strait of Hormuz, primarily from Gulf suppliers, such as Qatar and the UAE, making India's gas supplies vulnerable to disruptions in the route.

More importantly, India imports almost all of its LPG through the Strait of Hormuz. Any disruption or restriction at this chokepoint would immediately pressure LPG flows.

"Indian refineries put together hold anywhere between 10 to 15 days of crude inventories, both in tanks and in transit. Besides, all their fuel tanks are full, which can easily meet 7-10 days of the country's fuel requirement," an official said.

"For now, we think the closure of the Strait of Hormuz will not be very long."

Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), which controls the sea lane, has in messages in high frequency warned that no ships are allowed to pass through the Strait, but has so far not attacked any of them.

Another official said the world has enough crude oil supplies and India can tap sellers as far as Venezuela and Brazil besides Africa. (PTI)

Iran crisis: 225 flights cancelled at Mumbai, Delhi airports

NEW DELHI, March 1: As many as 225 international flights were cancelled at Mumbai and Delhi airports on Sunday due to operational disruptions in the wake of the US and Israel attacks on Iran and the subsequent closure of airspaces in the Gulf region.

Of the 225 flights, 125 flights were cancelled at Mumbai airport and at least 100 flights at Delhi Airport, sources say.

A source said 60 international departures and 40 arrivals have been cancelled at Delhi Airport.

"Due to the evolving political situation in the Middle East, west-bound international flights may experience disruptions or schedule changes," DIAL said in a post on X.

Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) operates the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in the national capital.

"A total of 125 flights have been cancelled at Mumbai Airport up till 2.30 pm on Sunday. These include 67 departures and 58 arrivals," said another source.

It may be mentioned here that due to the paucity of parking space, authorities at Mumbai Airport had taken NOTAM for not accepting any flight on account of diversion at 9 pm on Saturday until 8 am on March 1 amid the developments in West Asia. (PTI)

that promote biodiversity, generate sustainable livelihoods, and create meaningful employment opportunities, particularly empowering local women through self-help groups and eco-tourism initiatives."

Sahu is among the 12 women of Shiv Shakti Mahila Gram Sanghathan, a self-help group that manages the boating services of Kenapara eco-tourism located here in Surajpur district of Chhattisgarh. The boat ride activity is one of the main attractions of this eco-tourism park.

Sahu remembers the days when choices felt like distant dreams. Dependent on others, her world was small, defined by routines she didn't choose. But now, her world has transformed.

"I take immense pride when I say that now I have my own identity," she declares. "People call me 'Boating Wali Didi' and it feels like freedom."

Sahu explained with a broad smile that she now earns a sum of Rs 200 per day and is a master of her own destiny. "Today I have money on PhonePe and I can eat the food of my choice and buy clothes which I like."

Sahu has a message for women in rural areas: "Leave your homes and become financially independent."

Through her own journey of self-reliance, helming a boat on local waters, she has turned dependency into dignity. "By becoming financially independent, we can provide good education to our children and fulfill all our desires," she said. (PTI)

Hero MotoCorp wholesales up 44pc at 5,58,216 units in February



NEW DELHI, March 1: Two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp on Sunday reported a 44 per cent rise in dispatches to dealers at 5,58,216 units in February as compared to 3,88,068 units in the same month last year.

Domestic sales were at 516,968 units last month as compared to 3,57,296 units in February 2025, up 44.68 per cent, Hero MotoCorp said in a statement.

Last month witnessed a surge in scooter sales, while 100cc and 125cc motorcycles anchored volume growth, it added.

"The strong performance in February 2026 was driven by continued momentum in the scooter segment, supported by growing consumer preference for new and refreshed models like Xoom and Destini," the company said.

The 100cc - 125cc segment recorded an impressive growth, providing a substantial boost to overall volumes, it added.

The company's global business maintained its growth momentum, recording dispatch growth of 34 per cent with 41,248 units in February 2026 compared to 30,772 units in the same month last year, Hero MotoCorp said. (PTI)

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Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

to create a leadership vacuum given the absence of a known successor and because the 86-year-old supreme leader had final say on all major policies during his decades in power. He led Iran's clerical establishment and the Revolutionary Guard, the two main centers of power in the governing theocracy.

State media also reported the deaths of the head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard and a top security adviser to Khamenei in airstrikes. Maj. Gen. Mohammad Pakpour took over as the Guard's top commander after Israel killed his past commander in the 12-day war last June. The adviser, Ali Shamkhani, had long been a figurehead within Iran's security establishment, IRNA said.

As reports trickled out about Khamenei's death, eyewitnesses in Tehran told The Associated Press that some residents were rejoicing, cheering from rooftops, blowing whistles and letting out ululations.

Mourners raised a black mourning flag over the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city and a major pilgrimage site for Shiite Muslims. The Iranian government declared 40 days of public mourning and a seven-day nationwide public holiday to commemorate Khamenei's death.

Citing unidentified sources, the semi-official Fars news agency, believed to be close to the Revolutionary Guard, reported that several relatives of Khamenei were also killed, including a daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law and grandchild. (AP)

India monitoring situation

have already been issued for the protection and assistance of students, tourists and all Indians currently abroad." The recent military campaign, part of a joint US-Israeli operation against Iranian nuclear and military targets, intensified dramatically when Iranian state media confirmed on Sunday that Khamenei, who had led the Islamic Republic for more than three decades, was killed in the airstrikes.

A 40-day national mourning period has been declared in Iran. Reports say the strikes, code-named "Operation Epic Fury," targeted Tehran, Natanz and other strategic locations, prompting significant destruction and a volatile security situation in the region.

Margherita urged Indian nationals, especially students and travellers in affected areas, to stay in close contact with Indian missions and follow safety advisories.

"Our priority is the safety and wellbeing of Indians abroad," he said, adding that genuine cases of distress will be addressed with all possible support from government channels.

The minister's remarks come as countries around the world reassess travel advisories and consular operations amid growing concerns over potential ripple effects from the Middle East conflict on global security and energy markets.

Analysts say heightened tensions could lead to extended regional instability, impacting global diplomatic ties and civilian safety far beyond the immediate battleground.

Margherita also appealed for calm among communities in Assam with family ties in the Middle East, underlining that the situation remains dynamic and that all official channels are working to ensure prompt assistance.

"In these times of uncertainty, accurate information and coordinated support are crucial," he said.

'More eviction drives

would come out in such large numbers. I have seen many waves, but this time it is completely different," Sarma said.

The Assam Assembly elections are expected to take place in March-April this year. This will be the first assembly election after the delimitation exercise, which was done in 2023.

Presently, the ruling BJP's strength in the 126-member assembly is 64, while its allies AGP has nine MLAs, UPPL has seven and BPF has three members.

In the opposition camp, the Congress has 26 MLAs, AIUDF has 15 members and CPI(M) has one MLA. There is an Independent legislator as well. (PTI)

PM Modi to chair

are in continuous contact with nationals, and helplines have been activated. The CCS meeting may also take stock of the situation arising out of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which is a major shipping route for Indian ships like bulk oil carriers, by the Iranian authorities, sources said.

Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei was killed in a major attack on Iran launched by Israel and the United States. Iranian state television and the state-run IRNA news agency announced the 86-year-old's death early Sunday.

The announcements came after a joint US and Israeli aerial bombardment from Saturday that targeted Iranian military and governmental sites.

US President Donald Trump said it gave the Iranians their greatest chance to take back their country. Trump said the heavy and pinpoint bombing was to continue through the week or as long as necessary.

Iran responded to the assault by firing drones and missiles at Israel and US military installations around the Gulf, and also at the global business hub of Dubai.

On Sunday, mourners belonging to the Shia community took to the streets in various parts of India to express outrage and grief over the killing of Khamenei.

In Pakistan, at least 10 people were killed and several were injured on Sunday after clashes broke out between police and protesters as they tried to storm the gates of the US Consulate in the port city of Karachi. (PTI)

UPPL sounds poll

Islary and Jiron Basumatary, General Secretaries Raju Kumar Narzary and Madhab Chandra Chetry, along with several senior leaders. Meanwhile, the ruling BPF organised a separate rally at Titagarh in Kokrajhar under the theme "Dispur Chalo." Thousands of party leaders and supporters participated in the programme as part of efforts to consolidate support ahead of the Assembly elections.

BPF president and BTC chief executive Member Hagrama Mohilary, along with former minister and senior leader Pramila Rani Brahma and other party members, attended the rally.

Mohilary stated that his party is fully prepared to contest the Assembly elections across the BTC districts and maintained that the present BTC government is working for the overall development of the region.

Cong govt to enhance

connect directly with the people. The 'Samay Paribartan Yatra' on Sunday started from Naharkatia, and progressed through Duliaganj and Tingkhong constituencies with a 'padayatra' and bike rally.

Gogoi interacted with members of the Ghinai Baptist Christian community in Dibrugarh and lit candles at the church, praying for the well-being of all.

He was accompanied by Leader of the Opposition Debabrata Saikia, MP Pradyut Bordoloi, and former MPs Paban Singh Ghatowar and Ripun Bora, among others.

The 'yatra' will touch up on Makum, Doomdooma and Margherita in Tinsukia district on Monday.

The election to the 126-member assembly is expected to take place in March-April. (PTI)

Oil tanker with 15

members sustained injuries of varying degrees and have been given medical care. People familiar with the incident indicated that New Delhi is in touch with the relevant authorities.

Iran on Sunday said it will avenge the killing of Khamenei, triggering fears of a wider conflict in the Middle East. The US-Israel joint strikes on Iran came after weeks of negotiations between Washington and Tehran on the Iranian nuclear programme did not produce any tangible outcome.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Saturday that India is deeply concerned at the recent developments in Iran and the Gulf region.

"We urge all sides to exercise restraint, avoid escalation, and prioritise the safety of civilians," it said.

"Dialogue and diplomacy should be pursued to de-escalate tensions and address underlying issues. Sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states must be respected," it added. (PTI)

Assamese film wins

question -- who is actually the real thief?" Kotoky said. The Mumbai-based filmmaker further said that the film has also been selected at Covellite International Film Festival 2026 of the USA. "After watching 'Moi Eti Nixhasor' at Covellite, filmmakers described it as a 'delightful little celebration' with strong audience engagement. While it is not a major festival like Cannes or Sundance, it is highly regarded for its quality, diversity and dedication to showcasing independent work from around the world," he added.

Although he did not share any timeline, but Kotoky said that once the film is commercially released in Assam a few months down the line, the people of the state will shower similar love toward it.

The lead cast is played by noted theatre actor Gunomoni Baruah, while several senior and junior artistes of Assamese film industry have enacted other important characters.

Based on a true story written by senior journalist Anuradha Sharma Pujari, the film has been produced by the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and red river & blue hills. (PTI)

Gaurav Gogoi pledge to promote Assamese culture and seek justice for Zubeen Garg Samay Paribartion Yatra reached 95 no Demow constituency



HT Correspondent
DEMOW, March 1: The Samay Paribartion Yatra (Maati Bachaok, Jaati Bachaok) of the Congress Party reached 95 No Demow Constituency on Saturday. The Congress Party workers gave a warm welcome. On the

occasion, a bike rally was also taken out. The women sang the Diha Naam at the Demow Public Playground in the presence of APCC President Gaurav Gogoi, Debabrata Saikia, Leader of Opposition, as well as MLA of Nazira Constituency, Ripun

Borah, Former president of APCC, Pradyut Bordoloi, Nagaon MP, Bhaskar Barua, MLA of Titabor Constituency, along with other Congress leaders and workers. Ajay Kumar Gogoi, a ticket aspirant for the Congress Party from 95 No Demow Con-

stituency, anchored in the programme.

Later, talking to the media here, APCC president Gaurav Gogoi said, as the people welcomes their yatra, proves that in the coming days, Congress government will come for sure. He added that after coming into the government, their first aim is to give justice to Zubeen Garg. He alleges that this government has not offered the respect to Zubeen Kshetra which they should have to do and said the State Chief Minister is busy in his campaigning. He said that they have not been able to keep Zubeen Kshetra neat and clean. He said they wanted to take forward Assamese Culture and Assamese Tradition and alleges that everybody knows the BJP wanted to bring external culture which people see the difference.

Regarding alliance with other parties, he said that yesterday, he said there is a possibility and on Saturday also his stand is steady. Later, from the Demow Public Playground, the Congress leaders had a padayatra in Demow Hari Pora road and had meetings.

Tension erupts in Dalgaon over illegal sand mining

HT Correspondent
DALGAON, March 1: A heated confrontation broke out between alleged sand mafia operators and local residents in Dalgaon on Saturday over continued illegal sand mining in the Tangni river, prompting police intervention to restore order.

According to local sources, illegal sand extraction has been going on for nearly a decade in the Tangni river, which flows through the No 1/2 Baruahar area under Dalgaon Police Station. The operators have allegedly been managing local police and forest department officials, enabling them to run JCB machines, dumpers and tractors round the clock. Residents alleged that the unchecked activity has deepened the riverbed, altered its course and posed a serious threat to lives and property on both banks.

Locals claimed that heavy vehicles engaged in sand transportation have extensively damaged roads, while rising dust levels have become a health hazard for pedestrians and schoolchildren. Despite repeated protests, the mining operations have allegedly continued with accusations that some local leaders of All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU) were "managed" to suppress opposition.

The situation turned volatile at Office Bazar when shopkeepers sprinkled water on the road to control dust, as per their routine practice. When sand-laden trucks attempted to leave immediately afterward, an argument broke out between shopkeepers, residents and the operators. The confrontation reportedly escalated when some individuals allegedly tried to manhandle the shopkeepers.

On being informed, Daipam police reached the spot and brought the situation under control. During the standoff, one individual who allegedly claimed that the police were "managed" by them was briefly detained and later released. No vehicles or machinery involved in the alleged illegal mining were seized.

Following the public outcry, police temporarily sealed the mining ghat by placing bamboo barricades at the access point. However, residents expressed concern over how long the closure would remain in effect.

The incident has once again drawn attention to allegations of a nexus between illegal sand miners and authorities, even as concerns over environmental degradation and public safety continue to grow in the region.

Morigaon residents raise slogans against sitting MLA

HT Correspondent
MORIGAON, March 1: Residents of the Morigaon constituency raised slogans against sitting MLA Ramakanta Deuri during the Jana Ashirbad Yatra rally led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday.

As the Yatra van reached the Police Reserve gate, locals began shouting against the MLA, coinciding with the pres-

ence of eight BJP ticket aspirants for Morigaon constituency waiting to welcome the Chief Minister. The aspirants reportedly distanced themselves from the sitting MLA.

Crowds had gathered spontaneously to see the Chief Minister, accompanied by State BJP president Dilip Saikia and Minister Piyush Hazarika. On noticing Ramakanta Deuri in the mobile van,

people shouted slogans such as "Ramakanta Deuri go back, go back" and demanded change in the constituency.

Earlier, Deuri, along with party president, secretary and other workers had warmly welcomed the Chief Minister at Basanaghat. More than 10,000 bike riders greeted the Yatra at Jagiroad, and the rally proceeded via Morigaon to reach Barapujia.

Retired Judge suggests fast-track Court could expedite Zubeen Garg case

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, March 1: Amid ongoing legal proceedings, the question of whether Assamese music icon Zubeen Garg will receive timely justice has drawn widespread attention. Speaking to the media during a special programme in Tezpur on Sunday, retired judge Biplab Sarma said that a fast-track court could help expedite the case.

However, he cautioned against drawing conclusions at this stage, noting that the judicial process is still underway. "It would be premature to comment on the outcome now, as the arguments of the accused must also be heard," he said.

Justice Sarma, formerly of the Gauhati High Court, was speaking after attending the 54th foundation day celebrations of Tezpur Law College, where he was chief guest. During an interaction with students, he also appealed that no political mileage should be sought from the circumstances surrounding Zubeen Garg's death, emphasising the need to allow the legal process to proceed without external interference.

KKHSOU holds Learners' Meet at Barak Valley

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, March 1: Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) successfully organised a Learners' Meet on Sunday at Gurucharan University, Silchar, bringing together around 700 learners from across the Barak Valley. The event aimed to facilitate direct face-to-face interaction between university authorities and learners, understand their concerns and gather constructive feedback on various academic and administrative services provided by the University.

The meet served as an important platform for strengthening academic engagement and enhancing student support mechanisms in the region. Learners enthusiastically shared their experiences, suggestions and challenges, enabling the University to gain valuable insights for further improvement of its services. The programme was led by Prof Rajendra Prasad Das, Vice Chancellor of KKHSOU, who addressed the gathering and reaffirmed the University's commitment to quality education, accessibility and learner-centric governance. Prof

Pranab Saikia, Dean, Study Centre (i/c) and Dr Ridip Dev Choudhury, Chairman, Admission Committee, also interacted with the learners and responded to their queries. The event was graciously hosted at Gurucharan University and was honoured by the presence of Prof Niranjay Roy, Vice Chancellor of Gurucharan University. Principals and Coordinators of KKHSOU Study Centres from the Barak Valley were also present, reflecting strong institutional collaboration and support for open and distance learning initiatives.

The conference began in the

morning with the ceremonial hoisting of flags by the central committee and representatives of 28 affiliated committees. This was followed by floral tributes to martyrs in honour of their contributions and sacrifices. Several cultural and organisational programmes were conducted as part of the scheduled events.

Delegates and representatives from 28 district committees attended the conference including

Trailokya Bordoloi's solo art exhibition opens in Jorhat



HT Correspondent
JORHAT, March 1: A three-day solo exhibition of paintings and drawings by noted poet and artist Trailokya Bordoloi began on Sunday at Vision Art Asom, located on Jail Road in Jorhat. The exhibition commenced in the morning, followed by the inaugural ceremony in the afternoon.

On the occasion, Bordoloi's collection of lyrical poems titled Bon Birinar Bahi was formally released. The book was unveiled by Dr Gautom Kumar Saikia, Principal of Kamargaon College.

Speaking at the release ceremony, Dr Saikia remarked that poetry and painting are both complex forms of art and Trailokya Bordoloi has successfully mastered the rare ability to blend the two. He stated that each poem inherently carries a visual image and Bordoloi has the remarkable talent to bring those poetic images to life through his brush and colours.

The exhibition was inaugurated by renowned artist and president of the Jorhat Fine Art Society, Bhriugupati Hazarika, who attended as the Chief Guest. In his address, Hazarika mentioned that he had previously worked alongside Bordoloi and praised his deep understanding of both poetry and painting. He noted that Bordoloi possesses special expertise in both fields and consistently strives to depict authentic rural life through his art and poetry.

Hazarika further observed that lyrical poetry is relatively rare in literature and Bordoloi's book beauti-

fully captures the essence of nature. The collection, he said, contains resonant expressions capable of stirring readers' emotions and creating a deep impact through the rhythm and sound of words. He also described Bordoloi as a skilled painter who vividly portrays human emotions—joy and sorrow as well as the beauty of natural landscapes.

Expressing his happiness at inaugurating the exhibition organised through Bordoloi's individual effort, Hazarika remarked that today's classrooms often lack the environment and joy required to truly appreciate a painting.

Sharing his personal reflections, poet-artist and NEEPCO engineer Trailokya Bordoloi quoted the famous poet Hiren Bhattacharyya, saying, "Sorrow is the child in my lap." He added, "In the same way, colours and images are like children in my lap." He recalled that during an exhibition in Delhi, an artist had encouraged him to focus on Assam's abundant natural beauty. Since then, he has been travelling across villages, creating paintings inspired by nature. He mentioned his special fondness for watercolours and said that he mostly paints at night. He invited everyone to visit and experience the exhibition.

Among others present at the event were Parikshit Baruah of Vision Art Asom, Dr Mantumoni Dutta of NN Saikia College, artist Dr Ranjit Kumar Baruah, Dilip Tamuli, Bijoy Borthakur and Ripunjay Gogoi, along with several other distinguished personalities.

Dularai Bodo Harimu Afad annual conference concludes in Kokrajhar

Delegates from Assam and beyond reaffirm commitment to preserving Bodo culture



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, March 1: The 22nd Central Conference of Dularai Bodo Harimu Afad (All Bodo Cultural Association) and the 14th Annual Conference of its Kokrajhar District Committee concluded successfully on Sunday at Baganshali in Kokrajhar. The day-long programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from members and delegates.

The conference began in the

morning with the ceremonial hoisting of flags by the central committee and representatives of 28 affiliated committees. This was followed by floral tributes to martyrs in honour of their contributions and sacrifices. Several cultural and organisational programmes were conducted as part of the scheduled events.

Delegates and representatives from 28 district committees attended the conference including

participants from five districts of BTC as well as from different parts of Assam, West Bengal and New Delhi. The large turnout reflected the unity and commitment of members towards the preservation and promotion of Bodo culture and traditions.

Addressing the gathering, Nelson Daimary, president of Dularai Bodo Harimu Afad, highlighted the organisation's continuous efforts to promote Bodo art, culture, language and heritage at national and international levels. He stressed the need for collective responsibility to safeguard cultural identity and pass it on to future generations.

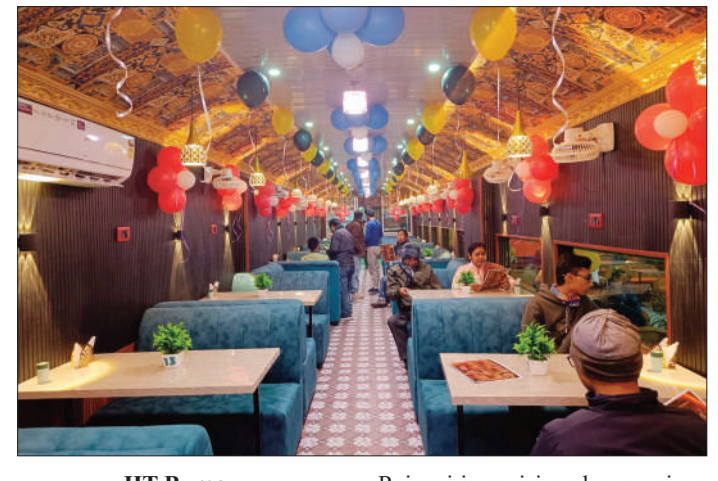
General Secretary Bijitgiri Basumatary presented the annual report and outlined various activities undertaken during the year. He also emphasised strengthening grassroots committees and expanding cultural awareness programmes across different regions.

The conference concluded with resolutions aimed at further strengthening the organisation and enhancing initiatives to promote Bodo cultural heritage globally.

Morigaon administration issues reminder on Constitution of ICC

HT Correspondent
MORIGAON, March 1: The Office of the District Commissioner, Morigaon (Women Cell) has issued a reminder to all Heads of Departments, private institutions, proprietors, entrepreneurs, business establishments and service providers to constitute Internal Complaints Committees (ICC) as mandated under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

NFR expands rail coach restaurant initiative



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, March 1: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) continues to strengthen its innovative Rail Coach Restaurant initiative across the zone, with 14 themed restaurants currently operational at major locations. These distinctive dining facilities are serving passengers and visitors at Katihar and Jobnani, Raiganj, Darjeeling, Malda Court, New Cooch Behar, Raja Bhat Khawa, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri Road and New Mal, as well as Guwahati, Uzanbazar, Kokrajhar and New Tinsukia. The growing popularity of these restaurants reflects NFR's commitment to enhancing passenger amenities through creative and sustainable initiatives.

Further advancing this concept, NFR has awarded the contract for the operation of a Rail Coach Restaurant at Raiganj Railway Station under Katihar Division for a period of five years. This marks another progressive step towards strengthening passenger facilities while promoting sustainable non-fare revenue generation for the Railways.

The Rail Coach Restaurant at

Raiganj is envisioned as a unique railway-themed dining destination, developed from a refurbished railway coach that blends nostalgic railway charm with modern hospitality standards. The facility will cater not only to rail passengers but also to local residents and visitors, making it an attractive and inclusive dining hub in the region.

The initiative forms part of NFR's broader vision to creatively utilise decommissioned railway coaches by transforming them into aesthetically appealing restaurants while preserving railway heritage. Across the zone, Rail Coach Restaurants have earned appreciation for their distinctive ambience, quality food offerings and customer-friendly service.

This initiative will significantly enhance passenger amenities while creating valuable employment opportunities, thereby contributing to local economic growth and community development. It further reflects Northeast Frontier Railway's strong commitment to innovation, sustainability and the effective, passenger-centric utilisation of railway assets for long-term public benefit.

Acharya lauds national unity and public service at Guwahati event Governor attends Lohpurush Rashtriya Ekatmata Award ceremony

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, March 1: Lakshman Prasad Acharya attended the Lohpurush Rashtriya Ekatmata Award distribution ceremony organised by Bharat Bharati at the Lohia Lions Gauhati Auditorium in Guwahati on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor termed the event a celebration of unity, national spirit and collective resolve. Extending his heartfelt congratulations to the awardees, he said that honours conferred in the name of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel serve as a reminder of his unparalleled contribution to India's unity and

integrity. He noted that at the time of independence, when the nation faced political fragmentation, Sardar Patel's courage, vision and determination ensured the integration of more than 500 princely states, laying the foundation of a strong and united India.

The Governor said that unity is the harmony of minds that binds society beyond differences of language, religion, culture or region. He observed that India's enduring strength lies in its timeless principle of unity in diversity, rooted in the civilisational ideals of public welfare and collective progress. Referring to the

guiding ethos of "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah" and "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," he said these values continue to inspire the nation's inclusive and compassionate outlook.

Highlighting the vision of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, the Governor spoke on development alongside heritage, stating that both should go hand in hand to realise the dream of a developed India. He added that Assam is making steady strides across sectors with meaningful contributions from social organisations and dedicated citizens.

Describing public service as a

noble pursuit, the Governor urged the youth to embrace service, sensitivity and social responsibility as guiding principles in life. He congratulated all the awardees for their selfless dedication to society and hailed Bharat Bharati for promoting national integration, cultural harmony and patriotic values across the country.

The programme was attended by national president Vinay Patrale, national secretary Rudra Narayan Tiwari, trust president Subhash Dhawan, president of Ishan Bharti Bhaskar Dutta Goswami, Convener Shobhan Vyas and other distinguished functionaries.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

The struggle you're in today is developing the strength you need tomorrow. - Robert Tew

US tariffs and Indian politics

The political sparring between Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi has entered a sharper and more consequential phase, with the balance of advantage appearing to tilt towards the Leader of the Opposition after an unexpected judicial intervention in the United States cast doubt on the durability of Donald Trump's tariff regime. The rhetorical exchange—Modi accusing Rahul Gandhi of indulging in shameless politics and the latter countering with the charge that the Prime Minister had compromised national interest—has acquired greater heft following the blow delivered by the Supreme Court of the United States to key elements of Donald Trump's trade policy. The ruling has injected fresh uncertainty into the global trade environment and, more importantly for domestic politics, strengthened the Congress narrative that New Delhi moved with undue haste in sealing a trade arrangement aligned too closely with Washington's tariff posture. For months, the Modi government defended its engagement strategy with the United States as pragmatic and forward-looking, presenting trade negotiations as essential to safeguarding India's export interests and securing supply-chain advantages in a shifting geopolitical landscape. Officials defended the approach as one rooted in realism, arguing that closer alignment with Washington would cushion Indian manufacturers from punitive duties and open avenues for technology transfer. The Prime Minister himself adopted a combative tone against critics, accusing them of playing politics with economic diplomacy.

Rahul's counterattack initially struggled to cut through. His allegation that the government was "selling Bharat Mata" was dismissed by ruling party figures as hyperbolic and theatrical. Yet the Supreme Court's intervention altered the terrain. By undercutting the legal foundation of Trump's tariff measures, the ruling amplified doubts about the sustainability of the very policy architecture that New Delhi had sought to navigate. If the tariffs were vulnerable to judicial rollback, the question arose whether India's concessions and diplomatic capital had been deployed prematurely. The optics matter in Indian politics, and on this front Rahul Gandhi has seized the moment with calculated precision. Rather than retreating into abstract economic arguments, he has presented the issue as one of judgment and timing. His central claim is that the Modi government acted with unnecessary speed and insufficient strategic caution.

There is a widely held perception among sections of industry and the policy community that India's move may have been fault-footed. Trade agreements negotiated against a backdrop of legal uncertainty carry inherent risk. The Supreme Court ruling did not merely challenge a specific tariff; it underscored the fragility of executive-driven trade actions that bypass established legislative processes. For New Delhi, which had calibrated its stance partly in anticipation of continuity in U.S. trade policy, the judgment signalled that assumptions about permanence were misplaced.

A shockwave across the Middle East

The past twenty four hours have unfolded like a chapter torn from a dark political thriller, except this is not fiction and the consequences are painfully real for millions of people. News alerts, official statements and social media claims have collided at high speed, leaving the world struggling to understand what is actually happening between the United States, Israel and Iran. At the center of the storm is a claim by United States President Donald Trump that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed during a massive wave of United States and Israeli strikes. Iran immediately rejected this, insisting that its leadership remains safe and sound. Between these two sharply opposing narratives lies a region on edge and a global audience watching with a mix of fear, disbelief and exhaustion.

The name Iran has long been associated with tension, sanctions, threats and proxy conflicts. Yet even by the standards of decades of hostility, what is being described now feels different in scale and intent. President Trump has framed the attacks as part of a direct effort to overturn the government in Tehran. That alone represents a dramatic escalation from containment and pressure to open endorsement of regime change through military force. Such language carries enormous weight, especially when it comes from the leader of the most powerful military in the world. It also raises memories of past interventions that reshaped entire regions with consequences that still echo today.

The claim that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has been killed is perhaps the most explosive element of all. As Iran's Supreme Leader, Khamenei is not just a political figure but a symbol of the Islamic Republic itself. His authority spans the military, the judiciary and key media institutions. If he were truly dead, it would mark one of the most consequential assassinations in modern history. Yet no independent confirmation has emerged, and Iranian officials have moved quickly to deny it. In an era of information warfare, where truth is often the first casualty, many observers are treating all statements with caution.

What is not in doubt is that Iran has been hit hard. According to Iranian state media, one of the strikes struck an elementary school in

southern Iran, killing scores of students. The images and accounts circulating online are harrowing. Parents searching for children, classrooms reduced to rubble, and a sense of shock that transcends politics. If verified, such an incident would constitute a grave tragedy and potentially a serious violation of international law. Civilian casualties, especially children, have a way of cutting through ideological divisions and forcing the world to confront the human cost of military decisions.

From Washington, the tone has been defiant rather than restrained. President Trump has suggested that the bombing will continue throughout the week, signaling that this is not a one off operation but a sustained campaign. Support from Israel, long an adversary of Iran, is portrayed as both strategic and necessary. Israeli leaders have for years warned that Iran represents an existential threat, particularly because of its nuclear ambitions and support for armed groups across the region. For Israel, striking Iran directly has always been framed as a last resort. Now that threshold appears to have been crossed. Iran's response was swift and unprecedented. Missiles and drones were launched toward United States military bases, Israeli territory and other targets across the Middle East. Sirens sounded in multiple countries, and residents of densely populated areas rushed for shelter. Airports suspended flights, oil shipments were disrupted and global markets reacted nervously. While the United States military reported no combat related American casualties, the psychological impact of seeing bases under fire was significant. For many Americans stationed abroad, this was a stark reminder that geopolitical decisions made far away can have immediate personal consequences.

The Middle East as a whole is feeling the tremors. Countries that have tried to balance relations with both Washington and Tehran now find themselves under intense pressure. The United Arab Emirates described the moment as historic, a striking choice of words that suggests both gravity and uncertainty. By saying that world leaders have failed to ensure stability, the statement reflects a growing frustration among regional actors who feel caught between great power rival-



ries and long standing regional disputes. There is a deep sense of unease among ordinary people. In Iran, families are grappling with fear, anger and grief, unsure of what the next days will bring. Internet access has reportedly been disrupted in some areas, adding to the sense of isolation. In Israel, civilians are once again living with the reality of incoming fire and the knowledge that escalation could bring even heavier retaliation. In neighboring countries, people worry about spillover violence, refugee flows and economic shocks.

Allies of the United States are quietly questioning both the objectives

and the endgame of the operation. Overturning a government of more than eighty million people is not a simple task, and history offers few examples where such efforts have led to stable and peaceful outcomes. Critics argue that even if Iran's leadership were weakened or removed, the power vacuum could unleash chaos far worse than the status quo. Supporters counter that Iran's current system is inherently destabilizing and that decisive action was overdue. Information itself has become part of the battlefield. Conflicting claims, dramatic headlines and rapidly spreading videos make it difficult for anyone to form a clear picture. Some footage circulating online is later revealed to be from past conflicts or unrelated incidents. This fog of war feeds anxiety and mistrust. Journalists face enormous challenges verifying information while access to affected areas remains limited. For the public, separating fact from propaganda requires patience that is often in short supply during crises.

The humanitarian dimension cannot be ignored. Even if military targets were the stated aim, the reality

of modern warfare in populated regions means civilians inevitably suffer. Hospitals, schools and homes are rarely far from strategic sites. Aid organizations are warning that if the fighting continues, shortages of medicine, food and fuel could quickly worsen. Iran already faces economic hardship due to years of sanctions, and intensified conflict threatens to push vulnerable communities further into crisis.

Diplomatic channels appear strained but not entirely closed. Some world leaders have called for

immediate de-escalation, urging restraint from all sides. Others are waiting to see how events unfold before taking a public stance. The United Nations has expressed concern and called for respect for international law, though its ability to influence the situation remains uncertain. Behind closed doors, frantic conversations are likely taking place, as governments try to assess risks and protect their interests.

The most troubling aspect is the apparent normalization of extreme measures. Talk of regime change, targeted killings and sustained bombing has become almost casual in some political rhetoric. This language can desensitize audiences to the real human suffering involved. It can also lock leaders into positions that become harder to walk back without appearing weak. Once escalation begins, stepping away requires political courage that is often in short supply.

There is also the question of precedent. If major powers openly pursue the overthrow of rival governments through force, what does that mean for the international system? Smaller states may feel increasingly insecure, believing that

might make right. This could encourage arms races, including the pursuit of nuclear weapons as a deterrent. In that sense, the current crisis is not just about Iran or the Middle East, but about the future norms governing state behaviour.

The claim regarding Ayatollah Khamenei's death remains unresolved, and its eventual verification or debunking will significantly shape the next phase of events. If he is alive, Iran's leadership may seek to project resilience and defiance, using the attack to rally domestic support. If he is indeed dead, internal power struggles could emerge, creating unpredictability at a moment of extreme external pressure. Either scenario carries serious risks.

Ordinary people across the world are left watching, refreshing news feeds, and wondering how close the world is to a wider war. Many feel a sense of helplessness, aware that decisions made by a small number of leaders can alter countless lives. Others feel anger, convinced that this crisis was avoidable and that diplomacy failed long before the first missile was launched.

It is worth remembering that behind every headline are human stories. Children who should be worrying about homework instead of air strikes. Soldiers who signed up for service but now face the reality of combat. Families who have lived through previous wars and fear they are about to endure another. These stories rarely fit neatly into political talking points, yet they are the true measure of what is at stake. Whether this confrontation escalates further or gives way to a tense pause will depend on choices made in the coming days. History suggests that once violence reaches this level, resolution becomes harder, not easier. Still, moments of crisis have also produced unexpected breakthroughs when leaders recognized the cost of continuing down a destructive path.

Uncertainty reigns for now. Claims and counterclaims continue to fly, bombs fall, and retaliation answers retaliation. The world watches, hoping that cooler heads will prevail before the damage becomes irreversible. In the meantime, the unfolding events serve as a stark reminder of how fragile peace can be, and how quickly rhetoric and rivalry can turn into tragedy when the machinery of war is set in motion.

US-Israel strikes on Iran: Assessing Tehran's readiness

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Middle East has entered another fraught and uncertain chapter following coordinated United States and Israeli airstrikes on Iranian territory over the weekend. The attacks came barely a day after negotiations in Geneva over Tehran's nuclear enrichment programme collapsed, underscoring the deep mistrust that continues to define relations between Iran and the Western bloc. Washington has long demanded that Tehran abandon enrichment activities, viewing them as a potential pathway to nuclear weapons capability, while Israel has treated the programme as an existential threat. The Islamic Republic, however, has repeatedly insisted that enrichment is its sovereign right and has shown no inclination to concede. Against this combustible backdrop, the strikes risk transforming a simmering confrontation into a wider regional conflict involving multiple actors.

The timing of the operation is significant because it coincides with an unprecedented American military buildup across the region. Over the past month, the United States has surged naval and air assets into West Asia, signalling both deterrence and readiness. The deployment of the Lincoln Carrier Strike Group, accompanied by numerous naval vessels and combat aircraft including advanced F-35 multirole stealth fighters, reflects a posture designed for sustained high-intensity operations. Adding to the pressure, the Ford Carrier Strike Group—Washington's most technologically sophisticated carrier formation—is reportedly moving toward the theatre from the Mediterranean. Such a concentration of force has few precedents in recent years and indicates that policymakers in Washington are preparing for contingencies that extend beyond limited punitive strikes.

Yet the central question confronting analysts is not the scale of American power but the depth of Iranian resilience. Iran remains a formidable military actor in the Middle East despite clear technological disadvantages vis-à-vis the United States and Israel, particularly in air defence and stealth aviation. Over decades of sanctions and isolation, Tehran has invested heavily in asymmetric capabilities intended to offset conventional weaknesses. Its missile arsenal is especially noteworthy. Iran fields a wide array of ballistic missiles with ranges reaching up to 2,000 kilometres, placing a substantial number of American installations across the region within striking distance. Equally important is the Shahed family of drones—relatively inexpensive loitering munitions that have demonstrated operational effectiveness in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Systems such as the Shahed-131 and Shahed-136 have provided Iran with a scalable, deniable strike option capable of saturating enemy defences.

According to a 2024 report by the Congressional Research Service, the United States manages or operates eight persistent bases and eleven additional military sites in the Middle East. This extensive footprint, while projecting American power, simultaneously creates a wide target set in the event of escalation. Tehran appears acutely aware of this vulnerability and has steadily refined its doctrine around precision missile and drone attacks against fixed installations. Reports that Iran

is close to finalising a deal with China for CM-302 supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles further underscore its focus on maritime denial. With a range of roughly 290 kilometres and low-altitude flight profiles designed to evade radar, these weapons could significantly complicate US naval operations in the Persian Gulf, particularly in constrained waterways.

Iran's military strength also derives from its layered force structure. Its conventional armed forces number roughly 600,000 personnel, but the more ideologically driven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps adds another 200,000 active members along with naval units, intelligence networks, special operations forces and the Basij paramilitary militia. The IRGC, in particular, has evolved into the regime's principal instrument of both internal control and external power projection. Beyond Iran's borders, Tehran's network of aligned non-state actors—often described as the "axis of resistance"—provides additional strategic depth. Groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthi movement have suffered attrition in recent confrontations with Israel, yet they retain the capacity to open secondary fronts that could stretch Israeli and American resources. Even limited proxy activity could transform the current crisis into a multi-theatre confrontation.

Advocates of precision decapitation strikes against Iran's leadership often underestimate the structural resilience of the Islamic Republic's political system. Unlike more personalised regimes, Iran has spent nearly five decades institutionalising succession mechanisms designed precisely to withstand leadership shocks. Any attempt to remove the Supreme Leader would confront not only formidable security barriers but also a deeply entrenched clerical-military establishment prepared for continuity. Reports indicate that the current leadership has already prepared multiple layers of succession for key military and governmental roles. In practical terms, the removal of the top leadership might harden rather than moderate the regime's posture, empowering more uncompromising factions within the system.

Understanding Iran's governance architecture is essential to evaluating the likely trajectory of the crisis. The Supreme Leader exercises overarching authority across the legislative, executive and judicial branches, creating a highly centralised yet institutionally embedded system. Electoral candidates—from local councils to the presidency—are vetted by the Guardian Council, whose mandate is to ensure adherence to Shia Islamic principles. Half of the council's twelve members are directly appointed by the Supreme Leader, while the remainder are nominated by the Chief Justice and approved by parliament; the Chief Justice himself is also appointed by the Supreme Leader. The council's veto power over parliamentary legislation further consolidates clerical oversight. This framework makes abrupt political transformation through external pressure exceedingly difficult.

Recent internal developments add another layer of complexity. Senior national security figure Ali Larijani, a former IRGC commander, has reportedly emerged as one of the most trusted advisers within the leadership circle and is believed to be playing a central role in day-to-day governance. His prominence was particularly visible during the harsh crackdown on anti-regime protests earlier

this year, the largest such unrest since the founding of the Islamic Republic. These dynamics suggest that the regime is not only intact but also actively consolidating authority in response to perceived external threats. Calls from Washington urging the Iranian public to seize control of their destiny may resonate rhetorically, but translating popular discontent into regime change under current conditions appears highly improbable.

The broader regional consequences of escalation could be severe. One of the most immediate risks lies in the energy domain. The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints, handling roughly one-fifth of global oil shipments. Any sustained military confrontation in or around this corridor would almost certainly trigger sharp spikes in global oil and gas prices. While India has significantly reduced its direct crude imports from Iran since the reimposition of US sanctions in 2019, it remains vulnerable to price volatility affecting other major suppliers such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. For energy-importing economies, even a temporary disruption could translate into inflationary pressures and fiscal strain.

Iran's initial response has already hinted at the contours of its deterrence strategy. Counterattacks reportedly targeted regional partners hosting American military facilities, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. The grounding of commercial flights across parts of the region reflects the seriousness with which governments are treating the threat environment. Lacking a comprehensive missile shield comparable to Israel's Iron Dome, Iran is unlikely to rely on purely defensive measures. Instead, its doctrine appears oriented toward imposing costs on adversaries by threatening dispersed assets, energy infrastructure and maritime traffic. Such an approach may not secure outright military victory, but it could raise the price of sustained confrontation to politically uncomfortable levels for Washington and its allies.

The strategic calculus facing all parties is therefore extraordinarily delicate. For the United States and Israel, the objective of constraining Iran's nuclear ambitions must be balanced against the risk of triggering a region-wide conflict that could prove difficult to contain. For Tehran, calibrated retaliation offers a means of preserving deterrence without inviting overwhelming retaliation, yet the margin for miscalculation is perilously thin. History suggests that once kinetic exchanges begin in the Middle East, escalation often acquires a momentum of its own, driven by domestic politics, alliance commitments and the logic of military signalling.

What emerges from the present moment is not a clear pathway to resolution but a widening zone of strategic ambiguity. Military deployments are increasing, proxy networks remain volatile, and diplomatic channels appear frayed at precisely the moment they are most needed. The coming weeks will likely determine whether the latest strikes remain a contained episode of coercive signalling or the opening phase of a broader confrontation. For now, the region stands at the edge of escalation, where deterrence, misperception and political resolve intersect in ways that could reshape the Middle Eastern security landscape for years to come. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Teaching about corruption in the Courts: Whose interest does it serve?

By: Lalit Garg

Once again, an issue related to education has taken center stage in the national discourse. The Ministry of Education and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) recently came under scrutiny after the Supreme Court of India expressed displeasure over a chapter titled "The Role of the Judiciary in Our Society" in a Class VIII Social Science textbook. The chapter reportedly mentioned corruption within the judiciary and the problem of pending cases. The Chief Justice's observation that "no one will be allowed to defame the judiciary" was not merely an emotional reaction but a clear assertion of institutional dignity. Subsequently, the decision was taken to withdraw the concerned chapter and recall the books from the market. This episode raises a fundamental question: Was this merely an editorial oversight, or does it reveal a deeper structural deficiency within our educational framework? What purpose is served by informing schoolchildren about "corruption in the judiciary" without adequate context? At the same time, it is undeniable that firm measures are necessary to curb corruption wherever it exists, including within judicial systems.

It must first be acknowledged that concerns about judicial backlog and instances of misconduct are not entirely imaginary. The number of pending cases in Indian courts runs into millions—this is a matter of public record. On certain occasions, judicial conduct has also come under scrutiny. However, it is equally true that the Indian judiciary has repeatedly safeguarded democracy through its independence, transparency, and proactive interventions. In recent years, steps such as the voluntary public disclosure of assets by senior judges have strengthened institutional accountability. Therefore, the real issue is not whether problems exist, but how they are presented—through what language, with what balance, and from what educational perspective. The purpose of education is not merely to transmit facts but to cultivate vision. If children are taught that corruption exists within the judiciary, they must simultaneously be taught how the judiciary has fought corruption, restrained executive excesses, and delivered historic judgments to protect fundamental rights. Education should include criticism, but not cynicism; it should present facts, but with balance. When institutional shortcomings are highlighted without equal emphasis on corrective efforts, constitutional values, and exemplary precedents, the result may be the sowing of distrust rather than the nurturing of informed citizenship.

This controversy also prompts a larger inquiry: How does such content pass through multiple layers of textbook review and still reach publication? Is there a lack of diversity in editorial boards? Is coordination among legal experts, educationists, and psychologists insufficient? In a democratic so-

ciety, institutional criticism cannot be taboo. Yet there exists a fine line between critique and denigration. It is the responsibility of bodies like the Ministry of Education and NCERT to recognize and respect this distinction. It must also be remembered that corruption is not confined to the judiciary. According to Transparency International's recent Corruption Perceptions Index, India ranks 91 out of 182 countries, reflecting a marginal improvement over the previous year but still indicating systemic challenges. Corruption is a structural, social, and administrative issue. If students are to learn about it, they should do so within a comprehensive framework: understanding why such problems arise, what constitutional safeguards exist, what role citizens play, and what reforms are possible. Isolating a single institution as the focal point of criticism neither does justice to educational integrity nor aligns with constitutional balance.

The dignity of the judiciary is a matter of profound importance. Democracy rests upon three pillars—the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. If young minds are instilled with distrust toward one pillar without adequate analytical context, the long-term consequences for democratic culture may be detrimental. Yet preserving dignity does not mean silencing discussion of challenges. Dignity and transparency are not adversaries; they are complementary. The judiciary's true stature is enhanced by its capacity to endure criticism, its willingness for self-correction, and its moral resolve. In this context, a reimagined educational framework seems necessary. Textbooks could adopt a structured approach to institutional study, presenting three dimensions: the constitutional mandate, practical challenges, and reform initiatives. A chapter on the judiciary, for example, should include its landmark judgments, the evolution of public interest litigation, and its role in protecting fundamental rights—alongside balanced discussion of case backlogs and reform recommendations. Such an approach would nurture neither blind reverence nor habitual skepticism, but responsible citizenship.

The Ministry of Education, too, should view this episode as an opportunity for introspection. Removing a chapter may offer an immediate remedy, but it is not a lasting solution. What is needed is an independent, multidisciplinary review mechanism involving legal scholars, former judges, educationists, sociologists, and child psychology experts. A tradition of public consultation could also be developed so that textbooks become not merely government publications, but documents reflecting broader social consensus. The judiciary, for its part, could respond constructively by promoting judicial literacy programs in schools and universities, providing accessible and balanced educational resources about court functioning. Greater transparency and engagement would further strengthen its credibility and public trust.

Do Anti-Aging Diets Really Work?



By: James Kingsland

Diets that purport to slow the aging process are becoming increasingly popular. Their proponents cite evidence that nutrient-restricting diets can increase healthy lifespan — at least in laboratory organisms such as yeast, worms, flies, and rodents.

In 1917, the journal *Science* published the first study to show that restricting the calorie intake of rats can delay the animals' development and dramatically increase their lifespan.

More than 100 years later, the same journal has published a roundup of the best research to date into the efficacy and safety of diets that claim to slow the aging process.

Scientists at the University of Washington in Seattle and Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge, CA, conducted the review of popular anti-aging diets.

These include not just calorie restriction but also diets that strictly limit a person's intake of carbohydrates, proteins, or particular amino acids.

The scientists also reviewed the evidence for the efficacy of various fasting regimes.

Remarkably, most of these diets appear to exert favorable effects on health and aging through their influence on a single metabolic pathway that yeast, worms, rodents, and humans have in common.

In theory, existing drugs that target this pathway could reproduce the diets' beneficial effects without the need to go hungry or give up particular types of food.

While the authors of the new review offer an optimistic forecast for the future of anti-aging diets, they caution that they may not work equally well for everyone.

For some people with a particular genetic makeup or under certain environmental conditions, the diets may actually be detrimental to health.

The reviewers emphasize that there are no clinically proven anti-aging diets and conclude that more research is needed before doctors can recommend such diets for otherwise healthy people.

Calorie restriction
When researchers restrict the calorie intake of mice and rats — while providing all the essential nutrients they need — the animals are healthier and their average lifespan increases compared with animals fed an ordinary lab diet.

In addition, these rodents have a reduced incidence of age-related diseases, including cancer, neurodegenerative disorders, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes.

There is a clear inverse relationship between calorie intake and lifespan in the animals, up to about 50% calorie restriction. Animals that begin these diets while still young appear to reap the most benefits.

Whereas the results of research into calorie restriction in lab animals are clearcut, say the authors of the review, whether they apply to humans is less obvious.

The authors point out that researchers typically house mice and rats in ideal, pathogen-free

conditions and keep a close eye on their health.

By contrast, the enormous variations in human environments and lifestyles are likely to have a large impact on the health effects of potential life-extending diets. Genetic variation between individuals is also likely to play a role in the diets' outcomes.

In addition, as much smaller creatures, mice have very different metabolic demands to ours. They have to burn around half of the calories they consume just to maintain their core body temperature, say the authors.

Another problem with translating the promising results in animal studies into humans is that our lives can span decades, whereas theirs only last a few years. Comparable studies in humans would take many years to complete.

Risks and benefits
Extreme calorie restriction — which animal research suggests is likely to yield the greatest life extension — also comes at a cost.

We know from the relatively small number of people who manage to conform to such rigorous diets that potential side effects include:

- Poor cold tolerance
- Loss of libido and sexual function
- Psychological problems
- Chronic fatigue
- Poor sleep
- Muscle weakness
- Increased susceptibility to infection
- Impaired wound healing

The authors write:
“Severe calorie restriction can

impair both immune function and wound healing, which could offset any potential lifespan-extending benefits under adverse environmental conditions in which the immune system is challenged, for example, a global viral pandemic, or in the absence of quality healthcare.”

There is some observational evidence that less extreme calorie restriction can yield significant benefits, however.

For example, the inhabitants of the small Japanese island of Okinawa traditionally consume 20% fewer calories than people who live on the mainland.

In the past, residents of Okinawa have enjoyed the longest life expectancy and the highest number of centenarians per head of population anywhere in the world.

Research suggests that they also experience exceptionally low rates of age-related illnesses, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.

However, as with all observational studies, the research cannot establish whether calorie restriction is responsible for these health benefits.

While no clinical trial has tested whether there is an increase in overall lifespan with calorie restriction, a series of shorter trials lasting from a few months to 2 years have found clinical benefits that are likely to extend a healthy lifespan.

The studies have found that a 25% reduction in calorie intake is associated not only with decreased weight but also enhanced insulin sensitivity and glucose tolerance and improvements in risk factors for cardiometabolic disease.

Ketogenic diets
Diets that strictly limit intake of carbohydrates but allow unrestricted consumption of healthy fats force the body to use molecules called ketones — a byproduct of fat metabolism in the liver — as fuel.

This kind of diet, known as a ketogenic diet, may reduce the frequency of seizures in people with epilepsy and promote weight loss in overweight and obesity.

In 2017, two studies reported that a low carbohydrate, low protein ketogenic diet increased the average lifespan of mice and improved the animals' health in old age. One of the studies found that the diet reduced mortality in midlife and improved memory in

aging mice. The other study found that it increased longevity and a healthy lifespan.

The review authors note that the long-term effects of such diets in humans remain to be determined.

But they go on to say that the animal findings are “highly suggestive” that ketones could have anti-aging properties.

Fasting
There are many variations of fasting diets, but they fall into three broad categories:

Intermittent fasting typically involves consuming few or no calories for 1–4 days each week.

Fasting-mimicking diets induce the same metabolic changes by following a low calorie, low protein diet for around 5 days each month.

Time-restricted fasting restricts eating to a certain number of hours each day.

The authors of the review say most preclinical animal studies of these diets are effectively investigating different forms of calorie restriction.

This is because the animals in the experimental group usually end up consuming fewer calories than animals in the control group.

So it's difficult to distinguish the potential benefits of fasting from the well-established benefits of calorie restriction.

But the reviewers do point to a study that compared mice allowed to eat only on alternate days with mice that consumed the same overall calories but without fasting.

This study found improvements in metabolism and reduced inflammation in the intermittent fasting group.

However, an equivalent study in people found that individuals who fasted every other day saw fewer benefits for their health than individuals who simply ate a calorie-restricted diet with the same overall energy intake.

The results for time-restricted fasting from animal and human studies are similarly conflicting.

The reviewers cite studies in rodents that found time-restricted fasting improved various measures of metabolic health and protected against an obesogenic or obesity-causing diet.

But research in humans has yielded mixed results for time-restricted fasting. Some studies have shown only mild improvements in health, whereas others have suggested detrimental ef-

fects on glucose metabolism.

Protein and amino acid restriction

The review authors note that numerous studies have found that restricting protein intake increases the lifespan of rodents and reduces age-related disease.

They report that while protein restriction in itself increases lifespan, the benefits are considerably weaker than those from calorie restriction.

In addition, say the authors, there is evidence that restricting dietary intake of particular essential amino acids, which the body is unable to synthesize for itself, can extend lifespan.

Animal studies suggest that restricting tryptophan, methionine, leucine, valine, and isoleucine is beneficial for increasing a healthy lifespan.

A universal aging switch
Intriguingly, nutrient-restricting diets appear to increase longevity and reduce age-related disease through their effect on a small number of metabolic pathways.

Specifically, the diets tend to reduce levels of growth hormone, insulin-like growth factor, and a signaling molecule called mechanistic target of rapamycin (mTOR).

Research in nematode worms and yeast shows that these molecules are key hubs in a molecular mechanism that senses the availability of nutrients in the animals' environment.

The job of this mechanism is to promote cellular maintenance and repair when nutrients are scarce but redeploy the organism's resources towards reproduction when nutrients are plentiful.

According to the disposable soma theory, this mechanism reflects the trade-off that all organisms — from yeast to people — have to make between staying alive and reproducing.

Anti-aging drugs
The existence of a nutrient-sensing mechanism that controls aging raises the exciting prospect of targeting it with a drug to promote longer, healthier lives. Such drugs already exist.

The review authors say the most promising of these appears to be rapamycin, which reduces the activity of mTOR and promotes healthy aging in rats.

It remains to be seen whether the drug would combat aging to the same extent in humans, who already enjoy relatively long

lifespans.

Prof. Matt Kaerberlein, Ph.D., the corresponding author of the review, told *Medical News Today* that he is optimistic.

Prof. Kaerberlein studies aging in lab animals and pet dogs at the University of Washington.

“It's early, but there are hints that it's possible to tweak the network with rapamycin in older dogs and people to potentially achieve similar functional benefits in the heart and immune system as what is seen in mice,” he said.

“Whether that will translate through to healthspan more broadly or lifespan or not, we don't know yet, but I think we will get that answer in the next 5–10 years.” — Prof. Kaerberlein

However, the review authors note that questions remain about the potential side effects of rapamycin.

Doctors give high doses of the drug, which modulates the immune system, to prevent rejection in organ transplant patients.

At these doses, side effects are severe, though proponents of rapamycin as an anti-aging drug claim that the benefits outweigh the costs at lower doses.

Treating diseases of aging
Arlan Richardson, Ph.D., director of the Oklahoma Nathan Shock Center on Aging in Oklahoma City, OK, recently co-authored an article in the journal *Geroscience* about rapamycin and aging.

The article argues that researchers should investigate the drug as a potential treatment for diseases of aging such as Alzheimer's disease.

He told MNT that another paper by his research group proposes that combining calorie restriction with rapamycin could provide more benefits for older people than either alone.

While the effects of the drug and the diet overlap, each also influences a range of different pathways. “While calorie restriction inhibits mTOR, it has more effects, as we have reported,” he said.

Overall, the authors of the review conclude that “future research should focus both on better understanding the cellular and molecular mediators of anti-aging diets under highly controlled laboratory conditions as well as the impact of genetic and environmental variation on health outcomes associated with these diets.” (Courtesy: MNT)

A new diagnosis of ‘profound autism’ is on the cards; Here’s what could change

By: Kelsie Boulton, Marie Antoinette Hodge, Rebecca Sutherland

When it comes to autism, few questions spark as much debate as how best to support autistic people with the greatest needs.

This prompted *The Lancet* medical journal to commission a group of international experts to propose a new category of “profound autism”.

This category describes autistic people who have little or no language (spoken, written, signed or via a communication device), who have an IQ of less than 50, and who require 24-hour supervision and support.

It would only apply to children aged eight and over, when their cognitive and communication abilities are considered more stable.

It would only apply to children aged eight and over, when their cognitive and communication abilities are considered more stable.

In our new study, we considered how the category could impact autism assessments. We found 24 per cent of autistic children met, or were at risk of meeting, the criteria for profound autism.

Why the debate?
The category is intended to help governments and service providers plan and deliver supports, so autistic people with the highest needs aren't overlooked. It also aims to re-balance their under-representation in mainstream autism research.

This new category may be helpful for advocating for a greater level of support, research and evidence for this group.

But some have raised concerns that autistic people who don't fit into this category could be perceived as less in need and excluded from services and funding supports.

Others argue the category doesn't sufficiently emphasise autistic people's strengths and capabilities, and places too much emphasis on the challenges that are experienced.

What did we do?
We conducted the first Australian study to examine how the “profound autism” category might apply to children attending publicly funded diagnostic services for developmental conditions.

Drawing on the Australian Child Neurodevelopment Registry, we examined data from 513 autistic children assessed between 2019 and 2024. We asked:

- How many children met the criteria for profound autism?
- Were there behavioural features that set this group apart?

Because we focused on children at the time of diagnosis, most (91 per cent) were aged under eight years. We described these children as being “at risk of profound autism”.



What did we find?

Around 24 per cent of autistic children in our study met, or were at risk of meeting, the criteria for profound autism. This is similar to the proportion of children internationally.

Almost half (49.6 per cent) showed behaviours that were a safety risk, such as attempting to run away from carers, compared with one-third (31.2 per cent) of other autistic children.

These challenges weren't limited to children who met criteria for profound autism. Around one in five autistic children (22.5 per cent) engaged in self-injury, and more than one-third (38.2 per cent) showed aggression toward others.

So, while the category identified many children with very high needs, other children who didn't meet these criteria also had significant needs.

Importantly, we found the definition of “profound autism” doesn't always line up with the official diagnostic levels which determine the level of support and NDIS funding children receive.

In our study, 8 per cent of children at risk of profound autism were classified as level 2, rather than level 3 (the highest level of support). Meanwhile, 17 per cent of children classified as level 3 did not meet criteria for profound autism.

Our concern
We looked at children when they first received an autism diagnosis. Children were aged 18 months to 16 years, with more than 90 per cent under the age of eight years.

This aligns with our earlier research, showing the average age of diagnosis in public settings is 6.6 years.

From a practical perspective, our biggest concern about the profound autism category is the age threshold of eight years.

Because most children are already assessed before age eight, introducing this category into

assessment services would mean many families would need repeat assessments, placing additional strain on already stretched developmental services.

Second, modifications will be needed if this criteria is going to be used to inform funding decisions as it didn't map perfectly onto level 3 support criteria.

On balance, however, our results suggest the profound autism category may provide a clear, measurable way to describe the needs of autistic people with the highest support requirements.

Every autistic child has individual strengths and needs. The term “profound autism” would need to be promoted with inclusive and supportive language, so as to not replace or diminish individual needs, but to help clinicians tailor supports and obtain additional resources when needed.

Including the category in future clinical guidelines, such as the national guideline for the assessment and diagnosis of autism, could help ensure governments, disability services and clinicians plan and deliver supports.

What can you do in the meantime?
If you're concerned your child requires substantial support, here are some practical steps you can take to ensure their needs are recognised and addressed:

Explain your concerns
Not all clinicians have experience working with children with high support needs. Be as clear as possible about behaviours that affect your child's safety or daily life, including self-injury, aggression or attempts to run away. These details, while difficult to share, help give a clearer picture of your child's support needs.

It can also be a challenge to find and access clinicians with appropriate expertise. Another potential benefit of having a defined category is that it can better help families navigate care.

Ask about support for the whole family
Our studies show that many caregivers want more support for themselves but don't always ask. Talk with clinicians about supports for yourself as well, including respite, or family support groups.

Reach out
Coming together with other carers and families can reduce your own isolation and normalise many of the unique challenges you face. Connecting with like-minded people can provide a supportive, empathetic and empowering community.

Plan for safety
For children with high support needs, prioritise safety planning with your child's care team. This can include strategies to reduce risks, as well as planning how best to support your child's interactions with health, education and disability services over time. (Courtesy: Down to Earth)

Precision without pain, how Robotic surgery is changing urology

By: Dr Devendra Kumar Babbar

For many patients, the word “surgery” still brings to mind long hospital stays, painful stitches, and weeks of slow recovery. This fear often leads people to delay treatment, especially for urological problems like kidney tumors or prostate issues. In India, prostate enlargement affects nearly 60 per cent of men over the age of 60, and kidney cancer cases have been steadily rising, with many detected at advanced stages. But in recent years, robotic-assisted surgery has quietly changed the face of urology. By using small instruments controlled through a robotic system, doctors can now perform complex procedures with greater safety, less pain, and much faster healing. This shift is giving patients the confidence to seek timely treatment, without the fear of traditional open surgery.

How Robotic Surgery Works

Robotic surgery is not performed by a machine on its own. Instead, it is fully controlled by a trained surgeon who operates from a console. The robot's arms translate the surgeon's hand movements with higher accuracy and stability. A 3D high-definition camera gives the doctor a magnified view inside the body, making it easier to work around delicate tissues. Through small keyhole-sized cuts, complex urology procedures can be performed without the need for large incisions.

Common Urological Conditions Treated

Robotic surgery is now used widely in several important urology cases. In prostate cancer, especially among older men, robotic surgery helps remove the prostate gland while protecting



surrounding nerves, preserving urinary function. For kidney cancer, robotic tools allow the tumor to be removed while saving healthy parts of the kidney. In young adults with pelviureteric junction obstruction, where urine flow is blocked, robotic repair offers long-term relief with faster recovery. It is also used in selected cases of bladder cancer or difficult urinary tract surgeries.

Faster Recovery, Less Pain

One of the main advantages of robotic surgery is how much easier it makes recovery. Patients usually experience less pain after surgery, have lower chances of infection or blood loss, and are able to leave the hospital sooner. Many can walk the next day and return to light activities within a week or two, depending on the type of surgery. Scars are smaller, and post-operative discomfort is minimal. For cancer patients, timely and precise surgery also improves long-term health outcomes.

A Technology That Needs Wider Reach

Despite its clear benefits, ro-

botic urological surgery is still mainly available in big cities or larger hospitals. Many patients in smaller towns are not aware that such an option exists or assume it is too expensive. However, with more hospitals in India adopting robotic systems and trained specialists becoming available, access is improving. The cost of robotic surgery has also come down significantly in recent years.

A Better Future for Urology Patients

Robotic-assisted surgery is transforming the experience of urological care. It replaces fear with confidence, pain with comfort, and long recoveries with quicker returns to normal life. For patients, this technology represents not just a medical breakthrough, but a chance to face serious health problems with hope and dignity. As awareness grows and access expands, robotic urology surgery is set to become the standard of care across the country. (The author is a Senior Consultant, Urology and Robotic Surgery, Yatharth Hospital, Greater Noida)

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dead at 86

DUBAI, March 1: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who assembled theocratic power in Iran over the decades as its supreme leader and sought to turn it into a regional powerhouse, bringing it into confrontation with Israel and the United States over its nuclear program while crushing democracy protesters at home, has died. He was 86.

Iranian state media reported the death early Sunday, after a major attack launched by Israel and the United States. US President Donald Trump said hours earlier that Khamenei had been killed in the joint operation.

Khamenei dramatically remolded the Islamic Republic since he took the reins after the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989. Khomeini was the fiery, charismatic ideologue who led the overthrow of the shah and installed rule by Shiite Muslim clerics tasked with spreading religious purity. It fell to Khamenei, a stodgier figure with weaker religious credentials and a leaden demeanor, to turn that revolutionary vision into a state establishment.

He ended up ruling far longer than Khomeini. He greatly expanded the Shiite clerical class and built the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard into the most important body underpinning his rule. The Guard became a military and business behemoth, the country's most elite force and head of its ballistic missile arsenal, with hands across Iran's economic sectors.



But the strains became harder to contain.

Political repression and the faltering economy fueled successively bigger waves of mass protests. Anger over the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini, detained for not wearing her mandatory headscarf properly, escalated into demonstrations against social restrictions. In early January, hundreds of thousands marched in cities across the country, many chanting, "Death to Khamenei."

Khamenei responded with the deadliest

crackdown seen in nearly 50 years of clerical rule as security forces opened fire on crowds, killing thousands.

At the same time, the Mideast was sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel set in motion the collapse of the region-wide "Axis of Resistance" built by Khamenei. Israel and Iran attacked each other directly for the first time in 2024. Israel struck Iran again in June 2025, as it and the United States targeted the country's nuclear program and killed top military officers and

nuclear scientists. Iran retaliated by sending missiles and drones at Israel.

Khamenei's death raises questions about the future of the Islamic Republic.

The 88-seat Assembly of Experts, a group of mostly hard-line clerics, will choose Khamenei's replacement. But no clear successor is in place.

As he launched the bombing Saturday, US President Donald Trump called on Iranians to "take over your government. It will be yours to take. This will be probably your only chance for generations." What happens next may depend greatly on bodies like the Revolutionary Guard, which has repeatedly shown its willingness to use overwhelming force to keep power even as many of Iran's 90 million people grow disenchanted.

"Culturally, the government is bankrupt," said Mehdi Khalaji, an analyst at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said in 2017. "The ideology of the Islamic Republic did not work at all."

Khamenei's daughter and son-in-law, a grandchild and a daughter-in-law also were killed in Saturday's attack, according to the semi-official Fars news agency, citing unidentified sources.

Iran's government declared 40 days of public mourning and a seven-day nationwide public holiday to commemorate Khamenei's death. (AP)

10 killed as protesters try to storm US Consulate in Pakistan's Karachi city



KARACHI, March 1: At least 10 people were killed, and several were injured on Sunday after clashes broke out between police and protesters as they tried to storm the gates of the US Consulate in Pakistan's port city of Karachi.

The clashes broke out following the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday in a joint US-Israeli air strike.

Dr Sumaiya Syed, Police Surgeon, Sindh, said so far 10 bodies have been brought to the Civil Hospital, and some appeared to have bullet wounds. The protesters began gathering on the road leading to the consulate building as soon as the death of Iran's Supreme Leader was confirmed in the ongoing Israeli and US strikes on Iran.

Syed said that around 30 injured persons are getting treatment at the hospital's trauma centre.

"The injured include four policemen," she said.

Senior police official, SSP Asad Reza, said after the crowd started attacking the police, they had to use tear gas shells and rubber bullets to control the situation.

The police also baton-charged the crowd, but one of them later claimed to a TV channel that the police also fired upon them.

A large number of demonstrators were gathered around the consulate, and police opened fire on them while they were attempting to break into the US Consulate.

Sindh Minister for Interior Ziaul Hasan Langar has requested immediate details from the Additional IG Karachi, stressing that "No one will be allowed to take the law into their own hands."

He called for enhanced security at sensitive installations. He added that alternative routes should be determined to maintain traffic flow during the protests.

"Law enforcement agencies are fully alert and monitoring the situation closely," the minister added.

The minister concluded that action will be taken against those disrupting law and order in accordance with the law.

He further added that a judicial inquiry had been formed to ascertain the entire incident, but rebuked suggestions that those killed were hit by US Marines guarding the consulate.

"What we know is that protesters turned violent and tried to break through the security cordon around the consulate and clashed with the police, and some of them were very violent due to which police had to respond accordingly," he said on Sunday.

The US consulate is inside a fortified building on the Mai Kolachi road, which is also close to a Naval housing society, but is surrounded by low-income neighbourhoods.

Faisal Edhi of the Edhi Welfare Trust said that some of the protesters had turned very violent and even attacked his volunteers and

ambulances.

The authorities have now closed down all roads leading to the consulate and announced alternate routes.

In its statement, the US Embassy in Islamabad said: "We are monitoring reports of ongoing demonstrations at the US Consulate General in Karachi and Lahore, as well as calls for additional demonstrations at the US Embassy in Islamabad and Consulate General Peshawar."

"We advise US citizens in Pakistan to monitor local news and observe good personal security practices, including being aware of your surroundings, avoiding large crowds, and ensuring your STEP (Smart Traveller Enrollment Programme) registration is up to date."

Shia organisations had announced a march towards the US Consulate in Karachi in protest of the Khamenei's death and voiced their intention to march towards the mission.

Traffic police said routes leading to Numaiish Chowrahi had been closed and alternative routes were being provided to motorists.

Meanwhile, protests have also been reported in Islamabad and Lahore on Sunday following the assassination of Khamenei.

In Islamabad, Tehreek-e-Jafaria Pakistan announced a protest and a planned encirclement of the US Embassy. Authorities have responded by sealing the Red Zone and deploying additional personnel on all roads leading to it, the report added.

Security checkpoints have been intensified, with every vehicle and motorcycle being thoroughly inspected. Armoured vehicles and extra forces have also been deployed. The Islamabad Police urged citizens not to travel towards the Red Zone.

Section 144 has been enforced in Islamabad, said the district administration. Under Section 144, all types of gatherings will be considered illegal.

The district administration urged citizens not to participate in any gatherings or assemblies. It warned that strict legal action would be taken in the event of any protest, demonstration, or gathering.

In Lahore, protests have continued outside the Press Club against Israel and the United States' actions against Iran. Security at the US Consulate has been tightened, and fresh police units have arrived to reinforce the area.

Protesters began a sit-in, carrying placards bearing the image of Iran's Supreme Leader. Anti-US slogans were reportedly raised, while the Anti-Riot Force maintained a strong security presence at the protest site.

The United States and Israel said an air strike killed Khamenei as part of what they described as the most ambitious series of attacks on Iran in decades. Iranian state media confirmed the 86-year-old leader's death on Saturday. (PTI)

Free yourself from 'shackles of tyranny,' Israel tells Iran

JERUSALEM, March 1: Israel urged Iranians to take to the streets and topple the government as Iran vowed revenge for the killing of the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei calling it "an open declaration of war against Muslims."

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) formally announced that it killed Khamenei in an airstrike in Tehran on Saturday hours after Israel and the US launched joint strikes on Iran earlier in the day.

On Sunday, in a Persian-language video posted on social media platform X, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel is working to create the conditions for the Iranian people to "free themselves from the shackles of tyranny."

"This is an opportunity that appears only once in a generation. Do not sit idly by, because your moment will arrive soon," Netanyahu said.

"The help you have long awaited has arrived. This is your moment to unite for a historic mission and secure your future," he urged.

Netanyahu's statement echoed US President Donald Trump's announcement on Saturday. In a video that announced the launch of the combat operations, Trump told Iranians that "when we are finished, take over your government. It will be yours to take. This will probably be your only chance for generations."

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, on the other hand, declared the Israeli strike in which Khamenei was killed on Saturday as "an open declaration of war against Muslims."

Sky News quoted the Iranian president as saying in a statement that it is Tehran's "legitimate right and duty" to seek revenge against those responsible for Khamenei's death, adding that it will work toward fulfilling "this great responsibility and mission."

Earlier, the head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larjani, a close confidante of Khamenei, threatened in a post on X to hit the US and Israel with unprecedented force.

While the missiles fired by Iran "did hurt," Larjani said, "today we will hit them with a force that they have never experienced before," Larjani stressed. (PTI)

Op against Afghan Taliban still continuing: Pak Minister

ISLAMABAD, March 1: A Pakistan minister on Sunday announced that the operation against Afghan Taliban was continuing, refuting social media reports about the conclusion of the blitz.

Pakistan launched its operation on Thursday night in response to the Taliban operatives attacking 53 locations along the more than 2,600km long border, targeting military installations deep in the country through air strikes.

Federal Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry refuted reports that Pakistan halted its operations, saying that "false and fabricated news is being spread on social media that Pakistan has stopped its operations against Afghanistan."

"The reality is the opposite. In view of the current regional situation, the sharing of PAF and drone footage with the media has been temporarily suspended. The purpose of this decision is to safeguard national security and operational strategy, not to prevent operations," he wrote on X.

He further said: "Operations are continuing. The operation against terrorist elements is moving forward with full intensity and wisdom."

Chaudhry concluded by saying that the nation stands with the Pakistani armed forces.

Pakistan information minister Attaullah Tarar said last night that Pakistan security forces had killed at least 352 Taliban personnel while injuring another 535. He also said that the attacks completely destroyed 130 military posts, while the security forces captured another 26 border posts.

Tarar also said that 171 tanks, armoured vehicles have been destroyed, adding that Pakistan also hit 41 locations "with precision air strikes".

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on X that airstrikes on Kabul and Kandahar were led by Pakistan air force women fighter pilots.

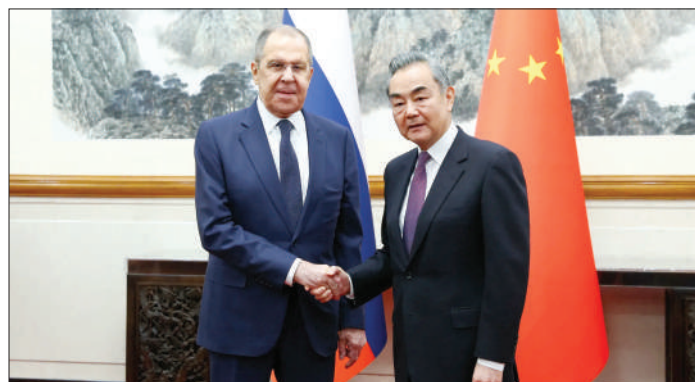
"It was women pilots of the Pakistan Air Force who carried out successful airstrikes in Kabul and Kandahar," he said. He titled the post as "Revenge of Power" and said that "women pilots delivering hell to those attacking girls' schools" - a reference to Taliban demolishing girls schools in Pakistan.

Separately, leading journalist and Geo News anchorperson Hamid Mir claimed that Pakistan captured 32 square kilometers of Afghan territory.

"In Zhob Sector, Pakistan Security Forces have captured 32 Square kilometers of Afghanistan territory named Ghudwana Enclave," he claimed in a post on X on Saturday. He then said: "Now Afghan Taliban must show the Pakistani pilot they reportedly captured. They cannot win a war with lies after losing 32 square kilometers." (PTI)

China condemns Khamenei's killing, says 'grave violation' of Iran's sovereignty

Russia shares same position with China and stands ready to strengthen coordination and communication with the Chinese side to send a clear signal



BEIJING, March 1: China strongly condemned the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saying that it is a "grave violation" of Iran's sovereignty and security and called for an immediate end to the US and Israeli attack on that country.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi also held telephone talks with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov over the deepening crisis in West Asia.

Iran is a staunch ally of China and Russia. China procures a substantial amount of oil and gas from Iran.

"The attack and killing of Iran's Supreme Leader is a grave violation of Iran's sovereignty and security," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a brief statement on Sunday.

"It tramples on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and basic norms in international relations. China firmly opposes and strongly condemns it," the statement said.

"We urge for an immediate stop to the military operations, no further escalation of the tense situation and joint effort to maintain peace and stability in the Middle East and the world at large," it said.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, held talks with Lavrov at latter's request, official media reported.

Wang said that under the impetus of China and Russia, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held an emergency meet-

ing Saturday on the current situation in Iran.

China has consistently upheld the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and opposed the use of force in international relations, he said.

"It is unacceptable for the United States and Israel to launch strikes on Iran during the Iran-US negotiations," said Wang, adding that it is also "unacceptable for them to blatantly kill the leader of a sovereign state and incite government change".

Wang pointed out that these actions violate international law and basic norms of international relations.

Noting that the escalation has spread throughout the Persian Gulf, Wang said that the situation in the Middle East may be pushed into a "dangerous abyss", and China is highly concerned about this.

Wang called for immediate cessation of military operations, prevent the spread and spill over of war and prevent the situation from getting out of control and called for dialogue to resolve the crisis.

Lavrov said that the US-Israel strikes against Iran have seriously undermined stability in West Asia.

Russia shares the same position with China and stands ready to strengthen coordination and communication with the Chinese side to send a clear signal through platforms such as the UN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, calling for an immediate cessation of the war and a return to diplomatic negotiations, he said, official media here reported. (PTI)

BOLIVIA PLANE CRASH Death toll rises to 22

LA PAZ (BOLIVIA), March 1: The death toll rose to 22 on Saturday from the crash of a military plane carrying 18 tons of new banknotes a day earlier near Bolivia's capital, damaging about a dozen vehicles and scattering bills on the ground, a police commander said Saturday.

Another 29 people were injured, mostly passengers travelling on public transportation where the plane crashed. Among the dead are 12 men, including one crew member, six women and four children, police commander Mirko Sokol said.

Forensic investigators were still recovering remains from the wreckage Saturday. The injured were taken to clinics in the city of El Alto, near La Paz, where the airport is located.

Defence Minister Marcelo Salinas said Friday that the Hercules C-130 plane was transporting newly printed Bolivian currency from the eastern city of Santa Cruz when it "landed and veered off the runway" at an airport in El Alto, a city adjacent to La Paz, before ending up in a nearby field. Firefighters managed to put out the flames that engulfed the aircraft.

Images on social media showed debris from the aircraft, destroyed cars and bodies scattered on the road. According to fire chief, Pavel Tovar, at least 15 vehicles were damaged.

The plane belonging to the Bolivian air force, was transporting money to La Paz and images on social media showed people rushing to collect the bills scattered at the crash site, while more than 500 soldiers and 100 police officers tried to disperse them, according to official reports. (AP)

Veteran UN diplomat Siddharth Chatterjee to head Vienna-based think tank

BEIJING, March 1: Veteran UN diplomat of Indian origin Siddharth Chatterjee has been appointed as CEO of Global Neighbours, a Vienna-based think tank upon his retirement as UN Resident Coordinator in China.

Chatterjee, 62, retired as UN Resident Coordinator in China on Sunday.

Chatterjee's appointment to head 26 UN offices in China in 2021 made headlines as it came in the midst of the India-China tensions over the eastern Ladakh standoff.

During his tenure in China, he became a major draw for Chinese, Indian and global media making waves with his high-intensity fitness regime and yoga exercises.

An alumnus of India's National Defence Academy, Pune, Chatterjee served in the Indian Army before joining the UN and was decorated for gallantry in 1995.

He is married to Ban Hyun-Hee, the daughter of former UN Secretary General Ban-Ki moon from South Korea who is currently Chief of Public Partnerships at UNICEF China.

A press release issued by the Global Neighbours said Chatterjee has been appointed as its CEO effective from March 2.

Global Neighbours is a Vienna-based think tank founded in 2022 by entrepreneur Jovanka Porsche, former Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern, and former German Vice Chancellor Philipp Rösler.

According to the brochure of the organ-



isation, it aims to build bridges between Europe, Asia, and other regions by creating a platform for fact-based dialogue among stakeholders in business, politics, and society.

Chatterjee joins Global Neighbours following nearly three decades of distinguished international service at the highest levels of leadership including as United Nations Resident Coordinator in China, the press release said.

As the UN Secretary-General's senior-most representative in China, he led the United Nations in one of the world's most

strategically significant countries.

He has served the UN in some of the most fragile parts of the world and has held senior leadership positions across development, humanitarian, peace operations, and international diplomacy. He previously served as UN Resident Coordinator in Kenya, it said.

He was the UNDP Resident Representative and UNFPA Representative in Kenya.

His UN experience also includes serving as Regional Director for the Middle East and Europe at UNOPS in Denmark, Chief of Staff for the United Nations Assistance

Mission in Iraq, leadership positions with UNICEF in Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Indonesia and UN Peacekeeping in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A defining milestone in his career at UNICEF was his central role in the demobilisation of more than 3,500 child soldiers in South Sudan in 2001 — an unprecedented humanitarian operation conducted during active conflict, it said.

Chatterjee has also served as Chief Diplomat at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Switzerland.

He is also a visiting Professor at Schwarzman College and the prestigious Tsinghua University in China, it said. Chatterjee is a graduate of Princeton University, USA.

"With his rare combination of operational depth, diplomatic acumen, intellectual leadership, experience and strategic vision, Chatterjee brings exceptional credibility and perspective to Global Neighbours", the press release said.

"The Board of Global Neighbours welcomes the appointment and looks forward to Chatterjee leading the organisation to the next level. It expressed full confidence that under his leadership, the organisation will further strengthen its role as a trusted platform for international dialogue and constructive engagement across regions at a time of increasing geopolitical complexity," it said. (PTI)

'By 2047, Puducherry must become a 'developed' Union Territory' Cong made Puducherry an 'ATM' for 'one family' in Delhi: PM

PUDUCHERRY, March 1: Attacking Congress, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday alleged that its rule in this Union Territory was marked by political instability, corruption, and that the UT was an "ATM for one family" in Delhi.

Hitting out at the DMK, Modi said the public was able to see a long list of "scams" that were happening in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, ruled by the Dravidian party.

During the earlier Congress regime in Puducherry, ration shops had no rice, salaries were delayed, goons and drug mafias ruled the streets, he alleged.

"Congress had made Puducherry an ATM for one family that sits in Delhi," he said at an event here to mark the launch of new projects and foundation stone laying for new initiatives. Congress and the DMK had become a "speed breaker" in Puducherry's development journey, he said.

"Now the same forces are hungry for power again. Should Puducherry go back to that era of corruption and crime? I am sure the people of Puducherry do not want that", he said, in his address after unveiling projects worth over ₹ 2,700 crore. Assembly elections are due in a month in this UT.

By 2047, Puducherry must become a 'developed' Union Territory and the double engine government "is with you in this mission", Modi said. The UT is ruled by the AINRC-BJP coalition government. "I strongly believe Puducherry can become a medical



tourism hub. It already has nine medical colleges," he said.

Puducherry witnessed good governance, development, as Centre and the UT worked with same vision, he said.

The Central government has included Puducherry under the special assistance for capital investment scheme that is meant only for states, Modi said, adding this move benefits the people of the UT by way of better infrastructure including roads.

Also, Modi pointed out that infrastructure upgrades have been done in Pondicherry University as well. He further said strong, empowered youth was the foundation for growth.

"We are working to support their dreams. At NIT Karaikal, the new Dr APJ Abdul Kalam engineering block and modern hostel facilities will strengthen technical education

for many students."

PM Modi stressed that healthcare should be accessible, available and affordable to all and that the Ayushman Bharat scheme is already fulfilling this vision for crores of families across India.

Battling for use of battery operated vehicles, Modi said, "Today, the world is focusing on mobility that is cleaner and greener. Electric vehicles have become an important part of our life. In a tourism hub like Puducherry, electric buses can be a gamechanger in reducing pollution. Under PM e-Bus Sewa, electric buses are provided today."

Referring to some of the initiatives unveiled by him on Sunday, Modi said the housing projects will give families stability and dignity. These are projects worth several hundred crores of rupees across Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam which will help people, he

remarked.

Stressing on boosting transportation between Puducherry and neighbouring cities, Modi said, "Connectivity to Chennai is being improved through upgrades in the East Coast Road and Grand Southern Trunk Road. Travel time between Puducherry and Chennai will reduce to about 1.5 to 2 hours", he said. Currently, it is about three and a half hours.

The Puducherry-Cuddalore National Highway is already completed and the Karaikal National Highway is being upgraded, he said. "We are investing more than ₹ 30,000 crore in road projects in the East Coast Corridor up to Kanyakumari. These projects link parts of Puducherry to major economic hubs like Chennai, Bengaluru and Coimbatore. Such connectivity will significantly boost tourism, trade and industry," he said.

The Prime Minister stressed that the new projects unveiled by him would transform the lives of the people of Puducherry.

He termed Puducherry as a land of Siddhar, saints, poets and freedom fighters. "This is where Mahakavi Subramania Bharati ignited the fire of nationalism. From here, Sri Aurobindo and The Mother gave a new spiritual vision for the whole world."

Recalling his past visit, Modi said he had then given the mantra of BEST Puducherry. "BEST means Business, Education, Spirituality and Tourism. In the last four

and half years, this vision is bearing fruit. Puducherry has witnessed good governance and development," he said.

"When the Centre and the Union Territory work with the same vision and dedication, results are faster and better," he said.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister N Rangasamy, who heads the AINRC-BJP coalition government, appealed to the PM to concede Puducherry's demand for statehood. In his speech at the event, he said Puducherry had been making sustained plea for statehood and was pressing the Centre through resolutions for years.

"Resolutions were adopted on 13 occasions in the Assembly which were sent to the Centre to grant statehood for Puducherry," Rangasamy said and added that statehood demand was the aspiration of the people of Puducherry.

"I hope that the Prime Minister would concede our demand", he said, highlighting that an elected government should have powers to implement schemes fast.

Some of the key initiatives inaugurated by Modi include the launch of e-buses under the PM e-Bus Seva Initiative, the Integrated Command and Control Centre under the Smart city Mission, tenements for economically weaker sections under City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain (CITIS) initiative, and important sewage and water supply sector projects of the government of Puducherry. (PTI)

Countdown for BJP's exit has begun, says Kejriwal at Jantar Mantar rally



NEW DELHI, March 1: Forty-eight hours after being discharged by a Delhi court in the liquor policy case, AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday, claiming that the countdown of the BJP's removal from power has begun.

Addressing the party's rally at Jantar Mantar here, Kejriwal accused the prime minister and Shah of conspiring to frame him in the excise policy case and said that the court in a recent "historic" judgement proved that he was "Kattar Imdard" (hardcore honest person).

A trial court on Friday granted the relief to Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia and 21 others in the case and criticised the CBI, saying the charge sheet "suffers from internal contradictions, striking at the root of conspiracy theory."

Addressing the gathering of party leaders and workers from several states, Kejriwal alleged that the prime minister feared everyone and asserted that when a "tyrant" is scared, it signals the end of his reign.

"He sent Sonam Wangchuk to jail, who is a big scientist and worked for the education of children. Modi ji did not go to Parliament one day, fearing women MPs would assault him. He is scared of Trump, too," Kejriwal stated.

The former Delhi chief minister also alleged that in 12 years of BJP rule in the country, all the sectors were ruined and the condition of roads, healthcare, education and sanitation, among others, was in bad shape.

Taking a dig at the "Viksit Bharat" vision of the Prime Minister, Kejriwal said people want a "Rahne Layak Bharat" (liveable India) and also took a swipe at the "Pariksha Pe Charcha" programme addressed by Modi, saying he should stop the "drama" and focus on preventing paper leaks in exams.

Kejriwal also slammed the BJP government in Delhi, saying the party ruined the city in its one-year rule, alleging that the roads are broken, the water supply is contaminated, and people are facing difficulty in breathing due to air pollution.

He said the prime minister had nothing to do with the country, and he was after power only through "conspiracies" and manipulation in voter lists.

"Modi ji, you can continue to work for power, and I will continue to work for the country," Kejriwal said. "I passed from IIT with good numbers and could have gone to America. But I thought if everyone went abroad, who would take care of the country? When I served as an income tax commissioner, people used to swear on my honesty," he said.

The AAP supremo said that on April 4, 2011, people gathered at Jantar Mantar had roared and the Congress was swept from power.

He said that the AAP rally marked a historic day, and the countdown of the BJP's removal from power has begun.

Several senior party leaders, including Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Manish Sisodia, Atishi, Sanjay Singh, and Saurabh Bharadwaj, also addressed the gathering at Jantar Mantar. (PTI)

Centre's goal is to develop TN, says PM

MADURAI, March 1: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the Centre's "collective goal" was a developed Tamil Nadu for a developed India, and assured that the Centre remained fully committed to enabling inclusive development and the state's progress.

In his address after inaugurating infrastructure projects worth over ₹ 4,400 crore, he said, "Our collective goal is a developed Tamil Nadu for a developed India. Every Indian is inspired to build a developed nation by 2047. Tamil Nadu will play a decisive role in shaping the nation's destiny." He assured that the Centre would remain fully committed to enabling inclusive development and the state's progress. Tamil Nadu, he said, has a rich his-

tory, and historic sites such as Adichanallur will be developed into global heritage destinations.

Noting that 9 Vande Bharat trains and 9 Amrit Bharat trains benefited people of Tamil Nadu, he said their coaches were manufactured at ICF.

According to him, the railway was emerging as a modern, efficient, people-centric transport system, and this was visible in TN.

The PM laid foundation stones for four-laning of Marakkanam-Puducherry section and Paramakudi-Ramanathapuram section of key NH routes, and inaugurated eight redeveloped railway stations in Tamil Nadu and dedicated to the nation, Chennai Beach-Chennai Egmore 4th Line. (PTI)

Targeted assassination of sovereign nation's leadership deserves strong condemnation: Priyanka

NEW DELHI, March 1: Slamming the killing of Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday said the targeted assassination of a sovereign nation by the "so called leaders of the democratic world" and the killing of multitudes of innocent people is despicable and deserves strong condemnation.

The Congress general secretary also took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying she had that having "genocided" before Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump, the PM makes every effort to bring all Indian citizens in the affected countries back home to safety.

In a post on X, Priyanka Gandhi said, "The targeted assassination of the leadership of a sovereign nation by the so-called leaders of the democratic world and the killing of multitudes of innocent people is despicable and deserves strong condemnation, no matter what the proclaimed reason for it."

It is tragic that multiple nations have now been

dragged into conflict, she said

The world needs peace, not more unnecessary wars, Priyanka Gandhi asserted.

"Those in charge of it would do well to remember Mahatma Gandhi's words: An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind," she said.

"I do hope that having genocided before the Prime Minister of Israel and President Trump, our Prime Minister makes every effort to bring all Indian citizens in the affected countries back home to safety," Priyanka Gandhi said.

Earlier, the Congress said the government's response to the war unleashed on Iran has been a betrayal of India's values, principles and interests.

The opposition party also claimed that the nation is paying a heavy price for both the substance and style of Prime Minister Modi's foreign policy.

Khamenei was killed in a major attack by Israel and the United States. State media reported that the 86-year-old was killed in an air strike targeting his compound in downtown Tehran. (PTI)

EC to visit Kerala on March 6, 7 to assess poll preparedness

NEW DELHI, March 1: The Election Commission, led by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, will visit Kerala this week to assess poll preparedness in the state where assembly elections are likely to be held next month.

The Commission is likely to reach Kerala on March 5 night and would commence its official tour on March 6 and 7, officials said on Sunday. Besides Kerala, assembly polls are due in Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and West Bengal.

The Election Commission (EC) has already visited Assam, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry to assess poll preparedness.

CEC Kumar told reporters in Guwahati that the EC would finalise the poll schedule for the northeastern state keeping in mind the festival of Bihu, which falls on April 14. It is usual for the EC to visit states where polls are due before announcing the election schedule.

The terms of the five assemblies end on different dates in May and June.

While the five-year term of the Puducherry Assembly ends on June 15, the terms of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal assemblies end on May 20, 23, 10 and 7, respectively. (PTI)

Nation paying heavy price for substance, style of Modi's foreign policy: Cong

NEW DELHI, March 1: The Congress on Sunday said the government's response to the war unleashed on Iran has been a betrayal of India's values, principles and interests, as it claimed that the nation is paying a heavy price for both the substance and style of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy.

Taking a swipe at Modi, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said India's foreign policy under the "self-styled Vishwaguru" stands brutally exposed, notwithstanding all the grandstanding on it by the cheerleaders of the PM, led by himself.

"Modi visited Israel on February 25-26, 2026, at a time when the entire world was aware that a US-Israeli military attack on Iran for regime change was imminent. The assault began just two days after Mr. Modi left Israel where his speech to the Knesset was a display of shameful moral cowardice," Ramesh said on X. "The Modi government's response to the war unleashed on Iran that has involved targeted assassinations has been a betrayal of India's values, principles, concerns, and interests," he alleged.

Ramesh's remarks come after Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in a major attack by Israel and the United States. State media reported that the 86-year-old was killed in an air strike targeting his compound

in downtown Tehran.

In his post on X, Ramesh lashed out at the Modi government's foreign policy.

"The US President continues his romance with Pakistan, applauding again and again the very man whose inflammatory remarks provided the backdrop to the terror attacks in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025. The US has also categorically come out in support of Pakistan's war on Afghanistan," he said.

The US President has, at last count, claimed a hundred times that he had intervened to halt Operation Sinoor on May 10, 2025 using the threat of increased tariffs on India's exports to the US, Ramesh said.

"But the PM is completely silent on these assertions of President Trump. The first announcement of the halt to Operation Sinoor was made by the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio at 5:37 PM on May 10, 2025," he said.

Ramesh further pointed out that on February 2nd, 2026 President Trump declared that - at Prime Minister Modi's request - the India-US trade deal had been finalised and is coming into effect immediately.

"That this was a desperate move by Mr. Modi who was attempting to divert the headlines from the issues raised by Rahul Gandhi in Parliament is clearly obvious," he claimed. (PTI)

Protests in several parts of India over killing of Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei

SRINAGAR/LUCKNOW, March 1: From Kashmir to Karnataka, Shia mourners took to the streets in various parts of India to express outrage and grief over the death of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a US-Israel strike.

Khamenei was killed in an airstrike in Tehran on Saturday during a joint Israel-US attack on Iran. Iranian state media confirmed the same on Sunday, triggering a wave of protests and mourning across the world, including India.

Kashmir — which has about 15 lakh Shias — witnessed major protests at Lal Chowk, Saida Kadal, Budgam, Bandipora, Anantnag and Pulwama, an official said.

The protesters were seen beating their chests as they shouted anti-US and anti-Israel slogans.

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah expressed deep concern over the developments in Iran and appealed for calm amid widespread protests.

"Chief Minister has expressed deep concern over the unfolding developments in Iran, including reports of the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He has appealed to all communities to remain calm, uphold peace, and avoid any actions that could lead to tension or unrest," the Office of Chief Minister said in a post on X.

Abdullah also said that his government is in close coordination with the Union Ministry of External Affairs to ensure the safety and well-being of J-K residents, including students, currently in Iran.

Expressing "profound anguish" over the assassination of Khamenei, National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah urged the administration to handle the situation with sensitivity and discretion, ensuring that those who wish to mourn are able to do so respectfully.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the chief priest of Kashmir, said he was deeply saddened and outraged at Khamenei's killing.

"Deeply saddened and outraged at the brutal killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei by the US and Israel that has shaken the Muslim world. The people of JK collectively condemn this brutality and the ongoing aggression against Iran, as well as the massacre of innocent girl students in Minab," the Mirwaiz said in a post on X.

Many Muslim bodies and organisations across the country announced a multiple-day mourning period and scheduled their protests on Monday as well in memory of the Iranian leader.

In Uttar Pradesh's capital, Lucknow, scores of people gathered near the Bara Imambara mosque and shouted slogans during the protest, with women mourners clinging to the Iranian leader's photo and weeping.

Maulana Yaseeb Abbas, general secretary of All India Shia Personal Law Board, announced that effigies of US President Donald Trump and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be burnt during the protest on Monday.

The Shia community has declared a three-day mourning, during which people will wear black, hoist black flags at their homes and organise special prayers, Abbas added. Punjab, which has a minuscule Muslim population, saw protests and effigies being burnt in Ludhiana.

Shahi Imam Maulana Mohammad Usman Rahmani Ludhianvi, who led the protest, demanded that the central government declare a week-long national mourning. Rehmani urged Muslims worldwide to unite against such challenges, terming Khamenei a great martyr and condemning his killing in the strongest terms.

The Shia community in Ajmer also announced a three-day mourning over the killing of Khamenei. The announcement was made by Syed Asif Ali, a community leader, who appealed to members of the Shia community to observe mourning and refrain from celebrations during the period.

Condolence meetings were also organised at Dargah in Dorai and Taragarh in Ajmer, where members of the community offered prayers and expressed grief over the incident. (PTI)

'Sardhubaatu': Artist Ravi Chunchula to explore memory, material in solo exhibition

NEW DELHI, March 1: Artist Ravi Chunchula will explore the quiet ways in which individuals are shaped by their surroundings, routines and social structures in his solo exhibition "Sardhubaatu: Put Together, Somehow", starting March 6.

To be held at Bikaner House, the exhibition meditates on processes of becoming -- how identity is gradually assembled through lived experience rather than formed in fixed or definitive moments.

It is presented by ChampaTree Art Gallery and curated by Archana Sapra and Pooja Bahri.

The word 'Sardhubaatu' is about the quiet process of becoming -- how we are constantly shaped by what we see, where we stand, and who we are surrounded by. These works are less about telling a story and more about holding a moment where things feel temporarily aligned, even if imperfect," Chunchula said



that are continuously negotiated rather than fixed.

"Sardhubaatu" is about the quiet process of becoming -- how we are constantly shaped by what we see, where we stand, and who we are surrounded by. These works are less about telling a story and more about holding a moment where things feel temporarily aligned, even if imperfect," Chunchula said

in a statement.

Rendered primarily on rice paper, the works allow pigment to settle organically into the surface, staining and evolving over time.

According to the curators, the fragile materiality forms a key part of the exhibition's visual language, echoing how experiences accumulate gradually, leaving subtle traces on identity and perception.

"Ravi's work speaks through restraint. There is a deep attentiveness in the way his figures inhabit space -- quiet, grounded, and profoundly human. With Sardhubaatu, we were drawn to how subtly the works reflect contemporary existence, without spectacle or excess," they added.

So, rather than depicting specific individuals, the figures aim to evoke a shared psychological condition, occupying everyday spaces suspended between habit and awareness, solitude and collective presence.

The opening evening will feature a live theatre performance titled "Where Is My Mind?", conceived by Rohit Chauhan and ensemble. The time-bound intervention will explore belief, conformity, influence and freedom through movement and visual symbolism. The exhibition will come to a close on March 14. (PTI)

Raza's all-round show not enough as South Africa maintain unbeaten run in T20 WC

NEW DELHI, March 1: Sikandar Raza singled-handedly kept Zimbabwe in the game with a special all-round performance before a shaky South Africa were able to steady the ship for a five wicket win in their final Super Eights game of the T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

After opting to bat, Raza made a sublime 73 off 43 balls in an otherwise ordinary batting display as South Africa limited Zimbabwe to 153 for seven.

After removing the dangerous duo of Aiden Markram and Quinton de Kock in his first two overs in the powerplay, Raza returned to dismiss a rampaging Dewald Brevis (42 off 18 balls) leaving the Proteas at 101 for five in the 11th over. With another 53 runs needed and the odd ball keeping low, South Africa felt the pressure but Tristan Stubbs (21 not out off 24 balls) and George Linde (31 not out off 21 balls) were able to get the job done in 17.5 overs.

Losing their first three wickets inside the powerplay, Brevis and David Miller did what they are known for to take the wind of Zimbabwe's sails. A barrage of big hits



and all of a sudden the momentum was back with South Africa.

There were few more hiccups in the run chase but Stubbs and Linde ensured South Africa carry their unbeaten run into the semifinal against New Zealand in Kolkata.

Zimbabwe, on the other hand, lost all their three games in the Super Eights phase after topping the group stage. Despite the loss, Raza stole the show in the afternoon game at Ferozshah Kotla.

The Zimbabwe captain got the

Having done well to reach the Super Eights, Zimbabwe found it tough to replicate their league stage success against the bigger teams. Raza knows what they need to do to consistently challenge the established teams but they are not there yet. Power-hitting is a critical aspect of the shortest format and the team needs more batters like Raza to put high quality attacks under pressure. On Sunday, openers Tadiwanashe Marumani (7) and Brian Bennett (15) began well against left-arm spinner George Linde but could not force the pace against the pacers.

Left-handed Marumani saw his leg-stump rattled as he attempted to smash left-arm pacer Maphaka out of the park. Bennett has been consistent at the top of the order but when he tried to dispatch Anrich Nortje over mid-off he was not able to clear the fielder.

However, Raza batted like a man possessed after being hurried by Nortje on his very first ball. He pulled Corbin Bosch over deep backward square leg for a six besides collecting a couple of fours in the sixth over, taking Zimbabwe to 45/2 in six overs. (PTI)

Pakistan's exit from T20 WC casts gloom over country's cricket fraternity

KARACHI, March 1: Pakistan may have ended their T20 World Cup campaign on a winning note but the team's overall performance in the mega event has cast a gloom over the country's cricket fraternity.

"You get one chance in two years' time to leave an imprint of your country's cricket excellence and you fail again. It is very disappointing to see all this," former captain and batting great Javed Miandad said on Sunday.

The batting maestro said the more he watched T20 cricket, the more he realised it is now a very methodical format and the Pakistan players are not able to keep up with the other teams.

Miandad said the team's performance against the higher-ranked teams is a matter of great concern, and the Pakistan Cricket Board needs to take some radical decisions now.

Former captain Mohammad Yousuf said a few players had been given too many opportunities to establish themselves in T20 cricket and have failed to deliver in major events.

"It is time to move on and learn from our blunders," he said. Former skipper Moin Khan said



that until Pakistan are not able to defeat higher-ranked teams, it would never win an ICC event.

"You can't win a major tournament unless you have the capability to beat top teams. Unfortunately, we have made too many mistakes in selection and on the field. More importantly, our main players didn't fire in the World Cup," he lamented.

Former skipper Babar Azam, incumbent captain Salman Ali Agha and other senior players such as Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, and Mohammad Nawaz are

receiving intense criticism. Agha is expected to step down from leadership role after returning home.

Saqlain Mushtaq, who has also coached Pakistan in the past, has also faced lot of criticism for trying to defend his son-in-law Shadab's performances by putting the blame on head coach Mike Hesson.

"I don't think former players who sit as experts on these shows should do so if they have their close ones and relatives playing in the team. It is obvious their analysis is biased," cricket writer Omair Alavi said. (PTI)

Addabarie Tea Estate clinches Luxmi Group Inter-Garden Football Title



HT Correspondent

SEPON, March 1: The Luxmi Group Inter-Garden Football Tournament concluded on March 1 at the Sepon football ground with a thrilling final marked by resilience, shifting momentum and composure under pressure.

Addabarie Tea Estate emerged champions after defeating Kenduguri Tea Estate 5-4 in a penalty shoot-out following a 3-3 draw at the end of regulation time. The match witnessed a dramatic turnaround as Kenduguri mounted a determined comeback in the second half, overturning a 3-1 deficit from the first half to level the score and push the contest into a tie-breaker.

In the decisive shoot-out, Addabarie held their nerve. Ajaj Nahak of Addabarie converted twice during the penalties, including the winning strike that sealed the title, drawing sustained applause from spectators.

The closing ceremony was attended by Luxmi Group Chairman Dipankar Chatterjee and

Managing Director Rudra Chatterjee, along with senior dignitaries and estate representatives, reaffirming the leadership's engagement in community initiatives.

With a legacy spanning over a century, Luxmi Group considers sport an integral part of its sustainability and people-centric approach. For nearly 18 years, the inter-garden tournament has provided a structured platform to nurture football talent from within its tea estates.

All players representing the estate teams are residents of their respective gardens, reinforcing a strong sense of ownership, local pride and continuity. Played against the scenic backdrop of tea gardens, the tournament continues to promote discipline, teamwork and aspiration.

Beyond competition, the event reflects the collective strength of estate communities and Luxmi Group's sustained commitment to development rooted in participation and opportunity.

Assam Rifles women's team wins AR Sentinels Cup



HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, March 1: The DGAR Women Football Team of Assam Rifles clinched the AR Sentinels Cup 2026 after defeating Laitkhor FC 2-1 in the grand finale held in Shillong.

The tournament was conducted from February 17 to 27.

The team, trained under the aegis of 41 Assam Rifles, delivered a consistent performance throughout the competition.

Notably, they had earlier defeated the same opponents 5-0 during the league stage.

In the final match, the Assam

Rifles side held firm to secure a 2-1 victory and lift the coveted trophy.

The event was graced by DG Assam Rifles Lt Gen Vikas Lakhera, AVSM, SM, who praised the team's discipline, performance and sportsmanship.

The DGAR Women Football Team remained unbeaten in the tournament and conceded only one goal overall, highlighting their strong defence, tactical coordination and consistency.

The triumph marks their second consecutive tournament victory, bringing pride and recognition to Assam Rifles.

Sindhu recounts 'tense and scary' ordeal after explosion near Dubai Airport, safe now

NEW DELHI, March 1: Two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu on Sunday described a "tense and scary" ordeal at the Dubai International Airport, where she and her Indonesian coach were stranded after an explosion occurred close to the area where they were staying amid escalating tensions in the Gulf region.

The disruption comes after the United States and Israel launched a major offensive on Iran, leading to retaliatory missile strikes across parts of the Gulf, including the United Arab Emirates.

The developments forced multiple airlines to cancel or reroute flights.

Sindhu, who is scheduled to compete at the All England Open Badminton Championships in Birmingham starting March 3, has been stuck in Dubai since Saturday after flight operations were suspended following airspace closures triggered by missile strikes in the region.

"Once our flight landed in Dubai, events beyond our control began to unfold. Shortly after, the airspace was shut down and the last few hours have been extremely tense. We could hear the sounds of interceptions overhead," Sindhu told PTI videos. "A few hours later there was an explosion very close to where we were holed up at Dubai airport. My coach was barely about 100 metres away when it happened and had to quickly move out of the area. Experiencing something like this in such close quarters truly shakes the very foundation you're built on," she added.

Her coach, Irwansyah Adi Pratama, also confirmed the incident to PTI, describing it as a narrow escape.

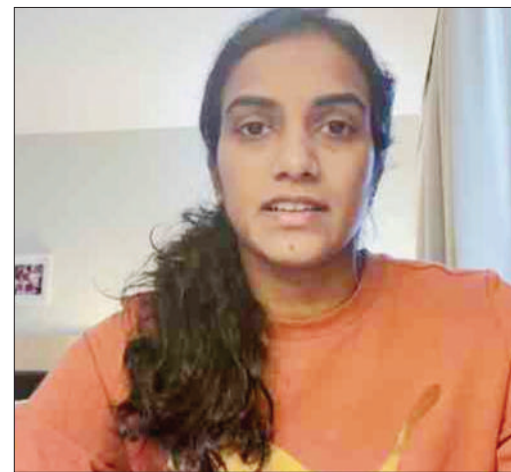
"There was an explosion in airport, so we are stuck here at the moment. They have put us in the hotel, we are okay but again there is a little bit of worry at the same time. We want to go to All England. I hope we can fly out today because Sindhu's match is on Wednesday," Irwansyah said.

Sindhu said she and her support staff have been moved to a secure location.

"We are all safe now and have been moved to a more secure place, thanks to the tireless efforts of the staff at Dubai Airport and the Dubai authorities," she said, expressing gratitude to the Indian High Commission in Dubai for responding on priority and deploying officials to assist stranded passengers.

Air India announced cancellation of all its services to and from major Gulf destinations, while Dubai International Airport suspended operations indefinitely due to airspace restrictions.

Meanwhile, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) said it was closely monitoring the travel challenges in coordination with Badminton England and



national associations.

"The safety and wellbeing of all athletes, officials and support personnel remain our highest priority," BWF said, adding that it was reviewing potential contingencies within the competition schedule should players face delayed arrivals.

Most Indian shuttlers have already reached Birmingham, but a few, including Sindhu, remain affected by the unfolding geopolitical crisis.

The top men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, men's singles player Lakshya Sen, young shuttler Ayush Shetty, and the women's doubles players Gayatri Gopichand and Treasa Jolly have reached.

Among others, Malvika Bansod has also reached, but Unnati Hooda remains in India after her direct flight from New Delhi to Birmingham was cancelled at the last moment. "I was supposed to travel today around 11 but early morning came to know that the flight has been cancelled. Now seats are not available in connected flights. I am in touch with BAI and they are in conversation with BWF to maybe schedule my matches late," Unnati said.

Former India coach Vimal Kumar was also scheduled to depart on Saturday but learnt of his cancellation shortly before boarding in Bengaluru.

Doubles coach B Sumeeth Reddy will travel via Singapore along with mixed doubles pair Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani.

"There are some players we are trying to send via Singapore, some have reached. Satwik and Chirag have reached," Badminton Association of India secretary Sanjay Mishra said. (PTI)

Healy quits ODI cricket on a high with 158, leads Australia to 185-run win and 3-0 sweep over India

HOBART, March 1: Captain Alyssa Healy bid adieu to ODI cricket on a glorious note, smashing a rampaging 158 as Australia whitewashed India 3-0 in the series with a 185-run thrashing of the world champions in the third and final match here on Sunday.

It was a fairytale ODI swansong for the 35-year-old Healy as her 158 and Beth Mooney's unbeaten 106 powered Australia to a mammoth 409 for seven after being asked to bat.

Chasing a massive target of 410, India were all out for 224 in 45.1 overs to lose the three-match series 0-3.

Healy will draw curtains to her illustrious international career after playing the one-off pink-ball Test in Perth against India from March 6.

She has accumulated 3777 runs from 126 ODIs, hitting eight centuries and 19 half tons.

Australia lost Phoebe Litchfield (14) early but Healy and Georgia Voll (62 off 52) shared 134 runs for the second wicket to take Aus-

tralia forward.

Healy and Mooney then stitched 145 runs for the third wicket to hand Australia a launching pad for the big score.

Playing in her 126th ODI, Healy decorated her eighth ODI century with as many 27 boundaries and two maximums from the 98 balls she faced.

Voll hit seven fours and one six during her knock, while Mooney's knock was studded with 10 hits to the fence and one six.

Annabel Sutherland (23) and Nicola Cary (34 off 15) played good hands towards the end.

For India, Sneha Rana (2/66) picked up two wickets while and Shree Charani (2/106) became only the third bowler to concede 100-plus runs in an ODI.

India never really got going in their run chase as they lost wickets at regular intervals.

Vice-captain and in-form Smriti Mandhana was the first to depart in the second over before Pratika Rawal (27 off 21) and Jemimah Rodrigues (42 off 29) added 54



runs for the second wicket.

But the floodgates opened once Rawal departed in the eighth over, caught plumb in front of the wicket by Annabel Sutherland.

Rodrigues, who was playing brilliantly with nine boundaries, was the next to go, caught at short fine-leg by Hamilton off Ashleigh Gardner as the batter went for a sweep, only to get a top-edge.

Harleen Deol (14) too failed to make any substantial contribution. Much was expected from skipper Harmanpreet Kaur but she could only make 25 off 33 balls before being dismissed LBW by Alana King.

Richa Ghosh (18) and Kashvee Gautam too disappointed as the asking was too much for the Indians.

Towards the end, Deepti Sharma (29 off 47) and Sneha Rana stitched 63 runs for the eighth wicket but that was not enough as the Indian innings never really got the impetus which it needed to chase down the huge target.

Deepti was sent packing by King, LBW in the 40th over.

Brought into the side for the fixture, Rana made instant impact with the both bat and ball.

She first returned with impressive figures of 2/66 and then made 44 off 74 balls with that bat to prove her case, albeit in a losing cause as India were bowled out for 224 in 45.1 overs.

India had lost the first two ODIs by six and five wickets respectively. The visitors, however, won the preceding three-match T20 series 2-1.

Australia now lead the multi-format series 8-4 on points.

The trophy for the multi-format series will be decided on points, with two points for each T20 and 50-over victory and four for a Test triumph. (PTI)