



Gyanesh Kumar named CEC after panel meeting

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Gyanesh Kumar has been appointed as the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) following a selection by a three-member panel led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He will assume office on Wednesday, the same day the Supreme Court will hear a challenge to the new law governing the selection process. Congress opposed the appointment, arguing that the new law creates a biased selection mechanism by replacing the Chief Justice of India with a Union Minister in the selection panel. Rahul Gandhi, part of the panel, walked out after submitting his objections in writing. The Congress urged the government to seek an early court hearing on the matter.

This is the first CEC appointment under the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, which replaced

the earlier system where the President appointed officials based on government recommendations. The outgoing CEC, Rajiv Kumar, highlighted the need for NRI voting rights and biometric authentication to prevent impersonation.

Finance Ministry likely to increase deposit insurance limit from ₹5 lakh official's return

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

The Finance Ministry is considering raising the ₹5 lakh deposit insurance limit, according to M. Nagaraju, Secretary to the Department of Financial Services. His statement comes after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed restrictions on New India Cooperative Bank due to liquidity issues, following a ₹122 crore embezzlement case involving a bank official.

Deposit insurance, governed by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961, protects bank deposits when financial institutions fail. The limit was last increased to ₹5 lakh in 2020 after the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank crisis.

Officials declined to comment on the Mumbai bank scam but stated that regulatory oversight is the RBI's responsibility. Ajay Seth, Secretary to the Department of Economic Affairs, defended cooperative banks, emphasizing that issues in one institution should not undermine confidence in the entire sector.

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SC puts off cases challenging Places of Worship Act with Centre yet to file a response

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

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SC puts off cases challenging Places of Worship Act with Centre yet to file a response

POLITY & GOVERNANCE



The Supreme Court on Monday noted the Centre's continued silence on filing a counter-affidavit in the case challenging the validity of the Places of Worship Act, 1991, which protects the identity of religious sites as of Independence Day. The case, pending for over four years, has seen multiple court orders urging the government to respond, but no affidavit has been filed. The hearing was adjourned to April 1.

The court expressed concern over the large number of petitions being filed and dismissed writ petitions where notices had not been issued, allowing petitioners to refile as applications. Lawyers representing various parties, including minority organizations and political groups, debated the Act's implications.

Supporters of the 1991 Act argued it prevents communal tensions and legal disputes over religious sites, while opponents claimed it unfairly

restricts Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs from reclaiming places allegedly taken over by past invaders. The Supreme Court had previously barred civil courts from entertaining new suits seeking to reclaim such sites.



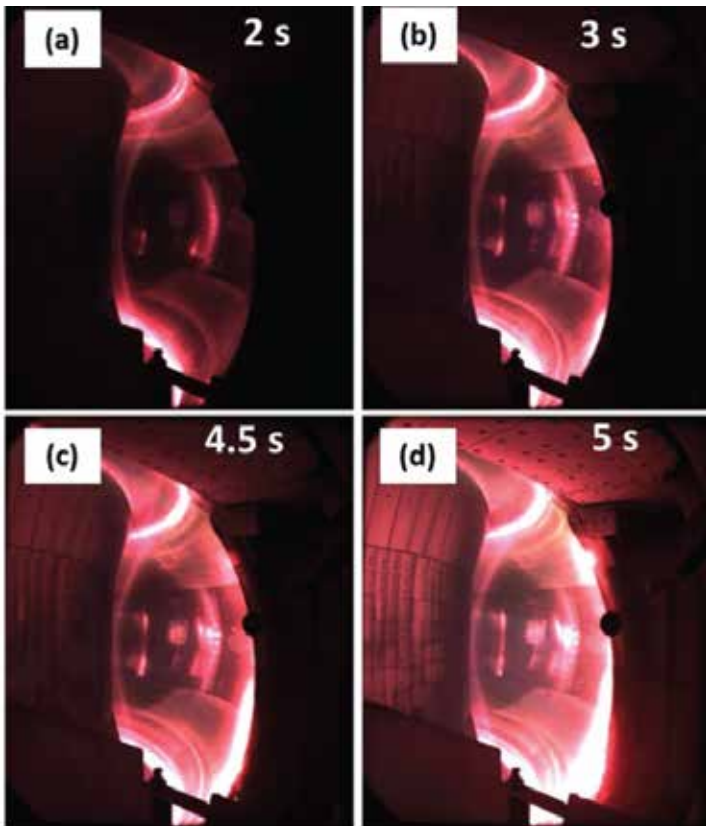
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China's EAST reactor keeps the fire of magnetic fusion burning

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



Chinese scientists have set a new record by maintaining a plasma at 100 million degrees Celsius for 1,066 seconds in the EAST (Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak) nuclear fusion reactor. Nuclear fusion, unlike fission, does not produce harmful radioactive waste, making it a promising clean energy source. However, achieving fusion requires extremely high temperatures to overcome nuclear repulsion, with deuterium-tritium fusion being the most feasible due to tritium's additional neutron.

EAST uses a magnetic confinement method with superconducting electromagnets to trap and heat plasma, preventing it from collapsing. Over the years, EAST has set multiple records, validating technologies needed for future fusion reactors. Despite progress, it has yet to achieve ignition—where the reaction becomes self-sustaining—an essential step toward generating usable electricity. EAST serves as a testbed for ITER, an international project aiming to build a reactor that generates more energy than it consumes, though ITER has faced delays and cost overruns.

Alternative fusion approaches include stellarators, which eliminate the need for poloidal magnetic fields, and laser-based methods like the National Ignition Facility (NIF), which achieved ignition in 2022 by bombarding a fuel pellet with high-power lasers. While NIF has provided proof-of-concept ignition, EAST continues to advance

large-scale tokamak technology. The race to achieve practical nuclear fusion remains ongoing, with both government-funded and private-sector projects exploring different paths to harness this potential energy source.

Georgia and the resurrection of the colour revolutions

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The "colour revolutions" of the early 21st century were a series of largely peaceful uprisings in post-Soviet states aimed at replacing pro-Moscow governments with pro-Western ones under the banner of democratic reforms. Notable examples include Georgia's Rose Revolution (2003), Ukraine's Orange Revolution (2004), and Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution (2005). While these movements received Western support, Russia viewed them as external attempts to undermine its influence.

However, the long-term impact of these revolutions was disappointing, as corruption and governance issues persisted, leading to public disillusionment. Georgia's Rose Revolution, initially seen as a democratic success, soon gave way to authoritarian practices under President Mikheil Saakashvili, exposing the movement's Western backing. A similar situation is unfolding in Georgia today, where recent elections have sparked protests over alleged electoral fraud. The ruling Georgian Dream Party accuses the West of orchestrating these demonstrations, continuing the pattern of external interference in post-Soviet politics.

Georgia's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia makes it a battleground for competing geopolitical interests. While Russia remains a key regional player despite its war in Ukraine, the U.S.'s ability to influence events through soft power, such as promoting democracy via colour revolutions, appears to be waning. The broader implications of Georgia's political struggles highlight the challenges post-Soviet states face in balancing internal governance with external pressures, raising questions about the continued viability of the colour revolution model in modern geopolitics.

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Lighten the pollution burden of thermal power States

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement commits to a cleaner economic path, reducing emissions intensity by 45% by 2030, and achieving 50% power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources. However, thermal power remains dominant, contributing significantly to carbon emissions, with certain States bearing disproportionate pollution burdens while others benefit from clean electricity.

India's electricity generation is divided among the central (22.9%), State (23.7%), and private (53.4%) sectors. Coal remains the primary energy source, with coal-rich States such as Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha generating most of the thermal power, but consuming less than they produce. Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Haryana are major importers of electricity, while States like Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are net exporters. Despite generating power, coal-rich States suffer from environmental degradation without receiving compensation, effectively facing a "resource curse."

India's regulatory framework does not compensate electricity-producing States for the pollution they endure. These States cannot levy taxes on electricity generation, as per constitutional provisions, and do not benefit from GST or electricity-related duties, which are collected by consuming States. A solution could involve either allowing States to tax thermal power generation or implementing a compensation mechanism through the Finance Commission. Given India's climate commitments, future financial planning must ensure fair compensation for thermal power-producing States to balance environmental and economic costs.

How did a DDoS attack cripple Kaveri 2.0?

INTERNAL SECURITY

In January 2025, Karnataka's property registration portal, Kaveri 2.0, suffered severe server outages due to a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack, not technical glitches. Following the attack, the Inspector General of Registrations and Commissioner of Stamps (IGR & CS) filed a cybercrime complaint, and the police registered a case under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

What is a DDoS Attack?

A DDoS attack overwhelms a server or network with excessive traffic, often using a botnet of compromised systems. While it doesn't directly steal data, it can disrupt services and serve as a distraction for other cyberattacks, potentially harming an organisation's reputation.

The Impact on Kaveri 2.0

The attack on Kaveri 2.0 began in December 2024, with fake accounts created to overload the system. In January 2025, another attack saw 6.2 lakh malicious requests in two hours, significantly reducing property registrations. The attack originated from 62 email accounts and 14 IP addresses.

Mitigation Strategies

To counter DDoS attacks, organisations can:

- Use traffic filtering and monitoring tools to detect unusual activity.
- Implement rate limiting and bot detection (e.g., CAPTCHA).
- Strengthen authentication mechanisms and conduct regular security audits.
- Collaborate with cybersecurity agencies to track perpetrators and improve defences.

Lessons for Kaveri 2.0 & Government Agencies

Kaveri 2.0 was restored on February 5, but the attack highlighted the urgent need for stronger cybersecurity measures in government systems.

Other Major DDoS Attacks

- **August 2024:** Elon Musk's X (formerly Twitter) was hit by a massive DDoS attack, causing service disruptions before his talk with U.S. President Donald Trump.
- **2015:** China-based botnet targeted Microsoft's GitHub, injecting malicious code into Baidu users' browsers to attack projects circumventing Chinese censorship.

The Kaveri 2.0 attack serves as a wake-up call for enhanced cybersecurity in digital services, especially in government portals handling critical data.

Most deportees from the U.S. are from Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

American nightmare

The data for the charts were sourced from Lok Sabha replies and U.S. Customs and Border Protection



Chart 1: State-wise share of Indian citizens deported from the U.S. in 2025

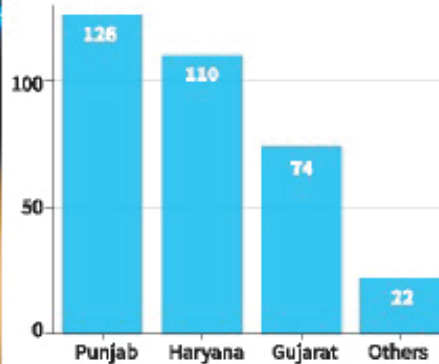


Chart 2: The chart shows the number of undocumented Indian immigrants deported from the U.S. since 2009

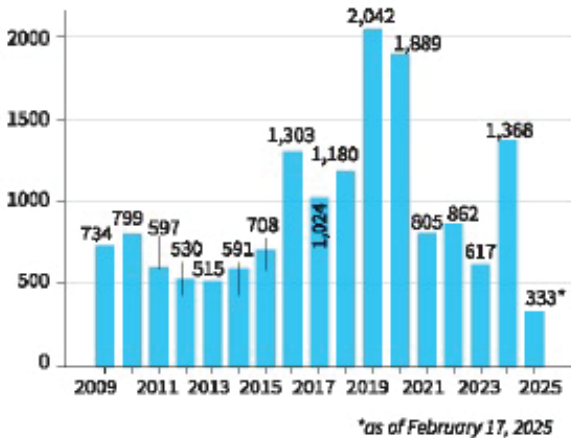


Chart 3: The chart shows the State-wise share of illegal agents identified till June 2024

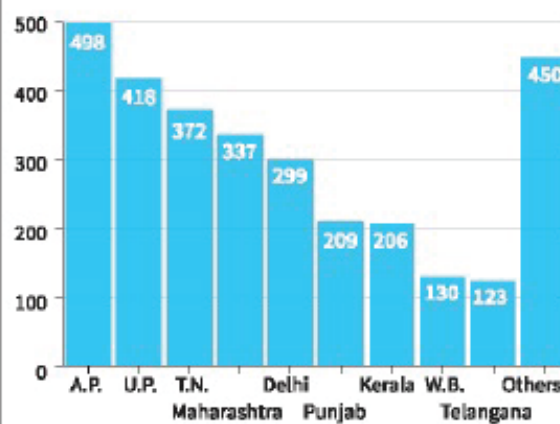


Chart 4: Number of Indian immigrants encountered at the southwestern and northern border to the U.S

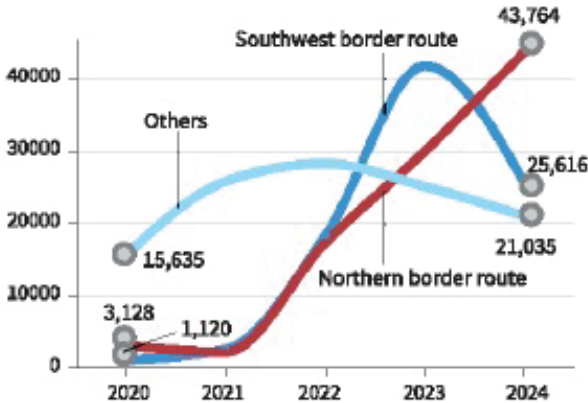
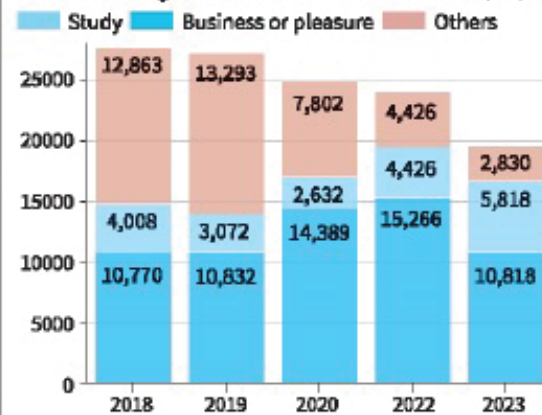


Chart 5: Number of Indians who have overstayed their visas after being admitted into the U.S. for various purposes



Source: The data for the charts were sourced from Lok Sabha replies and U.S. Customs and Border Protection

In 2025, of the 332 undocumented Indian immigrants deported from the U.S., the majority were from Punjab (38%), Haryana (33%), and Gujarat (22%). A Johns Hopkins University study found that between 2001 and 2022, 66% of Indian asylum seekers in the U.S. were Punjabi speakers, with a sharp rise in asylum applications after 2016. Deportation flights landing in Amritsar have sparked controversy, with Punjab's Chief Minister alleging political motives, while the Centre cites logistical reasons.

The deportation of Indian immigrants is not new, with 15,897 deported since 2009, peaking in 2019 (2,042 cases). Illegal border crossings by Indians have surged, reaching 96,917 in 2023. Many immigrants fall victim to fraudulent agents, paying between ₹20 lakh and ₹1.25 crore for illegal entry. Andhra Pradesh has the highest number of such agents, with 4,361 complaints filed against them in the past four years.

Many undocumented immigrants undertake dangerous journeys via the "donkey route," often crossing the Darien Gap or the U.S.-Mexico border. Illegal crossings from Canada have also risen, driven largely by Indian migrants. In addition to illegal entries, thousands of Indians overstay their visas annually, primarily after entering for business or tourism. Despite a

decline post-pandemic, nearly 17,000 overstays occur each year.

What is the Aravali safari park project?

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

The Haryana government has proposed a 3,858-hectare Aravali Safari Park across Gurugram and Nuh, aiming to be the world's largest safari park. The project, initially under the Tourism Department, has now been transferred to the Forest Department, with an expert committee overseeing it. The park will feature animal enclosures, hotels, restaurants, a hospital, children's parks, aquariums, cable cars, and other attractions to boost tourism.

Opposition to the Project

The Aravali hills, the oldest fold mountain range, play a critical ecological role, preventing desertification and acting as groundwater reservoirs. Environmentalists and 37 retired Indian Forest Service officers argue that the project will increase tourism footfall, disturb aquifers, and harm local biodiversity rather than focusing on conservation. They highlight Haryana's low forest cover (3.6%), advocating for rewilding instead of commercial projects.

Legal Protections for the Aravalis

The Aravali hills are protected under several laws, including:

- Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA), 1900, restricting land use changes.
- Forest Conservation Act, 1980, protecting designated forest areas.
- T.N. Godavarman Judgment (1996), extending protection to forests under their dictionary definition.
- Regional Plan-2021, classifying the Aravalis as a Natural Conservation Zone with limited construction.

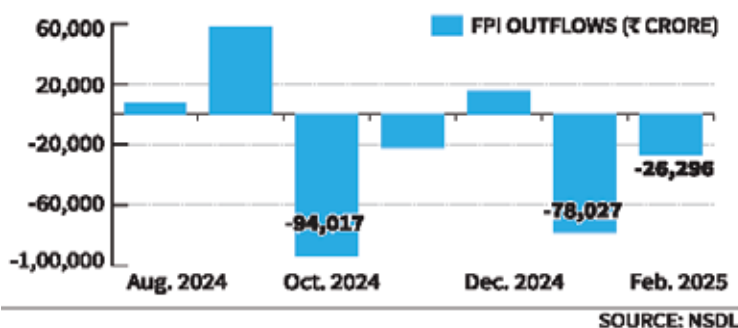
Experts suggest declaring the area a national park or sanctuary instead of developing a safari park to ensure environmental preservation.

FM downplays FII outflows, says investors booking profits

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Downward slope

The chart shows FPI flows from August 1, 2024 to February 17, 2025. January 2025 saw the highest outflows since October 2024



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman explained that the steady foreign institutional investment (FII) outflows from India's equity markets reflect profit-booking, not a lack of interest in India. She emphasized that the Indian economy is providing good returns on investments, which is why FIIs are withdrawing. Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey added that FIIs are often volatile, shifting their investments based on global factors, and they tend to return to the U.S. during periods of global uncertainty. Both officials acknowledged some temporary demand-supply issues but assured that India's economy remains resilient.

Will the new 'lucid' Income Tax bill reduce disputes and litigation?

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

The Income Tax Bill, 2025 was introduced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Lok Sabha on February 13, aiming to simplify India's direct tax law, making it more readable and reducing disputes. The bill focuses on improving clarity, reorganizing provisions, and consolidating sections to make tax compliance easier. It does not introduce policy changes but aims to reduce litigation by simplifying language and minimizing interpretation issues. A key change is replacing "financial year" and "assessment year" with "tax year" for better clarity.

The bill also addresses the virtual digital space, granting expanded powers of search and seizure, especially for cryptocurrency and other virtual assets, to prevent tax evasion.

This is not the first attempt to revise the Income Tax Act, as similar efforts were made in 2009 and 2019, but were unsuccessful. The government believes the new bill will increase tax administration efficiency and bring India's tax system in line with global standards.

Japan braces for BOJ to lift rates sooner

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT



Hawkish comments from the Bank of Japan (BOJ) and persistent inflation are pushing bond yields to multi-year highs, altering expectations about future rate hikes in Japan. Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities now expects the BOJ to raise interest rates to 0.75% by July and to 1.0% by January 2026, citing growing inflation pressures. Former BOJ official Nobuyasu Atago also sees a potential hike at the April 30-May 1 meeting.

Rising Japanese government bond yields reflect markets reassessing the BOJ's rate trajectory, with the 10-year yield reaching its highest level since 2010. Strong GDP data and inflation have strengthened expectations of a near-term rate hike. BOJ officials, including Hajime Takata, Ryozo Himino, and Naoki Tamura, have signaled that negative real

interest rates are unsustainable, supporting the case for further hikes.

Market expectations now price in an 80% chance of a 0.75% hike by July. Some analysts anticipate rates could reach 1.5% within two years, aligning with the IMF's neutral rate estimate. Additionally, U.S. trade policies are seen as indirectly supporting BOJ rate hikes by fostering a stronger yen.

Germany's economy is in the dumps. Here are the reasons

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Germany's economic slump over the past five years marks a stark shift for Europe's largest economy, which once thrived on exports of industrial goods like machinery and luxury cars. Several factors have contributed to this ongoing downturn:

- **Energy Crisis:** Russia's decision to halt natural gas supplies to Germany following the Ukraine invasion severely impacted Germany's energy model, which relied on cheap Russian gas. The transition to renewable energy has been slow, and the shift to more expensive liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar and the U.S. has further burdened industries like steel, chemicals, and glass.
- **Energy Policy Issues:** Germany's decision to phase out nuclear power in 2011, while relying on Russian gas as a bridge to renewables, backfired when Russia cut off supplies. Resistance to wind energy projects and slow development of hydrogen infrastructure have hampered progress in replacing fossil fuels.
- **China's Economic Growth:** Germany benefited from China's integration into the global economy, but China's state-subsidized manufacturing now competes directly with German industries, particularly in sectors like solar panels, electric vehicles (EVs), and steel. This shift has reduced Germany's export dominance, especially in the auto industry, where China's car exports have surged.
- **Complacency in Investment:** Germany delayed investing in infrastructure, such as rail and high-speed internet, during prosperous times, leading to long-term inefficiencies.

- **Labour Shortages:** German companies struggle to find skilled workers across various sectors, including IT, daycare, senior care, and hospitality. A significant number of firms report difficulty filling open positions.

These combined factors have resulted in a stagnating economy with increasing challenges in energy, industry competition, and workforce shortages.

Experts push to restore Syria's heritage sites after more than a decade of civil war

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Experts are focusing on restoring Syria's war-damaged heritage sites, like Palmyra and Crac des Chevaliers, hoping to revitalize tourism and boost the country's economy, which has suffered from nearly 14 years of conflict. Palmyra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was once a major tourist destination but has been severely damaged by the Islamic State (IS) group and subsequent battles. Despite the destruction, local tourists are returning, and conservationists aim to draw international visitors by emphasizing its historical significance. Similarly, Crac des Chevaliers, a medieval Crusader castle, also suffered extensive damage from airstrikes during the civil war. While efforts to restore these sites are ongoing, challenges remain, including looting and the need for coordinated restoration plans.

UNESCO has supported protection remotely, but on-the-ground work is limited. The hope is that once conditions improve, Syria's cultural heritage will draw global tourists and contribute to the nation's recovery.



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