



● POLITY

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Strife-hit Manipur put under President's Rule

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Repeating history

Manipur holds the record for the most instances of President's Rule

■ This marks the **11th time** President's Rule has been imposed

■ The latest instance was **277 days** from June 2, 2001, to March 6, 2002

■ The first was for **66 days** from January 12 to March 19, 1967

■ The longest was for **2 years and 157 days** from October 17, 1969, to March 22, 1972



MANIPUR

■ **Rishang Keishing of the Congress became the first Chief Minister to complete his full term. Okram Ibobi Singh of Congress was the first Chief Minister to finish not one but three terms**

President's Rule was imposed in Manipur on Thursday, four days after Chief Minister N. Biren Singh resigned. President Droupadi Murmu issued the proclamation under Article 356 based on a report from Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, stating that the State government could not function per the Constitution. The Manipur Legislative Assembly is under suspended animation but has not been dissolved. Administrative and security decisions will now be handled by the Governor. The decision came after Parliament adjourned for the first half of the Budget Session. The proclamation must be

approved by both Houses within two months to remain in effect. Singh resigned on February 9 after a political deadlock within the BJP on his replacement. Manipur has been facing ethnic violence between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities since May 2023, resulting in over 250 deaths and 60,000 displaced people. The last instance of President's Rule in the State lasted 277 days from 2001 to 2002.

Modi-Trump talks: tariffs, trade set to Take centre stage

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Washington for bilateral talks with U.S. President Donald Trump, aiming to manage relations amid Trump's "America First" policies. Key discussion topics include trade, tariffs, defense, energy, immigration, and the Indo-Pacific. Ahead of the meeting, Trump announced a new executive order on reciprocal tariffs, following previous tariff hikes on steel, aluminum, and other imports. India has made some tariff reductions, which the U.S. views as positive steps toward a future trade agreement in 2025.

Defense cooperation remains a priority, with discussions on a new framework and procurement deals. The U.S. also sees India as a key importer of American energy resources. While the Trump administration is expected to continue technology collaboration under the India-U.S. iCET framework, officials reiterated America's commitment to the safety of its citizens when asked about an alleged Indian plot targeting Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.

Before the talks, Modi met key Trump allies, including National Security Adviser Michael Waltz, former Republican candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, and businessman Elon Musk, discussing AI, space, mobility, and innovation. Reports suggest discussions about Musk's Starlink entering India. The India-U.S. partnership is considered one of the most critical bilateral relationships of the 21st century.

New I-T Bill proposes easier tax compliance

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the Income Tax Bill of 2025 in the Lok Sabha to simplify and revamp the 1961 Income Tax Act, which has been amended over 4,000 times. The Bill, aimed at making tax laws clearer and more concise, will be reviewed by a parliamentary select committee. It reduces the word count and number of chapters in the tax law nearly by half. Key changes include replacing multiple tax year terms with a standardized "tax year" and "financial year" and consolidating tax deduction at source (TDS) and tax collected at source (TCS) provisions for better clarity.

NSCN (I-M) calls upon PM to uphold 2015 framework pact

INTERNAL SECURITY

The NSCN (I-M) has stated that its 2015 Framework Agreement with the Indian government should not be equated with the 2017 Agreed Position signed with the NNPGs. The group criticized the Agreed Position as a mere extension of Article 371A, manipulated by Indian agencies. Since negotiations with the NNPGs concluded in 2019, aligning both agreements has become difficult. The NSCN (I-M) praised 21 MPs for urging Home Minister Amit Shah to provide a detailed update on the Naga peace process, emphasizing the need for democratic oversight. The group also called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi to uphold the Framework Agreement.

The problematic globalisation of medical education

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The global landscape of medical education is undergoing significant changes. While there is a shortage of doctors, governments and medical professionals often resist increasing access to medical studies, leading to a rise in international student mobility. An estimated 200,000 students study medicine abroad, often in institutions of questionable quality.

India faces a severe shortage of doctors, with intense competition for medical seats. Each year, around 2.3 million students take the national medical entrance exam, but only a fraction secure admission. High tuition fees in private institutions push over 20,000 Indian students to study abroad in countries like Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, China, and Nepal. Some foreign medical institutions are Indian-owned, such as the Manipal College of Medical Sciences in Nepal and the American University of Antigua. However, students returning to India must pass a licensing exam and complete an internship to practice.

To address this issue, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in the 2025 Budget that the government had added 1.1 lakh medical seats over the past decade and plans to add 75,000 more in the next five years.

This trend of seeking medical education abroad is not limited to India. Western students from France, Germany, and Norway also study medicine in neighbouring countries due to limited access at home. The U.S. sends students to Hungary, Poland, Ireland, and the Caribbean. Many foreign medical programs cater to international students, often as for-profit institutions offering English-medium education.

Balancing the rising demand for medical education with quality concerns remains a challenge. Governments are recognizing the issue, but expanding medical education domestically is costly and faces opposition from established medical professionals. More regulation and oversight are needed to ensure quality education and training for future doctors.

China's dam project opens the floodgates of concern

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

China's plan to build a massive hydroelectric dam on the Yarlung Zangbo river in Tibet has raised concerns in India regarding its environmental impact, water flow, and bilateral relations. The river, which becomes the Brahmaputra in India and flows into Bangladesh, is vital for millions. While China's move aligns with its goal to transition to renewable energy, it poses significant challenges for India.

Legally, the project raises issues under international water law, particularly regarding equitable resource use and cooperation. However, neither China nor India is a signatory to the UN Watercourses Convention, and formal agreements between them on water data sharing have expired. While diplomatic mechanisms like the Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) exist, no concrete agreement governs transboundary water management.

Environmental risks are significant, as the dam is being built in a seismically active region, increasing the threat of earthquakes, habitat destruction, sediment disruption, and erosion. Bangladesh, though affected, has not raised strong objections due to its growing ties with China and strained relations with India since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in 2024.

A regional water alliance involving South Asian lower riparian states like Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan could help negotiate with China, but political challenges and weak regional cooperation hinder collective action. Given the influence of politics on water issues, improved India-China diplomatic engagement offers hope for renewing agreements and enhancing trust through data sharing. China insists the dam will not affect India's water supply, but New Delhi remains concerned, making platforms like the ELM crucial for addressing disputes.

Engaging Russia

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

President Donald Trump has initiated talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on ending the Ukraine war, raising both hopes for peace and fears of Russian advantage. In a 90-minute call, both leaders expressed a desire to halt the conflict, with Russia offering to host U.S. officials for discussions. This marks a shift from previous U.S. policy under Joe Biden, who strongly opposed Putin, while Trump had promised to end the war quickly during his 2024 campaign.

While negotiations could be a breakthrough in engaging Putin, they may come at Ukraine's expense. U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth indicated that the U.S. would not send troops to Ukraine, block its NATO membership, and accept Russia's control over Crimea. This signals a shift away from NATO's earlier

commitment to support Ukraine indefinitely. The move could weaken Ukraine's position, hurt European security and economy, and reflect the Trump administration's prioritization of domestic concerns over Russian aggression.

Is appointing ad-hoc judges a viable means to reduce backlog?

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court has allowed High Courts to appoint retired judges on an ad-hoc basis to address the backlog of cases, specifically for hearing criminal appeals alongside sitting judges. Justice Rajeev Shakdher and Shadan Farasat discuss the viability of this measure.

Key points from the discussion:

- **Effectiveness of ad-hoc judges:** The move is commendable, given the huge backlog of 62 lakh cases. However, past implementation has been limited. Success depends on proactive action by Chief Justices and government cooperation.
- **Judicial appointment challenges:** While regular judicial appointments face delays, ad-hoc judges do not interfere with this process. Their appointment can help expedite criminal cases, easing overcrowding in jails.
- **Reforming the process:** The appointment procedure should be simplified, avoiding unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles like Intelligence Bureau clearance. Since retired judges have already been vetted, their selection should be straightforward.
- **Impact on judiciary and infrastructure:** Ad-hoc judges serve for a limited time and do not affect the seniority or promotion of sitting judges. While courts lack infrastructure, logistical challenges can be managed by reallocating resources.
- **Judicial independence and incentives:** Many retired judges prefer arbitration or private practice due to better financial prospects. However, the right candidates would uphold judicial independence, as their tenure is temporary and without career aspirations.

Overall, ad-hoc appointments can be a useful short-term solution to judicial delays, but their success depends on government cooperation, efficient implementation, and adequate infrastructure.

Only Parliament can constitutionally remove HC judge: Jagdeep Dhankhar

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar asserted that only Parliament has the authority to remove a High Court judge, referencing a pending impeachment notice against Justice Shekhar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court.

The issue arose after the Supreme Court (SC) summoned Justice Yadav over communal remarks, also seeking a report from the Allahabad High Court Chief Justice. Dhankhar stated that 55 Rajya Sabha members had submitted a removal notice in December 2024 under Article 124(4) of the Constitution.

He emphasized that the matter falls solely within the jurisdiction of Parliament and the President, directing the Rajya Sabha Secretary General to share this information with the Supreme Court Secretary General.

The impeachment motion was initiated by Opposition members, alleging that Justice Yadav's remarks at a Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) event amounted to hate speech and communal incitement.

‘Food prices to be under control, critical imports face uncertainty’

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman assured the Rajya Sabha that food prices are expected to remain under control in the coming year, based on advance estimates of crop output. She highlighted that food inflation has eased, particularly in potatoes, onions, and tomatoes, with CPI inflation for 2025-26 projected to average 4.2%.

She explained that food inflation is often triggered by adverse weather conditions and supply chain disruptions, but the government is overseeing timely imports to address any shortfalls. The agriculture sector is expected to see increased production, with kharif food grain production projected to rise by 5.7%.

Sitharaman emphasized the Budget’s goals of accelerating economic growth, promoting inclusive development, boosting private sector investments, and enhancing the spending power of the growing middle class, all while navigating global economic uncertainties. She acknowledged the challenges posed by fragmentation of globalization, rising national debts, and the diminishing power of multilateral bodies, but assured that India’s interests remain the top priority in planning.

Situation along the Line of Control stable, ceasefire with Pakistan is intact, says Army

INTERNAL SECURITY

The Indian Army downplayed recent skirmishes along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, emphasizing that the ceasefire between India and Pakistan remains intact. The Army acknowledged some incidents, such as cross-LoC firing and a suspected IED blast on an Indian patrol, but noted these are being addressed through established mechanisms. No heavy weapon exchanges have occurred recently, and the Army stated that such minor incidents are not uncommon along the LoC.

The Army assured that concerns have been raised with the Pakistan Army at the appropriate level, and the situation remains stable with the Indian Army maintaining a high state of alertness. This statement follows recent militant activities near the LoC, including the deaths of two soldiers in an IED blast in Akhnoor. Additionally, Jammu and Kashmir’s Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha chaired a high-level security meeting in Jammu, attended by top security officials.

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Rafale-M pact to be inked soon, delivery to start after 4 years

INTERNAL SECURITY



The Indian Navy is set to begin receiving Rafale-M jets and MQ-9B UAVs in 2029 after the contracts are signed in the coming months, likely during the visit of the French Defence Minister to India. Deliveries will begin within 48 months of signing and be completed in two years. The Navy is eager to finalize the deal by the end of the current financial year (March 31). The deals, which are government-to-government, involve Rafale-M jets from Dassault Aviation and three Scorpene-class submarines from Naval Group, together valued at over \$10 billion. The deals are in the final stages of approval, awaiting clearance from the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).

Unloading of Union Carbide waste begins in M.P. town

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Waste containers from the defunct Union Carbide plant in Bhopal were unloaded at a waste management facility in Pithampur, Madhya Pradesh, five days before the Jabalpur High Court hears a case about their disposal. The toxic waste, totalling 358 tonnes, has been stored in 12 trucks at the facility since January 2. The government plans to incinerate the waste but faced protests from local residents. Authorities assured that the waste remains locked in containers and no incineration has begun. The next hearing is scheduled for February 18, with activists focusing on presenting evidence in court. Local protests continue, with some fearing the potential environmental impact of the incineration. The government pledged that the process will be conducted under expert supervision.

Sales, profit growth lag in Q3

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Corporate India's private sector net profit grew by 14% in Q3 2024-25, down from 16.6% in the same period last year, according to a study by the Bank of Baroda. Sales growth also slowed to 5.9% from 7.4% last year. The performance was uneven across sectors, with a K-shaped recovery emerging. While sectors like banking and financial services performed well, non-consumer manufacturing, particularly in iron, steel, and crude oil, faced challenges. Consumer manufacturing, especially in automobiles, also showed slower growth, while consumer services saw a significant profit increase, largely due to a telecom company's higher earnings.

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What is happening in the DRC?

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A city under siege

The M23 militia, backed by eastern neighbour Rwanda, captured the mineral-rich city of Goma, which lies on the border between Rwanda and the DRC. The region has been beset with conflict between the Hutus and Tutsis since colonial times

- THE M23 MILITIA**
- One of about 100 armed factions vying for a foothold in mineral-rich eastern DRC
 - Rwandan-backed group which consists primarily of Tutsis who failed to integrate into the Congolese army
 - Led major insurgency against the DRC government in 2012, took up arms again in 2022. The group is estimated to have 6,500 fighters



Jan 27-28, Goma: While M23 rebels claim control of the city, they are reportedly facing resistance from army and pro-government militias

▲ Mount Nyiragongo

Direction of M23 advance

5km / 3 miles

UN experts estimate up to 4,000 Rwandan forces are fighting alongside M23

“Great Barrier” border crossing

Labels: Sake, Keshero, GOMA, Munigi, Gisenyi, Bulenga, Goma International Airport, Port, LAKE KIVU, DEM. REP. OF CONGO, RWANDA

- Latest rebel advance has forced thousands to flee Goma. The city of two million people is a vital humanitarian aid hub for the region
- The UN and other global powers fear that the conflict could spiral into a regional war similar to those of 1996-1997 and 1998-2003

Effects of war: A displaced woman walks back to her home village, in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, on February 12. GETTY IMAGES

Sources: Associated Press, Institute for the Study of War, Reuters

© GRAPHIC NEWS

The crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has escalated as the M23 militia, backed by Rwanda, captured the strategic city of Goma. The ongoing conflict has resulted in over 2,900 deaths, displaced 700,000 people, and spread to South Kivu province.

Historical Context:

- Ethnic tensions between Hutus and Tutsis date back to colonial rule, with Tutsis initially favored by European powers.
- Rwanda's 1994 genocide, triggered by the assassination of President Habyarimana, led to mass killings of Tutsis by Hutus.
- The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), led by Paul Kagame, ended the genocide, and many Hutus fled to eastern DRC.
- Subsequent wars (1996, 1998) involving multiple African nations turned the DRC into a conflict zone, leading to the deaths of five million people.

M23 Rebels & Mineral Wealth:

- Formed in 2012, the M23 militia consists of former soldiers who claim to protect Tutsis.
- They first captured Goma in 2012 but retreated after negotiations, only to resurface in 2022.
- The conflict is not just ethnic; the DRC's rich mineral resources, including Coltan (used in electronics), make the region highly contested.

Regional Responses:

- DRC President Felix Tshisekedi calls M23's actions an "act of war."
- Rwanda's President Paul Kagame denies direct involvement but supports M23's legitimacy.
- Burundi warns of escalating war due to Rwanda's influence.
- Uganda takes a neutral stance, aiding the DRC against IS-linked militants while allowing M23 to use its territory.

The crisis highlights both ethnic and economic tensions, with M23's control of Goma strengthening its position in a long-standing conflict fueled by historical grievances and resource competition.

NCLT nod for JSW's ₹16,000-cr. bid for KSK Mahanadi Power

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) in Hyderabad has approved JSW Energy Ltd.'s ₹16,084.08 crore resolution plan to acquire the bankrupt KSK Mahanadi Power Company Ltd.. The plan offers KSK Mahanadi's creditors nearly 50% of their admitted claims, with ₹15,985.08 crore in upfront cash for financial creditors. JSW Energy will fund the acquisition through ₹13,000 crore in debt and ₹3,084.08 crore in quasi-equity. The acquisition will involve JSW Energy identifying a bid company to merge with KSK Mahanadi. KSK Mahanadi was admitted into the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process in October 2019.



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Release hostages or face war, warns Israel as Hamas swears by truce deal

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



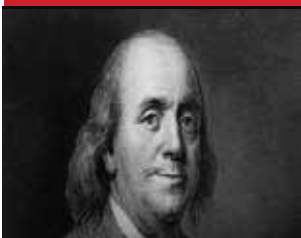
Israel has warned Hamas that if it does not release three hostages by Saturday, the ceasefire will end, and military operations will resume. Hamas has expressed its commitment to the truce and the hostage exchange but has cited Israeli violations as a reason for potential delays. If the hostages are not released, Israel plans to resume military action, with Defense Minister Israel Katz stating that the war would continue until Hamas is defeated and all hostages are freed. Additionally, Yemen's Houthi rebels have threatened to launch new

attacks on Israel if the U.S. follows through on a plan to move Palestinians out of Gaza.



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