

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Terrorism breathing its last in J-K

Modi says dynastic politics destroyed this 'beautiful region'

Jammu: Asserting that terrorism is taking its last breath in Jammu and Kashmir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said his government projected new leadership to counter dynastic politics that has destroyed "this beautiful region".

Addressing a massive election rally in support of BJP candidates in Doda district of Jammu region, Modi also reiterated his government's promise of restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and cautioned people against bringing the NC, Congress and the PDP back to power.

This was the first election rally by the Prime Minister in Jammu and Kashmir ahead of the first phase of the assembly polls on September 18, which will cover 24 seats spread across the three districts of Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban in Jammu and the south Kashmir districts of Anantnag, Pulwama, Shopian and Kulgam.

Modi began his nearly 45-minute speech by welcoming the people who attended the rally in the Kashmiri language.

"This time, the (assembly)

“They have now said if they come to power, they will end the reservation for Dalits and the downtrodden. This is the truth of this family. The Gandhi family always hated Ambedkar and was strongly opposed to reservation. The family had insulted Dalits, OBC and tribals.”
-Narendra Modi, PM in Haryana

election will decide the future of Jammu and Kashmir, which has remained the target of foreign powers since Independence," he told the gathering.

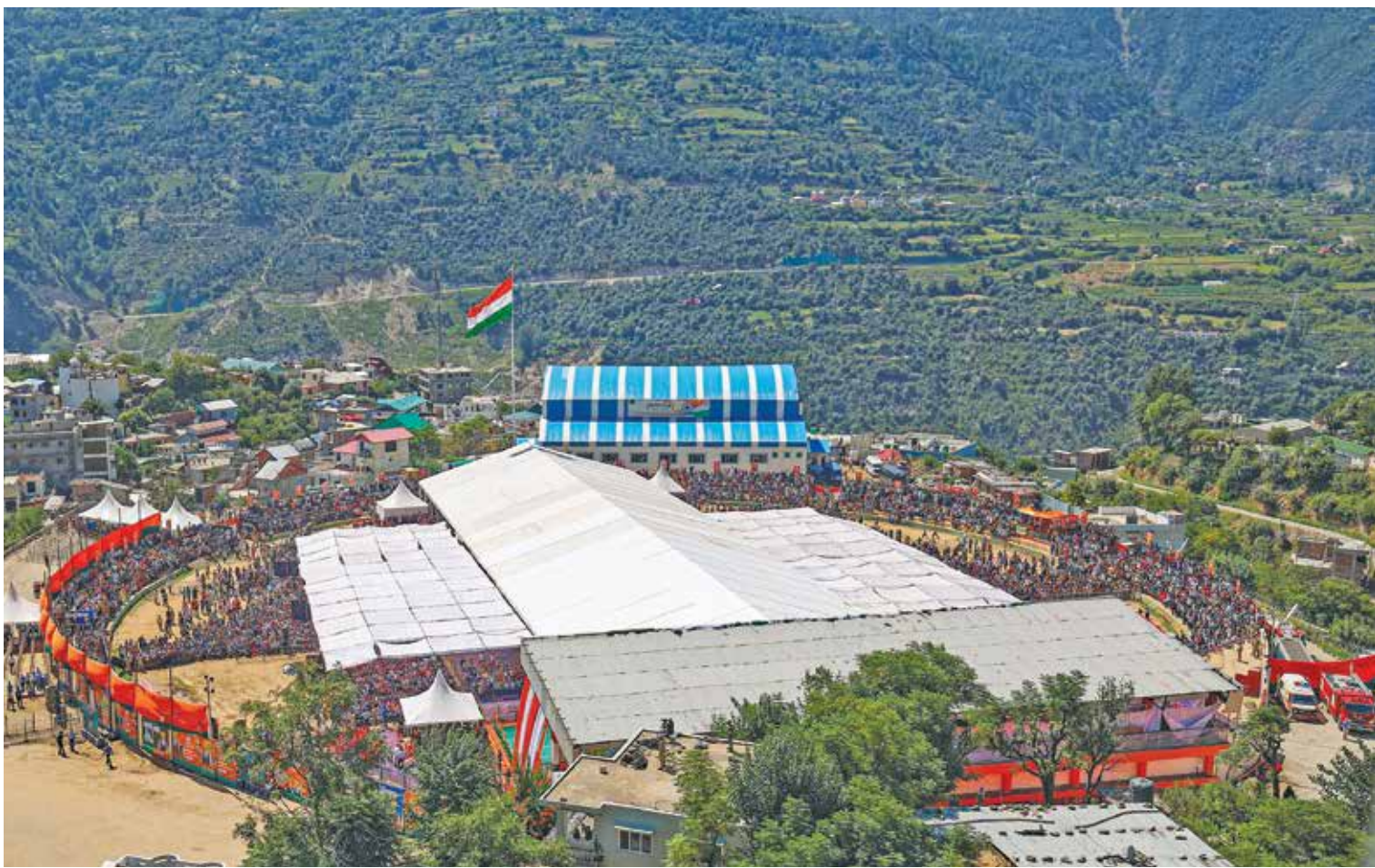
"Not only this, dynastic politics made this beautiful region hollow from within. The political parties you trusted never cared for your children. They only cared for and projected their children and did not let new leadership grow," Modi added.

Continuing his tirade against the Congress, NC and the PDP, he said these parties never wanted the youth to join politics but "we challenged their intentions and the result was that 30,000 to 35,000 youngsters got elected (in the local body elections) and took control of J-K".

In the years under the BJP government, the prime minister said, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a new phase of development and the credit for that goes to these elected youth. "I salute them for their contribution," he added.

"The Congress, NC and PDP have done nothing short of a sin as these three families are responsible for destroying J-K. They encouraged corruption and land grabbers and deprived the people of their rights and facilities. They gave government jobs to only those linked to them, besides preparing the ground for separatism and terrorism," the prime minister alleged.

He said terrorism is taking its last breath in Jammu and Kashmir. -PTI



An aerial view of the public meeting addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the upcoming Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections in Doda district on Saturday.

Pic: PTI

“This Assembly election is between three families and the youth. On one side, there are those three families and on the other, my daughters and sisters who are driven by their dreams.”
-Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

“The region has become a bureaucratic fiefdom controlled by the BJP-RSS cabal. While claiming to have ended special status for J&K, the government has in fact created an extra-special situation of a new and unique political system.”
-Jairam Ramesh, Leader, Congress

“When the BJP had an alliance with the PDP, that time they did not see anything wrong. When Vajpayee had to make a minister and he picked me, there was nothing wrong with us. Now, during the elections, they say that we are wrong.”
-Omar Abdullah, Leader, NC

Standoff continues; docs keep Mamata on waiting, again

Sandip Ghosh, policeman arrested for rape, murder



New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Saturday arrested Dr. Sandip Ghosh, the former principal of RG Kar Medical College in Kolkata, in connection with the rape and murder of a junior doctor.

The probe agency has

also arrested Tala Police Station SHO Abhijit Mondal in the case.

Ghosh, 54, will be produced before the Sealdah court on Sunday.

A junior woman doctor was found raped and murdered at the hospital August 9, sparking wide-

spread protests across the nation.

Ghosh is currently placed in a solitary cell at the Presidency Central Jail, where he was brought earlier this week after a special court remanded him in judicial custody till September. The CBI had told the court that Ghosh siphoned off funds and made 84 illegal appointments in 2022 and 2023.

On September 2, Ghosh was arrested by the CBI in connection with the alleged financial irregularities at RG Kar hospital. The Calcutta High Court had ordered a CBI probe into it following the rape and murder of a junior doctor on the campus.

Kolkata: The standoff between the West Bengal government and the protesting junior doctors continued on Saturday as the agitators refused to enter the Chief Minister's residence in the absence of a live telecast of their proposed meeting.

Speaking with doctors outside her residence, CM Mamata Banerjee said, "We will video-record the meeting to end R.G. Kar impasse and will provide it to you after the Supreme Court's nod."

The CM asserted that they "cannot keep insulting her." While leaving CM's residence junior doctors claimed when they finally agreed to discard their demand and agreed to hold only minutes of the meeting. They were allegedly told by the Mamata-led administration that CM waited for three hours and the meeting now was not possible.

"Today, you said that you want a meeting, so I have been waiting. Why are you people insulting me like

this? Please don't insult me like this," Banerjee pleaded. "Earlier on the three occasions, I have been waiting but you people didn't come."

The delegation of junior doctors, comprising around 30 medics, arrived at Mamata Banerjee's residence around 45 minutes past the scheduled 6:00 pm meeting time. However, the government had only invited 15 representatives for the talks. The key sticking point has been the doctors' demand for live-streaming the meeting, a request the chief minister once again rejected, citing legal constraints.

As the RG Kar issue is before the court, we cannot allow live streaming. I will video-record the meeting and provide you with a copy only after permission from the Supreme Court," Banerjee explained in an appeal to the doctors.

She urged them to come inside for the meeting and not get drenched in the rain, reiterating her request to end the deadlock.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with 'Deepjyoti', a calf who was born at the Prime Minister's official residence in New Delhi.

Pic: PTI

Was approached for PM post: Gadkari

By Correspondent

Nagpur: Union Minister for Transport and National Highways Nitin Gadkari revealed on Saturday that he was approached by one of the senior opposition leaders with the Prime Ministership offer ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, but he "simply rejected" it.

"I told the leader that I am a man who follows one ideology and conviction. I am in a party which has given me everything which I never even dreamt of. No offer can entice me," Gadkari said while speaking at a journalism awards function.

Gadkari didn't delve into the details of the incident. He hinted that the inci-

dence happened when it was believed that the BJP might not secure an absolute majority and could need support from a few opposition parties to form government.

"I flatly told him that I was raised with certain principles and convictions, and I would not compromise on them," Gadkari said.

India trail 0-2 against Sweden

Stockholm: N Sriram Balaji was easily tamed by Elias Ymer while Ramkumar Ramanathan lacked the killer instinct even against a lower-ranked Leo Borg as India were left trailing 0-2 against Sweden in the Davis Cup World Group I tie, here on Saturday.

Balaji, who is a doubles specialist, found the going tough against Ymer, who raced to a 6-4-6-2 win in the opening singles.

Ramkumar, who is a seasoned Davis Cupper now, was expected to bring India back into the tie but he lost to 603-ranked Borg, son of the legendary Bjorn Borg

3-6-3-6, in the second singles at the Royal Tennis Hall.

India were forced to field Balaji in singles as the country's top singles player Sumit Nagal opted out of the tie due to a back injury. While Balaji did the job against Pakistan, playing someone of the calibre of Ymer was always going to be a tough task.

The onus to win a point for India on the opening day was on Ramkumar. He should have won his singles match against the 21-year-old Borg but he did not seem to have a way to go past the Swede.

Ramkumar's challenge fell apart in just 58



N Sriram Balaji

minutes.

India now need to win all the remaining three matches on Sunday if the team has to make it to next year's

Qualifiers.

It remains to be seen if captain Rohit Rajpal goes with Balaji and Ramkumar in the do-or-die doubles, or

changes the combination.

Most likely, Balaji and Niki Poonacha will take the court.

Twice in Davis Cup history, India have managed to win a tie after being down 0-2. In 2010, India beat Brazil, and in 2018, it won against China after trailing 0-2.

Ramkumar could not charge to the net in the opening set as was the plan but did comparatively better in the second set. Bjorg served well, made fewer unforced errors and found some good passing winners when Ramkumar approached the net.

-PTI

School holiday for PM's event

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government on Saturday announced that all schools and colleges in Bhubaneswar would remain closed on September 17 in view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state on that day.

According to an official release, all the government offices, including revenue and magisterial courts in the state capital, will also be closed for the first half of the day on September 17.

During his visit, the PM would launch 'Subhadra' yojana, a women-centric scheme of the state government.

Don't respond to fake 'arrest notice': Mumbai Police

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Police Commissioner Vivek Phansalkar on Saturday urged people to approach police if they received any fake "arrest notice" through email, phone call or messaging apps.

"Received an arrest notice from the Commissioner of Mumbai Police? Bring it to our notice. Don't believe or respond to any fake arrest notice on mail, WhatsApp, SMS or phone call received on behalf of the Commissioner, Mumbai Police," he said on X.

People should not fall prey to the fraudsters who send such communication

and instead report it to police, Phansalkar added.

The commissioner also posted the screenshot of one such notice that had gone viral. The so-called notice, written in garbled English and sent through e-mail, asked the recipient to visit the office of the commissioner of police, claiming there was a "court order" against the person's IP (Internet Protocol) address for something to do with pornography. It also mentioned the CBI. Of late, numerous cases of on-line cheating where fraudsters pose as police or other law enforcement/government agency and extort money have come to light.



BJP National President JP Nadda, Union Minister Piyush Goyal, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and others during Ganesh Chaturthi festival at Fadnavis' residence in Mumbai on Saturday. Pic: PTI

Nadda reaches out to BJP leaders

Mumbai: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president and Union Health Minister JP Nadda on Saturday performed Ganesh puja at Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's official residence in south Mumbai as part of ongoing Ganpati festival.

Later, he also visited the official residence of Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis and performed puja. After that, he held a meeting with party leaders there.

Along with Nadda, Union minister and the BJP's Maharashtra in-charge Bhupender Yadav, Union minister Piyush Goyal, party's state unit chief Chandra Shekhar Bawankule, its Mumbai unit president Ashish Shelar, former Union min-

ister Raosaheb Danve and MLC Pravin Darekar were present at Fadnavis' residence.

Nadda later visited the famous Lalbaugcha Raja Ganesh pandal, the Bandra West Ganesh pandal, which is associated with Mumbai BJP chief Ashish Shelar, as well as Chinchpokalicha Chintamani Ganesh pandal and offered prayers.

Last week, Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah visited Mumbai and held meetings with Shinde, Fadnavis, and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

Assembly elections in the state are likely to be held in November. BJP, Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Pawar's NCP are part of the ruling Mahayuti alliance in the state.

Ganesh idols workshop vandalised

Thane: An unidentified person allegedly destroyed Ganesh idols and stole equipment from a workshop in Thane district, police said on Saturday.

The incident occurred in the Padma Nagar locality in Bhiwandi town in the wee hours of Thursday, an official said. An unidentified person allegedly broke into the workshop, destroyed idols and stole painting equipment. The vandalism came to light on Friday, he said. An irate crowd later gathered near the workshop and demanded action against the miscreant. The police deployment in the area was stepped up, and senior police officers pacified the people.

The situation was tense but under control, officers of the Bhiwandi police said.

BJP upbeat after internal surveys show favourable conditions in Konkan

By Abhijit Mulye

Mumbai: While former Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan has predicted PM Narendra Modi's ouster after possible NDA debacle in Maharashtra, the state BJP, however, is upbeat, as an internal surveys have shown favourable conditions for it in Konkan region.

Chavan, who was speaking at Gondia during a function to induct old party member Gopaldas Agarwal back into the party fold, stated that the NDA is sure to lose in Haryana and the same results are likely to be repeated in Ma-

harashtra. He also went on to predict that if that happens Chandrababu Naidu and Nitish Kumar could withdraw their support to the government paving way for PM Modi's ouster.

However, this prediction has not dampened the spirits of the state BJP. On the contrary the party is upbeat after an internal survey has shown an upper hand for the ruling alliance in Konkan region and the party regaining lost ground in other areas of the state.

According to the sources privy to the information, the party is likely to better its performance in Konkan region while its

condition in other regions too appears to be changing.

On the other hand, the favourable conditions for MVA are rapidly reversing owing to inability of the parties to come to consensus over seat sharing, the survey has shown. According to sources within MVA, 36 seats in Mumbai is the current bone of contention between the MVA alliance partners, even though it has successfully resolve issues around most of the other seats across the state. Within MVA, the Shiv Sena (UBT) wants to contest at least 20 seats in Mumbai, while the numbers for Congress and

Of the total 75 seats in Konkan region, the BJP has received favourable signals in as many as 40 seats, said the sources. Now, it needs to get most of these seats from the alliance members during negotiations. While the BJP is preparing to contest around 160 seats in the state the Shiv Sena is expecting to get around 100 and the NCP is hoping for 60 seats to come to it in the seat sharing. Days ahead would test the bargaining skills of our leaders, said the sources within BJP.

the NCP (SP) are 20 and 8 respectively.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) is stubborn on its demand of seats making it difficult to push through the seat sharing talks, said a senior Congress leader involved in the seat sharing talks. There are at least six seats that are being claimed by both, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Congress. Since the parties have respectively contested 19 and 29 seats in Mumbai during 2019 assembly polls in the city, they are trying for a bigger share of the pie leaving little middle ground during the talks, the leader said.

Notice to factory for closure

Thane: The Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) on Friday issued a closure notice to an Ambernath-based chemical factory, Nikakem Products, for negligence and improper acid storage. The action followed a Thursday night occurrence, when residents of Ambernath, a suburb of Thane, complained of eye irritation and breathing difficulties due to a thick haze from a gas leakage from the factory.

The gas began spreading after 11pm, and by 11:30pm, visibility was severely reduced. It spread across a 1 km area and the situation was brought under control in two hours. There have been no reports of injuries or hospitalisations.

Couple booked for cheating builder

Thane: A case has been registered against a couple for allegedly cheating a builder of Rs 12 crore in a dispute over the redevelopment of a housing society in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Saturday.

Based on a complaint by the builder, the Kalyan police on Thursday registered a case under sections 420 (cheating), 406 (criminal breach of trust) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code against Srikant Pai and his lawyer wife Divya, an officer said.

The complainant has alleged that the couple duped him of Rs 12 crore between January 2018 and May 2024, he said.

The accused allegedly

took money from the complainant by promising to get approvals and no objection certificates from flat owners for the redevelopment of a housing society and to withdraw cases they had registered against other tenants, the official said.

The duo also allegedly sold flats using forged documents, causing significant delays and financial loss to the project, he said.

A probe has been launched, and no arrests have been made in the case, the officer said.



New Marathi gymkhana soon



Mumbai: In a strategic move to woo the Marathi Manos ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, the Maharashtra government has announced plans to establish a Marathi Gymkhana in South Mumbai, mirroring the existing community clubs like the Islam Gymkhana and Parsi Gymkhana. The initiative is expected to resonate with local residents and cater to the cultural and recreational needs of the Marathi-speaking community.

According to sources, the civic body has been tasked with identifying a suitable plot of land for the proposed facility, which is set to become a hub for Marathi culture and community activities in the heart of the city. Its membership will be restricted exclusively to individuals from the

Marathi community.

The announcement was made by Marathi Language Minister, Deepak Kesarkar, on Friday. Speaking at a press conference, Kesarkar emphasized the importance of the new gymkhana in maintaining the cultural presence of the Marathi people in Mumbai, a city where several other ethnic communities already have dedicated spaces. The move aims to provide the Marathi-speaking populace with a distinct hub in the southern part of the metropolis.

"We are actively searching for a suitable location in South Mumbai for the gymkhana. As the guardian minister of Mumbai, I have instructed the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to help identify an appropriate spot for this venture," Kesarkar stated.

Woman loses Rs 3.04 crore to fraudsters

Mumbai: Cyber fraudsters posing as officials of Mumbai police and CBI duped a 61-year-old woman here of Rs 3.04 crore, police said on Saturday.

Over the last two months, the woman, a Thane resident, was contacted by individuals who identified themselves as officials of a courier firm, the cyber-crime cell of Mumbai police and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

She was told that her bank accounts required inspection for 'suspicious activity', and forced to transfer Rs 3.04 crore through five online transactions, said a police officer.

After realising that she had been cheated, she approached Thane Nagar police station on Friday and a case was registered, he said.



Om Shanti Mitra Mandal in Shanti Nagar, Mira road decorated the Ganesh Idol with 2000 kg of sugarcane.

Suffocation after fire, 90 rescued

Mumbai: Thirteen persons suffered from suffocation after a fire broke on the ground floor of a seven-storey building in Mumbai's Ghatkopar area in the wee hours of Saturday, an official said.

The blaze erupted at 1.35 am in Shanti Sagar Building located in Ramabai Colony of Pantnagar in Ghatkopar east and around 90 residents were rescued from there, the fire brigade official said.

"The fire broke out in the electric meter room on the ground floor. It remained confined to the wiring and other installations there.



Due to the fire, smoke engulfed the entire building," he said. "Eighty to ninety persons stranded on different floors were rescued and brought down using the staircase before the fire was extinguished at 2.05 am. Thirteen persons suffered from suffocation due to the

smoke, of whom 12 were admitted to a local hospital, while one was discharged after treatment at the OPD section there," he added.

Of the injured persons, nine are females, the official said, adding that the cause behind the blaze is being ascertained.

Cobra rescued from Mulund flat

Mumbai: A three-foot long cobra was found in a flat in Mulund in north east Mumbai on Saturday afternoon, a forest department official said. It was lying on the sofa in the house, said Pawan Sharma, president of RAWW and honorary wildlife warden with the Maharashtra forest department.

The spectacled cobra was rescued by Ravindra Suryavanshi from our team and it was examined by veterinarians Dr. Priti Sathe and Dr. Kirti Sathe.

Two booked for duping investors

Thane: A case has been registered against two persons in Maharashtra's Thane city for allegedly cheating people of Rs 6.25 crore by promising them lucrative returns on investments, police said on Saturday.

Based on a complaint, the police on Friday registered a case against the accused, Manish Malkan and Arpit Shah, under sections 420 (cheating), 406 (criminal breach of trust) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code for fraud that took place

between October 2020 and May 2023, an officer said.

The duo allegedly lured people to invest in their company, Money Maker Malkan, which they claimed was licenced by the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME), he said.

The accused assured high returns, promising 6 to 8 per cent profit on investments, and convinced people to invest large sums of money. However, the payments ceased in February 2023, and they failed to refund the principal amount.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Earlier, a crisis had emerged on the issue of onions. But the government's decision to slash export duty on onion will prove to be hugely beneficial to the growers of this crop. All these decisions will benefit soybean, onion and Basmati rice farmers and it will indirectly benefit cotton growers as well."

- Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy CM



Professor suspended over allegations of sexual harassment

Mumbai: In a significant decision, the Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has suspended an Associate Professor accused of sexual harassment of a female medical student of the BYL Nair Hospital, an official said here on Saturday. The suspension came after a series of internal probes till the matter was transferred to the BMC headquarters and entrusted to the Savitribai Phule Stree Resources Centre.

The BMC said that further action against the ac-



cus-ed-suspended Associate Professor shall be taken after the full investigations are complete and the report of the probe committee is received, an official said. Six months ago, in March, the student who is also an athlete, was summoned by the accused Associate Professor and queried on the sports she played.

A few days later, he again called her to his cabin where he touched her inappropriately on the neck and

behind her ears, claiming he was checking for lymph nodes swelling, asked her to remove her apron, put his hand on her shoulder and spoke about her lips colour.

Shaken by this, the MBBS student initially discussed the matter with her friends and classmates, and in April lodged a complaint against the Associate Professor. A local probe committee at the hospital level said in its report in August that "there is truth" in the student's complaint and recommended that the con-

cerned Associate Professor should be transferred, and his increments be stopped for a year.

It also recommended that he must not be kept at the Nair Hospital till the victim completed her studies and to bar him from conducting any examinations in which the aggrieved student was appearing.

The panel also termed the hospital management's stance as 'unfortunate and insensitive' to the whole matter and said it should be served with a written warning as they reportedly cre-

ated hurdles in the implementation of the laws and did not assist the case proceedings.

Subsequently, the accused Associate Professor was removed from teaching duties and assigned administration work till the pendency of the matter. The BMC said on Saturday that it has taken serious note of the case plus additional complaints of sexual harassment have also been received in the matter, which are now at the civic headquarters, for a fair and transparent probe.

Water leakage in main dome of Taj Mahal

Agra: The main dome of the Taj Mahal here witnessed water leakage due to incessant rain for the past three days which inundated a garden on the premises. The purported video of the submerged garden on the Taj Mahal premises went viral on Thursday and caught the tourists' attention. A senior official of the Archaeological Survey of India, Agra circle, said there is leakage in the main dome due to seepage and there is no damage to it.

Talking about the leakage in the main dome of the Taj Mahal, Rajkumar Patel, Superintending Chief of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Agra circle, told PTI, "Yes, we have witnessed the leakage in the main dome of the Taj Mahal. After that when we checked it was due to seepage and there was no damage to the main dome. We have checked the main dome through a drone camera."

On Thursday evening, a purported video of 20 seconds went viral on the internet in which one of the gardens of the monument submerged with rain water. It caught the attention of the tourists, who visited the Taj Mahal and many shot video of it. A local resident, who is working as a government approved tour guide, said Taj Mahal is the pride of Agra and the entire nation, adding it provides employment to hundreds of locals and those who are working in the tourism industry. "Proper care should be taken of the monument because for the tourism industry people it is the only hope," said Monika Sharma, a government approved tour guide.

As weather patterns grow more unpredictable due to climate crisis, India is taking a giant leap with "Mission Mausam" to improve weather understanding and forecasting through expanded observation networks, better modeling and advanced tools like AI and machine learning.

The mission will include creating a laboratory to artificially develop clouds, increasing the number of radars by over 150 per cent and adding new satellites, supercomputers and much more.

Why is it needed?

According to the Ministry of Earth Sciences, tropical weather forecasting remains challenging due to the complexity of atmospheric processes and limitations in current observation and model resolution.

Observational data is relatively sparse, both spatially and temporally, and the horizontal resolution of Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP) models, currently at 12 kilometres, makes it difficult to accurately forecast small-scale weather events in India, it said.

At the same time, climate change is making the atmosphere more chaotic, resulting in isolated heavy rainfall and localised droughts, which pose simultaneous challenges of flooding and drought. Cloudbursts, thunderstorms, lightning and squalls are among the least understood weather events in India.

The mission will include creating a laboratory to artificially develop clouds, increasing the number of radars by over 150 per cent and adding new satellites, supercomputers and much more.

What is 'Mission Mausam' and why is it needed?



Understanding these complex patterns requires in-depth knowledge of physical processes occurring within and outside clouds, on the surface, in the upper atmosphere, over oceans and in polar regions, the ministry said.

This calls for high-frequency observations at the ground level and across the earth system with improved spatial and vertical resolutions to monitor the earth's dynamic systems effectively and increasing the horizontal resolution of NWP models from 12 kilometres to six kilometres to generate panchayat-level forecasts, it said.

What will happen over the next five years?

Union Ministry of Earth Sciences Secretary M. Ravichandran said the five-year mission would be implemented in two phases.

The first phase, which runs until March 2026, will focus on

expanding the observation network. This includes adding around 70 Doppler radars, high-performance computers and setting up 10 wind profilers and 10 radiometers.

To put the scale of the task into context, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has installed 39 Doppler radars to date and has never set up a wind profiler. "We will also conduct an Observing System Simulation Experiment (OSSE) in the first phase, which will help determine the number of observations needed moving forward," Ravichandran said.

The second phase will focus on adding satellites and aircraft to further enhance observational capabilities. Over the five-year period, the ministry and its institutions -- the India Meteorological Department, the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology and the National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting -- will work to improve their understanding of weather and climate processes and prediction capabilities and develop weather management technologies.



What is a cloud chamber and what does Mission Mausam say about weather management?

The ministry has said that a "cloud chamber" will be established at the Indian Institute of Meteorology in Pune within the next one and a half years under the mission to study the processes occurring within clouds in the context of rising temperatures.

Rising temperatures lead to clouds becoming taller and more electrically active, while their horizontal spread may shrink. This can result in stronger thunderstorms and more frequent lightning events and impact rainfall dynamics, Ravichandran said.

"We will artificially create clouds inside a laboratory at the IITM and conduct experiments. This will help the scientists better understand these processes and figure out which types of clouds can be seeded (a process where substances are added to clouds to make them produce rain), what materials should be used for seeding and how much

seeding is needed to either increase rain or even prevent rain," he said.

The insights gained from the cloud chamber will also help improve the parameterization of weather models, supporting the indigenization of these models, he said.

"We aim to artificially enhance or suppress rain and hail within the next five years. After that, we can focus on the other weather phenomena like lightning," Ravichandran said.

Asked why weather management is needed, he explained, "If it's raining continuously in Delhi, which could lead to flooding, can I suppress the rain? By seeding the clouds a little more, it may stop raining. Similarly, in a drought-prone area, this could help prevent droughts by enhancing rainfall."

Cloud seeding involves dispersing substances into the air to encourage condensation, resulting in precipitation. The most common substances used for cloud seeding include silver iodide, potassium iodide and dry ice (solid carbon dioxide). These

agents provide the nuclei around which water vapour can condense, ultimately leading to the formation of rain or snow.

This weather modification technique has been utilised in several parts of the world, primarily in the regions experiencing water scarcity or drought conditions. Some of the countries and states that have employed the cloud seeding technology include the US, China, Australia and the UAE.

However, the effectiveness and environmental impact of cloud seeding remain subjects of ongoing research.

An IMD official told PTI that there have been a few attempts in India in this regard -- in Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The research is ongoing, but it has not made significant progress so far.

The Delhi government also considered using cloud seeding to improve air quality during winter in collaboration with IIT-Kanpur. The goal was to induce rain to wash away pollutants. However, the project got delayed because it required permissions from several Central government agencies, including aviation and environmental authorities.

What are the other main objectives?

Mission Mausam aims to improve short to medium range weather forecast accuracy by five to 10 per cent and enhance air quality prediction in all major metro cities by up to 10 per cent. It will enable weather prediction up to the panchayat level with a lead time of 10 to 15 days and improve the nowcast frequency from three hours to one hour.

A nowcast provides a very short-term prediction, usually for the next few hours. It is useful for tracking fast-changing weather events such as thunderstorms, heavy rain or snow.

-PTI



A wildfire consumes a rural area during the dry season in Varzea Paulista, Sao Paulo state, Brazil on Friday. Pic: AP/PTI

Two dead after driving SUV into flood

Faridabad (Haryana): Two private bank employees have died after getting trapped in their sports utility vehicle in the flooded Old Faridabad Railway underpass here, police said on Saturday.

It happened late Friday night when the victims, Punyashray Sharma (48) and Viraj (26), were return-

ing home in Greater Faridabad from Gurugram, they said.

According to police, due to the rainfall throughout Friday, the underpass was inundated and as a precaution, cars were being warned against entering it.

They said that around 11:50 pm, an XUV 700 entered the underpass, ignor-

ing all warnings and got stuck in the deep floodwater, following which water gushed into the vehicle.

Passers-by attempted to help the duo stuck in the car and after a lot of efforts, managed to get them out but Viraj died on the spot, police said.

Sharma was taken to the Badshah Khan Civil Hospi-

tal, where he was pronounced dead, they added.

"Their families have been informed. We will hand over the bodies to the next of kin after post-mortem examinations," Inspector Samer Singh, SHO of the NIT Faridabad police station, said.

-PTI

Two lakh places for cleanliness drive

New Delhi: Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar said on Friday two lakh places have been marked across the country to carry out a cleanliness drive during the 15-day national social mobilisation campaign for a clean nation.

Under the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' campaign, this year's theme is 'Swabhav Swachhata Sanskaar Swachhata (4S)' jointly spearheaded by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in collaboration with the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Addressing media on the campaign, Khattar said two lakh places have been marked across the country to carry out a cleanliness drive during the 15-day national social mobilisation campaign from September 17 till October 2.

"These two lakh locations which we will call cleanliness target units which will be cleaned in collaboration with stakeholders," he said.

Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Paatil said the campaign has been built around three key pillars -- Swachhata Ki Bahagidari - Public participation.

4,500 acres of land freed from garbage

New Delhi: Union minister Manohar Lal Khattar said on Friday said out of 2,300 identified garbage dumping sites across India, 427 have been fully cleaned, freeing up 4,500 acres of land and asserted that the remaining locations would be cleaned in the next two years.

Highlighting the country's progress towards creating garbage-free cities, Khattar noted that a significant portion of the cleaned land has been repurposed for development projects, including initiatives to generate electricity from waste.

"Some of the projects on these lands are focused on waste-to-energy solutions," he explained.

He also emphasised the importance of door-to-door waste collection in reducing the need for dump sites, pointing out that 97 per cent of urban wards now have such systems in place.

"We are moving forward so that no new dump sites are created," Khattar said, underscoring the need for sustainable waste management practices.

He said that while 427

18%	The quantum of solid waste being processed in 2021
73%	The quantum of solid waste being processed in 2024
1.5 lakh tons	The quantum of solid waste being processed per day
22 crore metric tons	The quantum of solid waste in India at 2,300 dumping sites



sites have been completely cleaned, several other locations are partially cleared. He expressed optimism that all dump sites would be

fully cleaned in the next two years. "In two years, we aim to completely finish this work."

-PTI

100 life-sized elephant sculptures NYC's new attraction

By Yoshita Singh

New York: A herd of 100 life-sized elephant sculptures created by Indian artisans and highlighting a story of harmonious coexistence to the global audience, is the talk of the town in New York City.

The Great Elephant Migration, a public art installation, will enthrall locals and tourists alike from September 6 to October 20 in the city's popular and among the most visited place in the Meatpacking district.

In partnership with Elephant Family USA, an international non-governmental

organisation (NGO) dedicated to helping the human race share space with the world's magnificent wildlife, 100 life-sized Indian elephant sculptures will migrate to the Meatpacking district, a statement by the Meatpacking District Management Association, a business improvement district (BID), said.

"The head-turning herds, spread across the district, will captivate visitors of all ages while amplifying indigenous knowledge and sharing a message about human-wildlife coexistence and conservation," it said.

"Using Lantana as materi-



al, the collective has recreated every elephant they live alongside, known well by name and

personality, in intricately detailed sculptural form. "The creation of these elephants

provides financial stability, status and pride to 200 members of the Soligas, Bettakumbas, Kattunayakan and Paniyas tribes, who coexist with the real wild elephants the herd is based on," it said.

The statement noted that over USD 500,000 has been generated already through the installation, "making it the biggest sustainable indigenous enterprise in India. This effort celebrates their knowledge of the natural world and rewards a remarkable ability to coexist."

The Great Elephant Migration marks the first time a "migration" of this scale and

purpose will take place, the statement said, adding that "this global fundraising adventure benefits indigenous and community-led conservation efforts -- specifically, conservation NGOs supporting remarkable people around the world who have found ways to live alongside lions, leopards, elephants, and some of the planet's most challenging animals -- and inspire peaceful, symbiotic human and animal coexistence."

India's Consul General in New York Binaya Pradhan addressed the opening of the installation.

-PTI

The installation is being dubbed as one of the largest public art installations in New York City since Christo and Jeanne-Claude's The Gates in 2005, an installation of 7,503 fabric panels in Central Park. Each stunning elephant sculpture is one-of-a-kind in the 100-strong herd on display, which has been created by the Coexistence Collective, a community of 200 indigenous artisans living within India's Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. These indigenous artisans have reclaimed an invasive plant species called Lantana camara that has entangled 300,000 square kilometres of India's forests and diminished food sources for all herbivores.

Drugged and raped, woman symbol of fight against sexual violence

Paris: Gisele Pelicot, the woman who was allegedly drugged by her now ex-husband over the course of a decade so that she could be raped by dozens of men while unconscious, is becoming a symbol of France's fight against sexual violence.

There have been calls for public gatherings on Saturday all over the country, including at Place de la Republique in Paris, in support for the 71-year-old and all rape victims in France.

On September 5, she spoke about her ordeal in public for the first time since police officers, four years ago, called her in to tell her the unthinkable. With a calm and clear voice, she detailed the horror of discovering that her former spouse had been sedating her and invited at least 72 strangers into their house in Provence to have sex with her.

"For me, everything collapses," she testified. "These are scenes of barbarity, of rape."

National broadcaster TF1 that day described a "dignified, strong," woman, who was "holding her head high."

In an open letter translated into English and published in French newspaper Le Monde, journalist and author Helene Devynck thanked Pelicot for her bravery, echoing the feelings of many other French people.

"You entered our lives like you entered the Avignon court, through the



● Since the beginning of the extraordinary trial on September 2, during which Pelicot will face 51 of her alleged rapists, she has been praised for her courage and composure.

● First, there was her decision to keep the trial public — after the court had initially suggested that it be held behind closed doors. She allowed journalists to publish her full name, and the court to exhibit explicit videos recorded by her husband showing men engaging in sexual intercourses with her naked, inert body.

● She has said her decisions were in solidarity with other women who go unrecognised as victims of sexual crimes.

front door," wrote Devynck, a figure of the French #MeToo movement. "It's not just you, Gisele, that they've treated like a thing. They were telling us, all of us women, how insignificant we are. Your strength restores ours. Thank you for this immense gift." Next week, Gisele Pelicot

will have to brave another mountain: facing the man whom she shared her life for over 50 years, and father of their three children. Her lawyer has said she is planning on attending his testimony.

Dominique Pelicot has previously confessed to the crimes to investigators. But

his court hearing will be crucial for the panel of judges to decide on the fate of the 50 other men accused of rape.

A majority of the defendants are contesting the accusation of "rape". Some have claimed they believed a husband's consent for sexual intercourse was sufficient, others said they were tricked by Dominique Pelicot to believe his wife was consenting. One lawyer representing six defendants has shocked the nation arguing that "there is rape and rape, and without intention, there is no rape."

Magali Lafourcade, a magistrate and secretary general of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights, also applauded Gisele Pelicot. She stressed that in France, studies suggest that nine out of 10 women who are victims of rape do not press charges. And when they do, about 80 per cent of the cases are dropped.

For health reasons, Dominique Pelicot has been exempted from attending the trial since Wednesday. He is expected to testify on Monday or Tuesday, his lawyer, Beatrice Zavarro, has said. Asked whether her client was trying to get out of testifying, Zavarro said Friday that he "had been waiting for his trial, he wanted to talk and be confronted to his wife and children." Dominique Pelicot, now 71, and the 50 other defendants face up to 20 years in prison if convicted. -AP

Comoros President "slightly injured" in knife attack

Moroni (Comoros): The president of the Indian Ocean Island nation of Comoros was "slightly injured" in a knife attack while attending the funeral of a religious leader on Friday, his office said. One other person was also hurt trying to protect him, authorities said.

President Azali Assoumani's injuries were not serious and he had returned to his home, his office said in a statement. It said the attacker was arrested by security forces and is in their custody, but gave no details on the attacker's identity.

The attack happened in the town of Salimani on the outskirts of the capital Moroni. Government minister Aoubacar Said Anli said Saturday that a civilian was injured during the attack while attempting to protect the president. There was no immediate information on the extent of the injuries sustained by the civilian.

Assoumani was reelected as president of Comoros in January in a vote denounced by opposition parties as fraudulent. At least one person died in unrest following the election.

Assoumani, 65, is a former military officer who first came to power in Comoros in 1999.

He has been the leader since and extended his presidency into a fourth term this year after changing the constitution to remove term limits and abolishing a system that saw the presidency rotate between Comoros' three main islands. The country, which is made up of an archipelago of islands off the east coast of Africa, has experienced more than a dozen coups or attempted coups since its independence from France in 1975.

Iran says it successfully launched satellite



Tehran: Iran launched a satellite into space Saturday with a rocket built by the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, state-run media reported, the latest for a programme the West fears helps Tehran advance its ballistic missile programme.

Iran described the launch as a success, which would be the second such launch to put a satellite into orbit with the rocket. There was no immediate independent confirmation of the launch's success, nor did Iranian authorities immediately provide footage or other details.

The US State Department and the American military did not immediately respond to requests for comment over the Iranian launch.

The United States had previously said Iran's satellite launches defy a UN Security Council resolution and called on Tehran to undertake no activity involving ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. UN sanctions related to Iran's

● The launch comes amid heightened tensions gripping the wider West Asia over the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, during which Tehran launched an unprecedented direct missile-and-drone attack on Israel.

● Iran continues to enrich uranium to nearly weapons-grade levels, raising concerns among nonproliferation experts about Tehran's program.

● Iran identified the satellite-carrying rocket as the Qaem-100, which the Guard used in January for another successful launch. Qaem means "upright" in Iran's Farsi language. The solid-fuel rocket put the Chamran-1 satellite, weighing 60 kilograms, into a 550-kilometre orbit, state media reported.

ballistic missile programme expired last October.

Under Iran's relatively moderate former President Hassan Rouhani, the Islamic Republic slowed its space programme for fear of raising tensions with the West. Hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, a protégé of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who came to power in 2021, has pushed the program forward. Raisi died in a helicopter crash in May.

It's unclear what Iran's new president, the reformist Masoud Pezeshkian, wants for the programme as he was silent on the issue while campaigning.

The US intelligence community's worldwide threat assessment this year said Iran's development of satellite launch vehicles "would shorten the timeline" for Iran to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile because it uses similar technology.

-AP

Biden brushes off Putin's threats about weapons for Ukraine

Washington: President Joe Biden brushed off a threat from Russian leader Vladimir Putin about war against the West if Ukraine's allies allow it to use weapons deeper inside Russia. It's a shift that Kyiv has pleaded for but does not appear likely to be announced following a meeting Friday between Biden and Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Ukraine and many of its supporters in the US and Europe want Biden to lift restrictions on Western-provided long-range weapons, and there are signs Biden might shift the administration's policy.

But the US, concerned about any step that could lead Russia to escalate the conflict, has moved cautiously before granting a series of earlier requests from Ukraine for specific arms, including advanced tanks, missiles and rocket systems, and F-16 fighter jets. Russian officials have issued similar threats before many of those past decisions.

Ukraine was a key topic

for Biden and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer following this week's visit to Kyiv by their top diplomats, who came under fresh pressure to loosen weapons restrictions. So far, the US has allowed Ukraine to use American-provided weapons only in a limited area inside Russia's border with Ukraine.

Two US officials familiar with discussions said they believe Starmer will seek Biden's approval to allow Ukraine to use British Storm Shadow missiles for expanded strikes in Russia. Biden's approval may be needed because Storm Shadow components are made in the US. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to share the status of private conversations, said they believed Biden would be amenable.

No announcement was expected Friday, several US officials said.

The Russian authorities kept a close watch on the discussion between Biden and Starmer. -AP



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer (right) during a meeting with US President Joe Biden (centre left) in the Blue Room at the White House in Washington on Friday.

Pic: AP/PTI

Williams, Wilmore plan to vote from space

Washington: Stranded on the International Space Station through February, NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore plan to vote in the November 5 US presidential election from space.

"It's a very important duty that we have as citizens and (I am) looking forward to being able to vote from space, which is pretty cool," Williams, who is of Indian origin, said on a call with reporters on Friday afternoon. Williams, 58, and Wilmore, 61, partici-

pated in a press conference on Friday from the International Space Station (ISS), which has been their home since June. Their Boeing Starliner spacecraft ran into several problems mid-flight and could not bring them home from a planned 8-day voyage.

"I sent down my request for a ballot today," Wilmore said. "It's a very important role that we play as citizens including those elections, and NASA makes it very easy for us to do that," he said. They, however, did not



indicate which presidential candidate — either former President Donald Trump or Vice President Kamala Harris — would get their vote. American astronauts have been voting from space since 1997 when the Texas legislature passed a bill allowing NASA employees to vote from space, New York Post reported. -AP

Tensions Between Islamabad and Kabul

Islamabad: The Pakistan government has removed its special representative to Afghanistan Asif Durrani, amid heightened tensions between Islamabad and Kabul, media reports said on Saturday.

According to an official notification, Durrani was "relieved of his responsibilities as Special Representative on Afghanistan in Management Position" on September 10, The Express Tribune newspaper reported. No official reason was given for the move.

Other sources said that Durrani had few tools at his disposal, given the overall strategy being followed by Pakistan. The Dawn newspaper reported the country's powerful military was unhappy with his performance, and Durrani, too, had grown frustrated as his policy advice was regularly ignored by his principals.

Durrani confirmed his departure in a text message, expressing gratitude to the leadership for allowing him to serve Pakistan. The post of the special envoy for Af-

ghanistan was created in June 2020 after the US-Taliban Doha Accord. It engaged with the Taliban and other countries involved in Afghanistan. Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have lately become strained, largely because of frequent attacks by the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan but also due to frequent border skirmishes.

There has been an uptick in the incidents of terrorism in Pakistan since the Taliban took over the government in Kabul in 2021.

Ukraine renews calls to approve strikes

Kyiv: Ukraine made a new call Saturday on the West to allow it to strike deeper into Russia after a meeting between US and British leaders a day earlier produced no visible shift in their policy on the use of long-range weapons.

"Russian terror begins at weapons depots, airfields, and military bases inside the Russian Federation," Ukrainian presidential adviser Andriy Yermak said Saturday.

Pak Parliament lodges declared as sub-jail

Islamabad: The Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly has declared the Parliament Lodges here as sub-jail for jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party's lawmakers who were arrested under the Anti-Terrorism Act and newly imposed Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act 2024.

On the other hand, Dawn News reported that the Islamabad High Court

set aside the physical remand of the 10 arrested PTI lawmakers and sent them to jail on judicial remand.

Police officials said the MNAs were detained at the suites allocated to them at the Parliament Lodges. These MNAs were arrested in connection with cases registered at Sangjani and Noon police stations under several charges, the officials said. -PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Amnesty International and others have had to dramatically limit or shutter operations in India because they do rely on fundraising. India has chosen through this act to significantly restrict the ability of organisations to operate and receive foreign funding."

- Time Kaine, US Senator



Respect to Mahsa Amini, Iran women give up hijabs

Dubai: On the streets of Iranian cities, it is becoming more common to see a woman passing by without a mandatory headscarf, or hijab, as the second anniversary of the death of Mahsa Amini and the mass protests it sparked approaches.

There is no government official or study acknowledging the phenomenon, which began as Iran entered its hot summer months and power cuts in its overburdened electrical system became common.



But across social media, videos of people filming neighbourhood streets or just talking about a normal day in their life, women and girls can be seen walking past with their long hair

out over their shoulders, particularly after sunset.

The country's new reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian campaigned on a promise to halt the harassment of women by mo-

Online videos — specifically a sub-genre showing walking tours of city streets for those in rural areas or abroad who want to see life in the bustling neighborhoods of Tehran — include women without the hijab.

reality police. But the country's ultimate authority remains the 85-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who in the past said "unveiling is both religiously forbidden and politically forbidden."

There have been scattered videos of women and young girls being roughed up by officers in the time since. In 2023, a teenage Iranian girl was injured in a mysterious incident on Tehran's Metro while not wearing a headscarf and later died in hospital. In July, activists say police opened fire on a woman fleeing a checkpoint in an attempt to avoid her car being impounded for her not wearing the hijab.

For some observant Muslim women, the head covering is a sign of piety before God and modesty in front of men outside their families. In Iran, the hijab — and the all-encompassing black chador worn by some

— has long been a political symbol as well. Amini, 22, died on Sept 16, 2022, in a hospital after her arrest by the country's morality police over allegedly not wearing her hijab to the liking of the authorities.



KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 Devotees take part in a procession to immerse a Lord Ganesha idol in Hyderabad on Saturday.
- 2 Congress candidate Vinesh Phogat campaigns for Haryana Assembly elections at Kamach Khera village in Jind district, Haryana.
- 3 Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal offers prayers at the Hanuman Temple at Connaught Place in New Delhi on Saturday, a day after he came out of jail.
- 4 North Korean President Kim Jong Un shakes hands with Russia's Security Council secretary, Sergei Shoigu, at an undisclosed location in North Korea on Friday.
- 5 Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi with deceased CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury's wife Seema Chishti and daughter Akhila Yechury at CPI(M) headquarters in New Delhi on Saturday.

All Pictures PTI, AP

LETTER FROM PAKISTAN

Pakistan's missile programme: Strain ties with US, China



By Kaswar Klasra



The recent imposition of US sanctions targeting Pakistan's ballistic missile program has left authorities in Islamabad both shocked and deeply concerned. On Thursday, the US State Department imposed restrictions on several Chinese companies and a research institute accused of supplying critical technology to Pakistan's missile capabilities.

The sanctions focus on China's alleged role in supporting Pakistan's missile programme, with the US accusing the Beijing Research Institute of Automation for Machine-Building Industry of assisting Islamabad in procuring equipment used to test rocket motors for the Shaheen-3 and Ababeel missile systems. These systems form the backbone of Pakistan's missile arsenal, which is seen as crucial for maintaining a strategic balance in the region, particularly with India.

In addition to the Beijing Research Institute, the US also sanctioned Chinese companies Hubei Huachangda Intelligent Equipment Co., Universal Enterprise, and Xi'an Longde Technology Development Co. A Pakistan-based firm, Innovative Equipment, and a Chinese national were similarly targeted for knowingly transferring equipment restricted under missile technology regulations. According to US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller, these actions reflect Washington's commitment to countering missile proliferation and associated procurement activities wherever they occur.

This latest move follows an ear-

lier round of sanctions in October 2023, when three China-based companies were similarly targeted for supplying missile-related items to Pakistan. The cumulative effect of these sanctions has triggered widespread concern within Islamabad. Although Pakistani authorities have not made any formal public statement, sources suggest these sanctions are viewed as a significant blow, especially when Pakistan grapples with severe economic challenges.

China, Pakistan's long-time ally, has reacted strongly to the sanctions. Liu Pengyu, the spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington, condemned the sanctions as a breach of international law, criticising the US for its "unilateral actions and long-arm jurisdiction." Liu further stated that China would "firmly protect" the rights and interests of its companies and citizens, signalling that Beijing does not intend to take these measures lightly.

The imposition of these sanctions has reignited debate about US-Pakistan relations. For many in Pakistan, this latest move reaffirms long-standing suspicions about the United States' reliability as an ally. Despite Pakistan's significant sacrifices in the US-led war on terror—both in terms of human lives and economic losses—Washington's actions continue to strain bilateral ties. The view that the US has never been a true friend of Pakistan is gaining traction, particularly among those who feel that Islamabad's contributions to global coun-

terterrorism efforts have been overlooked.

This growing sentiment has increased scrutiny of Pakistan's foreign policy approach towards the United States. Analysts and foreign policy experts are asking whether Islamabad's historical reliance on Washington remains a viable strategy in today's geopolitical climate. Some suggest the time has come for Pakistan to reconsider its approach and explore a broader range of alliances.

Among the most prominent suggestions is to adopt a foreign policy model similar to India's. Despite the complex global landscape, India has managed to maintain strong relationships with the United States, Russia, and China simultaneously, allowing it to navigate competing global interests while protecting its national priorities. In contrast, Pakistan's foreign policy has often been viewed as too dependent on its ties with Washington, leaving it vulnerable to actions such as these latest sanctions.

Conversations with senior government officials reveal mounting pressure within Islamabad's foreign policy establishment to reassess the country's strategy. Many argue that if India can successfully balance its relationships with multiple global powers, Pakistan should be capable of pursuing a similar approach. A shift in this direction could help Islamabad mitigate the risks associated with over-reliance on a single ally and open up new diplomatic and economic opportunities.

The current trajectory of US-Pakistan relations appears increasingly uncertain, and the imposition of these sanctions has underscored the need for a strategic recalibration. While Washington continues to wield significant influence on the global stage, Pakistan may find it prudent to cultivate stronger ties with other major powers, such as China and Russia, to create a more balanced and diversified foreign policy.

Such a shift, however, would not be without its challenges. The United States remains a key global player, and its influence over international institutions and financial systems cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, for Pakistan, the risk of continuing to rely on a single, often unpredictable partner may outweigh the potential benefits.

As the debate over Pakistan's foreign policy direction intensifies, it is clear that the US sanctions have not only impacted the country's missile programme but have also triggered a broader reassessment of its strategic alliances. For Islamabad, the future likely lies in forging a path that reduces dependency on any one power while simultaneously enhancing its relationships with multiple global actors. This approach could offer greater resilience in an increasingly multipolar world, where flexibility and balance are key to safeguarding national interests.

(The writer is a senior journalist based in Islamabad. Views personal.)

EXPLAINER

Why Google's ad auctions are in focus for monopoly claim

In fact, the Justice Department and a coalition of states say Google's dominance over the technology that controls the sale of billions of internet display ads every day is so thorough that it constitutes an illegal monopoly that should be broken up.

A trial under way in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia, will determine if Google's ad tech stack constitutes an illegal monopoly. The first week has included a deep dive into exactly how Google's products work together to conduct behind-the-scenes electronic auctions that place ads in front of consumers in the blink of an eye.

Online advertising has rapidly evolved. Fifteen or so years ago, if you saw an internet display ad, there was a pretty good chance it featured people dancing over their enthusiasm for low mortgage rates, and those ads were foisted on you whether you were looking at real estate or searching for baseball scores.

Now, the algorithms that match ads to your interests are carefully calibrated, sometimes to an almost creepy extent. The Justice Department contends that what Google has also done over the years is rig the automated auctions of ad sales to favor itself over other would-be players in the industry, and also deprived the publishing industry of hundreds of millions of dollars it would have received if the auctions were truly competitive.

Government witnesses have explained the auction process and how it has evolved over the years in detail at the Virginia trial.

In the government's depiction, there are three distinct tools that interact to sell an ad and place it in front of a consumer. There is the ad servers used by publishers to sell space on their websites, particularly the rectangular ads that appear on the top and right-hand side of a web page. Ad networks are used by advertisers to buy ad space across an array of relevant websites.

Professor Ramamoorthi Ravi, an expert at Carnegie Mellon University, said rules imposed by Google failed to maximize value for publishers and "seem to have been designed to advantage Google's own products."

And in between is the ad exchange, which matches the website publisher to the would-be advertiser by hosting an instant auction.

Publishers naturally want to receive as high a price as possible for their ad space, but testimony at trial has shown that didn't always happen due to the rules Google imposed.

For years, Google gave its ad exchange, called AdX, the first chance to match a publisher's proposed floor price. For instance, if a publisher wanted to sell a specific ad impression for a minimum of 50 cents, Google's software would give its own ad exchange the first chance to purchase. If Google's ad exchange bid 50 cents, it would win the auction, even if competing ad exchanges down the line were willing to pay more. Google said the system was necessary to ensure ads loaded quickly. If the computers entertained bids from every ad exchange, it would take too long.

Publishers, dissatisfied with this system, found a workaround to conduct the auctions outside of Google's purview, a process that became known as "header bidding." Internal Google documents introduced at trial described header bidding as an "existential threat" to Google's market share.

-AP



