

# THE PERFECT VOICE



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## Roy raped doctor in inebriated condition: CBI

Kolkata: The CBI on Monday filed a chargesheet accusing Sanjay Roy, who was a civic volunteer with the Kolkata police, of raping and murdering a junior doctor at R.G. Kar Medical College Hospital on August 9.

The incident had caused widespread outrage and led to a long strike by junior doctors in West Bengal. The accused Sanjay Roy, a civic volunteer attached to the police outpost of the hospital, was arrested soon after and subsequently, the case was handed over to the CBI.

On Monday, 58 days after the rape-murder, the CBI filed the first chargesheet in the case – a 45-page document that was submitted to the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) Court in Sealdah.

“Sanjay Roy has been charged with rape and murder. There is no mention of a gangrape (in the chargesheet). Sanjay Roy is the only accused who committed the crime. However, the probe is still going on. He was in an inebriated condition when the crime was committed. This is mentioned in the charge sheet,” said a source in CBI.

## D-Day for BJP ahead of Maha polls

By Correspondent

New Delhi: The counting of votes for both the Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir Assembly elections will take place on Tuesday.

The poll results are likely to have an impact on the Maharashtra Assembly election due in next month. The dates for the Maharashtra elections are likely to be announced after Dussehra. The BJP is in power in Haryana since 10 years. A defeat will cause a loss of face to the party.

This J&K assembly election assumed significance as it was the first since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 and after the former state was bifurcated into the union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The National Conference and Congress jointly fought the electoral battle, while the Peoples Democratic Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party contested independently. Several strong independent candidates are also in contention.

The key contesting par-



ties in Haryana included the BJP, Congress, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), as well as the pre-poll alliances between the Indian National Lok Dal-Bahujan Samaj Party (INLD-BSP) and Janayak Janta Party (JJP)-Azad Samaj Party (ASP). Several rebel and independent candidates may also bag seats.

Exit polls predicted that the Congress is likely to form the next government in Haryana, while its alliance with the National Conference may have its nose in front in Jammu and Kashmir. Based on a poll of polls, the Congress may bag 55 of Haryana's 90 assembly seats, with the majority mark at 45. The Congress-NC combine could get 43 seats in J&K, which also has 90 assembly seats.



We name our daughters Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati; we worship the divine feminine power in the temples but oppress, repress and even attack the feminine power amidst us. That is the irony in the way India sees its women.

After the safety of the daylight fades, women are seen as easy prey by the predators of the night.

We mark the nine nights of Navratri, the festival of the goddess, by celebrating the dedication and valour of nine real-life women who brave the challenges of the night to pursue their dreams.

“Set boundaries whenever and wherever required. Be aware of your surroundings when traveling for work or with new people”

PART - 6

## Setting Boundaries

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONAL ADVISES WOMEN TO BE AWARE OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS WHILE STAYING OUT LATE DESPITE MUMBAI BEING A RELATIVELY SAFE CITY

By Ruddhi Phadke

She's seen men stare her down on the streets of Mumbai but the crowds on the roads have always made her feel safe and confident even late at night. Chandana Buch, 35, a public relations professional working with The Other Circle is quick to draw a comparison between Mumbai and Delhi where she's worked earlier. “Compared to Mumbai, Delhi is much more unsafe. With Delhi, I have had to face drunk driving almost every day during late evening commutes. It was way too scary and what was worse is that I couldn't even abandon the taxi I was commuting in. Who wants to be left on streets in Delhi after dark? So, it was a tricky situation that nobody would want to be in,” says Buch who grew up in Gujarat's Saurashtra in a large joint family. She recalls an incident in Delhi when a co-passenger in a taxi pool struck up a conversation with her and continued to “text stalk” her. “In Delhi, I clung on to my brother most of the times and only went out with my old and



CHANDANA BUCH, 35, PR professional, Mumbai

known friends. Eventually, I left the city after around 11 months,” she says.

Buch, who has been working for a decade now has lived in Mumbai and Delhi and for a brief period of time in Dallas, USA. While handling clients that have been businesses in the field of entertainment, lifestyle and real estate, late nights are usual for her.

Despite the relative safety that Mumbai offers, it's not that she's been untouched by the actions of miscreants. She recalls being “intimidated by men staring” at her several times while travelling back home post midnight

Mumbai,” says Buch.

Buch is happy that her firm takes care to ensure the safety of its women employees and colleagues too have been caring and supportive. “The Group Head insists on knowing the details of our travel and ensures our safe return. I have had some wonderful colleagues in the past. We would make sure to drop each other safely and track rides until the last one gets home,” she says.

Making the cities safer, says Buch, is a process that has to start at home. “It has to start by sensitizing young boys and girls about respecting each other. Boys must be taught how to show respect and how to make the surroundings friendly and not intimidating for anyone,” she says. The best way to stay safe is to avoid prolonged work hours unless absolutely necessary. “Also set boundaries whenever and wherever required. Be aware of your surroundings when traveling for work or with new people,” is advice that Buch has for women who have to stay out of home beyond midnight.



महाराष्ट्र शासन



नरेंद्र मोदी  
प्रधानमंत्री



एकनाथ शिंदे  
मुख्यमंत्री

**महात्मा फुले जन आरोग्य योजना**

**पाच लाखांपर्यंत**

**मोफत उपचार...**

योजनेअंतर्गत राज्यातील सर्व नागरिकांना उपचाराचा लाभ उपचाराची खर्च मर्यादा प्रती कुटुंब प्रति वर्ष दीड लाखावरून पाच लाख. योजनेतून (१ जुलै २०२२ ते ३१ ऑगस्ट २०२४ पर्यंत) १० लाख ७३ हजार रुग्णांनी घेतला लाभ, यापोटी ४३५६.१२ कोटीचा खर्च



**आपलं सरकार**

**लाडकं सरकार**



अजित पवार  
प्रधानमंत्री



एकनाथ शिंदे  
मुख्यमंत्री



देवेंद्र फडणवीस  
प्रधानमंत्री

MAHARASHTRADGIPR माहिती व जनसंपर्क महासंचालनालय, महाराष्ट्र शासन



# First Ride on Underground Metro: A Superhit Experience

## Tata dispels rumour about health

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Tata Son's former Chairperson Ratan Tata has dispelled fears about his health saying that the claims of him being hospitalised after a drop in blood pressure are 'unfounded'.

The 86-year-old industrialist was reportedly admitted to the intensive care unit at Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai on early Monday after a sharp drop in blood pressure. According to reports, the blood pressure of the veteran entrepreneur had drastically fallen. In the wake of deteriorating health, he was promptly rushed to the emergency room of the hospital.

However, Tata allayed concerns about his health saying the claims of him being hospitalised after a drop in blood pressure are 'unfounded'.

The health update was shared by the businessman himself on the social media post, in which he said that he is currently undergoing medical check-ups due to his age and related medical conditions.

"I am aware of recent rumours circulating regarding my health and want to assure everyone that these claims are unfounded. I am currently undergoing medical check-ups due to my age and related medical conditions. There is no cause for concern," Tata posted on Instagram.

The noted industrialist further informed that there is no cause for concern. He said, "I remain in good spirits and request that the public and media respect refrain from spreading misinformation."

## JOY RIDE IN THE FIRST HALF, OFFICE GOERS IN SECOND PEAK HOUR

By Anand Mishra

### Selfies and Social Media

On October 7, 2024, I embarked on an unforgettable journey as I rode Mumbai's first-ever underground metro. The moment I stepped into the cool, air-conditioned ambience of the Metro Aqua Line 3, the sweltering 39°C heat and 73 per cent humidity outside became a distant memory. It felt like stepping into another world, a reprieve from the bustling, hot city streets. Though, as a reporter, I had a chance to visit tunneling and other works, but when I saw fully furnished station premises, it was undefinable.

I was excited to catch one of the very first trains of this new underground line. I got my hands on one of the first tickets—an experience I had been looking forward to for months! Though the train wasn't packed, the excitement among the passengers was palpable. From families to office-goers, everyone seemed thrilled to be part of this historic moment. The BKC station was particularly impressive. This station is located at the heart of Mumbai's bustling business district, and seeing its modern design gave me hope for a smoother commute for thousands of employees like me who travel to BKC daily.

Of course, no ride is complete without taking selfies and capturing videos for social media. Everyone around me was doing the same, including me! I couldn't resist the urge to document this memorable experience and share it with friends and family. Calls were buzzing, and people were updating their social feeds about their "First Day, First Ride."

Meanwhile, metro operator MMRC, while issuing a statement informed that by 6 PM, around 8,532 passengers had made their journey. A ticket booking clerk at



BKC station said, "While the passenger count started low, more people flocked to the cool, futuristic coaches during the evening peak hours as officegoers opted for the metro

on their way home."

I spoke to one of my fellow passengers, Prashant Wagh, who works in a BKC-based app development company. He shared his excitement, saying, "I've been waiting for this day for years, and finally, it's here. This metro is like a blessing for us."

### A Joyride for the Curious

As a reporter, I was curious to know the feeling of the fellow passengers who were looking all-round the vast premises crafted beautifully with decent aesthetics. Then I met Kiran Dubey, a homemaker who could not resist herself and who took a small trip from Santacruz to BKC just to experience the new mode of transport. "I've been watching the construction of this line for



People ride a metro on the Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) to Aarey underground section of Mumbai Metro Line 3 after it was opened for public, in Mumbai

the past 3 to 4 years. Now that it's finally operational, I had to take a ride. Mumbai desperately needs more metros like this," she said, smiling and adding that she plans to bring her entire family for a joyride soon.

### Minor glitches

There were a few issues reported as some passengers experienced glitches with the platform safety doors, causing delays at entry and exit points at a few stations. This was a concern since the first day of operation on October 7. Additionally, commuters

have requested an integrated app to manage ticketing across all metro lines, as different apps are currently required for various services. However, the service has been running smoothly overall, with many users expressing excitement over the new line and its comfort in the sweltering heat

### A Milestone for Mumbai

This newly launched Metro Aqua Line 3 spans from the Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) to Aarey Colony, covering 12.69 km of the larger Colaba-SEEPZ-Aar-

ey Line. With ten stations, including Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA), Marol Naka, and Andheri, this line is set to significantly ease the city's traffic woes by reducing road congestion by up to 35%. I learned that it could even help cut fuel consumption by 3,54,000 liters annually—a win for both commuters and the environment. With a fare structure ranging from Rs 10 to Rs 50, it's affordable too. Even, I can't wait to make this my go-to travel option for a cooler, faster and comfortable commute.

## 1993 Mumbai Serial Blasts Case Third phase of trial against seven accused begins

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The third phase of trial in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case began in a special court on Monday against seven accused who were absconding and were held at different times.

In two sets of trial, the court has convicted 106 persons, including Yakub Memon, who was hanged in July 2015, and gangster Abu Salem, who was extradited from Portugal in 2005 and sentenced to life.

Twelve bombs went off in various parts of the metropolis on March 12, 1993, killing 257 persons and injuring more than 700. It was among the deadliest terror attacks in the world at the time.

The latest trial began before special Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act judge V D Kedar on Monday with recording of testimony of two witnesses.

The seven facing trial are Farooq Mansoori alias Farooq Takla, Ahmed Lambu, Munaf Halari, Abu Bakar, Sohaib Qureshi, Sayeed



Qureshi and Yusuf Batka.

As per the prosecution, Mansoori had allegedly facilitated the lodging and transport of Lambu, Bakar, Qureshi and Batka. These four had gone to Pakistan for training in bomb-making.

Halari is accused of purchasing a scooter used in the blasts.

The prosecution is likely to examine 41 fresh witnesses during the course of this phase of the trial.

According to an official, 26 accused in the case are

still absconding.

In the first phase of the trial that ended in 2007, 100 people were convicted. Twelve of them, including Yakub Memon, were awarded the death penalty. The sentences of 11 were commuted to life imprisonment by the Supreme Court.

Memon, who was held guilty of conspiracy and financing the blasts, was executed on July 30, 2015.

Six others were convicted in 2017. Two of them got the death penalty.

## Pre-arrest bail to Mhatre

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Monday granted pre-arrest bail to Shiv Sena leader Waman Mhatre, accused of making offensive remarks against a female journalist while she was reporting on a protest over sexual abuse of two minor girls in Badlapur in Thane district in August.

A single bench of Justice Sandeep Marne said prima facie provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act were not made out in the case as Mhatre was not aware or had no intention to comment against the complainant's caste (she belongs to an SC community).

"In my view, prima facie there is room for holding that the offences under provisions of SC & ST Act are not made out against the Appellant (Mhatre)," the HC noted. Mhatre was booked under relevant provisions of the BNS and also under the SC/ST Act for allegedly making derogatory remarks and gestures against the woman journalist on August 20.



Workers of NCP (SP) and Congress take part in a protest against the Maharashtra government in Mumbai on Monday.

## NHSRCL invites bids for bullet train's track construction

Mumbai: The National High Speed Rail Corporation (NHSRCL) on Monday invited bids from eligible Indian and Japanese companies for the design, supply and construction of tracks for the Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train project in Maharashtra.

NHSRCL, in a release, said the bullet train track in Maharashtra will be 314 km long as the route align-

ment is 157 km between the train station at Bandra Kurla Complex and Zoroli village on the state's border with Gujarat.

The tender is for the design, supply and construction of tracks and track-related works, including testing and commissioning for the double-line high-speed railway, it said.

Technical bids are scheduled to be opened on Febru-

ary 3, 2025.

"This will be the last track construction contract for the bullet train project," the release stated, adding that it will also include track works for four stations and a rolling stock depot in Thane.

The work on track construction has already commenced in Gujarat, where the contracts were awarded to Indian companies.

As per the release, the ballast-less slab track system used in Japanese HSR (Shinkansen) will be used on India's first HSR project (MAHSR), and JICC, as the general consultant, has provided the detailed design and drawing of major track components.

The total cost of the project is pegged at Rs 1.08 lakh crore.

-PTI

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The 'Khokha and Dhokha' government in Maharashtra has committed immense corruption by deceiving the people in the name of development. The people of Maharashtra are soon going to exact accountability from it."



Priyanka Gandhi, Leader, Congress

## Event management firm owner loses Rs 1.22 cr in fraud

By Correspondent

Mumbai: An event management company owner lost over Rs 1.22 crore to cyber fraudsters who tricked him into investing in share market IPOs promising lucrative returns, police said on Monday.

The complaint was lodged on October 5 at the North Region Cyber Police Station by a 47-year-old resident of Kandivali (west). According to the victim, the fraud unfolded between June 17 and August 28.

The victim encountered an advertisement on Instagram on June 17, promoting investment tips for the share market. He joined a WhatsApp group named "D41 Nuvama Services Group," which was purportedly dedicated to training individuals on share investments.

On August 19, a man identifying himself as Raman Varna, "chief strategist" at Nuvama Securities, contacted the victim via WhatsApp. He urged the victim to invest in the share



market and directed him to download an app through a link he provided, the officer said.

Trusting the source, the victim filled out the form, disclosing sensitive personal information, including

banking details and passwords. Subsequently, he began transferring funds under the pretext of investing in shares.

The fraudsters started investing the victim's money in IPO (Initial Public Offering) without his consent and later claimed to deposit profits into other IPOs.

After the victim had deposited over Rs 1.22 crore, the fraudsters demanded an additional Rs 2.25 crore. When the victim expressed his inability to comply, they allegedly coerced him into

accepting a loan of the same amount, which they deposited into his trading account without his permission.

Realising he had fallen prey to a scam, the victim contacted the cyber helpline at 1930 on August 28 and lodged a formal complaint. Following an investigation, a case was registered against the unidentified fraudsters, the officer said.

The cyber police have initiated a probe into the matter. They are searching for the culprit.









EDITORIAL

TALKING FUTURE

Fatal Mismanagement

At least five lives were lost and around 100 people hospitalized following the Indian Air Force's (IAF) much-publicized air show in Chennai this Sunday.

The Chennai tragedy is part of a disturbing pattern in India's handling of mass gatherings. Last year, a similar tragedy unfolded during the Maharashtra Bhushan Award ceremony in Navi Mumbai, where 13 people died from heatstroke while attending an outdoor function on a blistering April day.

These incidents underscore a chronic failure in crowd management at India's mega events, where spectacle is prioritized over safety. Whether it is a religious gathering like the Kumbh Mela, a political rally, or a public celebration, the safety of attendees is often an afterthought.

India's fragmented governance structure exacerbates these risks. The responsibilities for crowd control are often split between various authorities, resulting in poor coordination and inadequate preparation.

The consequences of such negligence are often blamed on fate or uncontrollable forces, but the reality is mismanagement. Heatstroke, dehydration, and crowd crushes are preventable with the right measures in place.

Countries like Saudi Arabia, which hosts millions for the Hajj pilgrimage each year, have invested in sophisticated crowd control systems that include real-time monitoring and emergency response plans.

Only by placing human lives above record-breaking ambitions can India hope to prevent these deadly disasters in the future.

A March Towards the Viksit Bharat of 2047



By Dr. Raghunath Mashelkar

Reflecting on Bharatiya Science and Technology, I cannot help thinking of the pioneering contributions of my friend, computer scientist Vijay Bhatkar, who played a crucial role in the late 1980s.

As a member of Rajiv Gandhi's Science Advisory Council, I recall him asking, "We are a poor country, but rich in what?" The unanimous answer was 'intellect'.

Technonationalism is often driven by technology denial. Yet, the denial regime itself eventually changes as technonationalism strengthens a country's technological foundation.

markable example of this.

When the CRAY supercomputer was denied to Bharat by the USA in the mid-1980s, our response was to launch the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) in 1987.

But PARAM by C-DAC was not our only response to technology denial. We also had 'Flow-solver' by the National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL), ANUPAM by Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), and ANURAG by Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO).

This long voyage into high-performance computing was fraught with difficulties: embargoes on critical components, architectural debates, make-versus-buy dilemmas, loss of key talent to multinationals, and bureaucratic hurdles.

After C-DAC demonstrated the PARAM-8000 in 1990, a Los Alamos report concluded that supercomputers were unnecessary for nuclear weapons design, prompting the US to take a step back.



In 1995, the US placed parallel processing supercomputing on its list of items requiring an Indian export license.

There's an old saying: "Strength respects strength." India's foray into supercomputers is a brilliant example of this.

I still remember a headline from the Washington Post that read, "Angry India does it!" It was about the building of the PARAM supercomputer.

As we march toward Viksit Bharat of 2047, we should hold onto this spirit of determination.

India's foray into high-performance supercomputing exemplifies 'denial-driven innovation,' a trend seen in various fields of Bharatiya science and technology.

While 2020 is often seen as the year of the pandemic, I view it as the year of Bharatiya science. Faced with minimal diagnostic capabilities and no vaccines or therapeutics, our scientists rapidly delivered vital information to decision-makers.

showcasing a united front during the crisis.

I am particularly proud that Bharat didn't ask for help during the pandemic; instead, Bharat helped the world. Covaxin, our indigenous vaccine, is a shining example.

That said, we must acknowledge the challenges we face: 70 percent of Bharat lives in villages, nearly 15 percent below the poverty line.

As Chair of the Mashelkar Committee on NEP 2020 implementation in Maharashtra, I proposed that digital access for the poor be recognized as a fundamental human right.

Through the 'Anjani Mashelkar Inclusive Innovation Award' I established in my mother's name, I stress that while it's easy to develop high technology for the wealthy or low technology for the poor, the real challenge lies in making high technology accessible to the poorest.

(The writer is former Director-General, Council of Scientific & Industrial Research. Views personal)

Between Expediency and Indifference: The Arab States' Paradox with Palestinians



By Shoumojit Banerjee

The conflict between Israel and Hamas has sparked an exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees from Gaza since Israel's retaliation began following the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023.

What was striking in the immediate days and months following the October 7 attacks was the markedly muted reaction from the Arab states.

Despite their fiery rhetoric about Palestinian liberation and speeches condemning Israel's actions, Arab governments have repeatedly prioritized national interests, internal stability and geopolitical calculations over any sustained commitment to Palestinian statehood.



region, has left the door ajar for peace with Israel, and Morocco, Bahrain, and the UAE refrained from recalling their ambassadors, only Jordan, where Palestinians constitute a large portion of the population, has taken significant diplomatic steps.

This tepid response underscored a long-standing reality: the Palestinian cause, though emotionally resonant with the Arab public, rarely sways government policy in the Arab states who have largely been indifferent to the plight of the Palestinians.

This tension between Palestinians and their Arab hosts has deep roots. The Nakba of 1948 (when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced by the creation of Israel) was a blow to the legitimacy of Arab regimes who had failed to stifle the nascent Jewish state in its cradle.

A pivotal moment in the relations between the Palestinians and the Arab States came in the wake of the resounding Israeli victory in the Six-Day war of 1967, which trounced the coalition of Egypt-led Arab states and saw a dramatic series of territorial changes.

The expansion of Israel was followed by a major expulsion of Palestinians in 1948 and led to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) emerging as an assertive, somewhat independent voice of the Palestinians.

But after 1967, Palestinians began asserting their independence, a shift that unsettled Arab leaders. Their fears were well-founded: the PLO's increasing autonomy in places like

Lebanon led to unrest, culminating in conflicts such as the Israeli invasion of 1982, which dismantled PLO structures in Beirut.

In an insightful interview given to the American magazine Politico in January, former U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker observed that despite decades of vocal support for Palestinian rights, many Arab governments have long harboured feelings of "fear and loathing" toward the Palestinians - a sentiment particularly strong in Egypt, which continues to resist opening its borders to fleeing Gazans.

Arab governments, fearing internal instability, sought to contain Palestinian activism and the aftermath of the 1967 war solidified this policy shift: rather than confronting Israel, Arab states focused on controlling the Palestinian populations within their own borders, said Crocker.

Crocker suggests that Arab states' indifference to the Palestinians indicates that Netanyahu would need to offer only minimal concessions - vague promises of autonomy rather than substantive statehood to the Palestinians during negotiations.

The most dramatic example of this internal tussle between the PLO and the Arab states occurred during 'Black September' in 1970, when the PLO attempted to overthrow the Jordanian monarchy. Syrian forces, led by Hafez al-Assad, withheld support, allowing Jordan to crush the uprising.

rights, they often took actions that undermined the Palestinian cause, as Assad's anti-PLO policies in Syria and Jordan's military response in 1970 illustrate.

Despite fiery rhetoric about Palestinian liberation, many Arab governments viewed the PLO and its secular nationalism as a threat to their own sovereignty. Even Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Israel's most dogged adversary, once warned of the dangers posed by Palestinian militancy.

This would explain Egypt's vehement refusal to grant refuge to Gazans during the current conflict - a stance reinforced by the ideological divide between Hamas, with its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Egyptian regime.

Despite strong public support for the Palestinian cause, Arab states often prioritized their national interests over solidarity with the PLO.

The late 20th century marked a turning point, particularly after Egypt's peace treaty with Israel in 1979, which isolated Cairo within the Arab League.

The tensions between Palestinians and their Arab hosts was starkly illustrated last month in Jordan's parliamentary elections when Jordan's Islamist opposition, the Islamic Action Front - the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood - captured a fifth of the seats in Jordan's 138-member parliament.

Arab League. The end of the Cold War further transformed the geopolitical landscape, diminishing the influence of radical regimes and prompting moderate Arab states to pursue closer ties with the United States.

The June 1996 Arab summit underscored a strategic decision to recognize Israel, even amid lingering hostility from certain nations.

Perhaps the biggest irony today is in Shia Iran's support for the Sunni Hamas. Certainly, the two ideologically opposed entities have only their sworn enmity with Israel in common.

In the early days of the Lebanese Civil War, in 1975, the Tall al-Za'tar refugee camp in East Beirut was besieged by Lebanese militias and ultimately levelled to the ground.

The irony, of course, is in today's narrative. Iran, which is now seen as a major backer of Hamas and a purported supporter of the Palestinian cause, was very much part of the forces that once besieged these same Palestinians.

While the Front is now the largest opposition bloc, its influence remains curtailed by the limitations of Jordan's legislative body, where pro-government factions still hold sway.

less about ideological solidarity and more a marriage of convenience - another tool in Iran's broader strategy of projecting influence and power across the region through alliances with militias and proxies.

While the West and the rest of the World may not remember the "War of the Camps," both the Iranians and Palestinians do. Today, Tehran's support for the Palestinian cause is tactical, and not born out of any deep-seated love for the Palestinian people or their struggle.

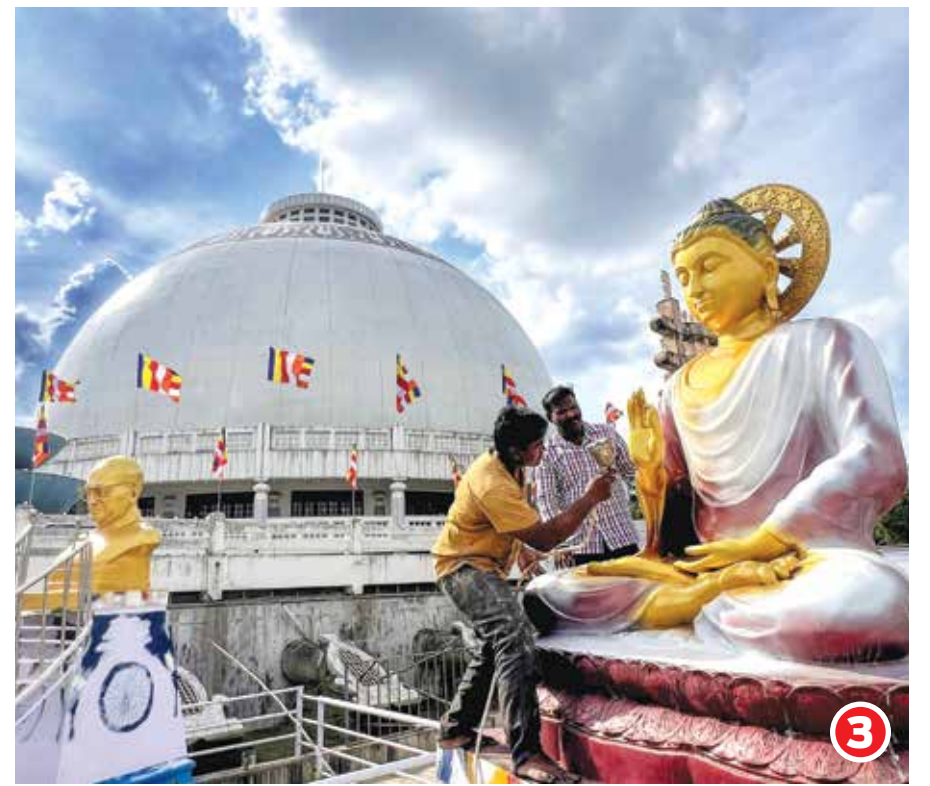
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While the Front is now the largest opposition bloc, its influence remains curtailed by the limitations of Jordan's legislative body, where pro-government factions still hold sway.

(Tomorrow, we look at Israel's long engagement in Lebanon, from its intervention in the Lebanese Civil War and 1982 occupation of the southern half of the country to its ongoing mortal combat with Hezbollah)







### KALEIDOSCOPE

1. A worker makes an effigy of the evil King Ravan, Meghnad and Kumbhakaran in preparation for the upcoming Dussehra festival in Jammu on Monday.
2. Actor and BJP MP Hema Malini performs at Ma Durga Nritya Natika during Navratri festival in Mathura.
3. Workers paint a statue of Gautam Buddha in the backdrop of the Deekshabhoomi ahead of the 68th Dhammachakra Pravartan Diwas celebration in Nagpur on Monday.
4. Sadhus take part in a protest rally against the alleged rape and murder of a Kolkata based trainee doctor in Kolkata on Monday.
5. People dressed in traditional attire participate in the 'Abhivyaakti Garba Mahostav' organised on the occasion of Navratri festival in Jaipur.

All Pictures PTI, AP



### WORLD VIEW

## The Forgotten Legacy of Thailand's 'Death Railway'



By  
Sumer Barar

In 1957, David Lean's Academy Award-winning film 'The Bridge on the River Kwai' captured global audiences. However, it left a bitter taste for the very men whose harrowing experiences inspired it—those who laboured on the Burma Railway, colloquially dubbed the 'Death Railway.'

During World War II, as Imperial Japan expanded its empire across Southeast Asia—encompassing Malaya, Singapore, and the Philippines—a critical challenge emerged: Allied submarines were sinking Japanese supply ships faster than

they could be replaced. This left the Japanese Army in Burma dangerously exposed. To address this vulnerability, the Japanese sought an overland route to supply their forces, and thus the 'Death Railway' was born.

Between December 1942 and October 1943, around 60,000 Allied POWs, alongside nearly 200,000 Tamil, Malay, and Burmese labourers, toiled under appalling conditions to construct the Bangkok-Rangoon railway. British engineers had previously deemed the project impossible due to the treacherous terrain of the disease-ridden tropical jungle. Yet, the Japanese possessed a seemingly inexhaustible supply of manpower, primarily drawn from the fall of Singapore and the Dutch East Indies.

The Japanese transported these 60,000 British, Australian, Dutch, and American servicemen to the Thai town of Kanchanaburi, where the railway's construction would begin. Simultaneously, POWs were dispatched to build the railway from the Burmese side, aiming to connect the two ends at the Three Pagodas Pass. In just 15 months, the 415-kilometer railway, complete with its bridges, was completed. What defies belief is that this colossal undertaking was executed by men who were often sick, malnourished, and brutalized. Under the Japanese ethos, any man who could stand was expected to work—malaria or dysentery were inconsequential to them.

Thailand, long celebrated for its picturesque beaches and vibrant culture, draws millions of tourists each year. Yet, just a few hours' drive from Bangkok lies a more sombre chapter of its history—a site where blood was spilled, but also where an extraordinary engineering feat emerged under unimaginable circumstances.

The conditions faced by POWs and civilian labourers during the construction of the railway were horrific. Their diets consisted mostly of rice with little meat, while diseases like malaria, cholera, and dysentery spread rapidly. Medical care was almost non-existent. No Red Cross supplies arrived. Figures like Lt. Col. E.E. Dunlop, known as 'Weary Dunlop,' advocated tirelessly for better treatment despite overwhelming odds. Tragically, the plight of civilian workers was even worse, with around 100,000 perishing, and among the POWs, approximately 12,500 died in agonizing conditions, as the Japanese had not signed the Geneva Convention and regarded surrender as

dishonourable.

Accounts from former POWs, such as John Coast's 'Railroad of Death,' reveal the grim reality they faced, while war artist Leo Rawlings' 'And the Dawn Came Out Like Thunder' poignantly captures their suffering through sketches.

The survivors' resentment stemmed from the film's portrayal of their experiences. Lt. Col. Philip Toosey, on whom Alec Guinness's Oscar-winning portrayal of Col. Nicholson in 'River Kwai' was based, was a distinguished officer captured during the fall of Singapore. Contrary to the film, Toosey actively tried to sabotage the railway project by infesting the wooden bridge with termites and consistently advocated for better treatment of his men, often enduring torture at the hands of his captors.

Toosey developed a complicated relationship with a Japanese Sergeant Major, Saito, who later testified in his defense during war crimes trials. When Lean's film was released in the 1950s, it sparked outrage among the POW community, who felt it misrepresented their suffering and bravery. Toosey's gentle nature did not allow him to publicly contest the portrayal, but his men insisted he address it, leading him to publish a letter clarifying the truth.

Julia Summers, Toosey's granddaughter, examines these grievances in her poignant work 'The Colonel of Tamarkan,' detailing her grandfather's struggles with memories of his captivity.

The Bangkok-Rangoon Railway stands as a testament to the human capacity for endurance and sacrifice, revealing a complex tapestry of cruelty, kindness, and resilience. It is a story that evokes profound emotions, and visiting the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in Kanchanaburi—where many of these men lie buried—serves as a haunting reminder of their harrowing journey.

(The writer is a practising advocate at the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Chandigarh and a military history enthusiast.)

### READERS' CHOICE

## Durgavati: The Queen Who Stood Against the Mughal Tide



By  
Girish Kale

India has long been a land of valiant kings and queens who defended their realm against invaders for over a millennium. From the British Empire to the Mughals, India faced numerous challenges, yet the resolute responses from various kingdoms significantly curtailed the advance of foreign aggressors. Throughout this illustrious history, countless sons and daughters of Bharat Mata emerged as inspiring figures, some sacrificing their lives in the ultimate act of patriotism. The janjati (tribal) kingdoms and their warriors have consistently been at the forefront of this struggle. The contributions of figures such as Bhagwan Birsa Munda, Raghoji Bhargare, Tantya Bheel and Siddhi-Kanho from the janjati community are well-acknowledged. However, the remarkable contributions of janjati women in this resistance often go unrecognized, overshadowed by their male counterparts, largely due to the biases of historical narratives. Alongside Rani Durgavati, women like Rani Fulkavar, the Phulo-Jhano sisters, Jhalkaari Bai, and Rani Gaidenliu have played pivotal roles in India's freedom struggle.

On October 5, 1524, the birth of a princess in the Kalinjari kingdom brought joy to the realm. Named Durgavati by her father, the Rajput king Kirti Singh, she grew up witnessing his governance. Trained in military tactics and imbued with the instincts of leadership, Durgavati married Dalpat Shah, the eldest son of King Sangram Shah of the Garha-Mandla (Gondwana) kingdom, at the age of 20. In 1545, the couple celebrated the birth of their son, Vir Narayan.

However, this happiness was short-lived. King Dalpat Shah passed away in 1550, leaving young Vir Narayan, only five years old, under the guardianship of Queen Durgavati. Understanding the looming threat of Mughal invasion, she took decisive action to fortify her kingdom. Durgavati not only expanded her army but also forged alliances with neighbouring states to bolster her defenses. Her focus extended beyond military might; she actively promoted the welfare of her people, constructing numerous lakes to combat recurring water shortages for both irrigation and domestic use. She believed that a kingdom's prosperity was intrinsically linked to the happiness of its populace. During times of drought, she cancelled taxes and aided her subjects. Many of the lakes she established still exist today, a testament to her foresight and commitment. Fondly referred to as 'Mother' by her people, Durgavati's legacy of benevolence is chronicled by historian Abul Fazal.

Yet, the spectre of invasion loomed large, as foreign forces sought to dis-

mantle Hindu states and their beliefs. Envious of Gondwana's prosperity, Akbar sent an ultimatum to Rani Durgavati, demanding her surrender along with her chief minister, Aadhar Singh, and her prized white elephant. Unwilling to capitulate, she prepared for war. The Mughal forces, initially thwarted in two assaults, returned for a third, this time armed with artillery.

On June 24, 1564, Rani Durgavati sustained serious injuries from arrows shot by Asaf Khan, a commander in Akbar's army. Witnessing their queen fight valiantly against overwhelming odds, the morale of her soldiers began to wane as they saw her bleed. In a moment of despair, Durgavati commanded her trusted minister to end her life, stunning her warriors. Knowing capture would lead to enslavement, she took dagger and ended her life, sacrificing herself to protect her beloved Gondwana just three months shy of her 40th birthday.

This year marks the 500th anniversary of Rani Durgavati's birth, commemorating the life of this extraordinary daughter of Bharat and ruler of the Garha-Mandala Gondwana kingdom. Her commitment to the welfare of her subjects and the defense of her homeland is an enduring legacy. In a contemporary landscape marked by foreign-funded disruptions, her spirit exhorts us to defend our motherland. Today, this battle consists of countering the divisive narratives propagated by external forces. While our armed forces stand ready to guard our borders, it is incumbent upon us to be vigilant guardians of Bharat Mata within our communities. The unity of Bharat's people will be crucial in confronting these ongoing challenges.

Let us collectively pay tribute to Rani Durgavati and all the courageous janjati freedom fighters who valiantly defended the rich heritage and culture of our motherland.

(The writer is an official of Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram. Views personal.)



