

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Biden, Harris real threat, will never surrender: Trump

Donald Trump Dodges second assassination attempt in Florida; Suspect arrested

By Lalit K Jha

Washington: Former US president Donald Trump is safe after he escaped an apparent assassination attempt while he was golfing on his course in Florida, a second bid on his life in two months.

The incident took place on Sunday at the Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Secret Service agents "opened fire on a gunman located near the property line" of Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Rafael Barros, the special agent in charge in Miami, said during a news conference, adding that the agency was "unsure whether the individual," who is in custody, "was able to take a shot at our agents."

Trump, who was golfing at the club, was unharmed.

According to Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw, a Secret Service agent spotted the suspect with a rifle sticking through the fence of the golf course and immediately fired at the man before he fled the scene.

The 78-year-old Republican presidential nominee was 300 to 500 yards away from the suspect, Bradshaw said.

"President Trump is safe fol-



"He (the attacker) believed the rhetoric of Biden and Harris, and he acted on it," Trump told Fox News. "Their rhetoric is causing me to be shot at, when I am the one who is going to save the country, and they are the ones that are destroying the country — both from the inside and out."

- Donald Trump to Fox News

lowing gunshots in his vicinity. No further details at this time," Steven Cheung, Trump's Campaign Communications director, said in a statement soon after that.

In a message to his supporters, Trump said he is safe.

Ryan Wesley Routh, a 58-year-old owner of a small construction company in Hawaii, was detained in connection with the incident.

On Monday, he appeared briefly in federal court in West Palm Beach. He was wearing dark

prison scrubs, and his feet and hands were shackled, CNN reported.

Routh has been charged with two firearm counts. The counts include possession of a firearm while a convicted felon and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number, the charge said.

Citing law enforcement officials, it said that additional charges could be brought against Routh.

A detention hearing has been set for September 23 and the arraignment is set for September 30.

This was the second attempt on Trump's life in two months. In July, a life-threatening attack on Trump during his rally in Pennsylvania shocked the entire nation. He injured his right ear when the young shooter fired multiple shots at him at the campaign rally.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis Monday said that he has not yet spoken with Trump after the incident, but reiterated that his state was doing its own investigation as "there is a need to make sure that the truth about all of this comes out in a way that is credible."

The White House has said that both President Joe Biden and

The President and Vice President have been briefed about the security incident at the Trump International Golf Course, where former President Trump was golfing. They are relieved to know that he is safe. They will be kept regularly updated by their team.

- Statement by White House

Vice President Kamala Harris have been briefed about the incident.

President Biden on Sunday condemned "political violence" following the second assassination attempt on former President Trump.

The Democratic president said he had been briefed on the incident and the federal investigation into the matter.

Soon after the gunshots were heard at the golf club in Florida, the FBI said that it was "investigating what appears to be an at-

tempted assassination of former President Trump".

The incident took place at roughly around 1:30 pm local time when Secret Service agents spotted a person with an AK-47 near the golf course. Agents opened fire at him.

"Officials believe the shots fired at Trump International Golf Club were intended for former President Donald Trump, according to sources familiar on the matter," CNN reported.

"Sources said the Secret Service spotted a suspicious individual on the Trump International Golf Course West Palm Beach and opened fire when agents saw what appeared to be the barrel of a gun," the New York Post reported.

"Just spoke with President Trump. He is one of the strongest people I've ever known. He's in good spirits and he is more resolved than ever to save our country," said Senator Lindsey Graham after speaking with Trump.

JD Vance, Trump's running mate, said on X that he spoke with Trump before the news was public and that the former president "was, amazingly, in good spirits" and there is "still much we don't know."

-PTI

All tribes in India are Hindu: VKA

New Delhi: All tribes in India are "originally" Hindu but some people are trying to create divisions in the tribal society by linking its members with other religions like 'Sarna', a senior functionary of RSS-affiliate Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram said on Monday.

Various groups in Jharkhand and its neighbouring states have been demanding that 'Sarna' be declared as the religion of the tribals as their practices and method of worship are different from Hindus and all other religions in the country.

Supporting the view, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), which rules Jharkhand, has been pitching for the inclusion of a separate 'Sarna Code' for tribals in the census.

"All tribes are originally Hindus. They were Hindus in the past, they are Hindus at present and they will remain Hindus in future," Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram's all India publicity and media communications head Pramod Pethkar said.

"Some people are engaged in creating division in the tribal society by carrying out such ideological attacks," he said.

-PTI

New Delhi: AAP leaders on Monday held a series of meetings to discuss probabilities for the chief minister's post, a day before party MLAs meet to finalise a successor for Arvind Kejriwal, who is likely to tender his resignation to Delhi Lt Governor V.K. Saxena.



A man rows a boat on the swollen Ganga river under a bridge in Prayagraj on Monday.

Pic: PTI

Mamata, agitating docs finally meet

Kolkata: The agitating junior doctors on Monday evening called on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at her residence in Kalighat. The meeting lasted over two hours. The details of the meeting were not available at the time of going to press.

As agreed before the meeting, both sides were in the process of finalising the minutes of the meeting.

The delegation of doctors arrived at CM's residence for the crucial talks at 6.20 pm. After four unsuccessful bids to initiate a dialogue to resolve the more than a month-long deadlock, a delegation of 35 agitating junior doctors came for the meeting this

evening. The meeting, which was originally scheduled at 5 pm, began around 6:50 pm and ended at around 9 pm.

TV channels reported that the doctors submitted a memorandum to the CM listing their demands.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue got stuck due to the state government's rejection of the doctors' demand for live-streaming and video recordings of the meeting. The agitating medics later agreed to a compromise, now only asking to record the minutes of the meeting and receive a signed copy. The state government accepted this condition, with Chief Secretary Manoj

Pant saying both parties will sign the minutes of the meeting and share copies for clarity.

The state government also allowed the two stenographers, accompanying the agitating doctors, inside the venue to record the minutes of the meeting.

"We also want the issue to be resolved but not at the cost of any form of compromise on our five demands. We are going to the meeting to discuss all the issues with an open mind," an agitating doctor, who is present at the meeting, said before leaving for the talks.

Earlier, the state government "for the fifth and the final time" invited the protesting doctors for talks.

Congress slams PM as 'weak', says running 'U-turn' govt

New Delhi: With Modi 3.0 completing 100 days, the Congress on Monday claimed that Narendra Modi in his third term had proven to be a "weak" prime minister who was dependent on crutches and setting new records for U-turns.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said the past 100 days had weighed heavily on the nation's farmers, youth, women, infrastructure, Railways, and overall peace.

These hundred days have proven that Modi has neither a solution nor a vision for the country's problems, she said at a press conference at the AICC headquarters. Modi's "habit" of turning a blind eye to issues and running away from challenges continues to persist, she claimed.

"Each moment of the government in these 100 days has been marked by instability, indecision and immaturity. There have been multiple attempts to inflate a punctured balloon



but the thorn pricked by the public in the Lok Sabha elections has not given Narendra Modi any chance to rise again," she said.

"Do you remember the tall claims made during the election campaign that Narendra Modi was planning for the first 100 days? Where is that plan now? Because from day one, Modi has proven to be a weak prime minister, dependent on crutches, setting new records for U-turns," Shrinete said and cited alleged U-turns on issues of lateral entry in civil services, broadcast bill, Waqf bill, indexation and NPS.

"Besides blowing the whistle on corruption, what have you done? In fact, all

This time, serious allegations of corruption, conflict of interest, and misuse of power have been made against SEBI chief Madhabi Puri Buch. Yet, you stay silent. Why are you shielding Madhabi Buch? What secrets are you afraid might be uncovered?

- Supriya Shrinete, Spokesperson, Congress

those you called corrupt are now in the BJP. Are you planning to legitimise corruption now? The Supreme Court has reprimanded you many times for misuse of agencies, will you continue to use agencies as the BJP's front, or do you plan to free them?" she said.

FIRs for waving 'Palestine flag'

Mandla/Balaghat (MP): Separate cases were registered for alleged waving of 'Palestine flags' during Eid-e-Milad processions in Mandla and Balaghat districts of Madhya Pradesh on Monday, leading to the arrest of some persons, police said.

Police said the allegation of raising pro-Palestine slogans in Rajgarh cannot be confirmed sans evidence.

In Mandla, a youth allegedly waved the Palestine flag at Chilmans Square during an Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi procession, marking the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad. Mandla Kotwali police station in-charge Shafiq Khan said the accused, identified as Fardeen, and others have been arrested.

In Balaghat city, a complaint was lodged with the police claiming a man and his associates waved the Palestine flag during the Eid-e-Milad procession at Mahavir Chowk, a press release stated.

The complainant stated the act has hurt the sentiments of Indians.

Filled with hate, not leaving chance to defame India

Narendra Modi attacks Rahul Gandhi on completing 100 days

Ahmedabad: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday alleged some individuals filled with hate and negativity are out to defame India and destroy its unity, remarks coming amid a row over statements made by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in the US.

Modi laid the foundation stone and inaugurated various projects of Rs 8,000 crore, including the flagging off of Bhuj-Ahmedabad Nam Bharat Rapid Rail, the first Vande Bharat metro service, and five Vande Bharat express trains, in Ahmedabad.

Addressing a gathering, Modi, without taking names, said they (Opposition) can cross any limits for appeasement politics.

"Some people filled with negativity are targeting India's unity and integrity intending to divide the country. Those filled with



When every citizen wants to represent India as its brand ambassador in the world and strives to take the country forward, some people in our own country, filled with negativity, are doing the opposite. They are attacking the unity.

- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

hate are not leaving any chance to defame India and Gujarat," he alleged.

Modi said he was insulted, jeered, and mocked by the Opposition over 100 days after he assumed of-

ice as PM for a third consecutive term, but he focused on finishing the development agenda during this period.

Without taking names, Modi alleged that when he

was busy fulfilling his promise of making unprecedented decisions in the first 100 days of his third term, some people made fun of him.

-PTI

NOTICE

The office of 'The Perfect Voice' will remain closed on Tuesday, September 17 on an account of Anant Chaturdashi. The issue will not be published on Wednesday, September 18.

-Editor

State gets three new Vande Bharat trains

Mumbai: The number of Vande Bharat trains plying in Maharashtra increased to eleven as Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off three new services via video link from Ahmedabad on Monday.

The new trains will be operated on Nagpur-Secunderabad, Kolhapur-Pune, and Pune-Hubballi routes, officials said.

Until now eight Vande Bharat Express trains were operated on various routes in Maharashtra by the Western Railway and Central Railway.

Mumbai-Ahmedabad and Mumbai-Gandhinagar Vande Bharat trains are operated by Western Railway, and Mumbai-Madgaon, Mumbai-Solapur, Mumbai-Sainagar Shirdi, Mumbai-Jalna, Nagpur-Raipur, and Nagpur-Bilaspur by the CR.

Swarnil Nila, Chief Public Relations Officer of Central Railway, said Vande Bharat trains on all three new routes are the upgraded 2.0 version of the semi-high-speed trains.

"Central Railway has presented three more Vande Bharat trains with 21 updates to increase the comfort and safety of passengers," Nila said.

The eight-coach Pune-Kolhapur and Pune-Hubballi Vande Bharat Express trains will run three days per week, while the 20-coach Nagpur-Secunderabad Vande Bharat train will ply six days a week.

Pune-Hubballi Vande Bharat Express will leave Pune at 16.15 hrs on Monday and reach Hubballi at 23.40 hrs the same day. The Nagpur-Secunderabad Vande



Bharat Express will depart Nagpur at 4.15 PM and reach Secunderabad at 11.25 PM the same day, the CR stated.

The Kolhapur-Pune-Kolhapur Vande Bharat Express will run three days per week.

Kolhapur-Pune Vande Bharat Express will run every Thursday, Saturday and Monday effective September 19. It will start from Kolhapur at 8.15 AM and reach its destination Pune at 1.30 PM the same day.

Pune-Kolhapur Vande Bharat Express will be operated every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday effective September 18. It will depart from Pune at 2.15 PM and reach Kolhapur at 7.40 PM the same day, the CR stated.

The Kolhapur-Pune-Kolhapur Vande Bharat Express will halt at Miraj, San-

gli, Kirloskarwadi, Karad and Satara stations.

The Pune-Hubballi-Pune Vande Bharat Express will also run three days a week on Thursday, Saturday and Monday.

With effect from September 19, the Pune-Hubballi Vande Bharat Express will leave Pune station at 14.15 hrs and reach Hubballi at 22.45 hrs the same day.

Hubballi-Pune Vande Bharat Express will be operated every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday from September 18. The train will leave Hubballi at 5 AM and reach Pune at 1.30 PM the same day with scheduled halts at Satara, Sangli, Miraj, Belagavi and Dharwad stations, the Central Railway said.

Nagpur-Secunderabad Vande Bharat Express will run six days a week, except Tuesday, de-

parting from Nagpur at 5 AM on September 19 and reaching Secunderabad at 12.15 PM the same day.

The Secunderabad-Nagpur Vande Bharat Express will also run six days a week, except Tuesday, which will leave Secunderabad at 1 PM and reach Nagpur at 8.20 PM the same day. This train will halt at Sevagram, Chandrapur, Ballarshah, Ramagundam and Kazipet stations.

Earlier in the day, Union minister and Nagpur MP Nitin Gadkari said Vande Bharat Express trains have become very popular among travellers ever since the first service was launched in 2019.

He thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw for starting a new Vande Bharat Express train from Nagpur.

Sena MLA announces reward for chopping

Mumbai: A Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad on Monday sparked yet another controversy after he announced a reward of Rs 11 lakh to anyone who will "chop off the tongue" of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his statements on reservation in the US.

Gaikwad said andhi wants to end reservation for backward tribals and others and hence he is using language of ending it.

"When the demands of reservation are rising in Maharashtra and the country, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi made a statement to end reservation in the country. In the Lok Sabha elections, he spread a false narrative to get votes. Today he is speaking the language of ending reservation from the country and has shown the real face of the Congress. This is my challenge whoever chops off Rahul Gandhi's tongue will be given a reward of Rs 11 lakh on my behalf," said Gaikwad.

On his trip to the US, Rahul Gandhi said the Congress party will "think of ending reservation when India is a fair place" and that he was not interested in living in a country "where 90 per cent of the people do not have access to opportunity".

Gaikwad is an MLA from Buldhana. He is not new to controversies. In a video posted on social media in February this year, Gaikwad claimed he had hunted a tiger in 1987 and has been wearing a tooth of the animal around his neck.

Mahayuti likely to face ST ire over Dhangar move



Mumbai: The Mahayuti government's decision to recognise Dhangar and Dhangad as one community is likely to face a stiff opposition from the Schedule Tribe (ST) community.

The state government on Sunday announced to form a panel to establish the validity of the Dhangar community. Once these two communities are recognised as one the Dhangars will be able to get benefits of the ST quota.

Narhari Zirwal, an NCP leader, said he was not against the reservation to the Dhangar community. "Our only contention is that they should not be included in the ST and they should be kept out of the ST quota."

At present, the Dhangars are included in the Vimukta Jati (VJ) and Nomadic Tribe (NT). They VJ and NT have 2.5 per cent quota whereas the ST have 7 per cent quota.

The Dhangar (shepherd) community has been long demanding their inclusion in the ST.

"The government should have consulted us before taking this step. I will appeal all the ST MLAs and leaders to come forward against the government decision and protest the rights of the ST."

- Narhari Zirwal, Deputy Speaker of the Assembly

They point that all states excluding Maharashtra provide ST benefits to the community. In other states the community is known as Dhangad. "There is only a difference of pronunciation. A misplaced r instead of d cannot deprive us from the benefits of ST quota," a Dhangar leader said.

The Dhangars live mostly in Western Maha-

rashtra and Marathwada. They have a 9 per cent share in Maharashtra's population. The community is in good numbers in four Lok Sabha constituencies, Baramati, Madha, Solapur, and Satara. In 2015, the state government had roped in Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) to establish whether Dhangars meet the criteria to be identified as ST. The study is yet unfinished.

If the Dhangars are included in their quota its repercussions are likely to be felt in the ST community.

Politically, the ST are divided between Congress and BJP. Over the period of years, the BJP has succeeded in making inroads in the ST bastions of north Maharashtra and Vidarbha. Any move going against the interests of the ST community is likely to dent the BJP vote bank in these areas ahead of the Assembly election.

The election is likely to be held in the second week of November.

CRIME WATCH

Meat worth Rs 4 lakh seized

Thane: Thane police have seized meat worth Rs 4 lakh from a tempo and have sent it for analysis, a police official said on Monday. The tempo was intercepted on Sunday on a tip off at Golavali in Dombivli, though its occupants managed to flee, the Manpada police station official said. "The tempo and a car trailing it have been seized. Efforts are on to arrest the persons behind this illegal transportation of meat."

Labourer hammers contractor to death

Thane: A 23-year-old labourer was arrested in Ambernath in Thane district for allegedly bludgeoning his employer to death, a police official said on Monday. Saleem Yakub Sheikh hammered labour contractor Abdul Rehman (52) to death on Sunday following an argument after the former's daily wages were reduced from the promised Rs 1,000 to Rs 700, Ambernath police station senior inspector Ashok Bhagat said.

Man booked for abetment of suicide

Thane: A man was booked in Bhiwandi in Thane for abetment of suicide after a 16-year-old boy hanged himself, a police official said on Monday. The accused has been identified as vada pav seller Kunal Chowdhary, the Narpoli police station official said. "On September 11, deceased Gaurav Jha went to Chowdhary's shop to buy vada pav. He asked the teen to drop some items at his house, which the boy refused. Chowdhary slapped him. Insulted, the boy hanged himself in his house some time later," Senior Inspector Bharat Kamath said.

Man held for wife's murder

Thane: A 50-year-old man was arrested in Thane district within hours after he allegedly killed his wife by slashing her neck over domestic issues, police said on Monday. The accused, identified as Pritesh Shirke, was nabbed on Sunday evening, a few hours after he fatally attacked his wife, Draupati Shirke, 47, with a sharp weapon.



Maharashtra Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari in Nagpur on Monday. Pic: PTI

Pawar says not getting CM's time over competitive exams

Mumbai: Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar has urged Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to call a meeting on the issue of delay in conducting competitive exams and appointments in government jobs.

Pawar has claimed that the Chief Minister has not yet given him an appointment to discuss the issue.

"More than 32 lakh students prepare for the competitive exams. The only expectation these students have is to conduct the exams on

time and they get the placement in stipulated time frame. However, presently delayed placements, pending advertisements of examinations, delay in announcement of exam dates has led to severe discontent within the students," Pawar wrote to Shinde on Monday.

Pawar highlighted five issues in his letter. They are no announcement of new dates of state service examinations postponed in August 2024 due to a clash with IBPS exam; no announcement of Group B and Group C

examinations, which are usually conducted in April or May; pending placements of successful candidates from the state service, agri-service and police sub-inspector examinations; judicial proceedings over 7,000 clerk posts; and vacant posts of professors all over the state.

Pawar also wrote that his attempts to discuss the matter with Shinde were unsuccessful. "I have been trying to seek your time to discuss these rightful demands of students for some time now but it has not been granted."

Seat-sharing to be finalised soon: Fadnavis

By Correspondent

Mumbai: With assembly elections in Maharashtra just a couple of months away, Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Monday asserted seat-sharing between ruling Mahayuti partners will be finalised "soon".

State BJP president Chandrashekhar

Bawankule also weighed in with his remarks on the pre-poll arrangement, saying ruling coalition's formula on distribution of seats has been finalised on "nearly 70-80 per cent" of the (288) assembly constituencies, and added the pact will be sealed well before their main rival, opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

Mahayuti (grand alliance) consists of the BJP,

the Shiv Sena and the NCP. Asked about seat distribution among Mahayuti allies and its formal announcement, Fadnavis told reporters in Pune, "The seat-sharing formula will be finalised soon."

He did not divulge any further information on what is going to be an intricate issue and hard bargaining.

However, speaking sepa-

rately, Bawankule claimed people will see Mahayuti's seat-sharing formula well before the MVA constituents -- the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) -- announce their agreement.

"The seat-sharing has been finalised on nearly 70-80 per cent of the constituencies. The outcome of a (recent) meeting between



Chief Minister Eknath Shinde (Shiv Sena), Fadnavis (BJP) and Praful Patel (NCP) was that winnability of a candidate was the most essential criteria,"

Bawankule noted. Chhagan Bhujbal, cabinet minister, feigned ignorance about Mahayuti reaching a broad agreement on allocation of seats.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If the BJP had followed the alliance dharma four more candidates of Shiv Sena had won the Lok Sabha election. There was strong undercurrent against Navnit Rana in Amaravati. The BJP made the Shiv Sena replace candidates in Nanded and Yavatmal. - Bachchu Kadu, Chief, Prahar Jan Shakti Party



Ganesh pandal highlights importance of vegetables

By Vinod Chavan

Latur: In a remarkable step towards creating awareness about environment conservation and healthy life, an NGO in Latur district had installed an idol of eco-friendly Ganesh, made from cow dung in a pandal and highlighted the importance of green vegetables for healthy and long life.

Majha Ghar run by Sharad and Sangeeta Zare of Manus Pratishthan near Budhoda village of Ausa tehsil in Latur district has installed an idol of Lord Ganesh which is made from cow dung by the underprivileged children of the ashram. Around hundred



idols were made by the children from cow dung and sold each for Rs 1000. Through the earned amount, a separate hostel will be built in the ashram for girls, said Sharad Zare.

An innovative Ganesha pandal focusing on the significance of vegetables became a major attraction for devotees. The eco-friendly pandal, adorned with vibrant displays of fresh vegetables with importance and benefits is not only visually captivating but also carries a powerful message about the importance of healthy eating and sustainable farming practices.

The Zare couple and children have creatively used vegetables

like tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, and leafy greens to decorate the pandal, symbolizing the essential role of a balanced diet in maintaining good health. Alongside the visual appeal, the pandal also promotes the benefits of organic farming and reducing the use of harmful chemicals in agriculture.

This unique concept has drawn large crowds of devotees who appreciate the blend of tradition with a social message. Many visitors have praised the initiative for raising awareness about nutrition and environmental sustainability, all while celebrating the beloved festival of Ganesh Chaturthi in an eco-friendly manner.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given based on information provided by my client, SHAFIQ AHMED MOHD ASGAR ANSARI, who is in the process of transferring the tenancy rights of the following room from the name of the principal tenant Ramzan Ali Jaffer Hussain to his own name. Any person, institution, bank, or company having any claim, encumbrance, right, or objection in respect of the said property is hereby required to submit their objections, along with supporting documents, to the address provided below or to the Estate Officer at 1st Floor, E-ward, Municipal Office, Shaikh Hafizuddin Marg, Byculla, Mumbai within 14 days from the date of publication of this notice. In the absence of any objections within the stipulated time, it will be assumed that there are no claims or objections regarding the transfer, and the matter shall proceed accordingly.

Property address: Room No. 125, 2nd Floor, Lambi Cement 'B', Byculla Station, Ganesh Hari, Parundekar Marg, Mominpura, Byculla (W), Mumbai - 400011. Sd/- Adv. S.B. Shinde, Add. 2/19 Municipal Camp, Panel, Bhowwada, Mumbai - 400 012.

24,000 cops to man streets as Mumbai gears up for Anant Chaturdashi



Mumbai: More than 24,000 police personnel will be deployed for immersion processions on Anant Chaturdashi, the tenth and final day of the Ganpati festival in Mumbai on Tuesday, an official said on Monday.

Drone surveillance will be in place at important immersion sites such as Girgaon Chowpatty, Dadar, Bandra, Juhu, Versova, Powai Lake, and Madh Island, the official said.

More than 24,000 police personnel, including nine additional commissioners of police, 40 deputy commissioners of police, and 56 assistant commissioners of police, will be deployed in the city to prevent untoward incidents, he said.

In view of the possible traffic snarls, as faithful throng roads in large num-

bers to witness the immersion processions, the city police will create a 'green corridor' for seamless movement of vehicles and connectivity between eastern and western suburbs, he said.

The corridor will be for essential and emergency services and those travelling for emergencies, he said, adding the Coastal Road will also remain open for 24 hours.

Talking to the media on Monday, joint commissioner of police (law and order) Satyanarayan Choudhary said the city police are on high alert to prevent any law and order issues.

He said that besides the local police deployment, SRPF platoons, quick response teams (QRT), riots control police (RCP), delta,



combat, home guards, and Maharashtra Security Force have also been roped in.

The police will maintain a strong vigil with the help of more than 8,000 CCTVs, and the safety of women and children in crowded places will be the top priority, he said.

The police deployment will remain in place for the Eid-E-Milad procession scheduled for Wednesday, the official said.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Anil Kumbhare said more than 2,500 traffic police personnel will

(RPF), and local trains will be operational throughout the night on the immersion day, he said.

Mumbaikars should remain alert during this period, not fall prey to rumours, and contact the police in an emergency, the official said.

ensure smooth movement of vehicles across the city during immersion processions.

Entry to some roads will be restricted, and some routes will be made one-way, while some will have diversions, he said.

At least 12 old bridges on the Central and Western Railway lines are in dangerous condition. Ganesh mandals have been advised to take precautionary measures while using them and to avoid crowding at these places, the official said.

The police are also coordinating with the Government Railway Police and Railway Protection Force

CR services disrupted after snag

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Services on the Down Fast line of Central Railway's suburban network were affected for nearly an hour on Monday afternoon after a technical snag in the pantograph of an air-conditioned train, an official said.

The incident took place between Mumbra and Diva stations beyond Thane, he added.



"The Dadar-Badlapur AC local was detained on the Down Fast line (corridor taking trains from CSMT towards Thane and beyond) after a snag in its pantograph at 12:10pm. It was rectified at 12:50pm. Two local trains following this AC local got stranded due to this incident," a CR spokesperson said.

A pantograph, mounted on the roof of a train, draws power from overhead equipment.

Commuters claimed fast locals were delayed by 20-30 minutes, resulting in crowding. They also claimed some services were cancelled.

Central Railway operates 66 AC locals in a day with cumulative ridership of 78,000. It operates more than 1800 daily suburban services.

Court denies bail to suspected woman drug peddler



Mumbai: A special court here denied bail to a woman arrested in a drugs case, noting the offence was "heinous in nature" and releasing her may be prejudicial to the society's interest.

Priyanka Karkaur, a singer by profession, was held along with several other persons in December 2023 for alleged possession of a commercial quantity of drugs.

In an order passed earlier this month, special NDPS court judge Mahesh Jadhav stated the available material suggests the accused (Karkaur) had played an "active role" in the crime.

"The offence alleged to be committed by the accused is of heinous nature," the court stated while rejecting the bail plea of Karkaur who claimed absence of "positive material" to establish a nexus between herself and the co-accused.

The amount of cash allegedly recovered by the probe agency was not related to her, the plea stated.

The prosecution contended that 14 grams of charas was found from Karkaur who was sitting in a car, along with the co-accused.

Additionally, two Aadhaar cards with photos of

the accused with different names and Rs 17,06,250 cash were recovered from her house.

The quantum of drugs recovered is of commercial quantity which warrants a case under section 37 (offences involving commercial quantity) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS), the prosecution said.

The court noted that the investigation suggested the involvement of the accused in peddling drugs and colluding with the co-accused.

At this stage, the accused prima facie failed to demonstrate that she was not involved in the crime.

"Considering the above facts and discussion and prima facie appreciation of the material on record, the release of the accused at this stage is likely to be prejudicial to the interest of the society at large," the court observed.

The liberal approach in granting bail in such kind of offences under the NDPS Act is also uncalled for.

On the prima facie appreciation of the material on record and considering the gravity of the offence, there are no justifiable grounds for releasing the accused on bail at this stage, the judge said.

Dengue, Malaria make citizen ill

By Swapnil R. Mishra

Mumbai: The city has been reeling under vector-borne diseases, which are increasing every month, leading to people falling sick. In just two weeks of September (1-14), the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) recorded a 25.44 per cent and 17.47 per cent rise in Dengue and Malaria cases compared to August (1-14) during the same period. Meanwhile, the cases of other illnesses have witnessed a steep drop.

According to the BMC monsoon report, the city recorded 705 dengue cases from September 1-14, an increase from the 562 cases recorded in the fortnight of August. Similarly, Malaria cases increased to 605 in the first 14 days of September, compared to 555 recorded between August 1-14.

As per the doctors, these

illnesses may persist for a week or two even after the rain stops completely. They are expecting to see a reduction in cases by mid- or end-September. If rain continues, there is also a possibility of a further spike in cases by September or October.

A state official said the rise in dengue was a global problem and that overall weather conditions and heat have contributed to an uptick in its transmission. Additionally, reporting has been strengthened for all vector-borne diseases, said the official.

J.J. Hospital's medicine unit head Dr. Madhukar Gaikwad said they see 10-12 dengue cases daily, of which 50-60 per cent of patients need hospitalisation as their platelet count decreases. "Most of them come with fever, body pain and headaches. It takes them around 8-14 days to recover.

Disease	Sept 1-14	Aug 1-14
Dengue	705	562
Malaria	605	555
Chickungya	78	84
Lepto	172	35
Gastro	326	534
Hepatitis	59	72
HINI	46	119

MD drugs-making unit busted, 4 held

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Mumbai Police busted an MD drugs manufacturing factory in Badlapur city of neighbouring Thane district and seized drugs with an estimated value of Rs 82 lakh, an official said on Monday.

Four persons, including a chemistry graduate who managed the entire drug operation and worked as a production manager in the unit, were arrested.

The breakthrough came when officials of Mumbai Police's Anti-Narcotics Wing (ANC) arrested two persons from Mankhurd area on Sunday night for possessing MD drugs, the police official said, adding that the estimated value of the seized drugs was Rs 21.60 lakh in the international markets.

The interrogation of the duo led police to another person who spilled beans on the existence of a drugs manufacturing unit in Badlapur, following which a raid was conducted on Sunday night, the official said. Police seized MD drugs valued at around Rs 60 lakh from the chemical unit, the official said, adding that further investigation is underway.

Cong leader seeks action against Shinde, Fadnavis



Mumbai: A Maharashtra Congress functionary on Monday submitted a complaint to Mumbai police seeking action against Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis for allegedly making communal statements.

Maharashtra Congress legal cell head advocate Raviprakash Jadhav, in his complaint to Colaba police station, alleged Shinde and Fadnavis, in a bid to inflame passions, had claimed police in Congress-ruled Karnataka had seized a Ganesh idol. Jadhav claimed Ben-

galuru police had taken the idol during a Vishva Hindu Parishad protest on September 13 for safekeeping and to ensure they don't get damaged in the melee.

The police later immersed the idol after completing all the rituals and many fact-checking organisations have revealed this, he said.

"However, for political benefits, Shinde falsely claimed Karnataka police stopped the festival celebration and seized the Ganesh idol. Fadnavis also shared similar misinformation from his X account," Jadhav claimed in his complaint.

"BJP MLA Nitesh Rane also spread false information and tried to stoke communal tension. Spreading of such fake news could be done for political benefits ahead of state elections. Police should take serious note and take action against them," the Congress functionary said. PTI ND



Chief Minister Eknath Shinde seeks blessings of Lalbagcha Raja during Ganesh Utsav, in Mumbai on Monday. PicPTI

Nitesh Rane booked for hate speech

By Correspondent

Thane: A case has been registered against BJP MLA Nitesh Rane for allegedly targeting the minority community during his speech at a Ganpati programme in Navi Mumbai, police said on Monday.

The case was registered on Sunday at the NRI police station against Rane and the

organiser of a Ganpati event in Navi Mumbai based on a complaint lodged by a policeman, an officer said.

The complainant alleged that one Sankalp Gharat had organised seven-day Ganpati celebrations at Ulve without requisite permission, and Rane was a chief guest.

During the programme on September 11, Rane al-

legedly targeted the minority community in his speech and instigated people, the complaint stated.

A first information report (FIR) has been registered under sections 302 (uttering words with deliberate intent to wound religious feelings of any person), 351(2) (criminal intimidation), 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) and other relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the officer said.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Devendra Fadnavis is creating obstacles in granting reservation to the Maratha community. Chhagan Bhujbal is inciting riots in the state at Fadnavis' behest by instigating OBCs against Maratha reservation."

- Manoj Jarange-Patil, Maratha activist

Raj terms Ranade's removal demoralising

The MNS chief asks government to intervene

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray on Monday termed the removal of noted economist Ajit Ranade as vice chancellor of Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics demoralising, and asked the Shiv Sena-led state government to take up the issue with the Centre.

Thackeray also ridiculed the authorities for citing lack of 10 years teaching experience for Ranade's re-

moval. It is wrong to humiliate a highly-educated person like Dr Ranade in this manner, he said. "Is this the New Education Policy," he added.

Ranade was removed on Saturday, ending months of controversy over his appointment after claims that he did not fulfil eligibility criteria related to teaching experience. The Pune-based institute



is one of India's oldest economics research and training institutes.

The removal came after a fact-finding panel appointed by chancellor Bibek Debroy found that Ranade's appointment does not "conform" to UGC norms.

Ranade had been in the job for more than two years. The committee concluded that Ranade did not fulfil

the eligibility criteria of 10 years of continuous teaching experience as professor. Calling his removal "unfortunate and shocking", Ranade said in a statement, "For the past two-and-a-half years, I have been working diligently and to the best of my ability, contributing to the positive developments in the institute. These results seem to have been completely ignored."

Prior to his appointment at the institute, Ranade was group executive president and chief economist with Aditya Birla Group. He has taught in universities in India and the US and has served as member of several RBI committees.

He was also a member of the Maharashtra Government's task force on post-pandemic economic recovery.

SEBI withdraws statement on unprofessional work

New Delhi: Seeking to defuse tensions with employees protesting against alleged "unprofessional work culture," SEBI on Monday retracted its earlier statement blaming "external elements" for the unrest and committed to address the concerns 'amicably through internal channels'.

The withdrawal comes nearly two weeks after a protest on September 5, where hundreds of SEBI employees gathered outside the regulator's headquarters demanding the withdrawal of the contentious September 4 press release and the resignation of SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch.

The initial statement had suggested that the protesting employees were being influenced by external forces to target Sebi's credibility and leadership.

This was not the first instance of a protest at the SEBI, which witnessed a similar protest over a month-ago by some employees. At that time, officials had said that the protests were by a few elements and did not have the backing of the recognised unions or associations.

In its fresh statement on Monday, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) emphasized that it handles employee-related matters through proper internal mechanisms and that it had constructive discussions with officers from various grades.

"SEBI addresses employee-related matters through appropriate internal



Youth Congress workers shout slogans during a protest against SEBI chief Madhabi Puri Buch, in Mumbai on Monday. PicPTI

mechanisms. "Following constructive discussions with representatives of all grades of officers, Sebi and its employees have reaffirmed that such issues are strictly internal and will be managed in accordance with the organization's high standards of governance and within a time-bound framework," the regulator said. Accordingly, the press release issued on September

4 has been withdrawn, the regulator said.

Further, SEBI said its employees have reiterated their commitment to resolving concerns amicably through established internal channels, ensuring that such matters remain internal and managed within a time-bound framework.

"Employees have strongly condemned the unauthorized release of internal communication and have

Godrej Consumer MD backs Buch

New Delhi: Godrej Consumer Products MD and CEO Sudhir Sitapati has thrown his support behind Dhaval Buch, husband of embattled Sebi Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch, stating that it could be the side effects of what happens when the worlds of government and the private sector collide.

Dhaval and Madhabi have been facing allegations of conflict of interest over providing consultancy services to corporates.

In a post on networking platform LinkedIn, he said unless the context of the top professionals coming from the corporate world is understood, there could be a situation where no senior person from the private sector would ever consider a government job.

Given the cusp of change India is at, "there is a lot of talent in the private sector that the government could use, and we probably need to reconsider our old social biases against everything private," he said. "I have known of and then known Dhaval Buch for the 22 years that I worked at Hindustan Unilever. I was much his junior, but in a company known for its integrity, his reputation for integrity stood out," Sitapati wrote.

confirmed that all concerns shall be addressed amicably through established internal channels," the statement noted.

Also, SEBI has acknowledged the critical role its employees have played over the past 36 years in shaping the Indian securities market into one of the most dynamic and well-regulated markets globally.

The withdrawal of the September 4 press release marks a significant shift in SEBI's approach. The initial statement, which dismissed employee complaints as "misplaced" and suggested they were "misguided by external elements," only added to the growing dissatisfaction among staff.

The initial statement was issued following a letter

from around 500 SEBI employees to the Finance Ministry on August 6, against the Sebi's top management, they raised concerns about a "toxic" work environment, which includes instances of public humiliation and shouting down.

It was an unprecedented move for any financial regulator in India and escalated the internal crisis at SEBI.

For SEBI chairperson Buch, protests and internal issues come at a time when she is probably facing the most challenging times in her stint. The career banker-turned-regulator is battling speculations on whether a conflict of interest made her go slow on the probe against Adani Group and a raft of other allegations around it. -PTI

Jindal to invest in green hydrogen

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Jindal Steel & Power Ltd will implement India's biggest investment by a steel maker in green hydrogen by integrating green hydrogen into its direct reduced iron (DRI) units at Angul in Odisha.

As part of the pact signed with Jindal Renewables Power Pvt Ltd, the initiative will reduce emission during steel production.

JSPL will provide essential infrastructure and support, while JRPL will handle the development and operation of the green hydrogen and renewable energy facilities. This collaboration underscores a major commitment to decarbonisation and green energy leadership in India's steel industry. The pact aims not only to significantly slash the cost of green hydrogen production but also to ensure sustainable long term business model by locking in offtake for the next 25 years.

"By integrating green energy and green hydrogen into our production processes, we are not only reducing our carbon footprint but also setting a new benchmark for the Indian steel industry," said Sanjay Singh, Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs at JSPL.

In the first phase, JRPL will develop a green hydrogen generation capacity of up to 4,500 tons per annum set to commence by December 2025. In addition, the project will also entail supply of 36,000 tons of oxygen per annum that will be used in the Angul steelworks. The move also supports

Mercedes rolls out second locally produced model in India

New Delhi: Luxury car maker Mercedes-Benz India on Monday expanded its Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) range in the country with the launch of the locally produced EQS 580 4MATIC.

EQS SUV 580 4MATIC is the second model, after the EQS sedan, to be locally produced at company's Pune-based manufacturing plant.

India is the first country outside the US to start the local production of the seven-seater electric SUV. NUMBERS

Rs 200 crore - Mercedes' additional investment towards manufacturing operations, new product start-ups and digitisation of manufacturing processes
Rs 3,000 crore - The company's till date investment in India

The EQS sedan which was introduced in India around 18 months back, we have sold more than 500 cars. It's a car costing more than Rs 1.6 crore. Our total penetration of EVs is 5 per cent today, it's growing. For sure, customer acceptance is there.

Santosh Iyer, Managing Director and CEO, Mercedes-Benz India

the government's vision of Make-in-India, he said.

Iyer said local production has led to a significant advantage in terms of pricing the electric SUV.

The introductory price of EQS SUV 580 4MATIC starts at Rs 1.41 crore which should also make a lot of customers shift to EVs much faster in terms of transition, he said.

Iyer said the sales of EVs were growing in the country with even high-end products finding acceptance. Iyer noted that the company remains committed to offer top-end luxury EV products offering higher range in the market.

He noted that there may be more opportunities in the entry EV segment but the focus of the company firmly remains on bringing luxury products in the market. -PTI

Reels, biz messaging supercharging growth

By Moumita Bakshi Chatterjee

New Delhi: Social media giant Meta counts India among its key priority markets globally, as the rising popularity of its offerings - from Reels to business messaging - and increased engagement on AI tools is supercharging growth, according to Meta India Vice President Sandhya Devanathan.

In an interview with PTI, Devanathan said India is the leading market for short-form video Reels' watch-time on Instagram. The Facebook and Instagram parent Meta is upbeat about the pace and extent to which Reels has caught on with creators and brands alike.

"Reels is big for Meta globally, but Reels is certainly huge for Meta in India," Devanathan said.

Having recognised the power of Reels in influencing buying decisions, brands are including it early in their campaign blueprint and customer outreach plans, Devanathan said.

According to her, Reels is now in the consideration

set for brands as they conceptualise their campaigns, marking a big shift in the way campaigns are being designed.

"Not only are we seeing the medium exploding in terms of consumption on our platform, but we are seeing brands and creators make use of that to get outcomes they want with their businesses and audiences," she said.

India is also the largest adopter of Meta AI, she said and added the company is "buoyed" by its uptake here, with users turning to the AI-powered chatbot for information on parenting tips to Onam Sadya (traditional vegetarian feast served during Onam festival).

Describing India as one of the key priority markets for Meta globally, Devanathan said the company is very excited about the prospects here and continues to double down and invest in the country.

"So, in terms of user growth, we are very excited by the opportunities and also in the value that we are driving for businesses," the top executive said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits an exhibition during the 4th Global Renewable Energy Investors Meet and Expo (RE-INVEST 2024) in Gandhinagar on Monday. PicPTI

HSBC India launches global education payments

By Correspondent

Mumbai: On Monday, HSBC India introduced a worldwide education payments service, allowing Indian students and the bank's clients to directly pay tuition fees at over 600 international educational institutions. Designed to streamline the foreign exchange payment process,

the service offers a fully digital experience for students and their families when settling fees for their studies abroad, the bank explained. They can then input student information, submit loan documents, request payments securely and instantly via the mobile app, enjoying lower remittance fees than other options for international education payments.

pre-filled, pre-approved account information for the university beforehand, the bank explained. They can then input student information, submit loan documents, request payments securely and instantly via the mobile app, enjoying lower remittance fees than other options for international education payments.

India's first, free behavioural assessment tool launched

By Correspondent

Mumbai: In a bid to help layman individuals understand his trading traits, Stoxmind.ai - India's first behavioural assessment tool powered by Stoxkart - a deep discount broker will offer psychometric tests to fairly evaluate one's myths and misconceptions.

The psychometric test also assumes significance since India's National Stock Exchange remained the world's largest derivative exchange for the fifth consecutive year by the number of contracts traded, as per the last available official data.

Moreover, according to SEBI's well documented study, 7 out of 10 individual intra-day traders in equity cash segment have incurred losses in a particular year and 9 out of 10 individual traders in equity Futures and Options Segment, incurred net losses.

Explaining the rationale for the launch of this tool, Pranay Agarwal, CEO, Stoxkart that powers Stoxmind.ai, said, "We have observed that emotions very often deprive traders and investors to book profit or build a portfolio, as they get



stuck in a cycle of trial and error in the market. This usually happens because people keep trying methods which do not gel with their personality traits and bring unnecessary hardship. That's why we created this free platform for objective evaluation of personality traits."

Psychometric tests are common when it comes to companies hiring employees, but unfortunately there have been no such tests available to investors and traders participating in the stock market with their hard-earned money that propelled us to launch this tool, Agarwal said.

The free tool, not restricted to Stoxkart users but to everyone in the trading universe, has been created after thorough research including thousands of traders and professional

psychologists offering five assessments based on the cognitive biases that can often influence the decision making of even experienced traders and investors. These include:

These include personal traits assessment for trading time frame, personal traits assessment for algo vs discretionary trading, identifying myths and misconceptions related to the markets, identifying cognitive biases which oppose rational decision making, and reasoning, Logical and Mathematical skills assessment.

In human interest, Stoxmind.ai coveted objective is to help people evaluate their discretionary traits and quantitative traits and overcome the cognitive biases that lead to suboptimal outcomes and reduced profitability.

BSE SENSEX		TOP LOSERS		PTI	
September 16, 2024					
%	POINTS	%	POINTS	%	POINTS
-3.36	Bajaj Finance	7342.10	+2.44	NTPC	411.05
-2.30	Hindustan Unilever	2866.50	+1.73	JSW Steel	970.95
-1.89	Bajaj Finserv	1858.05	+1.35	LT	3662.45
-0.97	Adani Ports	1439.35	+1.13	Axis Bank	1231.50
-0.79	Titan	3737.95	+0.94	ICICI Bank	1262.30
-0.73	UltraTech Cement	11630.55	+0.72	Nestle India	2550.00
-0.72	Asian Paints	3334.35	+0.65	Kotak Bank	1832.20
-0.65	SBIN	785.45	+0.61	M&M	2756.90
-0.46	Tech Mahindra	1648.65	+0.52	Tata Steel	154.20
-0.40	Tata Motors	988.15	+0.49	Sun Pharma	1862.95

BSE SENSEX		TOP GAINERS		PTI	
September 16, 2024					
%	POINTS	%	POINTS	%	POINTS
+2.44	NTPC	411.05	+1.73	JSW Steel	970.95
+1.73	JSW Steel	970.95	+1.35	LT	3662.45
+1.35	LT	3662.45	+1.13	Axis Bank	1231.50
+1.13	Axis Bank	1231.50	+0.94	ICICI Bank	1262.30
+0.94	ICICI Bank	1262.30	+0.72	Nestle India	2550.00
+0.72	Nestle India	2550.00	+0.65	Kotak Bank	1832.20
+0.65	Kotak Bank	1832.20	+0.61	M&M	2756.90
+0.61	M&M	2756.90	+0.52	Tata Steel	154.20
+0.52	Tata Steel	154.20	+0.49	Sun Pharma	1862.95

LIC Partners with Infosys to boost digital evolution

By correspondent

Mumbai: Infosys, a worldwide frontrunner in advanced digital services and consulting, has today revealed its partnership with the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) to lead its digital evolution project named DIVE (Digital Innovation and Value Enhancement). In this partnership, Infosys will support the development of a state-of-the-art NextGen Digital Platform, aimed at providing seamless multi-channel interactions and data-driven, highly personalized experiences for LIC's clients, agents, and staff.

Infosys will offer LIC comprehensive system integration services leveraging AI technologies from Infosys Topaz and DevSecOps solutions from Infosys Cobalt.vIn. In addition, Infosys will assist in setting up the essential infrastructure for digital evolution and ensure continuous monitoring and maintenance after the platform is operational. The platform will also act as an open system, facilitating quick integration with FinTech firms and Bancassurance partners.



"Our collaboration with Infosys marks a significant milestone in our digital transformation journey. It will not only enhance our operational capabilities, but also enable us to cater to our vast customer, agent and employee base with newer, more personalized experiences. We are committed to leveraging the latest technologies that Infosys has to offer, including Cloud and Enterprise AI, to drive innovation and improve our offerings," stated Siddhartha Mohanty, CEO & MD of LIC.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"There is no data on women in trade sector in North East in a comprehensive form. Our study, which is a first-of-its-kind here, will encompass women in trade, their safety concerns, challenges or barriers for them, and also propose solutions."

- Joyshree Das Verma, President, FICCI FLO



Doctor Rape And Murder Case

Ghosh was in touch with policeman 12 hrs before case registered : CBI

New Delhi: R.G. Kar Medical College's former principal Sandip Ghosh was found to be "deceptive" while answering important questions on the rape and murder of a trainee woman postgraduate doctor during his polygraph test and layered voice analysis, officers said.

The CBI, probing the case, arrested Ghosh on September 2 in connection with financial irregularities at the hospital. The federal probe agency later added charges of evidence tampering against him.

During the investigation, Ghosh was subjected to layered voice analysis and polygraph test.

According to a report from Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL), New Delhi, his version has been found to be "deceptive on certain important issues" relating to this case, officials in the know of the developments said.

Information revealed during the polygraph test may not be used as evidence during the trial but the agency may gather corroborative evidence which could be used in court, they said.

A polygraph test can help in assessing inaccuracies in the statements of suspects and witnesses. By monitoring their psychological responses, heart rate, breathing pattern, sweating and blood pressure, investigators can determine if there are discrepancies in their responses.

The CBI has alleged that Ghosh got information about the rape and murder of the



The Supreme Court is likely to hear on Tuesday a case it has initiated on its own following the rape and murder of a resident doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata amid the ongoing protests by doctors in West Bengal. As per the apex court web site, the suo-motu case is listed as the first item on Tuesday before a bench comprising Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra.

Senior backs Abhijit Mondal

A senior Kolkata Police officer on Monday came out in support of Abhijit Mondal, the officer-in-charge of Tala Police Station arrested by the CBI in the RG Kar hospital rape-murder case, and asserted that he had conducted the initial investigation transparently. Additional Commissioner of Kolkata Police, V Solomon Nesakumar, along with other senior officers of the city police, met Mondal's family and assured them all support. "We met the family of Abhijit Mondal. We spoke with his wife and informed her that the department stands by them like a family and will provide all support," Nesakumar told reporters. "Personally, I believe he is not guilty. Whatever Mondal did, he did with good intentions. He reached the spot in minimal time, conducted a transparent investigation, and acted in the interest of justice," he said.

found lying in an "unconscious state" in the seminar room of chest medicine, whereas the body was already examined by a doctor who had found the victim dead.

The general diary entry was allegedly made "in conspiracy with hospital authorities and other unknown persons", intentionally mentioning wrong details.

Mondal's failure to register an FIR and protect the scene of crime resulted in the "damage of vital evidence available at the crime scene", officials said, adding he tried to protect the accused Sanjay Roy and others who had unauthorised access to the scene of crime that might have led to tampering of evidence.

Ghosh allegedly directed subordinates to send the body to the morgue hurriedly, they said.

The trainee doctor was allegedly raped and murdered in the seminar hall of R G Kar Medical College and Hospital when she had gone to rest during her shift in the early hours of August 9. Her body with severe injury marks was found in the hall by a doctor who was on rounds.

Sanjay Roy, a police volunteer, was arrested the next day based on CCTV footage in which he was seen entering the seminar hall at 4.03 am on the day of the incident.

On August 13, the Calcutta High Court ordered the transfer of the probe from the Kolkata Police to the CBI, which took over the case on August 14.

Deceased's family refuses compensation

Kolkata: Turning down the compensation of Rs 2 lakh, the family of a 10-year-old boy who died at a state-run hospital in Dakshin Dinajpur district rejected the West Bengal government's claim that the ongoing agitation of the junior doctors caused his death. Shivam Sharma, a class 3 student, was injured in a road accident, following which he was taken to the Balurghat hospital. His family alleged that he died there due to the negligence of a senior physician who despite being on duty was late in attending him. "There are no junior doctors at this hospital. And he died on August 12, three days after the incident at the RG Kar hospital when the agitation by the junior doctors was at a nascent stage. So any claim that he was a victim of junior doctors' cease work is wrong," said Shivam's uncle Anand Sharma.

Senior docs allege evidence tampering

New Delhi: Senior doctors of R.G. Kar Medical College on Monday alleged tampering of evidence in the Kolkata doctor rape and murder case. Addressing a press conference here, they reiterated their demand for a live streaming of the meeting between them and the West Bengal government. "We condemn all such heinous crimes. This crime is a fallout of the nexus between the West Bengal government and health department officials," said one of the doctors. The doctors alleged there was "tampering of evidence". In a statement, the doctors have demanded that they want concerned authorities, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Supreme Court to expedite the investigation process and punish the culprits without any delay.

trainee doctor at 9.58 am on August 9 but he did not make the police complaint immediately.

He allegedly made a "vague complaint" at a later stage through the medical superintendent-vice principal even

though the victim was declared dead at 12.44 pm, they said.

"He did not try to get an FIR lodged immediately. Rather a new theory of suicide was introduced which is not possible as per external injury visible

on the body of the victim that was undressed at the lower part," the CBI has alleged.

The probe agency has alleged that Ghosh got in touch with Tala Police Station's Officer In Charge (OC) Abhijit Mondal at 10.03 am and with

an advocate at 1.40 pm while a case of unnatural death was registered at 11.30 pm.

Mondal, who has also been arrested by CBI in connection with the case, received information of the incident at 10.03 am on August 9 but did not

reach the scene of the crime immediately, the officials claimed, adding the OC reached the spot after an hour.

The general diary entry 542 mentioned that the body of the PG trainee of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital was

TV channel invading privacy, say cinema women

Thiruvananthapuram: The Women in Cinema Collective, an outfit of women professionals working in the Malayalam film industry, on Monday wrote an open letter to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan seeking his intervention to protect the privacy of women who have deposed in front of the Justice K Hema Committee.

In the letter posted on its official FB page, the outfit alleged that a private Malayalam television channel is telecasting reports based on the purported statements given by the women film professionals before the government-appointed panel.

The WCC said they were now witnessing a situation in which those statements were being dragged to an "irresponsible media trial" by the television channel.

It further said that the telecasting of the private statements given by the survivors raises suspicion about the intention of at least some people who have access to the Committee report.

The news reports were being aired in a manner in which people can identify the survivors easily, the outfit detailed.

"The invasion of privacy is unjust," the WCC said in the letter.

Stating that the channel reports have caused mental distress to the survivors, the outfit also strongly urged the CM to intervene in the matter to stop this "news attack" against the privacy of women.

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

Following the allegations of sexual harassment and exploitation cropping up against several actors and directors in the wake of the report being made public, the state government on August 25 announced the establishment of a seven-member special investigation team to probe them.

-PTI



People take part in a protest organised by Delhi Meetei Co-ordinating Committee over recent violence in Manipur at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Sunday. Pic: PTI

SC to hear today Muslim side's plea

New Delhi: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Tuesday a plea of the Muslim side against the Allahabad High Court order rejecting their petition challenging the maintainability of 18 cases related to the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah dispute in Mathura.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Sanjay Kumar will hear the plea filed by the Committee of Management Trust, Shahi Masjid Idgah against the August 1 order of the high court. The mosque management committee's plea has been filed through ad-

Shahi Idgah dispute

vocate RHA Sikander.

On August 1, the high court rejected the plea challenging the maintainability of 18 cases related to the temple-mosque dispute in Mathura, and ruled that the "religious character" of Shahi Idgah needs to be determined.

The high court had dismissed the Muslim side's contention that the suits filed by Hindu litigants relating to the dispute over the Shahi Idgah mosque complex adjoining the Krishna Janmabhoomi

temple violated the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, and were thus not maintainable.

The 1991 Act prohibits changing the religious character of any shrine from what existed on the day of the country's Independence. It exempted only the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute from its purview.

The cases filed by the Hindu side seek the "removal" of the Aurangzeb-era mosque they claim was built after demolishing a temple that once stood there.

-PTI

Ball in BJP's court for early polls: AAP

New Delhi: The ruling Aam Aadmi Party on Monday said it has put the ball in BJP's court by demanding early elections in Delhi in November, and now it is up to the opposition party to decide whether it was prepared to face CM Arvind Kejriwal.

Kejriwal will tender his resignation as chief minister on Tuesday and the process to choose his re-

placement will start after that, Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said, adding that there has been no discussion on who the next chief minister will be.

"Today is a holiday and tomorrow is the first working day of the week. He will tender his resignation tomorrow to Lt Governor and after the resignation is accepted, a meeting of party MLAs

will be held to decide on the new name," he said at a press conference.

Bharadwaj said the candidate chosen will then present their claim to the president through the LG.

"We have the majority and we will be invited and then the process for oath taking will happen. This should take a week," he added.

-PTI

Grenade attack on minister's residence

Imphal: A grenade, hurled by suspected militants, exploded in the residence of Manipur minister Kashim Vashum in Ukhrul district, causing damage to his property, police said on Monday.

No one was injured in the incident that occurred on Saturday night, a senior officer said. Vashum said he and his family members were not at home when the grenade exploded.

Probe into 'search' of pvt parts of examinee

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday directed the DGP to investigate the allegation of a job aspirant that a woman constable searched her private parts before she entered an examination hall in Nalbari during the test for filling up Group III posts.

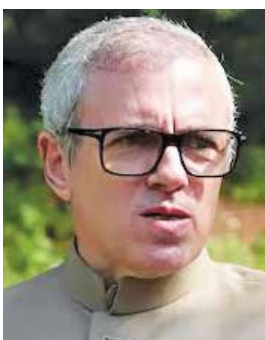
He said the DGP informed him of another incident where "cheating material"

was recovered from a woman candidate during the exam. "My instruction to the police on the Nalbari incident - I spoke with the DGP, Assam, @gpsinghps and instructed him to investigate the incident where a girl student has alleged that a lady constable searched her private parts before she entered the examination hall," Sarma posted on 'X'.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

How difficult is it to gather 30,000 people by using money? Don't show me the rallies, show me the votes. Let the BJP win one seat from the Kashmir valley, then we can talk.

- Omar Abdullah, Leader, National Conference



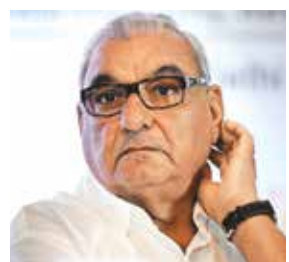
Task cut out for Hooda in Haryana

Rohtak: "I want to fight this battle not for myself but for you... I want Haryana to be number one once again," Congress veteran Bhupinder Singh Hooda declared from the dais while addressing a poll rally in his home constituency Garhi Sampla-Kiloi here a few days ago.

The former Haryana Chief Minister, who turned 77 on Sunday, has remained a four-time MP from Rohtak and defeated former deputy prime minister Devi Lal from the parlia-

mentary seat in the 1990s. Although the Congress has made it clear that its MLAs and the high command will pick the Chief Minister if the party wins the elections, Jat stalwart Hooda is virtually the face of the Congress for the upcoming Assembly polls.

The Congress is contesting 89 seats -- except Bhiwani which it has left for the CPI(M) -- and the majority of these have gone to Hooda loyalists or those considered close to him. Besides, the party has re-



fielded all 28 sitting MLAs, most of whom owe allegiance to Hooda. In the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, barring the Sirosa seat contested and won by his bete noire Kumari Selja, Hooda's choice pre-

ailed in the remaining eight of the nine constituencies from where the Congress contested.

Notwithstanding opposition from some of his detractors within the party, Hooda has managed to maintain a tight grip on the affairs of the Haryana Congress. The Garhi Sampla-Kiloi assembly segment, a Jat-dominated rural constituency in Rohtak from where the former chief minister is seeking a reelection, came into being in 2007, following the delimi-

tation of constituencies. It is considered as a "gadh" (bastion) of the Hooda family. Before the delimitation, this seat was known as Kiloi.

In 2005, the Congress high command handpicked Hooda, who was then a Rohtak MP, to be the chief minister of the state after the party returned to power winning 67 seats.

Hooda had edged out party veteran Bhajan Lal from the chief ministerial race and remained in office till 2014.

We will win with a big majority. Chattis biradari (people of all sections) have made up their minds to bring Congress back to power. The BJP is on its way out and the Congress is coming back to power. - Bhupender Hooda

The Milk Village of Dudran in North Kashmir



A man guides a cow at milk village of Dudran, in Uri, in the Baramulla district of north Kashmir on Saturday. Dudran the milk village of Kashmir valley continues centuries old tradition of cattle rearing and dairy production and preserving milk using Douh Khot. The 'Douh Khot' is a dome shaped structure built with stones and wood, is a rich heritage and cultural linkage to ancient technique of preserving milk. Milk is stored in multiple different pots varying from aluminium, earthen pots and steel is clabbered in an old age manner called to form buttermilk and other dairy products. Pic:PTI

Project Cheetah

Audit report flags 'lack of coordination'

New Delhi : A report by the Accountant General of Madhya Pradesh has flagged concerns over the management of Project Cheetah in Kuno National Park, highlighting a "lack of coordination" between central and state government departments.

The report also revealed that despite the arrival of cheetahs from Africa, the park's management plan for 2020-2030 has no mention of cheetah reintroduction.

When asked about these concerns, the chief conservator of forests and director of the Lion Project, Utam Sharma, said they had provided responses to the auditors but declined to share specific details. "It's

a routine exercise which is conducted in several phases. Any action, if required, will be taken after the completion of the entire process," he said.

The audit, covering the period from August 2019 to November 2023, found that ground staff and the Kuno Wildlife Division were not involved in either "site selection" or "cheetah reintroduction study".

The report, obtained under the Right to Information Act, said the Kuno Sanctuary was originally identified as a second habitat for Asiatic lions. "However, no effort has been made for the reintroduction of Asiatic lions till November 2023," it said.

S.P. Yadav, the Director



General of the International Big Cat Alliance, told PTI last week that natural geographic isolation is occurring among Asiatic lion populations in Gujarat and there is currently no need to translocate them.

The audit report said, "There was no mention of cheetahs in this management plan... Therefore, the expenditure of Rs 44.14

crore incurred on Project Cheetah from 2021-22 to 2023-24 (till January 2024) was not in accordance with the approved management plan." According to the report, the auditors could not find any records clarifying "under whose instructions the cheetah reintroduction work began".

In accordance with the Supreme Court's direc-

20 No of cheetahs have been brought to the Kuno National Park so far -- eight from Namibia in September 2022 and 12 from South Africa in February 2023.

8 No of adult cheetahs -- three females and five males -- have died

17 Cubs have been born in India, with 12 surviving, bringing the total number of cheetahs, including cubs, in Kuno to 24.

tions dated January 28, 2020, a three-member committee was formed to select the most suitable location for African cheetahs. This panel was required to submit its report to the apex court every four months. "The Supreme Court had only established the expert committee. It was unclear

whether the cheetah reintroduction would be carried out solely within the Kuno National Park.

"Therefore, there is no chapter on cheetah reintroduction in the management plan. The work related to cheetah reintroduction is being carried out according to the

Cheetah Action Plan 2021, prepared by the central government," the Forest Division told the auditors. It added that Kuno was to be developed as an alternative habitat for Asiatic lions, as per the Supreme Court's decision dated April 15, 2013, and the state government was "completely serious" about it.

The audit report said: "It is evident from the statements of the Forest Division that there was a lack of coordination between the departments of the Government of India and the Government of Madhya Pradesh."

"It is also clear that the ground staff and the Forest Division were not involved in the site selection or the

cheetah reintroduction study. The matter has been brought to the attention of the government," it said. The report adds that 43 out of 255 sanctioned posts were vacant, "which can have an immediate impact on the protection of forests and wild animals".

The report noted that Prakash Kumar Verma, the former Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of the Kuno Wildlife Division, was sent to South Africa and Namibia for training in cheetah management.

According to the Action Plan for the Introduction of Cheetah in India, trained staff were not to be removed from cheetah conservation sites for a "minimum period of five years".

Great Nicobar Transshipment Port Project

Opposition because of vested interest: Sonowal

New Delhi: Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has said that all necessary clearances have been taken for Rs 41,000-crore international transshipment port project at Great Nicobar Island in the Bay of Bengal, pointing out that the opposition to the mega project smells of "vested interest".

The detailed project report (DPR) of Great Nicobar transshipment port is being finalised by the government, and it will go ahead with the implementation of the project in the next few months.

"Our aim is to make India a developed nation... Those who are opposing the Great Nicobar transshipment port project, is because of vested interest," Sonowal told a group of journalists. Great Nicobar Transshipment port project has been under scrutiny over environmental concerns. Last month, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh had urged Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav to suspend all clearances accorded to the

The proposed port in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands will have the ultimate capacity to handle 16 million containers per year, and in the first phase, to be commissioned by 2028 at a cost of Rs 18,000 crore, it will handle more than 4 million containers.

The government has obtained all necessary clearances for the project and 5-6 players have shown interest for the international transshipment port project. - Sarbanand Sonowal

75 India's transhipped cargo is handled at ports outside India

85 Colombo, Singapore and Klang handle of this cargo, with more than half of it handled at Colombo port.

mega infra project in Great Nicobar Island. In a letter to Yadav, former environment minister Ramesh had said the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change must fulfil its dharma, and not allow itself to be reduced to becoming a project proponent, especially

when the project has decidedly "disastrous" human, social and ecological consequences.

The project can have "catastrophic ecological and human consequences" and has been pushed through by violating due process and sidestepping

legal and constitutional provisions protecting tribal communities, he claimed.

Larsen and Toubro Ltd, Afcons Infrastructure Ltd, and JSW Infrastructure Ltd are among the companies that have submitted EoIs for the international transshipment port project.

Other projects planned around the transshipment port include an airport, a township and a power plant. The project is located on the international trade route, with existing transshipment terminals like Singapore, Klang and Colombo in proximity.

The project focuses on three key drivers, which can result in making it a leading container transshipment port -- strategic location in terms of proximity (40 nautical miles) with the international shipping trade route, availability of natural water depth of over 20m and carrying capacity of transshipment cargo from all the ports in the proximity, including Indian ports. - PTI

Typhoon Bebinca makes landfall in Shanghai

Beijing: Bebinca, the strongest typhoon to have hit China's Shanghai city in 75 years packing wind speed of 42 meters, made landfall on Monday bringing the megacity of 25 million to a grinding halt.

The typhoon, with the maximum wind force near its center reaching 42 meters per second, churned ashore at the Lingang area of Shanghai's Pudong District, the Shanghai central meteorological observatory said. The city has already mobilised thousands of relief and rescue workers to attend to emergencies.

Bebinca is believed to be the strongest typhoon to land in Shanghai in 75 years. It is the 13th typhoon to hit China this year.

The State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters on Sunday activated a Level IV emergency response for east China's Anhui Province and raised the response in Shanghai and Zhejiang to Level III, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Bebinca has already led to flight cancellations. -PTI



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat with Union Minister Bhupender Yadav during a plantation drive under the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign with the participation of 10,000 women and 16 institutions at the Matri Van in Alwar. Pic:AP/PTI

Two earthquakes jolt British Columbia

Vancouver (British Columbia): Two earthquakes struck off the northern coast of the Canadian province of British Columbia Sunday but there were no immediate reports of damage.

The United States Geological Survey said the first earthquake, measuring

magnitude 6.5, happened around 3:20 pm local time.

It was located off the tip of Haida Gwaii, an archipelago located about 1,720 kilometres (1,069 miles) north of Vancouver and occurred at a depth of 33 kilometres (20 miles).

Natural Resources Canada said a second earthquake, measuring 4.5, occurred about an hour later in the same area.

The US Tsunami Warning Center reported that there was no threat of a tsunami from the quakes. No damage was reported. -AP

Replacing rice with other crops could recover groundwater

New Delhi: Replacing about 40 per cent of the area sown with rice with other crops could help recover 60-100 cubic kilometres of groundwater lost since 2000 in north India, a study has found.

Current cropping patterns -- dominated by rice, which relies heavily on groundwater for irrigation -- could result in a loss of about 13-43 cubic kilometres of groundwater if warming of the planet continues, a team of researchers, including those from the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar, Gujarat, said.

The researchers proposed shifting from existing cropping habits by cutting down on

cultivating rice as a potential solution for sustaining the fast-depleting resource in a warmer world that threatens food and water security.

"Replacing 37 per cent area of rice with other crops can recover 61 to 108 cubic kilometres groundwater compared to 13 to 43 cubic kilometres with current cropping pattern under the 1.5-3 degrees Celsius global warming levels," the authors wrote in the study accepted for publication in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) Nexus.

Compared to current cropping trends, the benefits of switching crops in saving



groundwater are more during the prolonged dry periods predicted under global warming, the researchers said. Changing crop patterns can

be substantially beneficial -- particularly for the states of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh -- for ensuring groundwater sustainability

and farmers' profitability, the authors said.

They also found that switching of crops did not substantially impact groundwater levels where recovery rates were

low such as in the states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jharkhand.

The findings have policy implications for identifying optimal cropping patterns for sustaining groundwater in the irrigated regions of north India, along with ensuring farmers' profitability and income, they said.

Previous estimates have suggested that about 300 cubic kilometres of groundwater have been lost between 2002 and 2022 as a result of the cropping trends in north India, where 80 per cent of the cultivated area is sown with rice.

Parts of Punjab and the Ganga basin experienced the

fastest rates of groundwater depletion in the world, the researchers said, and added that northern and northwestern regions of India are among the global groundwater hotspots.

Studies have shown crop switching to be beneficial for environmental sustainability and farmers' income in China, the US and India.

In this study, the researchers looked at current cropping patterns in regions that have seen considerable groundwater depletion. The team then used groundwater, well and satellite observations and models to estimate groundwater lost between 2002 and 2022. - PTI

Trump's attacker supports Harris, Ukraine

New York: In an apparent second assassination attempt on Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, the former President was moved to safety after authorities a man armed with an AK-style rifle was found hiding at a golf course in Florida.

The man, hiding in bushes roughly 400-500 yards from Trump, was confronted by Secret Service agents. Agents opened fire when they spotted the gunman and fired four to five rounds of ammunition, reports said. Sheriff Bradshaw stated that the suspect dropped the rifle and fled in a vehicle, abandoning the weapon along with two knapsacks, a scope used for aiming a weapon and a Go-Pro camera. The FBI is currently leading the investigation.

The man has been identified as Ryan Wesley Routh by news agency AP. The FBI, so far, has declined to comment.

Who is Ryan Wesley Routh?

The 58-year-old is originally from North Carolina and later a resident of Hawaii. Routh operated a shed-building business with his son and had a notable presence on social media, where he frequently commented on US politics and international affairs.

According to AP, voter records show Routh as an unaffiliated voter in North Carolina. He most recently voted during the state's Democratic Party primary in March 2024. He has also made donations to Act-



The house of Ryan Routh is seen in Kaawaa, Hawaii, Sunday. Routh is in police custody in connection with the apparent assassination attempt of Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump on Sunday.

Blue, a political action committee that supports Democratic candidates.

On his social media, Routh has supported former Democratic candidate Tulsi Gabbard, who later switched over to the Republican party. Over the years, his political views have shifted towards supporting President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

What we know from Routh's social media?

Following the first assassination attempt on Trump in Pennsylvania, Routh urged Biden and Harris to visit those wounded in the shooting at the hospital and to attend the funeral of a former fire chief killed at the rally.

He has also expressed support for Ukraine's fight

against Russia's invasion. He frequently commented on the war on his social media, and ran a website to raise money and recruit volunteers to go to Kyiv.

Routh's past

Routh has had multiple run-ins with law enforcement, including a conviction in 2002 for possession of a weapon of mass destruction following a stand-off with North Carolina police.

After the incident, Trump, in an email to his supporters, confirmed he was unharmed and expressed gratitude to his security team for their swift action. He was on the fifth hole of his golf course when the event occurred and was quickly evacuated. Though safe, Trump joked that he regretted not finish-

ing his round, as he "was even and had a birdie putt." Fox News host Sean Hannity, a close associate, reported that Trump remained in good spirits.

This marks the second recent attempt on Trump's life. Two months ago, during a campaign event in Butler, Pennsylvania, Trump was shot at, with one bullet grazing his right ear. The Secret Service later confirmed that the shooter was killed during the incident, which also left one rally attendee dead and two others injured. The shooter was identified as Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania. Security officials have told CBS News that the suspect fired from between 200 ft and 300 ft away on an elevated shed with an AR-style rifle. -AP

Germany begins random checks at borders

Kehl: Germany on Monday began random checks at its borders with five Western European nations as it seeks to crack down on irregular migration, expanding a system of controls that are already in place at four other borders.

The police controls began at the borders with France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Denmark on Monday morning and are due to continue for six months. Germany has already been carrying out the checks at its borders with Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and Switzerland since last year.

Germany, a European Union member, announced last week that it was expanding border checks to all nine of its land borders this week as part of an effort to crack down on irregular migration and crime following recent extremist attacks. Last month, a knife attack blamed on a Syrian asylum-seeker in Solingen killed three people. The suspect claimed to be inspired by the Islamic State group. In June, a knife attack attributed to an Afghan immigrant left a police officer dead and four other people wounded.

The border controls are testing European unity because it is seen by some as a step away from the spirit of the EU's free travel arrangement known as Schengen. The freedom of citizens in Europe to travel freely across borders for work and pleasure is one of the most beloved benefits of the EU. -AP



NDRF dispatch relief material to Typhoon Yagi-hit Vietnam and Laos. Pic:PTI

Taliban suspends polio vaccination campaigns

Dubai: The Taliban have suspended polio vaccination campaigns in Afghanistan, the UN said on Monday.

Afghanistan is one of two countries in which the spread of the potentially fatal, paralyzing disease has never been stopped. The other is Pakistan.

News of the suspension was relayed to UN agencies right before the September immunisation campaign was due to start. No reason was given for the suspension, and no one from the Taliban-controlled government was immediately available for comment.

A top official from the World Health Organisation said it was aware of discussions to move away from house-to-house vaccinations and instead have immunisations in places like mosques.

The WHO has confirmed 18 polio cases in Afghanistan this year, all but two in the south of the country. -AP

That's up from six cases in 2023.

"The Global Polio Eradication Initiative is aware of the recent policy discussions on shifting from house-to-house polio vaccination campaigns to site-to-site vaccination in parts of Afghanistan," said Dr. Hamid Jafari from the WHO. "Partners are in the process of discussing and understanding the scope and impact of any change in current policy."

Anti-polio campaigns in neighbouring Pakistan are regularly marred by violence. Militants target vaccination teams and police assigned to protect them, falsely claiming that the campaigns are a Western conspiracy to sterilise children.

The suspension of the September campaign is a blow for the eradication of polio in Afghanistan.

As recently as August, the WHO reported that Afghanistan and Pakistan

were continuing to implement an "intensive and synchronized campaign" focusing on improved vaccination coverage in endemic zones and an effective and timely response to detections elsewhere.

During a June 2024 nationwide campaign, Afghanistan used a house-to-house vaccination strategy for the first time in five years, a tactic that helped to reach the majority of children targeted, the WHO said.

But southern Kandahar province, the base of Taliban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, used site-to-site or mosque-to-mosque vaccination campaigns, which are less effective than going to people's homes.

Kandahar continues to have a large pool of susceptible children because it is not carrying out house-to-house vaccinations, the WHO said. -AP

Former BBC news anchor gets suspended sentence

London: Former BBC news anchor Huw Edwards, once one of the most prominent media figures in Britain, was given a suspended prison sentence on Monday for indecent images of children on his phone.

Edwards, 63, pleaded guilty in Westminster Magistrates' Court in July to three counts of making indecent images of children, a charge related to photos

five months of his salary after he had been arrested in November while on leave. The BBC has asked him to pay it back.

Edwards had been one of the BBC's top earners when he was suspended in July 2023 over separate claims made last year involving a teenager he allegedly paid for sexually explicit photos. Police investigated and decided not to bring charges.

Although Edwards was not publicly named at the time those allegations surfaced, his wife later revealed he was the news presenter investigated and said he was hospitalised for serious mental health issues. He never returned to the air but the BBC kept him on the payroll until he resigned in April for health reasons.

Edwards began his BBC career in Wales four decades ago. He went on to become lead anchor on the nighttime news for two decades and led the coverage of the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022 as well as election coverage. -AP



Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, right, and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz pose for a photo prior to their talks in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on Sunday. Pic: PTI

Columnists resign over fabricated articles

London: Three prominent columnists have resigned from the newspaper Jewish Chronicle over allegations it published fabricated articles about the Israel-Hamas war.

The resignations on Sunday came after the London-based newspaper removed multiple articles by a freelance journalist and apologized to readers, saying it conducted an investigation into the writer and was "not satisfied with some of his claims".

The newspaper did not specify which articles by the journalist, Elon Perry, were problematic. Among other claims, Perry — who described himself as a commando in the Israel Defense Forces — alleged that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar planned to smuggle himself and Israeli hostages out of Gaza through the border area with Egypt known as the Philadelphia corridor. The claims were questioned by Israeli media outlets. Long-time Jewish Chron-

icle columnist Jonathan Freedland resigned in protest on Sunday, saying "the latest scandal brings great disgrace on the paper" and that it has "departed from the traditions that built its reputation as the world's oldest Jewish newspaper". "Too often, the JC (Jewish Chronicle) reads like a partisan, ideological instrument, its judgements political rather than journalistic," Freedland wrote on the social media platform X. -AP

Papua New Guinea violence: 20-50 killed

Melbourne: Between 20 and 50 people have been killed in violence among illegal miners in Papua New Guinea, a United Nations official said Monday.

The fighting started days ago and is continuing in the Porgera Valley, near the site of a landslide in May estimated to have killed more than 2,000 people, according to the South Pacific island nation's government.

The U.N.'s humanitarian adviser for Papua New Guinea, Mate Bagossy, said

the death toll of at least 20 as of Sunday was based on information from community members and local authorities in Enga province in the nation's mountainous inland.

"We have confirmed that at least 20 people have been killed, but as per the last news that I have, it's likely up to 50 people," Bagossy told The Associated Press. "The fighting is continuing."

Bagossy did not have information on the numbers wounded. -AP

TikTok heads to court over US law

Washington: The US government and TikTok will go head-to-head in federal court on Monday as oral arguments begin in a consequential legal case that will determine if — or how — a popular social media platform used by nearly half of all Americans will continue.

Attorneys for the two sides will appear before a panel of judges at the federal appeals court in Washington. TikTok and its China-based parent company, ByteDance, are challenging a U.S. law that requires them to break ties or face a ban in the U.S. -AP

Singapore minister for inter-faith Diwali

Singapore: Senior Minister Teo Chee Hean, in his Diwali message, has urged Singaporeans to take part in festivals across all communities to foster unity and a shared sense of humanity.

He noted that Diwali's celebration of the triumph of light over darkness not only holds religious significance for Hindus, but is also a universal message that everyone can embrace. -AP

IS responsible for killing two Pak police officers

Quetta (Pakistan): The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the weekend bombing that killed two police officers in restive southwestern Pakistan, officials said on Monday.

Analysts say the latest violence is a sign of increasing coordination between Islamic militants and separatists who for years have been targeting security forces and civilians in the oil- and gas-rich

Balochistan province bordering Iran and Afghanistan.

The Islamic State group said in a statement on Sunday that it detonated an explosive device a day earlier targeting a Pakistani police vehicle in Kuchlak town near Quetta, the capital of Balochistan. Pakistani officials say the attack killed two officers and wounded two others on a highway. -AP

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"No more gimmicks. This government will tackle the smuggling gangs who trade the lives of men, women and children across borders. Martin Hewitt's unique expertise will protect our shores and bring order to the asylum system."

- Keir Starmer, Prime Minister, UK



I would have been a great President

New York: At the end of her new memoir, Hillary Clinton offers up what sounds like a far-off wish: "I hope I'm alive to see the United States elect a female president."

Turns out her book went to the printers a tad too soon. Clinton wrote that sentence before Kamala Harris became the Democratic presidential nominee, suddenly making that wish feel a whole lot more immediate. It was too late to update the print version of "Something Lost, Some-

In her memoir Hillary Clinton recounts telling one IB officer

thing Gained," which comes out this week, though the audiobook now has an epilogue.

Clinton, 76, has written memoirs before — from "Living History" in 2003 up through "What Happened?" in 2017, about the painful loss to Donald Trump that thwarted her own quest to be the first female U.S. president. This latest feels more intimate. Inspired by the song "Both Sides Now" by



one of her favorite musicians, Joni Mitchell, the book aims to be a snapshot

of how she sees the world now, she says — rather like catching up with her over dinner.

First lady, lawyer, senator, secretary of state, and of course presidential nominee. University professor, fledgling Broadway producer. Clinton has lived many chapters, and the book's actual chapters shift easily between eras.

She recounts in spy-novel-worthy detail an opera-

tion to save threatened women in Afghanistan as the Taliban were taking over in 2021, then reflects in the next chapter on the unique "sisterhood" of former first ladies, at one point defending Melania Trump from criticism of her attire at Rosalynn Carter's memorial service: "She came. That's what mattered."

But she makes no secret of her animosity toward Donald Trump. It's clear that in the "something lost" category of her title is the election that still hurts,

deeply. In one recent anecdote, she recounts running into a retired FBI official who apologized for his role in how the bureau handled the investigation over her emails, a probe that was reopened days before the election.

She writes that she stared for a minute, unable to speak. "I would have been a great president," she then told him, before walking off. Clinton spoke to The Associated Press last week ahead of her book's release. -AP

EDITORIAL

Constitutional Overreach?

India's Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar recently launched a scathing attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over remarks the latter made in the United States, accusing Gandhi of undermining the Indian Constitution. Gandhi, no stranger to controversy, has often aimed his verbal salvos at the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with his overseas speeches being thinly-veiled criticisms of India's democratic fabric under the Modi administration. But the Vice-President's public remarks has raised an important constitutional question: Should a figure occupying one of the highest apolitical offices in the land act as a de facto spokesperson for the ruling party?

Vice-presidents are meant to embody neutrality. According to the Constitution, India's Vice-President, like its President, is expected to rise above partisan squabbles, representing the entire polity rather than a single faction. The office of the Vice-President holds a unique position—it is second only to the President, and also serves as the chair of the Rajya Sabha, or the upper house of Parliament. In this role, impartiality is critical to maintain the balance of power between the government and the opposition.

Yet Dhankhar's outburst against Gandhi hints at a troubling erosion of this impartiality. While the Congress leader's comments about India's democracy and Constitution may warrant scrutiny, the Vice-President's role is not to censure political figures but to uphold the dignity of his office and the constitutional values he is tasked with safeguarding. When a vice-president adopts the language of a party loyalist, it undermines not only the office he holds but the very essence of India's democratic institutions.

This is not an isolated case. Indian politics has a long history of its vice-presidents showing leanings towards the ruling establishment. In the late 1970s, Vice-President B.D. Jatti, who briefly acted as President, was criticized for his perceived proximity to the ruling Congress party under Indira Gandhi, especially during the Emergency. Similarly, Gopal Swarup Pathak, Vice-President from 1969 to 1974, was accused of leaning towards Congress when he controversially withheld assent for a crucial bill, allegedly under pressure from the ruling party.

More recently, Hamid Ansari, who served as Vice-President from 2007 to 2017, was frequently targeted by the BJP for allegedly displaying a 'pro-Muslim' bias, though Ansari himself consistently maintained his commitment to the Constitution. To be sure, the criticisms Gandhi made abroad may well have crossed the line of diplomatic propriety, but such remarks should ideally be rebuffed by government ministers or party leaders—not the Vice-President. By involving himself in the day-to-day political fray, Dhankhar risks reducing his office to just another tool in the hands of the ruling establishment. Ultimately, the Vice-President is not a partisan warrior but a custodian of constitutional values. Regardless of whether Rahul Gandhi's criticisms of the government deserve rebuke, it is not the Vice-President's role to deliver it. When they act as political enforcers, they not only diminish their own role but also erode the public's trust in India's constitutional institutions.



By
Abhijit Mulye

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) is a national health insurance scheme by the Government of India, offering free healthcare coverage to low-income earners and a range of benefits. It covers a wide range of medical expenses, including medical examinations, treatment, and consultation; pre-hospitalisation up to three days; medicine and medical supplies; non-intensive and intensive care services; diagnostic and laboratory tests; medical implantation services; accommodation benefits; and food services. Unlike previous schemes, this one offers medical and allied services completely free.

More so, it comes with cashless access to healthcare services at empanelled public and private hospitals across India. Additionally, these benefits are port-

The Union Cabinet has decided to expand the scope of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) to provide health coverage to people aged 70 years and above, regardless of their income level. This is expected to change the entire face of the public healthcare sector.

PUBLIC INTEREST

Towards a Healthy India



able across India, so beneficiaries can visit any empanelled hospital for cashless treatment, and there are no restrictions on family size, age, or gender. However, it was observed that over a quarter of those admitted under the scheme were senior citizens, many of whom still faced barriers due to income restrictions. Therefore, the union cabinet's decision to remove income level conditions for Ayushman Bharat beneficiaries was a logical step to ensure broader access to healthcare, especially for the elderly.

While PM-JAY is a significant step toward addressing healthcare accessibility for low-income groups, the broader healthcare landscape in India remains a complex mix of progress and challenges. On one side, one would find glitzy steel and glass structures delivering high-tech medicare to the well-heeled, mostly urban Indian, while at the other end rests the ramshackle outposts in the remote reaches of the "other India," trying desperately to live up to their identity as health sub-centres, waiting to be transformed into shrines of health and wellness. With the rapid population growth,

diversity is likely to bring in even more complexity in the future. However, awareness, accessibility, affordability, and accountability have consistently been common challenges, while the availability of adequately trained manpower remains the primary hurdle in providing healthcare for all.

The glorious tradition of our public health dates back to the Indus Valley civilisation (5500-1300 BCE), where one finds mention of "Arogya" as reflecting "holistic well-being." However, the five A's mentioned earlier prevented us from attaining the goal of Arogya for all. The enormity of the goal catering to almost a fifth of the global population—was also an obvious cause.

Awareness is the foremost challenge. Adequate knowledge regarding breast-feeding practice was found in only one-third of the antenatal mothers in two studies. Moving ahead in the lifecycle, a study in urban Haryana found that only 11.3% of the adolescent girls studied knew correctly about key reproductive health issues.

A review article on geriatric morbidity

found that 20.3% of participants were aware of common causes of prevalent illness and their prevention. All these studies indicate a low level of health awareness in the Indian population. The remedy to this problem can be found in the recent success of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the way the issue of open defecation was made an issue of the past. A similar time-bound approach and timely interventions at the school level would help resolve this problem.

There is hardly any diversity of opinions that other issues of accessible, affordable, and accountable health facilities would be resolved with the advancement of schemes like PM-JAY. What remains is the issue of the availability of an adequately trained workforce. With the present government's thrust on skills training and the rapid increase in the training facilities for medical and paramedical students across the country, the issue of the availability of workforce is expected to be resolved very soon.

While initiatives like PM-JAY are tackling domestic healthcare challenges, they also have broader implications. As India enhances its healthcare infrastructure and access for its citizens, it simultaneously establishes itself as a leading destination for medical tourism. Factors such as cost-effective treatments, advanced technology, a diverse range of specialities, alternative medicine options, English language proficiency, and ease of travel have all contributed to the growth of India's medical tourism industry.

While India's healthcare sector is evolving with initiatives like PM-JAY and the rise of medical tourism, the journey toward providing comprehensive, accessible, and affordable healthcare for all is far from over. Addressing the systemic challenges of manpower shortages, infrastructure gaps, and health awareness will be key to building a more equitable healthcare system. With continued investment and innovative solutions, India has the potential to transform not just as a leader in medical tourism but also as a country that ensures quality healthcare for all its citizens.

TURNING POINT

What If Aurangzeb Had Lost the War of Succession?



By
Shoumojit Banerjee

Counterfactual history, though generally disdained by scholars, can be valuable in exploring alternate historical outcomes by respecting historical evidence as stressed by historian Niall Ferguson.

While the question of what might have happened had Aurangzeb lost the 'War of Succession' (1658-59) may seem asinine, contemplating an alternate outcome is fascinating as it doubtless would have altered the trajectory of Indian history. Aurangzeb's triumph over his elder brother Dara Shikoh in the decisive battles of Dharmat, Samugarh, and Deorai paved the way for his 49-year reign, marked by territorial expansion and religious orthodoxy.

Aurangzeb's military prowess was undeniable. His victories were not the result of mere luck, but of superior generalship, tactical expertise, and an ability to remain calm under pressure. His defeat of not only Dara but also his other brothers, Shah Shuja and Murad Baksh, set the stage for his reign, which historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar describes as bringing the Mughal Empire to its greatest extent. In his monumental five-volume 'History of Aurangzeb' (1912-24), Sarkar notes how Aurangzeb's empire stretched from Ghazni to Chitragong and Kashmir to the Karnataka—an expanse unmatched by any Indian state prior to British rule.

Yet, the cost of this expansion was immense and the socio-religious tensions it fostered left lasting scars on the subcontinent. Had Dara Shikoh won, the ethos of the empire would



have been fundamentally different. Known for his deep intellectual curiosity and his commitment to fostering religious inclusivity, his translation of the Upanishads, the ancient Hindu philosophical texts, from Sanskrit into Persian in Surr-e-Akbar ("The Greatest Mystery"), aimed to reconcile the mystical elements of Hinduism with Islam. He boldly asserted that the Upanishads held the key to understanding the esoteric aspects of the Quran, a view that placed him at odds with the more orthodox Islamic factions of the Mughal court.

Dara's deep respect for Hindu culture and close relationships with Rajput rulers set him apart from Aurangzeb, who later alienated the Rajputs with his aggressive policies. It is conceivable that the Rajput revolt of 1679, which saw Durgadas Rathore rise against Aurangzeb after the Mughal emperor attempted to annex Marwar, would never have occurred under Dara's rule.

Beyond the Rajput rebellion, the protracted Mughal-Maratha war in the Deccan (1681-1707), which bled the empire of its wealth and resources, could also have been avoided. Aurangzeb's execution of Chhatrapati Sambhaji in 1689 incited widespread resistance among the Marathas, turning the Deccan into a quagmire that drained Mughal coffers and military

might. Sarkar, in his comparison of this conflict to Napoleon's Peninsular War, remarked that "the Deccani ulcer killed Aurangzeb." A more diplomatically inclined Dara might have sought a peaceful resolution to the Deccan problem, sparing the empire from this debilitating war.

The execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675 solidified Sikh resistance, with Guru Gobind Singh transforming the Sikhs into a militant community through the founding of the Khalsa in 1699. Dara's more inclusive policies might have prevented this radicalization, preserving the Sikhs as a spiritual movement rather than a military force.

The Jat rebellion in Agra, led by Churaman and later his nephew Badan Singh, was another consequence of Aurangzeb's oppressive rule. The Jats, emboldened by the emperor's preoccupation with other fronts, rose in defiance, destabilizing Mughal authority in northern India.

While François Bernier, the 17th-century French physician and traveller, dismissed Dara as politically naïve, Sarkar was critical of Dara's limitations as a ruler of men. Nonetheless, had he triumphed, he would have left behind his vision for a pluralistic India. Aurangzeb's orthodox reign, by contrast, left the empire weakened by internal strife, setting the stage for its eventual decline.

STATES WATCH

Intense Wrestling Among Parties For Future

The upcoming Haryana Assembly election, already a significant battleground for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the opposition, has gained a new dose of star power. The state, known for its history of agricultural protests and caste-based politics, now finds its electoral stage glamorized by the entry of two iconic women: Vinesh Phogat and Kavita Dalal. Both hailing from Haryana's wrestling heartland, they have garnered national fame and international accolades, with Phogat as a Commonwealth Games gold medalist and Dalal, (known by her moniker Kavita 'WWE' Dalal) as a professional wrestling sensation.

Their entry has injected a new sense of excitement into an election that was already heating up due to internal fractures within the BJP and the implosion of unity talks between the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

In the state's Julana Assembly constituency, the stage is set for a humdinger: The seat, located in Jind district, will witness a three-way contest in the upcoming elections, with Congress's Vinesh Phogat pitted against BJP's Capt. Yogesh Bairagi and the AAP's Kavita Dalal.

Phogat, who snared headlines recently, retired from wrestling and

The fiercely contested Assembly election is becoming a test not only for individual candidates but also for the broader strategies of regional parties grappling with internal dynamics.

stepped into the political ring amid the Paris Olympics controversy.

Her public fight against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president, Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh over allegations of sexual harassment, has ignited a broader debate about systemic corruption in Indian sports. However, key supporters from her previous struggles, including fellow wrestlers Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik, have notably stayed away from her campaign.

Vij, a senior party leader and minister in the current government, has made no secret of his desire to stake a claim for the Chief Minister's post. Vij, a strongman politician with a dedicated voter base, has openly signalled dissatisfaction with the party's decision to project Manohar Lal Khattar as the face of the BJP in Haryana. Khattar, who has been Chief Minister since 2014, is seen as a technocrat with a focus on administrative reforms. However, his low-key persona has often left him vulnerable to internal challenges, particularly from more charismatic leaders like Vij.

Vij's challenge is more than just a power struggle; it reflects the deeper rifts within the BJP's Haryana unit.

The party, which has long banked on the strength of its centralized leadership under Narendra Modi, now finds itself facing dissent from a faction that believes Khattar's mild-mannered leadership is not enough to inspire the party's base in a politically charged state like Haryana.

For the BJP, the stakes are high. Losing Haryana would signal a weakening grip over northern India. But Vij's rebellion threatens to split the party's vote bank at a time when it can least afford such distractions. If Vij continues to push his claim for leadership, the BJP could find itself fighting not just a position, but itself.

On ground, Phogat's star power is undeniable. Chanting crowds often refer to her as the future sports minister. Meanwhile, Kavita Dalal, having been actively preparing for these elections since 2022, has framed Phogat as an 'outsider' parachuting into the constituency to exploit the recent wrestling controversy for political gain.

Dalal claims Phogat's family even attempted to convince her to withdraw her nomination, a gesture she firmly rejected.

The tussle between the two candidates is a microcosm of the tensions between the Congress and the AAP after the failure of their alliance talks in Haryana.

Meanwhile, the ruling BJP is struggling to cope the headwinds of rebellion within its own ranks. Anil

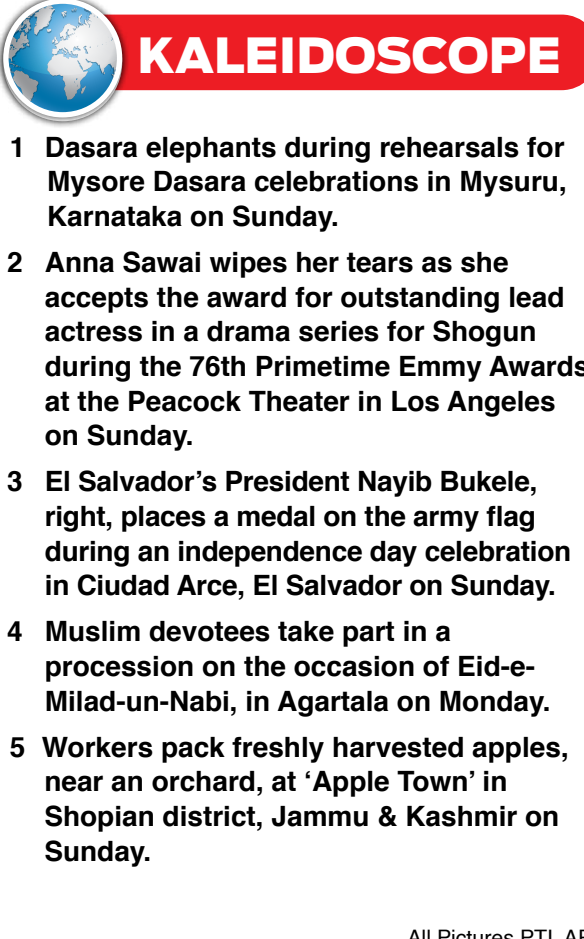
Haryana

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KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 Dasara elephants during rehearsals for Mysore Dasara celebrations in Mysuru, Karnataka on Sunday.
- 2 Anna Sawai wipes her tears as she accepts the award for outstanding lead actress in a drama series for Shogun during the 76th Primetime Emmy Awards at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles on Sunday.
- 3 El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele, right, places a medal on the army flag during an independence day celebration in Ciudad Arce, El Salvador on Sunday.
- 4 Muslim devotees take part in a procession on the occasion of Eid-Milad-un-Nabi, in Agartala on Monday.
- 5 Workers pack freshly harvested apples, near an orchard, at 'Apple Town' in Shopian district, Jammu & Kashmir on Sunday.

All Pictures PTI, AP

EXPLAINER

What's at stake in Sri Lanka's first presidential vote since its economic meltdown?

Sri Lanka will hold its presidential election on Sept. 21 in a crucial vote that will decide the future of the South Asian nation still struggling to recover from its economic collapse in 2022, which provoked mass protests and forced the former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee the country and later resign.

The election is seen as a referendum on President Ranil Wickremesinghe's two-year-long rule that has overseen a fragile recovery of the country's economy.

He faces a tough challenge from the leader of the opposition in parliament, as well as from a left-leaning politician with a powerful alliance, who is gaining popularity among young voters.

Who are the main candidates?

Wickremesinghe, whose United National Party has been weakened by a split, is running as an independent candidate. Even though Wickremesinghe remains unpopular for carrying out austerity measures — including sharp tax hikes — in exchange for an International Monetary Fund bailout, he is hoping to gain votes from his success in largely abating the shortage of essentials such as fuel, cooking gas, medicines and food. But Wickremesinghe — a six-time Prime Minister — is at a disadvantage because he belongs to the old guard, whom Sri Lankans blame for the economic collapse.

Anura Kumara Disanayake, the leader of a Marxist-led coalition named National People's Power, is fast emerging as a key challenger to Wickremesinghe due to his popularity among the young people fed up with corruption that they be-



lieve caused the economic crisis. He is also drawing support from some voters who participated in the 2022 protests demanding the resignation of the then-President Rajapaksa.

Although he has been a leftist in the past, Disanayake now professes economic freedom and promises welfare measures to help the working class. Political analysts say he is a strong contender because, unlike his rivals, he is not linked with the business and political elites who ran the country in the past.

Wickremesinghe's other challenger is Sajith Premadasa, the incumbent president's former deputy and leader of his breakaway party, United People's Power. Premadasa promises to continue with the IMF program but with chang-

17 No of Sri Lanka's eligible people for voting

22 Sri Lanka's population

38 No of candidates running for office

es to lessen the burden on poor people. He has also promised a degree of power devolution to the minority Tamil community, who make up about 11 per cent of the country's population. In return, Premadasa has secured the support of a strong Tamil political bloc.

How does the election work?

Votes will be cast throughout the day on September 21, with

results expected to be out by evening the following day.

Voters can select three candidates from the ballot paper in the order of their preference. The first preferences will be counted first and the candidate who secures more than 50 per cent of the valid votes will be declared winner.

If there is no clear winner, the first two candidates will be retained in the race and ballot papers that chose other candi-

dates for No. 1 will be checked to see if either of the top two contenders are their second or third preference. Those votes will be added to the tally of the remaining two candidates. The candidate who gets the highest number will be declared the winner.

Sri Lanka has a powerful executive presidential system with the President being the head of state, government, cabinet and the armed forces. The prime minister has some powers like recommending Cabinet ministers.

There are no reliable opinion polls to suggest which candidate is in the lead, but many observers say Disanayake has been gaining popularity.

Veeragathy Thanabalasingham, a senior journalist and political observer, said while it

What about the Rajapaksa family?

Namal Rajapaksa, the heir apparent to the once-powerful Rajapaksa clan, is also contesting. Namal's candidacy will test whether his powerful clan — which has produced two presidents — can retain its hold on the country after many of its members were pushed into the political wilderness. His father, Mahinda Rajapaksa, is credited with crushing the Tamil armed separatist movement in 2009.



Namal is promising to ease the tax burden on Sri Lankans and build a strong economy, saying its meltdown in 2022 was largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

appeared to be a "two-horse race" between Premadasa and Disanayake in early September, campaigning in the final weeks could place all three candidates on equal ground.

What are the big issues?

Sri Lanka's economy is the key issue in the election. Under Wickremesinghe, important economic figures have improved: Inflation dropped below 5 per cent from 70 per cent in 2022, interest rates were lowered, and foreign reserves grew. A 2 per cent growth is predicted for 2024, the highest since the economic collapse, but financial benefits have not reached the common

people, many of whom are affected by high living costs. Businesses and professionals are complaining of high taxes.

While Wickremesinghe says that the IMF agreement can't be significantly changed, his rivals say they will try to renegotiate it to ease the burden on the public.

A large section of the population is also unhappy because it believes Wickremesinghe's administration protected the Rajapaksa family, which has been accused of economic mismanagement and corruption. Many feel the family should be held accountable.

India beats Korea 4-1, takes on China in ACT final



Hulunbuir (China): Skipper Harmanpreet Singh's sublime form resulted in twin strikes as defending champions India entered the final of the Hero Asian Champions Trophy with a clinical 4-1 win against South Korea in the semi-final here on Monday.

India scored through Uttam Singh (13th minute), skipper Harmanpreet Singh (19th, 45th) and Jarmanpreet Singh (32nd), while Korea's lone goal came from through Yang Jihun (33rd)'s penalty corner conversion.

India will take on hosts China in Tuesday's final. Earlier in the day, China defeated Pakistan 2-0 via shoot-out in the first semi-

final after the two teams finished 1-1 at the end of regulation 60 minutes.

In the previous league stage encounter between the two finalists, India prevailed 3-0.

Pakistan and Korea will face off in the third place classification match which will also be played on Tuesday.

Meanwhile in the fifth-sixth place classification match, Japan beat Malaysia 4-2 in shoot-out following a 4-4 stalemate in normal time.

In the second semifinal as expected, the Indians started on the offensive and tested the Korean defence with persistent attacks from the word go.

The Koreans, on the other hand, were content to sit back and defend and rely on sporadic counter attacks.

Abhishek came tantalisingly close to handing India the lead in the fourth minute but his reverse hit was brilliantly saved by Korean goalkeeper Kim Jaehan.

The Indian made promising build ups and penetrated the Korean circle on consistent basis in the first quarter.

India's attacking intent finally paid off in the 13th minute when Uttam positioned himself at the right place at the right time to tap in Arajeet Singh Hundal's supply from the right.

A minute from the

first break, Korea secured back-to-back penalty corners but failed to utilise the chances.

Four minutes into the second quarter, India secured their first penalty corner and Harmanpreet scored his sixth goal of the tournament to hand his side a 2-0 lead.

At the stroke of half-time, custodian Suraj Karkera came out of his line to save an effort from the opposition player.

India continued in the same vein after the change of ends and extended their lead two minutes into the third quarter.

A brilliant scoop from Sumit from the right finds Jarmanpreet just outside the circle on the left flank and the latter neatly collected the ball and took a step or two to get inside the circle and slap the ball into the Korean goal to extend India's lead.

But Korea pulled one back a minute later from a penalty corner through the tournament's top-scorer Yang Jihun.

The goal hardly bothered the Indians as they continued their attacking game and dominated the share of exchanges.

With a second left for the third quarter, India secured another penalty corner when Korean goalkeeper Jaehan was shown the yellow card for handling the ball out side the circle, and Harmanpreet made no mistake to extend the lead.

Eight minutes from the final hooter, India's second goalkeeper Karkera made a fine double save to deny Park Cheoleon, but the Koreans secured a penalty corner which went in vain.

Thereafter, it was controlled show from the Indians as they defended their lead with consummate ease to march into their fifth final appearance in the tournament.

-PTI



India wins four bronze at WSC

New Delhi: India won four bronze medals and earned 12 medallions of excellence at the World Skills Competition in Lyon, France, held from September 10-15.

Ashwitha Police, who contested in patisserie and confectionery category, also won the Best of Nation Award.

The other medal winners are Dhrumilkumar Dhirendrakumar Gandhi and Sathyajith Balakrishnan (Industry 4.0), Joethir Adithya Krishnapriya Ravikumara (Hotel Reception), and Amaresh Kumar Sahu (Renewable Energy).

Jayant Chaudhary, Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, said, "This is a moment of immense pride for our country.

The Bronze medals and Medallions of Excellence are not just personal triumphs but a testament to the nation's growing emphasis on skills.

"These young competitors have not only showcased their individual brilliance but also reaffirmed India's commitment to achieving global excellence in skills development".

WorldSkills Lyon 2024 saw more than 1,400 participants from over 70 countries competing in diverse categories.

India competed in 52 skills against countries like China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Germany, Brazil, Australia, Colombia, Denmark, France, the UK, South Africa, Switzerland, and the USA.

-PTI

Sakshi, Aman, Geeta announce Wrestling League



New Delhi: Olympic medalists Sakshi Malik and Aman Sehrawat, along with former world championship bronze-winner Geeta Phogat, on Monday announced that they would soon launch a Wrestling League (WCSL) for the country's budding grapplers but are yet to get the national federation's backing for it.

Sakshi, along with Bajrang Punia and Vinesh Phogat, had spearheaded the wrestlers' protest against ousted Wrestling Federation of India President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who was accused of sexual harassment.

She has, however, distanced herself from the latter two after they took the political plunge by joining Congress ahead of next month's Haryana assembly elections.

She won the 58kg bronze in 2016 Rio Olympics, and announced the project with Phogat, a 55kg bronze winner in 2012 World Championships through their social media handles. The two, while announcing that they had Paris Games bronze-winner Aman on board, did not provide any details.

Phogat told PTI that she is hopeful of support from the federation and the government.

"We are doing it for the players, for their benefit. That is the idea and vision,

Sakshi and I have been planning this League for long. Soon it will take a final shape. We have not yet spoken to the WFI but it would be great if WFI and government support us. It will be the first league that will be operated only by the players.

Geeta Phogat

so no one should have any problem with it. It's a proud moment for us.

We won't stop anyone from getting involved in it, if WFI or government comes on board, even better. We have not yet spoken to them.

"There will be international wrestlers, and coaches involved, so it should help our junior wrestlers. They will get good exposure."

Sakshi, who retired from wrestling after Sharan Singh's close aide Sanjay Singh became WFI head, said she hopes to give back to the sport through this initiative.

-PTI



Cricketers Ravindra Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin during a training session ahead of the first Test cricket match against Bangladesh, at MA Chidambaram Stadium, in Chennai on Monday. Pic: PTI

Indian men crush Azerbaijan, women beat Kazakhstan in Chess Olympiad

Budapest : Backed by the two in-form stars in World Championship challenger D Gukesh and Arjun Erigaise, the Indian men scored a 3-1 victory over Azerbaijan in the fifth round of the 45th Chess Olympiad here.

It seems like Gukesh and Arjun can do nothing wrong in this Olympiad as they overpowered Aydin Sulemanli and Rauf Mamedov respectively with their white pieces in quick time.

Praggnanandhaa played another draw on board two to only ensure an Indian victory while Vidit Gujrathi played out a draw with Shakhriyar Mamedyarov in a marathon game to complete the triumph.

After scoring the fifth victory on the trot, the Indian men maintained a



clean slate on ten points and they were joined by Vietnam who continued with their impressive show and downed Poland 2.5-1.5.

The other two teams that joined the leaders' pack were China and Hungary who scored identical 2.5-1.5 victories over Spain and Ukraine respectively.

With six rounds still to come in the biggest chess event, Magnus Carlsen's

many pundits believed her position to be winning against Bibisara Assaubayeva.

On the fourth board Vantika Agarwal yet again played the anchor and won a clean game with white pieces against Alua Nurman while Xeniya Balabayeva split the point with Divya Deshmukh.

With the scores tied at 2-2 it was Vaishali's turn to come up triumphs for the team and she outwitted Meruert Kamalidenova.

Team India joined Armenia and Mongolia in the lead on ten points. Armenia halted the Chinese party for now handing them a 2.5-1.5 defeat while Mongolia proved superior to United States with a similar score.

The three leaders have 10 points apiece and they are

now followed by Georgia and Poland a half point behind.

Gukesh scored his fourth victory in a row at the expense of Sulemanli. The World championship challenger got a huge middle game advantage with scattered black pieces and a weak king and made no mistakes in converting that in to a full point.

Arjun is the only Indian who has played all five games thus far and the primary reason is his ability to complicate matters with either colour. Up against Mamedov, it was Sicilian Dragon structure wherein Arjun converted to a complicated endgame and then his precise calculation helped him carve out his fifth win as many games.

-PTI

Golfer Sharma finishes T-42nd

Dublin: Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma had a choppy back nine leading to a round of 1-over 72 as he finished a disappointing T-42nd at the Amgen Irish Open at Royal County Down.

Sharma, who was in the top-15 after the first two days, ended with a total of 4-over 288.

He parred through the front nine and two more holes before finding his first birdie on the 12th.

He bogeyed 13th and the 15th but birdied 16th only to drop a shot on 17th and close with a par.

Meanwhile, Rasmus Hojgaard holed out twice and produced a stunning finish with four birdies in last five holes as he beat local favourite Rory McIlroy.

-PTI

Players working on mental strength, says Harmanpreet

Mumbai: Indian players have been working on their mental strength for a "long time" which should help the team in overcoming hurdles, says skipper Harmanpreet Kaur ahead of the upcoming women's T20 World Cup next month.

India, who finished as runner-up in the 2020 edition of the tournament, are placed in Group A along with six-time winners and defending champions Australia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

Kaur said on Monday that the Indian players have been working on the mental aspect to bring out their best in crucial moments.

"We have been working on mental strength for a long time. The last 3-4 overs are the most crucial. T20 cricket is not a small format; at the end of the day, you are playing 40 overs," Kaur told Star Sports.

"In the last 4-5 overs, the team that is mentally strong wins the

match. We have been focusing on this for a while. If we can remain mentally stable in those final five overs, we can execute what's best for us."

India's performances in summit clashes have featured in discussions given the team lost in the 2020 final by 85 runs to Australia, while England had pipped them by a mere nine runs in the 2017 ODI World Cup final.

Even in the Commonwealth Games 2022, Australia eked out a nine-run win to clinch the gold medal despite a spirited show with the bat from India in the final, with Kaur's team settling for the silver.

"We are working on those aspects, and hopefully, we will overcome this hurdle in the tournament," she added.

India's campaign begins on October 4 against New Zealand followed by the clash against arch-rivals Pakistan on October 6.

India, who lost to Sri Lanka in

the women's Asia Cup final earlier this year, will take on the team from the island nation on October 9 and each of their first three group stage matches will be played in Dubai.

India's final group match against Australia will be played at Sharjah on October 13.

Kaur said the team's combination of players from different states in the country gives an opportunity to learn further.

"All the players in our team come from different states.

It feels good when you see so many different characters in the team. People from various states share the dressing room, and you get to learn about their cultures.

"I think you can only experience that in sports, not in any other career," Kaur added.



-PTI