

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Jaishankar discusses 'deepening cooperation' with Canadian counterpart Anita Anand

MUNICH, FEB 16: Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar and his Canadian counterpart Anita Anand discussed "deepening cooperation" and "partnership opportunities" between the two countries on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference ahead of Prime Minister Mark Carney's likely visit to India next month.Â

This marks the fifth meeting between the ministers since September 2025, reflecting the growing momentum in the Canada-India relationship, a statement issued by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Sunday.Â

"Was great to sit down and catch up with FM @AnitaAnandMP of Canada. India-Canada ties continue their steady progress," Jaishankar posted on social media after the meeting on Saturday.

The two ministers discussed deepening cooperation in several areas, includ-



ing energy, technology, and trade.

"Good to see my Indian counterpart Minister @DrSJaishankar to discuss the Canada-India relationship and the work ahead to advance our shared interests," Anand posted on social media.Â

Anand noted India's importance as a partner for Canada as the two ministers shared technological benefits and significant partnership opportunities for businesses, industries and workers of

both countries.Â

"Canada remains committed to constructive engagement, and I look forward to continuing our efforts in India," she added.

The ministers also underscored the substantive progress made on the joint roadmap for Canada-India relations announced in October 2025.Â

They emphasised their commitment to strengthening ties through the implementation of roadmap prior-

ities as well as expanding and diversifying Canada-India trade in support of economic resilience and stability.

The India-Canada relations hit rock bottom following their prime minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in 2023 of a potential Indian link to the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

India had dismissed Trudeau's accusation as "absurd".

In October 2024, India recalled its high commissioner and five other diplomats after Ottawa attempted to link them to the Nijjar case. India also expelled an equal number of Canadian diplomats.

However, Liberal Party leader Carney's victory in the parliamentary election in April last year helped in beginning the process to reset relations.

Both sides have already posted their high commissioners in each other's capitals. (PTI)

9-judge SC bench to hear pleas on discrimination against women at religious places

NEW DELHI, FEB 16:

The Supreme Court on Monday said that a nine-judge bench will commence final hearing on a batch of petitions relating to discrimination against women in religions and at religious places, including Kerala's Sabarimala Temple.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi said the bench, which will be constituted by the CJI, will commence the crucial hearing on

the petitions on April 7.

It said that the hearing is likely to conclude on April 22. The bench asked the parties to file their written submissions on or before March 14. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta for the Centre said he supported the pleas for review of the Sabarimala verdict.

"We also deem it appropriate that senior advocate K Parameshwar along with Shivam Singh are appointed as the amicus. Singh shall submit the stand taken by all parties before this court," the CJI said.

The bench-appointed lawyer Krishna Kumar Singh is the nodal counsel for par-

ties supporting the review of the Sabarimala verdict.

It also appointed Shashwati Pari as the nodal counsel for those opposing the review of the verdict.

"We also deem it appropriate that senior advocate K Parameshwar along with Shivam Singh are appointed as the amicus. Singh shall submit the stand taken by all parties before this court," the CJI said.

The nine-judge bench will begin hearing the Sabarimala review case on April 7.

2026 at 10:30 am. The review petitioners or the party supporting them shall be heard from April 7 to April 9. The ones opposing the review shall be heard on April 14 to April 16. The rejoinder submissions, if any will be heard on April 21, 2026 followed by the final and concluding submissions by the learned amicus which is expected to be over by April 22," the order said.

The bench asked the lawyer for the parties to adhere to the time schedule.

PM Modi Inaugurates India AI Impact Expo, Interacts With Startups

NEW DELHI, FEB 16:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the India AI Impact Expo here featuring over 600 high-potential startups and 13 country pavilions showcasing international collaboration in the AI ecosystem.

He also interacted with startups participating in the expo.

The prime minister visited various stalls and spoke with the companies participating in the expo. He was seen ask-

ing questions from company representatives to better understand what they are showcasing.

The prime minister spent several minutes at various stalls while interacting with the representatives.

The Expo brings together global technology firms, startups, academia and research institutions, Union ministries, state governments and international partners.

Spread across 10 arenas covering more than 70,000 square metres, the Expo

brings together global technology firms, startups, academia and research institutions, Union ministries, state governments and international partners.

The Expo also features 13 country pavilions, showcasing international collaboration in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) ecosystem. These include pavilions from Australia, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Serbia, Estonia, Tajikistan and

In addition, the Expo will feature over 600 high-potential startups, many of them building globally relevant and population-scale solutions. These startups will demonstrate working solutions that are already deployed in real-world settings. (Agencies)

'Don't trust anybody before marriage': SC advises caution in pre-marital physical relationship

NEW DELHI, FEB 16:

The Supreme Court on Monday said a boy and a girl before marriage are "total strangers" and they should be cautious while indulging in pre-marital physical relationships.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan, which was hearing the bail plea of a man accused of rape on a false promise of marriage, questioned the woman why she travelled all the way to Dubai where they indulged in physical relationship.

"It's consensual. We may be old-fashioned but a boy and girl before marriage are total strangers. They should be circumspect in indulging in physical relationships before marriage," the bench observed.

"Whatever may be the thick and thin of their relationship, we fail to understand how they can be indulging in physical relationship before marriage," Justice Nagarathna said.

Counsel for the woman said they met on a matrimonial website in 2022 and he allegedly established physical relations with her on a false promise of marriage on multiple occasions in Delhi and later in Dubai.

Justice Nagarathna questioned the woman about what was the need for her to travel to Dubai and observed that it appears to be a case of

the views of both the parties. The woman has claimed in her complaint that on his insistence, she travelled to Dubai where he allegedly established physical relations with her on false pretext of marriage and recorded intimate videos without her consent, threatening to circulate them if she resisted.

The woman said that later she learnt that he had married a second woman in January, 2024 in Punjab.

The Delhi High Court and the trial court had dismissed the bail application of the man.

The high court rejected bail, saying the allegations *prima facie* indicate that the promise of marriage was false from inception, particularly as the petitioner was already married and had married again on January 19, 2024.

Aggrieved by the high court's order, the man approached the top court for bail in the case. (PTI)

Rahul Tutored By NGOs That Good Days Will Come For Cong; He Is Not Interested In Running Par: Rijiju

TAWANG, FEB 16:

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday claimed that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is not interested in the smooth functioning of Parliament, and some NGOs have tutored him that "good days" will come for his party and that is why he has been stalling the House.

Rijiju also said that the government is not going to take any more extra steps to "placate" the Congress to defuse the situation in Parliament as he had made "many attempts" so that the House functions properly, but in vain.

"Rahul Gandhi is not interested in running the House. He is interested in making issues.

Rahul Gandhi was tutored by some NGOs that your days will come. But their days won't come. In the next elections, their tally (in the Lok Sabha) will further go down," he told PTI in an interview here.

Police said that further legal action will be taken based on forensic findings and the post-mortem report. (PTI)

with the opposition stalling the House as he had made many attempts to defuse the situation, including speaking to senior Congress leader K C Venugopal and a few others.

"We are not going to do anything extra to placate the Congress. The Congress is frustrated because the party is losing election after election. They are desperate to change the situation," he said. The Union minister claimed there was pressure on the Congress from the smaller parties in Parliament to not stall the House because they lose out their time

to speak.

"All opposition is not with the Congress. Smaller parties are not being able to utilise their respective party time. Smaller parties are unhappy with Rahul Gandhi. Some of them have not even signed the motion against the Speaker," he said.

Rijiju said some members of other political parties kept telling him that they wanted the House to function.

Most days of the first part of the Budget Session in the Lok Sabha witnessed disruptions and adjournments after Gandhi was disallowed by the Chair from quoting an ar-

North Korea opens new housing district for families of Ukraine war dead



analysts see it as an effort to bolster internal unity and curb potential public discontent.

Kim in recent months has sent thousands of troops and large quantities of military equipment, including artillery and missiles, to fuel Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine, as the leaders align in the face

of their separate confrontations with Washington.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service told lawmakers last week it estimates that about 6,000 North Korean troops were killed or wounded during their deployment in the war, but did not provide a breakdown of fatalities. The agency said

last year it believed roughly 600 had died.

The spy agency believes North Korean forces are benefiting from the war by gaining modern combat experience and Russian technical support that could improve the performance of their weapons systems, according to lawmakers.

"The NTA had made elaborate arrangements at various levels and taken help from state and district authorities for the smooth conduct of the examination. The OTP-based Aadhaar E-KYC was introduced for the first time as a key method for authenticating candidates during the registration process. The initiative aims to prevent impersonation and address potential criticisms in the future," the official added. (Agencies)

All the 12 candidates are male.

According to officials, the NTA score is not the same as the percentage of marks obtained, but normalised scores.

"NTA scores are normalised scores across multi-shift papers and are based on the relative performance of

all those who appeared for the examination in one shift. The marks obtained are transformed into a scale ranging from 100 to 0 for each shift of examinees. The NTA score is not the same as the percentage of marks obtained," a senior official explained.

According to the NTA officials, a Central Control Room was opened to monitor and facilitate the smooth conduct of the examination on the ground.

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Kargil war veteran kills wife, son; then dies by suicide

Basti locality to inform family members, they discovered the bodies of his wife, Sunita Verma (40), and their son, Deep (16), inside the house.

According to the police, Sunita was found lying near the bed with a gunshot wound to her head, while Deep was found near the bedroom entrance with a bullet injury to his chest.

Bloodstains were visible from the kitchen to the bedroom. A licensed double-barrel (DBBL) gun was recovered from the spot, Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Vipin Tada said, adding that a domestic dispute seems to have occurred late Sunday night, following which Paswan allegedly shot his wife.

The son is believed to have rushed in after hearing the gunshot and was also shot. Paswan then left the house, locked the main gate from

outside, and later died by suicide on the railway track, an official said.

The ACP further said that, prima facie, the case appears to be a murder-suicide, but the exact sequence of events will be confirmed only after a detailed investigation.

Forensic teams have collected blood samples, the weapon, CCTV footage and other evidence from the scene. All angles, including family and financial issues, are being examined," Tada said, adding that the bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination.

Paswan, a native of Serua Bakariya village in Ghatampur, had retired from the Indian Army and was working as a security guard at a bank. He was also receiving a pension. The family had moved into their newly constructed house around three months ago.

Police said that further legal action will be taken based on forensic findings and the post-mortem report. (PTI)