

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a visit to Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque, in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei on Tuesday.

Pic: PTI

Toll at 153 in Chhattisgarh so far in 2024

Six women among nine Naxals gunned down

Dantewada: Nine Naxalites, including six women, were killed in a fierce encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region on Tuesday, a top police official said, in the latest offensive against Maoists which has gathered pace after a change of government last year.

The gunfight broke out at around 10:30 am in forests along the border of Dantewada and Bijapur districts when a joint team of security forces was out on anti-Naxal operation, Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range, Sundarraj P told PTI.

Personnel belonging to the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG), Bastar Fighters and 111th and 230th battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were involved in the operation.

The operation was launched on Monday night based on inputs about the presence of cadres belonging to Maoists' PLGA (People's Liberation Guerrilla Army) Company No. 2, west Bastar and Darbha division on the hills of inter-district border, he said.

The exchange of fire between Naxalites and security personnel took place multiple times in forests near Lohagaon, Purangel and Andri villages under the Kirandul Police Station area (Dantewada district). After the guns fell silent, bodies of nine Naxalites, including six women -- all clad in 'uniform' -- were recovered from the spot, informed the senior IPS officer.



After the latest offensive, 153 Naxalites have been gunned down in separate encounters in the Bastar division, comprising seven districts -- Kanker, Kondagaon, Narayanpur, Bastar, Bijapur, Dantewada and Sukma

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai hailed security forces for their latest success against Maoists and asserted his government has resolved to end the Left-wing extremism by March 2026.

A cache of weapons, including one SLR (Self-Loading Rifle), one 303 rifle, 12 bore rifle, 315 bore rifle, BGLs (barrel grenade launchers) and explosives, items of daily use and other Maoist-related materials were recovered from the spot, IPS officer Sundarraj said.

During the same period, 669 Naxalites have been arrested, while 656 others have surrendered before

police in the division, the officer added.

Preliminary investigation suggests the slain cadres belonged to the west Bastar division committee and PLGA Company No. 2 of Maoists, but their identity was yet to be ascertained, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai said.

Blood stains found at the encounter site indicate several other Naxalites may have been injured or killed in the gunfight, Rai said, adding reinforcement was sent to the spot for conducting further search operation.

Home Minister Shah has highlighted the Union government's resolve to eliminate Naxalism by March 2026, he said.

Boy mistaken for cattle smuggler, shot dead

Faridabad: A class 12 student was allegedly chased in a car and shot dead here on August 23 by a group of five suspected cow vigilantes who claimed they mistook the boy for a cattle smuggler, police sources said on Tuesday.

All the five accused -- Saurabh, Anil Kaushik, Varun, Krishna and Adesh -- were arrested on August 28 and remanded in police custody for two days, Superintendent of Police (Crime) Aman Yadav said in a statement released on Tuesday.

During interrogation, the accused claimed that on the night of August 23, they had received information that some suspected cattle smugglers driving two SUVs were doing recon in the city, according to the sources.

They mistook the victim, Aryan Mishra, and his friends, Shanky and Harshit, for cattle smugglers and followed their car for about 30 kilometres near the Gadhuri toll on the Delhi-Agra National Highway, the sources said.

The accused told the police that when they asked the boy and his friends to stop their car, the driver accelerated, following which they opened fire and Mishra was killed on the spot near the Gadhuri toll in Palwal, they said.

All the accused have been sent to judicial custody after the police remand expired, the SP said, adding that the illegal weapon and the car used in the crime have been recovered.

A police officer said that they are also investigating

if it was a case of old enmity.

The victim's father claimed that one of the acquaintances who had accompanied his son was part of a conspiracy to get him killed.

The weapon will be sent for forensic examination and the police are trying to ascertain the veracity of statements given by the accused, the police statement said, without mentioning if they were cow vigilantes and the reason behind the crime.

-PTI

India growth forecast raised to 7 per cent

New Delhi: The World Bank on Tuesday raised the growth forecast for the Indian economy to 7 per cent from an earlier projection of 6.6 per cent in the current fiscal, helped by recovery in the agri sector and pick-up in rural demand.

This is in line with projections by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Asian Development Bank (ADB). Both multilateral

According to Economic Survey, the country's real gross domestic product (GDP) will grow at 6.5-7 per cent in 2024-25. However, the Reserve Bank of India estimates a higher 7.2 per cent for the current financial year.

"India's robust growth prospects, along with declining inflation rate will help to reduce extreme poverty. India can boost its growth further by harnessing its global trade potential. In addition to IT, business services and pharma where it excels, India can diversify its export basket with increased exports in textiles, apparel, and footwear sectors, as well as electronics and green technology products."



Auguste Tano Kouame, Country Director, World Bank

funding agencies have raised their forecast to 7 per cent for the financial year ending March 2025. It is to be noted that the World Bank has raised the GDP forecast by 40

basis points from earlier estimates of 6.6 per cent for FY25 released in June.

An increase in GDP forecast is supported by improvement in monsoon.

Boat with 50 migrants sinks near France

Paris: A boat sank off France's northern coast and plunged more than 50 migrants into the waters of the English Channel as they tried to cross it on Tuesday, and French maritime authorities said around a dozen people were recovered in critical condition. The English Channel is a busy and often treacherous waterway. At least 30 migrants have died or gone missing while trying to cross to the UK this year, according to the International Organisation for Migration.

The prefecture said the boat got into difficulty off Gris-Nez point and everyone aboard ended up in the water. Boats and aircraft were scrambled for the rescue operation and more than 50 people were picked up, the prefecture said. It had no other immediate information about injuries.

-AP

Controversial Web Series

After Centre's rap, Netflix India adds real names

Mumbai: Under pressure from the government, Netflix India on Tuesday said it has included the real and code names of the hijackers of the Indian Airlines aircraft depicted in the web series 'IC814: The Kandahar Hijack'.

The web series had triggered a row after a section of viewers objected to the humane projection of terrorists and reference to their Hindu code names, contending that distortion of real identities of hijackers amounted to misrepresentation of historical events.

Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju summoned the Netflix India's contend head, Monika Shergill, to convey the government's strong disapproval of the depiction of certain elements in the web series.

She said the code names in the series reflect those used during the actual event. The real names of the hijackers were Ibrahim Athar, Shahid Akhtar Sayed, Sunny, Ahmad Qazi, Zahoor Mistry and Shakir. However,

"For the benefit of audiences unfamiliar with the 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight 814, the opening disclaimer has been updated to include the real and code names of the hijackers."

- Monika Shergill, Contend Head, Netflix India



the series referred to the code names used by terrorists -- Bhola, Shankar, Doctor, Burger and Chief.

"India has a rich culture of storytelling and we are committed to showcasing these stories and their authentic representation," Shergill said.

A senior government functionary said there was a need for the OTT platform to understand the impact certain things may have on society.

"The issue is that we should understand each other. What is your thinking, what is our thinking. There was

a need to understand each other and the kind of impact certain things can have on society," the functionary said.

The web series chronicles the true story of the December 1999 hijack by Pakistan-based terror outfit Harkatul Mujahideen.

The series has courted controversy on social media and elsewhere with many claiming that the film-maker changed the names of the hijackers to 'Shankar' and 'Bhola' to allegedly protect the terrorists who belonged to a certain community.

Ladki Bahin Scheme: Nervous govt ropes in President

By Suyash Padate

Mumbai: The aggravating circumstances in the state forced the Maharashtra government to take advantage of the image and clout of the President Draupadi Murmu. With the political impact of the much-publicised Ladki Bahin Yojana has been lost, the state government is making a last-ditch effort to gain some ground with the visit of the President.

On Wednesday, the president will address a gathering of beneficiaries of 'Shasan Aplya Dari' and 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojna' at Udgir in Latur district.

After the sexual abuse of a toddler in Badlapur and collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue has



President Droupadi Murmu during the 21st convocation of Symbiosis International (Deemed University) in Pune on Tuesday.

Pic: PTI

put the state government in fix. People, especially the women have bolted the doors on Mahayuti leaders. For the face-saving purpose the government is trying to

cash this particular function.

When contacted, the Shiv Sena leader SanjayShirsat virtually shouted and said, "This is your imagination

and keep that with you. Reality is far different. Women are happy with this scheme and Shinde Saheb is getting excellent responses everywhere".

"You cannot connect everything with two unfortunate incidents. President Draupadi Murmu herself was impressed by our scheme so she agreed to attend the function. The question of using her clout doesn't arise"

- Sanjay Shirsat, Leader, Shiv Sena



The Ladki Bahin Yojana is a flagship welfare scheme launched by the government of Maharashtra. This initiative aims to provide financial assistance to women from economically weaker sections of the state, promoting their self-reliance and socio-economic development. The much-hyped scheme initially got clout and publicity too. However, two incidents in the state put the Eknath Shinde led government in a precarious position.

When this scheme was launched it received a tremendous response across Maharashtra. Now, the state government has decided to extend the registration deadline.

The state government has extended the registration period for the Ladki Bahin Scheme' until the end of September. The government strongly feels that women who were unable to register under the scheme for various reasons can do so until the new deadline. However, the response is somewhat slow.

This is not the first time the government has extended the registration period. Initially, in June, the registration window was set for 15 days, but the government realised that this was insufficient, so the deadline was extended to August 31. Additionally, the government increased the age limit from 60 to 65 years. The requirement to provide an income certificate was also relaxed, allowing registration for saffron-colored ration card holders.

Nod To Manmad-Indore Railway Line

Upbeat BJP eyes electoral gain in north Maharashtra

By Anand Mishra

Mumbai: The Modi government's approval for the Manmad-Indore railway line has made a century old demand of the people residing in the locality and now they have got a sigh of relief. According to the officers, privy to the development, the first survey was done in 1908 for the 309 km long railway from Manmad to Indore and after that several announcements were made for these railway lines, but actually the work never took off.

Now, this much-awaited project costing Rs 18,036 crore project has been approved so it is seen as a game changer project that will not only connects Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, but will give much needed fillip to the social and economical development of the region, besides, this initiative will mainstream remote areas.

Connecting pilgrimage sites
The Manmad-Indore railway line will connect Shri Mahakaleswar Jyotirlinga temple and other religious places in Ujjain.

Due to this route, the onion-producers of North Maharashtra will get a market as this route will bring new and improved connectivity between Nashik and Dhule in Maharashtra and the tribal areas of Barwani, Khargone and Dhar in Madhya Pradesh.

This 309 km long railway line will pass through Manmad-Malegaon-Dhule-Nardana-Shirpur-Sendhwa and Indore and a major chunk will be in Maharashtra for 192 km.

The central government will

Major Benefits

- The underdeveloped areas of Dhule, Malegaon and Madhya Pradesh will be industrialised and the way for development will be opened.
- The distance from Mumbai to New Delhi via Manmad will be reduced by 136 km and the distance from Pune to Indore by 320 km.
- The distance of trains going to South India from the cities of Jodhpur, Jaipur, Udaipur on the Surat-Dhule route will be reduced by almost 200 km.
- Passengers' time will be saved and also by reducing the fuel expenditure, it is possible to save Rs 2 crore per day.



This is true that they (BJP) were following up on this issue, but it could not happen in the last 10 years. I had met the Railway Minister in the month of June this year and suggested that he make enough provision for this line in the upcoming budget. He had assured me of doing so.

Dr. Shobha Bachchav, MP, Dhule (Congress)

"Few journalist friends asked me whether this new line has got approval in the wake of the upcoming assembly election. I told them that development and sustainable development is the core agenda of the Modi Government and it should not be seen like this. We have several other infra projects in the pipeline."

Dr. Bharti Pawar, Ex Union Minister

bear 50 percent of the cost of the Manmad-Indore route, while Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh have to bear the remaining 25 percent each.

BJP workers celebrate

The approval of the Manmad-Indore railway line by the Modi government has sparked various political reactions. BJP workers celebrated by bursting firecrackers under the leadership of for-

mer MP Subhash Bhamre near Jhansi Rani statue in Dhule.

The Railway Minister, through a video conference, lauded Bhamre's efforts and gave credit to him.

Former MP of BJP Dr. Bharti Pawar, Dr. Hina Gavit also attended the event and tried to take credit for the new line.

Emphasizing the project's potential to boost economic growth and regional connectivity, Mad-

hya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan described the project as a "game-changer" for the state, particularly for the backward regions that will benefit from improved transportation links.

The project is expected to reduce the travel distance between Indore and Mumbai significantly, thereby enhancing trade and economic activities across the connected districts.



Artist busy to give final touch to Lord Ganesh Idol which make from Woolen Gonda Material called (Gonda) at Byculla Makba Chawl near "S" bridge, in Mumbai on Tuesday.
Pic: Bhushan Koyande

Enrolment date extended till Sept 30

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government has extended till September 30 the deadline for enrolment under the Ladki Bahin Yojana, a scheme that provides Rs 1,500 to underprivileged women as stipend per month. Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare has said.

The enrolment under the scheme was initially until July 31 which was extended to August 31 due to high volume of applications from potential beneficiaries.

Given the overwhelming response to the scheme, the cut-off date for submitting applications by eligible women has been extended to September 30, Tatkare said.

The Mukhya Mantri Ladki Bahin Yojana is a flagship scheme of the Eknath Shinde-led government.

Attack On Train Passenger

GRP to re-arrest accused trio as court cancels bail

By Correspondent

Mumbai: With a court cancelling the bail granted to three men arrested for allegedly assaulting an elderly man in an express train on the suspicion of carrying beef in Maharashtra's Nashik, the Government Railway Police (GRP) has launched an operation to trace the trio to re-arrest them in the case, officials said.

The court cancelled their bail on Monday after the police added the charges of dacoity and hurting religious feelings against them.

The 72-year-old victim, Ashraf Ali Sayyed Hussain, from Jalgaon district in north Maharashtra, was assaulted by a group on board the Dhule-Mumbai CSMT Express on August 28 on the suspicion of carrying beef.

A video of the incident went viral on social media and the police arrested three men from Dhule - Akash Awhad (30), Nitesh Ahire (30) and Jayesh Mohite (21) - on August 31. They were presented in a court the next day, which granted bail to them.

As the GRP could not keep them in its custody after they were granted bail, the accused were allowed to go home, an official said, adding that the trio was going to Mumbai to take part in a police recruitment drive when the incident took place.

Based on the additional information provided by the victim, the police added charges of dacoity and hurting religious sentiments in the case, and also applied to cancel the bail, he said.

THE PERFECT INTERVIEW

Even today, the regime of Peshwa mentality exists

State Congress Chief Nana Patole says Mahayuti is spreading fake narrative

The Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi has intensified its agitation against the state government over the issues of Badlapur sexual assault and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue collapse. The Congress is aggressively leading the protests on both these issues. The state Congress president Nana Patole spoke to the 'The Perfect Voice' representative Mangala Waghe about the party's stance on these sensitive issues. Excerpts...

The Congress is aggressively protesting on the streets over both the sexual assault as well as statue collapse case. Will this benefit the Congress in the upcoming Assembly elections?

Due to the incompetent Mahayuti government, Maharashtra is suffering. There is discontent in the hearts of the 13 crore people of Maharashtra. As an opposition party, we are protesting as the voice of the people. Whether it is the Badlapur atrocity or the insult to Maharaj's statue, the incompetence of the Mahayuti government is visible. Deputy Chief Minister Dev-

endra Fadnavis is emphasizing the issue of fake narratives. What you want to say about this?

Even today, the regime of Peshwa mentality exists in Maharashtra. The BJP asks for votes in the name of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj but insults him. This is the Peshwai mentality of the BJP. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj wished for a grand memorial of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Pune, but the Peshwas opposed the memorial. The Brahmins ensured that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's coronation would not take place. Devendra Fadnavis comes from the same class. So he has nothing to do with Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Creating a fake narrative and spreading it among the public is the mentality of the people in the Mahayuti. This government spent Rs. 236 crore on creating and beautifying Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue, without any approval. The commission-hungry government has indulged in corruption to insult Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The public has seen their true face, and people will not rest un-



til they show this government the door.

The Prime Minister and the Chief Minister have apologised to the people over collapse of the statue. We have seen Narendra Modi's way of apologising. He apologised as if he had done some favour to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Maharaj's insult cannot be compensated by his apology. The anger of the people will reflect in the form of votes.

There is speculation that the elections are postponed due to political reasons. Do you agree?

The Mahayuti government is

scared. These people can do anything, and that's Modi's guarantee. Leagues Ram Temple and the Parliament building, and cracks on Atal Setu - this is Modi's guarantee. So, the scared government might postpone the elections. Even if they postpone the elections, they will have to face the consequences.

There is unrest within the Mahayuti, and Ajit Pawar is reportedly unhappy. Will the Mahayuti remain intact until the Assembly elections?

As soon as Modi accused Ajit Pawar's involvement in the Rs. 70,000 crore scam, he became unhappy. Eknath Shinde and

The BJP asks for votes in the name of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj but insults him. This is the Peshwai mentality of the BJP.

The Brahmins ensured that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's coronation would not take place. Devendra Fadnavis comes from the same class.

We believe that the MVA will win more than 200 seats in the upcoming elections.

Are you hopeful that Congress will emerge as a big brother in the MVA?

The Mahayuti government is a commission-hungry, and treacherous government. The goal of the MVA is to remove this government from power. We have consistently protested against this government, and now the public is joining us in our protests.

The mentality of the people is now to topple this government, and we are confident that the MVA will win the maximum number of seats. We believe that the MVA will win more than 200 seats in the upcoming elections.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Narayan Rane, MP, BJP

"I am not a historian. But from whatever I have read, heard, and known from historian Babasaheb Purandare, "Shivaji Maharaj had looted Surat".

Over 200 relocated in Hingoli

By Correspondent

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: More than 200 persons were relocated and nearly 90 others rescued after heavy rains inundated several areas in Hingoli district of Maharashtra's Marathwada region, while over 2 lakh hectares of land under cultivation got affected in neighbouring Nanded district.

Heavy rains have been pounding parts of the Marathwada region, compris-

ing eight districts, since Sunday. At least four persons have lost their lives in rain-related incidents so far.

According to officials, 45 revenue circles in Nanded district were affected by the downpour. Crops on more than 2 lakh hectares were affected and 25 animals were reported dead.

Crops in Nanded city, Ardhapur, Hadgaon, Degloor, Mudkhed, Kandhar, Loha and Naigaon were badly damaged due to the rains,

they said.

The crop loss survey will be undertaken after the rain stops, Nanded collector Abhijit Raut said in a release. Bharad, Malegaon and Dabhad revenue circles recorded 170 mm rainfall in just 12 hours on Monday, an official said.

The low-lying areas in Nanded city were inundated due to the incessant showers. In Vasarni's Panchavati Sai baba Kaman area, the water reached up to the second floor of a building and

two residents were rescued from there, he said.

As a result of heavy rains in the catchment areas, water was discharged from several dams in Nanded district were opened on Monday, he said.

Fourteen gates of Vishnupuri dam, nine out of 15 gates of Upper Manar project were opened and excess water was released into the Godavari and Manar rivers respectively. The gates of various barrages in Nanded are kept open and discharge

is being done to maintain the water level, he said. In Hingoli district, 218 residents were relocated and 87 people were rescued on Monday.

Two residents, including a 10-year-old child drowned in Sarangwadi village. A resident of Tembhorni of Vasmat tehsil got drowned and his dead body was recovered later on Monday evening, a district disaster management officer from Hingoli told PTI on Tuesday.

-PTI

Local politics larger force for Maratha leaders to leave BJP

By Abhijit Mulye

Mumbai: Though questions are being raised about the BJP's eroding voter base among dominant Maratha community after Samarjitsinh Ghatge join the NCP (SP) on Tuesday, the BJP leadership feels that it is more about local politics than any larger phenomenon like the Maratha quota stir that is leading some leaders to quit the BJP.

Ghatge, a CA by education, hails from the original family of Shahu Maharaj and hence is considered to be a very strong Maratha leader from Kagal in Kolhapur district of Western Maharashtra. He controls the Shahu sugar mill.

His political journey began after death of his father and when reigns of the sugar mill came to him. While pursuing higher education in Pune, he came in touch with the BJP leadership and was entrusted with responsibility of district president of the party. After he moved to Kolhapur, he was made the district president of the party. He was keen on contesting the assembly seat from his hometown Kagal.

However, after the NCP joined the Mahayuti government in the state, sitting MLA from Kagal Hasan Mushrif became Rural Development Minister in the Eknath Shinde Cabinet. Now that it is becoming clear that all the three parties will face the elections in alliance and Mushrif is the most likely candidate of the alliance, Ghatge was left with no



other option but to find some other credible option and that is the reason why he went to NCP (SP), said a senior BJP leader who doesn't want to be named.

BJP unmoved

State BJP President Chandrashekar Bawankule was more forthcoming on the issue. "We are aware that some of the party leaders are weary about losing their chance to contest election due to the coalition compulsions and hence they might leave the party in coming days," Bawankule said. "But, their number won't be too big," he quickly added.

According to Bawankule's estimates, around 25 BJP leaders might be thinking of quit-

► Samarjit Ghatge had no choice than leaving
► At least 25 BJP leaders thinking of quitting
► BJP is losing Maratha faces

able to pursue others to toe party line," he added.

Maratha leadership

Apart from influential Maratha leaders who are leaving the party, the Maratha quota stir and its leader Manoj Jarange's anti-BJP stand too is considered to be a big threat to the BJP in the forthcoming assembly election. However, the BJP leadership feels that the impact will be limited only to Marathwada.

A senior BJP functionary from Marathwada who has been looking after the party organisation in the region, pointed out of the total 46 assembly seats of Marathwada six are reserved and of the remaining seats the BJP has only 11 Maratha MLAs. One of

these leaders was Haribhau Bagde. He is now governor of Rajasthan. The party will give a new face in his place and due to Haribhau's clout the party is sure to retain the seat. "This means a loss of at the most 10 seats," he added.

The leader also pointed out that when Jarange recently visited Sindhudurg district, there were hardly 100 people with him. "This shows he influences only a limited region and unlikely to dent BJP's prospects across the state," the leader added.

No strategy

The BJP is finding it difficult to assure political security to the 'imported' leaders. Harshwardhan Patil, a former Congressman, is another example of the BJP's failed strategy. Patil is eyeing to contest from his traditional seat, Indapur in Pune district. However, since the sitting MLA belongs to the NCP the BJP may not field Patil from there. As a result, the dejected Patil is contemplating to join the NCP (SP) under Sharad Pawar's leadership.

The BJP has already lost the support of an influential family Mohite-Patil, who wrests control over Solapur district. The BJP's refusal to cancel the candidature of Ranjitsinh Nimbalkar in Madha Lok Sabha seat led to Dhairyashil Mohite-Patil joining the NCP (SP). The BJP not only lost Madha but the adjoining Solapur seat too because of its failure in gauging the ground reality.

Look-out notice against Apte

Mumbai: The Sindhudurg Police has issued a Look Out Circular against contractor Jaydeep Apte in connection with the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue at Rajkot fort, officials said on Tuesday.

An LOC is issued to airports and all other exit points to stop a person from fleeing the country.

Apte, a Thane-based sculptor, had executed the contract to make the statue.



Following its collapse on August 26, less than nine months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated it on the coastal fort, Malvan police registered a case against Apte and structural consultant Chetan Patil for negligence and other offences.

Patil was arrested from Kolhapur, whereas search was on for Apte, a police official said, adding that Malvan police has now issued an LOC for him.

The collapse of the statue of the iconic founder of the Maratha state triggered a huge political row ahead of assembly elections in Maharashtra.

-PTI

Need to change way women are viewed: Murmu



Mumbai: President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said there are "shortcomings" in societal views on women and underscored the need to reassess them, emphasising that the nation's progress cannot be fully realised without the socio-economic and educational development of women.

Speaking at centenary celebrations of the Maharashtra Legislative Council in Mumbai, Murmu pointed out that women constitute half of India's population and added their active participation in various spheres was needed to take the country forward.

"Without their (women) socio-economic and educational progress, the country's development cannot be achieved the way it should be," she said.

The President further said women are probably getting the push now but in future they will "walk, run and fly" and further contribute to the nation's development.

"There is a shortcoming in the way women are viewed and understood.

There is a need to change the way we look at women. It is our duty and responsibility to change it," she added.

"In future, we will probably not see what we are seeing now and what women are facing," the President said, comments coming in the backdrop of the massive outrage over the rape and murder of a junior doctor at a government hospital in Kolkata and sexual abuse of two minor girls at a school in Badlapur.

Notably, the President, on August 28, said it is time for India to wake up to the "perversion" of crimes against women and counter the mindset that sees women as "less powerful, less capable, less intelligent".

At the legislative council event on Tuesday, the President hailed the contributions of Veermata Jijabai, the mother of legendary Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and social reformer Savitribai Phule, one of the pioneers in the area of women's education.

-PTI

CRIME WATCH

Five hurt in scuffle

Thane: A scuffle over hurling of a glass bottle during a Ganapati procession in Dombivli left five persons injured, police said on Tuesday.

The incident occurred on Sunday night under the limits of Tilak Nagar police station.

A 22-year-old man, later identified as Ganesh, allegedly threw a glass bottle at some members of a minority community who participated in the procession, causing injuries to three persons, including himself (Ganesh), a police official said.

A fight ensued after Ganesh was detained and questioned by some members of the procession, causing injury to two persons, he said.

Based on a complaint, police on Monday registered an FIR under section 118(1) (voluntarily causing hurt or grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the official said, adding that nobody has been arrested so far and investigation is underway.

Man duped of Rs 4 lakh

Thane: A 51-year-old man was allegedly duped of Rs 4 lakh by three persons who offered to exchange his foreign currency at Dombivli. The victim, a wholesale medicine supplier, contacted the accused through an acquaintance and they offered to give him 700 Dinars in exchange of Rs 12 lakh.

On August 31, the trio met the victim around noon at Nilje in Dombivli East and repeated the offer to give 700 Dirhams in exchange for Rs 12 lakh. As he agreed, they took the first tranche of Rs 4 lakh from him. The accused handed over a bag to him, saying that it contained Dinars. They left the spot soon afterwards, he said.

Boy raped in Mankhurd

Mumbai: A 12-year-old boy was allegedly raped by a drunk man in the Mankhurd area of Govandi. The incident took place on Monday evening and as per the relatives of the minor victim boy, police lodged a First Information Report (FIR) six hours after the incident.

On Tuesday, the police said they have arrested a 22-year-old man in the matter. The accused is identified as Sharad Sable, a local resident.

Traffic on Ghodbunder Road hit

Thane: Traffic on the Ghodbunder Road in Maharashtra's Thane city was disrupted for several hours early Tuesday after a container truck carrying a chemical overturned shortly after midnight, a civic official said.

Nobody was injured in the incident that occurred near Patlipada bridge, he said. The accident occurred around 12.15 am when a container truck, carrying 27 tonnes of aqueous ammonia solution, overturned, resulting in a chemical spill, Yasin Tadv, chief of the Disaster Management Cell at the Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC), said.

The truck, which was en route from Nhava Seva to Punjab, lost control and overturned. Emergency services, including local fire-fighters, the Regional Disaster Management Cell (RDMC) team, and two hydras machines, were promptly dispatched to the scene to manage the situation, he said.

The chemical company responsible for the cargo was notified. The rescue team later cleared the road and the traffic flow was restored after nearly five hours, Tadv said. -PTI

Mumbai: Build a "watertight" case and do not file a charge sheet hurriedly under public pressure, the Bombay High Court on Tuesday told the police team probing the sexual assault of two girls at a school at Badlapur in Maharashtra.

A division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan also said boys should be sensitised. "Education of boys is important. 'Bete ko padhao beti ko bachao,' (educate the boy and save the girl)," Justice Dere said, tweaking the government slogan.

The bench last month took suo motu (on its own) cognisance of the incident where two girls, around four years old, were sexually assaulted inside the washroom of the school by a male attendant. The accused has been arrested.

Advocate General Birendra Saraf, appearing for the government, told the court during Tuesday's hearing that a chargesheet would be filed shortly.

The bench noted that the special investigation team (SIT) was formed as the local police did not probe the

Badlapur sexual assault

Make watertight case, says HC



NCP (SP) women's wing activists stage protesting for the women's safety issue demanding the implementation of "Shakti Law" under the leadership of MP Supriya Sule and former Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Tuesday. Pic: Bhusan Koyande

Retired IPS officer Meeran Borwankar, and a retired high court judge -- either Sadhana Jadhav or Shalini Phansalkar-Joshi -- should be included in the committee, the HC suggested.

case properly, and "there was a strong outburst of

the common man." "This is a larger issue. This case will set a precedent for all such cases in future. Public is watching and what message we are giving is important," the court added.

"Therefore, don't file the chargesheet hurriedly. There is still time. Don't go by public pressure. Investigation has to be done properly before chargesheet is filed," the judges said. "Before the chargesheet

is filed, ensure everything is in order. Make a watertight case," the HC added.

"Is this a manner in which case diary is maintained? Is it a modus operandi to write case diary in stereotypical manner by the investigating officer?" the HC asked.

Every step of the probe has to be mentioned in the case diary, the judges said, noting that details were not mentioned in the diary.

-PTI

Hegde bats for Velankanni

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The former MLA and the spokesperson of Shiv Sena, Krishna Hegde has urged the Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to consider including the shrine at Velankanni, in Tamil Nadu in the list of Mukhyamantri Teerth Darshan Yojana of the state Government.

In his letter to CM Hegde stated that presently senior citizens above the age of 60 years, who are residents of Maharashtra with an annual income less than Rs 2.5 lakhs can avail the benefits of the scheme. The senior citizen should be eligible within the criteria set up by the Government for the Yojana. This scheme is meant for senior citizens who cannot afford travel expenses and are from poor families.

If the government includes shrines name in the list, the devotees can avail travel benefits upto Rs 30,000 once in a lifetime, free stay and meals in this scheme and visit 73 religious places across the country which are listed. They can also avail free medical assistance they require during the days of their travel, he has pointed out.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sharad Pawar, President, NCP (SP)

"Upon receiving a book at any event, I generally open the wrapping to see it because I was once presented some books at an event. I did not open the wrapping but later saw that one of the books was on Golwalkar Guruji. After that incident, I decided that if a wrapped book is presented by someone, I will unwrap it before accepting it."

MSRTC employees launch state-wide strike

Demand parity in salary; 35 of 250 bus depots shut



Mumbai: Ahead of the Ganesh festival, the bus services of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) got disrupted on Tuesday in most parts of Maharashtra, as a large section of its employees launched a strike over salary-related and other demands, officials said.

Due to the strike launched by the action committee of 11 trade unions starting midnight, the bus services of the state-run corporation were com-

pletely stopped at 35 out of the MSRTC's 250 bus depots across the state, a spokesperson of the corporation said.

"Other depots are either fully or partially operational," he said.

The strike will create problems for the people who wish to travel to their native places for the 10-day

Ganesh festival, which is celebrated on a large scale in the state.

The Maharashtra State Transport (ST) Kamgar Sanyukta Kruti Samiti (joint action committee) began this strike over salary-related issues of employees, after talks with the state government failed last month.

The action committee is demanding a salary for the staffers on par with that of the state government

employees. The MSRTC spokesperson said that the bus services in the Mumbai division were not affected, but were partially hit in neighbouring Thane division.

"The bus operations are running smoothly in all the depots in Mumbai division. However, Kalyan, Vitthalwadi depots in Thane are completely shut," he said.

Barring Vidarbha region in eastern Maharashtra, the strike has affected the bus operations in other regions of the state.

Management system for laptops, tablets

Over USD 4 bn imports so far

New Delhi: With the deadline for review of import management system for laptops and other IT products nearing, the companies which have received authorisations have imported these products worth over USD 4 billion so far this fiscal, an official said.

These imports stood at USD 8.4 billion in 2023-24 and most of these imports were coming from China, the official said.

In October last year, the government rolled out an import management/ authorisation for imports of laptops, personal computers and certain other IT hardware products. The system is aimed at monitoring inbound shipments of these items into the country without hurting market supply.

The importers are allowed to apply for multiple authorisations and those authorisations would be valid up to September 30, 2024. The authorisations will be issued for any number of consignments for imports till September.

On November 1, 2023, the government cleared over 100 applications, including those of Apple, Dell and Lenovo, which sought permission for imports of these IT hardware products worth nearly USD 10 billion, on the first day of implementa-



tion of the new system. "Last year, the imports stood at USD 8.4 billion out of the USD 10 billion worth

of approvals. So far this fiscal, the imports stood at about USD 4-5 billion," the official said.

When asked about the plans after the end of the validity on September 30, the official said the commerce ministry will entirely go with the Meity's (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) view on that.

The new licence regime is applicable to laptops, personal computers (including tablet computers), micro-computers, large or main-frame computers, and certain data processing machines to ensure India's trusted supply chain.

-PTI



Flying Wedge Defence & Aerospace (FWDA) founder and CEO Suhas Tejaskanda (left) poses with the indigenous unmanned bomber aircraft 'FWD 200B' during a press conference, in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

-Pic: PTI

The main exporters in 2022-23

- China – USD 5.11 billion
- Singapore – USD 1.4 billion
- Hong Kong – USD 807 million
- US, Malaysia, Taiwan, Netherland and Vietnam

NUMBERS SPEAK

USD 5.33 billion
India has imported personal computers, including laptops, worth USD 5.33 billion in 2022-23 compared to USD 7.37 billion in 2021-22

August sales tamed auto companies

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Indian auto companies continue to report a lackluster sales numbers for the month of August with Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors reporting a decline in sales volume from the same month a year ago and flat numbers from the preceding month of July.

As per the data filed with the stock exchanges, India's largest passenger car manufacturing company – Maruti Suzuki reported a 181,782 units of sale in August, down 4 percent from the same month a year ago, but up 3.8 percent from the month of July. Similarly, Tata Motors too reported an 8 percent

drop in domestic sales at 70,006 units and marginally down from July when it reported sales of 70,161 units.

Auto industry is witnessing a declining trend in the last couple of months leading to rising inventories at dealer outlets across the country, as highlighted by Federation of Automobile Dealers Association.

The association had indicated that inventory of passenger vehicles were at an all-time high, but auto companies are hopeful of revival with the beginning of the festive season from September onwards. Auto analysts too were expecting a subdued month of sales in August. "August has been a season-

ally lean month for vehicle sales, largely due to the monsoon season, and this trend is expected to continue in August 2024. Dealers reveal that there has been no significant change in retail demand trend during the first half of the month as compared to July, although there was some traditional buying activity seen on Janmashtami in certain regions," said an auto analyst with stock brokerage firm Sharekhan, in his report. In light of that the sales in August 2024 would be a mirror of either inventory build-up ahead of the festive season or inventory management.

However, rising inventory levels in the passenger vehi-

cle segment remain a concern. New product launches are still attracting both customers and dealers. Additionally, a shift in the festive season compared to the previous year is likely to impact original equipment manufacturers' dispatches, he said. This year, the Onam and Ganesh festivals are in September, whereas Onam fell in August last year. The first wave of festive vehicle sales typically begins with Onam, and sales during Onam and the Ganeshotsav, prior to the Shradh season provides an early indication of how the major festive season (Navratri/Dussehra/Diwali) will perform in certain regions.

Cong questions ICICI's claim

New Delhi: The Congress on Tuesday questioned the ICICI Bank's assertion that it had not paid any salary or granted ESOPs to SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Buch after her retirement and asked that if the amount paid

to her was her "retiral benefit", why was it non-uniform both in terms of its frequency and amount. The opposition party levelled fresh conflict-of-interest allegations against Buch on Monday and asked Prime Minister Naren-

dra Modi to come clean as the head of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet on her appointment.

It alleged that since Buch took office in 2017, she has not only been drawing a salary from the SEBI but has also

been holding an office of profit at the ICICI Bank, continuing to receive income from the bank to this very day. ICICI said it has not paid any salary or granted ESOPs to Buch after her retirement on October 31, 2013.



Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran, right, RBI Deputy Governor Michael Patra, centre, and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Director General Chandrajit Banerjee during the CII Financing 3.0 Summit in Mumbai on Tuesday.

-Pic: PTI

Bajaj announces IPO price band

Mumbai: The housing finance division of Bajaj Finance is scheduled to go public (IPO) on Monday, September 9. Prospective investors are required to purchase at least 214 equity shares, with additional shares available at a higher price. The IPO's bidding period is set to end on Wednesday, September 11. The tentative listing date for this IPO is 16 September.

Bajaj Housing Finance has decided a price band of Rs 66 to 70 for its IPO. The company is aiming to secure a total of Rs 6,560 crore from its IPO, which will include the sale of new shares worth Rs 3,560 crore and an issuance of an over-all participation scheme worth Rs 3,000 crore from its parent company. India's Bajaj Housing Finance is seeking a valuation of Rs 58,297 crore (\$6.94 billion) for its \$782 million IPO, as indicated in a term sheet released on Tuesday.

The company plans to issue new shares up to Rs 3,560 crore, with the goal of using the funds to strengthen its capital structure. Bajaj Housing Finance's initial public offering (IPO) is poised to become one of the largest among the top Indian IPOs this year.

IIT-B records 75 pc placement

Average salary was Rs. 23.50 lakh pa as compared to last year's Rs. 21.8 lakh

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay has released the report of its job placements and internships for the 2023-24 academic year. The recruitment process ended on July 7, 2024 and IIT Bombay has successfully completed its recruitment for the 2023-24 academic year. This year, a total of 2414 students participated in the placement exams, with 1475 positions being filled. A total of 1650 positions were available.

More than 22 students from IIT Bombay got an annual CTC package of more than Rs. 1 Crore. The average salary this time was Rs. 23.50 lakh per year as compared to last year's Rs. 21.8 lakh. The salary amount has seen a 7.7% increase from the previous year. Nearly 258 students received offers before the start of their internships. Also, 78 students got international offers from companies in Japan, Taiwan, Europe, Singapore, the USA, and the Netherlands. The lowest package at IIT-Bombay placement so far was Rs 6 lakh, it further reduced to 4 lakh this year.

Total Number of Registered Students - 2414
Total Number of Actively Participated Students - 1979
Total Number of Accepted Offers - 1475
Total Number of Companies Offered Jobs - 364
Total Number of Job Offers - 1650
Job Offers above INR 1 crore accepted - 22
Pre - Placement Offers accepted - 258
International Job Offers accepted - 78
Average annual CTC Salary Package of students - INR 23.50 LPA
Median Salary - INR 17.92 LPA
Top Recruiting Sector - Engineering & Technology

(Source: IIT Report)

This year, the fields of engineering and technology attracted the largest number of applicants; 430 students were chosen from 106 leading engineering firms for entry-level roles. The hiring in the Information Technology and technology sectors was slightly up this year compared to the previous year.

In contrast to the previous year, there were fewer selections, with only 117 consulting positions filled by 29 consulting firms. The sectors that were major employers included trading, banking, and fintech. The finance industry received 113 job offers from 33 financial service providers for the current year. The areas experiencing signifi-

cant hiring include artificial intelligence, machine learning, product management, mobility, 5G, data science, and analytics, as well as education. The design industry had 17 companies hiring for 33 positions, with a decrease in the number of candidates selected.

The education sector had 11 companies involved in hiring with a total of 30 job offers. The research and development sector saw companies focusing on automation, energy science, battery technology, chemical and mechanical research, energy efficiency solutions, application development, materials research, semiconductor, power electronics, AI/ML, and research laboratories.

BSE SENSEX TOP LOSERS	
%	POINTS
-1.22	Infosys 1940.20
-1.13	Bajaj Finance 7351.55
-0.99	Adani Ports 1479.70
-0.97	JSW Steel 931.00
-0.95	HCL Tech 1789.85
-0.87	NTPC 406.30
-0.83	Bharti Airtel 1560.50
-0.83	IndusInd Bank 1436.60
-0.64	Tata Motors 1085.55
-0.49	Tata Steel 152.10

BSE SENSEX TOP GAINERS	
%	POINTS
+1.45	ICICI Bank 1247.80
+1.30	Bajaj Finserv 1863.95
+0.85	Titan 3617.00
+0.75	Nestle India 2527.95
+0.72	HDFC Bank 1637.80
+0.32	SBIN 824.75
+0.27	Axis Bank 1191.80
+0.25	M&M 2784.00
+0.23	LT 3689.80
+0.22	Kotak Bank 1784.20

Working population to usher prosperity

By Correspondent

Mumbai: India will experience rising incomes and prosperity as the employability of its working age population goes up, said Reserve Bank of India's deputy governor, Michael Debabrata Patra at the Financing 3.0 summit in Mumbai.

"In the tradition of classical economics, it is a productive workforce that is the true source of value creation; capital is only an organising factor, boosting the productivity of labour and creating conditions for its growth. In that classical sense of the supply side of the economy, every sixth working person in the world is an Indian benefiting from a population that is the

youngest in the world," said the deputy governor at the summit organized by the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII).

Delving into India's remarkable growth story and the fact that India is riding on a cusp of a distinct demographic advantage, the deputy governor said, "India will skill this rising workforce at a rapid pace, given that we are already producing the largest number of STEM (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) graduates in the world – over 20 lakh every year; 43 per cent of whom are women."

Quoting World Economic Forum, Patra said, 44 percent of the worker's skills globally would be disrupted in the following five years.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Michael Debabrata Patra, Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India

"Going forward, boosted by rising incomes, households will likely build back their financial assets. This process has already begun. Households' financial assets have increased from 10.6 per cent of GDP during 2011-17 to 11.5 per cent during 2017-23 (excluding the pandemic year). Accordingly, households will remain the top net lenders to the rest of the economy in the coming decades."

Mamata seeks resignations

The CM wants PM, CMs of BJP states to step down

WB Assembly passes bill for stringent punishment to rapists

Highest graft complaints against rail employees

By Ashwini Shrivastava

Mamata Banerjee:

"I demand the resignation of PM Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and chief ministers of all states that have failed to implement effective laws that can ensure security of women and children across the country."

"States like Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat have abnormally high crime rates against women whereas in West Bengal, tortured women are getting justice in courts."

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the chief ministers of all states that have "not been able to implement effective legislations to safeguard women".

Speaking in the assembly after tabling of the Aparajita Woman and Child Bill (West Bengal Criminal Laws and Amendment) Bill 2024, Banerjee said the proposed legislation aims at quick investigation, fast justice delivery and enhanced punishment of the guilty.

Amid chaotic scenes on the floor of the House when BJP leg-



Theatre personality returns award

Amid protests by civil society organisations over the rape-murder of a trainee doctor, Bengali theatre personality Biplab Bandyopadhyay on Tuesday announced returning the state-instituted 'Best Theatre Director' award over the RG Kar Hospital issue. Bandyopadhyay, eminent playwright and director, said in a statement that he is returning the award conferred on him earlier this year by the Paschimanga Natya Akademi and the Rs 30,000 monetary grant. "I think the main criteria behind such awards is not one's talent and merit but sycophancy, unconditional support to the state. I did not realise this while accepting this honour in February," he said. Earlier, six Durga Puja committees in West Bengal declined to accept the state's Rs 85,000 honorarium in protest against the RG Kar incident, further highlighting the widespread dissatisfaction with the state's response.

islators raised slogans demanding the CM's resignation over the alleged rape and murder incident at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, Banerjee also demanded the resignation of Suwendu Adhikari, the Leader of the Opposition, for obstructing the proceedings for passage of the Bill.

"We wanted the Centre to amend its existing laws and include stricter clauses to ensure exemplary punishment for perpetrators and quicker justice to victims. They showed no enthusiasm for it. That's why we made the move first. This Bill, once enacted, can serve as a model for the rest of the country," the CM said.

Banerjee also tabled the two letters she recently wrote to PM Modi in this regard, one of which was a counter statement to Union Women and Child Development Minister Annapurna Devi's response to her first letter.

"Rape is a curse against hu-

manity and social reforms are required to prevent such crimes," she said.

Once this Bill is passed, the state will form a special Aparajita Task Force from among the state police force to ensure time-bound completion of the probe, the chief minister said. Hailing the Bill as "historic", Banerjee said that through this proposed legislation, her government has tried to plug the loopholes that exist in the central legislations in terms of speedy and effective disposal of justice to victims and their kin.

The chief minister informed the House that the day of introduction of the Bill coincided with the 1981 UN convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

"This coincidence gives me goose bumps. You should be thrilled as well," she said, pointing at the opposition benches.

When BJP MLAs raised slogans and showed placards demanding her resignation, she

retorted, "What if I raise slogans against the prime minister and the home minister for the same reasons you are raising slogans against me."

Responding to a question from Adhikari, Banerjee said, "We have 88 fast track courts in West Bengal, the third highest among all states in the country, and over 50 designated courts for crimes against women. These courts have so far disposed of 3,11,479 of the 3,92,620 cases registered. Some 7,000 cases concerning women currently remain under adjudication before the courts."

Banerjee alleged that West Bengal was not consulted before passing BNS. "We wanted discussions on it after the formation of the new government at the Centre," she said. Banerjee urged the Opposition to impress upon the governor to sign the Bill without delay, while asserting that it would be the state government's responsibility for its effective enactment following

the assent of Raj Bhavan and the President.

"We want justice from the CBI and death by hanging of the guilty," Banerjee said over the rape and murder of the RG Kar medic while expressing her sorrow over the gruesome crime and sympathies for the victim's kin. Referring to the infamous 2013 Kamduni village gang rape and murder case in Bengal, Banerjee claimed the state did everything in its power to send the perpetrators to the gallows but failed because the high court felt otherwise. The Bill was later passed unanimously despite disgruntled opposition members choosing to call the Bill an "eye-wash" after the government rejected most of the amendments moved by Adhikari to it.

Bill passage diversionary tactic: Shivraj Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan Tuesday termed the passage of an anti-rape bill in the West Bengal as-

Shivraj Singh Chouhan:

"Didi (Banerjee) has enacted the law under pressure. This is being done to divert attention from the R G Kar hospital rape-murder incident. Why did she not bring it earlier? Why didn't she show empathy earlier?"

"Didi should answer. Will people like Shahjahan Sheikh too get the death penalty under this law? This is being done to distract attention. There is no point in making such laws."

sembly a "diversionary tactic" and asked if the main accused in the Sandeshkhali sexual abuse case will get the death penalty under the law.

The bill was passed unanimously in a two-day special session of the assembly in the wake of the rape and murder of a trainee woman doctor at the state-run R G Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata last month that sparked nationwide protests. Chouhan, who was the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh for multiple terms, said the BJP-ruled state enacted a similar law in 2017, and already 42 people have been awarded death sentences under the legislation.

-PTI

-PTI

Young scientist washes away

Hyderabad: A 26-year-old award winning agriculture scientist washed away along with her father in the floods in Telangana's Mahabubabad district on Sunday while they were going to Hyderabad in their car.

Dr. Nunavath Aswini was the first scientist from her village. She had a PhD in genetics and plant breeding. She was working as a scientist in the School of Crop Resistance System Research at ICAR - National Institute of Biotic Stress Management, Baronda, in Chhattisgarh.



Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren with his wife and JMM leader Kalpana Soren carries a 'chadar' to pay their obeisance at Ajmer Sharif Dargah. Pic-PTI

Malayalam actor booked for rape

Kochi: Actor Nivin Pauly was on Tuesday booked for the offence of rape on a complaint by a 40-year-old woman that he sexually assaulted her over a year ago in Dubai, police said.

An officer of Onnukal police station, where the FIR under section 376 of the IPC was registered, said that there are six accused, including a woman, in the case. The first accused is a woman and Pauly is the sixth accused, the officer said.

According to the woman, the incident occurred over a year ago in Dubai, the officer said, and declined to give further details. Pauly is among the many actors and directors who are facing allegations of sexual harassment or rape by female actors following the publication of the Justice K Hema Committee report.

The committee was constituted by the Kerala government after the 2017 actress assault case and its report revealing instances of harassment and exploitation of women in the Malayalam cinema industry.

-PTI

Continued assistance from Center needed: DGP

Imphal: Manipur Director General of Police Rajiv Singh on Tuesday said that the police alone cannot deal with the situation in the violence-hit state and continued assistance from central forces was required.

More than 200 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis since May last year. The conflict took a new turn recently as militants deployed drones to launch bomb attacks on villages of the rival community.

Two persons have been killed and 12 others injured in two drone and gun attacks in Sejam Chirang and nearby Koutruk in Imphal West district in the last two days. Singh, however, asserted that Manipur Police would do everything in its capability to counter the drones.

Speaking to reporters after visiting Koutruk and Kadangband areas, he said, "This is a new thing and things have escalated.

We are taking it very seriously."

"We have spoken to NSG (National Security Guards), and more experts are coming. We have constituted a committee to critically examine the drones. We will soon search for means to deal with the drone attacks. We have some means to deal with drones and we are trying to deploy those," he said.

On demands for the removal of central forces for their alleged inability to stem violence, the DGP said state forces alone cannot handle the situation due to manpower issues and assistance of central forces was a necessity.

"The Centre is providing us with all support and they are worried over the situation. We are working together to tackle it. Right now, there is requirement for manpower and state police alone could not provide it as they are deployed in their normal law and order duties. So obviously, we need central forces," he said.

-PTI

Govt constitutes 23rd Law Commission

Next task will be report on Uniform Civil Code

New Delhi: The government has notified the constitution of the 23rd Law Commission for a period of three years, with a provision to appoint serving Supreme Court and high court judges as its chairperson and members.

The panel advises the government on complex legal issues. Once it is constituted, the government initiates the process of appointing its chief and members.

The term of the 22nd

Law Commission ended on August 31 and the new panel has been constituted with effect from September 1, according to a law ministry order issued late Monday.

Though the notification relating to the constitution of the 21st and 22nd law commissions, issued in September 2015 and February 2020 respectively, had provisions for appointing

serving SC and HC judges as chairpersons and members, in the recent past, either retired top court judges or former chief justices of high courts have headed the body.

On August 31, the term of the 22nd Law Commission, which was without a chairperson for the past few months, ended with its key report on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) still in

the works.

The report prepared by the law panel on simultaneous elections is ready and pending submission to the law ministry.

People aware of the procedure noted that the report cannot be submitted in the absence of a chairperson.

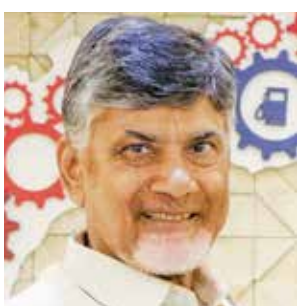
Justice (ret'd) Ritu Raj Awasthi, who headed the 22nd law panel, was ap-

pointed a member of the anti-corruption watchdog Lokpal a few months ago.

According to the order, the panel will have a full-time chairperson and four full-time members, including member-secretary. The secretary of the Department of Legal Affairs and the secretary of the Legislative Department will be its ex-officio members. There cannot be more than five part-time members, according to the order.

-PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



N. Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh

"In my career, this is the biggest disaster. We had some events like Hudhud hurricane and Titli cyclone but compared to these, here the human suffering and property loss is the biggest. I would request the Central government to declare the floods in the state as a national calamity."

Karandlaje apologises to people of TN

Chennai: Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje on Tuesday filed an affidavit before the Madras High Court, apologising to the people of Tamil Nadu for her remarks made in light of the Rameshwaram Cafe blast in Bengaluru earlier this year.

Post the March 1 low intensity blast at the popular eatery in Bengaluru, Karandlaje had linked the people of Tamil Nadu with the incident and she was booked by the Madurai po-



lice over the matter. She had moved the court seeking to quash the criminal proceedings against

her. In her affidavit filed before the bench of Justice G Jayachandran, Karandlaje

said the remarks made about the people of TN was done "without any intention" to hurt their sentiments and feelings.

She said she has already retracted her previous comments and tendered "my profound apologies through social media platforms." "I state that I have the highest respect and regard to the history, rich culture, tradition, and to the people of Tamil Nadu and I had or have no intention whatsoever to hurt the

sentiments of the people of Tamil Nadu by any conduct of mine."

"Hence, I hereby once again tender my apology to the people of Tamil Nadu for having caused any hurt from my comments. The same may kindly be taken on record in the interest of the justice," the Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Labour & Employment, said. The judge adjourned the case to September 5.

-PTI

Air pollution in Indo-Gangetic plains

Set up panel to tackle issue: UP to Centre



New Delhi: The Uttar Pradesh government has asked the Centre to consider establishing an airshed coordination committee to manage air pollution in the Indo-Gangetic Plains, officials have said.

The Indo-Gangetic Plain (IGP) is a major hotspot for atmospheric pollution in India. During winter, pollution levels in the IGP sharply increase due to unfavourable weather conditions such as low temperatures and slow wind speeds.

In a letter dated July 22, the Uttar Pradesh government requested the Union Environment Ministry to

consider setting up an airshed coordination committee for the IGP.

"Uttar Pradesh is located in the heart of the IGP. We have been advocating for addressing air pollution at the airshed level. Significant progress can be made if all states work together," a state government official said.

"Pollution travels with the air, moving from cities to villages and across state borders - like smoke from stubble burning in Punjab that drifts into other states," the official added.

The Uttar Pradesh government's draft clean air action plan for the period up to

2035 also emphasises adopting the airshed approach to combat air pollution. Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai has also called on the Centre to adopt an airshed approach to tackle air pollution in the region.

An airshed refers to a geographic area where air quality is influenced by similar factors, such as wind patterns and pollution sources. Since pollution in one area can easily spread to neighbouring regions, an airshed approach promotes coordinated efforts across states.

Experts argue that air quality was equally poor in smaller cities, towns, and villages since pollution didn't respect state or national borders.

They have urged for the adoption of an airshed approach to manage air pollution in the region.

"Most cities across the country have PM2.5 levels higher than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards but lack action plans to reduce emissions because they aren't yet included in the NCAP," said Sunil Dahiya, an analyst at the Centre

The decline in air quality has reduced life expectancy in the region -- home to 40 per cent of India's population -- by around seven years, according to the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC).

for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

Therefore, it is important to develop a broader airshed-level clean air action plan that enforces systematic and comprehensive pollution reduction strategies, not just within city limits but also for areas beyond municipal boundaries, he added.

Piyush Bhardwaj, a research scientist working with the air quality team of the think tank Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy, said typical clean air action plans designed to improve air quality over cities/states miss out on the contribution of non-local sources of pollution located in an airshed.

To achieve large-scale reductions in particulate pollution, a cross-state multi-jurisdictional or airshed approach needs to be adopted, he said, adding the inter-city or interstate contributions to local air pollution can be calculated using air quality models.

-PTI



Devotees take part in the 'Kali' and 'Pili' Marbat festival procession, taken out on the second day of 'Pola', in Nagpur on Tuesday.

Pic-PTI

Storm kills 14 in Philippines

Manila: A fierce storm was blowing out of the northern Philippines Tuesday after leaving at least 14 people dead in landslides, floods and swollen rivers, disaster-response officials said.



Tropical Storm Yagi swept past Paoay town in Ilocos Norte province into the South China Sea with sustained winds of up to 75 kilometers (47 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 125 kph (78 mph), according to

the weather bureau. It was forecast to strengthen into a typhoon as it barrels northwestward over the sea toward southern China. Storm warnings remained in most northern Philippine provinces, where residents were warned of the lingering danger of landslides in rain-soaked mountain villages and floodings in the farming lowlands of Luzon, the country's most populous region. Locally called Enteng, Yagi enhanced seasonal monsoon rains and unleashed downpours across Luzon, including in the densely populated capital region,

metropolitan Manila, where classes and government work remained suspended Tuesday.

At least 14 people died in landslides, floods and swollen rivers in northern and central provinces, including in Antipolo, a popular Roman Catholic pilgrimage city and tourism destination west of Manila where at least three residents, including a pregnant woman, died in a hillside landslide that buried shanties and four others drowned in creeks and rivers. Antipolo's disaster-mitigation officer Enrilito Bernardo Jr. told The Associated Press by telephone.

-AP

India launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in 2019 with a target to reduce particulate pollution by 20-30 per cent by 2024, using 2017 as the base year. The target was later revised to a 40 per cent reduction by 2026, using 2019-20 as the base year. However, the programme currently covers only 131 non-attainment cities -- those that consistently failed to meet national ambient air quality standards between 2011 and 2015.

Delhi minister seeks positive suggestions'

New Delhi: Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Tuesday wrote to state unit presidents of Congress and BJP, requesting any "positive suggestions" for incorporation into the Winter Action Plan to reduce pollution levels in the national capital.

In the letter to Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva and Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav, Rai also cited the various initiatives taken by the AAP dispensation to solve the pollution problem.

He cited a report of the Centre for Science and Environment which states that only 31 per cent of the pollution that the people of Delhi have to face is contributed by the residents while the rest comes from NCR states.

-PTI

Kerala to develop early warning systems for disasters

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala government has decided to focus on scientific use of land and deployment of localised early warning systems as part of its efforts to tackle Wayanad-like landslides and other disasters in the future, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said.

He said the landslide forecasting systems were in the "infancy" stage and his government now wants to "strengthen" Kerala's institutes and departments meant for studying climate change by providing them enhanced manpower and modern equipments.

Speaking to PTI during an interview over the weekend, Vijayan said, "In an era of climate change, fragility is a matter that needs to be balanced with respect to ground realities, societal aspirations and the boundaries laid down by the law." The CM said relief shel-

ters have been built at 18 coastal local governments in nine coastal districts and seven hill panchayats of Idukki district.

"These numbers need to be increased for which we

Pinarayi Vijayan: "Most of the climate-linked disasters cannot be prevented fully. However, their impacts can be reduced. The Kerala government has decided to focus on scientific use of land and localised community-based early warning systems which will increase local resilience."



are in the process of a project design," he said.

Talking about the weather forecasting system, Vijayan said the system "needs to be improved."

Kerala has demanded from the central government increased observational systems, including more radars, he said.

"Landslide forecasting systems are in infancy stage. This will need to be fast tracked by having more intense research by the na-

tional nodal agencies. Therefore, the Kerala government has requested the government of India for setting up local research centres of national agencies," he said.

The CM said Kerala has set up an Institute of Cli-

mate Change Studies for state specific research and that they need "financial assistance" to strengthen these institutions to make the state, replete with sensitive ecology, resilient in the near future. The state has announced

that it will create one or two new townships for the housing requirements of the families of the victims and survivors of Wayanad whose homes and belongings were either washed away or buried in the landslides.

-PTI

Children back to school

They looked fresh in new uniforms and seemed relieved when they reunited with their friends after weeks, putting behind the trauma of a natural calamity that may have scarred them for life. The enthusiastic children clapped loudly and sang their favourite songs when the state-run buses started to ply with them from the devastated Chooralmala town to nearby Meppadi through the winding mountain roads on Monday morning.

It was the journey of the children of the landslide-hit hamlets of Wayanad to resume their studies after 30 days after the massive disaster shook their lives and deprived them of everything in life, from schools and study material to home and family members, besides some of their buddies. Two state-run schools in the area, Mundakkai GLPS and Vellarmala GVHSS had suffered immense damage in the July 30 calamity, which had also claimed the lives of several children who studied there. As over a month passed after the landslides devastated the interiors of the hill district, the Kerala government, under the auspices of the General Education Department, had made arrangements to resume the studies of the survivor children. Temporary classrooms were set up for them in the government higher secondary school and at the panchayat community hall in nearby Meppadi. Thus, over 600 children of Mundakkai and Vellarmala schools restarted their studies amid colourful ceremonies and festivities on Monday.

Companies responsible for lowering carbon emission

The Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the world's largest carbon emitters, including China, Japan and South Korea.

By Syed Shams and Sudipta Bose

Toowoomba (Australia): As the world grapples with the intensifying challenges of climate change, businesses are under increasing pressure to take action.

To avert catastrophe, this will have to go beyond merely complying with new regulations and minimum standards. Business must lead the charge in good faith.

Yet still too often, taking bold action on climate is painted as a kind of tradeoff - that because it costs money to act, doing right by the environment comes at the cost of doing good business.

Our recent research calls this myth into question. We

found improving carbon performance can go beyond addressing environmental concerns and provide tangible financial benefits.

Our study, spanning almost two decades of data from firms across the Asia-Pacific region, found that superior carbon management is linked to significantly lower financial risk.

That offers evidence taking action is no longer just an environmental imperative - it's also an essential financial strategy.

Lower risk in every category

The Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the world's largest carbon emitters, including China, Japan and South Korea. Businesses operating

there face mounting pressure from regulators, investors and consumers to improve their environmental footprint.

Our research examined more than 9,000 firm-year observations (such as annual reports) from 13 countries in the Asia-Pacific between 2002 and 2021. It sought to explore the relationship between carbon performance and three common types of business risk: idiosyncratic, systematic and total risk.

Idiosyncratic risks are those faced by a particular business, while systematic risks are those that affect the whole market, such as economic downturns. As you might expect, total risk combines these. We found better corpo-



rate carbon performance was associated with lower levels of risk in all three categories.

Companies that took active steps to manage and reduce their carbon emissions enjoyed less volatility in their stock prices, diminished firm-specific risks, and weren't as sensitive to

market-wide economic shocks.

The reduction in total risk varied, ranging from 1.22 per cent in Taiwan to as much as 4 per cent in Australia.

Stronger governance, stronger effect

Our study also found that

in countries with higher quality corporate governance standards - which encompasses factors such as environmental regulations, effective law enforcement and anti-corruption measures - there was a stronger relationship between carbon performance and lower levels of risk.

It's most likely that in countries with strong governance frameworks, companies with solid environmental credentials are being rewarded with lower borrowing costs and greater market valuation. That offers an important takeaway for policymakers.

It suggests that implementing measures like emissions trading schemes, standardised climate change performance met-

rics, and national commitments to international climate agreements can all enhance the financial benefits of carbon performance.

What can we learn?

Our research offers some important takeaways for investors, companies and the rest of us.

For investors, our research emphasises just how important companies' environmental performance can be. Firms with poor carbon performance may face higher risks in general. That can mean higher returns are required to compensate investors for these risks. On the other hand, firms taking meaningful steps to manage their carbon emissions are more likely to enjoy stable cash flows and lower volatil-

ity, which can boost investor confidence. For companies, the message is clear. Investing in carbon management is not just an ethical or regulatory obligation - it is a sound financial decision.

By enhancing their performance on carbon, firms can lower their total risk levels, attract sustainability-focused investors, improve their access to capital markets, and lower their borrowing costs.

Strong action on climate doesn't have to be a trade-off. As the world rises to the challenge of living with climate change, the link between environmental accountability and financial performance will only grow stronger.

-The Conversation

Putin in Mongolia, defying arrest warrant

Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia): Russian President Vladimir Putin was visiting Mongolia on Tuesday with no sign that the host country would bow to calls to arrest him on an international warrant for alleged war crimes stemming from the invasion of Ukraine.

A spokesperson for Putin said last week that the Kremlin wasn't worried.

His visit puts Mongolia in a tough spot. Members of the international court are bound to detain suspects if an arrest warrant has been issued, but Mongolia is a landlocked country highly dependent on Russia for fuel and some of its electricity. The court doesn't have a mechanism to enforce its warrants.

The Russian leader was welcomed in a ceremony in the capital city's main square by an honour guard dressed in vivid red and blue uniforms styled on those of the personal guard of 13th century ruler Genghis Khan, the founder of the Mongol Empire.

He and Mongolian President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh walked up the red-carpeted steps of the Government Palace and bowed before a statue of Genghis Khan before entering the government building for their meetings.

The International Criminal Court has accused Putin of being responsible for the abductions of children from Ukraine, where the fighting has raged for 2½ years.



More than 50 Russians outside the country have signed an open letter urging the government of Mongolia to "immediately detain Vladimir Putin upon his arrival".

The trip is Putin's first to a member country of the International Criminal Court since it issued a warrant for his arrest about 18 months ago. Ahead of his visit, Ukraine called on Mongolia to hand Putin over to the court in The Hague, and the European Union expressed concern that Mongolia might not execute the warrant.

"Mongolia, like all other countries, has the right to develop its international ties according to its own interests," European Commission spokeswoman Nabila Massrali said. But she added, "Mongolia is a state party to the Rome Statute of the ICC since 2002, with the legal obligations that it entails." The signers include Vladimir Kara-Murza, who was freed from a Rus-

sian prison in August in the biggest East-West prisoner swap since the Cold War.

Putin has made a series of overseas trips in recent months to try to counter the international isolation he faces over the invasion of Ukraine. He visited China in May, made a trip to North Korea and Vietnam in June and went to Kazakhstan in July for a meeting of the Shanghai

Cooperation Organisation.

Last year, he joined a meeting in Johannesburg by video link after the South African government lobbied against him showing up for the BRICS summit, a group that includes China and other emerging economies. South Africa is an International Criminal Court member.

-AP

Zia acquitted in five cases

Dhaka: Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia has been acquitted in five separate cases, including one filed over allegations of celebrating a "fake birthday" and another for supporting war criminals, a media report said on Tuesday.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Mahbul Haque's court issued acquittal orders in four cases whereas Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Tofazzal Hossain's court acquitted her in one case on Tuesday, The Dhaka

In August 2016, a case was filed against Zia by a journalist for celebrating a "fake birthday". The complaint alleged that although five different birthdates of Zia were found through various sources, none was on August 15. She has been celebrating her birthday on August 15, which is the national mourning day commemorating the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman since 1996. The complaint alleged Zia celebrates her birthday on this day solely to tarnish reputation of Bangabandhu and his family.

Tribune newspaper reported. The defendant, 79-year-old Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson Zia, was acquitted after the plaintiff did not appear in court.

Zia was under house arrest for the past five years and returned to her home from the hospital as a free person following a presidential pardon last month.

-PTI

Sri Lanka restores burial rights

Colombo: A draft bill that would grant the right to every individual in Sri Lanka to decide whether that person's body should be disposed of by burial or cremation has been approved, a cabinet note said on Tuesday.

The 'Burial and Cremation Rights Bill' seeks to pacify the aggrieved minority.

The bill was approved on Monday after which Minister of Justice M U M Ali Sabry posted on X: "Today, the Cabinet of Ministers approved taking steps necessary to pass the 'Burial and Cremation Rights Bill', a proposal I strongly advocated for."

"This crucial piece of legislation ensures the right of every individual to choose between burial and cremation, respecting personal and religious beliefs. Together, we will uphold dignity and justice for all," he added in his post.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020 and 2021, an expert panel appointed by the then government had decided that there existed a serious risk of water contamination if bodies of patients who died of the virus were to be allowed burials.

The government didn't relent even in the face of concerns raised by Islamic nations on the decision.

The current dispensation earlier this year extended an apology to the Muslim minority on the issue and said compensation could be granted to those aggrieved by the forced cremation decision.

The act of cremating a dead body is forbidden in

Forced cremations during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic had caused much heartburn among the island nation's 9 per cent Muslim minority residents.

Cabinet note: "The right to decide whether the body of the dead person should be buried or cremated to be entrusted with the deceased individual's closest relative considering the deceased individual's preferences."

Islam and the callous disregard for religious rites by the state has understandably caused distress amongst the Muslim community, Amnesty International had then said.

The government didn't relent even in the face of concerns raised by Islamic nations on the decision.

The current dispensation earlier this year extended an apology to the Muslim minority on the issue and said compensation could be granted to those aggrieved by the forced cremation decision. The act of cremating a dead body is forbidden in Islam.

-PTI

Bus crashes into crowd, 11 dead

Beijing: A bus crashed into a group of students and their parents at a school in eastern China early Tuesday, killing 11 people and injuring 13, police said.

The students and parents were at the gate of a middle school in Tai'an city in the eastern province of Shandong just before 7:30 am, the Dongping county police department said in a posting on social media.

Six parents and five students were killed, it said. One of the injured was in serious condition while the others were listed as stable, the department said. The driver was in police custody and the incident was under investigation, it said.

The bus was specially customized for transporting students, it said but did not say who was responsible for operating the bus. Many schools contract out such services to private companies or individuals.

School safety, including overloaded school buses and poorly designed buildings, has long been a problem in China.

In 2017, a dozen people, including 11 kindergarten pupils, were killed when a school bus crashed and burst into flames in a tunnel in the eastern Chinese city of Weihai, also in Shandong province. The driver, six Chinese children and five South Korean children were killed. It remains unclear whether the crash was deliberate or the result of unsafe driving.

China has cracked down heavily on transportation dangers, adding training and vehicle inspections.

UN nuclear watchdog head in Ukraine

Kyiv: The head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog was holding talks with senior officials Tuesday in Ukraine over safety concerns for Europe's largest nuclear power plant, where attacks were recently reported nearby.

Rafael Mariano Grossi, the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, was making his 10th visit since the Russia-Ukraine war began in February 2022. Grossi posted on X that he was on his way to Zaporizhzhia to "help prevent a nuclear accident."

The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which came under Russian control in the wake of its 2022 full-scale invasion, saw artillery shelling in the area the previous day that damaged the facility's power access, according to its operator Energoatom, which blamed Russia for the attacks. "Russian shelling damaged one of the two external overhead lines through which ... the Zaporizhzhia NPP receives power from the Ukrainian power system," the operator said in a post on the Telegram messag-



ing and social network. "In the event of damage to the second line, an emergency situation will arise," it said, adding that technicians couldn't access the site of the damage because of the "real threat of repeated shelling."

Analysts say that an explosion at the Zaporizhzhia plant would produce radiation and likely trigger panic, but the radiation risk beyond the immediate blast area would be relatively low and nothing like the scale of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Also, if the wind is in an easterly direction, radiation could be pushed toward Russia.

The Zaporizhzhia region is one of four regions — along with Donetsk, Kherson and Luhansk — in southern and eastern Ukraine that Russia partly, and illegally, annexed in September 2022, seven months after it invaded its neighbour.

-AP

Imran approaches high court

Islamabad: Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan on Tuesday approached a high court to prevent his possible transfer to the military for trial in the cases concerning the violence on May 9 last year, two days after Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said a military trial of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party founder was "possible".

Khan filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) through his lawyer, Uzair Karamat Bhandari, to ensure that he remains under civilian jurisdiction.

He made Secretary of Law, Secretary of Interior, Inspector Generals of Islamabad and Punjab, the Director General of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and the Inspector General of Prisons as respondents in the plea.

The 71-year-old leader requested in the plea that the court issue an order to the authorities, restraining them from handing him over to military custody.

Congo: 129 died during attempted jailbreak

Kinshasa (Congo): An attempted jailbreak in Congo's main prison in the capital left at least 129 people dead, most of them in a stampede, authorities said on Tuesday.

A provisional assessment showed that 24 inmates were shot dead by "warning" gunshots as they tried to escape from the overcrowded Makala Central Prison in Kinshasa early Monday, Congolese Interior Minister Jacquemin Shabani said on the social platform X.

"There are also 59 injured people taken into care

Makala — among other prisons in Congo — is so overcrowded that people often die from starvation, activists say. Scores of inmates have been released this year as part of efforts to decongest the prisons. Makala, Congo's largest penitentiary with a capacity for 1,500 people, holds over 12,000 inmates, most of whom are awaiting trial, Amnesty International said in its latest country report. The facility has recorded previous jailbreaks, including in 2017 when an attack by a religious sect freed dozen.

by the government, as well as some cases of women raped," he said, adding that order has been restored at the prison, part of which was burned in the attack.

Gunfire inside the prison

started around midnight on Sunday into Monday morning, residents said. A senior government official earlier said only two deaths were confirmed during the incident, a figure disputed by

rights activists. Videos that appeared to be from the prison showed bodies lying on the ground, many of them with visible injuries. Another video showed inmates carrying people who

appeared to be dead into a vehicle.

There were no signs of forced entry into the prison, which is located in the city centre, 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the presidential palace. The attempted escape was plotted from inside the prison by inmates in one of the wings, Mbemba Kabuya, the deputy justice minister, told the local Top Congo FM radio.

In the hours that followed the attack, the road to the prison was cordoned off while authorities convened a panel to investigate the incident.

-AP

Indian jailed for molestation

Singapore: A 52-year-old Indian national has been sentenced to 14 months of jail for molestating a teenage girl from a known family.

For molestating a child below 14 years old, an offender can be jailed for up to five years, fined, caned, or receive any combination of such punishments. The man cannot be caned as he is over 50.

The man, who cannot be named due to a gag order to

protect the girl's identity, pleaded guilty to a molestation charge, The Straits Times newspaper said.

The 13-year-old girl trusted him enough to go on a motorcycle ride with him one evening in October 2022 when he molested her near a playground in Sembawang, northern Singapore, Deputy Public Prosecutor Suriya Prakash told the court.

-PTI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives customary Guard of Honour upon his arrival, in Brunei Darussalam.

Pic-PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

"Today, I am embarking on a first ever bilateral visit to Brunei Darussalam. As we celebrate the 40 years of our diplomatic relations, I look forward to my meetings with His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah and other esteemed members of the Royal family to advance our historical relationship to new heights."

The extravagance of Brunei's Sultan

New Delhi: The residence of Sultan of Brunei is called 'Istana Nurul Iman' and the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah is proud of it. This is the world's largest palace is an epitome of extravagance, spanning two million square feet and having 1,700 rooms and a 22-carat gold dome.

Brunei, which is strategically located on the island of Borneo, is smaller than Indian states like Sikkim and Tripura, but the Sultan's immense wealth and lavish lifestyle has re-



peatedly grabbed attention.

The second-longest reigning monarch in the world after the UK's Queen Elizabeth II, Bolkiah reportedly has a net worth of

\$30 billion. Brunei is rich in oil and natural gas reserves. The Sultan and his family reportedly accounted for half of all the Rolls Royce car purchases in the

world during the 1990s.

Bolkiah is also known for losing his purse strings, even for basic necessities. According to a report in The Times, Bolkiah regularly spends \$20,000 on fly-

The most important aspect of Bolkiah's luxurious lifestyle that grabs eyeballs is his private car collection, valued at an estimated \$5 billion. The collection includes a gold-coated Rolls Royce, around 450 Ferraris and 380 Bentleys. Not only luxurious vehicles, but even rare pieces like Lamborghini Urraco, Ferrari 456 GT Venice (one of only seven in the world) and a Porsche 959 occupy a pride of place in one of his 200 garages.

The Istana Nurul Iman, the world's largest palace as per the Guinness Book of World Records, takes the crown, consisting of 1,700 rooms, 250 bathrooms, and five swimming pools. Each room has gold wash basins too.

ing his designated barber from London to Brunei to take care of his grooming needs. Sultan boasting of a Boeing 747-400, a Boeing 767-200 and an Airbus A340-200 jet.

EDITORIAL

Caste Conundrum

In an unexpected turn, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has voiced its support for a caste-based census, framing it as a tool to aid government welfare schemes aimed at upliftment of communities that have fallen behind. This endorsement comes with a caveat: it should not be used as a political tool for elections. Traditionally, the RSS, as the ideological parent of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has advocated for a unified Hindu identity, ostensibly transcending caste divisions. Yet, its recent endorsement of a caste census suggests a nuanced, perhaps even conflicted, approach to India's deeply entrenched social stratification. This endorsement raises critical questions: Is the RSS diverging from the BJP's stance at a politically fraught moment for the latter? And, crucially, does it tacitly acknowledge the persistence of caste as a formidable social reality?

The BJP, facing mounting pressure from opposition parties led by the Congress as well as from its own coalition allies within the NDA like the Janata Dal (United) and Lok Janshakti Party, has been circumspect on the issue of a caste census. Wary of potential electoral repercussions, the BJP has neither supported nor outright rejected the demand given that the Bihar government, led by the JD(U), has already conducted a caste census.

Politically, the RSS's stance complicates the BJP's position. It bolsters the opposition's narrative that caste-based inequities require systematic acknowledgment and redressal. Moreover, it puts the BJP in a tight spot: opposing the census could alienate OBC and Dalit voters, who are increasingly vocal about their demands for representation; endorsing it, however, risks backlash from upper-caste segments of its base, who have been wary of expanding reservation quotas.

Yet, a closer examination suggests the RSS's position is perhaps not entirely at odds with the BJP's broader strategy.

The RSS's endorsement of a caste census can be seen as a pragmatic recognition of caste's enduring influence in Indian society — a reality that cannot be glossed over by nationalist rhetoric alone.

While the BJP has sought to consolidate Hindu votes by downplaying caste distinctions, the RSS's call for a census acknowledges that caste remains a potent social and political force, particularly in states where identity politics drive electoral outcomes. By supporting the census, the RSS could be aiming to navigate this complex terrain, ensuring that the BJP does not alienate critical voter blocs as it had done in the recently concluded 2024 general election.

This development also underscores the RSS's internal balancing act: reconciling its vision of a casteless Hindu society with the practical realities of India's caste-based polity. The RSS has long propagated the notion of social harmony, advocating for the upliftment of marginalized communities within the Hindu fold. However, its support for a caste census implicitly accepts the need for data-driven policies that address socio-economic disparities along caste lines — disparities that persist despite decades of reservation policies and affirmative action.

By
Abhijit Mulye

As Indians, we are used to scenarios where people arrive late at appointments, trains, buses, or planes are delayed, and events start later than scheduled. This is frequently and sarcastically referred to as 'Indian Stretchable Time', a play on the official time zone of Indian Standard Time (IST). It reflects a passive acceptance of our collective disregard for punctuality. The problem becomes even more pronounced as we delve deeper into the grassroots levels of society. At these levels, we often encounter tragic news stories where lives

Delays in critical areas like healthcare and the judiciary in India highlight severe systemic issues. Lives are lost due to slow medical responses, and unresolved court cases reveal inefficiencies within the judicial system. Immediate reforms are essential to address these pressing problems and improve justice delivery.

PUBLIC INTEREST

The Toll of Judicial Delays on India's Justice System

have been lost due to delays in receiving critical medical treatment. Similarly, there are numerous instances where judicial cases are left unresolved, not because justice was served but because plaintiffs or defendants passed away before their cases could be concluded.

Recently, President Draupadi Murmu voiced her concern over the issue of delayed justice. Pendency and backlog of cases is a big challenge before the judiciary, she said, suggesting measures like special Lok Adalat week should be organised more frequently to tackle the issue, urging all stakeholders to prioritise finding a solution.

The preamble of the Indian Constitution identifies securing justice social and economic as one of its fundamental mandates. Furthermore, Article 39-A of the Constitution directs the state 'to secure equal justice and free legal aid for the citizens'. However, this goal remains elusive even 77 years after independence. Our judicial system has failed to address basic issues like quick and inexpensive justice and safeguarding the rights of the poor and the vulnerable. According to estimates from a former Supreme Court judge, more than five crore cases are currently pending in Indian courts, with over 10 percent of them being older than ten years. If this is a sign of the collapse of the justice delivery system in India, one will have to think of what can be done to revitalise the system.

When court decisions in a heinous crime like rape come after a generation has passed, the common man feels that the judicial process lacks sensitivity. It is a sad aspect of our social life that, in some cases, people with resources continue to roam around fearlessly and freely even after committing crimes. Those who fall victim to these crimes are often left to live in fear, almost as if they are the ones who have committed a wrongdoing. It's a cruel irony that these innocent individuals, already suffering from the impact of the crimes against them, are forced to endure a life



filled with anxiety, as though they were the perpetrators rather than the victims.

Several measures have been discussed to revitalise the ailing justice delivery system. The COVID pandemic came as a boon when one thinks of the modernisation of the legal system, including the digitisation of court records, online filing of cases, and e-court services. Reforms in the criminal justice system, which include measures like improving forensic capabilities and ensuring timely investigation and prosecution, are expected to fall in line soon. Measures like increasing the number of judges, providing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration, making legal aid available to those who cannot afford to hire a lawyer, and setting up fast-track special courts have been discussed for a long time.

While speaking at the National Conference of District Judiciary, organised by the Supreme Court of India, President Murmu underlined the fact that providing justice to the people through the district courts with sensitivity and promptness and at a low cost is the basis of the success of our judiciary. She stressed that faith and reverence towards justice have been a part of Indian tradition, which is why

people consider every judge in the country as God. This puts a great responsibility on the justice delivery system at the grassroots as the district-level courts determine the image of the judiciary in the minds of crores of citizens. Unfortunately, today, let alone the poor people from villages, but the comparatively well-to-do urban middle-class people too are afraid to go to court. They become participants in the justice process of the court only under great compulsion. They often tolerate injustice silently because they feel that fighting for justice can make their lives more miserable. Hence, every possible measure should be taken to change this situation.

The persistent delays in various aspects of Indian life, from public transportation to the judicial system, reflect a deeper cultural and systemic issue that urgently needs to be addressed. Revitalising the justice delivery system, particularly at the grassroots level, is not just a legal necessity but a moral imperative, one that will restore faith in the judiciary and protect the rights of all citizens, especially the most vulnerable. The consequences of this attitude are most severe in the judiciary, where delayed justice is, in reality, denied justice.

GLOBAL WATCH

Starmmer's Hurdles: Riots, Immigration, and Labour's Future

In his first two months in office, Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer finds himself grappling with the mounting challenges that have historically bedevilled Labour leaders - economic unrest, immigration controversies, and internal party discord.

Having ascended to the premiership on promises of stability and reform, Starmer's favourability ratings have fallen to their lowest levels since he became PM.

The most urgent issue confronting Starmer is the wave of riots that have erupted across major British cities following the stabbing of three young girls at a dance class in the seaside town of Southport in the north of England.

The violence, in towns and cities across England and in Northern Ireland, was followed by the worst unrest the UK has seen in more than a decade, aggravated by misinformation online and anti-immigration sentiment.

The riots recalled the urban unrest of Tony Blair's third term, when protests over the Iraq War and fuel tax hikes roiled the nation. In a recent visit to Paris, Starmer underscored the gravity of the "far-right threat," describing it as a "very real" danger that must be countered with effective govern-

The British PM's success or failure in overcoming the menacing triad of challenges will determine whether he can establish a lasting legacy or succumb to the pitfalls that have ensnared his predecessors.



ance. He emphasized that the antidote to populism and nationalism lies in delivering progressive, democratic solutions to the challenges facing the UK and Europe.

The riots reignited the immigration debate and Britain's asylum policy, with the Conservative opposition quick to pounce on perceived government weaknesses. For Starmer, this is not just a policy challenge but a test of Labour's credibility on immigration — a historically weak point for the party. During Gordon Brown's tenure, Labour struggled to reconcile its pro-immigration stance with public concerns over border control, contributing to the party's defeat in 2010. Starmer has pledged a "fair but firm" approach, promising tighter controls while protecting genuine asylum seekers.

Starmer's tenure is also marred by internal discord within Labour, a legacy of the party's struggles since the end of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. While Starmer has made progress in rebranding Labour as a moderate, pragmatic alternative to the Conservatives, deep ideological rifts persist. His attempts to shift the party towards the center have met with resistance

from left-wing factions, mirroring the struggles faced by Neil Kinnock in the 1980s. Like Kinnock, Starmer faces the daunting task of uniting a fractured party while appealing to the broader electorate with centrist policies—a challenge that has historically vexed Labour leaders.

To navigate these early crises, Starmer could benefit from the lessons of Harold Wilson, who adeptly managed internal party divisions and external pressures through political pragmatism and economic acumen during his second stint as Prime Minister in the mid-1970s. Starmer's challenges are similar: a volatile economy, a divided party, and a sceptical electorate. However, unlike Wilson, Starmer operates in a more fragmented political landscape, with rising populism complicating his path forward.

The stakes are high for Starmer. His ability to manage the riots, address immigration concerns, and unify his party will not only define his political future but also shape the Labour Party's trajectory. The early months of a Labour government are often the most telling, and Starmer's forthcoming actions will be scrutinized closely by both allies and adversaries.

STATES WATCH

Shifting alliances Political Chessboard

Today marks a decade since the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana was launched. For me, this initiative was more than just a policy - it was an endeavour to build an India where each and every citizen, irrespective of one's economic background, has access to the formal banking apparatus.

Many of you, especially the youth, would be thinking - why does this matter so much? After all, in this age, having a bank account would be very basic and even taken for granted. However, when we assumed office in 2014, the situation was very different. It was almost 65 years since Independence, but access to banking was a distant dream for almost half of our households. There was a world where savings were kept at home, vulnerable to loss and theft. Access to credit was often at the mercy of predatory lenders. The absence of financial security held back so many dreams.

This problem becomes even more ironical considering the fact that four and a half decades ago, banks were nationalised by the then (Congress) Government and that too in the name of the poor! Yet, the poor

The history of political alliances in Jammu and Kashmir has been a tale of convenience and contradiction, with old alliances being revived ahead of the 2024 election and new courses being adopted



Jammu and Kashmir

empowerment is concerned. Almost 30 crore women have been brought into the banking system.

Likewise, the benefits of the scheme and the other benefits that come thanks to a bank account have positively impacted crores of SC, ST and OBC families. They have also benefited those families who belong to the middle and Neo-middle classes. Had it not been for the Jan Dhan Yojana, the MUDRA Yojana, or the social security schemes of the Government, namely the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and the Atal Pension Yojana would never have been as impactful.

never got access to banking.

When the Jan Dhan Yojana was rolled out, I remember the scepticism that surrounded it too. Some people asked - could it really be possible to bring such a large number of people into the banking system? Will this effort lead to any concrete changes? Yes. The scale of the challenge was enormous, but so was the determination of the people of India to ensure it becomes a reality.

The success of the Jan Dhan Yojana has two parts to it. One is in the numbers:

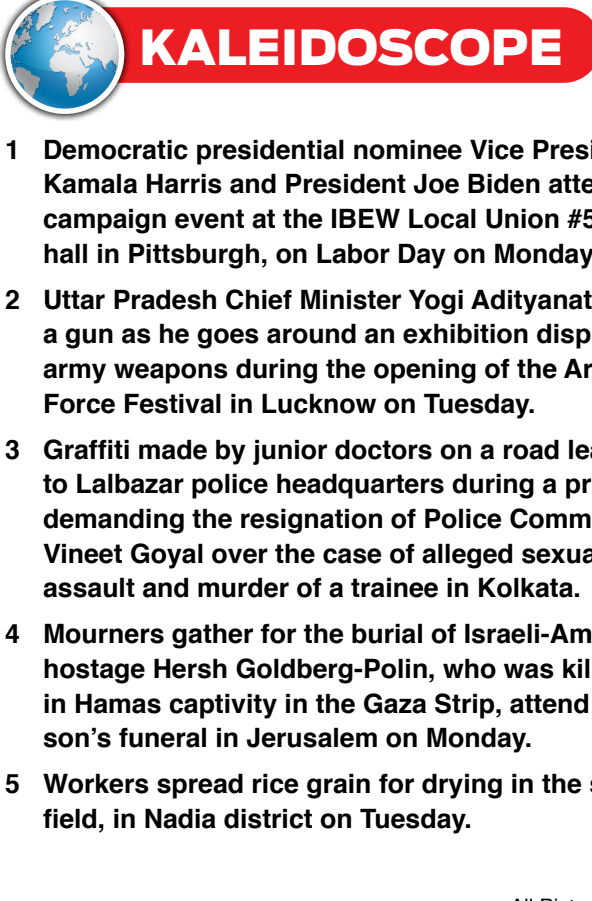
Today, over 53 crore people who never imagined they would enter a bank have bank accounts.

These accounts have a deposit balance of over Rs. 2.3 lakh crore.

Over 65 per cent of the accounts are either in rural or semi-urban areas, thus taking the movement of financial inclusion outside the metros.

Direct transfers worth almost Rs. 39 lakh crore have taken place. But, the second part goes beyond the impressive numbers.

Jan Dhan Yojana has proven to be game-changing as far as women's



KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris and President Joe Biden attend a campaign event at the IBEW Local Union #5 union hall in Pittsburgh, on Labor Day on Monday.
- 2 Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath views a gun as he goes around an exhibition displaying army weapons during the opening of the Armed Force Festival in Lucknow on Tuesday.
- 3 Graffiti made by junior doctors on a road leading to Lalbazar police headquarters during a protest demanding the resignation of Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal over the case of alleged sexual assault and murder of a trainee in Kolkata.
- 4 Mourners gather for the burial of Israeli-American hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who was killed in Hamas captivity in the Gaza Strip, attend their son's funeral in Jerusalem on Monday.
- 5 Workers spread rice grain for drying in the sun at a field, in Nadia district on Tuesday.

All Pictures PTI, AP

TALK OF THE TOWN

Could mass protests persuade Netanyahu to agree to a cease-fire deal?

By Tia Goldenberg

Israelis were plunged into grief and anger this weekend after the military said six hostages were killed by their captors in Gaza just as troops were closing in on their location.

The rage sparked massive protests and a general strike — the most intense domestic pressure on Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu since the start of the war nearly 11 months ago.

Many Israelis blame Netanyahu for the mounting number of dead hostages and are calling for a cease-fire agreement to free the remaining roughly 100 captives — even if that means ending the conflict. Sunday's demonstrations were the largest show of support for a hostage deal since October 7, when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel and kidnapped 250 people.

But Netanyahu has faced fierce pressure to reach a cease-fire agreement before, from key governing partners to top security officials and even Israel's most important international ally, the US. Yet a deal to wind down the war in Gaza remains elusive.

Here's a look at how the public outcry in Israel could affect Netanyahu's next moves in the war:

Netanyahu's position

Throughout the war, critics have claimed Netanyahu has put his political survival above all else, including the fate of the hostages. His rule relies on support from two ultranationalist parties that were once at the fringes of Israeli politics but now hold key positions in government.

Headed by Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, they oppose any deal that ends the



People attend a rally demanding a cease-fire deal and the immediate release of hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip after the deaths of six hostages in the Palestinian territory in Tel Aviv, Israel on Monday. Pic-AP/PTI

war or sets free Palestinian prisoners convicted of killing Israelis.

They have vowed to topple the government should Netanyahu agree to a cease-fire — a step that would trigger elections that could remove Netanyahu from office.

Netanyahu blames Hamas for the lack of a deal.

Looming over the prime minister is also his ongoing trial on corruption charges. If Netanyahu is voted out of power, he will lose his platform to rail against the judicial system, which he accuses of being biased. He also wouldn't be able to move ahead with his government's planned changes to the legal system that critics say could affect the trial and help him avoid a conviction.

Hamas has rejected those demands as deal-breakers — and the condition has prompted clashes with Netanyahu's own defense minister, who says a deal that frees the hostages should be a priority.

As the toll of the war in Gaza has mounted — with tens of thousands killed and whole swaths of the territory decimated — Israel has become increasingly isolated internationally. On Monday, when asked if Netanyahu was doing enough to negotiate a deal, US President Joe Biden responded, "No."

Biden, who has never seen eye to eye with the Israeli leader even though their nations are close allies, has grown increasingly critical of his counterpart's leadership. But the timing on Monday's remark was particularly

What he cares about is his political survival. His political survival with Ben-Gvir and Smotrich doesn't allow him to end the war and bring back the hostages.

- Reuven Hazan, a political scientist at Jerusalem's Hebrew University:

pointed, coming as it did after the demonstrations and outpouring of grief for the hostages.

The largest show of support for a hostage deal

Many Israelis accuse Netanyahu of obstructing a deal to stay in power and say that by not ending the war, he is putting the lives of the hostages in danger.

Israel has seen weekly protests in solidarity with the hostages since the start of the war. But over time, as Israelis have tried to return to a semblance of normalcy or have been preoccupied by fears of a regional war



Demonstrators light a bonfire during a protest demanding a cease-fire deal and the immediate release of hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip after the deaths of six hostages in the Palestinian territory, in Tel Aviv, Israel. Pic-AP/PTI

with Iran or the militant group Hezbollah, the protests have dwindled in size. That has eased pressure on Netanyahu and talks toward a deal have repeatedly fizzled.

But on Sunday, hundreds of thousands of people poured into central Tel Aviv, banging drums and chanting "Deal, now!" About 100 hostages remain in captivity in Gaza, roughly a third of them said to be dead. Israel and Hamas have been mulling a three-phased proposal that would set them free and end the war.

It was the largest demonstration Israel has seen at least since before the war, when Israelis took the streets weekly to protest a plan by Netanyahu to overhaul the judiciary. While the protests coupled with a general strike prompted Netanyahu and his government to walk back or soften some decisions, the overhaul was only put on hold when the war broke out.

The limits of public pressure

The current public outcry has its limits. Sunday's protest failed to break longstanding political boundaries and appeared to be largely made up of the same liberal, secular Israelis who protested the overhaul and against Netanyahu's leadership while on trial for alleged corruption.

Many of Netanyahu's supporters say relenting on any position in talks now after the deaths of the six hostages would signal to Hamas that it can reap rewards from

Netanyahu says he has the country's best interests in mind and insists that the military operation in Gaza is the best way to bring about the hostages' freedom. He also wants any deal to keep Israeli troops in two strips of land in Gaza, and reaffirmed his insistence that he will never agree to a withdrawal from one of those areas on Monday.

such violence.

Similarly, Monday's strike reflected those same political divisions. Liberal municipalities in central Israel, including Tel Aviv, joined the strike, leading to public daycares and kindergartens closing as well as other services. But other cities, mostly with conservative and religious populations that tend to support Netanyahu, including Jerusalem, did not join the strike. And a labour court cut the strike short by several hours, hobbling its efficacy.

Without large sustained protests across a broader swath of society, it's hard to see how Netanyahu will feel enough pressure to change his approach, said Hazan, the political scientist. And so long as his government is stable, he may stick to his demands in the negotiations to appease his coalition and ignore the protests entirely.

Still, relatives of the hostages found killed in Gaza expressed hope that the protests marked a turning point in the war that might force progress on a deal.

In a eulogy for Hersh Goldberg-Polin, an Israeli-American who became one of the most high-profile captives, his father spoke of the emotional resonance the deaths might have.

"For 330 days, mama and I sought the proverbial stone that we could turn over to save you," Jon Polin said. "Maybe, just maybe, your death is the stone, the fuel, that will bring home the remaining" hostages. -AP

"Hamas was the one that pulled the trigger, but Netanyahu is the one who sentenced (the hostages) to death," said an editorial Sunday in the liberal daily Haaretz.



Yashaswini Ghoshal of Athlead Goa Challengers in action during her match against U Mumba TT at the Ultimate Table Tennis 2024 tournament at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, in Chennai on Monday. Pic-AP/PTI

Ronaldo resumes Portugal career

Geneva: Cristiano Ronaldo has extended his record-setting Portugal career so long he's seeing a new generation of Spain players grow up to rule international soccer.

"When I will feel like I'm not adding anymore, I'll be the first to leave," the 39-year-old Ronaldo said ahead of national team soccer resuming in Europe this week. "(My motivation) is to come to the national team and to win the Nations League."

Portugal and Spain both play on Thursday to start a new UEFA Nations League less than two months after the European Championship final in Germany.

Though Ronaldo has captained Portugal to win past editions of both competitions — the 2019 Nations League and Euro 2016 — Spain now holds both trophies sparked by an exciting wave of talent. Lamine Yamal, the 17-year-old sensation of Euro 2024, and 20-year-old Gavi were not born when Ronaldo played in his first major tournament final, the Euro 2004 loss to Greece.

Some of Ronaldo's peak career years clashed with the great Spain team that won an unprecedented three straight titles at Euro 2008, the 2010 World Cup and Euro 2012. In the last two of those, Spain eliminated Portugal in the knockout rounds.

Now Spain is back on top before the 2026 World Cup, that could yet see a 41-year-old Ronaldo — and Lionel Messi who would turn 39 during the tournament in North America — play at a record sixth edition. When asked about his World Cup plans, Ronaldo said in translated comments, "I can't give you an answer because I don't know what will happen."

Time to start afresh, retain



Bengaluru: Indian men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh said it's time to move on from the euphoria of a second successive Olympic bronze medal if the side desires to retain its Asian Champions Trophy title in Hulunbuir, China this month.

Under Harmanpreet's leadership, India won a second successive bronze medal for the first time in over half-a-century at the Olympics in Paris recently. But Harmanpreet said it's time to move and start afresh after a deserving break for the Asian showpiece to be held from September 8 to 17.

Besides India, the Asian Champions Trophy will feature Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Japan and hosts China

"With a brief break after the Paris Olympics, the team is ready to take on the best hockey playing nations in Asia and prove its mettle."

"We had a good outing in Paris but hockey is a very close game, we cannot rest on our laurels," the skipper said before leaving for China in the early hours on Tuesday.

"The aim will be to play high-octane hockey and retain our title."

India will begin their

campaign against China on September 8, followed by a match against Japan on September 9.

After a one-day break, India will take on Malaysia on September 11, followed by Korea on September 12 and arch-rivals Pakistan on September 14.

The top four teams will advance to the semifinals slated for September 16, with final scheduled for September 17.

Vice captain Vivek Sagar Prasad said the side has a few new players in the team this time around, who have immense potential and are eager to perform.

"We will do our best to create a nurturing environment for them on the way to our title defence," he said.

-PTI

US Open

Bopanna-Sutjiadi enter semis

New York: Veteran Indian tennis star Rohan Bopanna and his Indonesian partner Aldila Sutjiadi entered the semifinals of the US Open mixed doubles with a hard-fought win over Australian Matthew Ebden and Barbora Krejčíková of the Czech Republic here.

The eighth seeded Indian-Indonesian pair registered a 7-6(4) 2-6 10-7 win over fourth seeds Ebden and Krejčíková in the quarterfinal that lasted one hour and 33 minutes on Monday night.

Bopanna and Sutjiadi had earlier defeated Aus-

tralian duo of John Pears and Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic 0-6 7-6(5) 10-7 in a second-round match.

Bopanna and Sutjiadi will play American pair of Donald Young and Taylor Townsend in the semifinals.

The 44-year-old Bopanna had already crashed out of the men's doubles competition after he and his partner Ebden, seeded second, lost 1-6 5-7 to the 16th seed Argentine combination of Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni in the third round.

-PTI



Use Of Performance Enhancing Drugs

Pakistani stripped of CWG medal

Karachi: Pakistani wrestler Ali Asad has been stripped of his bronze medal in the Commonwealth Games after testing positive for using performance enhancing drugs.

The Pakistan Wrestling Federation confirmed that Ali Asad had not only been banned for four years but also stripped of his bronze which he won in the 2022 Birmingham CWG.

"His tests carried out by the International Testing Agency (ITA) have confirmed he took performance enhancing drugs during the event," one official said.

The ruling on his case came this week, following



investigation by the ITA.

The official said that the ban on Asad came after he waived his right to a hearing and also didn't respond to the allegations within the given deadline.

Pakistani weightlifters and wrestlers have faced a spate of bans from the International Weightlifting Fed-

eration (IWF) for failing dope tests in international competitions.

In May this year, the IWF handed four-year bans to four Pakistani weightlifters for anti-doping rule violation.

Abdur Rehman, Sharjeel Butt, Ghulam Mustafa and Farhan Amjad were suspended in 2022 after they refused to give samples to the International Testing Agency (ITA) team on November 10, 2021.

The four weightlifters went to Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) to defend themselves but the suspension remained.

-PTI

Boyfriends sets athlete on fire

Nairobi (Kenya): A Ugandan athlete living in Kenya was attacked and set on fire by her boyfriend and is receiving treatment for burns on 75% of her body, police said.

Rebecca Cheptegei, a distance runner who finished at the 44th position in the 2024 Paris Olympics, was attacked in her house in the western Trans Nzoia County.

Trans Nzoia County Police Commander Jeremiah ole Kosiom said Monday that Cheptegei's boyfriend, Dickson Ndiema, poured it on her and set her ablaze during a disagreement.

Financial Crunch Affects Pakistan Hockey

Coach quits over long contract

Karachi: Head coach Roelant Oltmans ended his association with the Pakistan hockey team after he refused to join the side in China for the upcoming Asian Champions Trophy, citing the lack of a long-term contract.

Oltmans, who has been working with the senior team from earlier this year, was scheduled to join the team directly in Hulunbuir but pulled out at the last moment.

"Oltmans has notified the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) that he is not available for coaching as he wants a long-term proper contract with the PHF," an official



source in the PHF said. The six-team ACT tournament is scheduled to be held between September 8 and 17.

The PHF source said Oltmans, who had also worked as Indian hockey team's High Performance Director and head coach between 2013 and 2017, was offered an

"event-to-event" contract. "The PHF has been hiring him on assignment basis due to fund issues and he was supposed to coach the team during the event in China and then return home."

The PHF has faced a financial crunch for a while now and the Pakistan Sports Board has also refused to release funds of 50 million rupees for 27 players and six officials for the ACT. The PSB, however, said it had offered to pay for the air tickets of 19 players and four officials as the funds being demanded by the PHF were high.

-PTI

Bhagyashri Jadhav finishes fifth

Paris: India's Bhagyashri Jadhav finished fifth in the women's shot put (F34) at the Paralympics here on Tuesday.

Jadhav, making her second appearance at the Paralympics, produced a throw of 7.28m but it was not enough for a podium finish. China's Lijuan Zou won the gold with a season best of 9.14m while Poland's Lucyna Kornobys secured the silver with an effort of 8.33m.

The 39-year-old Indian hails from Nanded district in Maharashtra.

-PTI

'Sweet' sacrifice and sleepless nights

Sumit Antil speaks on defending Paralympic gold

Paris: Carrying a back injury for more than a year, history-making Indian javelin thrower Sumit Antil's path to Paralympic glory was paved with a 'sweet sacrifice' and several sleepless nights.

The 26-year-old faced a tough choice in the build-up to the Paralympics -- give up his favourite sweets or put his career at risk due to rapid weight gain and a back injury that troubled him before the Asian Para Games in Hangzhou last year where he won a gold.

On the advice of his physio, Antil grudgingly gave up sweets, followed a strict training regimen and shed around 12 kilograms in just two months. His sacrifice paid off on Monday when the Sonapat-lad became the first Indian man and only the second Indian overall to defend a Paralympic title, clinching gold in the F64 category with a record throw of 70.59m.

This new mark bettered his previous Paralympic best of 68.55m set in Tokyo Paralympics

three years ago. "I've reduced around 10-12 kilos. My physio, Vipin Bhai, told me that the weight was putting pressure on my spine. So, I cut out sweets, which are my favourite, and focused on eating right," he revealed in a media interaction here.

Fixing his back by taking adequate rest is the first thing Antil will do after his return to India. He also thanked his coach (Arun Kumar) for always knowing what he needed, staying up nights to plan his schedule, and putting in tremendous effort. He said his coach had worked even harder than him. Antil dreamed of becoming a wrestler and was inspired by Olympic bronze-medallist Yogeshwar Dutt.

However, in 2015, his life changed when a tractor accident led to the amputation of his left leg below the knee. Undeterred, Sumit was introduced to para-sports in 2017 by a fellow athlete from his village.

-PTI

I was not at 100 per cent. I had to take a painkiller before my throw, and even during training, I haven't been at my best. The first priority is to fix my back after we return to India because rest is crucial with the type of injury I have. With competitions so close, I haven't been able to rest properly and have constantly taken precautions to protect my back. I've been careful with every movement to avoid aggravating it further.



Sumit Antil poses for photographs after winning the gold medal in javelin throw F64 event in Paris Paralympics on Monday. Sumit secured gold with a 70.59 m throw.

Pic-PTI