

THE PERFECT VOICE



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The underground metro is getting ready for the services. Around 93 per cent of the work is completed. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to inaugurate the first phase in October. Pic: Bhushan Koyande

Modi calls for ceasefire in West Asia, dialogue

By Yoshita Singh

New York: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called for a ceasefire in West Asia, the release of hostages and a return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy as he stressed that only a two-state solution will deliver enduring peace and stability in the volatile region.

Modi expressed deep concern at the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza and the deteriorating security situation in the region during his meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on the margins of the Summit of the Future here on Monday.

He reaffirmed India's unwavering support to the people of Palestine, including continued humanitarian assistance, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

Prime Minister Modi "reiterated India's time-tested principled position on the Israel-Palestine issue, and called for a ceasefire, the release of hostages and return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy," it said.

He stressed that only a two-state solution will de-



liver enduring peace and stability in the region.

Recalling that India was one of the first countries to recognize Palestine, he conveyed India's continued support for Palestine's membership of the UN.

"The two leaders held constructive discussion on various facets of India-Palestine bilateral relations, including India's support to Palestine at the United Nations and ongoing assistance and support to Palestine in the field of education, health, and other capacity building efforts," the statement said.

Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further deepen India-Palestine bilateral relations, it added.

Briefing reporters Monday evening as Modi wrapped up his three-day visit to the US, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said that President Abbas

41,226
No of Palestinians killed
95,413
No of Palestinians injured
1,542
No of Israelis killed

thanked Prime Minister Modi for the assistance that India had provided, including on political issues, and "hoped that India would continue to play its role for bringing peace in the region."

Describing the meeting with Abbas as "very good", Misri said it allowed the Palestinian leader to "appreciate the stance that India has taken in an overall sense on the Palestine issue".

He added that Abbas "did explicitly state that he was very appreciative of India's support, not just for humanitarian assistance,

Our fundamental position on the Palestine issue remains what it has long been. In the present context, there's much greater urgency related to issues of humanitarian assistance and support, which we have continued to provide and will continue to provide.

- Vikram Misri, Secretary, External Affairs

but also for India's political support to Palestine on the international stage."

Modi also referred to India's historic support for Palestine in the United Nations on the international stage, as well as the consistent and sustained humanitarian support that India has provided to Palestine in the fields of health, education, capacity building and others.

-PTI

Promotion Of Anti-India Ideology

NIA raids 11 places in Tamil Nadu

New Delhi: The NIA conducted searches at multiple locations across Tamil Nadu on Tuesday as part of its probe into an "anti-election campaign" promoted by the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, a pan-Islamist organisation seeking to establish Islamic rule in the country, an official statement said.

It said officials of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) raided the houses of 11 suspects in Chennai, Tambaram and Kanyakumari districts, and seized incriminating materials, including digital devices,

unaccounted cash and literature belonging to the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

The NIA said the searches were conducted as part of a case related to causing and creating disaffection through various social media handles and campaigning against the exercise of the electoral franchise, which is deemed by the Hizb-ut-Tahrir as un-Islamic or 'Haram'.

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a fundamentalist organisation engaged in instigating its followers to overthrow the lawfully established

democratic government through divisive actions, according to the anti-terror agency.

Hameed Hussain, a key conspirator in the case, had collaborated with five other accused to hold secret meetings to promote the anti-India ideology of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, it said.

"NIA investigations in the case so far have revealed that the accused, along with several groups of people, had carried out campaigns throughout Tamil Nadu to establish Khilafah or Islamic rule in India." -PTI

Israel kills top Hezb commander

Beirut: The Israeli military says it has killed a top commander with Hezbollah's missile and rocket unit in a strike in Beirut.

Military officials said Ibrahim Kobeisi, who they said was responsible for launches towards Israel, was killed Tuesday. The military said "other key commanders" were with Kobeisi at the time of the strike, but officials did not say whether any of the others were killed or wounded.

-AP

CID to investigate killing, family wants SIT probe

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Maharashtra's Crime Investigation Department (CID) will conduct a probe into the death of Badlapur sexual assault case accused Akshay Shinde, officers said on Tuesday.

A team of forensic science experts on Tuesday examined the police vehicle, in which Shinde was allegedly shot by a cop on Monday evening, they said. Shinde, 24, was accused of sexually assaulting two minor girls at a school in Badlapur town of Thane district.

A contractual sweeper at the school in Badlapur, Shinde was arrested on August 17, five days after he allegedly sexually abused the two girls in the school toilet.

He was killed near Mum-

According to the J.J. hospital authorities, the accused had internal bleeding in head after a bullet hit the head. The post-mortem was done according to the guidelines of National Human Rights Commission. A team of five doctors conducted autopsy and the body and reports are handed over to Mumbra Police around 5 pm.

bra bypass in Thane on Monday evening when he allegedly snatched the gun of a policeman while he was being ferried in a police vehicle as part of a probe into a case registered against him on the complaint of his former wife, an official earlier said.

After he shot and injured

Father moves HC, seeks SIT probe

The father of Akshay Shinde has moved the Bombay High Court seeking probe by a special investigation team into the death. Anna Shinde, in his petition filed through advocate Amit Katarnaware, alleged that his son was killed in a "fake encounter".

An SIT should be formed to probe the killing and the high court should monitor the investigation, the petition demanded.

"The accused was in custody when he was shot dead in a fake encounter. This is a cold-blooded murder by criminals in uniforms," advocate Katarnaware said. The petition will be heard by a division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan on Wednesday.

an API, another officer from the police escort team fired at him, and he was declared dead by doctors at the Kalwa civic hospital, the official said.

As the incident is concerning death in police custody, it will be investigated by the Maharashtra CID, a senior official said on

Tuesday.

A team of CID officials will visit the spot at Mumbra bypass where the incident took place, he said, adding they will also record statements of police personnel who were in the vehicle at that time.

The CID officers will also record statements of Ak-

shay Shinde's parents, he said.

Akshay Shinde's body was taken from the Kalwa civic hospital in Thane to the state-run J.J. Hospital for post-mortem on Tuesday morning.

The post-mortem was conducted in-camera in the presence of expert doctors, the official said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut alleged that the government was trying to shield the school management. "How convincing is it that a school janitor snatches a gun from a policeman and fires a locked weapon? This is the basic question," he said, alleging that Akshay was the main piece of evidence that was destroyed as Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis wanted to shield the school management.



India Women's T20 World Cup 2024, in Mumbai on Tuesday. Harmanpreet Kaur addresses the pre-departure press conference ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024, in Mumbai on Tuesday. Pic: PTI

HC slams SRA over Bhandup project

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court recently directed the Slum Redevelopment Authority (SRA) to complete the survey of eligible persons on land at Kanjur village Bhandup West within four weeks for a rehabilitation project.

The court further directed the Deputy Commission-

er of Police (Operations), Bhandup, to provide adequate police protection to the SRA.

"The police authorities must understand that the orders for the survey have been given by the Additional Collector, AGRC, and finally, this Court. The officials present, virtually pleaded helplessness. The statutory authority, which has statutory powers, can-

not plead such helplessness," the court observed.

In this matter, we find that UVK Constructions LLP & ANR, the Petitioners, from 2017 onwards, have been pursuing the survey of a property, which is the subject matter of this Petition. Authorities like SRA have accepted the survey fees, but no survey has been undertaken.

Vodafone Idea to pay senior citizen for service deficiency

Mumbai: A consumer commission here has directed Vodafone Idea to pay Rs 50,000 in compensation to a senior citizen for mental harassment following the abrupt disconnection of his mobile services and not letting him use international roaming pack data.

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (Central Mumbai) held the mobile service provider guilty of service deficiency for causing "inconvenience, mental, and financial harassment and agony" in an order passed on Monday.

The complainant, a resident of Mumbai, had opted for an international roam-

ing pack (I-RoamFree) on his mobile number for 28 days from May 2, 2019. In addition to unlimited incoming and outgoing calls, the plan provided 5.2 GB of internet data.

The complainant started using the plan after visiting Kenya on May 2, 2019. He consumed about 75% of the data (out of 5.2 GB).

He used the data during his visit to Victoria in Zimbabwe for two days believing that the region was covered under the pack. He claimed to have not received any message from the service provider informing him that the Victoria Falls area is not covered under the plan.

After he shot and injured



The complainant also didn't receive any cautionary message informing him about a roaming rate schedule which kicks in whenever one enters a new country.

After the consumer used a nominal 124 MB data, his

mobile phone service was abruptly stopped by Vodafone Idea sans any intimation mail or message, the complaint stated. The service provider unreasonably imposed a heavy cost of Rs 72,419.

The complainant re-

turned to Kenya within 2 days and requested the company to restore his services and allow him to use the remaining data from the 5 GB pack, but the service provider rejected his request and asked him to pay around Rs 60,000 to-

wards service restoration.

The complainant raised the matter with the customer relationship cell, nodal officers, and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), among others, but failed to get a response. After being out of service for nearly 40 days, the complainant was compelled to pay a bill of Rs 86,290, including GST.

The complainant alleged wrongful loss due to service deficiency on the part of Vodafone Idea by illegally disconnecting the network services.

The mobile service provider argued that the customer knew only 77 countries were listed in the

discounted rate plan. For the rest, standard international charges are applicable for usage under the I-RoamFree Pack.

As Zimbabwe was not among the 77 countries, the complainant was billed at the standard rate, the company said.

The commission held that the complainant was entitled to avail of the benefit of I-RoamFree Pack after returning to Kenya which he had availed for Rs 5,999 for 28 days and had not fully exhausted the data.

"We hold that the opposite party was deficient in the service to the extent of not informing the complainant in advance about

the applicable roaming charges, arbitrarily letting him use the roaming services up to Rs 72,419, forcing him to clear the same and disconnecting his services abruptly and not restoring it even at Kenya," the commission observed.

The complainant, who is a senior citizen, was deprived of the services even in the country (Kenya) to which it was applicable caused inconvenience, mental, and financial harassment and agony for which he is entitled to be compensated and directed the mobile service provider to pay Rs 50,000 and Rs 10,00 towards the cost of filing the complaint. -PTI

At least 10 pc increase at booth

AMIT SHAH GIVES POLL MANTRA TO THE BJP OFFICIALS

By Correspondent

Nagpur: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday asked BJP workers and leaders to ensure that the voting percentage at each polling booth increases by at least 10 per cent during the ensuing Maharashtra assembly elections.

Addressing a party meeting in Nagpur, Shah also asked them to work in tandem with the ruling Mahayuti alliance partners, a leader present at the meeting said.

Shah said the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which addresses the management, preservation, and misuse of Waqf properties, will be passed in Parliament soon.

Shah interacted with key office-bearers of all the 62 state assembly constituencies of Vidarbha region at Suresh Bhatt hall in Reshimbagh area of Nagpur.

Speaking of the resolve to make the country strong, prosperous and safe, Shah listed many achievements of the Narendra Modi-led government, like scrapping Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, constructing the grand Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and revoking triple talaq.

Former Rajya Sabha member Anil Bonde said Shah emphasized the crucial role of Vidarbha region in the BJP's success in the upcoming Maharashtra as-



sembly elections.

"Amit Shah showed us the path to victory. He said that the path passes through the Vidarbha region. He has given a clear direction for the party workers ahead of the assembly polls," Bonde told a Marathi news channel.

Of the 288 state assembly seats, 62 are in Vidarbha region.

A BJP functionary said, "After the setback in the state in the Lok Sabha polls, Shah has asked the party workers to make extra efforts and reach out to the voters with various government schemes."

"Shah asked the party functionaries to show similar enthusiasm for the candidates of allies and give a strong message that we all are united. He also said that if someone does not get a ticket in the 2024 assembly polls, it is not the end of his political career," he said.

The BJP won only two of

the 10 Lok Sabha seats in the Vidarbha region this year. In the 2019 assembly elections, the BJP won 29 of the 44 seats it contested. The party won 44 assembly seats in Vidarbha in 2014 elections.

While state BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule and deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis were present at the meeting, senior BJP leader Nitin Gadkari could not attend it as he was away, party sources said.

BJP workers and office-bearers gathered at the Nagpur airport to give Shah a grand welcome.

Shah's two-day visit to Maharashtra also includes meeting BJP workers at Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Nashik, and Kolhapur. During these interactions, Shah is also expected to discuss seat-sharing formula for the assembly polls among the Mahayuti allies.

Three arrested over counterfeit medicines

Nagpur: With the arrest of three men, Nagpur rural police on Tuesday claimed to have busted an interstate racket involved in the distribution of counterfeit medicines. Vijay Shailendra Chaudhary was arrested from Mira Road area in Thane while Raman and Robin Taneja were nabbed from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, officials said here.

The racket operated across Maharashtra and neighboring states, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Haryana, they said. The accused supplied counterfeit versions of widely prescribed medical drugs such as Ciprofloxacin, Levofloxacin, Amoxicillin, Cefixime and Azithromycin under brand names of non-existent firms.



The underground metro is getting ready for the services. Around 93 per cent of the work is completed. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to inaugurate the first phase in October.

Pic: Bhushan Koyande

MMRDA proposes Marina project

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The MMRDA presented a revised draft development plan for the Backbay Reclamation Scheme considering slum rehabilitation and metro projects with the special focus on natural features such as beaches and mangroves.

The revised plan was presented during MMRDA's 158th meeting chaired by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday.

The revised draft plan has proposed a dedicated marina for tourism which will include ports for small boats and yachts to boost tourism in the area.

The plan for the Backbay Reclamation Scheme (Blocks III to VI), formulated under section 26 of the Maharashtra Regional and Town Plan-

The revised development plans and major connectivity projects, such as the Backbay Reclamation and the access-controlled highway, are critical to shaping the future of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

- Sanjay Mukherjee, Commissioner, MMRDA

ning Act, 1966, considers ongoing slum rehabilitation and metro projects in the area, an MMRDA release stated.

"The revision takes into account ongoing projects by other government and non-government organisations in the area, including slum rehabilitation and metro projects" The revised draft plan divides the Backbay

area into residential and commercial zones, with special attention to natural features such as beaches and mangroves.

The MMRDA has proposed the expansion of the new legislative building and the introduction of link roads, including proposed connectivity between Netaji Subhash Chandra Marg and Jagannath Bhosle Marg.

An administrative approval has been granted for the preliminary alignment report of an access-controlled highway connecting Kalyan, Dombivli, Ulhasnagar, Ambernath, and Badlapur with Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, as per the release.

The proposed highway between the Virar-Alibaug corridor and Badlapur is estimated to cost Rs 10,833 crore which will cut travel time between these cities and Mumbai to 60 minutes and Navi Mumbai to 30 minutes.

It will also provide direct connectivity to the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport and NAINA, while also reducing congestion in Thane and nearby highways.

"The project will feature an eight-lane divided car-

riageway with service lanes, ensuring a design speed of 80 km/hour. Major interchanges are proposed with key roadways, including the Mumbai-Vadodara Expressway (JNPT spur), Katali-Badlapur and the Kalyan Ring Road," the release highlighted.

The authority also approved the allotment of a commercial plot at BKC (Bandra Kurla Complex) to construct a new administrative office for the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

The MMRDA also gave administrative approval for the formation of a dedicated "Project Implementation Unit" and a "Business Development Cell" to execute the Mumbai Metropolitan Region's economic master plan.

CRIME WATCH

TC suspended over adverse remarks

Mumbai: The Western Railway (WR) has suspended a Mumbai-based Ticket Collector after an audio clip surfaced wherein he is purportedly heard making objectionable remarks against Maharashtra natives and a minority community.

Ticket Collector (TC) Ashish Pande, hailing from Uttar Pradesh and currently residing in Mumbai's Vikhroli area, was suspended on Sunday, pending an inquiry, the WR's Mumbai Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) said after the clip's content triggered an uproar.

The audio clip was on Sunday posted on X by a social media user and it quickly went viral.

In the clip, Pande is purportedly heard making disparaging remarks against Maharashtrians and a minority community.

Five booked for vandalising autorickshaws

Mumbai: Three persons have been arrested for allegedly vandalising eight autorickshaws following an incident of road rage in Bandra here.

Police were on the lookout for two other accused in connection with the incident that occurred in the Kherwadi locality on Monday evening, an officer said.

According to the police, two men got into a heated argument after their cars brushed each other on a busy road in the locality, and they got into a scuffle.

One of the men called his friend from the locality while the other man left the scene. After some time, a group of men armed with iron rods arrived at the scene and allegedly damaged parked autorickshaws, he said. An autorickshaw driver informed the police control room.

Decomposed body found in Navi Mumbai

Thane: Police have arrested a suspect in connection with the case of murder of an unidentified man in Maharashtra's Navi Mumbai township.

The motive for the murder is believed to be a trivial dispute, but investigations are underway.

The decomposed body of the man was found at an abandoned godown near Panvel railway station on September 16.



Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders Aadiya Thackeray (R) and Tejas Thackeray with their mother Rashmi Thackeray during the Senate election of Mumbai University at Chetna College polling station in Bandra.

Pic: PTI

Wall collapse causes damage

Thane: At least 20 two-wheelers were damaged when the compound wall of a housing complex collapsed in Maharashtra's Thane city on Tuesday morning, civic officials said.

No person was injured in the incident which took place in Shivai Nagar at around 4 am, Thane Municipal Corporation's disaster management cell chief Yasin Tadvai said.

The city received heavy rains in the last 24 hours.

A portion of the compound wall of the housing complex collapsed on vehicles parked by the side.

Mice found on prasad packets

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Amid the ongoing row over Tirupati laddus, a purported video of mice on the prasad packets of the Siddhivinayak Temple here is making rounds on social media, sparking concerns.

The Three Siddhivinayak Ganapati Temple Trust (SSGT) has, however, denied the allegation and said it has launched a probe into the matter.



Talking to PTI on Tuesday, Shiv Sena leader and SSGT chairperson Sada Sarvankar said, "Lakhs of laddus are distributed daily, and the place they are prepared is clean. The video shows a dirty place. I can see it is not of the temple and has been shot somewhere outside."

The purported video shows mice on torn packets of laddus kept in a blue tray.

"We will check the CCTV, and an officer of DCP rank will be appointed to conduct an inquiry. Action will be taken against whoever is found guilty," he said.

Speaking at a press conference earlier, Sarvankar

said the temple makes every effort to ensure the prasad is prepared in a clean place.

"Ghee, cashew and other ingredients are first sent for testing at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's lab and used after approval," he said, adding that even water is tested at the lab.

"This means we pay full attention to ensure that the prasad given to devotees is pure," he said.

AIMIM rally heads back

Mumbai: AIMIM's Tiranga rally, organised to seek the arrest of BJP legislator Nitesh Rane and Ramgiri Maharaj over the provocative remarks against Muslims, has headed back to Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar from Mumbai, police said on Tuesday.

The rally, which was to enter Mumbai, was not allowed to proceed beyond Thane and its participants began making their way back to Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar Monday night, an official said.

The rally was led by Imtiaz Jaleel, former MP of AIMIM.

"Despite the fact that FIRs have been lodged at different places against them, the state government has refused to act against Nitesh Rane and Ramgiri Maharaj who have openly targeted the Muslim community and made inflammatory statements to disturbing peace in the state," Jaleel said.

"The Mahayuti government is rattled by its defeat in the Lok Sabha. Now it wants Hindu-Muslim violence and thereby benefit during elections," he said.

Speaking at Chiplun

in Ratnagiri district, former Union minister Sharad Pawar, without naming BJP MP Narayan Rane, said on Monday, "Sindhudurg district has given a chief minister to Maharashtra. He has also worked with me. I don't want to say anything about him. But the way his son (Nitesh Rane) is making statements, I have never seen in Maharashtra's history the future generation of a chief minister resort to such a path."

On Ramgiri Maharaj, Pawar said, "Those who are donning saffron attire are making venomous statements against people from other religion which is not appropriate. One should not make statements which affect the unity among the people from different religions."

NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that the share certificate no. 01 for 5 (five) ordinary shares bearing Distinctive no. 1 to 5 of JAIRAJRATNA CHS LTD standing in the names of DAMODAR SAMBHAJI ROKADE EXPIRED DATED 25/06/2000 DC. NO. D-2020-27-90276-001196 have been reported lost and that an application for issue of Duplicate Certificate in respect thereof has been made to the society at BLDG NO 12, B -203 JAIRAJ RATNA CHS, NEW SHASTRI NAGAR, GOREGAON (W.), MUMBAI - 400 104., to whom objection if any, against issuance of such Duplicate Share Certificate should be made within 14 days from the date of publication of this notice. Share certificate is not mortgaged nor any loan taken against the flat.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that my client MRS. NAYANA NITIN SHAH & MR. NITIN NATWARLAL SHAH, Residing at Flat No. C/503, Magnum CHS Ltd., Viva Gokul complex, Bolini, Virar (West), Pin-401303, have filed Police Complaint at Virar Police Station bearing No. 30636-2024 dated 24.09.2024 in connection of Lost/Misplaced of Agreement for Sale dated 15/08/1985, Registration No. 1389/85 dated 02/09/1985 between M/s. Vrindavan Builders and Shri. Hemant Keshavlal Solanki. Any person having any objection in connection of the above said Agreement for Sale, the same may be made known to me in writing within 7 days from the date of issue of this notice, failing which my client shall proceed further. Place: Virar Date: 25.09.2024 (Dhanashri D. Yerunkar) Advocate Add: Shop No. 23, SHREE VRINDAVAN CHS LTD., 284 Agashi Rd, Behind Woodland Cinema, Virar (West), Dist-Palghar Pin 401303. Mobile No. 7249285502

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Vidarbha is a BJP stronghold, and the road to power passes through the region. Workers must be active on the ground to win the elections.



Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Minister

Imprisonment doesn't restrict right to pursue education: HC

Mumbai: Imprisonment does not take away a person's right to pursue further education, the Bombay High Court has said while permitting Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case accused Mahesh Raut to take admission in a city college for law degree.

Denying opportunity to take admission in the college despite being allotted a seat would be violation

of the fundamental right, a division bench of Justices A S Gadkari and Neela Gokhale said on September 19.

The court was hearing a petition filed by Mahesh Raut, who was arrested in June 2018, seeking a direction to the University of Mumbai to grant him admission for the law degree course at the Siddharth College of Law in south

Mumbai for the academic year of 2024-25.

His counsel Mihir Desai told the court that in 2023, Raut was granted bail by HC but he continued to remain in jail as the prosecution had challenged the bail order.

The Supreme Court stayed the bail order which continues till date.

The University of Mum-

bai opposed the plea, claiming law was a professional course which requires a candidate to have compulsory attendance of 75 per cent, which obviously Raut would not be able to fulfil.

The court noted that when Raut sought permission to appear for the Common Entrance Test (CET), no one opposed. The purpose of appear-

ing for the CET was obviously to seek admission for the law degree course, it said.

"Imprisonment does not restrict an individual's right to pursue further education. Denying the opportunity to take admission in the college despite a seat being allotted is a violation of the fundamental right of the petitioner," the HC said.

Encounter specialist Pradeep Sharma's aid shot Akshay Shinde

Police pumped three bullets in 'self-defense', netas want probe

By Correspondent

Thane: As the chilling details of the alleged encounter of Badlapur sexual assault accused Akshay Shinde coming to the fore, doubt turning into reality that deceased was shot to kill and not to defense self.

Sanjay Shinde, the police inspector who shot dead Akshay Shinde, has reportedly worked with suspended former 'encounter specialist' Pradeep Sharma in the past. Akshay Shinde, 24, who was accused of sexually assaulting two minor girls at a school in Badlapur, was killed in 'encounter' on Monday has drawn sharp criticism from the rival political parties.

Deep-diving details have found that Sanjay Shinde had previously worked with the anti-extortion cell of the Thane Police Crime Branch, then headed by Pradeep Sharma. He was part of the team which arrested gangster Dawood Ibrahim's brother Iqbal Kaskar. Sharma earned a reputation as an 'encounter specialist' in the Mumbai Police, credited with neutralising more than 100 criminals throughout his career. Sanjay Shinde faced suspension and an inquiry after murder accused Vijay Palande escaped police custody. In 2014, Shinde was reinstated by the Mumbai

What Happened on Monday

3.30 pm: Parents of Akshay Shinde meet him in Taloja jail

5.30 pm: Thane crime branch Central unit takes his custody from jail for probe into another case

6.15 pm: Akshay allegedly fires at police near Mumbra bypass and police fires at him in defense

7.05 pm: Accused declared dead at Kalwa hospital



Police.

A contractual sweeper at the school in Badlapur, Akshay Shinde was arrested on August 17, five days after he allegedly sexually abused the two girls in the school toilet.

Attempt to murder

A senior police officer said that Crime Investigation Department (CID) will investigate the incident as it is related to death in police custody. Officials said that a team of forensic experts examined the police vehicle in which Shinde opened fire on the police to retaliate, a policeman fired shots in self-defense on Monday evening.

"On Monday evening,

while Akshay Shinde was being taken to a police vehicle in connection with the investigation of another crime reported by his wife, he grabbed a policeman's revolver and opened fire," the officer said, adding that a case of attempt to murder has been registered against the deceased.

Notably, Shinde was killed near Mumbra Bypass in Thane while he was being ferried in a police vehicle as part of a probe into a case registered against him on the complaint of his former wife.

Govt under pressure

The Badlapur sex assault case and subsequent inordinate delay in filing FIR had landed government in a soup. In addition to this, case had put the Mahayuti government under huge pressure as Bombay High court during several hearings had expressed displeasure at the probe saying the cops took more than 11 hours to file FIR.



Sena workers celebrate in Thane

Thane: Shiv Sena workers here on Saturday burst firecrackers and distributed sweets to celebrate the death of the accused in the Badlapur sexual assault case in an alleged police encounter.

Similar celebration was also seen in Pune. They also congratulated the Maharashtra government led by party chief Eknath Shinde.

Pramod Bhangire, Pune city chief of the Shiv Sena, said they celebrated by bursting firecrackers and distributing 'pedha' sweets outside the party office to

boost the morale of state police.

"We congratulate the state Government and Maharashtra police. Whatever action the police have taken, it was excellent," he said. Bhangire also criticised the Opposition for questioning the alleged encounter. "Instead of criticising and casting doubt on the incident, Opposition should support the police and help boost their morale," he said.

In Thane district, local Shiv Sena leaders led by Thane MP Naresh Mhaske visited 'Shakti Sthal', the

memorial of late Sena leader -- and chief minister Shinde's political mentor -- Anand Dighe, and offered floral tributes. Party workers also burst crackers.

At Dombivli, a number of women activists were seen celebrating, while hoardings featuring Eknath Shinde were put up in many places. Sena workers also distributed sweets to police personnel.

In Badlapur, Shiv Sena leader Mahesh Gaikwad handed over a cheque of Rs 51,000 to the police department.

Govt protecting school management: Raut

Mumbai: The accused in the minor girls' sexual assault case was killed in an encounter as the Eknath Shinde government was trying to shield the pro-BJP Badlapur school management, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut alleged on Tuesday.

Hitting back, the ruling Shiv Sena slammed the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction for questioning the bravery of police officers.

Though the encounter was suspicious, there is no need to show sympathy for such a person (Akshay Shinde who is accused of sexually assaulting two minor girls in a school), said Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut. "This murder or encounter that has taken place was done to save the main accused (the school management)," Raut told reporters.

Questioning the circumstances of Shinde's death, Raut asked, "How convincing is it that a janitor snatches a gun from a policeman and fires a

locked weapon? This is a basic question". Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Home Minister Dev-

endra Fadnavis on Monday said that police had fired in self-defence.

Raut suggested that Akshay Shinde was the main piece of evidence that was destroyed given that CM Shinde and Fadnavis wanted to shield the school management.

"This is a big conspiracy. Those who are being saved enjoy the patronage of the chief minister and deputy chief minister," Raut alleged.

He claimed the CCTV footage of the school in Badlapur where the two minor girls were sexually assaulted has gone missing. "The school is related to BJP and yesterday's story (Akshay Shinde's killing) was done to save them," Raut claimed.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and former minister Aadiya Thackeray asked where are the trustees of the Badlapur school and why are they being protected by the government.

"It is understood that the trustees of the school are affiliated to the BJP who are being protected," Thackeray claimed.

Does opposition want to observe Shinde's death anniversary?

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Does opposition want to observe death anniversary of Akshay Shinde just like they did with Afzal Guru, Mumbai BJP president Ashish Shelar asked on Monday while taking on the opposition for constant ranting over the death of the accused in Badlapur minor rape case.



"Akshay Shinde died in an encounter with the police yesterday. But, the Opposition still seems to be skirmishing about it. I have been watching the constant rant from leaders from the Opposition and their sycophants since yesterday. This is utter shamelessness. Will they observe Akshay's death anniversary as they observe Afzal Guru's (death anniversary)," asked Shelar while

interacting with the reporters.

Shelar raised several questions over the purpose behind opposition's ranting. "What is it that the Opposition is talking about? What are their claims? What do they intend to convey? What is it supposed to mean? Shouldn't they study before speaking? Why this rant? What do they want to say? Are they saying that the police should have got shot? Shouldn't their empathy be towards the suffering child?" Shelar asked.

He also asked whether the opposition is trying to doubt the role of the police. "Are they raising questions on the evidence received by the police machinery? Whether that child was really abused? Whether the police really did anything? Are they raising doubts about all these things? How much low will they further stoop?" he asked.

Shelar asked, "Why are they politicizing and painting Akshay Shinde, the culprit, the pervert? Why are they talking about him?"

Parents cry foul play

Thane: The family members of Badlapur sexual assault case accused Akshay Shinde, who has been shot dead by police, have termed the incident as an "encounter" and sought a probe into his killing.

His father Anna Shinde, however, said an inquiry should be conducted into his son's killing.

Speaking to reporters outside the hospital on Monday, Akshay Shinde's mother and uncle alleged it was a conspiracy by police and management of the Badlapur school.

They claimed Akshay Shinde had told his kin that he was being beaten up police in custody and he also sent a chit seeking money.

"My son was afraid of bursting crackers and crossing the road. How can he shoot at policemen?" Akshay Shinde's mother asked.

"The police have killed our child. The school management must also be probed. The police got him to write something but we don't know what it is. This should be investigated," the kin further said.

Opposition smells conspiracy

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Badlapur sexual assault case has now taken an ugly turn with the alleged encounter of accuse Akshay Shinde. The opposition members have alleged that the government is making a full-fledged attempt to hush up this sensitive case to save the school trustees who have close alliance with BJP and Sangh Parivar. Meanwhile, Advocate Asim Sarode, the lawyer of the two minor girls who were allegedly sexually assaulted by Shinde has made it clear that he will take up this matter to the High Court.

Sarode told The Perfect Voice, "According to the Supreme Court encounter is murder, those who support the encounter are not fit to live in a democratic system. Systematic attempts are being made to save the other accused in this case by encountering Akshay Shinde.

The school management people belong to BJP and RSS. This encounter was done to prevent action against them. You will be shocked to hear that after the encounter, efforts were made to pressurize the relatives of the victim



The laxity shown by the Home Department in transferring the main accused in this incident is questionable. It seems that the government has become weak.

Sharad Pawar, Chief, Nationalist Congress Party (SP)

girls to drop their demand for action against the school management and trustees of it. We will pursue the matter to take stern action against the other accused."

"While representing the two minor girls, I noticed it was becoming uncomfortable for the local politics of the Thane district and even for that educational institution where Akshay Shinde was working. Shinde's death in such a manner is killing of justice.

Now, the case of sexual assault of the two minor girls will get sidelined. This particular case was all set to create embarrassment for the educational institute, affiliated to a certain powerful political family."

Advocate Sarode decried the killing of Akshay Shinde, accused of sexually assaulting two mi-

We want justice. The family would have accepted the verdict delivered by the court after a trial, but we are poor people; we don't have a voice.

Anna Shinde, father of Akshay

nors, as a mockery of law and judiciary.

He further stated that such a practice would lower the confidence of people in police and the judicial system. We will file a petition in the High Court in this matter to expedite the case.

"I would like to make one thing clear that we are not upset with the killing of Akshay Shinde. He should have been punished through a judicial process.

If it had been done, then



"Were Akshay Shinde's hands not tied by the police during the transit? How could he reach for the gun, and how come the police were so careless? There is no action against the 'BJP-linked' school management. However, an arrested accused is shot dead in suspicious circumstances. We have no trust in Badlapur police."

Vijay Wadetiwar, Leader of Opposition

guidelines and rules could have been made to prevent repeating of the Badlapur episode.

We will also demand that the Akshay Shinde encounter case be investigated under the supervision of a judge," Sarode said.

Body handed over to police after post-mortem

Mumbai: The body of Akshay Shinde, the accused in the Badlapur sexual assault case, was on Tuesday handed over to police after post-mortem at the JJ Hospital in south Mumbai, an official said.

Shinde was killed near Mumbra bypass in Thane on Monday evening when he allegedly snatched the gun of a policeman while being ferried in a police vehicle as part of a probe into a case against him on the complaint of his former wife, the official said.

The body of the 24-year-old school sweeper was transferred from Kalwa Civic Hospital in Thane to the state-run JJ Hospital on Tuesday morning, for a post-mortem.

"The post-mortem was done according to the guidelines of National Human Rights Commission by a team of five doctors. The body and reports were handed over to Mumbra police around 5 pm on Tuesday," a hospital official said.

Hospital dean Dr Pallavi Saple said the government guidelines to record the video of the post-mortem were followed.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Akshay Shinde was not a saint and deserved to be punished but the police action was wrong. A proper legal process was adhered to even before sending Ajmal Kasab to the gallows. We want an independent, high-level probe by judges of the High Court into Shinde's death."

Sushama Andhare, Shiv Sena (UBT)



Controversial FFI Citation

Writer says would like to give them benefit of doubt

By Radhika Sharma

Mumbai: "Laapataa Ladies" screenwriter Sneha Desai says she wouldn't like to "read too much" into the Film Federation of India (FFI)'s citation for choosing the film as India's official entry to Oscars 2025 as it could have been drafted by anyone.

The 13-member all-male jury of FFI, the body which selects India's entry in the international film category

every year, drew ridicule online for their citation for the Kiran Rao directorial. Many on social media said the brief went against the message the film was trying to convey.

The citation by FFI read: "Indian women are a strange mixture of submission and dominance. Well-defined, powerful characters in one world, a Laapataa Ladies (Hindi) captures this diversity perfectly, though in a semi-



idyllic world and in a tongue-in-cheek way."

Desai, who wrote the

gently subversive feminist drama set in rural India in early 2000s, is happy the

film will represent the country on the world stage despite there being no woman member on the jury.

"I think the citation is not a clear indication of what the entire association or the jury stands for. I would like to give them the benefit of the doubt because it could have been drafted by anyone else as well. Yes, they could have been a little careful but I wouldn't want to read too

much into it.

"And, for not having any woman member on the jury is a call I don't know how they would have taken or the higher powers would have decided. Despite that 'Laapataa Ladies' making it, is again a wonderful thing," the debutante film writer told PTI in an interview.

"We are extremely elated... It's just a very gratifying and wonderful feeling," she said.

A Decade Of 'Make In India'

Brilliant future ahead for manufacturing

New Delhi: A series of measures to improve ease of doing business, zero tolerance for corruption and the focused effort on emerging sectors like electronics have helped promote 'Make In India' and boost both domestic and foreign investments in the country, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday.



The 'Make in India' initiative was launched on September 25, 2014, to facilitate investment, foster innovation, build world-class infrastructure, and make India a hub for manufacturing, design, and innovation. It is one of the unique 'Vocal for Local' initiatives that promoted the country's manufacturing domain to the world.

119 per cent – Inflow of FDI in last 10 years
USD 667 billion – FDI inflow (2014-24)
USD 304 billion – FDI inflow (2005-14)
90 per cent – FDI received through automatic route
USD 778 billion – India's export in 2023-24
63 – India's ranking in ease of doing business among 190 countries

"We have achieved great success and a brilliant future is ahead for manufacturing in the country as the 'Make in India' programme is celebrating its 10 years," he said.

"We are seeing very big investment plans on the anvil which will create millions of jobs and expand our manufacturing contribution to the economy," Goyal told PTI.

Recalling the journey of the initiative, the minister said that the Modi-government started with "very" tough times as the mood of investments both domestically and internationally was "very" low in 2014 and businesses were not sure about the future.

Internationally, the image of the country was down and the country was categorised as a "fragile five" economy, he said adding it took this government some time to earn the trust of investors.

"But that happened very quickly under Prime Minister Narendra Modi because he took very bold decisions whether it is one nation one tax - GST, whether it is IBC (Insolvency and Bankruptcy

Code), or putting in place a transparent process for auction of mines," he said.

The government also gave investors stable and predictable policies, with a commitment not to do retrospective amendments, the minister said.

Due to measures like digitisation and simplifying procedures, India's rank in the ease of doing business climbed 14 rungs to 63 among 190 countries.

"Zero tolerance for corruption, and the focused effort on emerging sectors for promoting Make in India ignited the investments both domestically and internationally," Goyal said.

"And 10 years later, we are both redeemed by the results and excited about the future. In many areas, we have seen significant progress like in mobiles, we are now world's second

largest manufacturers with production going on from only two factories to 200 in this field," he added.

Besides, sectors like steel, and cement where demand was generated because of a significant ramp-up in infrastructure funding, India witnessed massive investments and growth under the Make in India programme.

The government's initiatives in other segments such as textiles, ceramics, toys, plastics, chemicals, and pharma, have resulted in an increase in domestic capacities which have met the needs of India as well as helped boost the country's exports which reached an all-time high of USD 778 billion in 2023-24.

The minister expressed confidence that with the increasing momentum

seen under the Make in India programme, "We believe that the share of manufacturing will also start increasing in the coming years".

The steps taken to boost manufacturing and attract investments include easing foreign direct norms in a number of sectors such as space, coal mining, e-commerce, pharma, civil aviation, contract manufacturing, and digital media.

In 2020, the government rolled out the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes for a number of sectors to provide financial incentives to enhance domestic manufacturing. The scheme has attracted substantial investments in key sectors such as electronics, and pharmaceuticals.

The other measures include national logistics policy, national single window system, Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) and law to decriminalize 183 provisions in 42 legislations. -PTI



Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal with Premier of NSW Australia Chris Minns at a meeting in Sydney. Pic: PTI

Rahul asks SEBI name big profiteering players

By Aditi Khanna

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said 90 per cent of small investors have lost Rs 1.8 lakh crore in Futures and Option (F&O) trading in three years and asked the SEBI to reveal the names of the "so called big players" profiteering at their expense.

More than 91 per cent, or 73 lakh, individual traders lost money in the F&O segment in FY24 with an average net loss of Rs 1.2 lakh per person, a study conducted by markets regulator SEBI revealed. Further, 93 per cent of over 1 crore individual F&O traders incurred average losses of about Rs 2 lakh per trader during the three years from FY22 to FY24.

UK union decries Gujarat port workers

By Aditi Khanna

London: The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the UK-headquartered global union of transport workers, on Tuesday condemned the demolition of an informal settlement that it says has left thousands of port workers and fishers homeless in Gujarat.

In a letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the state government and the Deendayal Port Authority (DPA), the ITF has called for action to help the estimated 2,500 workers who have been left destitute.

It says that more than 600 huts were demolished in the

Banna Mazdoor Basti settlement in the early hours of September 5 despite many residents in the settlement, near Kandla Port, having lived there for generations.

"This shocking act, justified by what our affiliate believes to be spurious claims of security concerns, has left thousands of people homeless," said ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton.

"We are deeply concerned about the wellbeing of the displaced residents, many of whom have been integral to the operation of what is India's largest public sector port. We believe that is a basic duty of the Deendayal Port Authority and the Indian government

to protect their dignity and fundamental human rights," he said.

ITF said its affiliate, Shri Kutch General Mazdoor Sangh (SKGMS), is closely monitoring the situation on the ground near Kandla Port as it supports them to ensure restitution for the workers who have lost their homes.

Among its demands, the ITF is calling on the government of India to provide compensation and resettlement for displaced workers, in accordance with Indian law; DPA and local government to stop all plans for further demolitions of worker settlements and instead develop a plan for the rehabilitation of workers.

BYJU's default confirmed by Delaware SC

New Delhi: The Delaware Supreme Court ruling has affirmed that edtech firm BYJU's has defaulted on Term Loan B.

BYJU's US-based lenders on Tuesday said the Delaware Supreme Court affirmed the previous ruling by Delaware Court of Chancery's and said an event of default had occurred under the credit agreement and entitled BYJU's lenders and their administrative agent, GLAS Trust for action against the company.

BYJU's, from US-based lenders, had raised USD 1.2 billion Term Loan B (TLB) -- a loan which is issued by institutional investors, through its holding company Byju's Alpha. The lenders through their administrative agent GLAS Trust approached Delaware Court of Chancery alleged default in the payments under the loan agreement and sought early payment of the USD 1.2 billion TLB. Think and Learn, which owns BYJU's brand, had contested the claim but the Delaware Court of Chancery ruled in favour of the lenders.

According to a statement of The steering committee of the ad hoc group of term loan lenders, BYJU's founder and CEO Byju Raveendran

and his brother Riju Ravindran have voluntarily conceded that BYJU's was in default of credit agreement by October 2022.

"We are gratified that the Delaware Supreme Court decisively affirmed what we have known all along: BYJU's breached and defaulted on the credit agreement it knowingly and willingly entered into.

"Most notably, this ruling confirms that BYJU's was in default, which both Byju and Riju personally acknowledged when they signed multiple amendments to the credit agreement on BYJU's behalf from October 2022 to January 2023," the committee said.

A query sent to BYJU's did not elicit any immediate reply. The US-based lenders through GLAS Trust had filed claims of USD 1.35 billion dues in Indian courts during ongoing insolvency proceedings against the edtech firm. In the latest statement, the lenders have raised their total claim to USD 1.5 billion. The committee said that the Delaware Supreme Court ruling has validated that the Lenders were well within their contractual rights to accelerate the Term Loan and take control of BYJU's Alpha Inc. -PTI



Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw takes selfie with workers during an inspection visit of the under-construction Gandhinagar Railway Station in Jaipur on Tuesday. Pic: PTI

Design for GST e-invoicing for retailers ready

New Delhi: The design architecture for implementing GST e-invoicing for retailers is mostly ready and being vetted by industry experts, GST Network CEO Manish Kumar Sinha said on Tuesday.

E-invoicing is already present in the B2B sector. The GST Council, in its meeting earlier this month, decided to extend e-invoice to the B2C sector on a pilot basis. Sinha said the GST department is currently in discussion with the industry for the issuance of electronic invoices for every B2C transaction.

"Initially, we will do a pi-

lot project. The design of the architecture is mostly done, and we are getting it vetted by some of the best people we have in the industry," Sinha said.

The threshold for businesses that would be required to issue e-invoices is in the process of being decided. "We have to give time to the industry, particularly, small mom-and-pop stores. What we want to get right is the technology. Large organised retail, e-commerce operator, big companies... have a good IT set up with them, ... at least encourage them to start adopting it," Sinha said. -PTI

India's affluent class boosts Scotch whisky sales

India outpaces US and China's consumption rates, says Swiss researcher

Montreux (Switzerland): India's rising affluent class is fuelling a surge in high-end spirits sales, with Scotch whisky and fine wines registering double-digit growth, outpacing consumption rates in the US and China, according to a Switzerland-based researcher.

"One subcategory where India surpasses China and is growing at double the rate of the USA over a five-year CAGR is Scotch luxury whisky," Simon Joseph, a senior luxury brand builder and consumer experience expert based in Zurich, said.

Joseph, a researcher with Glion Institute of Higher Education, said according to various data forecasts, the luxury Scotch whisky market is also growing at 16 per cent CAGR up to 2024-end.

Scotch whisky exports to India grew at a compound annual growth rate of 66 per cent up to 2022, outpacing the US, China, and other significant markets, Joseph said, citing data from the UK-based Scotch Whis-

167 million – No of bottles exported to India in 2023, according to the UK-based SWA data

27 per cent – Increase in India's whisky import from 2019

16 per cent – Rise in luxury Scotch whisky market by 2024 end

Whisky drinking has become a social ritual in India. It is mostly enjoyed with friends and family during celebrations and functions
Simon Joseph, luxury brand builder and consumer experience expert

According to the 2024 Hurun India Rich List, India has 334 billionaires, up 75 from last year. The UBS and Credit Suisse joint wealth report for 2023 also pegs HNWI growth at 69 per cent. Personal luxury in India is valued at Rs 256,176 million, and according to Euromonitor International, the Indian personal luxury market is set to grow over the next five years to Rs 347,355 million.

ky Association (SWA).

"The US, in value, is still dominant in the consumption of Scotch whisky; India now is the biggest consumption in terms of volume, just overtaking France. Scotland remains the biggest exporter of Scotch whisky," Joseph said. Joseph helps companies in the luxury sector scale their brands and brand strategies for emerging and developing luxury markets. He recently completed an Executive Mas-

ter's in Luxury Management at Glion Institute of Higher Education (GIHE), based in Montreux. The findings were part of his "India as the Next Frontier for Personal Luxury" thesis submitted during his education programme.

GIHE is an institute under Sommet Education, known for luxury and hospitality education, which is becoming popular among Indian students seeking a global education in these

sectors. Joseph said though a late entrant in the luxury spirits landscape, India is rapidly gaining prominence in the sector, emerging as the fifth-largest market for Scotch luxury whisky.

"In luxury Scotch whisky, India remains the fifth largest market behind the USA in first position, followed by France, Singapore, and Taiwan. But India has seen the fastest CAGR of all five countries at 16 per cent," he said.

No signs of slowdown in Indian housing

By Manvendra Jha

Sydney: Housing demand in Indian real estate market continues to be strong with no signs of slowdown and there is a need to boost supply to meet the requirements, according to realtors' apex body CREDAI.

The association said that housing sales in any particular quarter could fall due to lesser number of launches, but consumer demand that has surged post COVID pandemic remains intact.

CREDAI is holding its flagship conference 'CREDAI NATCON' here during September 23-26 being attended by more than 1,100 delegates.

He was replying to a query about PropEquity latest data which estimates 18 per cent fall in sales across nine major cities to 1,04,393 units during July-September period.

Irfan Razack, CMD of Prestige Group and past president of CREDAI, said, "Demand is there. There is no inventory."

The demand is "ever-green" in Indian housing market, he added.

Citing the example of his company, Razack said the sale bookings of Prestige Estates Projects fell in April-June quarter due to lesser number of launches.

He stressed on the need to streamline and fasten the process of approval for real estate projects.

Gaur further said the projects launched by reputed developers are completely sold out within few

days. Razack expressed concern over a sharp rise in housing prices in some micro markets and said the annual appreciation should be modest.

CREDAI National President Boman Irani emphasised on the need to have provision of GST input credit in the real estate sector.

He also pressed for change in the definition of affordable housing, which was capped at Rs 45 lakh in 2017. -PTI

"There is no inventory. There is a huge demand for residential properties from good developers at right locations and attractive prices."
- Manoj Gaur, National Chairman, CREDAI

1400
No of members of Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The infrastructure financing, of course, is mainly coming from the roads, renewable energy, and some of the refineries. We have a pipeline, both in terms of sanctioned but not disbursed and a pipeline of proposals which are under process. This amounts to almost Rs 4 lakh crore."
C.S. Setty, Chairman, SBI

Karnataka HC dismisses Siddaramaiah's petition

Bengaluru: In a setback to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, the Karnataka High Court on Tuesday dismissed his petition challenging Governor's approval for investigation against him in a site allotment case.

The Chief Minister had challenged the approval given by the Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot for an investigation against him in the alleged irregularities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) in a prime locality.

After completing the hearings on the petition in six sittings from August 19, the single judge bench of Justice M Nagaprasanna on September 12 reserved its verdict. It had also extended its August 19 interim order directing the special court for people's representatives that was slated to hear complaints against him in the case, to defer its proceedings till the disposal of the petition.

"The facts narrated in the petition would undoubtedly require investigation, in the teeth of the fact that the beneficiary of all these acts is not anybody outside but the family of the petitioner. The petition stands dismissed," Justice Nagaprasanna ruled.

He said: "interim order of any kind subsisting today shall stand dissolved."

The Governor on August 16 accorded sanction under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 218 of the



Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 for the commission of the alleged offences as mentioned in the petitions submitted to him by complainants Pradeep Kumar S P, T J Abraham and Snehamayi Krishna.

On August 19, Siddaramaiah moved the High Court challenging the legality of the Governor's order.

In the petition, the Chief Minister submitted that the sanction order was issued without due application of mind, in violation of statutory mandates, and contrary to Constitutional principles, including the advice of the Council of Ministers, which is binding under Article 163 of the Constitution of India.

Siddaramaiah sought quashing of the Governor's order contending that his decision is legally unsus-

In the MUDA site allotment case, it is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife B M Parvathi in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA.

tainable, procedurally flawed, and motivated by extraneous considerations.

Reading out the summary of findings, Justice Nagaprasanna said, the complainants were justified in registering the complaint or seeking approval

BJP demands CM's resignation

BJP workers on Tuesday staged protests in several parts of Karnataka demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, hours after the Karnataka High Court dismissed his petition challenging Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's approval for investigation against him in a site allotment case.

The protests were organised in Siddaramaiah's home district of Mysuru, Hubballi and Belagavi, among other places, party leaders said.

at the hands of the Governor.

As the judge dismissed the petition, senior counsel Abhishek Manu Singhvi who appeared for Siddaramaiah, said, "the matter related to dates of 1990's, and the complaint if filed now," as he requested the bench to consider "a two weeks' stay on this."

Responding to this, the Justice Nagaprasanna said, "I can't stay my own order. The petition stands dismissed. Interim order of any kind subsisting today shall stand dissolved."

-PTI

16-year-old stabbed to death by friends

New Delhi: A 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death allegedly by three of his friends in East Delhi's Shakarpur when he refused to give them a treat after buying a new phone, police said on Tuesday.

They said three juveniles, all aged 16 years and students of Class 9, have been apprehended in connection with the murder.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Apoorva Gupta said a patrol team spotted blood stains on a street near Ramji Samosa shop in Shakarpur around 7.15 pm on Monday and conducted an enquiry. She said local people informed the team that a group of boys had stabbed one boy, who was taken to the LNJP Hospital.

The victim was identified as Sachin (16), who lived nearby, the official said, adding that the incident occurred in full public view.

Gupta said Sachin succumbed to injuries in the hospital about an hour later and two stab wounds were found on his back.

The DCP said further investigation has revealed Sachin and one of his friends were returning home after buying a mobile phone when they ran into the three boys. "The group demanded a party or a treat to celebrate the purchase but Sachin refused. An argument ensued, leading to the stabbing," Gupta added.

She said a case under sections 103(1) and 3(5) of the BNS has been registered at the Shakarpur police station and the trio was apprehended from the locality on Tuesday.

Police used CCTV footage to identify the accused.



Andhra Pradesh Dy CM Pawan Kalyan takes part in a purification ritual amid the Tirupati laddu controversy. Pic:PTI

Temple chariot burnt, five held

Anantapur: A chariot of Hanuman temple at a village in the district was allegedly set ablaze by unidentified persons early on Tuesday, and five people have been detained in this connection.

Anantapur district superintendent of police P Jagadeesh said the incident was not communal, but a fallout of some altercation between two groups within the same community.

"It is not communal... Two people donated it two years ago and there was a discord between them."

According to police, a dispute arose over the parking of the chariot in a public place, and the donors were asked to keep it in their home.

Dry fruits be offered as prasad

Haridwar: The Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad on Tuesday said mishri (sugar crystals), cardamom seeds and dry fruits offered traditionally to the Hindu deities as 'bhog' should be distributed among devotees as prasad at temples instead of prepared delicacies such as laddu to prevent adulteration.

The statement by the seers' body comes amid the outrage over alleged adulteration of the laddu prasad offered to devotees in in Andhra Pradesh's Tirupati Balaji Temple.

This system of prasad should be operational in all temples across the country until the government and the management of temples guarantee the purity of ghee used to prepare prasad, said

Mahant Ravindra Puri, president of the Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad, an important body of seers.

"Items like rock sugar, cardamom and dry fruits are traditionally offered as Bhog to Hindu deities. Their distribution as prasad will leave no room for adulteration," he said.

Expressing his disgust at the adulteration of 'prasadam' at the Tirupati Balaji Temple, Puri said it had hurt the sentiments of Hindus all over the world.

He suggested that Hindus feeling guilty about having eaten adulterated prasad unknowingly at Tirupati Balaji can purify their system by consuming Ganga jal or Gomutra (cow urine).

-PTI

CPI(M) MLA Mukesh arrested in rape case, released on bail

Kochi: MLA of the ruling CPI(M) and actor M Mukesh was on Tuesday formally arrested by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in the rape case against him on a complaint by a female actor.

His lawyer confirmed that the MLA was arrested, his medical examination and potency test were carried out and then he was released as he had been granted anticipatory bail by a sessions court earlier this month.

His arrest was recorded after the SIT, investigating the case registered against the actor, called him for questioning. Mukesh appeared before the SIT at the Coastal Police Headquarters here at 9.45 am and was questioned for three and a half hours. Two cases have been registered against Mukesh, one by the Wadakkanchery police and the other by the Maradu police.

Ernakulam District and Sessions granted bail to Mukesh on September 5 in connection with the rape case filed against him by the female actor, who also made additional accusa-

tions of sexual assault. Following the woman's accusation, an FIR under section 376 (rape) of the IPC was registered against Mukesh. He claimed that the charges were the result of his refusal to succumb to blackmail attempts by the complainant.

Multiple FIRs have been registered against several high-profile Malayalam film personalities following allegations of sexual harassment against various directors and actors, sparked by revelations in the Justice K Hema Committee report. The committee was established by the Kerala government after the 2017 actress assault case.

Its report highlighted instances of harassment and exploitation of women in the Malayalam cinema industry. In response to these allegations of sexual harassment and exploitation involving several actors and directors, the state government announced the formation of a seven-member Special Investigation Team on August 25 to investigate the claims.

-PTI



Bulldozers being used during poll campaign ahead of the Haryana Assembly elections in Haryana's Nuh district. Pic: PTI

Bengal govt to discontinue tram service

Kolkata: The West Bengal government has decided to discontinue the 150-year-old tram service in Kolkata soon, barring a solitary heritage stretch from Maidan to Esplanade, Transport Minister Snehasis Chakraborty said.

Tram lovers, however, have decided to hit the streets in protest against the decision. Kolkata is the only city in the country where trams continue to operate.

Chakraborty said slow-moving trams, which move along the roads creating

Trams are undoubtedly a part of Kolkata's heritage after their introduction in 1873. But as roads comprise only 6 per cent of Kolkata's surface area and with increase in vehicular traffic, we have observed that trams cannot ply the roads along the same routes.

Snehasis Chakraborty, Transport Minister

traffic jams in peak hours, cannot be run in the present situation as commuters need faster modes of transportation.

Chakraborty said as the

issue of plying trams is now pending before the Calcutta High Court, the state government will make the aforementioned submission in the next hearing.

70-year-old crawls 2 km to collect pension

Keonjhar (Odisha): A 70-year-old woman in Odisha's Keonjhar district was forced to crawl nearly two kilometres from her home to the panchayat office to collect her old-age pension.

The ailing woman identified as Pathuri Dehury, a resident of Raisuan gram panchayat, cannot walk.

A video of Dehury crawling on a village road has gone viral on social media.

The state government earlier issued a directive to officials to deliver the pension of elderly and dis-

abled beneficiaries to their doorstep.

Dehury, however, said a panchayat official had asked her to visit the office to collect the monthly pension and she had to crawl to reach there on Saturday.

The gram panchayat concerned is under Telkoi block in Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's home district Keonjhar.

Telkoi block development officer (BDO) Geeta Murmu told PTI that the old-age pension was earlier sent to her bank account.

However, as she became ill and expressed her inability to visit the bank, the local administration has started disbursing the pension by hand, she said.

Now, the panchayat extension officer was asked to disburse the old-age pension to Dehury at her home each month. A wheelchair has also been provided to her, the BDO said.

Raisuan sarpanch Bagun Champia said the civil supply assistant will provide rations to Dehury at her doorstep.

-PTI

SC seeks response on RTI portals

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has sought responses from 11 states, including Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand, on a plea alleging that they are yet to set up Right to Information (RTI) portals under the transparency law in pursuance of a 2023 judgment. In the landmark judgment, the top court had on March 20 last year directed all states, Union territories and high courts to set up RTI websites within three months.

Woman finds hidden cams in rented home

New Delhi: A 30-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly installing spy cameras in the bedroom and washroom of his female tenant's home in east Delhi's Shakarpur area, police said Tuesday.

The victim, a civil service aspirant, was staying alone in the house for the past few months and would handover the keys to her landlord's son Karan before going out of town, they said.

The matter came to fore after the woman noticed

some unusual activity on her WhatsApp, Deputy Commissioner of Police (east) Apoorva Gupta said

"After being advised to check her linked devices, she discovered that her WhatsApp account was logged into an unknown laptop and she promptly logged out of it," she said. The woman became more suspicious and began searching her apartment for hidden cameras or surveillance devices and she found one in the bulb holder of her bathroom.

-PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Big central leaders are roaming across Jharkhand. The Centre is eying Jharkhand's mines and mineral resources. It digs out the natural resources and takes them out of the state.

Kalpna Soren, MLA, JMM



Zeenat Aman says she became high as a kite

New Delhi: Veteran actor Zeenat Aman says she had to appear really stoned while shooting for the classic song "Dum Maro Dum" in 1971's popular film "Hare Rama Hare Krishna" and to bring authenticity to her character she got as high as a kite after she smoked up with real-life hippies in Nepal.

In the film, also starring and directed by Dev Anand, Aman portrayed the role of Jasbir 'Janice' Jaiswal who drifts away from her family and spends

time with hippies consuming alcohol and drugs with them.

Aman, 72, shared the anecdote in an Instagram post on Monday night.

"We were in Kathmandu shooting Hare Rama Hare Krishna, and Dev Saab had rounded up a gaggle of hippies from the streets to be featured in the song. Which song? The picture is a dead giveaway - Dum Maro Dum of course.

"Now Dev Saab wanted authenticity in this sequence. My character, the



drug-addled Janice, had to really look stoned. And the easiest way to achieve this was to partake in the hippy offerings! So there I was,

still in my teens, gamely taking long pulls from their chillum for take after take," she wrote alongside a still from the song.

By the time the team wrapped the day's work, Aman said she was "high as a kite!"

"I was in no state to return to the hotel in that happy, dizzy and slightly gormless haze. So some of the team members packed me into a car and took me on a drive to a beautiful vantage point. There in the cold mountain air, I contemplated the Himalayas and slowly, peacefully came down from my high.

"I later found out that my mother was furious

when she learnt what happened, and gave the senior crew members a sharp tongue lashing for allowing her precious child to 'do drugs'! Luckily, I was spared her wrath," she added.

In the same post, Aman also said that she will tour Mumbai, Delhi and Jaipur in October where she will share many such anecdotes and groove to the most memorable numbers from her films, all performed by a live band.

-PTI

Interlinking river projects to bring opportunities

New Delhi: Business opportunities worth Rs 2 lakh crore are expected to open up for engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) players over the next decade for the completion of four priority interlinking river (ILR) projects, said a study by rating agency ICRA.

Around a third of these (about Rs 80,000 crore) are estimated to be awarded in the next four years for companies involved in the construction of large irrigation projects, it added.

The Centre's thrust on the water sector has increased significantly over the past few years, ICRA said and added that this is visible in the increase in budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJ) to Rs 78,000 crore.

"The four-priority links are just the beginning of the decade-long plan of the ILR project implementation. While the share of these projects as a percentage of budgetary allocation to the ministry is currently minimal, at about 5 per cent i.e., Rs 3,908 crore, it is expected to increase as more projects get approval and awarding/construction gains momentum."



4 – No of priority projects identified by NWDA. They are Ken Betwa, Kosi-Mechi, Parabati Kalisindh Chambal and Godavari-Cauvery links

Rs 2 lakh crore – Amount expected to open up for the completion of four priority interlinking river (ILR) projects

30 – No of ILR projects identified by NWDA

16 – No of peninsular river links projects

14 – No of Himalayan river links projects

60 per cent – Funds to be provided by Union government

Chintan Lakhani, Vice President and Sector Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA

tion to the ministry is currently minimal, at about 5 per cent i.e., Rs 3,908 crore, it is expected to increase as more projects get approval and awarding/construction gains momentum,"

Chintan Lakhani, Vice President and Sector Head - Corporate Ratings at ICRA, said.

The Godavari-Cauvery project is the largest of the four (at 45 per cent of the

cumulative project cost) and the Kosi-Mechi link is the smallest at 4 per cent. The first awarded ILR project the Ken Betwa, is already under implementation, it said. -PTI



A farmer runs with his bulls during the bull ploughing competition in Kerala's Kozhikode

India needs funding to scale up wind, solar capacities

New Delhi: India will need increased climate finance to scale up wind and solar capacities to over 600 gigawatt, a study said on Tuesday.

Enhanced international cooperation, including the provision of grants and concessional finance help to mobilise private capital, is urgently needed to ensure emerging and developing countries benefit equally from the renewables rollout, the report by Climate Analytics and New Climate Institute said.

For India, the study said, "The country has made impressive progress on wind and solar but would need more international climate finance to scale them five-fold to over 600 GW to meet growing demand and move away coal dependence."

By Mari Yamaguchi

Tokyo: Small tsunami waves splashed ashore on remote Japanese islands on Tuesday morning after an earthquake that may have been triggered by volcanic activity.

The offshore quake was not felt, and the tsunami advisory was lifted about three hours later. No damage or injuries were reported.

The Japan Meteorological Agency had advised that waves up to 1 metre (yard) above tide levels could occur on the coasts of the Izu and Ogasawara island chains after the magnitude 5.8 quake occurred off the Izu Islands. The US Geological Survey measured the quake's strength at 5.6 magnitude.

About 21,500 people live on the islands in the Izu group and about 2,500 on the Ogasawara Islands.

JMA said a tsunami of about 50 centimeters was detected in the Yaene district on Hachijo Island about 30 minutes after the quake. Smaller waves were detected on three other islands — Kozushima, Miyakejima and Izu Oshima. The offshore quake occurred about 180 kilometers (111 miles) south of Hachijo island, which is about 300 kilometers (186 miles) south of Tokyo.

Television footage showed waves splashing against a wharf on Hachijo island but no major swelling was seen.

Residents on Hachijo said they did not feel the quake and only heard the

tsunami advisory, Japan's NHK public television said.

Ryuji Minemoto, a Hachijo resident, told NHK that he was on high ground overlooking the ocean but didn't notice changes in the water. "I can see some ships but they don't seem to be moving violently," he said. Minemoto said he did not feel the earlier quake.

Fumihiko Imamura, a Tohoku University seismologist, said the tsunami is believed to be related to undersea volcanic activity that might have caused a rise or sinking of parts of the seabed. Imamura told NHK that such movement, unlike ordinary quakes, may not have caused rattling. Japan sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", a line of seismic faults encircling the Pacific Ocean. -AP

Turtles rescued while being trafficked

Rangia: Two Indian flapshell turtles were rescued in Assam's Kamrup district while being trafficked from Kaziranga National Park to outside the state, police said. A joint team of the Assam Police and the Forest Department rescued the turtles on Monday night from a truck at Amingaon Industrial Park, and arrested two persons in this connection, an officer said.

Rains wreak havoc in Goa

Panaji: Goa witnessed heavy rains overnight which led to waterlogging at several places in the coastal state on Tuesday morning.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a 'red' alert for Goa on Tuesday, saying heavy rainfall was very likely at a few places.

Also, very heavy rainfall with extremely heavy showers were very likely with winds gusting to 40-50

kmph at isolated places over North Goa and South Goa, it added.

The IMD has issued an 'orange' alert for Wednesday and a 'yellow' alert for Thursday.

Several low-lying areas in North Goa district, including Sanquelim and Bicholim, were inundated since Tuesday morning.

Some locals shared videos on social media showing the Valvanti river, which runs through San-

quelim town, in spate.

"We are on alert. There are no floods in and around Sanquelim but we are monitoring the situation," a senior police official said, adding that night patrolling was intensified on Monday.

Deputy Collector (Bicholim) Rohan Kaskar told PTI the situation was under control but it was raining heavily in and around Sanquelim. -PTI

NTPC Green Energy's IPO likely in early November

New Delhi: NTPC Green Energy, a subsidiary of state-owned power giant NTPC, is likely to bring its initial public offering (IPO) to raise Rs 10,000 crore in first week of November, a source said.

Last week, NTPC Green Energy had filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 10,000 crore through IPO.

The highly placed source said the IPO is expected to be launched in first week of November this year.

The company has planned roadshows in India (Mumbai) as well as abroad, especially in Singapore, the source informed.

The initial share-sale is entirely a fresh issuance of equity shares with no offer-for-sale (OFS) component, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The company said proceeds of the issue to the tune of Rs 7,500 crore will be used to repay or prepay part or all of its subsidiary NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd's (NREL) outstanding

60 GW – The renewable energy capacity NTPC group aims to reach by 2032.

3.5 GW – The installed capacity of NTPC

28 GW – The capacity of NTPC in progress



loans, while a portion will be utilised for general corporate purposes.

The filing comes at a time when the country's IPO market is thriving, with around 60 main board companies having launched their initial share-sale this year so far.

NTPC Green Energy is a 'Maharatna' central public sector enterprise with renewable energy portfolio, including solar and wind power assets spread across more than six states.

As of August 2024, the company's operational capacity comprised 3,071 MW

India's renewable energy sector is growing rapidly. Globally, India is ranked fourth in clean energy capacity, including wind and solar installations, the draft paper said, citing a Crisil report. The country's installed renewable energy capacity increased from 63 GW in FY12 to 123 GW in FY21 and reached about 191 GW by March 2024 (including large hydro). As of March 2024, renewable energy made up nearly 43 per cent of India's total power generation capacity, with solar energy leading this growth, it added.

from solar projects and 100 MW from wind projects.

IDBI Capital Markets & Securities, HDFC Bank, IIFL Securities, and Nuvama Wealth Management are the book-running lead managers to the issue. -PTI



A group of Bengal Fox seen in an enclosure during the 150th anniversary celebration of Alipore Zoological Garden in Kolkata. Pic: PTI

Bihar govt to launch drive to cull wild boars

Patna: The Bihar government on Tuesday said it will launch a drive from this month to cull 'Ghodparas', popularly known as 'Nilgai' (blue bulls) and wild boars in five districts where these animals have been causing widespread damage to crops.

The drive will be launched in the most affected districts of Vaishali, East Champaran, Buxar, Siwan and Samastipur as per the "laid down procedures".

"Officials concerned shall be empowered to cull up to 50 such animals at a time in districts where the problem is grave," a statement issued by the state's Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department said.

The decision to launch a drive to kill 'Ghodparas' and wild boars in the affected areas was taken at a review meeting chaired by state Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Prem Kumar on Tuesday.

By Yuen Yoong Leong

Kuala Lumpur: Women have a key role to play at the forefront of climate action.

They drive policy change, inspire sustainable solutions and champion environmental protection and social justice. From government positions to corporations and grassroots movements, their leadership is crucial.

However, there is a caveat. While a privileged few women hold influential positions, the vast majority are often excluded from the conversation. Women are significantly under-represented in decision-making roles at all levels, including within the

climate change arena. Only 15 out of 133 world leaders who attended COP28 in 2023 were women. While women's leadership often flourishes in communities, their voices are less prominent at national level.

Climate frontline

Research underscores the connection between women's leadership and stronger climate policies, highlighting the importance of empowering women to play a greater role in shaping climate solutions.

Still, a few outstanding women scientists, women academics, women indigenous leaders and women philanthropists are leading the charge for change and

offer hope for the millions whose voices are yet to be heard.

Datu Dr Lullie Melling, for example, is the first Asian woman elected to the International Peatland Society's executive board. Her continued leadership underscores the invaluable contributions of women to tropical peatland research and the broader scientific community.

Women are also leading the transition to a low-carbon future. Professor Phoebe Koundouri, a global authority on sustainable development, is spearheading efforts to integrate climate and energy models worldwide through the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's Global Climate Hub.



Her leadership is instrumental in optimising decarbonisation pathways globally. As founder of Partners of Community Organisations in Sabah, Anne Lasimbang has empowered indigenous communities in Borneo for over two decades through education,

human rights, and environmental initiatives. The organisation's successful implementation of micro-hydro and biogas projects, in partnership with Green Empowerment, showcases the transformative impact of women-led initiatives in providing

clean energy and improving livelihoods.

Indigenous knowledge

Indigenous women such as Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, who is at the forefront of climate activism in Africa, offer invaluable

perspectives rooted in ancestral wisdom. Oumarou Ibrahim's emphasis that "nature is our home, not a commodity" underscores the profound disconnect between Western economic models and indigenous worldviews.

Oumarou Ibrahim's call for long-term, community-led approaches, as opposed to short-term, donor-driven initiatives, is a critical step towards true climate justice. She speaks of approaches that span seven generations, rather than quick goals of 2030 or 2050, for example. Women-led organisations are playing a pivotal role in the global clean energy transition, driving innovation and social impact.

Women leading the green charge

15 – No of women among 133 at world leaders who attended COP28 in 2023

3.6 billion – No of people not having affordable energy

A UN Women report warns that climate change could push up to 158 million more women and girls into poverty by 2050. Women and girls constitute 80 percent of climate-displaced populations, facing heightened risks.

Dissanayake to reopen Easter Sunday attacks probe

Colombo: Sri Lanka's new president Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Tuesday said he would reopen an investigation into the 2019 Easter Sunday terror attacks.

Dissanayake who was appointed president on Sunday following his victory in last weekend's presidential election made the remarks while paying a courtesy call on the head of



the Catholic Church Malcol Cardinal Ranjith.

"The new president assured us that the truth on the Easter Sunday attacks

would be brought to light," Ranjith said.

Ranjith has been critical of the investigation into the attacks at star-class hotels

and churches during the Easter Sunday mass, leaving nearly 300 persons, including foreigners, dead.

Blaming both former presidents Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Ranil Wickremesinghe for the incident, Ranjith slammed the investigation as a political cover-up of the attacks carried out by local jihadi group National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ).

Former president Maithripala Sirisena had

Harini Amarasuriya new PM

Harini Amarasuriya was sworn in as Sri Lanka's new Prime Minister on Tuesday, becoming the first woman leader since Sirimavo Bandaranaike in the year 2000 to hold the post. The 54-year-old National People's Power (NPP) leader was sworn in by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, who appointed his cabinet of four, including himself. She has been assigned the portfolios of the Minister of Justice, Education, Labour, Industries, Science & Tech, Health, and Investment.

She has replaced Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, who resigned from his post following the presidential election. A rights activist and university lecturer, Amarasuriya is the first woman Prime Minister of Sri Lanka since the late Sirimavo Bandaranaike took up office in 1994 and the third female Prime Minister in the country's history. NPP parliamentarians Vijitha Herath and Laxman Nipunarachchi were sworn in as cabinet ministers. They would serve as the caretaker cabinet with the imminent dissolution of parliament to call for a snap parliamentary election. The election could happen in late November, officials said.

appointed a high-level probe committee following pressure from the church.

The probe found Sirisena guilty and ordered him to compensate SRs 100 million (INR 27,443,756) to the

victims' relatives.

Then defence top brass were also found guilty of criminal negligence for ignoring prior intelligence warnings from India.

-PTI

HC disposes Imran related petition

Islamabad: A Pakistani high court on Tuesday disposed of a petition regarding holding a military trial of former prime minister Imran Khan after it was informed that no decision had been taken by the federal government. Khan's supporters allegedly attacked defence installations and vandalised state properties on May 9, 2023 protesting against the government.

EAM meets foreign ministers of G4 nations

New York: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has met his counterparts from the G4 countries, reaffirming the grouping's commitment to urgent reform of the United Nations Security Council through text-based negotiations.

The G4 nations comprise Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan.

Jaishankar, who is in the US on an official visit, on Monday met his Japanese counterpart Yoko Kamikawa, the Foreign Minister

of Germany Annalena Baerbock and Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira on the sidelines of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The G4 nations support each other's bids for permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council.

India has been at the forefront of years-long efforts calling for reform of the Security Council, saying the 15-nation Council, founded in 1945, is not fit for purpose in the 21st Cen-

G4 reaffirmed its commitment for an urgent reform of the United Nations Security Council through Text Based Negotiations.

S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister

tury and does not reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. A polarised Security Council has also failed to deal with current peace and security challenges, with Council members sharply divided on conflicts such as the Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Jaishankar also held talks with his Venezuelan counterpart Yvan Gil on Monday about energy and economic cooperation, among other things. -PTI

World leaders meet to discuss three wars

By Edith M. Lederer

United Nations: World leaders will open their annual meeting at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday under the shadow of increasing global divisions, major wars in Gaza, Ukraine and, Sudan and the threat of an even larger conflict in the wider Middle East.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres previewed his opening "State of the World" speech to presidents, prime ministers, monarchs and ministers at Sunday's "Summit of the Future", saying "our world is heading off the rails — and we need tough decisions to get back on track". He pointed to conflicts "raging and multiplying, from the Middle East to Ukraine and Sudan, with no end in sight" and to the global security system, which he said is "threatened by geopolitical divides, nuclear posturing, and the development of new weapons and theatres of war".

He also cited huge inequalities, the lack of an effective global system to respond to emerging and even existential threats,

and the devastating impact of climate change.

One notable moment at Tuesday's opening assembly meeting: US President Joe Biden's likely final major appearance on the world stage, a platform he has tried upon for decades.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told reporters last week that the US focus in the assembly will be on ending "the scourge of war", lamenting that roughly two billion people live in conflict-affected areas.

But she also said: "The most vulnerable around the world are counting on us to make progress, to make change, to bring about a sense of hope for them."

Among other speakers on opening day are Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, King Abdullah II of Jordan, and Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian.

The Iranian leader accused Israel on Monday of seeking a wider war in the Middle East and laying "traps" to lead his country into a broader conflict.

-AP



Rescuers stand on the rubble of a building hit in an Israeli airstrike in the southern village of Akbieh, Lebanon on Tuesday.

Pic: AP/PTI

Trump upset with investigation

Washington: Former US president Donald Trump has accused the Department of Justice and the FBI of "mishandling and downplaying" the recent apparent assassination attempt on his life, demanding that the state of Florida handle the case. A second bid in two months on 78-year-old Trump's life took place on September 15 at the Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Israel, Hezbollah trade strikes again

By Abby Sewell

Beirut: Israel and Hezbollah traded strikes again on Tuesday as the death toll from a massive Israeli bombardment climbed to nearly 560 people and thousands fled from southern Lebanon with the two sides on the brink of all-out war. Displaced families slept in shelters hastily set up in schools in Beirut and the coastal city of Sidon. With

hotels quickly booked to capacity or rooms priced beyond the means of many families, those who did not find shelter slept in their cars, in parks or along the seaside.

Issa Baydoun fled the village of Shihine in southern Lebanon when it came under bombing and came to Beirut in a convoy of cars with his extended family. They slept in the vehicles on the side of the road after

Israel seeking wider Mideast war

United Nations: Iran's new president accused Israel on Monday of seeking a wider war in the Middle East and laying "traps" to lead his country into a broader conflict.

Masoud Pezeshkian told about two dozen media representatives that Iran doesn't want to see the current war in Gaza and air strikes across the Israeli-Lebanon border expanded.

"We don't want to fight," he said. "It's Israel that wants to drag everyone into war. They are dragging us to a point where we do not wish to go." -AP

All remaining Iran workers died, toll 49

Tehran: Iran said Tuesday it believes the remaining workers trapped by an explosion at a coal mine in the country's east have died, bringing the death toll in one of its worst industrial disasters to at least 49.

A provincial emergency official, Mohammad Ali Akhondi, gave the death toll in a report carried by Iranian state television from the mine in Tabas.

Figures for the numbers of miners inside the mine at the time have fluctuated since a methane gas leak

Saturday sparked an explosion at the coal mine in Tabas, about 540 kilometers (335 miles) southeast of the capital, Tehran.

Around 70 people had been working at the time of the blast. Bodies recovered so far showed no signs of blast injuries, suggesting many of the workers died from the gas before the blast.

Such gases are common in mining, though modern safety measures call for ventilation and other measures to protect workers. -AP

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I remember the 'Bring Me Thanos' moment. There was footage of a cinema hall in India where that happened and people throwing popcorn on the chair, I'd never seen anything like it. Every time I go to India, I think of that moment."

- Chris Hemsworth, Actor



In a first, China operates all three aircraft carriers

By K J M Varma

Beijing: The Chinese navy for the first time carried out exercises and tests of all three of its aircraft carriers recently to highlight that its carrier warship programme has entered a fast lane, official media reported on Tuesday.

Currently, China has two aircraft carriers in operation - the Liaoning, a refit of the Soviet-era ship commissioned on Sept 25, 2012 - and Shandong, an indigenously built 2nd aircraft carrier

commissioned in 2019.

China's third aircraft carrier Fujian, which is larger than the two carriers with a displacement of 80,000, is currently undergoing trials.

Ahead of the 12th anniversary of the commissioning of China's first aircraft carrier, which falls on Wednesday, all three Chinese aircraft carriers reportedly carried out exercises or tests over the past week, state-run Global Times reported on Tuesday.

With this, China's aircraft carrier programme has entered a fast lane, it quoted observers as saying.

According to the official media, the Chinese navy plans to have four to five aircraft carriers making them the frontline force of its navy as China seeks to expand its global influence with deployments in the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait and the Indian Ocean in future.

Fujian is the "first fully domestically developed and

constructed" aircraft carrier with an electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS) similar to that of the American aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, according to official media reports.

China's other two aircraft carriers are equipped with ski-jump take-off ramps while the Fujian features a flat-top flight deck.

Liaoning last week provoked protests from Japan by spotted sailing in waters near Diaoyu Dao islands in the western Pacific which

are under the control of Japan, which calls the islands the Senkakus.

China periodically sends its coast guard ships to assert its claim over the islands.

Liaoning, which the Chinese navy uses for mostly training purposes, reportedly carried the new fighter jet J-35, an advanced version of the J-15 currently being used by the navy. The J-35 jet was designed to be used on Fujian, which has an EMALS landing system.

China's second aircraft carrier, the Shandong, recently hosted a certification test for night-time operation for a group of new fighter jet pilots during a combat exercise in the South China Sea, the state-run CCTV reported.

The move further enhanced the PLA Navy aviation force's round-the-clock, all-domain combat capabilities, as more fighter jet pilots are qualified to operate on aircraft carriers, according to the CCTV report. -PTI

EDITORIAL

A Murky Death

The killing of Akshay Shinde, the prime accused in the Badlapur molestation case, has unleashed a torrent of controversy, with allegations of a 'big conspiracy' surrounding the official account of events. According to Maharashtra police, Shinde, while being escorted from Taloja Central Jail, allegedly snatched a police officer's gun and fired three rounds, prompting an officer to fatally shoot him. But the account provided by Shinde's family paints a different picture, one of premeditated execution. Their accusations, along with calls from the Opposition Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) for a judicial probe, raise important questions about systemic lapses of police and administrative procedure.

Arrested for allegedly sexually abusing two young girls in a school toilet in Badlapur, Shinde was at the center of a scandal involving the school's management and local police. Amid public pressure, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) had taken over the case, filing chargesheets that included grave allegations not only against Shinde but also against the school authorities. The police's failure to act promptly and their mishandling of the initial investigation had already led to mass protests. The question now is: was Shinde's killing a hasty attempt to close the case, or was it part of a broader cover-up to protect powerful individuals involved?

From the police's initial delay in registering the molestation case to the murky circumstances surrounding Shinde's death, the situation underscores a state apparatus increasingly incapable of managing political pressures. Further concerns arise from the circumstances of Shinde's transport, including how he was taken out after jail hours and whether the revolver which he allegedly snatched and fired at the police had been secured. Could this have been an extraordinary failure in protocol, or was the narrative later fabricated to justify an extrajudicial killing?

The Opposition MVA, while questioning how a handcuffed man could have possibly snatched a gun from a trained police officer, have categorically accusing the ruling Mahayuti government of foul play. Shinde's death, they argue, conveniently shuts down an investigation that might have implicated powerful individuals linked to the BJP. Despite widespread calls for their arrest, members of the school board, many of whom are associated with the ruling party, remain at large, they claim. As Maharashtra heads towards election, the MVA will doubtless rake up the Shinde killing as an illustration of the fragility of the rule of law in the state under the ruling Mahayuti.

Whether a genuine act of self-defence or an orchestrated encounter, Shinde's has revealed serious flaws in both law enforcement and political accountability. Calls for a judicial probe must be heeded if public faith in the state's justice system is to be restored.

Extra-judicial killings in India are often cloaked in the rhetoric of swift justice, but they signify a breakdown of due process and a dangerous slide toward lawlessness. When the state allows such acts, it sends a wrong message that the law can be bent to serve political or institutional convenience.

NATIONAL INTEREST

Sacred Sweets and Sacred Rage: The Politics of Religious Offence

By
Kiran D. Tare

The controversy surrounding Tirupati Laddu, one of Hinduism's most cherished offerings, underscores a stark truth about the nature of religious tolerance in India. Despite the discovery of sub-standard ghee and traces of animal fat in the famed prasadam, there has been no violence and no rioting from the devout millions who revere the Tirumala Venkateswara Temple – arguably India's most visited religious site. No doubt the political fallout has been fierce, and the hurt to religious sentiment palpable, but the response from Hindu devotees has been largely peaceful.

Contrast this with the reaction to perceived blasphemy in Islam. Across the world, even minor offences against the Prophet Muhammad or the religion's tenets have triggered violent reprisals. In 2015, when the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo published cartoons of the Prophet, the result was a brutal terrorist attack on its offices that left 12 people dead. The violence was not confined to France. Demonstrations and riots erupt-

The Tirupati Laddu scandal underscores Hinduism's ability to respond with restraint to religious affronts, offering a lesson in tolerance.

ed in Muslim-majority countries from Pakistan to Yemen, with protesters demanding retribution. Similarly, the 2005 publication of caricatures in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten led to a global wave of riots, embassy burnings and multiple deaths.

In June 2022, Umesh Kolhe, a chemist in Amravati district, was gruesomely murdered for forwarding a WhatsApp message supporting then-BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma, who had made controversial remarks about the Prophet Muhammad. Around the same time, in Udaipur, Rajasthan, tailor Kanhaiyya Lal Teli was similarly killed for the same reason, with one assailant recording the act on a mobile phone.

The point here is that Hinduism, in contrast, offers a model of remarkable tolerance and resilience in the face of insult or perceived sacrilege – notwithstanding the disparaging from the so-called 'liberal' champions of secularism.

This is not to suggest that Hindus are immune to provocation. India has seen its fair share of communal violence, often political in nature. But when it comes to religious offence, especially in cases involving sacred rituals or deities, the general pattern is one of legal redress rather than an immediate turn to violence seen in other parts of the world.

In the Tirupati laddu controversy, while Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is rattling sabres with Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP), the broader Hindu population has remained calm. Rather than calls for violence, there were demands for accountability, investigation and ultimately justice.

The response to religious affront in Islam, by comparison, tends to escalate more quickly into violence. The theological underpinnings of this difference are complex. In Islam, any depiction or criticism of the Prophet is viewed as an act of blasphemy, punishable by death in several countries. This is rooted in sharia



law, which prescribes severe penalties for apostasy and blasphemy. Even in countries where such laws do not exist, Muslim communities often react with intensity to perceived slights against their religion.

Hinduism, by contrast, is more decentralised and diverse in its interpretation of the sacred. With thousands of deities, multiple schools of thought, and no single religious authority, there is a degree of pluralism inherent in the faith which often extends to matters of religious offence.

The Laddu controversy, while deeply wounding to Hindu sensibilities, has been addressed within the boundaries of state authority. Investigations are underway, and while political rivalries continue to play out, the broader Hindu response has been one of tolerance, or at least restraint. This restraint is not a modern phenomenon. It is deeply rooted in India's historical tradition of religious tolerance, exemplified by emperors such as Harsha and Samudragupta, whose rule, based on the tenets of 'Dharmashastras,' stood in stark contrast to the bloodlust and rapacity of marauding Islamic conquerors from Afghanistan and Central Asia who swept through India in the 11th century.

Though Harsha himself was a devout Buddhist, his kingdom embraced a pluralistic approach, with support extended to Buddhist, Hindu and Jain institutions alike. His administration was marked by tolerance and accommodation of multiple faiths. His diplomatic outreach to China and sponsorship of religious councils reflects a ruler more interested in intel-

lectual exchange than religious dominance. Similarly, Samudragupta, called the 'Napoleon of India' by Vincent Arthur Smith for his military conquests in the 4th century CE, also presided over a period of religious pluralism. Whatever Smith thought, I regard Samudragupta as being far greater to Napoleon, whose conquests brought misery to Europe for two decades and overshadowed his reforms.

This tolerance contrasts sharply with the rule of Islamic conquerors like Mahmud of Ghazni, whose infamous sacking of the Somnath Temple in 1026 CE was not merely a political act of conquest but one deeply imbued with religious motives. The looting and destruction of Hindu temples became a pattern among many subsequent Islamic rulers, from Muhammad of Ghor to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. This contrast is certainly not a commentary nor meant to disrespect Indian Muslims, many of whose remarkable contributions have greatly enriched Indian social life at every stage post-Independence.

The point is that the legacy of pluralism inherited from rulers like Harsha and Samudragupta has left a deep imprint on the Hindu psyche. Hinduism, with its multitude of deities, philosophies, and practices is inherently more accommodating of diversity and dissent.

The Tirupati Laddu affair highlights Hinduism's capacity for measured responses to even the most delicate of religious insults – a lesson in tolerance that many other faiths, grappling with their own theological rigidity, would do well to learn.

TURNING POINT

What If Eisenhower Had Raced for Berlin?

By
Shoumojit Banerjee

Imagine a Cold War without the Berlin Wall – that iconic symbol of a stark ideological divide adorned in the covers of books by every major spy thriller writer from John le Carré to Joseph Kanon. A divided Berlin has been emblematic of the Cold War (1945-91). In this context, one cannot help asking a counterfactual often asked in the past – what if the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, had opted to push east and race the Soviets to Berlin?

In the spring of 1945, as Hitler's Third Reich lay in ruins, Eisenhower made a fateful decision: to halt American and Allied forces at the Elbe River and allow the Soviet Red Army to take Berlin.

Had Eisenhower pushed for Berlin, the Cold War might still have occurred, but it would have been a different conflict. A united Germany, neutral or aligned with the West, would have weakened Soviet power in Europe. Berlin, without its iconic wall, would not serve as the stark symbol of ideological rivalry.

The nature of Postwar Europe would have been profoundly altered. The Cold War would have swung in a way favourable to the West, or perhaps its inception may have been prevented altogether.

The absence of Berlin as a flashpoint could have led to fewer tensions in Europe, and NATO's formation might have shifted in focus.

What prevented Eisenhower from



ordering the dash to Berlin? In his thrilling classic 'The Last Battle' (1966), author Cornelius Ryan shows how Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin cleverly outmanoeuvred Eisenhower diplomatically, convincing the Allied Supreme Commander that Berlin was not worth the cost. Through a campaign of misdirection, Stalin minimized the military significance of Berlin, presenting it merely as another urban battleground while emphasizing other military priorities.

Eisenhower, pragmatic by nature, thought it prudent to avoid a bloodbath in Berlin and focus on defeating the remaining German armies across central and southern Europe. Another factor in Eisenhower's decision to forego Berlin was the intelligence, later revealed to be exaggerated, suggesting that Hitler, along with remaining SS units and German divisions would make a last stand in his 'Alpine Redoubt' bastion. As it turned out, the Allies found no well-organized Nazi stronghold and Hitler, far from fleeing to the Austrian Alps, remained holed in his Berlin bunker, awaiting the end.

In a noted book-length essay, Eisenhower and Berlin, 1945: The Decision to Halt at the Elbe (1967), historian Stephen Ambrose, Eisenhower's official biographer, critiqued Ryan's

work by underscoring that the general saw no value in sacrificing American lives for symbolic prizes like Berlin.

However, if Eisenhower had ordered the armies of Field Marshal Montgomery and Gen. Omar Bradley to take Berlin, the post-war landscape would have looked very different. This does not mean the Cold War would vanish. But the intensity of the Cold War, that characterized postwar Europe, would have been channelized in other regions, such as the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Africa (where it eventually did with great intensity and loss of life).

That said, Stalin's paranoia about Western intentions, evidenced by his brutal consolidation of power in Eastern Europe, would still persist. Moscow would still desire a buffer zone, likely seeking control over Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. However, with Berlin in Western hands, Stalin's expansion might have been less aggressive, and the tension between East and West more political than militarized.

Eisenhower's pragmatic decision to halt at the Elbe had profound implications for the postwar order. The question of whether a bolder approach might have significantly altered the geopolitical landscape of the 20th century is now an academic one.

STATES WATCH

The Rising Scourge of Crimes Against Women

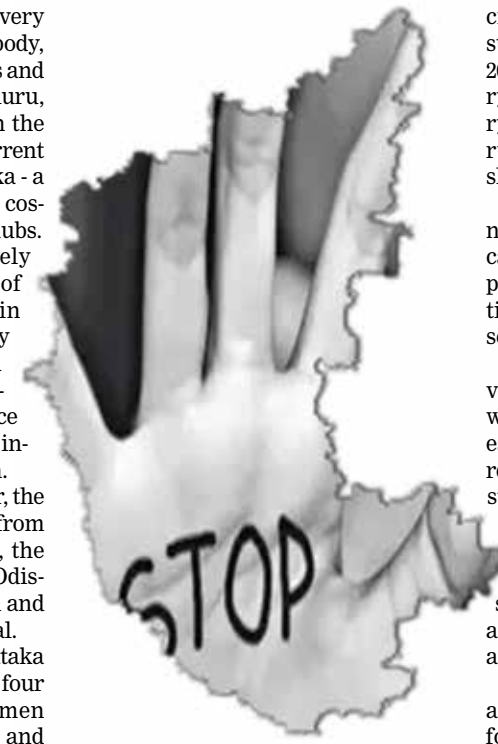
The recent, gruesome discovery of a 29-year-old woman's body, dismembered into 50 pieces and stored in a refrigerator in Bengaluru, has cast an unflattering light on the law-and-order situation of the current Congress-led regime in Karnataka – a state traditionally known for its cosmopolitan cities and vibrant IT hubs.

The recent horror immediately echoes the macabre murder of 27-year-old Shradha Walkar in Delhi in 2022, who was killed by her boyfriend and dismembered before being discarded in a forested area. Karnataka's experience highlights a worrying pattern of increasing violence against women.

In the case of the fridge murder, the deceased had been living apart from her husband. As per the police, the prime suspect, originally from Odisha, had been living in Bengaluru and was now presently in West Bengal.

Between April and May, Karnataka witnessed the brutal murders of four women – all at the hands of men known to them – friends, lovers, and fiancés – men unable to cope with rejection. The murder of 22-year-old Neha Hiremath on April 18 sent shockwaves around the state. Stabbed to death by her former classmate Fayaz Khondunak at her college campus in Hubballi, Neha's murder ignited pro-

The tragic fridge murder serves as a chilling reminder that Karnataka's policymakers must prioritize women's safety as a fundamental right, not merely as a political talking point.



Karnataka

tests across the country, highlighting the urgent need for change.

Before that, Bengaluru had been rocked by a double murder when a married man, Suresh, fatally stabbed his 25-year-old colleague before being bludgeoned to death by the victim's mother. On May 9, 33-year-old Prakash Omkarappa beheaded his 16-year-old fiancée after the District Child Protection Unit intervened in their engagement. The most recent incident saw 21-year-old Girish Sawant stabbing 20-year-old Anjali Ambiger to death at her home in Hubballi on May 15.

The ruling Congress and the Opposition BJP engaged in sabre-rattling, with the latter accusing the Siddaramaiah-led government of a breakdown of law and order.

Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) revealed that

crimes against women in Karnataka surged by over 10% between 2022 and 2023. Cases of domestic violence, dowry deaths, and sexual assaults are worryingly commonplace, with Bengaluru accounting for a disproportionate share of these incidents.

In the first half of 2024 alone, Karnataka has recorded an alarming 6,551 cases of crimes against women, as reported by the State Police. This statistic underscores a deteriorating landscape for women's safety.

The rise in reported cases of sexual violence is particularly disconcerting with more than 2,000 molestation cases filed under Section 354 as per police records. The disturbing trend does not stop there; kidnappings, dowry-related violence, and domestic abuse reflect a pervasive culture of misogyny and violence that threatens the safety and autonomy of women across Karnataka – a state perceived as progressive.

Karnataka's Home Minister, G Parameshwara, acknowledged the need for urgent measures, assuring the public that programs like Nirbhaya are ongoing and that initiatives, including CCTV installations, are being pursued.

The rising incidence of crime against women bears comparison to West Bengal, recently rocked by the rape and murder of a junior doctor at the RG Kar medical college with the opposition BJP demanding the resignation of West Bengal's Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee. The BJP have cited a staggering 50,000 cases of rape and murder during the tenure of Banerjee's Chief Ministership and the TMC rule.

The recent case of the dismembered woman raises critical questions about the effectiveness of law enforcement and the social stigma surrounding gender-based violence. As Karnataka grapples with this unsettling reality, the question remains: what will it take to ensure the safety and dignity of women?



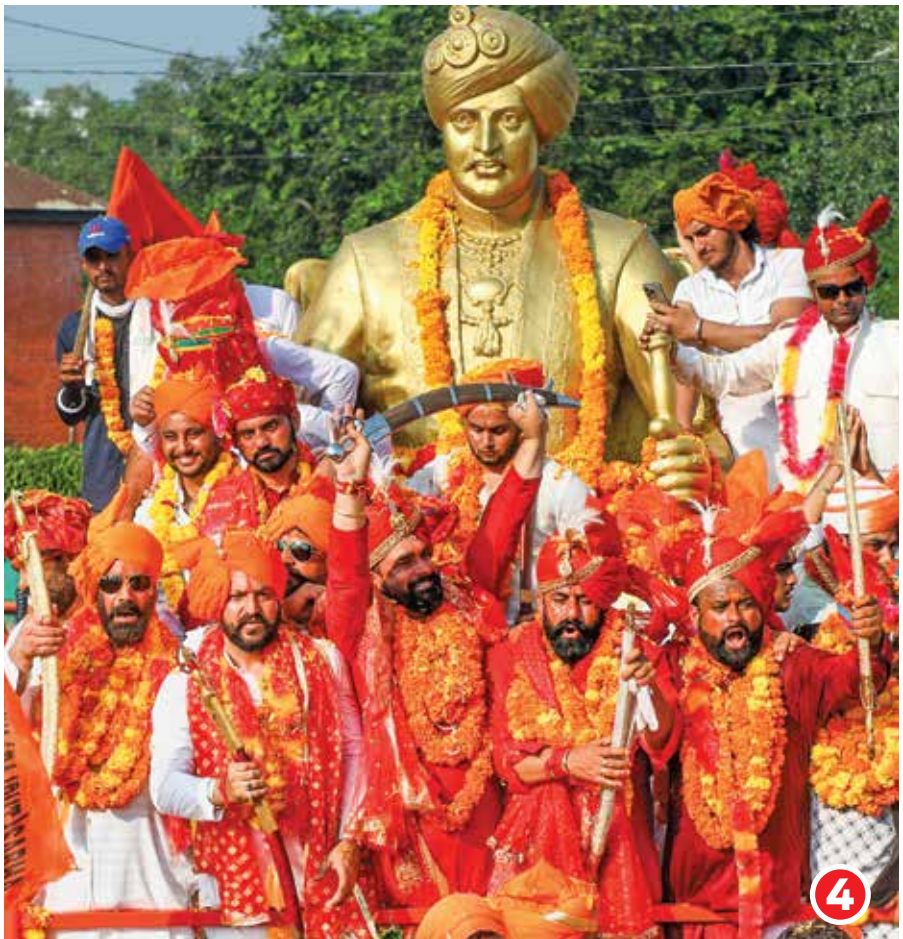
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KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 Farm workers use a tractor to spread rice grain for drying in the sun at a field in Jalandhar.
- 2 Delhi Chief Minister Atishi recites the 'Hanuman Chalisa' during her visit at the Hanuman temple at Connaught Place in New Delhi.
- 3 Artwork by Pio Abad is seen during the Turner Prize 2024 press preview at Tate Britain in London, as part of the 40th anniversary exhibition featuring four shortlisted artists on Tuesday.
- 4 Members of Yuva Rajput Sabha during celebration of Maharaja Hari Singh birth anniversary in Jammu.
- 5 Children play as they take shelter in a school in Beirut, after fleeing the Israeli airstrikes in the southern Tyre district.

All Pictures PTI, AP



5

EXPLAINER

What is the conflict between Israel, Hezbollah?

The past week has seen a rapid escalation in the nearly year-long conflict between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah. First came two days of exploding pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah — deadly attacks pinned on Israel that also maimed civilians across Lebanon.

Hezbollah's leader vowed to retaliate, and on Friday the militant group launched a wave of rockets into northern Israel. Later in the day, the commander of Hezbollah's most elite unit was killed in a strike in Beirut that killed dozens more people.

The cross-border attacks ramped up early Sunday, with Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed Shiite group that is Lebanon's most powerful armed force, launching more than 100 rockets deeper into northern Israel, with some landing near the city of Haifa. Israel launched hundreds of strikes on Lebanon.

Then, on Monday, Israel launched a series of strikes that killed more than 490 Lebanese, the deadliest attack since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. Israel warned residents in southern and eastern Lebanon to leave their homes ahead of a spreading air campaign against Hezbollah.

Many fear the escalating violence could lead to an all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah, which would further destabilise a region already shaken by the fighting in Gaza. Both sides have said they don't want that to happen, even as they have defiantly warned of heavier attacks.

Israel and Hezbollah have launched repeated strikes against each other since the Gaza war began, but both sides have pulled back when the spiral of reprisals appeared on the verge of getting out of control, under heavy pressure from the US and its allies.

But in recent weeks, Israeli leaders have warned of a possible bigger military operation to stop attacks from Lebanon to allow hundreds of thousands of Israelis displaced by

the fighting to return to homes near the border.

What were the latest strikes?

More than 1,600 Lebanese were injured in Monday's deadly strikes and thousands more fled southern Lebanon. Israel said it was targeting Hezbollah weapons sites, and had hit some 1,600 targets. Lebanon's health minister said hospitals, medical centres and ambulances had been struck.

The Israeli military warned residents to immediately leave areas where Hezbollah is storing weapons. The Lebanese media said the evacuation warning was repeated in text messages.

Hezbollah said it had fired dozens of rockets toward Israel, including at military bases, and officials said a series of air-raid sirens were ringing out in northern Israel warning of rocket attacks. On Friday, an Israeli airstrike brought down a high-rise building in Beirut's southern suburbs, killing Ibrahim Akil, the commander of Hezbollah's elite Radwan unit, and other top unit leaders. Israel said Akil led the group's campaign of rocket, drone and other fire into northern Israel.

At least 45 people were killed in that attack and more than 60 wounded. That strike came after the shock of the electronic device bombings, in which thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah detonated on Tuesday and Wednesday. At least 37 people were killed, including two children, and around 3,000 were wounded.

Israel has neither confirmed nor denied its involvement. Analysts say that attack had little effect on Hezbollah's manpower, but could disrupt its communications and force it to take tighter security measures.

What is the situation on the border?

The Israel-Lebanon border has seen almost daily exchanges since the Is-



rael-Hamas war began on October 7. Before Monday, the exchanges had killed around 600 people in Lebanon — mostly fighters but also about 100 civilians — and about 50 soldiers and civilians in Israel. It has also forced hundreds of thousands of people to evacuate homes near the border in both Israel and Lebanon.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah promised to retaliate for the electronic device bombings. But Hezbollah also has proved wary of further stoking the crisis. The group faces a difficult balance of stretching the rules of engagement by hitting deeper into Israel in response to its brazen attacks, while at the same time trying to avoid the kind of large-scale attacks on civilian areas that can trigger a full-scale war

that it could be blamed for.

Hezbollah says its attacks against Israel are in support of Hamas. Last week, Nasrallah said the barrages won't end — and Israelis won't be able to return to homes in the north — until Israel's campaign in Gaza ends.

What is Israel planning?

Israeli officials say they haven't yet made an official decision to expand military operations against Hezbollah — and haven't said publicly what those operations might be. Last week, though, the head of Israel's Northern Command was quoted in local media as advocating for a ground invasion of Lebanon.

Meanwhile, as fighting in Gaza has slowed, Israel has increased its forces along the Lebanese border,

including the arrival of a powerful army division believed to include thousands of troops.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant last week declared the start of a "new phase" of the war as Israel turns its focus toward Hezbollah.

"The centre of gravity is shifting to the north," he said.

A UN-brokered truce to the 2006 war called on Hezbollah to pull back 29 kilometers (18 miles) from the border, but it has refused, accusing Israel of also failing to carry out some provisions. Israel is now demanding Hezbollah withdraw eight to 10 kilometers (five to six miles) from the border — the range of Hezbollah's anti-tank guided missiles.

The monthlong 2006 war, triggered when Hezbollah fighters kidnapped two Israeli soldiers, includ-

ed heavy Israeli bombardment of southern Lebanon and Beirut and a ground invasion into the south. The strategy, Israeli commanders later said, was to inflict maximum damage in areas where Hezbollah operated to deter them from launching attacks.

But Israel could have a more ambitious goal this time: to seize a buffer zone in south Lebanon to push back Hezbollah fighters from the border. A fight to hold territory threatens a longer, even more destructive and destabilising war — recalling Israel's 1982-2000 occupation of southern Lebanon.

What would be the impact of a full-blown war?

The fear is that a new war could be even worse than the one in 2006, which was traumatic enough for both sides to serve as a deterrent ever since.

The fighting then killed hundreds of Hezbollah fighters and an estimated 1,100 Lebanese civilians and left large swaths of the south and even parts of Beirut in ruins. More than 120 Israeli soldiers were killed and hundreds wounded. Hezbollah missile fire on Israeli cities killed dozens of civilians.

Israel estimates that Hezbollah now possesses about 150,000 rockets and missiles, some of which are precision-guided, putting the entire country within range. Israel has beefed up air defences, but it's unclear whether it can defend against the intense barrages of a new war.

Israel has vowed it could turn all of southern Lebanon into a battle zone, saying Hezbollah has embedded rockets, weapons and forces along the border. And in the heightened rhetoric of the past months, Israeli politicians have spoken of inflicting the same damage in Lebanon that the military has wreaked in Gaza.

Extra-curricular activity passion for D. Gukesh

Chennai: It all started as an extra-curricular activity in school, which later became a life-long passion for D Gukesh and led to him becoming one of the best chess exponents in the world.

spotted his talent at the Vellammal Vidyalaya when he was just seven years old, said he saw in him the hunger to excel at a very tender age.

"We started when he (Gukesh) was in class 1 at

the third-youngest GM in history of the game, who will compete against Ding Liren of China for the world title later this year.

Bhaskar added that Gukesh was indeed a child prodigy who liked to experiment with his game from early days.

"He started doing too much, and I was very happy that he became the third youngest Grandmaster in the world. I felt so happy when he won the Candidates in Toronto and earned the right to challenge world champion Ding Liren later this year in Singapore."

Bhaskar is also happy that Gukesh's contribution played a key role in India winning the gold medal at the Olympiad. The 18-year-old won nine of the 10 matches he played with one ending in a draw.

"It is the first time the Indian (men's and women's) teams have won, and his (Gukesh's) wins against the opponents assured the gold in the 'Open' category. I am extremely happy for the whole team, particularly for Gukesh, and my best wishes for him to see him as the youngest world champion."

Double joy for Babu

There was double joy for Ramesh Babu, the father of R Praggnanandhaa and R



D Gukesh

Vaishali, as both his children won gold in the most prestigious biennial team chess event in the world.

While GM Praggnanandhaa was an integral part of the men's team, his elder sister Vaishali also played a key role in the women's title triumph. "We are very proud (of Praggnanandhaa). My daughter Vaishali's team also won the gold medal, so we're happy about that as well," said Ramesh Babu.

"All the team players have done very well and won gold medals." He added that the success of Indian chess players had given a huge boost to the game in the country.

"Nowadays, chess has become very popular after cricket. More and more people are getting interested. Apart from academics, playing chess is becoming a part of their career. Youngsters are taking it up as a career." He added that both Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali were aiming for more success in their career.

-PTI

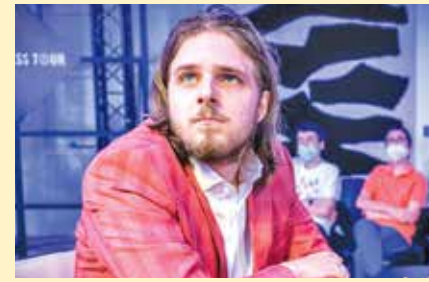
Gukesh is super impressive: Rapport

By Poonam Mehra

New Delhi: Hungarian Grandmaster Richard Rapport, who was one among the two players to manage a draw against an unstoppable D Gukesh in the Chess Olympiad, is in awe of India's phenomenal rise in the sport but still wouldn't declare the teenager an outright favourite for the world crown.

The reason being that the eagerly-awaited showdown in November-December is a "different" level in the difficulty meter and Gukesh will have an experienced rival in Ding Liren to counter at the showpiece.

For now, the 18-year-old is celebrating India's maiden Olympiad gold in Budapest where he was the star of the campaign, remaining unbeaten through the event with eight wins and two draws.



Rapport was the first to hold Gukesh during a seemingly invincible run and speaking to PTI, the 28-year-old lauded the youngest ever challenger to the world title. The two are likely to face off once again next month during the Tech Mahindra Global Chess League (GCL) in London.

Rapport had beaten Gukesh when the two got a game against each other in the inaugural season of the event last year.

Gukesh and Rapport clashed in the sixth round of the Olympiad and signed peace after 44 moves. Uzbekistan's Abdusattorov Nodirbek was the only other player to clinch half a point against Gukesh. Like the rest of the chess world, Rapport too is looking forward to the world championship. He was Liren's second when the Chinese GM won the crown last

year by beating Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi.

The Hungarian believes it won't be easy for Gukesh to claim the title in November 20 to December 15 clash due to the wealth of experience that Liren has.

"If you look at the last event (the Olympiad), Gukesh is supposed to be favourite but that match is very different and Ding has experience and I think may be there would a new champion. But I would not put the numbers in favour of anybody. It's way too difficult than any tournament ever. "Experience is a huge advantage for anyone. I expect a very close (match) and I expect a big fight. I hope to see some good ideas, worthy of a world championship, which I think the last match definitely delivered," he said.

Coming back to the Olympiad and Rapport said he was also impressed with the performance of the Indian women's team, which too won gold to make it a clean sweep. "The ladies team was actually surprising. We are all focussing on the Open team but in that team you had two players (Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi) who were playing just unbelievably. If you have (even) one player, you have a very good chance of winning a tournament but you had two," he pointed out.

"But in the ladies team, it was very tight competition. They stood their ground and played really well, that's really impressive. I mean, look at Kazakhstan, they had a very strong ladies team but, I don't want to insult anyone, an unremarkable team in the men's section. I mean decent players but not top players," he said.

"...(but) your country is up there when it comes to chess." Rapport, who switched allegiance to Romania for a couple of years as he felt ignored by his country of birth, returned to Hungary's fold before the Olympiad after being made to feel "looked after" by the national chess body.

At the GCL, he will have Norwegian maverick Magnus Carlsen and Indian wizard R Praggnanandhaa among others as his teammates in Alpine SG Pipers.

"For me, if I was not playing, this league would be something that I would be watching. In a way it kind of succeeded in that regard," he said of the league that starts on October 3.

-PTI



R Praggnanandhaa

Grandmaster Gukesh, on Sunday, made history by leading India to its first-ever chess Olympiad gold in the 'Open' category in Budapest.

Gukesh's childhood coach, V Bhaskar, who

Vellammal Vidyalaya. He used to come for extracurricular activities. I saw a spark in him at the age of seven and asked him to come for personal training, and we worked for many years," said Bhaskar about

Will get Sindhu back on podium: Sridhar

New Delhi: P.V. Sindhu still has the hunger to succeed, and the primary aim is to help her regain consistency, says her new coach Anup Sridhar, who has been roped in by the two-time Olympic medallist on a trial basis following the Paris Games.

Sindhu, who returned from the French capital without a medal for the first time in three Olympics, has been training under Sridhar, a Beijing Olympian, for the past three weeks at the Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad.

"I spoke with Sindhu's team a few weeks ago, and she has been training under me in Hyderabad since the start of this month. We've made significant progress,



and in two weeks, we'll head to tournaments in Europe," the 41-year-old Sridhar, who also briefly coached Lakshya Sen, told PTI.

Sindhu lost in the pre-quarters to China's He Bingjiao at the Paris Games and will restart her BWF world tour season with the European leg, which includes the USD 420,000 Arctic Open in Vantaa, Finland

(October 8-13), and the USD 850,000 Denmark Open (October 15-20) in Odense.

"I'm taking it week by week," said Sridhar, who has been brought on board for the remainder of the season after Indonesian Agus Dwi Santoso's contract ended post-Paris Olympics. "Since we haven't committed to anything long-term, it's hard to plan for 2025. However, there are a couple of tournaments in 2025 that Sindhu should aim to peak at," he said.

"You can plan for physical peaks, but not for form. I have my eye on a few tournaments next year, but the immediate focus is to enhance her consistency and get her back on the podium -- that's the big goal." -PTI

Cash Rewards for Paris winners

New Delhi: The Badminton Association of India announced on Tuesday a total reward of Rs 50 lakh for the para shuttlers who secured medals at the Paris Paralympics last month.

Indian para shuttlers won five medals, including one gold, two silver and as many bronze, at the Paris Games. Nitesh Kumar, who clinched the coveted gold in the men's Singles SL3 category, will receive a prize of Rs 15 lakh, while silver medallists Suhas Yathiraj (men's singles SL4) and Thulasimathi Murugesan (women's singles SU5) will each be awarded Rs 10 lakh. Bronze-medal winners Manisha Ramadass and Nithya Sre Sivan will each receive Rs 7.5 lakh.



Mohun Bagan Super Giant player Dimitrios Petratos vies for the ball with North East United FC player Miguel Zabaco Tome during an ISL match. Pic: PTI

Pant big influence, need to keep him quiet: Pat

New Delhi: Australian captain Pat Cummins acknowledged that Rishabh Pant has been a "major influence" in India's back-to-back Test series wins Down Under, stressing the need to keep the flamboyant wicketkeeper-batter "quiet" in the upcoming five-Test series later this year.

A key figure in India's historic Test triumphs in 2018-19 and 2020-21, the 26-year-old Pant made a stunning comeback from a horrific car accident in December 2022, scoring a second innings century in the first Test against Bangladesh last week.

"He's someone that has a big influence in a couple of series and we have got to try and keep him quiet," Cummins said on Star Sports.



Known for his unorthodox shots, including the reverse and one-handed flicks, Pant has made significant contributions in the last two Test series against Australia.

In 12 innings, he has amassed 624 runs at an impressive average of 62.40, with a top score of 159 not out.



His unbeaten 89 in the second innings at the Gabba in 2021 not only handed Australia their first defeat there in 32 years but also secured a 2-1 series victory for India.

"Someone like Rishabh Pant might play a reverse slap and it's an incredible shot, and that's just part of who he is. I think we've be-

come a bit more accustomed."

The 31-year-old pacer further compared Pant's aggressive approach to that of his teammates Travis Head and Mitchell Marsh.

"Every team has one or two of those players who can take the game on. You know, we've got Travis Head and Mitch Marsh and those guys, you know that they're going to be aggressive. If you miss your area a little bit, they're going to take the game on," he added.

Australia will be in search of their first Test series win against India since the 2014-15.

The five-match series is starting with the Perth Test on November 22.

-PTI

Soccer pitch collapses due to floods in UK

London: A soccer pitch in London collapsed and other parts of the United Kingdom were submerged by flash floods Monday after some areas saw a month's worth of rainfall in 24 hours.

Roads were closed, some train lines in London were suspended and dozens of people reported their houses being submerged as parts of central and southern England saw about 60 to 80 millimeters (2 to 3 inches) of rainfall. A few locations were expected to be hit by more than 120 mm (4.7 inches) of rain, weather forecasters said.

In the capital, the London Fire Brigade said emergency responders received some 350 flood-related calls.

The service said these included rescuing people trapped in cars, assisting people from their homes.

HC issues notice on Somdev's plea

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought the stand of the All India Tennis Association (AITA) on a petition against holding of its election later this month allegedly in violation of the Sports Code.

Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav issued notice to the sports body as well as the Centre on the petition by former India tennis player Somdev Devvarman and doubles player Purav Raja, and said the election will be subject to the outcome to the plea.

While refusing to stay the election at this stage, the judge also directed that the result of the polls, which are scheduled to be held on September 28, shall not be published.

The senior counsel appearing for the petitioners argued that AITA was holding the election in a "clan-



destine manner" as there was "nothing on the website".

Seeking a stay on the election, the senior lawyer submitted that the conduct of the AITA was in flagrant violation of the Sports Code as well as the decisions passed by the high court.

The court asked the petitioner to make the Returning Officer of the election a party to the proceedings and asked the respondent parties to file their replies. It further said that if the

election is subsequently found to be in violation of the Code, the elected office bearers will not be allowed to function and an independent entity may be appointed in their place.

"I am not staying. Election requires a lot of preparation. If the election process is conducted in defiance of the subsisting directions, the office bearers will be restrained from functioning. Then we will consider appointing someone as the ad hoc (body)... That election will be set aside," the court said

"In the meantime, the election of respondent no 2 will be subject to the outcome of the instant writ petition.. The result of the election shall not be published," the court ordered.

The matter will be heard next on October 14.

-PTI