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Manipur crisis drags on as BJP weighs options

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Leadership struggle

BJP appears to be facing internal divisions over N. Biren Singh's successor



■ No consensus has been reached on selecting Biren Singh's successor, as Sambit Patra held closed-door meetings with Imphal-based NDA legislators for the second consecutive day

■ Patra's separate meetings — first with Biren Singh and later with the Governor, accompanied by State BJP chief A. Sharda Devi and some legislators — suggest a divide within the party ranks

■ The Congress said that the constitutional mandate to hold consecutive Assembly sessions within a six-month gap is breached

The political situation in Manipur remains uncertain as the Union government awaits alternative leadership within the ruling BJP, following Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's resignation on February 9. The six-month constitutional deadline for an Assembly session lapsed on February 12, but no decision on President's Rule has been made yet. The Supreme Court previously ruled that a delay in convening the Assembly alone is not grounds for President's Rule. The Governor is expected to report the constitutional crisis to the President, but a decision may be delayed until the Prime Minister returns from an overseas trip.

Meanwhile, BJP leaders, including Sambit Patra, are struggling to reach a consensus on Singh's successor, with factions emerging within the party. The Army's 3 Corps chief visited Imphal to assess security preparedness. Additionally, journalist Yambem Laba, a critic of Singh, was abducted by gunmen but later released.

History shows that technology won't cause job loss, says PM at AI summit

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



At the AI Action Summit in Paris, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized that AI governance should go beyond managing risks and rivalries, advocating for a collective approach to set global standards, particularly benefiting the Global South. As India co-chairs the summit with France, he addressed concerns about AI-driven job losses, stating that technology historically creates new job opportunities, making workforce reskilling essential.

Modi highlighted the need for global cooperation in AI governance, ensuring equitable access to resources like computing power, data, and talent. He stressed the importance of open-source AI systems, unbiased datasets, and addressing AI's high energy consumption. He also called for promoting green energy solutions,

citing the Indo-French International Solar Alliance as a key initiative.

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Trump suspends foreign bribery law in possible reprieve for Adani, others charged by U.S. SEC

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order pausing the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) of 1977 for at least 180 days, pending a review by Attorney General Pam Bondi. The move may benefit the Adani Group, whose executives face bribery-related charges, though its impact on ongoing investigations remains unclear.

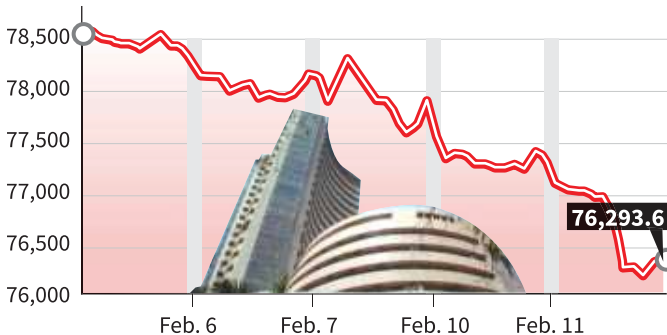
The order halts new FCPA investigations and allows for "remedial measures" on existing ones after new guidelines are set. Trump justified the decision by arguing that FCPA enforcement has been excessive and hinders U.S. business competitiveness. He emphasized that limiting the law would boost American economic and strategic interests. Since returning to power, Trump has signed around 80 executive orders.

Sensex trips amid trade war fears; Adani stocks hold up

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Downward spiral

The Sensex has plunged 2,215.29 points or 2.82% in the past five days to close at 76,293.6 points on Tuesday



India's stock markets fell for the fifth consecutive day on Tuesday, driven by concerns over U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff policies and fears of a trade war. The BSE Sensex dropped 1,018 points (1.3%) to 76,293.6, while the NSE Nifty also declined. Small and mid-cap stocks were hit harder, with the NSE Nifty Midcap index reaching its lowest since June 2024 and the BSE Smallcap index slumping 3.4%.

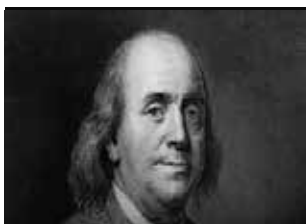
The BSE Metal index fell 2.23% due to the U.S.'s 25% tariffs on steel and aluminium imports. However, shares of Adani Group companies saw gains after Trump signed an executive order pausing the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which had been used to investigate Adani Green Energy. Market breadth weakened significantly, with the BSE advance-to-decline ratio falling to its lowest since June 2024 election results.

IIT Madras develops indigenous Shakti semiconductor chip

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

IIT Madras and ISRO have developed an indigenous aerospace-quality semiconductor chip based on the Shakti microprocessor. Led by IIT Madras director V. Kamakoti at PSCDISHA, the project is part of the Ministry of Electronics and IT's Digital India RISC-V (DIRV) initiative, which promotes indigenous microprocessor development for secure and efficient computing.

The new RISC-V controller, derived from the Shakti processor, is designed for space applications and can be used in IoT and strategic computing systems. ISRO chairman V. Narayanan hailed the chip as a major milestone in India's semiconductor design and fabrication under the "Make in India" initiative.



"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."

—Benjamin Franklin

Products developed in-house by service innovators catch eyeballs

INTERNAL SECURITY



The Indian Army has developed an AI-powered weapon system, the Ten AI Weapon System (TAIWS), to enhance border surveillance and prevent terrorist infiltration, particularly in Kashmir's difficult terrain. Developed by Colonel Ashish Dogra and Lieutenant Colonel Prashanth Agrawal in collaboration with IIT Bombay and MIET Jammu, TAIWS integrates secondary vision technology with a medium machine gun and has completed field trials. It is expected to be deployed along the Line of Control after modifications.

Additionally, the Army has developed a 50-meter footbridge deployable within an hour and a 9mm sub-machine gun, with 550 units already inducted. The Army Design Bureau has registered 75 intellectual property rights (IPRs), with 12 granted, and is funding 100 innovation projects, 75 of which are in final stages.

Russia offers to partner with India for joint production of Su-57 fighter

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



At Aero India 2025, Russia's state-owned Rosoboronexport offered to partner with India on localizing production of the Su-57 fifth-generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), potentially starting in 2025. The deal includes the transfer of advanced technologies such as engines, AESA radars, AI elements, optics, and air weapons, which could also support India's Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) program.

Rosoboronexport assured India there would be no risk of sanctions or supply disruptions and emphasized Russia's commitment to long-term defense cooperation, building on 60 years of successful joint aircraft production.

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India, 57 countries call for inclusive and sustainable AI

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



At the AI Action Summit in Paris, 58 countries, including India, China, Brazil, France, and Australia, signed a joint statement on “Inclusive and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence for People and the Planet.” The statement emphasizes AI accessibility, trust, safety, and ethical deployment while calling for support in AI capacity-building for developing nations. It also seeks to prevent market concentration and promote AI-driven economic growth.

The U.S. and U.K. did not sign the statement, with U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance arguing against excessive AI regulation, advocating instead for a pro-growth, deregulatory approach. This marks the third such international AI declaration, following previous summits in the U.K. and South Korea.

Self-inflicted injury

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Economic analysis of former U.S. President Donald Trump’s first-term tariffs on \$400 billion in goods showed negative impacts, including lower GDP, reduced household income, and manufacturing job losses. A Federal Reserve study found that tariff-exposed industries faced employment declines, with an estimated 75,000 fewer jobs. The Congressional Budget Office projected a 0.3% GDP drop and a \$580 decrease in real household income by 2020.

In his second term, Trump reintroduced a 25% tariff on steel imports, similar to his 2018 policy, which led to retaliatory tariffs and inflationary pressures. The U.S. steel industry supports the move, but global oversupply, mainly from China, keeps prices competitive. Given past effects, these tariffs risk further economic strain, despite the U.S. remaining the world's largest economy.

A role for India in South-South climate cooperation

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, focused on climate finance and operationalized Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, particularly Article 6.2, which enables the transfer of Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) between countries. This mechanism allows developing nations to receive financial and technological support from developed countries while helping them meet emissions reduction targets.

India, the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter, sees Article 6.2 as a means to balance its development and climate goals, given its financial and technical constraints. India has integrated market mechanisms through its Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) and has prior experience with carbon markets, making it well-positioned to leverage ITMOs. It has identified 14 key sectors for international collaboration, including renewable energy, energy storage, and green hydrogen, and has sought partnerships with nations like South Korea, the EU, and Japan.

Article 6.2 also offers India a leadership role in South-South cooperation, particularly with Africa, facilitating technology and capacity building while accessing carbon finance. However, challenges include the risk of developed nations relying on India's low-cost emission reductions instead of their own decarbonization, potential governance issues, and opportunity costs for India. Safeguards for transparency and equitable benefit-sharing are essential to ensure fair and effective ITMO agreements.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

A legal 'remedy' that perpetuates survivor trauma

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Allahabad High Court has recently granted bail to rape accused individuals on the condition that they marry the survivors, raising significant legal and ethical issues. These decisions, made in cases like *Atul Gautam vs State of Uttar Pradesh* (2025) and *Abhishek vs State of Uttar Pradesh* (2024), have sparked debates about whether courts can impose such conditions and whether the state is neglecting its duty to support survivors.

The Supreme Court's guidelines emphasize that bail conditions should prevent contact between the accused and survivor to avoid further trauma. Requiring marriage, however, violates these principles and perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes, equating a woman's dignity with marriage. This approach can coerce survivors into unequal relationships and create opportunities for further abuse under legal protection.

The state's failure to provide adequate support for survivors shifts the burden to the judiciary, resulting in coerced solutions like forced marriages, which undermine the survivor's autonomy. Additionally, granting bail under such conditions could influence the trial and affect the survivor's ability to testify freely, complicating the pursuit of justice. The passage calls for a re-evaluation of such judicial practices, emphasizing the need for justice that upholds survivors' rights, dignity, and autonomy.

Perilous path

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Following the overthrow of Sheikh Hasina's government in a student-led uprising on August 5, 2024, Bangladesh's new military-backed interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, promised reforms and a new beginning. However, six months later, the country remains unstable, with rising lawlessness and political unrest. On February 5, 2025, a mob attacked the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum and vandalized the residences of Hasina and other Awami League leaders. Despite the government's promise of action, there has been little progress in the reform agenda, and the government has failed to announce a schedule for general elections.

There have been complaints of increasing violence against minorities and opposition groups, with over 100 deaths and 11,000 arrests, including 140 journalists facing charges. The interim government has cracked down on the press, banned the student wing of the Awami League, and continues to blame Hasina for the ongoing violence. A Human Rights Watch report has criticized the government for mirroring the intolerance of the previous regime. The passage argues that Mr. Yunus must take responsibility for maintaining law and order, expedite reforms, and announce elections to ensure a legitimate government for Bangladesh's future.

Addressing the growing threat of forest fires

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The urgency of addressing forest fires has been highlighted by recent events, such as the wildfires in Los Angeles and the increasing frequency of fires in India. In India, over 36% of the country's forest cover is prone to fires, and there has been a ten-fold increase in incidents over the past two decades. Most fires are caused by human activities like land clearing and slash-and-burn agriculture, compounded by climate change factors such as rising temperatures and dry spells.

The consequences of forest fires are widespread, including loss of biodiversity, carbon emissions, economic losses (around ₹1.74 lakh Cr annually due to forest degradation), and disruptions to the water cycle and soil fertility. While India has policies and schemes like the National Action Plan on Forest Fires and the Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme (FFPMS), there is still much to be done, including better budget allocations, advanced predictive modelling, and technology such as drones for monitoring fire-prone areas.

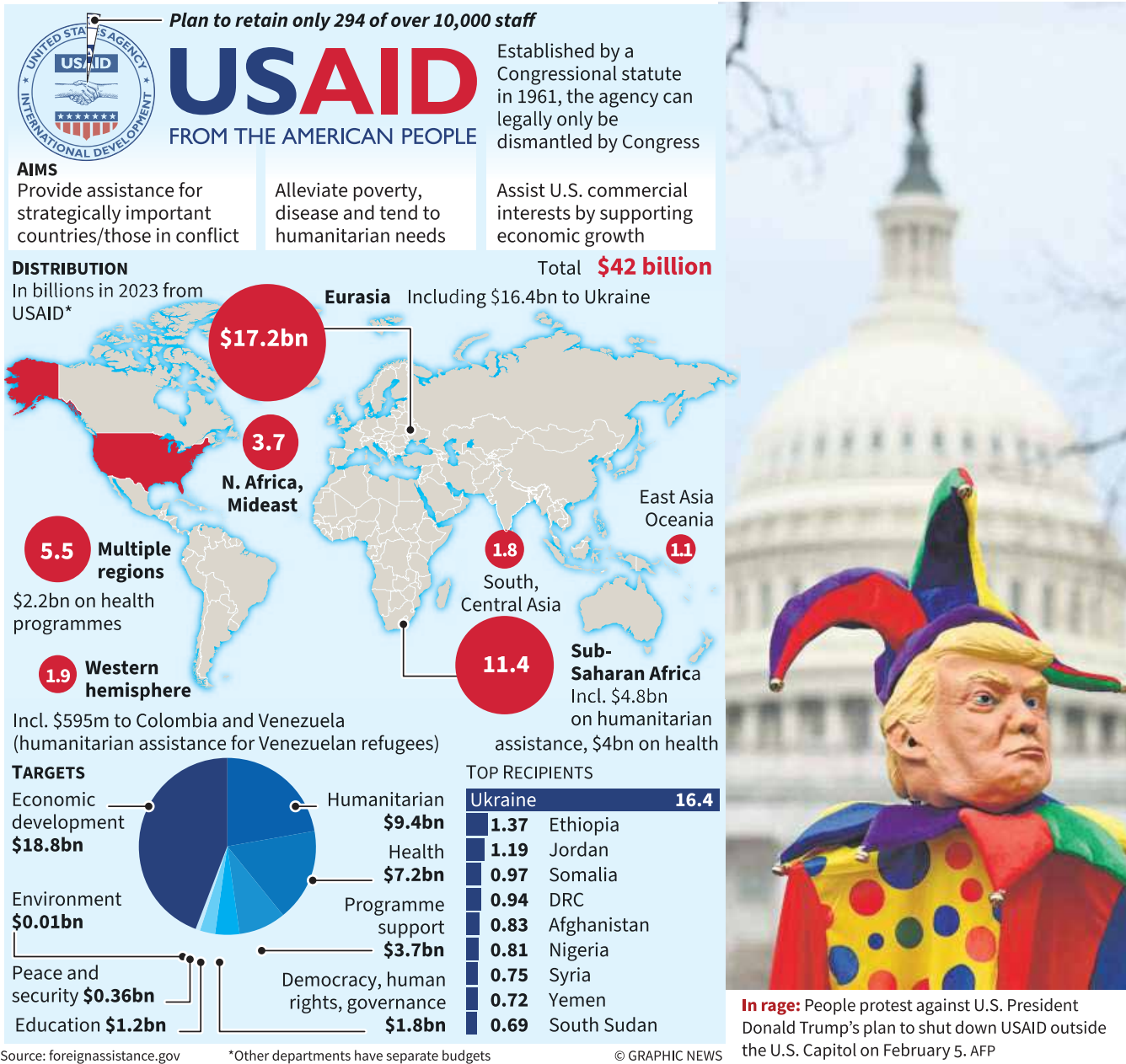
Empowering local communities with tools and training, along with integrating existing data sources, can improve early warning systems and firefighting efforts. Drawing from international examples, such as Nepal's Community Forest User Groups, India can enhance community-based fire management. Addressing forest fires requires collaboration between policymakers, scientists, civil society, and communities, combining policy intervention, technology, and local knowledge to tackle this environmental, societal, and economic issue.

How will freeze on USAID affect the world?

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Dismantling aid from the U.S.

The withdrawal of USAID, arising out of a decision born of petulance, might severely impact the fortunes of many nations, as a number of projects will have to be dropped, in the light of aid being stopped through an executive decision by the Donald Trump administration



On January 20, 2024, U.S. President Donald Trump implemented a 90-day freeze on foreign assistance, halting the disbursement of funds by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID, established in 1961, provides financial aid for development projects worldwide in sectors such as health, education, food security, and humanitarian assistance. It receives funding from the U.S. federal budget, amounting to \$44.20 billion in 2024.

Elon Musk, head of the Department of Government Efficiency, has suggested shutting down USAID, while Secretary of State Marco Rubio has proposed restructuring the agency. The freeze has caused concern for countries heavily dependent on U.S. aid, such as Ukraine, Ethiopia, and South Sudan, with potential severe consequences for millions relying on programs like HIV/AIDS aid. Exceptions are made for "mission-critical functions" and select programs, though details are unclear.

In India, USAID's funding has been relatively small, about 0.2%-0.4% of its global aid. USAID's support in India has focused on healthcare, including HIV/AIDS, TB, and maternal health. While the freeze may not significantly impact India,

existing healthcare projects could be affected. USAID has directed organizations in India to suspend operations temporarily.

‘Mobilising labour for infra-building getting tough, attrition high’

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT



Larsen and Toubro (L&T) Chairman S.N. Subrahmanyam highlighted the challenges in mobilizing labour for infrastructure projects in Indian cities. He noted that labour attrition occurs three to four times a year, and despite having a database of millions of workers, many are unwilling to migrate to cities due to factors like successful direct benefit transfers, the MNREGA scheme, and local job opportunities. Additionally, labourers are attracted to higher-paying jobs in the Middle East, where salaries are three to four times higher than in India. Subrahmanyam emphasized the need for infrastructure development and skill training, advocating for flexible human policies and efforts in villages to encourage labour migration.

Stalled Enron-era plan set to take off, to aid LNG imports

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Dabhol Breakwater project, stalled since 2001 after the U.S. firm Enron's exit, is set to be completed by March 2025. Konkan LNG Ltd. (KLL), a subsidiary of GAIL India, is working to operationalize the Dabhol LNG terminal, turning it into an all-weather port. This will help India improve its LNG imports and energy mix. The project faced legal challenges and the construction of an island breakwater, which made it complex. The terminal, initially designed for the Dabhol Power Plant, was separated in 2018 and became KLL-owned in 2020. After completion, the terminal's capacity will increase, helping India boost its natural gas share in the energy mix from 6.5% to 15% by 2030.

Net direct tax kitty up 15% to ₹17.8 lakh Cr

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Net direct tax collection in India for the fiscal year 2024-2025 grew by 14.69%, reaching over ₹17.78 lakh Cr, according to data from the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT). Personal income tax (non-corporate taxes) saw a 21% growth to ₹9.48 lakh Cr, while corporate tax collection increased by more than 6% to ₹7.78 lakh Cr. The securities transaction tax (STT) jumped 65% to ₹49,201 Cr. Refunds issued rose by 42.63%, totalling over ₹4.10 lakh Cr. Gross direct tax collections grew by 19.06% to ₹21.88 lakh Cr. Revised estimates for the fiscal peg direct tax collections at ₹22.37 lakh Cr, slightly higher than the budget estimate of ₹22.07 lakh Cr.

‘Digitisation doesn’t mean deregulation’

POIITY & GOVERNANCE

Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran emphasized that digitization is often confused with deregulation, explaining that merely moving regulations online does not equate to deregulation. He stressed the need to eliminate unnecessary regulations, whether online or offline, to support small businesses and facilitate economic growth. Nageswaran also noted that India's future growth will largely rely on the domestic economy, as globalization's benefits may not be as significant as in the past. He predicted that inflation may become more persistent globally and that India needs to target a 3-4% inflation rate to help stabilize the rupee. Additionally, he advocated for energy security, stating that nuclear energy should play a key role in India's energy transition while urging a pragmatic approach to green energy.



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