

THE PERFECT VOICE



Low vote transfer from NCP resulted in BJP's poor LS showing, says Fadnavis ... pg 2



Eco Sensitive Zone surrounding Gir ... pg 6



Chess happened by accident, says Vidit ... pg 10

43 die while taking holy dip in Bihar

THE DECEASED INCLUDE 37 CHILDREN. THREE WOMEN ARE REPORTEDLY MISSING, SAY POLICE

During the popular 'Jivitputrika' festival, women fast for the well-being of their children and both take holy dips.



Patna: At least 43 people, including 37 children, drowned and three others went missing while taking holy dips in rivers and ponds in separate incidents during the 'Jivitputrika' festival in Bihar, the state government said on Thursday. The incidents occurred in 15 districts of the state during the festival held on Wednesday. "A total of 43 bodies have been recovered so far. Fur-

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced an exgratia of Rs 4 lakh for the next of kin of the deceased. The process of providing the exgratia has begun and family members of eight deceased have already received it, he said.

ther search operation is on," a statement issued by the Disaster Management Department (DMD) said. "The incidents of drowning were reported from East and West Champaran, Nalanda, Aurangabad, Kaimur, Buxar, Siwan, Rohtas, Saran, Patna, Vaishali, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur, Gopalganj and Arwal districts. The state government of-

officials said that at least three women are reportedly missing. Their search is going on. The tragedy has taken place at a time when Bihar government is facing harsh criticism for the sub standard quality of the bridges it has built over the rivers across the state. Since the drowning incidents are reported in 15 districts the CM Nitish Kumar is likely to face a tough time in handling the situation. -PTI

Did Modi resign in Godhra case: Sidda

Bengaluru: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah reiterated on Thursday he will not resign as he again denied any wrongdoing in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA). Terming the charges against him a "BJP conspiracy", Siddaramaiah said he would wage a legal fight. A special court here on Wednesday ordered a probe by the Lokayukta police in Mysuru against the Chief Minister in the MUDA site

allotment 'scam', setting the stage for registering an FIR against him. "There is no question of resigning, because I have done no wrong. This (charges against him) is a BJP (conspiracy)," Siddaramaiah told reporters here. "I won't resign, let them get Kumaraswamy's resignation, he is on bail. He is in whose Cabinet, in which government? He should give (resignation first). Did Narendra Modi resign? Despite hundreds of people dying, he did not resign. I have done no wrong." -PTI

Did the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi as the then Gujarat CM) resign in the Godhra incident as FIR was done (then)? (H D Kumaraswamy (JDS leader) is in Narendra Modi's government, he is on bail, has he given resignation?" the Chief Minister asked. "Have they given resignation?" -Siddaramaiah, CM

Simple jail to Raut in defamation case

By Correspondent

Mumbai: A magistrate's court in Mumbai on Thursday sentenced Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut to 15-day simple imprisonment after convicting him in a defamation case filed by BJP leader Kirit Somaiya's wife Medha more than two years ago. However, the court later suspended the sentence for 30 days and granted him bail. Raut (62) was convicted by Judicial Magistrate (First Class) Aarti Kulkarni for an offence committed under IPC section 500 (pun-

ishment for defamation). Besides handing jail sentence, the court also imposed a fine of Rs 25,000 on the Rajya Sabha MP. After the magistrate pronounced the verdict, Raut's lawyer filed two pleas - one for suspension of the sentence to enable his client to appeal against the ruling in a higher court and the other for granting him bail. The JMFC allowed both pleas. Medha Somaiya, in a complaint filed through advocate Vivekanand Gupta, in 2022 claimed Raut had made baseless and defamatory allegations against her



and husband in the media, accusing them of being involved in a Rs 100-crore "scam" related to the construction and maintenance of public toilets under the jurisdiction of the Mirambhander Municipal Corporation. The Shiv Sena (UBT) leader's statements were printed, published and circulated to the general public at large through electronic and print media. They also went viral on social media platforms and were read and heard by people at large, according to the complaint. "The statements made by the accused (Raut) to the media are per se defamatory. The statements have been made to malign my character in the eyes of the general public," Medha Somaiya had stated. During arguments on the

complaint, Advocate Gupta told the court Raut was "almost a habitual offender" as there were other defamation cases, too, pending against him. The lawyer said they had sought two years' prison sentence for Raut during arguments on the quantum of punishment. Advocate Manoj Pingale, appearing for Raut, pleaded for minimum sentence, contending the statements made by his client were in "public interest". The court, after hearing both sides, sentenced the Sena (UBT) leader to 15-day simple jail term.

Won't stop striking Hezbollah: Netanyahu

Tel Aviv: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel is striking Hezbollah "with full force" and will not stop until its goals are achieved. Netanyahu spoke as he landed in New York to attend the annual U.N. General Assembly meeting and as U.S. and European officials were pressing for a 21-day halt in fighting between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah to give time for negotiations. Netanyahu said Israel's "policy is clear. We are continuing to strike Hezbollah with full force. And we will not stop until we reach all our goals, chief among them the return of the residents of the north securely to their homes." Israel has dramatically escalated strikes in Lebanon this week, saying it is targeting Hezbollah. Israeli leaders have said they are determined to stop more than 11



Lebanese soldiers cordon off the area at the site of an Israeli airstrike in Beirut Thursday. Pic:AP/PTI

months of cross-border fire by the militant group into Israel, which has forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of Israelis from communities in the north. **11 killed in Israeli strike in Gaza** Deir Al-Balah: An Israeli airstrike hit a school sheltering thousands of displaced Palestinians in northern Gaza on Thursday,

killings at least 11 people and wounding 22, including women and children, the territory's Health Ministry said. The Israeli military confirmed it struck the school in the Jabalia refugee camp, saying it was targeting Hamas militants inside who were planning attacks on Israeli troops. The claim couldn't be independently confirmed.

Footage from the al-Falouja School showed rescue workers rushing casualties out of the school compound amid widespread debris and crowds of people. One video showed men wrapping a mangled, severed torso in a plastic sheet and putting body parts into a cooler. Gaza's Health Ministry didn't immediately provide a breakdown of how many of the casualties were women and children. Israeli forces have repeatedly struck schools, saying Hamas fighters use them as "command centers" to plan attacks. The military says it uses precision weapons to avoid civilian casualties. The strikes have brought heavy death tolls. Tens of thousands of Palestinians are living packed in schools across Gaza after fleeing their homes in the face of Israeli bombardment and offensives. -AP

Woman drowns in Raigad waterfall

Alibag: A 22-year-old woman on an outing with her family members drowned in a waterfall in Raigad district during heavy rains, a police officer said on Thursday. Swapnali Kshirsagar lost her life in the Khopoli waterfall in the Khopoli area, about 70 km from Mumbai, on Wednesday. The woman and her kin, residents of Khopoli, had gone to the waterfall for a picnic. While they were in the plunge pool at the base of the waterfall, the flow of water suddenly increased due to heavy downpours. Kshirsagar lost her balance and got swept away. Four of her family members managed to save themselves by holding one another's hands, the police officer said. Police later recovered her body from near a bridge downstream, the officer added. -PTI



Zomato delivery partner Rachana carries her child on a bike as she delivers amid rain, in Rajkot on Thursday. Pic:AP/PTI

Ancient prasad recipe for Vrindavan temples

Mathura: A local religious body here has decided to distribute "ancient Prasadam" made of fruits, flowers, panchmeva, cardamom seeds, and sugar candy in temples, instead of market-made sweets. In a meeting held in Vrindavan on Wednesday,

Dharma Raksha Sangh national president Saurabh Gaur said there is a need for significant reforms in the 'prasadam' system followed nationwide. "A consensus had been reached among religious leaders and organisations to return to the traditional

Hindu practices of offering and accepting pure, Satvik Prasadam," he said. The body, which holds significant sway over temples in Vrindavan, said it will encourage all local religious institutions to adopt its approach. -PTI

New HPC systems named Arka, Arunika

By Correspondent

Pune: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said a country can aim for high achievements only if it has a big vision and asserted that technology upgradation should be to empower the poor. Speaking after launching via video link three PARAM Rudra supercomputers, developed indigenously under National Supercomputing Mission, Modi asserted that today's India is carving new opportunities in the infinite sky of possibilities. Modi said his government has taken steps to ensure research in technolo-

gy benefits the common man. "We started the national supercomputing mission in 2015 and now quantum computing technology has taken a lead which will help improve IT, manufacturing, MSMEs and startups," he said. Modi said his government is giving priority to science, technology and research. "Mission Gaganyaan preparations have begun and by 2035 we will have our own space station," he said, adding that the first phase of the project has been approved. "Science for self-reliance is our mission," Modi said.



The three supercomputers, built at a cost of Rs 130 crore, have been deployed in Pune, Delhi and Kolkata to facilitate pioneering scientific research, Modi said.

Modi also inaugurated the Rs 850 crore High-Performance Computing system tailored for weather and climate research, and described the day as one of

a "very big achievement" in science and technology sector. "There is no sector which does not rely on technology and computing capability,"

Modi said. "In this revolution, our share should not be in bits and bytes but in terabytes and petabytes. Therefore, this achievement proves that we are moving in the right direction at the right pace," he said. The significance of science is not only in invention and development, but also in fulfilling aspirations of the last person, Modi said. India is building its own semiconductor ecosystem which will be a key part of the global supply chain, Modi said. The Giant Metre Radio Telescope (GMRT) in Pune will leverage the supercom-

puter to explore Fast Radio Bursts (FRBs) and other astronomical phenomena. The Inter University Accelerator Centre (IUAC) in Delhi will enhance research in fields like material science and atomic physics, while the S N Bose Centre in Kolkata will drive advanced research in areas such as physics, cosmology, and earth sciences. The High-Performance Computing system is tailored for weather and climate research and the project represents an investment of Rs. 850 crore, marking a significant leap in India's computational capabilities for meteorological applications.

Located at two key sites, the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) in Pune and the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecast (NCMRWF) in Noida, the HPC system has extraordinary computing power. The new HPC systems are named 'Arka' and 'Arunika,' reflecting their connection to the Sun. These high-resolution models will significantly enhance the accuracy and lead time of predictions related to tropical cyclones, heavy precipitation, thunderstorms, hailstorms, heat waves, droughts, and other critical weather phenomena.

Low vote transfer from NCP resulted in BJP's poor LS showing, says Fadnavis

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The BJP's reverses in Maharashtra in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls were due to poor vote transfer from the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Thursday.

The BJP's "core voter base" did not like the alliance with the NCP, though "80 per cent" are now convinced about the need for such "political compromises", he added.

The ruling alliance, which comprises the BJP, NCP and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena, managed to win just 17 of the 48 Lok Sabha seats in the state. BJP won nine seats, down from 23 in the 2019 edition.

"It is true that this is the BJP's worst performance in the last few general elec-



tions. We contested 28 seats but still got very less seats. However, we lost 12 seats by less than 3 per cent votes, which is a margin of 3000-6000 votes. One must remember we received the highest number of votes in this (2024 Lok Sabha) election," he said at the India Today Conclave here.

Fadnavis said the BJP got more seats than Shinde's Sena (7) and Ajit Pawar's NCP (1), which he said were breakaway parties and, in a way, new parties.

"For them, this Lok Sabha election basically entailed settling of their voters. It was a bit difficult for both of them. For us, it was comparatively easier because our voter base is settled," Fadnavis said, adding these issues won't get repeated in the state assembly polls.

"It was easier for Shiv Sena to transfer its votes to us, because both parties had an alliance for many years. However, we have always contested against the NCP. Hence, it was dif-

icult for them to transfer those votes. But now, the voter base of both parties is settled," the senior BJP leader asserted.

Fadnavis admitted the BJP's core voter base did not like the alliance with the NCP.

"But we managed to persuade them (workers) of the necessity of this alliance (with the NCP). There are political compromises that go against what you truly believe, but you still move forward with them. We made these kinds of compromises. I can guarantee that at least 80 per cent of our voter base is now convinced (of the need to ally with NCP)," he said.

Fadnavis also said discussion on 80 per cent of the 288 assembly seats in the state is over, adding "winnability is more important than focusing on any kind of perception".

Shiv Sena announces outreach campaign

Mumbai: The Shiv Sena on Thursday announced 'Mahavijay Samvad' - a public outreach campaign - for all assembly constituencies in Maharashtra to strengthen the party organisation and highlight the work done by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Shiv Sena's Kalyan MP Shrikant Shinde said their women, youth and social media wings will be a part of the initiative starting Friday.

Elections to the 288-member Maharashtra assembly will likely be held in November.

Under this campaign, he said, two party leaders will visit every assembly constituency in the state and hold public meetings.

Six assembly segments will be covered daily as part of the outreach programme, which will also include interactions at 'shakhas' (party offices).

Purvash Sarnaik, the executive president of Yuva Sena, will start the campaign from the Bhiwandi Rural constituency, said Shrikant Shinde.

The women's wing of the party has been tasked to take to the people flagship schemes like 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana Scheme', which provides monthly financial assistance of Rs 1,500 to eligible women, and the one that ensures free education to girls.

He said their social media wing chief Rahul Kanai will visit the assembly constituencies in Nandurbar, Nashik, Dhule, Shirdi and Ahmednagar districts as part of the outreach.



Heavy waterlogging and mud at the SP College grounds after heavy rains in Pune on Thursday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to Pune to inaugurate a new corridor of the Pune metro had to be cancelled due to heavy rainfall

Modi's visit cancelled after heavy rains

By Correspondent

Mumbai/Pune: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Pune in Maharashtra on Thursday was cancelled due to the heavy rain situation in the city, officials said.

Modi was to flag off the Metro train line from District Court to Swargate in Pune and launch development projects of Rs 22,600

crore, ahead of the state assembly elections.

BJP sources confirmed that the PM's visit to Pune was cancelled. The new date for his visit will be announced later.

After heavy rains on Wednesday evening, the SP College ground, the venue of PM Modi's programme, had muddy pools.

The MeT department

has issued a warning of heavy showers in Pune and Mumbai for Thursday.

"The PM's visit to Pune has been cancelled and the programme officially postponed," Pune divisional commissioner Chandrakant Pulkundwar said.

Maha-Metro spokesperson Hemant Sonawane said, "The programme has been cancelled due to the orange alert (for heavy rains) issued for Thursday by the IMD. If there are rains, people coming for the programme may face hassles, so for the safety of the people, the programme has been cancelled."

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Wednesday visited the SP College ground and said arrangements were being made to ensure nobody is inconvenienced.



Bhujbal hospitalised

Mumbai: Minister Chhagan Bhujbal was on Thursday hospitalised after he fell ill.

Bhujbal was in Pune to attend Prime Minister Narendra Modi's function, which was cancelled. The state minister for food and civil supplies complained of fever and throat infection and rushed back to Mumbai, after which he was admitted in Bombay Hospital.



Missile Cum Ammunition Barge, LSAM 13 (Yard 81), the fifth Barge of 08 x Missile Cum Ammunition Barge project, during its induction ceremony at Naval Dockyards Mumbai on Wednesday. Pic: PTI

CRIME WATCH

Man gets life imprisonment for murder

Thane: A Thane court has sentenced a 45-year-old man to life imprisonment for murdering a person here after a dispute in 2010.

Additional sessions judge Vasuda L Bhosale, in the order passed on Wednesday, said the prosecution has successfully proved all charges against the accused, Shahid Gulam Mustafa Surme, from Mumbra in Thane. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 13,000 on the accused. Additional public prosecutor Varsha Chandane said there was a long-standing dispute between the accused and the victim over construction carried out on the land of a mosque in Mumbra area.

Engineer held for taking bribe

Thane: The Anti-Corruption Bureau has arrested an engineer working with the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company (MSEDCL) here for allegedly taken a bribe of Rs 2,600 from power consumers, the ACB said on Thursday.

The 43-year-old assistant engineer initially demanded Rs 4,000 for the installation of four electric meters of as many consumers. After negotiations, he brought down the demand to Rs 2,600. The aggrieved consumers lodged a complaint with the ACB's Thane unit which laid a trap on Wednesday at the MSEDCL's office at Shil Phata here and nabbed the accused while accepting the bribe amount of Rs 2,600 from one of the complainants.

Minor kills uncle over dispute

Latur: A 16-year-old boy has been detained for allegedly stabbing to death his uncle after a dispute in Maharashtra's Latur city, police said. The incident took place on Wednesday morning near Arvi locality, on the city's outskirts. The 42-year-old victim went to his sister-in-law's house to collect his Aadhaar card and bank documents which were apparently in her possession. However, a heated argument erupted when the woman denied having the documents and began abusing him, an officer from MIDC police station said. The matter escalated and the woman's teenage son allegedly stabbed his uncle in the back with a knife, he said. The man was critically injured and he later died, the police said.

Puja Khedkar's arrest delayed

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday extended till October 4 the interim protection from arrest granted to former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar in the criminal case lodged against her for alleged cheating and wrongly availing OBC and disability quota benefits in civil services examination.

Justice Chandra Dhari Singh deferred hearing on her plea seeking anticipatory bail after a request was made by her lawyer.

Counsel for the Delhi Police urged the court to allow a short adjournment, saying a "larger conspiracy has come to light", which involves forgery and creation of documents.

"At request of counsel for the petitioner, list on October 4. Interim order to continue," Justice Singh said.

Khedkar is accused of allegedly misrepresenting information in her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination, 2022 to get reservation benefits.

She has denied all allegations. Khedkar's lawyer on Thursday sought more time from the court to file a response to the UPSC's allegation that she committed perjury by making a false statement in relation to her anticipatory bail plea.

I am made a scapegoat, says Raut

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut, a bitter critic of the BJP, claimed he has been made a scapegoat and asserted he would challenge the judgment in a higher court.

Even Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik had demanded a probe into the matter and there was some discussion on it in the state assembly, claimed Raut.

"If I said this then how have I defamed anyone? Everything is on record. There is also a Mira Bhayander Municipal Corporation report. I have only asked questions about whether there is corruption.



How people like me who raise voice against corruption and other issues would get justice when the Prime Minister visits the residence of the Chief Justice of India to eat "modak"? I have been made a scapegoat because of the impending assembly elections in Maharashtra.

Sanjay Raut, MP, Shiv Sena

"But the entire judiciary in the country is influenced by the RSS ('sanghikaran'), right from top to bottom. I will appeal in the sessions court and tell the people how we are wronged," the opposition MP insisted.

but said police had refused to accept his wife's complaint against Raut under pressure from the then-MVA government led by Uddhav Thackeray, who heads the Shiv Sena (UBT). "We had to approach the court to get our a case registered, and after 28

months, we got justice." Mumbai BJP president Ashish Shelar lashed out at Raut for his defamatory remarks and demanded his resignation. "Does he have the moral right to continue being the Rajya Sabha MP? He must resign from the position."

Two dead in car-MUV collision

Nashik: Two people were killed and four seriously injured in a car-MUV collision in Nashik in Maharashtra on Thursday morning, a police officer said.

A Mahindra Bolero multi-utility vehicle collided with a car at Hirenagar Phata in Nandgaon on the road leading to Manmad, he said.

"Shivaji Deshmukh (60) and Usha Mahajan (60) died in the collision. Four persons have been admitted in the government hospital here with serious injuries. The deceased and injured are from Mohadi and Pachora. A case was registered and probe is underway," the Nandgaon police station officer said.

Collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Statue

Technical committee blames rust

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The committee entrusted with investigating the collapse of the Chhatrapati Shivaji statue at Malvan has submitted a 16-page report to the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra government, concluding that rust and weak frame were the key reasons leading to the fall of the statue.

The statue was unveiled by

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 4, 2023 on the eve of Navy Day and it collapsed on August 26 caused immense embarrassment to both the state as well as the central government.

According to the report submitted by the joint technical committee comprising experts, structural engineers, and officials from the Indian Navy and the state government, structural integrity of the

statue, which stood 33 feet tall, was insufficient to support its weight. Issues such as internal corrosion and defects in the welding were also identified as the main factors in the incident.

The report also blamed improper maintenance for the fall of the statue. The state government shall study the report and nail the culprits, Industries Minister Uday

Samant said. However, he added that he won't be able comment any further as he hasn't seen the report as yet.

The Maharashtra Public Works Department (PWD) had previously raised concerns about rust accumulating on the statue and suggested permanent measures in a letter sent to a Naval official just six days before the structure collapsed.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Go and visit the Worli sea link in Mumbai to have a look at the quality. Even after 26 years, expansion joints are perfect. Everywhere else there is a problem. Dwarka express highway is supposed to be a premium project, but the expansion joint was not perfect."



Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Highway

Porsche crash: Cops add charges against juvenile

By Correspondent

Pune: Police here on Thursday added charges of destruction of evidence and forgery as well as offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act against the 17-year-old juvenile involved in the Kalyani Nagar Porsche car crash.

A "supplementary final report" containing fresh charges was submitted before the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) here, an official said.

The final report, which charged the boy with 'culpable homicide not amounting to murder' under IPC section 304, had been filed in June.

The teenager was allegedly driving the Porsche under the influence of alcohol when it hit a motorbike in Kalyani Nagar area of the city in the wee hours of May 19, killing a man and a woman, both young IT professionals.

"A supplementary final report has been filed before



the JJB, incorporating charges under Indian Penal Code sections 201 (causing disappearance of evidence), 213 (taking gift to screen an offender), 214 (offering gift or restoration of property in

consideration of screening an offender), 466, 467, 468, 471 (all offences related to forgery)," said a crime branch official.

The Prevention of Corruption Act was also in-

voked as the juvenile is accused of colluding with his parents, doctors from the government-run Sassoon Hospital and some middlemen to swap his blood samples, the official said.

It is alleged that blood samples were replaced to hide the fact that the juvenile was drunk at the time. Technical data about the speed of the car at the time of the incident was also included in the report besides statements of witnesses to corroborate the newly add-

ed sections, the official said. The supplementary report was submitted by Assistant Commissioner of Police Ganesh Ingale, the investigating officer, through Special Public Prosecutor Shishir Hiray.

While the juvenile was released from the observation home following a High Court order, his parents and seven others including two doctors of Sassoon General Hospital and two middlemen are in judicial custody.

BMC panel to probe woman's death caused by falling into drain



By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Mumbai civic body on Thursday announced a high-level probe into the death of a 45-year-old woman after she fell into a storm water drain here following heavy rains, while the police registered a case of accidental death.

The woman, Vimal Gaikwad, died in the incident that occurred at 9.20 pm on Wednesday near gate no. 8 of MIDC, Andheri East, police have said.

The local police and the fire brigade were alerted

and they took the woman to the Cooper Hospital where she was declared brought dead, the police said.

In a release issued on Thursday, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said a three-member committee, headed by deputy municipal commissioner (zone 3) Devidas Kshirsagar, will submit its report on the incident within three days.

Mumbai fire brigade chief Ravindra Ambulgekar and chief engineer (vigilance) Avinash Tambewagh are the other

two members of the committee.

Meanwhile, a case of accidental death was registered at the MIDC police station in connection with the woman's death, officials said.

"Some road-related work was lying incomplete at the spot and the drain had remained open. Some Metro line work was also carried out nearby earlier," a police official said.

After the incident, the police have written a letter to the BMC as well as the Mumbai Metro Rail Corpo-

ration Ltd (MMRCL) so that its responsibility can be fixed, he said.

"A probe is being carried out into the incident," he said.

Heavy rains battered Mumbai on Wednesday evening, inundating low-lying areas, halting local trains in their tracks and forcing the diversion of at least 14 incoming flights. Some roads virtually turned into rivers of fast-moving water as several areas received more than 100 mm of rain in five hours in the evening.

BJP blames UBT for sufferings

The Mumbai BJP on Thursday blamed the Shiv Sena (UBT) for the inferior quality city infrastructure, which, they said was the root cause for the sufferings that thousands of city dwellers had to undergo on Wednesday after the heavy downpour.

"Aaditya Thackeray and his UBT Sena is only responsible for the sorry state of affairs in Mumbai. Yesterday's downpour and the subsequent water logging have its roots in the extremely poor quality of works carried out by them over the last 25 years," said Mumbai BJP president and MLA Adv Ashish Shelar. He also demanded that UBT Sena MP Sanjay Raut must tender his resignation.

Shelar, who was interacting with the media at Mumbai BJP's headquarters at Dadar on Thursday, lashed out at Shiv Sena UBT leader Aaditya Thackeray for his criticisms of the state government for

the sorry state of affairs in Mumbai after the heavy rains on Wednesday. "They themselves are responsible for it," Shelar stressed.

"The works done by the UBT group in Mumbai, who were in power in the BMC for almost 25 years, has been of inferior quality. The BRIMSTOWAD project wasn't completed in time. They failed miserably, despite spending thousands of crores, to create an effective drainage system. What happened yesterday wasn't due to the failures of the last couple of years, but was a result of inferior quality works

over the last 25 years. They need to first sanctify themselves for the unfortunate demise of renowned Dr. Amrapurkar who died after falling into the drain during monsoon in 2017," Shelar said while blaming the Shiv Sena (UBT) for the mess in the city.



Gaikwad lambasts government

Congress MP Varsha Gaikwad said that the corrupt and non-performing state government has created yet another death trap, resulting in the loss of another Mumbaikar's life due to negligence. "This is not an accident; it is cold-blooded murder," she said.

"Why was the manhole left open? Why was there no warning sign or barrier around it? Why weren't manholes properly covered before the monsoon, as they should be? These questions demand answers, but this government seems to only excel at making excuses and empty promises!" Gaikwad said.

She stated that the Chief Minister loves to boast about personally overseeing pre-monsoon work. If that's the case, then why did Vimla Gaikwad have to lose her life? Despite spending a significant amount on drain cleaning and monsoon preparedness, why does Mumbai get submerged every time it rains?"

She was backbone of family

The Mumbai police have registered an Accidental Death Report (ADR) case against Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and a contractor over the death of a 45-year-old woman who drowned in nullah in Andheri amid heavy rain in the city on Wednesday.

The bereaved husband, struggling with his health issues, told The Perfect Voice, "My wife was the backbone of our family, providing for our every need." Her tragic loss has left him feeling helpless. Whoever is responsible must be held accountable, he urged, his voice laced with determination. We have lodged an FIR, seeking justice."

According to police, the family has lodged an FIR against BMC and a contractor for negligence after the death of the woman by drowning in a nullah. Two labourers were struck by lightning in Kalyan's Kamba village, and another woman drowned near a waterfall in Khopoli. According to BMC data, 21 incidents of tree collapse have been reported in Mumbai, of which 14 were in the western suburbs, five in the island city, and two were reported in the eastern suburbs until 8 am on Thursday. In addition, 21 cases of short circuits were reported in Mumbai during the past 24 hours.

Shinde's family seeks police protection for last rites

Thane: Family members of Akshay Shinde, the Badlapur sexual assault case accused who was killed in an alleged shoot-out with police earlier this week, on Thursday demanded security for his last rites.

Amar Shinde, his uncle, told media persons that they were yet to decide where the body should be buried.

"We have been searching for a place. Police have called us to show some spots. We will bury the body at a secure place," he told reporters here.

Police protection should be provided for the last rites, and also to Akshay's parents and his lawyer as there was a threat to their lives, he said.

"We have also sent an email making this request to deputy chief minister and home minister (Devendra Fadnis)," he added.

Akshay Shinde had in the past expressed desire that he would like to be buried instead of being cremated, his lawyer Amit Katarnavre told PTI.

On Wednesday, his father had informed the Bombay High Court that the family was ready to take



possession of his son's body but could not find a burial site. The public prosecutor assured the high court that a Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Thane crime branch would ask the local authority to make necessary arrangements.

Akshay's father has filed a petition in the high court challenging the police's version that Akshay first shot a policeman while being taken out for probe, and was killed in retaliatory firing. He was killed in a fake encounter, the petition alleged, seeking probe.

Akshay Shinde, 24, was arrested last month for allegedly sexually assaulting two kindergarten girls at a school in Badlapur in Thane district.

He was being taken to Badlapur for probe in another case on Monday even-

ing when the alleged shoot-out occurred inside the police van, resulting in his death.

Advocate Katarnavre told reporters at Kalyan that he had applied for a certified copy of the charge sheet filed by the police against Akshay in the sexual assault case, as no copy has been provided so far.

"One will come to know what was his role in the crime only from the charge sheet. How did the government decide he is the culprit? The charge sheet is in the custody of the court. Let the charge sheet be examined, we will come to know the details," the lawyer said.

The family had been attacked earlier (when the crime came to light and triggered massive protests) and needed protection, the lawyer said.

Aaditya targets govt

Mumbai: leader and former Maharashtra minister Aaditya Thackeray on Thursday targeted the Eknath Shinde-led state government over flooding in Mumbai, Thane and Pune after heavy rains pounded the cities.

He alleged that the mechanisms to provide relief to people in Mumbai when such incidents occur were absent.

"We (the undivided Shiv Sena which controlled the Mumbai civic body from 1997 to 2022) were always there, but no one from the Sena-BJP was there on the ground yesterday to help people in Mumbai, Pune and Thane. No officer from the civic bodies was seen on the ground to deal with the situation," Thackeray said.

Places like Hindmata (in Mumbai), where flood mitigation steps were taken, were also inundated. There are 400 pumps and five pumping stations in the city, but they did not work effectively, he said.

"Where will people go to address their issues in the absence of local representatives?" Thackeray asked, pointing out that polls to the civic bodies must be conducted at the earliest.

When I witnessed collapsing Mumbai's traffic system

By Aditi Pai

Mumbai: The forecast of a downpour in Mumbai brought with it some cheer; after all, Mumbaikars were waiting for a break from the sweltering September heat. The rains had taken off on an endless holiday well before their scheduled departure.

I was on a flight from Goa to Mumbai which was delayed by over an hour because the incoming aircraft was itself late. Mumbai rains, they said.

The gravity wasn't evident because at Goa, we saw overcast skies but only a drizzle.

Our flight finally took off at 6.30 PM and what was to be an hour-long journey suddenly stretched into two hours. The captain announced that the Mumbai runway was closed because visibility had dropped due to the incessant heavy rains. We had been asked to orbit around 90 km south west of Mumbai. The flight eventually landed an hour late and all seemed fine until I switched on my phone and started getting calls



from my family.

It's raining very heavily, you won't get an Uber, they warned. My cousin offered to drive me home. I walked towards the parking and she called again to say that all roads leading to the airport were blocked and the navigation maps showed that she would take an hour to reach.

The app-based taxi had switched on their "surge pricing" but there was no other alternative than to pay them hefty rates.

But then, to be disappointment, no cabs were to be found. The Mumbai kaali peeli was also missing. The travel operator desks at the airport expressed helplessness - they also had no cars.

The roads were water logged and taxis couldn't enter, rather, didn't want

to. People crowded the airports P 4 level where taxis have their pick-up points. A woman looking tired told me it had been two hours since she had been trying to book a cab. Mumbai Central, where she had to go, was flooded.

Another family with young children crying was pleading with man who was regulating the app-based taxis. He was issuing token members based on your confirmed Uber booking. And cars were being allotted by the token.

Finally managed to book an Uber XL and the attendant gave me a token number. "It'll take an hour. There was 15 people ahead of you and taxis aren't coming in," he said. I waited.

There were the elderly, little children and tired and

irritated passengers. But at least we were dry and comfortable. My social media feed showed harrowing images of people stuck in stampede-inducing crowds at railway stations, drenched in the rain.

At least we weren't wading through dirty waters here. Thanking God for the relative comfort I had, I waited patiently. It was a good time for people watching - some tried jumping queues, irate passengers yelled at the attendants for no apparent reason, taxi drivers were being finicky about their rides, some sat on the luggage trolleys and opened snack boxes for a little party in the parking lot. People reacted differently to the same situation.

An hour later, my token number was called out and I walked towards the taxi. The driver expressed relief at it being a short ride. I was amused, they usually refuse short distances but today, it had all changed.

The traffic had cleared by the time we got out and joined the highway and the ride home was comfortable and dry.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Political reservation to the Divyang? What is going on? Should we take up farming now? You can join the politics. If people support you can become their representative."



Ajit Pawar, Deputy Chief Minister

Galaxy of stars to light up IIFA 2024

Rekha set for a grand finale performance

Mumbai: From celebrating the best talent from both Hindi and South film industries to live performances by celebrities such as Rekha and Shahid Kapoor, the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards 2024 will be a grand celebration of Indian cinema.

The three-day awards gala will be held from September 27 to 29 in Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, for the third time. IIFA Awards 2024 is also bringing together actors from Hindi cinema with Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada for the first time.

Telugu star Rana Daggubati

will host IIFA Utsavam with Teja Sajja on Friday, followed by the IIFA Awards ceremony, which will be emceed by superstar Shah Rukh with filmmaker Karan Johar and Vicky Kaushal.

One of the most anticipated aspects of the event is the performances by renowned stars from both the South and Hindi film industries, especially the finale performance by Rekha.

Besides her, the lineup also includes Pushpa composer DSP, Prabhu Deva, Raashii Khanna, Janhvi Kapoor, Ananya Panday,



and Kriti Sanon.

Rekha's will be a finale performance, she will perform for 22 minutes with 150 dancers, and she is working day and night on her act, graphics and costumes and is making sure that this perfor-

mance will be of a lifetime. The clothes are designed for this by Manish Malhotra. Vicky Kaushal will also be performing, and actors Bobby Deol, Anil Kapoor, and Kriti Sanon will be part of Shahid Kapoor's act.

There will be a masterclass session with filmmaker Rakeysh Om Prakash Mehra.

The film extravaganza will conclude with the exclusive, invitation-only event, IIFA Rocks, to be hosted by Siddhant Chaturvedi and Abhishek Banerjee. It will feature performances by

Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, Honey Singh, Shilpa Rao, Julia Vantur, and Karan Aujla.

Last week, the organisers announced that the 25th edition of the IIFA Awards will be held in Jaipur from March 7 to 9, 2025.

The first-ever IIFA award ceremony was held in 2000 in London, and over the years, the awards gala was hosted in locations like Johannesburg, Singapore, Amsterdam, Dubai, Yorkshire, Thailand, Macau, Tampa Bay, Colombo, Toronto, Bangkok and Madrid.

Rajan appreciates infra works, calls for boost to manufacturing

New Delhi: India has done well in areas like infrastructure in the last 10 years, but it also needs to do more in other sectors to boost local manufacturing and job creation, former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan said on Thursday.

In an interview with PTI, Rajan further said the government's focus on production, whether it is goods or services is a good thing, but it is also important to do it the right way.



Pic: Bhusan Koyande



Responding to a question on the Modi government's flagship initiative 'Make in India', he said, "I would say the intention is good. I think in some areas, we have done a lot, as I said, in infrastructure...we have done a lot that has been very useful".

The Modi government's flagship initiative 'Make in India' was launched 10 years ago on September 25, 2014.

"But we need to check the other places. And the best way to check is to ask critics, what do you think? What has happened? Has it happened the way you want it?"

“ If we grow at 7 per cent, then we will be past Germany and Japan in 2-3 years. That is not something which is out of the realm of possibility, it will happen. What is more worrisome, however, is when we say a developed nation. Now, what does it mean to be developed now? That is also a changing metric. Let us say being developed is having a per capita GDP in today's dollars of about USD 15,000. If you see that, then you put a 7 per cent growth rate, and you find it is not enough to become SD 15,000 per capita GDP by 2047 we need to do better. ”

Should we do more? You get feedback, and then you work along," Rajan said.

The eminent economist also pitched for more ease of doing business, especially with regard to government policies and less fear of raids by inspectors or tax authorities, etc.

Observing that there is a

package which propels economic growth, he said, "If we focus on that, I think that would strengthen the concept of Make in India".

Rajan, who is currently a professor of finance at US-based Chicago Booth, also opined that the government should ask businessmen about difficulties faced by

them, and not just follow the World Bank's ease of doing business checklist.

The former RBI governor also emphasised that the government need not dismiss criticism of its policy by saying that there is some vested interest or some hidden agenda. Under the 'Make in India' initiatives a series of measures have been taken by the government to boost local manufacturing and exports.

These initiatives include the rollout of production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes for 14 sectors, ease of foreign direct investment (FDI) norms, reduction of compliance burden, single window approval system, and the national logistics policy.

Currently, the size of Germany's economy is about USD 4.5 trillion and Japan about USD 4.2 trillion. The size of India's economy is USD 3.7 trillion at present. -PTI

SC reserves verdict in Byju's case

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on a plea of a US firm against the NCLAT order stopping insolvency proceedings against ed-tech firm Byju's.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud asked the insolvency resolution professional (IRP) to maintain status quo till the apex court delivers its judgement in the matter.

The bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, considered the plea of US firm Glas Trust Company LLC and asked the IRP not to proceed with the committee of creditor's meeting to deal with the Byju's case.

While hearing the matter on Wednesday, the top court had questioned the verdict of insolvency appellate tribunal NCLAT setting aside the insolvency proceedings against Byju's and approving its Rs 158.9 crore dues settlement with the BCCI.

Observing that the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) did not apply its mind while closing the insolvency proceedings against the ed-tech major, the bench had hinted that it may send back the dispute for fresh adjudication. The NCLAT, on August 2, granted relief to the embattled ed-tech firm by setting aside the insolvency proceedings against it after approving its Rs 158.9 crore dues settlement with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

The verdict had come as a huge relief for Byju's as it had effectively put its founder Byju Raveendran back in control. However, the relief remained short-lived as the top court, on August 14, termed the NCLAT verdict as "unconscionable".



Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) Director Anant Ambani and bp CEO Murray Auchincloss during the inauguration of the 500th Jio-bp pulse EV-charging station at Jio World Centre, in Mumbai on Thursday. Pic: PTI

GoM on GST on health, insurance to meet on Oct 19

New Delhi: The ministerial panel to decide on lowering goods and services tax (GST) on health and life insurance premiums will have its first meeting on October 19, officials said.

Currently, 18 per cent GST is levied on insurance premiums and there have been demands to either exempt or reduce the tax.

The GST Council in its meeting earlier this month decided to set up a 13-member GoM to decide on tax on health and life insurance premiums. Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary is the convener of the GoM.

The panel includes ministers from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana.

The GoM has been mandated to submit its report to the Council by

Rs 8,262.94 cr – Amount collected on health insurance premium in 2023-24

Rs 1,484.36 cr – Amount collected on health reinsurance premium

18 per cent – GST levied on insurance premiums

October-end.

A final call by the council on taxation of insurance premiums is likely to be taken in the next meeting in November, based on the GoM report. "The GoM on GST on insurance will meet on October 19 in Delhi," the official said.

The terms of reference (ToR) of the panel also includes suggesting tax rate of health/medical insurance, including individual, group, family floater, and other medical insurance for various categories like senior citizens, middle class, persons with mental

illness.

The ToR also include suggest tax rates on life insurance, including term insurance, life insurance with investment plans, whether individual or group and re-insurance.

Some Opposition-ruled states, including West Bengal, had demanded complete exemption of GST on health and life insurance premiums, while some other states were in favour of lowering the tax to 5 per cent. Even Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari had in July written to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on the issue saying "levying GST on life insurance premium amounts to levying tax on the uncertainties of life".

Sitharaman in her reply to discussion on Finance Bill in the Lok Sabha in August had said that 75 per cent of the GST collected goes to states. -PTI

Reliance Infra to consider raising funds

New Delhi: Reliance Infrastructure on Thursday said its board will meet next week to consider and approve raising of long-term resources from domestic and/or global markets.

This will be the second meeting after September 19 where the company's board approved Rs 3,000-crore preferential issue.

"A meeting of the Board of Directors of the company will be held on Tuesday, October 1, 2024, inter alia, to consider and approve raising of long term resources from domestic and/or global markets, inter alia, by issue of equity shares/equity linked securities/ warrants convertible into equity shares, by way of preferential issue and/or qualified institutional placement and/or rights issue and/or foreign currency convertible bonds or any other method including determination of issue price," the company said a regulatory filing.

Last week, Reliance Infrastructure said its board of directors has approved raising of Rs 3,014 crore by preferential issue of up to 12.56 crore equity shares.

In a separate regulatory filing, the company had said the preferential issue shall

be made to Risee Infinity Pvt Ltd, a promoter group company and to other investors, namely Florintree Innovation LLP and Fortune Financial & Equities Services Pvt Ltd.

"The preferential issue will result in enhancing the promoters' equity stake. The preferential issue shall be made in accordance with the SEBI (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2018 and other applicable law.

"The board also approved seeking to enable authorisation from the shareholders to raise up to Rs 3,000 crore by making a qualified institutional placement," Reliance Infrastructure had said.

According to the filing, the preferential issue proceeds will be used for expansion of business operations directly and/or through investment in subsidiaries and joint ventures, including meeting the long-term working capital requirements and for general corporate purposes.

The company had said the preferential issue will enhance the company's net worth from more than Rs 9,000 crore to over Rs 12,000 crore. -PTI



People buy onions at subsidised rate of Rs 35 per kg provided by National Cooperative Consumers Federation of India (NCCF) in Jaipur Pic: PTI

Allcargo Gati to increase charges

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Allcargo Gati Ltd, a leading distribution and courier service, has announced a 10.2 percent increase in its rate card effective from January 1, 2025, the company statement said.

This price increase is driven by the necessity to align pricing with ongoing operational investments and maintain high standards of service quality and will help offset the significant increase in costs over the years, tak-

ing into consideration inflation, administrative costs related to regulatory and security measures.

Allcargo Gati claimed that this would be the first price revision since All-cargo Logistics Limited's strategic acquisition of Gati in 2019.

Earlier, this year effective January 1, 2024, DHL Express had increased its parcel delivery prices in India by an average of 6.9 percent citing rising costs. "This price revision is a strategic response to

the evolving economic environment. Amid rising fuel costs and inflationary pressures, this move is essential to maintaining the high standards of service our customers expect. The revised pricing will allow us to further invest in infrastructure and technological advancements enabling us to be well-positioned to meet the increasing demands of our clients across diverse regions," said Ketan Kulkarni, Deputy Managing Director, Gati Express.

Govt mulling increasing sugar MSP

New Delhi: The government is considering increasing the ethanol price for 2024-25 season as well as minimum selling price of sugar, Food Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Thursday.

Joshi said the proposal on hiking the ethanol price is under consideration of the government. The petroleum ministry is looking into the matter.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event here, the minister also mentioned that the government is "considering a proposal to increase the minimum selling price of sugar", which remains unchanged at Rs 31 per kg, a rate established in February 2019.

He also said the sugar production looks good for the 2024-25 season (October-September) on account of good monsoon.

Ethanol prices, fixed by the government, have not been hiked since the 2022-23 ethanol supply year (November-October). Currently, ethanol produced from cane juice is priced at Rs 65.61/litre, while rates for ethanol from B-Heavy and C-Heavy molasses stand at Rs 60.73/litre and Rs 56.28/litre, respectively. -PTI

BITS Pilani, IIT-B sign deal for research

Mumbai: BITS Pilani on Thursday said it has signed an agreement with the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB) to collaborate on research, innovation and skill development.

The aim of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) is mainly for joint

"This MoU bridges academia and industry, opening new doors for research, skill development and innovation. Together, we look forward to providing ample opportunities to our students so that they are all set to succeed in the future with the emergence of pharma, healthcare and en-



research projects, consultancy, student internships, faculty exchanges and developing modern technologies, BITS Pilani said in a statement.

Both the institutes will focus on ecosystem development, which will involve close collaboration between academia and industry by hosting visiting faculty and forming pre-competitive consortia for research in emerging technologies, it added.

gineering," BITS Pilani Vice Chancellor Professor Ramgopal Rao said.

Professor Shireesh Kedar, Director of IIT Bombay, added, "This collaboration between IIT Bombay and BITS Pilani will bring the best minds from two of India's top-ranked institutions together. We look forward to pioneering research projects that address real-world challenges and contribute to the nation's growth." -PTI

Amazon India inks pact to post job opportunities

New Delhi: Amazon India has signed a pact with the Labour and Employment Ministry to post available work opportunities at Amazon and its staffing agencies on the National Career Service (NCS) portal.

The MoU (memorandum of understanding) is initially set for two years. It will allow job seekers registered on the portal to view and apply for opportunities at Amazon.

"Amazon is the first e-commerce company to collaborate with the Ministry of Labour and Employment through the NCS portal. This partnership aims to connect aspiring

individuals with career prospects that match their skills and qualifications," Amazon said in a statement.

The NCS portal currently has over 60 lakh active job seekers and 33.50 lakh active employers.

By bridging the gap between supply and demand, NCS has the potential to connect job providers and job seekers across levels and roles, particularly in the fast-growing e-commerce sector, and contribute to the overall economic development of the country, the statement said.

In a separate statement, the minister said: "We are in the pro-

cess of upgrading the NCS portal. The enhanced platform will offer a more user-friendly interface for job seekers, employers, and stakeholders, utilising advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence".

The collaboration also involves organising job fairs at Model Career Centres (MCCs), where job seekers will have the opportunity to interact directly with Amazon's recruitment teams, the statement said. The ministry will also assist Amazon in conducting job fairs across the country.

"A key aspect of the MoU is its focus on inclusivity. The partner-

“ With Amazon's array of roles and their commitment to nurturing talent, we are confident that this synergy will unlock new employment opportunities for the youth of the country. - Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister, Labour and Employment ”

ship prioritises promoting employment opportunities for women and divyang candidates, ensuring equal access to jobs," it said.

Amazon India employs over 1.2 lakh people across various roles, these include operations roles like fulfilment centres, distribution centres, and customer service, as well as corporate roles like software development, human resources, programme management, machine learning data services, and seller support.

Recently, it announced over 1,10,000 seasonal work opportunities ahead of its festive season sale. -PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Now, the IMF says India is the most-favoured global destination for investments and opportunity, and the World Bank calls India a role model on digitization. Now, the power corridors are fully sanitised. The middleman has disappeared. All transactions take place digitally, without a human interface. "



Jagdeep Dhankhar, Vice President

Karnataka withdraws general consent to CBI

Bengaluru: The Karnataka government on Thursday decided to withdraw general consent given to CBI to investigate cases in the State.

"The notification granting general consent for CBI to probe criminal cases in Karnataka state, under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946, has been withdrawn," Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil said after a meeting of the Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

According to section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) needs consent from the respective state governments to

No direct correspondence with Governor

Karnataka Cabinet on Thursday directed the Chief Secretary and the Secretaries that any correspondence from the government to the Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot as sought by the latter, should be sent only after its consent.

conduct investigations in their jurisdiction.

He said: "It has been done because it is clear that the CBI or the central government while using their instrumentalities are not using them judiciously. So, case-by-case we will verify and give (consent for CBI probe), general consent has been withdrawn."

Asked whether this was being done to "shield" the Chief Minister who is fac-

ing a probe in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case, Patil said: "on CM there is a court order for Lakayukta probe, so there is no such question."

He said there is concern being expressed "day-in-and-day-out" that CBI is misused in several cases.

Even in the cases that the state government had given to CBI or the agency

had taken up, in several of them chargesheets were not filed, Patil said. Asked whether the government has done this keeping in mind the demand for CBI probe into Karnataka Maharsi Valmiki Scheduled Tribe Development Corporation fund misappropriation case by the BJP, the Minister said: "It has nothing to do with it as the matter is in court, the court will decide."



BJP leaders raise slogans during a protest demand the resignation of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah after Karnataka HC dismissed his petition challenging Governor's sanction for his prosecution in alleged MUDA scam in.

Six Bangladesh nationals held

Tiruppur (Tamil Nadu): Six Bangladeshi youths, who allegedly entered the country illegally, were arrested when they were about to board a bus to Palladam, police said on Thursday.

The police team comprising personnel from the Rapid Action Force on suspicion stopped the youths and sought their documents including Aadhaar, which they failed to produce.

The police team learnt that the six had come from Bangladesh a fortnight ago and were turned away from a knitwear company at Mudhalipalayam.

Baghel's son, daughter questioned

Durg: The son of former Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel was on Thursday questioned in connection with the assault on a government college professor, police said.

On July 19, Vinod Sharma, professor in a government college here, was thrashed by six persons while he was on his way home under Old Bhilai police station limits. He is still hospitalised, as per police.

The preliminary probe found a link to Chaitanya Baghel after which he was summoned to record his statement, Durg Superintendent of Police Jitendra Shukla said. "Chaitanya Baghel was questioned for more than four hours at Old Bhilai police station.



His mobile phone was seized and then he was allowed to go. As per the probe so far, nine persons were involved, five of whom have been arrested. Efforts are on to nab the remaining four," Shukla informed.

Chaitanya Baghel was summoned on Wednesday after his alleged involvement in the assault case as well as facilitating the escape of the accused came to light, City Superintendent of Police (Chhavni) Harish

Patil said.

"Further probe will be carried out based on his statement. His mobile phone will be sent to the cyber lab for forensic analysis. We questioned him on whether he was in touch with the accused politically or economically. He has submitted his reply," the CSP said. Three of the key accused are absconding, while Chaitanya Baghel was allegedly in touch with accused Praveen Sharma, who has been spotted at events held by the Baghel family, he added.

The former CM's daughter was also questioned in the case and her statement was recorded on Wednesday, the CSP informed.

Stalin hails Senthil Balaji's 'sacrifice'

Chennai: Hours after the Supreme Court granted bail to former Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji in a money laundering case, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said attempts were made to break the DMK leader's resolve by keeping him behind bars but that he has emerged stronger than ever before.

Responding to the SC granting bail to Balaji, Stalin said his "dear brother" got the relief after 471 days.

He alleged the Enforcement Directorate, which arrested Balaji last year, was being used to 'suppress' the opposition but "the Supreme Court alone has been the dawn."

India elected to GlobE Network steering committee

New Delhi: India was elected to the 15-member steering committee of the global anti-corruption platform GlobE Network after multi-stage voting in Beijing on Thursday, officials said.

Having 121 member countries and 219 member authorities, the GlobE Network has one chair, one vice-chair and thirteen members in the steering committee for providing leadership. India was elected to the steering committee after a multi-stage voting process during the ongoing fifth plenary meeting of the Global Operational Network of Anti-

Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network) in Beijing, the officials said.

"As a member of the steering committee, India will play a crucial role in shaping the global agenda against corruption and asset recovery. India's expertise and experience in combating corruption will be valuable assets to GlobE Network," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

The Union Home Ministry is the central authority from India for the GlobE Network while the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are mem-

ber authorities.

A G20 initiative, the GlobE Network to combat cross-border financial crimes and corruption received strong support from India in 2020. The platform was officially launched in June 2021 during a special event at the UN General Assembly Special Session against Corruption (UNGASS).

It has emerged as a unique platform where agencies from across the world share best practices, criminal intelligence, develop strategies, and support in the common cause of combating corruption, the CBI statement said.

Three die in elephant attacks

Udhagamandalam (Tamil Nadu)/Jashpur (Chhattisgarh): A 60-year-old man died after he was attacked by a wild elephant at Pandalur Seppanthodu in Nilgiris district on Thursday, leading to protests by the locals condemning the frequent incidents of wild animal attack in the area.

A senior forest official said the elephant, which was hiding behind a thicket, charged at the man as soon as he stepped out of his house early in the morning, killing him instantly.

The villagers resorted to sudden agitation for nearly five hours, demanding the authorities to end the recurring attacks on humans by wild animals. In another incident, a leopard strayed into Nattakal village in Lower Kotagiri, in the district, and attacked a man in his house.

An official said the wild cat entered into the house of one Mani while chasing a pet dog. "Hearing the man's screams, the villagers rushed to his house and chased away the animal," he said. Mani has been admitted to the Kotagiri government hospital with injuries on his face and legs.

Another incident in CH A 45-year-old man was killed and another injured after a wild elephant attacked them in Chhattisgarh's Jashpur district on Thursday, officials said.

The incident occurred in the morning in Mariam Tola forest near Aagdi village where the duo came face to face with the jumbo, said Jashpur Divisional Forest Officer Jitendra Upadhyay.

The big mammal attacked the duo, killing Asit Tigga and injuring his associate Arvind Tigga seriously injured, he said. Local villagers evacuated Arvind from the spot and admitted him to a hospital from where he was shifted to Ambikapur hospital in neighbouring Surguja district for further treatment, he said.

The villagers resorted to sudden agitation for nearly five hours, demanding the authorities to end the recurring attacks on humans by wild animals. In another incident, a leopard strayed into Nattakal village in Lower Kotagiri, in the district, and attacked a man in his house.

Woman trampled A tribal woman was trampled to death by a wild tusker in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district on Thursday. The incident took place at Radhikasole village under the Baripada forest division in the early hours of Thursday when the woman was asleep, they said.



Congress Party workers take out a protest rally demanding justice for the six-year-old girl who was allegedly killed by her principal in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

Car waylaid, over 2.5 kg gold looted

Thrissur (Kerala): A daring daylight robbery took place at the national highway near Peechi here in which a gang of 12 allegedly waylaid a car and kidnapped two persons and looted over 2.5 kg of gold ornaments, police said on Thursday.

A dashcam video of the incident went viral on Thursday in which three

cars were seen blocking another car in the middle of the national highway.

Police said a complaint was received on Wednesday and an FIR was registered under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The case was registered under sections 126 (2) (wrongful restraint), 310 (2) (dacoity) and 137 (2) (Kid-

napping) of the BNS.

According to the FIR, the incident happened on September 22 and two persons-Arun Sunny and Rojy Thomas-- were kidnapped after three cars waylaid them. The complaints in the FIR alleged that they were beaten up and jewellery worth Rs 1.84 crore was looted by the gang. Later they were released.

Arms seized in Manipur

Imphal: Security forces seized a cache of arms and ammunition during search operations in Manipur's Thoubal district, a police statement said.

Assam Rifles and Manipur Police in a joint operation on Wednesday in Tekcham Maning Ching area seized one 7.62mm SLR along with empty magazine, two SMG carbine along with magazines, one .32 pistol and 9mm pistol along with an empty magazine, the statement said.

It also said that one 51mm para bomb, four HE-36 hand grenades without detonator, two electronic detonators, five explosives weighing 125 gm each, live ammunition, one stun grenade, one stinger grenade, and two 38mm rubber bullets were also seized during the search operation.

In another operation a joint team of Army, BSF and police seized two large heavy calibre country made mortar (Pompis), and two grenades from Nalon area of Churachandpur district, it added. This is third incident of arms seizure.

Bengaluru murder suspect found hanging in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha police found a man, the key suspect in the brutal killing of a woman in Bengaluru, hanging from a tree in Bhadrak district, an officer said.

The police on Wednesday also recovered a diary, believed to be belonging to the deceased man Mukti Ranjan Ray, in which he confessed to killing the woman whose dismembered body was found in the fridge of her house in the southern metropolis.

Bhadrak SP Varun Guntupalli said Ray (30), a resident of Bhuinpur Village under Dhusuri Police Station, was the prime suspect in the woman's murder.

He was allegedly on the run following the discovery of the body parts of Mahalakshmi, a 29-year-old woman. Earlier on the day, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara had said the police have information about the presence of the suspect in Odisha, and teams formed to crack the case have been sent there to nab him.

"We have recovered the body of Mukti Ranjan Ray hanging from a tree. The body was handed over to his family after conducting post-mortem examina-

tion," Dhusuri Police Station IIC, Santanu Jena, said.

The SP said the police recovered a diary of Ray in which he confessed that he had dismembered the body of the Bengaluru woman to 59 pieces after killing her. He had returned to the village from Bengaluru after the murder. Asked whether the Karnataka police had contacted Bhadrak police, Jena said, "We had received a message, but no repre-



sentative of the Karnataka police has reached here."

The maggot-infested body of Mahalakshmi, chopped into several pieces and stuffed into the fridge, was found by her mother and elder sister at her Vyalikaval home on Saturday.

The deceased woman's estranged husband on Sunday expressed suspicion about the involvement of a man known to Mahalakshmi, who had been living alone, in her neighbourhood.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

We have been saying since the beginning, let there be any inquiry or investigation, we have no objection to it. But, certain lapses that have happened legally, it needs to be rectified, it is our duty.



A.S. Ponnanna, Legal Advisor, Karnataka CM

Village rallies behind Dalit youth over IIT payment

Muzaffarnagar (UP): For the past several months, the small village of Titora has been preoccupied with but one issue - the admission of Atul Kumar into IIT-Dhanbad and making sure he actually gets there.

It takes a village. And the 18-year-old Dalit youth and his family have realised just that as the residents of Titori first got together to raise funds and then rallied behind them as they waged a battle in the Supreme Court.

While 18-year-old Atul Kumar has cracked the

highly competitive JEE Advanced exam, his dream of joining the elite engineering institution remains hanging in the air after he missed the deadline to pay Rs 17,500 -- a requisite fee to block a seat -- due to a technical glitch.

His family and members of his village have now pinned all their hopes on the Supreme Court, which has said it will help Atul as far as possible.

His father Rajendra Kumar said, "My son is facing this trouble for something which was not in his con-



trol. He studied hard to clear the exam."

Rajendra, who works at a textile firm, added that they had to ask money from some relatives and some people in the village for the acceptance fee, which was to be paid by 5

pm on June 24. But a technical glitch the online portal has led to a three-month ordeal to get into IIT-Dhanbad.

Atul said they had managed the funds required just before the deadline. "Unfortunately, a techni-

cal glitch on the online portal prevented us from submitting the fee," he said.

He then approached the IIT-Dhanbad administration, where he had secured an electrical engineering seat based on his performance in the JEE Advanced exam. But he was informed that the admission process was strictly online and that the payment deadline was over.

Atul's family was then forced to approach the biggest court in the country. Titora village is around 100 km from the Supreme

Court in Delhi but a majority of the youth from the village work in sugarcane farms. Some, more ambitious, think of clearing the Army's recruitment.

Atul opted for the road not taken.

"Getting into the IIT was my dream ever since I cleared the class 10th exam. My parents supported me to continue my studies. But all that hard work has come to a halt because of this issue. I hope that all this is temporary and that I will be allowed for admission," he said.

Eco Sensitive Zone surrounding Gir



Ahmedabad: The Centre has declared 1.84 lakh hectares surrounding the Gir Protected Area- the natural abode of Asiatic Lions- as an Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ) through a draft notification, the Gujarat government said on Wednesday.

This initiative will balance the conservation of the Asiatic lions' habitat with sustainable development in the region, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) stated.

Currently, the area falling within 10 km of the outer boundary of the Gir Protected Area is considered ESZ as per the Supreme Court's order and Central guidelines, Gujarat Forest and Environ-

2.78 km – The minimum distance from the boundary of the sanctuary

9.5 km – The maximum distance from the boundary of the sanctuary

17 – No of river corridors to be covered

4 – No of Lion movement corridors to be covered

1.84 lakh hectares – Area of Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ)

24,680 hectares – Area of forest land

1,59,785 hectares – Area of non-forest land

ment Minister Mulubhai Bera stated in a release.

As per the draft notification issued by the Union government at the request of the government, the minimum distance from the boundary of the sanctuary has been set at 2.78 km while the maximum

distance is 9.5 km.

"This reduction in the limits of the Eco-Sensitive Zone will boost development in the region," the minister stated.

A total of 17 river corridors and 4 important lion movement corridors will be covered in the new ESZ

area, as per the draft notification.

A new Eco-Sensitive Zone has been declared after taking into account the data, collected by the forest department over 10 years about the movement of lions tracked through radio collars, important corridors used by them and areas used for hunting, the release stated.

The 1.84 lakh hectares include 24,680 hectares of forest land and 1,59,785 hectares of non-forest land.

Altogether, forest and non-forest areas falling under 196 villages of Junagadh, Amreli and Gir Somnath districts around the Gir Protected Area have been included in the new

ESZ, as per the release.

Bera said adding these areas in the ESZ will boost lion conservation efforts.

Notably, 1,468 square km of forest land in Gir National Park and adjoining Gir, Pania and Mitiala sanctuaries have already been reserved for lions and other wildlife. Now the area surrounding that protected region will be considered ESZ, he added.

"The Govt of India issues draft notification for the Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around Gir Protected Areas. This initiative aims to balance the conservation of the Asiatic lion's habitat with sustainable development in the region," the CMO stated on X. **-PTI**

AIIMS Delhi's big step in robotic surgery

New Delhi: The AIIMS Delhi is set to become the biggest robotic surgery skill training centre with two state-of-the-art robotic surgery equipment dedicated for training of surgeons, Union Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav said.

The institute is a pioneer in the field of medical education, research and healthcare in India whose legacy of excellence continues to inspire medical institutions worldwide, said Jadhav, as he presided over the 69th Foundation Day ceremony of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi.

"AIIMS Delhi has achieved remarkable milestones and is determined to

achieve its goal of being one of the top-ranked medical institutions in the world," Jadhav said while speaking on the occasion.

Highlighting that for the seventh consecutive year since the National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF), AIIMS Delhi has been ranked number one among medical institutions of India, the Union minister said, "This institute's continuous unchallenged status is a remarkable achievement."

He informed that AIIMS Delhi now serves as the National Resource Centre of the National Medical College Network (NMCN) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. This has enabled linkages with more

than 100 medical colleges for enhancing undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing medical education, he said.

"This objective is being facilitated by the creation of a National Learning Management and Information System, SAKSHYAM, which was launched last year," he said. Jadhav highlighted that AIIMS Delhi has established a centre of excellence for development of artificial intelligence in healthcare.

This centre is expected to deliver AI-based solutions for evaluation of chest X-rays, early detection of diabetic retinopathy and identification of skin lesions, among other tools, for enhancing national programmes.



Astronauts Thomas Pesquet of France and Matthias Maurer of Germany demonstrate their training in lunar surface simulating conditions for future moon missions, like the Artemis lunar exploration program led by NASA.

PIC: AP/PTI

80 cr saplings in Centre's campaign

New Delhi: The Centre said on Wednesday that 80 crore saplings have been planted under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign, achieving the target five days ahead of schedule.

The goal was to plant 80 crore saplings by September 2024, and this target was reached on Wednesday.

This achievement was made possible through the combined efforts of government agencies, village-level institutions, local communities, and other stakeholders, the Union Environment Ministry said in a statement. 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' is a nationwide tree plantation campaign launched on the World Environment Day, June 5.



Vehicles stuck in a jam after a road blocked by a tree that uprooted due to heavy rainfall in Shimla on Thursday.

PIC: PTI

Delhi launches winter action plan

New Delhi: In a first for the national capital, Delhi's environment department will deploy one or two drones at each of the 13 major hotspots to monitor pollution levels as part of the newly launched Winter Action Plan, officials said

on Wednesday. Environment Minister Gopal Rai unveiled the 2024 Winter Action Plan with 21 key points. The drone initiative is expected to provide real-time data on pollution sources, enabling swift intervention and precise mitigation measures.

An official from the department said that the tender process for acquiring these drones is expected to be finalised in a week.

"We are in the final stages of releasing the tender for drones," the official

said. He also said that each of the 13 identified hotspots, some of the city's most polluted areas, will be assigned one or two drones based on the requirement and need.

-PTI

Notice to three Union ministries

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has sought replies from three Union ministries, including the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, regarding implementing the star rating system for all passenger vehicles, based on fuel efficiency and carbon dioxide emission.

The green body was hearing a plea saying the star rating system, an effective mechanism to curb air pollution, has already been introduced across the developed nations and it also existed in some developing countries, such as Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore. In an order passed on September 20, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava noted the submissions about vehicular pollution being the most important contributory factor for air pollution and that the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences had stated that vehicular pollution contributed around 40 per cent to air pollution.

The bench also comprising judicial member Justice Arun Tyagi and expert member Afroz Ahmad.

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has formed a panel to inquire and take action against the alleged heavy pruning of trees in west Delhi's Paschim Vihar.

The green body was hearing a plea claiming that more than 250 trees were illegally lopped (cutting or trimming of branches) while more than 20 trees were pollarded (pruned) in an unauthorised manner across various blocks in the area between February and March.

In an order passed on Monday, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava noted the complaint, according to which, there was a nexus between the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and forest department officials and private contractors, who in the garb of pruning, engaged in "heavy" cutting of the trees.

"She (the applicant) has also submitted that the officers of the departments concerned deliberately do

not remain present when the contractors carry out the work of pruning the trees," said the bench also comprising judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member A Senthil Vel.

"In the original application (OA), the applicant has given the following details of 40 trees that have been damaged by lopping, pollarding and excess pruning," it said.

The bench also noted that the plea alleged violation of a 2023 order of the Delhi High Court, which prohibited the pruning of trees in the national capital, except under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act.

It said, "The application raises substantial issues relating to compliance of environmental norms... Issue notice to the respondents for filing their response or reply at least one week before the next date of hearing on January 15."

The respondents in the case are the MCD, the Delhi government's departments of environment, forest and wildlife, the deputy

director of horticulture, the Delhi Police headquarters, and three resident welfare associations.

"Having regard to the seriousness of allegations, we form a joint committee comprising representative of the inspector general (IG) of forest of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, member secretaries of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and the district magistrate of north Delhi," said the tribunal.

"The committee will duly take into account the photographs enclosed in the original application with the geo-coordinates at the time of inspection relating to the cutting of heavy branches of the trees, stacking of the wood logs and its transportation," it added.

The exercise has to be completed within two months, following which the committee would submit its report, said the tribunal. **-PTI**

Hurricane Helene threatens 'unsurvivable' storm surge

Tallahassee: Fast-moving Hurricane Helene was advancing on Thursday across the Gulf of Mexico toward Florida, threatening an "unsurvivable" storm surge in northwestern parts of the state as well as damaging winds, rains and flash floods hundreds of miles inland across much of the southeastern US, forecasters said.

Helene is expected to be a major hurricane — meaning a Category 3 or higher — when it makes landfall on Florida's northwestern coast Thursday evening. As of early Thursday, hurricane warnings and flash flood warnings extended far beyond the coast up into south-

central Georgia. The governors of Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas have all declared emergencies in their states.

The National Weather Service in Tallahassee forecast storm surges of up to 20 feet (6 metres) and warned they could be particularly "catastrophic and life-threatening" in Florida's Apalachee Bay. It added that high winds and heavy rains also posed risks.

"This forecast, if realized, is a nightmare surge scenario for Apalachee Bay," the office said. "Please, please, please take any evacuation orders seriously!"

In Crawfordville, farther inland and about 25 miles (40 kilometers) north west of



People traverse a flooded street with a horse-drawn carriage after the passage of Hurricane Helene in Guanimar, Artemisa province, Cuba on Wednesday.

PIC: AP/PTI

Apalachee Bay, Christine Nazworth stocked up on bottled water, baked goods and pre-

made meals at a Walmart. She said her family would be sheltering in place, despite Wakulla

County issuing a mandatory evacuation order.

"I'm prayed up," she said. "Lord have mercy on us. And everybody else that might be in its path."

Wakulla County was one of several to issue evacuation orders. Along Florida's Gulf Coast, school districts and multiple universities have cancelled classes.

Early Thursday, Helene was about 425 miles (680 kilometers) southwest of Tampa and moving north at 9 mph (15 kph) with top sustained winds of 85 mph (137 kph). Forecasters said it should become a major Category 3 or higher hurricane, meaning winds would top 110 mph

(177 kph).

While Helene will likely weaken as it moves inland, its "fast forward speed will allow strong, damaging winds, especially in gusts, to penetrate well inland across the southeastern United States", including in the southern Appalachian Mountains, the National Hurricane Centre said. The centre posted lesser tropical storm warnings as far north as North Carolina, and warned that much of the region could experience prolonged power outages, toppled trees and dangerous flooding.

Helene had swamped parts of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula on Wednesday, flooding streets and toppling trees as it passed

offshore and brushed the resort city of Cancun.

The storm formed Tuesday in the Caribbean Sea. In Cuba, the government preventively shut off power in some communities as waves as high as 16 feet (5 metres) slammed Cortes Bay. And in the Cayman Islands, schools closed and residents pumped water from flooded homes.

Rain was already falling steadily in Atlanta on Wednesday evening as shoppers emptied shelves of water at a Kroger supermarket east of downtown. The National Weather Service in Atlanta issued flash flood warnings for much of the state.

Another Khalistani provocation in US

By Lalit K. Jha

Washington: Unknown miscreants have vandalised the BAPS Hindu temple in California's Sacramento, desecrating it with expletive-laden graffiti saying "Hindus go back!", the BAPS Public Affairs said.

"Less than 10 days after the desecration of the @BAPS Mandir in New York, our Mandir in the Sacramento, CA area was desecrated last night with anti-Hindu hate: "Hindus go back!" We stand united against hate with prayers for peace," the BAPS Public Affairs said in a post on X.

Wednesday night's incident comes after the desecration of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Melville, New York, on September 17.

"Our condemnation of hate remains resolute; our sadness has only deepened; and our prayers for all, including those with hate in their heart, have grown stronger," the organisation said in a statement.

"BAPS is working with law enforcement authorities on this hate crime," the statement said.

"The BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Sacramento is home to a vibrant Hindu community engaged in numerous activities and projects to support the larger community. We are and shall remain an integral part of this community's fabric," the statement added.

The temple community in response to the incident gathered for a prayer ceremony and called for peace and unity, remembering His Holiness Mahant Swa-



This type of hate against Hindu Americans and vandalism is appalling and morally wrong. The Department of Justice must investigate these hate crimes, and those responsible should be held fully accountable under the law."

Ro Khanna, Congressman

mi Maharaj's ideal of harmony and respect.

This was the second incident of desecration at a BAPS temple in less than a month in the US amidst the growing trend of temple vandalism as part of a systematic hate crime against the Hindu community in the country.

Amerish Babulal or "Ami" Bera, an American physician and politician serving as a member of the US House of Representatives from California, said on X: "There is no place for religious bigotry and hatred in Sacramento County. I strongly condemn this apparent act of vandalism in our community."

"All of us must stand against intolerance and ensure that everyone in our community, regardless of faith, feels safe and respected," Bera said in a post on X.

Indian-American entrepreneur Ajay Jain Bhutoria, urging the FBI to investigate and hold accountable those spreading hate and fear, said: "No place for hate in our communities or country."

"All Temples must also enhance security and utilise available grants. We stand united against hate and will continue to pray for peace," he said on X.

Headquartered in Gujarat, BAPS has more than 100 temples and centres in North America.

Last year, it opened the Akshardham temple in New Jersey, the largest Hindu temple outside India.

BAPS is a non-political organisation and has its support base across the political and ideological spectrum.

-PTI

India urges citizens to leave Lebanon

Jerusalem: The Indian Embassy in Beirut has urged its nationals to avoid travel to Lebanon due to escalating violence and "strongly advised" those present there to exercise extreme caution and leave the country as soon as possible.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on Wednesday said that 200,000 people have been displaced in Lebanon since Hezbollah began firing rockets into northern Israel nearly a year ago, drawing Israeli retaliation. According to Lebanon's health minister, 51 people were killed and 223 wounded Wednesday in Israeli strikes.

In an advisory posted on social media platform X on Wednesday, the Indian embassy said, "As a reiteration of the advisory issued on 1 August 2024 and in view of the recent developments and escalations in the region, Indian nationals are strongly advised against travelling to Lebanon till further notice."

The Indian Embassy in Beijing on Thursday advised all Indian nationals residing in China to register with the mission, which will be a requirement for all future services to be availed from the Embassy.

Upon successful submission of the registration form on the website, a registration document containing the name of the applicant, passport number and registration number will automatically be generated in downloadable pdf format and also sent to the registered email ID provided by the applicant during the process of filling the registration form, the advisory said.

-PTI



Abraham Bonowitz, executive director of Death Penalty Action, and other death penalty opponents hold a demonstration outside the Alabama Capitol in Montgomery, Ala. on Wednesday. Pic: AP/PTI

China says reached 'some consensus' with India

By K J M Varma

Beijing: China and India were able to "reduce differences" and build "some consensus" on disengaging troops from friction points

through diplomatic and military channels including between two foreign ministers and China's Foreign Minister and India's National Security Advisor and through the border

On Sept 3, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, while commenting on the talks between Wang and Doval said, "The front-line armies of the two countries have realised disengagement in four areas in the Western sector of the China-India border, including the Galwan Valley."

to end the standoff in eastern Ladakh and agreed to maintain dialogue to reach a resolution acceptable to both sides at an "early date", the Chinese Defence Ministry said on Thursday.

Under the guidance of two leaders, China and India have maintained communication with each other

consultation mechanisms, Zhang Xiaogang said.

"The two sides agreed to reach a resolution at an early date acceptable to both sides," he said.

He was replying to a question on the talks between the two countries on disengagement from the remaining friction points especially Demchok and Depsang to

Both China and India through talks were "able to reduce their differences and build some consensus besides agreeing to strengthen dialogue to accommodate each other's legitimate concerns."

Zhang Xiaogang, Spokesperson, Ministry of National Defence, China

end the over four-year-long military standoff in eastern Ladakh resulting in a freeze of relations between the two countries.

Zhang referred to the meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi as well as the recent meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS meeting in Russia between Wang and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.

In his reply to the question, Zhang didn't comment on the progress of the disengagement from the remaining areas including Depsang and Demchok but said both sides will continue to consolidate the outcomes.

"We will continue to consolidate the outcomes we have reached and respect bilateral agreements and confidence-building measures to safeguard peace and tranquility at the border," he said.

Zelenskyy hopes support in White House visit

Washington: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is visiting Washington on Thursday as US support for his country's fight against Russia faces a partisan reckoning in this year's presidential election.

Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee for president, has pledged to continue sending military assistance to Ukraine if she's elected, and she'll have her own meeting with Zelenskyy after the Ukrainian leader sits down with President Joe Biden.

However, Zelenskyy's tumultuous relationship with former President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee, continued to deteriorate this week. Instead of meeting with Zelenskyy, Trump has criticised him.

As for US support for Ukraine, Trump complained that "we continue to give billions of dollars to a man who refuses to make a deal" to end the war.

It's the most politically treacherous landscape that Zelenskyy has encountered in Washington since the war with Russia began nearly three years ago. Ukrainian officials are anxious to maintain good rela-

tions with whoever becomes the next president of the United States, which is its biggest and most important provider of arms, money and other support.

But the effort risks slipping into the political blender of the election, polarising the discussion around a war that used to be a bipartisan cause celebre in Washington.

The latest round of sniping started on Sunday, when The New Yorker published an interview with Zelenskyy in which he criticised J.D. Vance, Trump's running mate, as "too radical" for suggesting that Ukraine needs to give up some territory to end the war.

Zelenskyy also dismissed Trump's boasts that he could quickly negotiate a solution, saying "my feeling is that Trump doesn't really know how to stop the war even if he might think he knows how".

On the same day, Zelenskyy toured a Pennsylvania factory producing munitions for the war. He was joined by Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro, a top surrogate for Harris, and Republicans criticised the visit as a political stunt in a political battleground state.



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (left) greets France's President Emmanuel Macron outside Rideau Cottage at Rideau Hall in Ottawa on Wednesday. Pic: AP/PTI

N Korea has enough uranium, says Seoul's spy agency

Seoul: North Korea has likely enriched enough uranium to build a "double-digit" number of bombs and is making progress in its efforts to develop more powerful and accurate missiles targeting rival South Korea, Seoul's spy agency told lawmakers on Thursday.

The closed-door parliamentary briefing by the National Intelligence Service came after North Ko-

rea offered a rare glimpse into a secretive facility to produce weapons-grade uranium earlier this month as leader Kim Jong Un reiterated his goal to "exponentially" increase his stock of nuclear weapons.

The South Korean agency assessed that Kim's disclosure of the facility was likely a statement of defiance toward Washington ahead of the US presidential election and meant to

domestically showcase his military accomplishments amid deepening economic struggles, according to Lee Seong-kweun, one of the lawmakers who attended the briefing.

When asked about North Korea's bomb fuel capacity, the agency said North Korea likely has about 70 kg (154 pounds) of plutonium and an unspecified but considerable amount of weapons-grade uranium.

IMF approves USD 7 billion bailout for Pakistan

By Sajjad Hussain

Islamabad: The IMF has approved a USD 7 billion new bailout package for Pakistan, authorising the immediate release of the first loan tranche of less than USD 1.1 billion to reinforce the cash-strapped country's efforts to address the

a 5 per cent interest rate on the IMF loan. The Express Tribune quoted the Ministry of Finance as saying in a statement given to the Senate Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday reiterated this would be Pakistan's last IMF programme;

To qualify for the programme, the government raised Rs 1.8 trillion in additional taxes from Rs 1.4 trillion earlier, increased electricity prices up to 51 per cent, and promised to bring transparency in the affairs of the Sovereign Wealth Fund.

USD 12.7 billion – Amount Pakistan has committed to refrain from repaying debt to Saudi Arabia, China, the UAE, and Kuwait during the programme period

USD 2 billion – Amount the IMF forced Pakistan to first bridge additional financing gap for qualifying the board approval

25 – No of times Pakistan has obtained IMF programme since 1958

ongoing economic crisis.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) board met on Wednesday in Washington to give a nod to the staff-level agreement with Pakistan after Islamabad promised to overhaul its agriculture income tax, transfer some fiscal responsibilities to provinces, and agree to limit subsidies.

The Prime Minister's Office confirmed the Executive Board of the IMF approved the 37-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF) totalling USD 7 billion.

Pakistan will pay around

a statement he made after the approval of the 24th programme in 2023 as well.

Shehbaz, giving credit for the new bailout package to Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir and the finance team, noted the federal government cannot complete the 25th programme without the cooperation of all four provinces.

The Sindh government on July 30 ratified a memorandum of understanding for signing the National Fiscal Pact and the Balochistan government signed it on July 26 following the

staff-level agreement between Pakistan and the IMF on July 12.

The new bailout package targets achieving macroeconomic stability by consolidating public finances, rebuilding the foreign exchange reserves, reducing fiscal risks from state-owned enterprises, and improving the business environment to encourage growth led by the private sector.

The government also took the most expensive loan in Pakistan's history -- USD 600 million -- to win a board meeting date from the IMF.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Clearly the pope is aware of the difficulty, and that for years there has been suffering in Belgium (Bishop's abuse scandal), and certainly we can expect a reference in this sense."



Matteo Bruni, Spokesman, Vatican

Washington: Waves of sanctions imposed by the Biden administration after Russia's invasion of Ukraine haven't inflicted the devastating blow to Moscow's economy that some had expected. In a new report, two researchers are offering reasons why.

Oleg Itskhoki of Harvard University and Elina Ribakova of the Peterson Institute for International Economics argue that the sanctions should have been imposed more forcefully immediately after the inva-

sion rather than in a piecemeal manner.

"In retrospect, it is evident that there was no reason not to have imposed all possible decisive measures against Russia from the outset once Russia launched the full-scale invasion in February 2022," the authors state in the paper.

Still, "the critical takeaway is that sanctions are not a silver bullet", Ribakova said on a call with reporters this week, to preview the study.

The researchers say Rus-



sia was able to brace for the financial penalties because of the lessons learned from sanctions imposed in 2014 after it invaded Crimea. Also, the impact was weakened by the failure to get more countries to partici-

pate in sanctions, with economic powers like China and India not included.

The report says that "while the count of sanctions is high, the tangible impact on Russia's economy is less clear", and "global cooperation is indispensable".

The question of what makes sanctions effective or not is important beyond the Russia-Ukraine war. Sanctions have become critical tools for the United States and other Western nations to pressure adver-

saries to reverse actions and change policies while stopping short of direct military conflict.

The limited impact of sanctions on Russia has been clear for some time. But the report provides a more detailed picture of how Russia adapted to the sanctions and what it could mean for US sanctions' effectiveness in the future.

The paper will be presented at the Brookings Institution next week.

Since the beginning of Russia's invasion of

Ukraine in February 2022, the US has sanctioned more than 4,000 people and businesses, including 80 per cent of Russia's banking sector by assets.

The Biden administration acknowledges that sanctions alone cannot stop Russia's invasion — it has also sent roughly USD 56 billion in military assistance to Ukraine since the 2022 invasion. And many policy experts say the sanctions are not strong enough, as evidenced by the growth of the Russian economy.

EDITORIAL

Monsoon Malaise

Few things are as predictable as Mumbai's monsoon: torrential rains, clogged roads, submerged railway tracks, harried commuters. Year after year, Mumbai, Pune and other parts in Maharashtra face a familiar deluge of water - and a deluge of excuses. As the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issues warnings, the state's infrastructure wilts under pressure, unable to cope with the annual onslaught. The problem is not the accuracy or inaccuracy of these forecasts (often the butt of jokes), but the chronic inadequacy of the state's infrastructure.

Despite Maharashtra being one of India's wealthiest states, its urban planning and preparedness for heavy rains remain woefully inadequate. Mumbai, the financial capital, is an emblem of this paradox. The city's drainage system, much of it built during the British era, is designed to handle 25mm of rain per hour. This might have sufficed in 1860, but it is pitifully inadequate for the reality of the 2020s, where storms can dump more than 100mm of rain in just a few hours.

In Pune, rapid urbanization has outstripped its drainage systems, causing flash floods during the monsoon. Once known for its pleasant weather, the city now faces severe waterlogging with any heavy rain, worsened by roads that quickly morph into lunar craters at the first instance of heavy showers.

A critical flaw in Maharashtra's monsoon preparedness lies not just in infrastructure but in communication. While the state government leans heavily on IMD forecasts, it rarely takes proactive steps to directly inform the public about impending torrential rains. The reliance on the IMD's bulletins alone - often buried in technical jargon - leaves citizens unaware of real-time conditions and disruptions.

This communication gap has dire consequences. Commuters in Mumbai, dependent on the city's overstretched public transport system, often find themselves stranded as trains are cancelled, buses are rerouted, and streets turn into rivers.

The city's famed suburban rail network grinds to a halt, leaving thousands scrambling for alternative routes with little advance notice. Instead of waiting for IMD alerts, the Maharashtra administration could adopt a more dynamic, real-time communication system using apps, SMS alerts, and social media to keep commuters informed of road closures, train delays, and areas to avoid.

A centralized, citizen-centric system, akin to those used in other flood-prone cities globally, could alleviate much of the chaos that grips Mumbai during the monsoon, helping people adjust their plans before the city is submerged.

Without a strategic overhaul of its urban infrastructure, the state will remain trapped in a vicious cycle of monsoon mismanagement. Maharashtra cannot control the skies, but it can control how prepared it is to face the rains that fall from them.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Revisiting the Indus Waters Treaty: Water Diplomacy Amidst Growing Tensions



By

Dr. Manisha Shrimali

September 19 marked the 64th anniversary of the Indus Waters Treaty, a testament to the fragile peace between India and Pakistan in a landscape marred by conflict. Signed in 1960, this landmark agreement governs the six rivers of the Indus basin, allocating 80% of the waters to Pakistan and leaving India with the remainder. Despite being hailed as a durable resolution to water disputes, the treaty faces challenges that threaten its sustainability.

As India's population swells and its economy expands, so too does the demand for water, intensifying calls for a renegotiation of existing agreements, especially in the wake of the 2019 Pulwama attack. Yet, decades of mutual distrust continue to obstruct cooperation between the two nations. Before diverting water from the western rivers, India must prioritize addressing its infrastructure deficits to mitigate flooding risks in Jammu and Kashmir. In 2019, Nitin Gadhkar issued a stark warning to Pakistan: cease its support for terrorism or face the consequences of diminished access to Indian waters. Concurrently, plans are in motion to redirect surplus water to Punjab and Haryana for agricultural use, alongside the construction of the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, which promises to reduce travel time by four hours.

Pakistan's mismanagement of water resources, particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan - a mineral-rich region, including gold - has relegated it to one of South Asia's poorest areas. China's encroaching influence, exemplified by the ambitious Diam-



er-Bhasha Dam, heightens India's concerns. With an estimated cost of 442 billion, the dam has ignited protests in Gilgit, prompted by fears of submerged villages and demographic shifts. China's hegemony over water resources complicates any potential renegotiation of the treaty. To maintain regional stability and protect its interests, India must also settle water disputes with neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal, thereby avoiding accusations of 'water imperialism.'

Gilgit-Baltistan, a sparsely populated mountainous area over six times larger than Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK), has been under Pakistan's illegal control. The Indus River, which flows from Ladakh through PoJK, has been effectively commandeered. This resource-rich territory, abundant in minerals and precious metals, remains one of the poorest regions in South Asia. Notably, it is home to significant gold reserves, with mines scattered near Basha, Braldo, Parkuta, Saltoro, and along the banks of the Indus and Shyok rivers.

The agriculturally fertile Shyok and Indus valleys produce a variety of crops, including rabi staples such as wheat, gram, peas, and rapeseed, alongside kharif crops like millets and buckwheat. Despite its agricultural potential, chronic mismanagement continues to stifle development in the region. Although it is legally part of India, Gilgit-Baltistan remains a hotspot for protests by

marginalized communities, occasionally escalating into violence.

Divided into seven districts, this region is cradled by the Karakoram, Himalaya, and Hindukush ranges, bordering China's Xinjiang, Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It encompasses eight of the world's highest peaks and over fifty summits exceeding 7,000 meters. With elevations ranging from 300 to 28,250 feet, it is characterized by snow-clad peaks, vast glaciers, and lush valleys. Many of Pakistan's freshwater resources originate in or traverse this area. The geopolitical importance of Gilgit-Baltistan has surged with the completion of the Karakoram Highway, which not only enhances trade with China but also solidifies the alliance between the two countries. This highway is vital for Pakistan's freshwater supplies, which, under international law, legally belong to India. Despite this, successive Indian governments have maintained a conspicuous silence regarding developments in this strategically crucial region.

The looming threat of Chinese retaliation adds complexity to the renegotiation of the treaty. In the absence of water-sharing agreements, India and China are increasingly reliant on cross-border rivers like the Brahmaputra and Indus, both originating from Mount Kailash.

Since 1962, China has pursued control over key water bodies near Ladakh, including attempts to seize Pangong Lake

and allegations of diverting the Galwan River, a tributary of the Indus. The Galwan flows from Samzungling in Aksai Chin, merging with the Shyok River near Leh. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) runs through this region, with disputes over its exact location, particularly around Pangong Lake, where India controls only 45 of its 135 kilometers. China's construction of a road along the lake opposes India's infrastructure developments. Tensions peaked on June 15, 2020, with a violent clash near Patrol Point 14 in the Galwan Valley, underscoring the need for India to resolve this issue to protect its natural resources.

China's control over critical resources amid rising water scarcity poses a major challenge for India. The strategically important Kailash Range in Tibet was effectively closed off to India by China's Assertion Line established on October 27, 1959, which diverges from the 1959 Claim Line near Black Top. Since 1962, the region has seen intense disputes. The 2017 Dawn leaks revealed China's ambitions in Pakistan via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to dominate Indus basin agricultural resources, raising concerns that China may also try to control Tso Moriri, a glacial lake near Leh.

Population growth, climate change, and ineffective water management necessitate a shift towards improved technologies, crop diversification, and significant infrastructure investments. While India faces water-related accusations from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, it retains its rightful claim to the waters of the Indus basin. India has fostered cooperative ties with Bhutan, as evidenced by successful hydropower initiatives. To ease regional tensions, India must navigate the delicate balance of avoiding 'water imperialism' while respecting the rights of its neighbours, necessitating diplomatic finesse and a commitment to water as a fundamental human right.

(The writer is an educationalist. Views personal.)

GLOBAL WATCH

The Rising Tide of China's Pacific Power Play

On Tuesday, China conducted a rare test-firing of its Dongfeng (DF)-41 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) into international waters, marking its first such launch in 44 years. This act has drawn immediate protests from neighbouring countries in the region, particularly Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, reflecting fears of China's growing military capabilities.

In the evolving landscape of the Indo-Pacific, the missile test serves as a stark reminder of China's aspirations for regional dominance. Regional actors swiftly expressed alarm. Japan, which claimed it had no record of receiving prior notice of the test, raised serious concerns about China's military expansion. Australia condemned the action as "destabilizing," while New Zealand labeled it "an unwelcome and concerning development."

Historically, China's approach to ICBM testing has undergone a significant transformation. The DF-41, operational since 2017, boasts an impressive range of 12,000 to 15,000 kilometers, capable of reaching the U.S. mainland. This latest test, conducted by the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF), signals a departure from China's traditional practice of testing missiles internally, such as in the Taklamakan Desert.

Robert D. Kaplan, in 'The Revenge of Geography,' posits that "geography is destiny," suggesting that China's geographical aspirations have increasingly dictated its military strategy as it seeks to assert its influence over the Asia-Pacific region.

China's assertiveness raises alarms across the Indo-Pacific, echoing a turbulent legacy of ambition and conflict.



Over recent decades, China has dramatically ramped up its defense spending, indicating a commitment to modernizing and expanding its military capabilities. This drive for modernization is underscored by Beijing's long-standing narrative that its nuclear arsenal serves solely as a deterrent.

In Japan's condemnation of China militant test, there is a historical irony reminiscent of the responses of the United States and other Western countries to Japan's own historical militarism in the third decade of the 20th century.

Historically, Japan's militaristic endeavours in the Pacific during the early 1900s were characterized by a similarly assertive posture. The 1930s saw Japan expand its influence aggressively, culminating in the invasion of China and the broader aggression in Southeast Asia. In his classic, Pulitzer-winning 'The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire 1936-1945,' maverick historian John Toland noted that Japan's imperial ambitions were driven by a belief in its own superiority and a desire to dominate the region.

China's current trajectory, particularly with its recent missile

launch, reflects a different but parallel aspiration. The DF-41 ICBM, capable of reaching the U.S. mainland, underscores China's intent to position itself as a formidable military power.

Moreover, Japan's militaristic assertions culminated in a tragic confrontation with the United States during World War II, a conflict deeply rooted in its quest for power in the Pacific. Similarly, the United States today perceives China's military modernization as a potential threat to its own interests and allies in the region. The U.S. remains wary of the implications of China's expanding nuclear capabilities, a concern that echoes the historical context of the Pacific Theater, where control over territory was often fought through military might.

As we examine these two epochs, the similarities are striking. Both China today and Japan in the past have sought to leverage military might to assert their influence over the Pacific. The consequences of such assertive postures can be dire. The challenge for both China and the international community lies in managing these aspirations without sliding into conflict.

STATES WATCH

Broader Message through Cabinet Churn

In a significant reshuffle of his cabinet, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, in an unexpectedly bold move, has ushered in a new set of faces while easing out four of his sitting ministers. The first day of this week saw five fresh inductees take the oath of office at Raj Bhavan in Chandigarh, under the watchful eye of Governor Gulab Chand Kataria. The changes, though not officially explained, were telegraphed by the political undercurrents long swirling within the ranks of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

This marks the fourth such reshuffle since Mann came to power in 2022, a tenure characterized by the elusive balance between performance and loyalty. Unlike other routine overhauls, the timing of this manoeuvre carries the unmistakable weight of recent electoral disappointments - specifically, the Lok Sabha elections in which AAP won just three out of 13 seats in Punjab.

Among the four ministers facing the axe, the most conspicuous name is Chetan Singh Jouramajra, a figure long regarded as one of Mann's inner circle. Jouramajra, who had held the portfolios of Public Relations, Mining, and Horticulture, has reportedly been ousted

In mimicking the AAP playbook in Delhi, Bhagwant Mann's decisions underscore a broader message that loyalty alone is not enough and that performance remains paramount.

due to a litany of complaints from his home turf in Patiala. Yet his response has been one of incredulity, as sources say he is still grappling to understand what exactly went wrong.

Bram Shankar Jimpa's removal comes as an even greater surprise. A minister tasked with handling revenue, Jimpa had quietly gone about his duties, steering

constituency, exacerbated by her public acknowledgment that some officials had been accepting bribes in her name.

The new inductees, all first-time MLAs, reflect a reshuffling of caste and regional calculus as much as a desire for renewal. Baraminder Kumar Goyal, a Lehra MLA, is being seen as an attempt to placate the Bania community - a group Mann had earlier alienated.

Other new entrants include Hardeep Singh Mundian, a former Congress member from Sahnewal, and Dr. Ravjot Singh from Sham Chaurasi, a doctor by

training whose political fortunes had been relatively low-key until now. Ravjot's entry into the cabinet, alongside fellow newcomer Mohinder Bhagat, signals a deliberate attempt to increase representation from the Scheduled Caste community.

This brings the number of SC ministers to five, a nod toward the politics of inclusion, even as questions linger about the depth of such gestures.

Mann's reshuffle echoes AAP's Delhi strategy, emphasizing that loyalty not backed by performance is not sufficient, as the government grapples with the fallout of the party's poor performance in the Punjab during the general election.



Punjab



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3



4

KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 Foreign tourists wearing 'sarees' visit the Taj Mahal in Agra on Thursday.
- 2 Artists perform during a dress rehearsal for 'The Little Prince', a theatrical production at the Grand Theatre of the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre, Mumbai.
- 3 Performers dressed in traditional attire rehearse for Garba, a traditional folk dance, ahead of Navratri festival, in Ahmedabad.
4. President Droupadi Murmu pays tribute at the Siachen War Memorial during a visit to Siachen Base Camp on Thursday.
- 5 Indianarae Siqueira, a transgender woman running for city council, attends a rally led by state employees in Rio de Janeiro.



5

All Pictures PTI, AP

TALK OF THE TOWN

Uncommon Presence of the Common Face



By
Abhjit Joshi



In the movie Maharaja, there is a scene that exemplifies the brilliance of Vijay Sethupathi's acting. Vijay's character is called to his daughter's school after she is wrongly accused of mischief. The school owner lashes out at the girl, only for it to be discovered later that another child was responsible. While the issue seems settled, the real drama begins when Vijay Sethupathi calmly asks the school owner to apologise to his daughter. The owner, feeling offended, dismisses him and calls for security to escort Vijay out. In a display of extraordinary restraint, Vijay doesn't fight or cause a scene. Instead, as he is being dragged toward the door, he grips the bar, locking eyes with the owner, and quietly repeats, "Say sorry to my daughter." It's the intensity in his eyes, the quiet resolve, and the understated power of the scene that leaves the audience with goosebumps.

This is what makes Uncommon Presence of the Common Face such an apt phrase to describe Vijay Sethupathi and other actors who defy Bollywood's conventional definitions of a hero.

Bollywood, for decades, has celebrated a particular mould of the hero: tall, fair-skinned, muscular, and exuding wealthy looks. The leading men have often been those with the polished, picture-perfect looks of the Khans, Kapoors, and Kumars. However, there are exceptions—most notably, Nana Patekar, who, despite his unconventional appearance, managed to command commercial success with his extraordinary talent. For a long time, though, Bollywood didn't fully em-

brace actors outside this conventional framework, leaving only a few to pull off lead roles in commercial cinema.

Then came the OTT revolution, which changed the game entirely. As streaming platforms began to gain ground, audiences started seeking authenticity, depth, and diversity in storytelling. With that shift came an appreciation for actors who, while lacking the so-called conventional Bollywood looks, brought extraordinary skill and charisma to the screen. Actors like Pankaj Tripathi, Vijay Verma, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Jaideep Ahlawat, and Chhaya Kadam became household names—not because of their looks, but because of their sheer talent.

Pankaj Tripathi is a prime example of this transformation. His portrayal of Kaleen Bhaiya in Mirzapur is unforgettable. The series, known for its gritty themes, explicit scenes, and explosive dialogues, wouldn't have been the same without Tripathi's magnetic presence. His calm, menacing demeanor had viewers on the edge of their seats, eagerly awaiting his next move or line.

Vijay Verma, another rising star, has also carved a niche for himself with his unconventional looks and immense acting prowess. Audiences remember him fondly for his performances as Sasya in SHE or as Bharat/Shatrughn Tyagi in Mirzapur. His role in Lust Stories 2, especially alongside his rumoured girlfriend Tamannaah Bhatia, became a talking point, not just for his chemistry but for the depth of his performance. In the same league is Chhaya Kadam, a promising actor whose career is filled with memora-

ble roles. She's left a lasting impression on audiences with her portrayal of Manju Mai in Lapaataa Ladies and her appearance in Jhund alongside Amitabh Bachchan.

Jaideep Ahlawat is yet another fascinating talent whose non-heroic looks have garnered attention to himself. From his gripping roles in Maharaj, Paatal Lok, and Raees, Ahlawat has shown that traditional hero material is no longer a necessity to pull off stellar performances. In the recent film Jaane Jaan, where he shared screen space with Kareena Kapoor and Vijay Verma, Ahlawat held his own and never overshadowed, proving that talent trumps all.

It's not just about appearances or star power anymore. Audiences today are looking for depth, nuance, and the ability to connect emotionally with characters. Actors like Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Vijay Sethupathi, and Pankaj Tripathi have brought something fresh and raw to the forefront. They've made it clear that you don't need chiseled features or a glossy persona to make an impact. Their uncommon presence—grounded, real, and full of substance—is what today's viewers crave. In the changing landscape of cinema, especially with the rise of OTT platforms, these "common faces" are proving that extraordinary talent can break stereotypes and redefine what it means to be a star. They are no longer confined to supporting roles or niche films; they are leading the charge, pulling entire shows and movies with their undeniable skill.

(The writer is a communication professional. Views personal.)

LEADER'S VOICE

The Impact of 'Make in India' Shows that Bharat Is Unstoppable



By
Narendra Modi

The impact of 'Make in India' shows that Bharat is unstoppable.

This was an effort that began ten years ago with an ambitious aim - to increase India's strides in manufacturing, to ensure that a talented nation as ours is not merely an importer but an exporter as well.

Reflecting on this past decade, I cannot but be filled with a sense of pride in how far the strength and skills of 140 crore Indians have got us. The imprint of 'Make in India' has become visible across sectors, including areas where we never even dreamt of making an impact.

Let me give an example or two.

Mobile manufacturing...we know how important mobile phones have now become, but what is startling is that in 2014, we had only two mobile manufacturing units in the entire country. Today, that number has risen to over 200. Our mobile exports have skyrocketed from a mere 1,556 crore to an astounding 1.2 lakh crore - a mind-boggling 7500 per cent increase! Today, 99 per cent of mobile phones used in India are Made in India. We've become the second-largest mobile manufacturer globally.

Look at our steel industry - we have become a net exporter of finished steel, with production in-

It is the collective drive, relentless in nature, which has transformed a dream into a powerful movement.

creasing by over 50 per cent since 2014.

Our semiconductor manufacturing sector has attracted investments worth over 1.5 lakh crore, with five plants approved that will have a combined capacity of more than 7 crore chips per day!

In renewable energy, we are the 4th largest producer globally, with capacity increasing by 400 per cent in just a decade. Our electric vehicle industry, practically non-existent in 2014, is now worth \$3 billion.

Defence production exports have soared from 1,000 crores to 21,000 crore, reaching over 85 nations.

During one of the 'Mann Ki Baat'

on the MSME sector.

As a Government, we are committed to making this spirit even stronger. Our decade long track record speaks for itself. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes have been game changers, enabling investments of thousands of crores and generating lakhs of jobs. We have also made significant strides in ease of doing business.

There is a lot going in India's favour today- we are the perfect blend of democracy, demography and demand. We have what it takes to be a key player in the global supply chain, seen as a reliable partner for business. We also have the most phenomenal Yuva Shakti, whose



programmes, I had spoken about the need to have a vibrant toys industry and our people showed how that is done! Over the years, we have seen exports increase by 239 per cent, with imports halved, particularly benefiting our local manufacturers and sellers, not to mention the little children as well! :)

Many of the icons of today's India - our Vande Bharat trains, BrahMos missiles, and the mobile phones in our hands - all proudly bear the Make in India label. From electronics to the space sector, it represents Indian ingenuity and quality.

Make in India initiative is also special because it has given the poor the wings to dream big and aspire- it has given them the confidence that they can be wealth creators. Equally notable is the impact

success in the StartUp world is for everyone to see.

Thus, the momentum is clearly in India's favour. Despite facing unprecedented challenges like the global pandemic, India has remained firmly on the growth track. Today, we are being seen as drivers of global growth. I call upon my young friends to come and join us in taking Make in India to new heights. We all must strive for excellence. Delivering quality should be our commitment.. Zero defect should be our mantra. Together, we can continue to build an India that not only meets its own needs but also serves as a manufacturing and innovation powerhouse for the world.

(The Prime Minister wrote this blog on LinkedIn)

Chess happened by accident, says Vidit



By Saumojyoti S Choudhury

New Delhi: Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi was just another Indian kid who dreamt of becoming a cricketer in his childhood before an accidental initiation to chess, which he feels was a "very happy accident".

Gujrathi was part of the five-member Indian men's team that won a historic gold in the open category of the recent Olympiad in Budapest. To make the achievement more memorable, the Indian women's team also bagged the gold, making it double celebration for the country.

The 29-year-old from Nashik became a Grandmaster in 2013 and was also a part of India's silver medal-winning side at the Hangzhou Asian Games.

"It has not sunk in yet but I do know this achieve-

ment is going to stay with us for a long time. Score of 21 out of 22, highest-ever and it would be hard to break this record. With women's team also winning gold, it was double the joy. You cannot write such a perfect script," Gujrathi said.

"This was the same team that played in the Asian Games. That was the first time we all were together. We won silver there and there were lessons that we learnt from the Asian Games. This time we came with a new vibe, we are rooting for each other, celebrating each others' success."

Gujrathi said it was not easy to script such a dominating performance as they felt the pressure of being rated as one of the favourites in the Olympiad.

"When the team was drafted we knew that we are one of the favourites.

Everybody around us kept telling us the same but I never thought of it. As we got closer to the event we started to realise there is that pressure which has started to build.

"But what took the pressure is when we started to play we won first game 4-0, second game 4-0," he said.

"This was my fourth Olympiad in person and I played two online. Winning gold in Chess Olympiad is a dream-come-true moment for any chess player."

Gujrathi missed playing at the Summer Olympics and hoped chess is included in the quadrennial sporting extravaganza someday.

"I was watching the Paris Olympics two months ago and was rooting for our players. When we were winning medals, I thought I want to do this as well.

"That (chess not in Summer Games) breaks heart to see because everytime I

It was accidental. I was six-years-old and I was very mischievous as a child. My parents wanted to engage me in some activity. I used to play cricket like every Indian kid. He took me to a club and there cricket was played with season ball, so my Dad said to me wait for a year and then play cricket, till then pick another sport. So I started chess. My father taught me and I wanted to win against him, so that was the motivation. It was an accident but a very happy accident.

saw the Games I used to feel we would have returned with a gold," he said.

He now just wants to meet his family and celebrate the success with them.

"I want to celebrate and meet my family, without them I would have not been here. I want to celebrate with them," said the player, whose parents as well as sister are doctors.

-PTI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an interaction with 45th FIDE Chess Olympiad winning Indian teams, at his residence in New Delhi on Wednesday. Pic: PTI

Of AI, a birthday and India's sporting might

PM WITH CHESS MASTERS

New Delhi: Artificial Intelligence, an upcoming birthday, and the ambition to make India a sporting powerhouse came up for discussion when Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted the Olympiad gold-winning Indian chess teams at his residence, seeking to understand their mindset in the high-pressure event.

In the interaction that took place on Thursday evening, both the men's and women's teams, who won gold medals in the event for the first time ever, sat with the PM to share their experience and also ask him about his interest in sports.

The men's team featured the youngest ever world championship challenger D Gukesh, R Praggnanandhaa, Arjun Erigaisi, Vidit Gujrathi, P Harikrishna and captain Srinath Narayanan.

The women's team was made up of R Vaishali, Tania Sachdev, D Harika, Divya Deshmukh and Vantika Agrawal. They were captained by Abhijit Kunte.

Modi asked them about their sensational run during which the men's team won 21 of the 22 points on offer and the women gathered 19 from a total of 22. He also wanted to know how their opponents reacted to the stupendous performance.

"All our opponents expressed their happiness for us," responded Harika.

"We won so convincingly, it felt that nobody could touch us," added Sachdev, who said her team was determined to beat USA, the country that denied them the top spot during the previous Olympiad in the final round. Gukesh, who is now gearing up for the much-awaited world title clash against China's Ding Liren in November-December, reiterated that it was teamwork that steered the gold-winning show.

"This experience was a great team effort. We were in excellent form, we were

all super motivated. In the last Olympiad, there was one match which I should have won to guarantee a gold for India but unfortunately lost," he said.

"This time we were motivated to win," the reticent 18-year-old added. The PM was curious to know how AI is shaping the future of chess where players routinely test themselves against computers.

"With AI, chess has evolved, the computers have become much stronger, showing new ideas," said Praggnanandhaa.

"AI is available to all, it has democratised chess," added Gujrathi. Sachdev then threw a query at the PM, asking him about his interest in sports and Modi said it was an important indicator of a nation's growth.

"Economy is not the only indicator of growth and development. Development requires invincibility in every field. So, if you are

talking about films, how many Oscars are your films winning? If you talk about science then the number of Nobel prize winners.

"In the same way, when our kids win maximum gold medals, that's how our country becomes great," he answered. The players were charmed by the veteran leader with Vantika expressing surprise that he was aware of her birthday which is coming up on Saturday.

"He knew that, I was very surprised. I was 9 when he felicitated me in Gujarat during a junior competition and that motivated me," she said.

"The way he remembered Vantika's birthday showed how much he cares about the sport and players," added Gukesh.

Vantika also gifted the PM a picture of that felicitation function in which she was presented a shawl by the leader. -PTI



India's Virat Kohli with young cricketers during a training session ahead of the 2nd Test cricket match between India and Bangladesh in Kanpur on Thursday. Pic: PTI

Srikanth, Treesa-Gayatri enter quarters

Macau: Star Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth advanced to the men's singles quarterfinals of the Macau Open Super 300 badminton tournament with a straight-game victory over compatriot Ayush Shetty in the second round here on

Thursday. Seeded sixth, Srikanth, who is playing his first competition since recovering from an injury sustained in May, outclassed 2023 Odissha masters runner-up Ayush 21-13, 21-18 to emerge as the lone Indian competi-

tor in the singles event. Srikanth, the 2021 World Championship silver medallist, will next face Hong Kong's second seed Ng Ka Long Angus, with whom he shares an even 4-4 head-to-head record in their last eight encounters.

In women's doubles, the pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand also reached the quarterfinals, securing a solid 22-20, 21-11 win over Chinese Taipei's Lin Chih-Chun and Teng Chun Hsun in just 38 minutes. -PTI

From pressure to progress

HOW ARJUN ERIGAISSI FOUND SUCCESS THROUGH DETACHMENT

By Aparajita Upadhyay

New Delhi: Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi has revealed that he once felt bogged down by the weight of his own expectations, a phase that led to several lows, but by detaching himself from the outcome of his matches, he has finally discovered the path to success.

Erigaisi is enjoying a stellar year. Not only did he play a vital role in the Indian men's team's historic gold at the recently-concluded Olympiad, he also won nine of his 11 games to secure an individual gold on the third board. His performance has elevated him to a career-best world number three in live FIDE rankings.

However, things didn't seem so rosy a year ago, as Erigaisi found himself caught in a rut.

"I would say back in 2021, I was clearly underrated (in ratings). I was about 2500 something (rating). But my strength was clearly about 2600. So, it was all smooth sailing until a point," he told PTI in an interview.



By liberating himself from the suffocating pressure of achieving specific results, he discovered a newfound mental clarity and resilience. But how did he do it?

"It's like giving my best in my efforts and accepting whatever comes out of it. And if you give your best, you most likely tend to get the best possible outcome. It wasn't easy obviously," he said.

The 21-year-old from Warangal, Telangana, who missed qualifying for the prestigious Candidates tournament last time, is eager to maintain his winning momentum, with the long-term ambition of ultimate-

And then in 2023, I was about 2700. And that period was tough. I was having ups and downs. And some of the downs were really harsh like missing out on the Candidates. So 2023 was really tough. One conscious decision I made after that was to detach myself from the results. Because I was ending up putting too much pressure on myself by desperately wanting to achieve something. I think detaching from the results really helped me.

ly becoming a world champion.

"My long term goal is to

become world champion. And short term goal. I mean, it's just taking one tournament at a time. So whichever tournament that I play, I want to do well in that."

With Indian youngsters shining on the global stage, the nation is celebrating them as the golden generation of chess players and Erigaisi believes that the camaraderie between him, D Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa, fuels their collective success and elevates their game.

"We can certainly call this the golden generation of India. Like 2003 born to 2006, let's say. And I'm the oldest one in there. We all know each other for a pretty long time and have a healthy rivalry.

"So it's like when someone does well, the others also get motivated and want to do well. And that just makes each and every one of us stronger, which is just good for the Indian chess."

A fan of team events, Erigaisi is excited about the upcoming Global Chess League, which he calls the "IPL of chess". -PTI

Pant's a ripping bloke, wish he was Australian: Marsh

Mumbai: Rishabh Pant's stirring comeback to cricket has moved Mitchell Marsh so much that the all-rounder termed him a "ripping bloke" whom he wished to have played for Australia.

After returning to international cricket earlier this year through white ball formats, Pant underlined his long-term readiness for red-ball cricket with a hundred against Bangladesh in the recent first Test at Chennai.

Talking about Pant's comeback from that horrific car accident in 2022, Marsh was in awe of the Indian wicketkeeper batter's positivity, competitiveness and hunger to win.

"He's a ripping bloke. I wish he was Australian. He's obviously been through a lot over the last few years, and it's been a hell of a comeback," he told Star Sports.

"He's a positive guy, still really young, and

he loves winning. He's highly competitive for someone who has the persona of being relaxed and always laughing and smiling. He's got that big smile."

Pant is expected to be an integral part of the Indian batting line-up during the upcoming five-Test Border-Gavaskar Trophy series starting in Perth from November 22.

The left-hander was superb in the previous two Test series against the Aussies, gathering 624 runs in 12 innings at an average of 62.40, including a century and two half-tones. He has top score of an unbeaten 159 against the team from Down Under.

The 26-year-old also slammed an unbeaten 89 in the second innings of the Brisbane Test in 2021, handing Australia its maiden Test



loss at the venue in 32 years, while the Indians sealed the series 2-1 to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Meanwhile, Australian opener Travis Head also spoke highly of Pant's abilities.

"The Indian cricketer I believe is most Australian would be Rishabh Pant. I think the way he goes about his aggressive nature and his work ethic would make him very enjoyable to play with," he reckoned.

I find Rohit tough to bowl to: Hazlewood

It will be Rohit Sharma's maiden tour of Australia as the Test skipper, and he is also expected to

shoulder a lot of responsibility with the bat.

Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood admitted that Rohit is a tough batter to bowl to.

"I find him quite tough to bowl to. I think 'Gaza' (Nathan Lyon) has had some good success against him, particularly in Australia, so it might be a case of getting him on early as well," he stated.

Rohit has scored 408 runs in seven Tests at an average of 31.38 in Australia, and he is yet to hit a hundred there.

"I remember one time India came out, and he batted at five or six. Then, last time, he opened. He's always facing the new ball a lot, regardless of the format. I feel like he plays the quicks unbelievably well.

"The bounce and movement don't seem to bother him; he plays it right under his eyes and has all the time in the world." -PTI