

# DAILY PT POINTERS

11 January, 2025



## The Hindu-GS2(IR)Page1

# Trump sentenced in hush money case, not punished

Though the President-elect gets an unconditional discharge, he will become the first President of the U.S. to be sentenced as a felon; Trump calls it a 'setback for the New York court system'

Agence France-Presse  
NEW YORK

A judge sentenced Donald Trump to an unconditional discharge on Friday for covering up hush money payments to a porn star despite the U.S. President-elect's efforts to avoid becoming the first felon in the White House.

The judge spared Mr. Trump prison or a fine even though the 34 counts of falsifying business records on which he was convicted in May 2024 carried potential jail time. Instead New York judge Juan Merchan handed down the mildest criminal sanction available, an unconditional discharge – a relatively uncommon measure.



**Case closed:** Donald Trump and attorney Todd Blanche appear virtually before judge Juan Merchan for the sentencing hearing. AP

such a unique and remarkable set of circumstances," Mr. Merchan said. "The only lawful sentence that permits entry of a judgment of conviction without encroaching on the highest office of the land is an unconditional

sentencing virtually, with the judge, lawyers and media packed into the scruffy Manhattan courtroom that was the backdrop to the trial's high drama, legal wrangling and vitriolic personal attacks by the divisive Republican.

it's been a tremendous setback for New York and the New York court system," Mr. Trump said before the discharge was passed. "It was done to damage my reputation, so I would lose the election."

The former President appeared on screens in the courtroom with two large U.S. flags behind him, wearing a red tie with white stripes and looking on impatiently as the brief proceeding unfolded.

Ahead of the sentencing, prosecutor Joshua Steinglass said Mr. Trump had been convicted of a "premeditated and continuous deception". "The verdict in this case was unanimous and decisive and it must be respected."

- President-elect Donald Trump was sentenced in his hush money case, but the judge declined to impose any punishment, an outcome that cements his conviction while freeing him to return to the White House unencumbered by the threat of a jail term or a fine.
- "Hush money" refers to a sum of money paid to someone to keep them quiet about something, usually to prevent them from revealing damaging or embarrassing information. It's often associated with covering up scandals or illicit activities.

## The Hindu –GS3(Disaster Management)-Page 8

### Centre allows Kerala to use SDRF funds for Wayanad rehabilitation

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOCHI



Rescue workers helping a victim of Wayanad landslides which happened last year. PTI

The Union government on Friday informed the Kerala High Court that the State has been permitted to utilise ₹120 crore from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), which has been set apart for payment to the Defence department towards airlifting service charges provided by the Centre, for rehabilitation measures for the Wayanad landslide survivors.

The submission was made by Additional Solicitor-General A.R.L. Sundarasan when a suo motu case registered in the wake of the the Wayanad landslides came up for hearing before Justice A.K. Jayasankaran Nambiar and Justice Eswaran S.

He also furnished a let-

He also submitted that as per SDRF guidelines, the State Executive Committee constituted under the Disaster Management Act is empowered to spend from the SDRF. The State government is at liberty to utilise the funds in accordance with the approved norms of assistance.

₹120 crore” for immediate use by the State in connection with the rehabilitation measures.

By virtue of the notification, the State government has an opportunity to tap into multiple funding sources for recovery and rehabilitation, such as the Member of Parliament

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- The State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), constituted under Section 48 (1) (a) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, is the primary fund available with State Governments for responses to notified disasters.
- The Central Government contributes 75% of SDRF allocation for general category States/UTs and 90% for special category States/UTs (NE States, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir). The annual Central contribution is released in two equal installments as per the recommendation of the Finance Commission.
- **Disaster (s) covered under SDRF:** Cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, frost and cold waves.

The Hindu –GS3(Environment)-Page 10

## 2024 was the first year to breach global warming limit, show data

It is the first time that mean temperature crossed the threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, says global body; experts say that given the high rate of carbon emissions, the 2024 temperatures represent a point of no return

Jacob Koshy  
NEW DELHI

Humanity has stepped into a future that climate scientists for decades have warned about. Temperature data made public on Friday by the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), an authoritative source on historical trends in climate, show that 2024 was the first year in history when mean global temperature went 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level.

Annual climate conferences, or the Conference of Parties convened by the United Nations, are about getting world leaders to agree on measures to curb emissions to keep temperatures from going over 2 degrees Celsius above the temperature in the 1850-1900 pre-industrial period and "as far as possible" keeping it below 1.5 de-



**Scorching heat:** Each of the past 10 years was one of the 10 warmest years on record. FILE PHOTO

breach the 1.5 degrees Celsius mark for a decade or two would a boundary considered to have been breached. However, experts say that given the high rate of carbon emissions at present, the 2024 temperatures represent a point of no return.

"While there may be year to year variability, an El Nino in some years or a major volcanic eruption in others might influence

At an average temperature of 15.1 degrees Celsius, 2024 was the warmest year in global temperature records, which go back till 1850, and was 0.72 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average. It was 0.12 degrees Celsius above the average of 2023, the previous warmest year on record. It was also 1.6 degrees Celsius above an estimate of the 1850-1900 temperature designated to

pre-industrial levels.

In 2024, the annual average sea surface temperature (SST) over the extra-polar ocean reached a record high of 20.87 degrees Celsius, 0.51 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average.

The average extra-polar SST was at record high levels for the time of year from January to June 2024. From July to December 2024, the SST was the second warmest on record for the time of year, after 2023.

Among the reasons for the record-breaking temperatures in 2024 was the El Nino, which is warming of the Central Equatorial Pacific, that began in June 2023 with effects lasting well into 2024.

### 'Serious implications'

"A single year with temperatures 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels does not mean we've reached 1.5°C

sions cuts," Professor Joeri Rogelj, Director of Research at the Grantham Institute - Climate Change and Environment, Imperial College London, said in a statement.

Other experts referred to the latest, failed talks at Baku, Azerbaijan, where countries couldn't bring themselves to agree on a financial package that would realistically account for the costs of mitigating runaway carbon emissions.

"The year on year increase in average global temperature has serious implications for developing economies reeling under frequent climate disasters. This, coupled with the failure of COP29 to deliver on meaningful finance, only implies that developing economies will have to allocate more funds to deal with climate impacts and disasters in the future. Mitigation am-

- In 2024, the global mean temperature reached 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for the first time, as reported by the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S). This milestone highlights the urgent need for global action to curb emissions and prevent temperatures from rising further.

Key points:

- **Temperature Milestone:** 2024 marked the first year with the mean global temperature 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level.
- **Annual Climate Conferences:** These conferences aim to get world leaders to agree on measures to keep temperatures below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, with a target to stay below 1.5°C if possible.
- **Consistency and Implications:** A single year above 1.5°C isn't catastrophic, but consistent breaching over a decade would be alarming. The high rate of carbon emissions suggests a potential point of no return. **Record Temperatures:** 2024 was the warmest year on record, influenced by El Nino.

The Hindu- Places(GSI)-Page 12

## Three million Sudan children facing acute malnutrition: UN

Agence France-Presse  
PORT SUDAN

An estimated 3.2 million children under the age of five are expected to face acute malnutrition this year in war-torn Sudan, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).



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**Capital:** Khartoum, which is located at the junction of the Blue Nile and White Nile rivers and its main port, is Port Sudan on the Red Sea. It is bordered by seven countries: Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Republic of South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad, and Libya.

It also borders the Red Sea to the northeast.



## The Hindu-IR(GSII)

### NATO members reluctant to endorse Trump's defence spending proposal

The U.S. President-elect said members of the military alliance should spend 5% of gross domestic product on defence - a huge increase from the current 2% goal and a level that no NATO country currently reaches; a new target is likely to be agreed at a NATO summit in The Hague in June

Reuters  
BRUSSELS

NATO won't heed Donald Trump's proposal for a massive hike in defence spending but will likely agree to go beyond its current target, according to officials and analysts.

The U.S. President-elect declared on Tuesday members of the military alliance should spend 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) on defence - a huge increase from the current 2% goal and a level that no NATO country, including the United States, currently reaches.

Mr. Trump's comments - at a press conference that also generated a blizzard of headlines on Greenland, Canada and Panama - were a reminder of his focus on NATO spending during his first term and his threats not to protect allies that fail to meet the target.

#### Politically impossible

Officials from NATO countries said they agreed defence spending needs to rise further but did not endorse the 5% figure, which analysts said would be politically and economically impossible for almost all members. It would require hundreds of billions of dollars in extra funding.

However, a new target is likely to be agreed at a NATO summit in The Hague in



Joint effort: The U.S. flag alongside the NATO flag outside the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, U.S. sources

June, spurred by fears that Russia may attack a NATO country after Ukraine and by Mr. Trump's exhortations, officials said.

The key open questions are what that new target will be and whether it will be enough to satisfy Mr. Trump.

Some expect NATO's 32 members to agree, after much wrangling, to a target of around 3% of GDP. But even that would be a stretch for many, who barely meet or fall short of the 2% goal now - a decade after it was set.

"It seems there will be a shift," Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto said. "I don't think it will be 5%, which would be impossible

for almost every nation in the world right now but... it will not be two [per cent], which we are already struggling to reach, but it will be more than two."

Italy, with defence spending at around 1.5% of GDP, is among eight NATO members that do not meet the current target.

Poland, which borders Ukraine, is the NATO member that spends the highest share of GDP on defence - 4.12% last year, alliance estimates show. It is followed by Estonia with 3.43% and the United States with 3.38%.

NATO estimated the combined defence spending of its members at \$1.474 trillion in 2024 - second

Poland, which borders Ukraine, is the NATO member that spends the highest share of GDP on defence - 4.12% last year, alliance estimates show

Ukraine, many European countries have ramped up defence spending in recent years.

But with public finances tight, and defence spending not politically popular in some countries, it would not be easy for governments to find the extra billions that even a move to spend 3% of GDP on defence would entail.

While Mr. Trump has likened NATO defence spending to alliance membership fees, they reflect budgets set by national governments.

Fenella McGerty, a defence economics expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies think tank, said recent increases had been "remarkable" but it takes years for countries to start reaching new targets.

"Even if Europe were to continue that rate of quite extraordinary growth - in excess of 10% in real terms in 2024 - it would still take another 10 years to even get to 3% of GDP," she said.

However, many European governments say the

continent should do more to defend itself and rely less on the United States.

France and the Baltic states are pushing for joint European Union borrowing to fund defence spending. The outcome of that debate may depend on next month's national election in Germany, which has so far opposed the idea.

#### Spending surge

Should be Europe's use in

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*NATO's purpose is to guarantee the freedom and security of its members through political and military means.*

**POLITICAL** - *NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.*

**MILITARY** - *NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations*

## Indian Express-Governance(GSII)-Page 1

**EARLIER, MOST SENIOR EC WAS DEFAULT CHOICE TO SUCCEED CEC**

# In a first, selection process for next Chief Election Commissioner casts wider net

As per new law, panel of five to be sent to committee of PM, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Minister

DAMINI NATH

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

TRADITIONALLY, the successor to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has been the next senior most Election Commissioner. For the first time, as per the Chief Election Commissioner And Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service And Term of Office) Act, 2023, the net can be cast wider. Current CEC Rajiv Kumar

demits office on February 18. The Election Commission comprises the CEC and two election commissioners – Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu at present.

Gyanesh Kumar could still be in contention but according to Sections 6 and 7 of the Act, the Ministry of Law will set up a Search Committee chaired by the Law Minister to prepare a panel of five names for the Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee, comprising the Prime Minister,



CEC Rajiv Kumar with ECs Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu. File

a Cabinet minister and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, can select from this

**EXPLAINED**  
**E** Break from tradition?

WHEN THE Election Commission is under scrutiny, the new law gives the Government the space to break from tradition. With the Leader of Opposition on the panel, a debate over who is next is not ruled out.

panel or consider "any other person" from outside.

Section 6 of the Act specifies this process for the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners.

Even as Gyanesh Kumar remains a potential candidate for the top post, the Act gives the selection committee the option of considering names from outside the Election Commission.

This comes against the backdrop of the EC facing the heat

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

- Traditionally, the successor to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has been the next senior most Election Commissioner.  
The Chief Election Commissioner And Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service And Term of Office) Act, 2023, allows for a wider selection pool.  
Current CEC: Rajiv Kumar, the current CEC, will leave office on February 18.
- Sections 6 and 7 of the Act require the Ministry of Law to set up a Search Committee chaired by the Law Minister to prepare a panel of five names for the Selection Committee.  
Selection Committee: The Selection Committee, comprising the Prime Minister, a Cabinet minister, and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, can select from this panel or consider other candidates.

## Indian Express-Governance(GSII)-Page 4

### Amid 'Sheesh Mahal' row, a look at CAG's scope

HARIKISHAN SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10



Archive

6, Flagstaff Road, where Kejriwal lived when he was CM

THE COMPTROLLER and Auditor General of India (CAG) is again in the spotlight amid a political row triggered by its report on the cost of renovation at the office and residence of ex-CM Arvind Kejriwal.

As *The Indian Express* reported last week, the CAG is learnt to have shown that starting from preliminary estimates of Rs 7.91 crore, the total cost of the work on the premises of 6, Flag Staff Road stood at Rs 33.66 crore when the PWD completed it in 2022. The CAG's findings have sparked a war of words between the BJP and AAP ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls next month.

The CAG, which is the country's supreme audit body, has submitted a dozen audit reports to the Delhi L-G in recent years. But the AAP government has not laid them in the Assembly, triggering a backlash from the BJP whose MLAs have approached the High Court. Some of these reports, including performance audits on several burning issues such as liquor supply in Delhi, prevention and mitigation of air pollution, and functioning of the Delhi

Transport Corporation, were presented to the L-G four years ago.

Here is a look at how the CAG chooses subjects for audits, how reports are prepared, and what happens afterwards:

#### What are the various types of audits CAG conducts?

The CAG conducts three kinds of audits: compliance audit, or an assessment of whether provisions of the applicable laws, rules, and regulations, and various orders and instructions issued by the competent authority are being followed; performance audit, or an assessment of the implementation of schemes or pro-

grammes; and financial audit, or certification of government's accounts and the accounts of PSUs.



#### How does it select audit subjects?

Before finalising a subject, it follows a risk assessment procedure that accounts for various factors such as size of the outlay of a project, what's being written in newspapers about the issue, and its own inspection reports over the years. It also consults guidelines laid down by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions that spell out what is of relevance to citizens.

Based on these criteria, the CAG's office approves an annual

audit plan that is implemented in the field offices. There is also an Audit Advisory Board that meets twice a year and suggests subjects and methodologies for audit. The government or courts can also recommend CAG audits.

#### What happens after the CAG selects a subject?

Once a subject is chosen, the CAG holds an entry conference with the department or organisation being audited. At this conference, CAG officials inform the body concerned about matters such as their plans for the audit, the methodology to be followed, and a tentative timeline. They also seek assistance in accessing records and documents.

After the audit, officials from the auditor general's office hold an exit conference to share their findings with the department or organisation and seek their reply. The entry and exit conferences are held for every performance and compliance audit. CAG shares a draft report with the department audited. Normally, the department has to respond in six weeks. Thereafter, the CAG signs the report and sends it to the government (President or Governor). Then the government lays

the report before the legislature.

#### What does the Constitution say on tabling a CAG report?

Article 151 provides for laying CAG reports in Parliament or state legislatures but no time limit is specified. A CAG report becomes public only after it's laid in the House. The Public Account Committee (PAC) examines the selected reports and seeks a response from the government. The PAC also asks the government to take action on the recommendations and submit a report.

#### Do CAG reports have any impact?

The audit reports highlight losses to the exchequer, procedural losses and also provide recommendations that play a key role in changing rules and procedures. Among the CAG reports that have had a big impact in recent decades is the one on licences and allocation of 2G spectrum, tabled in November 2010. It had a massive political effect damaging the image of the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government that was ultimately voted out in 2014.

FULL REPORT ON  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

- CAG's report on renovation costs of former Delhi CM's residence has sparked a political row
- CAG's Role: The CAG audits Central and state governments, maintains state accounts, and conducts compliance, performance, and financial audits. Audit Selection: Subjects are chosen based on risk assessment, media reports, and guidelines from the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI).
- Article 151 mandates laying CAG reports in Parliament or state legislatures, but no time limit is specified. Impact: CAG reports highlight losses and recommend changes. Notable reports include the 2G spectrum allocation audit.



# HEADLINES OF THE DAY



## PIB-Governance(GSII)



## CENTRE RELEASES ₹1.73 LAKH CRORE TO STATES FOR TAX DEVOLUTION

- Tax devolution refers to the constitutional process of distributing tax revenues between the central and state governments. The division is based on recommendations by the Finance Commission, which ensures the allocation is conducted fairly and equitably.
- The Finance Commission uses specific criteria to determine devolution amounts for each state. These include a 12.5 percent weightage for demographic performance, 45 percent for income, 15 percent each for population and area, 10 percent for forest and ecology, and 2.5 percent for tax and fiscal efforts.