

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Ten die in Marathwada

By Correspondent

Mumbai: At least ten persons from Marathwada region of Maharashtra pounded by heavy rains lost their lives over the last three days, as per primary assessment by authorities.

After battering the region for three consecutive days since September 1, the rain took a break after Tuesday evening.

The recent heavy rainfall damaged crops on nearly 11.67 lakh hectares of land in seven districts, with Nanded witnessing the maximum impact of nature's fury.

Five individuals from Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, two in Hingoli, and one each in Latur, Beed, and Jalna died since September 1, as per the primary survey report.



NUMBERS SPEAK

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 11.67 lakh hectares | Area on which crops are damaged |
| 7 | No of districts affected |
| 284 | No of revenue circles affected |
| 883 | No of villages affected |
| 14.62 lakh | No of farmers affected |
| 523 | No of animals died |
| 1,126 | No of houses damaged |

The devastation apart, the rains have positively impacted water storage levels in the Marathwada region. The Jayakwadi Dam,

which supplies water for industry, agriculture, and drinking purposes in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar and neighbouring Jalna district, has reached 90 per cent of its storage capacity.

Overall, the average storage in eleven major projects across the Marathwada region has risen to 77.63 per cent.

The irrigation department report further stated that none of the projects in the region is now in dead storage, indicating improved water availability.

Krishna Janmabhoomi Land Muslim side moves SC

New Delhi: The Muslim side has moved the Supreme Court against the Allahabad High Court order rejecting their plea challenging the maintainability of 18 cases related to the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah dispute in Mathura.

The plea challenging the August 1 order of the high court has been filed in the apex court by the Committee of Management Trust, Shahi Masjid Idgah through advocate 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 and 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.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed by members of Indian community upon his arrival, in Singapore on Wednesday. Pic: PTI

Woman dies after being hit by SUV

By Correspondent

Mumbai: A 26-year-old woman died after being hit by a Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) in Malad area of Mumbai, police said on Wednesday.

The accident occurred in Gudiya Pada locality on Tuesday night, following

which the police arrested the SUV driver, who is a merchant navy officer, an official said.

The woman, identified as Shahana Kaaazi, was walking when she was hit by a Ford Endeavor around 10 pm. After the accident, the accused himself took the woman to a nearby

hospital, where she died during treatment," the official of Malad police station said.

The accused, Anup Sinha, was booked under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and was placed under arrest. His vehicle was also seized by the police,

he said.

The accused has an office in Andheri and he was on leave when the incident occurred, he added.

The police have collected his blood sample to ascertain whether he was driving under the influence of liquor, the official said.

No pension to defector MLAs

Shimla: In an unprecedented move, the Himachal Pradesh Assembly on Wednesday passed an amended Bill to stop pensions of members disqualified under the anti-defection law.

Tightening the noose on defectors, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Tuesday introduced the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly (Allowances and Pension of Members) Amendment Bill, 2024, that aims to deter and discourage MLAs from defecting parties by discontinuing

their pension. "A person shall not be entitled to a pension under the Act if he has been disqualified at any point of time under the tenth schedule of the Constitution (anti-defection law)." The Bill also includes provisions for recovery of pension drawn by legislators who are disqualified under this amendment.

Under Section 6B of the Act, every legislator who has served for any period up to five years is entitled to a pension of Rs 36,000 per month. Section 6(e) further states that every legislator

will be given an additional pension of Rs 1,000 per month for every year in excess of the period of the first term.

The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution is designed to prevent political defections. The anti-defection law was passed by Parliament in 1985. Six Congress MLAs — Sudhir Sharma, Ravi Thakur, Rajinder Rana, Inder Dutt Lakhnani, Chetanya Sharma, and Devinder Kumar — were disqualified in February this year under the anti-defection law for defying a party whip.

Indian origin man dies in minors' attack

London: A couple of days after five minors assaulted him an 80-year-old Indian-origin man died on Wednesday. The London Police have launched a murder investigation and have arrested the minors.

Bhim Kohli was assaulted while walking his dog in Franklin Park of Braintree Town. The five arrested minors include a 14-year-old boy and girl, as well as a 12-year-old boy and two 12-year-old girls.

Peace pact with Tripura surgent groups

New Delhi: The government is committed for all-round development of the northeastern region, especially tribals, while preserving their culture, language and identity, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday.

He also said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not only bridged the gap between the Northeast and Delhi by connecting them through roads, railways and flights, but has also bridged the gap between hearts.

Shah was addressing an event where a peace agreement was signed between the central and Tripura governments and two insurgent groups of the state here at North block aiming to end violence and bring peace in the northeastern state.

Shah said a new milestone is set today in Tripura's ongoing journey towards peace and progress with the signing of the agreement.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha and senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the state government were also present during the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement with the representatives of National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF).

"The Modi government is committed for the overall development of the Northeast, especially the tribal groups, through development while preserving their culture, language and identity," he said.

Shah said the government has given highest priority to peace and development in the northeastern region. "All peace agreements



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha and others during the signing of peace agreement between central and Tripura governments and two insurgent groups NLFT and ATTF, in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Amit Shah said around 10,000 people have given up arms and joined the mainstream due to these agreements. He said over 328 insurgents will give up arms and join the mainstream and Rs 250 crore has been approved for development of area.

The signing of this agreement is a major milestone in fulfilling the resolve taken by the Modi government to develop the entire Northeast by combining the 'Ashtalakshmi' concept and 'Purvodaya'.

- Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

BJP defeats AAP in MCD

New Delhi: The BJP on Wednesday defeated the AAP in the MCD zonal ward polls, sealing its dominance in the highest decision making body of the civic agency -- the standing committee.

The BJP bagged the posts of chairman, deputy chairman of the zonal-level ward committees, and one member each for standing committee in seven of 12 zones, restricting AAP to five zones in the keenly contested poll. Delhi mayor Shelly Oberoi, said the election would be considered "null and void".

Man detained for protest appeal

Mumbai: A 27-year-old social media influencer was detained by the Mumbai Police on Wednesday for allegedly posting inflammatory content in support of Kangana Ranaut-starrer "Emergency" movie, and trying to incite discord between the Sikh and Muslim communities.

The detained individual has been identified as Faizan Abdul Zameer Ansari, a police official said.

According to a police official, Ansari's posts were potentially designed to create communal tension.

His message, which included an invitation for a protest purportedly organised by the Muslim community, was associated with the film's release.

The controversial post claimed that thousands of Muslims from Mumbai would gather outside Mahim dargah to protest on Wednesday in support of the film, the police official said, adding that the social media post also included Ansari's mobile number, which drew the attention of the police.

An FIR was registered against Ansari under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for spreading hatred among communities at Mahim police station and further investigation is underway.

Earlier in the day, the Bombay High Court refused to issue any orders to the censor board for the grant of a certificate for 'Emergency', which means the film is likely to miss its scheduled release on September 6.

The biographical drama is caught up in a controversy after Sikh organisations, including the Shiromani Akali Dal, alleged misrepresentation of the community and projecting incorrect historical facts.

-PTI

Complaints Of Sexual Harassment In Industry Karnataka film fraternity urges CM to form panel

Bengaluru: Over 100 film professionals on Wednesday urged the Karnataka government to appoint a committee led by a retired judge to address the sexual harassment issue in the Kannada film industry.

In a letter addressed to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, sent on behalf of Film Industry for Rights & Equality (FIRE), 153 film professionals, including actors Kiccha Sudeep and Ramya, demanded the government to "conduct a thorough investigation into the systematic issues faced by women in KFI, including sexual harassment".

The letter, dated September 4, comes in the wake of the Justice K Hema Committee report that is taking the Malayalam film industry by storm with many survivors coming forward to name the preparators.

FIRE, led by film director, screenwriter and lyricist Kavitha Lankesh, has been pushing for reform in the Kannada film industry following the #metoo wave as well.

FIRE also urged the government to "develop and recommend policies to ensure a healthy and

equitable work environment for all women in the industry."

It wanted a retired judge of the High Court or Supreme Court "who has demonstrated a strong commitment to gender justice over her/his years of service be appointed to head the committee."

Incidentally, FIRE has been instrumental in establishing India's first-

ever film industry National Complaints Committee (ICC), advocating for survivors of sexual harassment.

"We recognise that more comprehensive measures are needed to create a safe and equitable working environment for all women in the industry," said the letter.

Despite many attempts to reach Lankesh over the

phone, she was unavailable for comment.

The film fraternity in Kerala is already under fire after the Justice Hema Committee report highlighted several instances of sexual harassment in the industry. A similar kind of complaints are voiced in Tamil and Bengali film industry as well.

-PTI

Kavitha Lankesh



On Devendra Fadnavis:

Despite the fact, Fadnavis made a different statement, in which he indicated that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj did not commit the act of looting (Surat). The deputy CM also alleged that the Congress spread wrong history about Shivaji Maharaj.

It is the right of historians to present facts after years of research. Yesterday, (noted historian-author) Jaisingh Rao Pawar said that not just once, but Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj carried out a mission to Surat twice. The intention to ride to Surat was different and it was explained by Jaisingh Rao Pawar. Another historian Indrajit Sawant also echoed his opinion.

It means no one should present a wrong history before the people and the young generation.

Pawar levels fresh attack on Fadnavis

By Correspondent

Mumbai: NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar on Wednesday levelled another attack on Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis over an interpretation of historical events. Pawar also demanded that Maharashtra should replicate the anti-rape bill passed by the West Bengal Assembly on Tuesday.

**On Anti-rape bill:**

Maharashtra should consider replicating the bill passed by the West Bengal Assembly. My party supports such a bill. There will be no legislature session in Maharashtra now since Assembly polls will be held soon. We will highlight this point in our election campaign and mention it in the poll manifesto as well.

On MVA's CM face

The decision can be made based on numbers after the poll results. As of today, we are winning the election. There is no need to announce any CM candidate before the election. MVA leaders should sit for talks regarding seat sharing from September 7 to 9.

On collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue:

"The sculptor had never executed such a big work before and yet it was given to him. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde attributed the incident to strong winds. But at the Gateway of India in Mumbai, a statue of Shivaji Maharaj was installed by the state's first Chief Minister Yashwantrao Chavan sixty years ago, and that statue is still standing strong."

Prima-facie, those who were given the work to build the statue had no experience. It was not appropriate to give such a big work to them and now after that incident, people having faith in Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj are restless.

Deshmukh calls CBI case 'baseless'

Nagpur: NCP (SP) leader Anil Deshmukh on Wednesday claimed the Central Bureau of Investigation has registered a new "baseless" case against him, and attributed the "conspiracy" to Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis getting panicked.

Deshmukh, a former state home minister, is already facing a CBI case for alleged corruption and another case registered by the Enforcement Directorate.

"Another baseless case has been filed against me by the CBI. This conspiracy has started as Fadnavis has panicked after seeing the people's mandate. I am not scared at all by such threats and pressure," he said, adding that he has vowed to fight against the BJP's "repressive rule". People should contemplate how Fadnavis was indulging in "pervasive and low-level" politics, Deshmukh said. -PTI

Help women achieve their dreams, says President

Udgir (Latur): President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said economic empowerment of women will lead to the country's progress and development, and asked men to help women achieve their dreams by identifying their capabilities.

Stating that respecting women has been a part of Indian culture, she expressed happiness over the growing participation of women in the country's workforce.

Murmu was addressing a gathering at Udgir in Maharashtra's Latur district, where beneficiaries of the 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana' and 'Shasan Aplya Dari' pro-

grammes of the Eknath Shinde-led government were given certificates. "As per a study conducted by the Indian govern-

ment, the participation of women in the country's workforce has significantly increased. With the help of the government, women

are contributing in every sphere. But there is a need to put more effort into this so that their participation rises further," the president said.

Men should identify the capabilities of women and help them fulfil their dreams. Every woman reaches her goal after many hurdles. But hurdles created for a woman can also decrease the speed of the country's growth, she said.

"We call our country 'matrubhoomi' (motherland) and this way we show our respect towards women. Respecting women has been a part of our culture and it should also be reflected in the value system

This move of the state government is commendable. It is working for social, financial, educational development and women should take advantage of it, become independent and contribute towards the development of the state and the country.

- Droupadi Murmu, President

of every family," she said.

Talking about the government schemes, she said the state was providing stipend to students during their apprenticeship,



President Droupadi Murmu and Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde pay tribute to a statue of lord Buddha during inauguration of Buddha Vihar accompanied with a meditation centre, in Udgir on Wednesday.

which will give them confidence.

Women comprise half of the country's population.

Just as they are in the forefront in running their families, they should also contribute to the country, she

said. "Economic empowerment of women will lead to the country's progress and development," she said.



Idols of Lord Ganesh being transported through trains ahead of Ganesh Chaturthi festival, at a railway station in Solapur on Wednesday. Pic: PTI

Award to health department

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Health Department has been awarded "The World Records of Excellence" for successfully organising the Maha

Arogya Camp at Pandharpur and providing patient care to more than 15 lakh poor people. The International Books of Records has given this excellence award. The state health department

organised 'Arogyachi Wari, Pandhari Chi Dari'—for the second consecutive year. The health services were provided to 15,12,774 people with the help of over 7,500 doctors and paramedical

staff who were part of Maha Arogya Camp. On the occasion of every Ashadhi Ekdashi, the public health department organises free health check-up.

Toll exempted for Konkani devotees

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government has exempted toll for Lord Ganesh devotees going to celebrate Ganeshotsav in Konkani. This exemption of toll will be valid on Mumbai-Bangalore National Highway, Mumbai-Goa National Highway and all other roads under PWD ministry leading to Konkani. The CMO announced on Wednesday.

Besides, there will be additional toll exemption on above mentioned routes between September 5 and September 19.

For this toll exemption concession, road toll waiver pass in the form of stickers with the content 'Ganeshotsav 2024, Konkani Darshan', vehicle number, driver's name written on it and those stickers as per required number should be submitted to Transport Department, Traffic Police/Police, concerned Regional Transport Department in coordination with police station, traffic police station and R.T.O. Orders have been given that it should be made available in the offices. The same pass will be considered for return journey also," a GR stated.

15 companies interested in Vadhvan

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Top conglomerates such as Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd, Larsen & Toubro, Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd etc. are among the 15 companies that have filed Expression of Interest (EoI) applications for Vadhvan Port on PPP under Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the new port on August 30. The EoI applications were invited for development and maintenance of land to be created offshore of Vadhvan coast by dredging, reclamation and construction of offshore protection bund for the proposed port. The applications were opened on September 2, 2024.

"We have received applications from 15 interested parties and after most of the parties expressed willingness, we

opened the same. We will now analyse the demands and firm up the proposal before sending it to the Ministry of Finance through the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)," an official with JNPA said.

"Once the proposal is approved, we will float the tenders. The entire process should take 2-3 months," he said. While the pre-application conference was held on August 1, 2024, the last date for submission of EoI was August 20, 2024.

The port had received clearance from the Union Cabinet on June 19, 2024 which also approved the establishing road connectivity between the port and National Highways by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highway besides rail linkage to existing rail network and the upcoming Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) by the Ministry of Railways.

Jaydeep Apte arrested

Mumbai: The Sindhudurg Police have arrested contractor Jaydeep Apte from Thane district. He was booked over the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue at Rajkot fort, an official said on Wednesday.

Police had been searching for 24-year-old Apte since the day of the collapse on August 26, but he has remained untraceable. Seven teams were formed for his search.

The Sindhudurg police have also issued a Look Out Circular (LOC) against Apte to prevent him from leaving the country through sea ports, airports and all other exit points, he said.

Teams of Sindhudurg police are searching for him at places, including Mumbai, Thane, Sindhudurg and Kolhapur. Some of the teams are using technical help to apprehend the accused, the official said.

A police team had visited Apte's residence at Dudhna in Kalyan of Thane district, but it was locked, he said.

Apte had executed the contract to make the 35-foot statue of the Maratha warrior king that was unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the fort in Malvan tehsil on Navy Day, December 4, last year.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Aaditya Thackeray, Leader, Shiv Sena (UBT)

"It is clear that our fight is not against anyone. It is against the Maharashtra government and we want to overthrow the current dispensation in the state. It is our prime target. Internal discussion will take place. Nobody is fighting for the post of Chief Minister. But a tug-of-war over seats is expected to happen...Everyone should claim every seat."

Construction of Lord Venkateshwara Temple begins

Thane: The first stone for the construction of a mega temple dedicated to Shri Lord Venkateshwara at Ulwe in Navi Mumbai was laid on Wednesday in the presence of senior Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) officials and industrialist Gautam Singhania.

J. Shyamala Rao, Executive Officer of TTD, and Venkaiah Choudhary, Additional Executive Officer of the trust, were present at the event. The foundation stone of



the grand shrine, a replica of the famous Balaji Temple located at Tirupati temple in Andhra Pradesh, was laid on June 7, 2023, at a ceremony presided over by

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and his deputy Devendra Fadnavis.

The temple is being built by the Raymond Group on a 10-acre plot allotted by the state government.

"The Shri Lord Venkateshwara Temple in Navi Mumbai is a project that holds immense cultural and spiritual significance for devotees in the region. This temple is a testament to our commitment to preserving and nurturing India's rich religious

heritage. "We will prioritize its completion and ensure it becomes a revered centre for worship and community gatherings in the near future," Raymond Ltd Chairman-cum-Managing Director Gautam Singhania said after laying the first ornamental stone of the temple.

The temple site at Ulwe in located near the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport and is also close to the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (Atal Setu). -PTI

Pawar on a mission to dent Mahayuti



By Suyash Padate

Mumbai: At 83, he had to rebuild the party from scratch just nine months before the Lok Sabha election, with his back to the wall, he came with flying colours. A lynchpin for the anti-BJP opposition alliance at the national level and a key architect of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the state Sharad Pawar has started making dent in BJP and nephew Ajit Pawar-led NCP, the party founded by the octogenarian. He is confident of dislodging Mahayuti dispensation in Maharashtra from power.

The senior leader kicked off this mission prior to the Parliament elections. Now he is busy exploiting the fault lines, a 'kamjor kadi' in the Ajit's NCP and the saffron camp. For this he is touring the state and is on lookout for leaders from both the outfits who are ready to switch over. As a result, not only the dis-

gruntled elements but leaders with mass following are also in touch with Sharad Pawar. On Tuesday NCP (SP) boss Sharad Pawar kicked off his Kolhapur mission by inducting BJP leader Raje Samrajtsinh Ghatge, a royal descendant of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, who joined NCP in a public rally. This was a major blow to the BJP as Ghatge was very closely associated with the Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. Pawar, who is currently camping in Kolhapur, has been focusing on the south Maharashtra district to consolidate his party. He met a bunch of senior leaders from the district, many of them willing to fight upcoming elections as NCP (SP) candidates.

Another BJP leader and former Minister Harshvardhan Patil, is all set to join NCP (SP) very soon. Patil wants to contest from In-dapur in Pune district but

Ajit's loyalist Datta Bharne doesn't want to give up the seat. As no option was left Patil approached Pawar and showed his willingness to join. Significantly, Sharad Pawar is in touch with at least 15 MLAs and some leaders of NCP and BJP. According to sources they might cross over very shortly.

The demand by the Maratha community to grant Kumbi certificates to all Marathas in order to sanction them an OBC quota, and the OBC community's opposition to these demands, have left many leaders in a bind. Pawar's party had always backed the demand for a Maratha quota. But earlier this month, the NCP (SP) chief had passed the ball into the centre's court. Realising that only Maratha card cannot work in forthcoming elections Pawar is also in touch with some OBC leaders. Sources have also claimed that one of the stalwarts from

OBC community who is in presently BJP office bearer is likely to be pitted against Chhagan Bhujbal.

It may be recalled that during Lok Sabha polls, Pawar personally met Vijaysinh Mohite Patil, who was in BJP and was at loggerheads with party's MP Ranjeetsinh Naik Nimbalkar. In one meeting Pawar convinced Mohite Patil and fielded Dhairyasheel Mohite Patil as a NCP candidate from Madha. Vijaysinh's clout and influence ensured a smooth victory for the NCP (SP) candidate. Similarly Nilesh Lanke who was with Ajit Pawar, joined senior Pawar's party contested Lok Sabha election from Ahmednagar constituency and won.

Recently, Sharad Pawar predicted that the opposition will win 225 of 288 seats in upcoming assembly elections. This has virtually created flutter in the opposition BJP camp. The MVA stunned the ruling Mahayuti, which comprises BJP, Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena, and Ajit Pawar's NCP, by winning 30 of the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra in the 2024 polls. Pawar has said that the opposition won just six of the 48 Lok Sabha seats in the state in 2019, but this figure rose to 31 in 2024. "Maharashtra is in the wrong hands. In the Lok Sabha polls, people have given results that indicate change. Looking at this equation the opposition will win 225 of the 288 seats in the assembly polls," the NCP leader has categorically said. Against this backdrop, news is doing the rounds that danger bells are ringing for the Mahayuti.



Mumbai cha Raja (Ganesh Galli) pandal structure on the theme of 'Shri Mahakaleshwar Mandir, Ujjain' being constructed by their mandal ahead of Ganpati Utsav at Lalbaug in Mumbai on Wednesday. (Pic: Bhushan Koyande)

Release Of 'Emergency'

No direction on certificate immediately

Mumbai: Kangana Ranaut's film 'Emergency' didn't get any relief on Wednesday from the Bombay High Court which refused to pass any order in the wake of a directive by the Madhya Pradesh HC directing CBFC to consider objections to the movie before certifying it.

The film was scheduled to release on September 6 but will now be pushed back for two weeks as the HC directed the censor board to consider the objections raised against the film and then certify it by September 18.

A division bench of Justices B.P. Colabawalla and Firdosh Pooniwalla on Wednesday accepted the producer's contention that the certificate was kept

ready but not issued.

The bench said once the certificate was issued online to the makers of the film, the CBFC's contention that the certificate was not issued as it was not signed by the chairperson is incorrect.

The court, however, noted it would have directed the CBFC to issue the certificate on Wednesday itself had there not been an order from the Madhya Pradesh HC.

"We know that there is something else happening behind. We don't want to comment on it. The CBFC shall consider the objections and take a decision by September 18," it said.

The Madhya Pradesh HC on Tuesday heard petitions filed by Sikh groups claiming that the film contains



scenes that may hurt their religious sentiments and may hence cause unrest.

The CBFC had claimed there that the movie had not yet been issued a certificate.

The Madhya Pradesh HC then directed the censor board to consider the representation of the petitioner Sikh groups raising objections to the film before issu-

ing the certificate to the movie.

The CBFC was directed to carry out this exercise and decide expeditiously.

During the hearing of the petition filed by Zee Entertainment, the Bombay HC on Wednesday said that while it was with the petitioner on the issue it cannot grant any relief in the wake of the order passed by the Madhya Pradesh HC.

"The Madhya Pradesh HC has given the CBFC a direction. If we give any relief today then it would be directly in contravention to that order. We will be asking CBFC to breach another HC order if we pass any order today. We cannot do that. Judicial propriety demands that of us," the bench said.

CRIME WATCH

Police raid spa in Navi Mumbai

Thane: Police on Wednesday conducted a raid at a spa in Navi Mumbai and rescued three women who were found to be pushed into flesh trade, an official said.

Officials of the Anti-Human Trafficking Cell (AHTC) raided the spa at Sanpada following a tip-off, he said. "During the operation, the police found that some women working as masseuses were being pushed into flesh trade by the management," senior AHTC official Prithviraj Ghorpade said.

An FIR was registered under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act against three persons, including a woman at the Sanpada police station, he said.

The accused have been identified as Rakesh Pramod Pingle (38), Nazia Bandenawaz Sheikh (23) and Akash Lalsingh Chouhan (25) at Sanpada police station, the official said.

AC coach attendant attacked

Mumbai: An AC coach attendant and his assistant were allegedly attacked aboard an express train by three unidentified persons near Mumbai, a Government Railway Police (GRP) official said.

The incident occurred on LTT-Agartala Express between Kalyan and Kasara stations on September 1.

Three unidentified men attacked the complainant, who was on duty in an AC coach and his associate, with an iron object and snatched his mobile phone, the GRP official said. The injured persons were rushed to a trauma care centre when the train reached Bhusawal.

Headmistress, clerk held for bribe

Thane: The headmistress and a junior clerk of a private school in Bhiwandi city of Thane district were arrested for allegedly accepting a Rs 800 bribe for issuing a school leaving certificate to a student, an Anti-Corruption Bureau official said on Wednesday.

The accused duo allegedly demanded Rs 1,000 for issuing the certified true copy of the leaving certificate, but later agreed to accept Rs 800 from the parents of the student.

The ACB acted on a complaint lodged by the parents nabbed the clerk on Tuesday.

Concessionaire for pod taxi approved

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority on Wednesday has granted approval for the appointment of Sai Green Mobility Private Limited as the concessionaire for the pod taxi project in Bandra-Kurla Complex.

The concessionaire will be responsible for the design, engineering, development, construction, testing, commissioning and also operation and maintenance on DFBOT basis of the Automated Rapid Transit System (Pod Taxi).

The firm has partnered with M/s. Ultra PRT, a technology provider with a proven track record, including the operational Pod Taxi system at Heathrow Airport, London. This project is set to revolutionize last-mile connectivity within BKC, addressing the

needs of the 4 to 6 lakh commuters who travel daily to and from the business district.

With the anticipated increase in footfall due to upcoming infrastructure developments such as the bullet train and new commercial buildings, the necessity for efficient last-mile connectivity has become paramount. The Pod Taxi system, being fully autonomous and capable of operating at a frequency of every 15 to 30 seconds, is ideally suited for the narrow roads connecting BKC to Bandra and Kurla suburban stations.

The decision to implement the Pod Taxi system follows a comprehensive Techno-Economic Feasibility Study (TEFS) commissioned by MMRDA, which explored various technologies operational across the globe. The

The Pod Taxi project in BKC marks a significant step towards enhancing urban mobility in one of Mumbai's busiest business districts. This system will not only improve last-mile connectivity but also reduce congestion and provide a modern, efficient mode of transportation for daily commuters.

- Dr. Sanjay Mukherjee, IAS, Metropolitan Commissioner

study, peer-reviewed by M/s. Tata Consulting Engineers, recommended the Pod Taxi system for BKC due to its suitability for the region's topography.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Naseeruddin Shah, actor on IC-814 hijack

"I was about 50 when this (incident) happened. I remember being extremely disturbed because I feared that it would provoke another wave of Islamophobia, and luckily, at that time, it didn't. But I remember feeling concerned about the situation and what it would lead to."

Teen runs away from home

Thane: A 15-year-old girl from Thane district ran away from home after being scolded by her parents for spending too much time on the mobile phone, an official said on Wednesday.

The teenager left her home at Khoni in the Dombivli area around 1.15 pm on Monday and did not return. In their complaint to the Manpada police, her parents said she stepped out of the house after they reprimanded her for excessive use of mobile phone.

Sinister plot by govt: MP

Mumbai: Congress MP Varsha Gaikwad on Wednesday accused the Maharashtra government of hatching a "sinister plot" to hand over 1,500 acres of eco-sensitive salt pan land in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region to Adani group under the guise of the Dharavi slum redevelopment.

She alleged the usurping of land belonging to the people of Mumbai was the sole agenda of the business conglomerate.

The Dharavi Redevelopment Project is a joint venture between the Adani Group and the state government for the construction of residential and commercial units.

"The state government has come up with a sinister plot to hand over 1,500 acres of ecologically sensitive salt pan land in MMR to Adani group under the guise of the Dharavi redevelopment project," Gaikwad alleged after visiting Kanjurmarg area and hold-

ing discussions with officials.

The "corrupt" government can go to any extent to ensure the business house is benefited, she alleged.

Gaikwad demanded the rehabilitation of all residents of Dharavi slum irrespective of the eligibility criterion.

"Mumbai's future is not for sale. Salt pan land reclamation can potentially threaten floods," she added.

-PTI

Counterfeit currency seized

Thane: Police have registered an FIR against two persons, one of them unidentified so far, for allegedly possessing nearly 200 counterfeit currency notes, all of Rs 500 denomination, in Navi Mumbai, an official said on Wednesday.

The official said on August 9, an unidentified man dumped 194 counterfeit notes of Rs 500 denomination each (total face value of Rs 97,000) near a bridge in Uran town.

Vadhvan Port attracting global interest: Sonowal

New Delhi: The upcoming Vadhvan Port in Maharashtra's Palghar is attracting significant global interest and would create 12 lakh jobs once operational, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said.



The Ports, Shipping, and Waterways minister was speaking at the curtain raiser event for the launch of 'Sagarmanthan: The Great Oceans Dialogue'. The inaugural edition of the event is scheduled to take place on November 18 and 19, 2024, in Mumbai.

Port by the Prime Minister on August 30. "This green-field mega container port on India's west coast, being developed with an estimated investment of USD 10 billion, is set to create over 1.2 million jobs once operational and has already attracted significant global interest," he said.

fit India but also serve as a model for other countries in their climate transition. The minister further emphasized the success of the Global Maritime India Summit in 2023, where India secured over USD 119 billion investment commitments. Sonowal invited all stakeholders, including global leaders, industry experts, and policymakers, to the inaugural "Sagarmanthan" in Mumbai, urging them to work together to harness the immense potential of the oceans and contribute to an inclusive and sustainable future for all.

First insurance policy in Braille

By Correspondent

Mumbai: India's first insurance policy in Braille to empower the visually impaired individuals with income opportunities in the insurance sector was launched by Star Health Insurance. This initiative would ensure that the visually impaired and blind diaspora can access information and make independent decision on matters related to their health and finance. Star Health has also launched a diversity and financial inclusivity drive to economically empower the 34 million diaspora of visually impaired/blind individuals in India with income generation opportunities by becoming health insurance agents, the company said in its filing with the stock exchanges.

WB's Suggestion To India On RCEP Based on flawed outdated projections

New Delhi: Think tank GTRI on Wednesday said that the World Bank's suggestion for India to reconsider joining RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) is based on flawed assumptions and outdated projections.

For developing countries like India, policy decisions must be rooted in real-world data and a thorough understanding of the long-term implications, it said. The rising trade deficits among RCEP members and the over-reliance on China-centric supply chains underscore the importance of a cautious, well-researched

India already has several functional Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with 13 out of 15 RCEP members, except New Zealand and China.

India pulled out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019 after entering negotiations in 2013. The RCEP bloc comprises 10 Asean group members (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Laos and Vietnam) and their six FTA partners - China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

approach, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said. It added that the World Bank should focus on thorough, data-based analysis that considers the specific challenges and economic conditions of developing countries before offering solutions based solely on economic models, which should be just one factor.

Congress accuses Adani over bank claims

New Delhi: The Congress on Wednesday cited data purportedly revealed by All India Bank Employees Association to allege that public sector banks that had claims of about Rs 62,000 crore from 10 financially-stressed companies were made to settle them for just Rs 16,000 crore after the Adani Group took over these firms.

Agriculture risk could trigger food inflation, say experts

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Despite an overall improvement in performance of monsoon compared to last year, India's agriculture sector continues to remain at risk due to regional disparities in rainfall that could threaten inflation, said a note by way of Monsoon update by rating agency - CareEdge. Key regions particularly in Northern India and the Gangetic plains, continue to experience significant deficit in rainfall. As of the last week of August, Kharif sowing is 97% complete. However, compared to re-

cent years with normal monsoons (2021 and 2022), the sowing of pulses and some oilseeds has lagged, potentially adding to price pressures given their import dependence, the note said. Global edible oil prices have recently exited a deflationary period due to global factors, and the risk of these prices passing through to the domestic consumption basket remains a key concern. Additionally, lower reservoir levels, reflecting the rainfall pattern in some regions like northern India and few states in east India

could impede the prospects for Rabi sowing, which largely depends on irrigation, the note said. At this juncture, monitoring food prices is crucial, especially as the base effect is expected to turn adverse ahead of the early festive season this year. These factors could slow the moderation of already high food inflation, increasing the risk of entrenching higher inflation expectations. Recent surveys indicate that since March 2024, inflation expectations have risen while consumer confidence has trended downwards.



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addresses an event 'Women Rising-The Unseen Barriers in Power, Politics and Otherwise' organised by FICCI FLO, in Chennai on Wednesday.

Services sector activity hits 5-month high

New Delhi: India's services sector activity growth touched a five-month high in August on stronger rise in new work orders, while payroll numbers rose solidly as companies remained upbeat regarding the economic outlook, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.



The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services Business Activity Index rose from 60.3 in July to 60.9 in August, registering the fastest expansion since March and was largely supported by productivity gains and positive demand trends. In the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction. "The Composite PMI for India continued to show strong growth in August, driven by accelerated business activity in the service sector, which experienced its fastest expansion since March. This growth was largely fuelled by an increase in new orders, particularly domestic orders," said Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC.

On the price front, input costs rose at their slowest pace in six months, with both the manufacturing and service sectors exhibiting the same pattern. Consequently, output price inflation receded in August. "The overall rate of charge inflation across India's service economy was moderate. The rise was also slower than that seen in July," the survey noted. However, the outlook for the Indian private sector over the next year has moderated, reaching its lowest level in 15 months due to competitive pressure, although the Future Output Index remained above the long-term average. According to the survey, employment levels remained robust, though there was a slight decrease in the pace of hiring compared to July.

Two-wheeler makers should provide helmets

New Delhi: Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday said two-wheeler manufacturers should provide helmet to the purchaser of the vehicle at a discount or reasonable rate as many people die in road accidents just for not wearing helmets. Addressing an event here, Gadkari said 50,029 people lost their lives in accidents in the country in 2022 when they were not wearing helmets. "I am thinking of requesting two-wheeler manufacturers... if they can give some reasonable discount on helmets to the purchaser of the vehicle then we can save the life of the people," he said. The road transport and highways minister also stressed on the need to plan the parking arrangement for school buses. Noting that the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 has enforced hefty penalties on traffic offences, he said, "But actually, effective enforcement is also a big challenge." Gadkari said his ambition is to start driving school in every taluka of the country.

About 50 pc Gen Z prefer solar solutions

New Delhi: A recent survey conducted to gauge awareness about clean energy sources revealed about 50 per cent of Gen Z respondents prefer solar solutions, followed by Millennials at 46 per cent. The report is based on a survey of 4,318 respondents among four age cohorts across 5 metros -- Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, and 8 non-metros -- Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Gurugram, Guwahati, Jaipur, Kochi, Lucknow, Patna, conducted between February 2024 to March 2024. Gen Z refers to those who are in the age group of 18-22 years. Millennials 23-38 years, Gen X 39-54 years and baby boomers 55-76. Luminous Power Technologies MD and CEO Preeti Bajaj in a statement, said, "Owing to this shift in needs and demand trends, the Solar spectrum of New India gave us a clear picture to understand the changing consumer perceptions, limitations and opportunities that remain unaddressed around the sphere of solar energy adoption."



The study showcased that awareness of alternatives to traditional energy sources is on the rise among Indians. As much as 97 per cent of respondents in India do not have a solar rooftop system installed in their homes. In terms of accessibility, the survey revealed that 28 per cent of baby boomers consider solar energy solutions inaccessible, while millennials report the least difficulty, with only 21 per cent expressing concerns. Gen X and Gen Z follow closely, with 23 per cent and 25 per cent respectively, indicating inaccessibility. Most respondents agreed that the shortage of specialised skills and skilled labour is a major roadblock for a seamless transition to solar solutions.

NCLT On Go First Insolvency resolution deadline extended

New Delhi: Corporate dispute tribunal NCLT has extended the insolvency resolution deadline for grounded airline Go First for the fourth time and directed the suspended board of the debt-ridden firm to file a reply within three weeks. A two-member bench of the Delhi-based National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) issued notice to the suspended management of the company on Tuesday and listed the matter for hearing in the first week of October. The resolution professional of Go First had moved the application under section 33 (1) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code for the liquidation of Go First after the lenders failed to find a reasonable buyer within the stipulated time frame. During the proceedings, counsel appearing for Go First informed the NCLT that the Committee of Creditors decided to liquidate the company with a majority vote. This was the fourth extension for Go First to complete the

Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP), as the airline has been struggling to find a buyer. In June, NCLT had granted an extension of 60 days to the grounded air carrier for completing the insolvency process. While granting the latest extension on Tuesday, the NCLT's Delhi bench said: "This is the final extension." The Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC) mandates completion of CIRP within 330 days, which includes the litigation period. As per Section 12(1) of the Code, CIRP should be completed within 180 days. However, the maximum time within which CIRP must be mandatorily completed, including any extension or litigation period, is 330 days, failing which a corporate debtor is sent for liquidation. The NCLT, on May 10, 2023, admitted the plea of Go First -- which stopped operating flights on May 3 -- to initiate voluntary insolvency resolution proceedings.

Investors put in bids for GIC

New Delhi: Institutional investors on Wednesday put in bids worth about Rs 2,300 crore in the government's offer for sale (OFS) in General Insurance Corporation (GIC Re). "Offer for Sale in GIC got a positive response today from Non-Retail investors. Issue subscribed 1.08 times of base size. Govt has decided to exercise the green shoe option," DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said in a post on X. The government is selling up to 5.95 crore equity shares or 3.39 per cent stake in GIC Re at a floor price of Rs 395 a share. The OFS also has a green shoe option to allow the government to retain over-subscription of up to an additional 3.39 per cent, taking the total issue size to 6.78 per cent. The first government disinvestment of the current fiscal -- the OFS of GIC RE -- saw a slow start on Wednesday, with the issue getting fully subscribed just before the close of market hours. The OFS received bids from non-retail investors for 5.81 crore shares, which is 108.49 per cent of the over 5.35 crore shares reserved for them, as per BSE data.

| BSE SENSEX TOP GAINERS | | |
|------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| % | POINTS | |
| +2.39 | 3229.30 | Asian Paints |
| +1.74 | 2842.50 | Hindustan Unilever |
| +1.18 | 1832.43 | Sun Pharma |
| +1.13 | 11590.50 | UltraTech Cement |
| +0.43 | 1871.95 | Bajaj Finserv |
| +0.34 | 3929.80 | Reliance |
| +0.25 | 1641.95 | HDFC Bank |
| +0.18 | 1563.35 | Bharti Airtel |
| +0.02 | 1644.85 | Tech Mahindra |
| +0.00 | 2531.35 | Nestle India |

| BSE SENSEX TOP LOSERS | | |
|-----------------------|---------|---------------|
| % | POINTS | |
| -1.29 | 2748.60 | M&M |
| -1.20 | 1177.50 | Axis Bank |
| -1.00 | 816.50 | SBIN |
| -0.97 | 1235.75 | ICICI Bank |
| -0.94 | 1922.05 | Infosys |
| -0.86 | 3658.00 | LT |
| -0.68 | 4481.30 | TCS |
| -0.60 | 7307.70 | Bajaj Finance |
| -0.53 | 151.30 | Tata Steel |
| -0.51 | 332.90 | Power Grid |

Will need 10-20 chip plants in a decade

New Delhi: India will need 10-20 chip manufacturing plants over the next 10 years, Semicon India organiser Semi President and CEO Ajit Manocha said on Wednesday. Manocha said that huge interest is developing in the semiconductor ecosystem, especially in Taiwan after the success of Foxconn and Wistron in India. "I think we will need probably in the next 10 years, maybe 10-20 fabs in India. This is a rough



estimate," Manocha said. Semi will organise the first global conference on semiconductor ecosystem, Semicon India 2024 from September 11-13 in Noida. Manocha has over 40

years of experience in the semiconductor industry. "For the first time, stars are aligned in favour of India. The public policies are in favour of India. The geopolitical issues are definitely much more in favour of India and the investment capacities are also in favour of India," Manocha said. There will be more than 650 booths and over 250 semiconductor companies will exhibit at Semicon India.

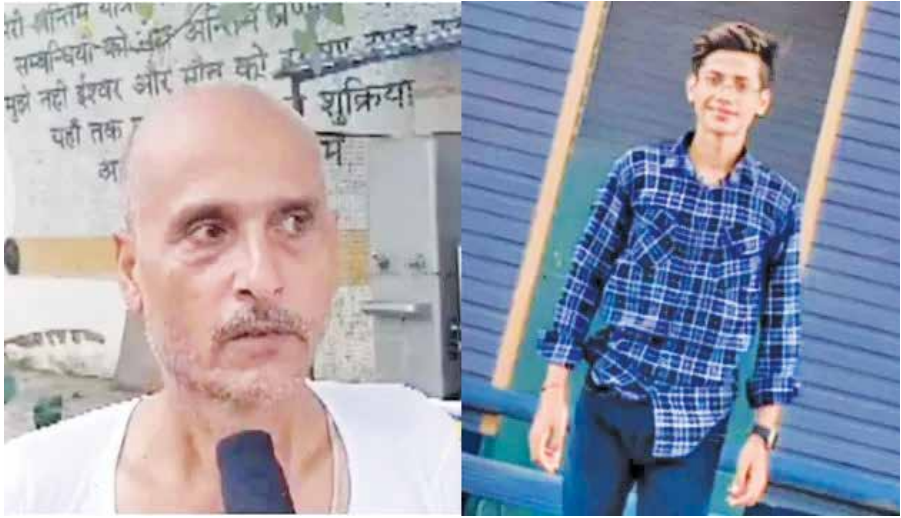
QUOTE OF THE DAY



Lee Chee Koon, Group CEO, CapitalLand Investment

"India is a strategic market for us and a key contributor to CLI's overall business. India has been one of our fastest-growing markets, where our investments have tripled in the last seven years. With India's GDP forecasted to grow 7 per cent in 2024 and its trajectory to be the world's third-largest economy in the next five years, the country is attracting demand from global corporations and institutional investors for quality real assets."

'Aryan was not alone, why no one else was hurt,' Asks father of the boy killed by cow vigilantes



Aryan's brother has started a Whatsapp group "Nyay" to seek justice in the killing. The group, created Tuesday night, has been joined by more than 1,000 people.

Faridabad: The father of teenager Aryan Mishra, who was shot dead allegedly by cow vigilantes in a car chase in Faridabad, is restless with many questions about the death, such as why none of the other passengers in the vehicle were hurt in the attack.

him and opened fire were arrested on August 28. Though he did not make an explicit accusation, Siyanand Mishra said the family of his landlord, who was with his son in the car that night, may have something more to say on the matter. Mishra also asked if his son was indeed shot by cow vigilantes, who gave them the right to do that. "Anil Kaushik told police that my son was killed because they mistook him

for a cattle smuggler, and if he is right, who gave the right to cow vigilantes to shoot anyone? My son will not come back but this matter needs to be investigated seriously," he said. According to police sources, the accused during interrogation claimed that on the night of August 23, they had received information that some suspected cattle smugglers driving two SUVs were doing

recce in the city. They mistook Aryan, and his friends, Shanky and Harshit, for cattle smugglers and followed their car for about 30 kilometres near the Gadhuri Toll on the Delhi-Agra National Highway, police sources said. When they asked the boy and his friends to stop their car, the driver started speeding, following which they opened fire and Mishra was killed on the spot near the Gadhuri toll in Palwal. Police arrested five men on August 28 and remanded them to police custody for two days, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime) Aman Yadav said in a statement on Tuesday. Hemendra Kumar Meena, DCP crime, said, "Many aspects of this case are still unresolved. The facts that came to light during the interrogation of the accused are being verified. The case is being investigated thoroughly and it would be premature to say anything right now. The police will soon reveal the case."

-PTI



Sikh youth perform 'Gatka', an ancient form of Sikh martial arts, during a 'nagar kirtan' procession to mark the anniversary of installation of the Sikh holy book Guru Granth Sahib, in Amritsar on Wednesday. Pic-PTI

Yoga Guru held for raping NRI

Chikkamagaluru (Karnataka): A yoga teacher has been arrested here for allegedly raping a Non Resident Indian (NRI) under the pretext of having a relationship with her in her previous birth, police said on Wednesday. Based on a complaint by the woman, the police registered a case against the Pradeep Ullal (54) of Kevala Foundation in Mallenahalli in that district. The complainant hails from Punjab but is settled in California, USA. The victim alleged that she visited the Yoga Guru thrice between 2021 and 2022 when she was sexually assaulted.

-PTI

Omar files nomination papers from Ganderbal

Ganderbal (J-K): National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah on Wednesday filed nomination papers from the Ganderbal assembly seat. Abdullah, accompanied by senior leaders of the party and his sons, filed the papers before the returning officer at the Mini-Secretariat here. He reached the Mini-Secretariat sitting atop a vehicle, surrounded by a huge number of enthusiastic supporters. This marks the return of the NC leader to the constituency that he represented from 2009 to 2014 when he was the chief minister of the NC-Congress coalition gov-



ernment in the erstwhile state of J-K. He fought and won the 2014 assembly polls from Beerwah assembly seat in central Kashmir's Budgam district. Abdullah had also contested from Sonwar seat in Srinagar, but was defeated there by then PDP leader Mo-

hammad Ashraf Mir. Ganderbal has been bastion of the NC and the Abdullahs with NC founder Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah and incumbent president Farooq Abdullah having represented the constituency several times.

-PTI

Bodies of two crew members found



Porbandar: Of the three crew members who went missing after an Indian Coast Guard (ICG) helicopter crashed into the Arabian Sea off Gujarat coast, the bodies of its pilot and a diver have been recovered while search for the third one is still on, officials said on Wednesday. The bodies of Commandant Vipin Babu and diver Karan Singh were recovered on Tuesday night while search is still on to trace another pilot, Rakesh Rana, said Coast Guard spokesperson, Amit Uniyal. "Of the total four crew members on board the ICG's

advanced light helicopter (ALH), diver Gautam Kumar was rescued soon after the incident while a search was on for three others - one pilot and two divers. On Tuesday night, the bodies of pilot Vipin Babu and diver Karan Singh were recovered," he said. "Another pilot, Rakesh Rana, is still missing. We have deployed four ships and an aircraft to locate him. Wreckage of the helicopter has been found," he added. The incident occurred on Monday night after the ICG launched an operation around 11 pm to evacuate an injured crew member on

board a tanker which was sailing close to Porbandar. Meanwhile, Navi Bandar police station of Porbandar on Tuesday night filed an accidental death report after the recovery of two dead bodies from the sea. As per the report, the Coast Guard helicopter carrying four crew members crashed into the sea nearly 30 nautical miles from the coast due to unknown reasons during a medical emergency rescue mission mid sea. It added that two persons have died while the rescued crew member Gautam Kumar is currently admitted to a hospital.

-PTI

Chargesheet against Darshan

Bengaluru: The Bengaluru Police on Wednesday filed a chargesheet against 17 accused in the Renukaswamy murder case, including Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa. A "watertight" chargesheet was prepared after investigating the case from all aspects, Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda told reporters here. The chargesheet comprises 231 witness statements and technical and electronic evidence, the police said, adding, it was a massive investigation. The 3991-page chargesheet (with seven volumes and 10 files) was submitted to the 24th Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate court. "We have arrested 17 people in this case who are in judicial custody. There are three direct eye witnesses; 27 witnesses have given their statements before the court and other witnesses have recorded their statements before the police," Dayananda said. As many as 56 police officers are among the witnesses in the case, Dayananda added.

Phogat, Punia meet Rahul Wrestlers likely to contest Haryana polls

New Delhi: Wrestlers Bajrang Punia and Vinesh Phogat met former Congress president Rahul Gandhi here on Wednesday with sources saying that they are likely to contest the upcoming Haryana assembly polls on the party's ticket. Sources said deliberations are on to finalise the seats for the two wrestlers with Julana and Badli seats under consideration for Phogat and Punia respectively. The Congress put out a photograph of Gandhi with Phogat and Punia on its official X handle. AICC general secretary in-charge Haryana Deepak Babaria had on Tuesday said there will be clarity on the candidature of two wrestlers by Thursday. Punia is a Tokyo Games bronze medalist, while Phogat became the first woman wrestler to reach the Olympics final, the stage where she was disqualified after being found over weight by about 100 gm in her 50-kg category weigh-in. She subsequently announced her retirement



from the sport. The Congress's central election committee has cleared the names of candidates for 66 seats out of 90 till Tuesday. Punia and Phogat were part of the protest over sexual harassment allegations against former BJP MP and then Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhusan

Sharan Singh in 2023. The Congress and AAP are engaged in seat-sharing talks for the Haryana Assembly polls with hard bargaining from both sides. Voting on 90 assembly seats in Haryana will be held on October 5 and counting of votes will be undertaken on October 8.

-PTI

PIL seeks to halt arms export to Israel

New Delhi: A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Centre to cancel licences and not to grant new ones to Indian firms exporting arms and other military equipments to Israel, which is fighting a war in Gaza. The PIL, filed through lawyer Prashant Bhusan, has made the union ministry of defence a party, and said, "India is bound by various international laws and treaties that obligate India not to supply military weapons to States guilty of war crimes, as any export could be used in serious violations of international humanitarian law". The plea filed by 11 people, including Ashok Kumar Sharma, a resident of Noida, said the supply of military equipments to Israel by companies. "Issue a writ of mandamus or any other appropriate writ or direction to the respondents, Union of India, through its various organs, to cancel any existing licences and halt the grant of new licences/permissions, to various companies in India, for export of arms and other military equipment to Israel..." the plea said.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sam Pitroda, Leader, Congress

"I had an opportunity to see many prime ministers from very close quarters but the difference between Rahul and Rajiv maybe is that Rahul is much more intellectual, thinker, Rajiv was a little more doer. They have the same DNA, they have the same concerns and feelings for the people, they genuinely believe in building a better India for everybody, they are genuinely simple people. They don't have big personal needs."

Yogi's barb at Akhilesh: 'Tipu' trying to become a 'Sultan'

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday retorted sharply to Akhilesh Yadav's warning that he will after 2027 order all "bulldozers" to Gorakhpur - the home district of the CM -- saying not everyone has the heart and character to handle a bulldozer. Adityanath made the remark responding to the Samajwadi Party chief's Tuesday comment on bulldozer, the machine which has become emblematic of his style of governance.

"As soon as the Samajwadi government is formed in 2027, the bulldozers of the entire state will head towards Gorakhpur," Yadav had said. Adityanath said only those with a "bulldozer-like capability" can operate it. "Today these people have come back in a new form to mislead the public. Not everyone's hands can fit on a bulldozer. It requires both heart and mind. Only someone who has a bulldozer-like capability and determination can operate it. Those



who grovel before the rioters will not be able to stand in front of a bulldozer," he said while addressing an appointment letter distribution event.

The CM also made a pun on Yadav's nickname saying, "Now 'Tipu' is also trying to become a 'Sultan'." He said Yadav's ambition of returning to power in Ut-

tar Pradesh is nothing more than a daydream, and accused the former chief minister and his uncle Shival Yadav of indulging in extortion during his rule. "There used to be a competition between 'chachabhatija' in extorting money. Areas between them were divided. I can see that at this time some man-eating wolves are creating havoc in different districts. "More or less the same situation was in the state before the year 2017," Adityanath said.

-PTI

Wolves' revenge tendency behind spate of attacks

Bahraich: As Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich grapples with wolf terror, an expert has said the series of attacks on the residents of Mehsi tehsil might be due to wolves "seeking revenge" for possible habitat loss or killing of their cubs.

Wolf attacks on humans, including children, have been taking place in Bahraich since March but they saw a spike from July 17 onwards during the rainy season.

Till September 2, eight people, including seven children, have died in these attacks while about 36, including women, children and elderly, have been injured.

Gyan Prakash Singh, a retired officer of the Indian Forest Service (IFS) and a former forest officer at Karamiaghata Wildlife Division of Bahraich district, said wolves, unlike other predatory animals, have a tendency to seek revenge. "On the basis of my experience, I can say that wolves have a tendency to take revenge. In the



past, humans must have caused some kind of harm to their cubs due to which these attacks are happening as revenge," Singh, who is serving as an adviser to the Wildlife Trust of India after retirement, told PTI.

Singh said a similar pattern has emerged in Bahraich as in January and February, two wolf cubs were crushed under the wheels of

As the furious wolves began attacking local residents, several of them were caught and released in Chakia forest, around 40 km away. "Perhaps a mistake was made here. Chakia forest is not a natural habitat for wolves. It is likely that the same wolves have returned and are carrying out these attacks to seek revenge," Singh said.

Around 25 years ago, more than 50 children were killed by wolves in the basin area of the Sai river in Jaunpur and Pratapgarh districts of Uttar Pradesh. Upon investigation, it was found that some children had killed two wolf cubs in a den. The parents of the wolf cubs became very aggressive and began attacking humans living in the area. The forest department launched a campaign and some wolves were caught but the man-eater couple managed to evade getting captured despite the large-scale hunt. Ultimately, they were identified and both were shot.

- Gyan Prakash Singh, retired IFS

a tractor.

Talking about the four wolves who have so far been captured by the forest department, Singh said it was highly unlikely that all the man-eater wolves had been caught or else the attacks would have stopped.

"There is little hope that all the four wolves that have been caught so far are man-eaters. It is possible that one man-eater has been caught but the others have escaped. Perhaps that is why three or four attacks have taken place in the recent past," he said.

Bahraich's Divisional Forest Officer Ajit Pratap Singh said even lions and leopards do not have the tendency to take revenge, but wolves do. -PTI

Nine teams deployed

A team of nine shooters has been deployed in Bahraich forest here to shoot a man-eating wolf at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's order, an officer on Wednesday said.

Six of the shooters are from the forest department and three from police, Bahraich's Divisional Forest Officer Ajit Pratap Singh told PTI.

"The forest department has divided the entire operation into three major sections. Apart from three 'special teams' of three sections, one team has been kept in reserve. Each special section has been given three shooters," he said.

The officer said the team's main task is to identify the man-eating wolf and transfer it to a zoo or shoot it.



Huge amount of water flows from the Ayad river to Udai Sagar after heavy rains for the last two days, in Udaipur on Wednesday. Pic-PTI

Climate change puts voting rights at risk: Nepal PM

By Shirish B Pradhan

Kathmandu: Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on Wednesday emphasised that unpredictable weather patterns and natural disasters, exacerbated by climate change, can pose a significant threat to citizens' ability to exercise their right to vote, as he underscored the need for election officials to adapt and ensure the integrity of democratic processes.

"Issues like climate change, migration and the

rise of social media and the role of artificial intelligence are crucial for our democracies," Oli said at the inauguration of the 12th conference of the Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBOSA) here.

"Unpredictable weather patterns and natural disasters due to climate change threaten our ability to ensure that every citizen can exercise their right to vote... Climate change is not only an issue related to the environment, it touches every

facet of our society," he said. "The movement of people across borders and within, and within our countries have profound implications for electoral rolls, voter identification, and the right to vote," Oli pointed out at the two-day conference with the theme, "Emerging trend in elections: Climate change, social media and migration."

Oli noted that social media and Artificial Intelligence are revolutionising the way politicians engage with voters and conduct

elections. While these tools offer unparalleled opportunities for outreach and participation, they also bring risks such as misinformation, disinformation, fake news and manipulation that can erode trust in our democratic institutions, he said.

"As we embrace these technologies, we must do so with caution and a steadfast commitment to upholding the highest standards of transparency and accountability," the prime minister said. -PTI



A firefighter works to put out fires in the Brasilia National Forest, Brazil, in the middle of the dry season on Tuesday. Pic-AP/PTI

One dead, several missing

Kohima: One person died and several others were reported missing after heavy rainfall damaged houses and major portions of National Highway-29 in Nagaland's Chumoukedima district, officials said on Wednesday.

The incident took place on Tuesday night, as roadside houses were damaged in flashfloods caused by torrential rain at Pherima in the district, they said.

The Chumoukedima district administration is assessing the situation, while search operations have been initiated to locate the missing people, the officials said.

A portion of the NH-29 connecting state capital Kohima with commercial hub Dimapur has been completely washed away, they said. -PTI

Space Infra And Geospatial Knowledge Services

Collaboration key for national mapping agencies

New Delhi: A leading think tank has made a strong pitch for collaboration between the national mapping agencies (NMAs) and the private sector to build space infrastructure and geospatial knowledge services, which find applications in various economic sectors.

A report 'Evolving Role of National Mapping Agencies - Transitioning to Geospatial Knowledge Infrastructure', released recently by Geospatial World - a think tank in space and geospatial technologies, cited examples of collaborations by national mapping agencies and the private sector in countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Singapore and the US.

"Given the critical importance of space and geospatial solutions to national mission programmes, delays in these areas mean lost opportunities. Therefore, globally a mission-mode approach is needed to build space infrastructure and geospatial knowledge services through public-private partnerships," said the report, which was released recently.

It said that the Geospatial Knowledge Infrastructure served as a nervous system to measure, model, monitor, and manage natural resources efficiently and transparently, driving economic and sustainable growth.

Integrating advanced technologies such as AI,

Machine Learning, and Digital Twins into the operations of the NMAs was key to enhancing data accuracy and expanding their roles in sectors like urban planning and environmental monitoring, the report said.

"Commercialisation through startups, investments, and innovation will continue to strengthen private sector participation, alongside government disinvestment from the commercial sector," the report said.

Sanjay Kumar, founder and CEO of Geospatial World said national mapping agencies should gradually assume the role of regulator and keeper of standards for the geospatial sector. -PTI

IIT-GN Study On Gujarat

Flooding worsened by extensive urban development

Ahmedabad: An analysis of recent flooding in parts of Gujarat showed that it was caused by severe weather conditions and exacerbated by extensive urban development, altered elevations and compromised drainage patterns, researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IIT-GN) have said.

The recurrence of "un-

usual weather events along India's western coast", such as the one witnessed last week, highlights the urgent need to reassess urban planning and infrastructure resilience. This scenario underscores the need for robust and scalable emergency response strategies that can handle the complexities of concurrent extreme events, researchers at IIT Gandhinagar's

Machine Intelligence and Resilience Laboratory (MIR Lab) said.

"As rapid urbanisation continues to modify regional and local hydrology, placing greater strain on drainage systems, it is crucial to keep hydrology at the core of urban development strategies," the researchers observed.

Vadodara, which grappled with severe flooding after heavy rains last week, suffered from the situation despite rains not being unprecedented in magnitude, the IIT-GN research said.

"However, the flooding was likely exacerbated by extensive urban development in flood-prone areas, altered elevations, and drainage patterns compro-



mised due to rapid urbanisation and clogged drainage systems," it said.

"This situation is a classic example of concurrent extreme events, where multiple regions experience severe weather simultaneously. Such concurrence complicates emergency response and evacuation ef-

forts as resources become stretched across multiple affected areas," the study said.

Demands for rescue, relief, and evacuation operations in such a scenario can overwhelm emergency services, making it more challenging to respond effectively and efficiently to the

Twelve of the state's 33 districts experienced one-day rainfall totals that exceeded the 10-year return period. The situation became even more critical over two-day periods, with 17 districts exceeding the 10-year return period, including Jamnagar, Morbi, and Devbhumi Dwarka, where rainfall surpassed 50-year return levels. Additionally, 15 districts recorded three-day rainfall totals exceeding the 10-year return period, with Jamnagar, Morbi, Devbhumi Dwarka, and Rajkot all experiencing levels above their 50-year thresholds.

needs of those impacted by the floods, it said.

"This underscores the need for robust and scalable emergency response strategies that can handle the complexities of concurrent extreme events," it added.

The analysis of maximum rainfall during this

period revealed that Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka and Morbi in the state's Saurashtra region experienced rainfall over a one-day period last week that surpassed their 50-year "return period" (with Dwarka exceeding 100-year period).

Assistant Professor in Civil Engineering and Com-

puter Science and Engineering at IIT Gandhinagar, Udit Bhatia, said the granularity of the available data may not fully capture the nuances of urban flooding, which often results from short-duration, high-intensity rainfalls that overwhelm city drainage systems.

"When rainfall persists for longer durations, the soil becomes saturated during the initial spells, and subsequent rainfall is more likely to contribute directly to surface runoff. This runoff exacerbates flooding, especially when drainage systems are either incapacitated or unhealthy," said Bhatia, who is the Principal Investigator at the MIR Lab. -PTI

Parts of Gujarat witnessed flooding due to heavy rains between August 20 and 29. During this period, 15 out of the 33 districts in the state recorded three-day rainfall totals exceeding their 10-year return period - a statistical measure indicating the average interval between such intense events - with Jamnagar, Morbi, Devbhumi Dwarka, and Rajkot experiencing levels above their 50-year thresholds.

Pope In Asia

Francis urges Indonesia to fight extremism

Jakarta (Indonesia): Pope Francis urged Indonesia to live up to its promise of "harmony in diversity" and fight religious intolerance on Wednesday, as he set a rigorous pace for an 11-day, four-nation trip through tropical Southeast Asia and Oceania that will test his stamina and health.

Francis had a packed first full day in Indonesia, meeting with outgoing President Joko Widodo and other Indonesian authorities at the presidential palace and then greeting Catholic priests, nuns and seminarians at Jakarta's main cathedral in the afternoon.

Cannons boomed as Francis joined Widodo on the veranda of the palace along with President-elect Prabowo Subianto. A marching band, stiff-legged troops and children in traditional Indonesian dress welcomed the first pope to visit in 35 years.

In his remarks to the Indonesian authorities, Francis compared the country's human diversity to the archipelago's 17,000 islands. He said each one contributes something specific to form "a magnificent mosaic, in which each tile is an irreplaceable element in creating a great original and precious work."

And yet, Francis warned that such diversity can also become a source of conflict. It was an apparent reference to episodes of intolerance that have flared in recent years in Indonesia as well as a broader concern



Pope Francis arrives for a ceremonial welcome at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta on Wednesday.

Pic:AP/PTI

about conflicts raging around the world.

"This wise and delicate balance, between the multiplicity of cultures and different ideological visions, and the ideals that cement unity, must be continuously defended against imbalances," Francis said. Political leaders, he said, had a particular role to play but he also assured Widodo of the Catholic Church's com-

mitment to increasing interreligious dialogue.

"This is indispensable for meeting common challenges, including that of countering extremism and intolerance, which through the distortion of religion attempt to impose their views by using deception and violence."

Regionally, internal conflict in Myanmar has forced more than 7,00,000 Rohingya

to flee to Bangladesh, where thousands have fled overcrowded, violent camps to countries including Indonesia. Francis met with at least one Rohingya refugee upon arrival Tuesday at the Vatican's residence in a show of support for refugees to be welcomed, not rejected.

Farther afield, Indonesia has long been a strong supporter of Palestinians and the government has regularly condemned Israel's war in Gaza. Widodo thanked Francis for the Vatican's support of Palestinians since the start of the war.

"War will not benefit anyone, war will only bring suffering and misery to the common people," Widodo said. "Therefore let us celebrate the differences that we have. Let us accept each other and strengthen tolerance to realize peace, to realize a better world for all humanity." Francis arrived in Jakarta on Tuesday to kick off the longest, farthest and most difficult trip of his pontificate given his myriad health problems. At 87, he uses a wheelchair, has regular bouts of bronchitis and has had multiple surgeries for intestinal problems.

By the trip's end on September 13, Francis will have flown 32,814 kilometers to visit Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Singapore, one of the longest papal trips ever in terms of days on the road and distances traveled.

-AP

Campaign for participation of Indian-Americans in polls

By Lalit K Jha

Washington: Ahead of the November 5 US presidential elections, an Indian diaspora group has launched a campaign to increase the policy impact and participation of Indian-American voters in the polls.

Launched by non-profit institution Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS), the "Indo American Votes Matter" campaign underscores the critical role the community can play in shaping the nation's future, a statement issued on Tuesday said.

"As a vibrant and growing immigrant minority, Indo-Americans— numbering approximately 4.5 million across the United States — have a unique opportunity to make a significant impact in the 2024 elections. Concentrated in key swing states such as Florida, Georgia, Arizona, Virginia, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, the Indo-American vote could be decisive in determining the outcome of crucial races," the FIIDS said.

A comprehensive survey of Indian-Americans will gather their views on both domestic and global policy matters of the US important to them, it said.

"With a sizable population in swing states crucial to the presidential elections, Indian-Americans have a unique opportunity to make an impact," said Khanderao Kand, chief of policy and strategy at FIIDS.

-PTI

India, Brunei stress freedom of navigation

Bandar Seri Begawan: India and Brunei on Wednesday committed themselves to respecting freedom of navigation and overflight consistent with international law, a joint statement said here after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral talks with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah.

Prime Minister Modi also expressed deep appreciation to Brunei Darussalam for continuing to host Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Telemetry Tracking and Telecommand (TTC) Station that has helped India's ongoing efforts in the space sector, the statement said.

Modi and the Brunei Sultan also discussed enhancing defence and maritime cooperation through joint exercises, it said. "Both leaders reiterated their commitment to maintaining and promoting peace, stability, maritime safety and security, as well as respecting freedom of navigation and overflight and unimpeded lawful commerce, consistent with international law, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982," it said.

During the bilateral meeting, Modi and Sultan Bolkiah discussed wide ranging topics and spoke about further expand trade ties, commercial linkages and people-to-people exchanges.

Earlier, before his departure to Singapore, Modi described his Brunei visit as "productive" and said it ushers in a "new era of even stronger India-Brunei ties" contributing to a better planet.

Modi, the first Indian



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sultan of Brunei Hassanal Bolkiah shake hands during signing and exchange of MoUs between two countries, in Brunei on Wednesday.

Pic: PTI

Prime Minister to travel to Brunei on a bilateral visit, held bilateral talks with Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah discussing defence, trade and energy among other topics along with exchanging views on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

India and Brunei elevated the bilateral ties to "Enhanced Partnership."

Brunei is an important partner in India's 'Act East' Policy and its Vision of the Indo-Pacific," the MEA said in a post on X along with the photos.

The two countries are linked by history, culture and tradition spanning a millennium, the MEA had said ahead of Modi's visit to the South East Asian nation.

-PTI

Boko Haram attack village, kill over 100

Maiduguri: At least 100 villagers were killed in northeastern Nigeria when suspected Boko Haram Islamic extremists opened fire on a market, on worshippers and in people's homes, residents said Wednesday, the latest killings in Africa's longest struggle with militancy.

More than 50 extremists on motorcycles rode into the Tarmuwa council area of Yobe state on Sunday evening and began firing before setting buildings ablaze, according to Yobe

police spokesperson Dunga Abdulkarim.

The police blamed the attack on Boko Haram, which since 2009 has launched an insurgency to establish its radical interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia, in the region. Boko Haram has since splintered into different factions, together accounting for the direct deaths of at least 35,000 people and the displacement of more than 2 million, as well as a humanitarian crisis with millions of people in dire need of foreign aid.

At least 1,500 people have so far been killed in the region this year in attacks by armed groups, according to the US-based Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, or ACLED.

Yobe Deputy Gov. Idi Barde Gubana gave a much lower death toll of 34 from Sunday's attack. Contradictory statistics are a common trend in the security crisis, with the death toll from survivors' count often higher than the official figure.

-PTI

North Korea, Russia meet

Seoul: The leaders of South Korea and New Zealand strongly condemned the deepening military cooperation between North Korea and Russia as they met Wednesday for a summit meant to strengthen bilateral ties.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon arrived in Seoul, the South Korean capital, on his first trip to the Asian country since he took office last November.

Cambodia says China gifting two warships



Phnom Penh: Cambodia's Defence Ministry said Wednesday that China is giving its navy two warships of the type it has had docked for months at a strategically important base being expanded with Beijing's funding, which has raised concerns of

China establishing a permanent naval presence on the Gulf of Thailand.

Ministry spokeswoman Maly Socheata told The Associated Press that China would give Cambodia two newly built Type 56 corvettes, smaller vessels typically used for coastal

Cambodia is China's closest ally in Southeast Asia, while China is Cambodia's most important ally and benefactor, with a strong influence on its economy. Beyond military projects, China funds numerous others in Cambodia — particularly infrastructure, including airports and roads, but also private projects such as hotels, casinos and property development. Some 40 per cent of Cambodia's USD 11 billion in foreign debt is owed to China.

patrols, next year at the earliest.

She would not comment on reports that China also planned to hand over to Cambodia newly expanded facilities at Ream Naval Base, including a lengthy new pier capable of accommodating much larger naval vessels than Cambodia has in its own fleet. Maly did say the final phase of construction would soon be completed.

The United States and others have expressed concerns about China's navy establishing a base at Ream, which would give it easy access to the Malacca Strait, a critical shipping

route between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Those concerns grew after two Type 56 corvettes docked at the newly built pier in December, and have maintained a presence there on-and-off ever since.

Cambodia has said one of the reasons the Chinese corvettes have been there for so long was that it was considering similar warships for its own navy, and for training.

Maly said the two corvettes being given to Cambodia, the Type 56C variant, came after Cambodia requested China's support.

-AP

Four Indians burnt alive in Texas accident

Houston: Four Indian nationals, including a young woman, lost their lives and several others were injured in a tragic multi-vehicle road accident in the US state of Texas during the Labour Day weekend.

According to the Collin County Sheriff's Office, the accident involving five vehicles occurred on the northbound US 75 just past White Street at Anna near Dallas.

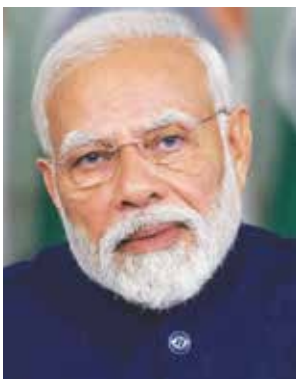
The victims were identified as Aryan Raghunath Orampatti from Kukatpally suburb of Hyderabad, Farooq Sheikh, Lokesh Palacharla, and Darshini Vasudev from Tamil Nadu.



Queen Camilla smiles after speaking to Adrian Gott CEO of Stonegate Farmers, a new state-of-the-art facility where free-range and organic eggs are packed in Lacock, England on Tuesday.

Pic:AP/PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

"Landed in Singapore. Looking forward to the various meetings aimed at boosting the India-Singapore friendship. India's reforms and the talent of our Yuva Shakti makes our nation an ideal investment destination. We also look forward to closer cultural ties."

Another migrant boat seen near France

Wimereux: Just a day after 12 migrants died in a failed effort to cross the English Channel aboard a small inflatable, another boat carrying several dozen people appears to be making another crossing attempt from the coast of northern France on Wednesday, seemingly trying to head toward Britain.

Associated Press journalists on a beach in Wimereux, on the northern French coastline and close to the site of Tuesday's deadly sinking, broadcast live video of an inflatable boat

crowded with people, seemingly migrants, out at sea.

The boat is so laden that some of those aboard, crammed side-by-side on the inflatable tubes, have their legs over the sides.

Many are wearing orange life preservers. A small patrol boat flying a French flag approached the inflatable at one point and a crew person aboard then tossed more orange life vests — about half a dozen of them — to people aboard the vessel, who caught them.

Another larger patrol vessel with a French tricol-



A group of people thought to be migrants are brought in to Dover, Kent, from a Border Force vessel following a small boat incident in the Channel on Wednesday.

Pic:AP/PTI

our stripe on its side — identified by maritime authorities as the French Gendarmerie's coastal pa-

trol vessel Armoise — is shadowing the inflatable from a distance away. The French maritime

agency that oversees that stretch of the channel confirmed to the AP that an operation was underway to monitor the inflatable, in case it runs into difficulty or the people aboard request assistance. The agency said that the Armoise was involved in that operation, accompanied by its own smaller boat that it carries with it.

The gray seas of the English Channel are comparatively calm, with small waves lapping against the beach, where people are strolling and walking dogs.

-AP

EDITORIAL

Waterlogged Aspirations

India's monsoon season, once a lifeline for agriculture and water supply, has increasingly turned into a source of recurring disaster. The recent flooding across Kerala, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, and other states has once again exposed the country's disjointed and inadequate flood preparedness.

Gujarat's relentless rains submerged cities like Surat and Rajkot, overwhelming outdated drainage systems and displacing thousands. More than 35 people lost their lives in both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and nearly 50,000 people displaced due to the rain and flood fury.

This year's floods are part of a long-standing pattern. Flooding in India is a recurring crisis, worsened by climate change, urban expansion, and deforestation. With over 75% of India's rainfall concentrated in the monsoon, the National Disaster Management Authority notes that inadequate water management turns potential resources into catastrophic floods.

Gujarat's Tapi Riverfront Development Project in Surat exemplifies these issues. Launched in 2013 to create a flood-resilient city, it has suffered repeated delays, leaving critical flood control measures incomplete.

In a bid to improve flood management across India, the central government is contemplating making the enactment of floodplain zoning legislation a prerequisite for states to access funds under the Flood Management and Border Areas Programme (FMBAP).

The core issue lies in the disconnect between India's central and state governments. Water management is a state responsibility, yet critical projects often depend on central funding and expertise.

BY INVITATION

Malayalam Cinema Caught in the Crosshairs



By R Ramanand

Malayalam cinema has long served as a vibrant mirror to Kerala's society, deeply intertwined with the daily lives of Malayalis. The film industry's actors are cherished figures across the globe, akin to family members.

The controversy traces back to 2017, when a leading actress was assaulted by a group of assailants, implicating a prominent actor. This incident spurred the formation of the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC), which petitioned the Kerala government to address systemic issues facing women in the industry.

This unfolding crisis should be seen not as a series of isolated incidents but a deliberate effort to provoke societal discord and shift power dynamics within the industry and beyond.

sala Kumari. The committee was tasked with investigating these concerns.

The Hema Committee submitted its report on December 31, 2019, but it remained unpublished, with no concrete action taken by the government throughout Vijayan's tenure until July 2024.

The release of the report has led to a flurry of new allegations, including claims against prominent actors such as Jayasurya, Mukesh (a CPIM MLA), Idavela Babu, and Baburaj.

Unlike others, Jayasurya's independence from influential lobbies and his spiritual beliefs may have made him a target. Media scrutiny and a coordinated smear campaign, including branding him as a 'toilet star' suggest an orchestrated effort to tarnish his reputation.

A long-standing rape allegation against veteran actor Siddique has resurfaced, while new accusations against filmmaker Ranjith—alleging homosexual assault



and the dissemination of compromising photos—have emerged. In response, the government has formed a seven-member special investigation team, and the leadership of the Malayalam film actors association (A.M.M.A.), led by Mohanlal, has resigned amid growing scrutiny.

This crisis appears to be part of a larger agenda to control Malayalam cinema, with actor Mohanlal—known for his nationalist leanings—emerging as a significant obstacle. The ongoing smear campaign against Mohanlal, alongside new allegations against various actors including Jayasurya, appears part of a broader strategy to undermine his influence and dismantle his support network.

This turmoil seems to echo tactics used in the Jasmine Revolution and other uprisings, combining issues like sexual assault, gender discrimination, and corrup-

tion to create widespread unrest. Recent allegations against ADGP Ajithkumar, a close ally of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, further suggest an orchestrated effort to destabilize state institutions and public trust.

The unfolding crisis should be seen not as isolated incidents but as a deliberate effort to provoke societal discord and shift power dynamics within the industry and beyond.

The turmoil within the Malayalam film industry may be a precursor to a larger upheaval reminiscent of the Jasmine Revolution and other recent uprisings. Allegations against high-profile figures and the timing of these accusations suggest a coordinated attempt to undermine public trust in Kerala's institutions and government.

This scenario calls for heightened vigilance and a serious response to prevent the destabilization seen in other regions.

Kerala, like the rest of India, must guard against these destabilizing tactics. The central government must address the drug mafia's influence in the Malayalam film industry and halt radical Islamization to ensure a safe, secular, and dignified work environment for all professionals.

(The writer is a journalist and script writer, based in Kochi, Kerala. Views personal)

PERSONALITY VOICE

Dr. K. L. Shrimali: The Unsung Hero of Indian Education



By Manisha Shrimali

S. Radhakrishnan.

Dr. Shrimali, a distinguished educationist and parliamentarian, made significant contributions as the Union Minister of Education for the Government of India from 1955 to 1963. He completed his education at Banaras Hindu University, Calcutta University, and Columbia University in New York, establishing a strong academic foundation that fuelled his passion for education reforms in India.

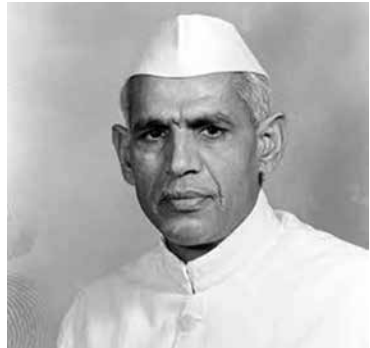
His tenure as the Education Minister was marked by a deep commitment to educational reform and institution-building. Dr. Shrimali's legacy as a 'forefather' of Indian education is rooted in his visionary approach, which sought to balance the need for modernisation with the cultural and social context of India.

Dr. Shrimali was instrumental in the establishment and expansion of several higher education institutions. Under his leadership, the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) were further developed and new ones were established, laying the groundwork for what would become India's premier technical education institutions.

He supported the creation of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act of 1956. This Act empowered the UGC to oversee and regulate higher education in India, ensuring the maintenance of standards, the promotion of research and quality education.

Recognising the need for a skilled workforce to drive India's industrialisation, Dr. K.L. Shrimali emphasised the importance of technical and vocational education. He championed the establishment of Regional Engineering Colleges (RECs), which were precursors to the National Institutes of Technology (NITs), to address the regional imbalances in access to quality technical education.

He was an advocate for adult education and literacy, particularly in rural areas. He promoted several literacy programs aimed at reducing the high illiteracy rates in the coun-



Dr. Kalu Lal Shrimali

try, believing that education was a key driver of social and economic progress.

Beyond his ministerial duties, Dr. Shrimali was actively involved with various educational institutions. He founded the iconic Vidhya Bhavan in Udaipur and social welfare organisations like the Seva Mandir. He was the editor of Jan Shikshan, a monthly educational magazine. He also authored several publications where he highlighted the challenges and opportunities in Indian education, influencing public opinion and policy discussions.

In 1963, he resigned from the Congress. However, his passion for education continued. After resigning from the ministry, he served as the Vice Chancellor of Mysore University and Banaras Hindu University.

Dr. Shrimali played a key role in implementing the recommendations of the Secondary Education Commission (1952-1953) and prepared the groundwork for future reforms that included the Kothari Commission's report (1964-1966). His advocacy for the three-language formula and the importance of moral and character education helped shape the curriculum and policy directions that India would follow for decades. His contributions to education were recognised through numerous awards and honours, including the prestigious Padma Vibhushan in 1976. His work continues to be celebrated.

(The writer is a grand daughter of K.L. Shrimali. Views personal)

GLOBAL WATCH

A Political Earthquake in Germany

Germany is no stranger to political turbulence, but the recent state elections in Thuringia and Saxony marked an unprecedented shift. For the first time since World War II, a right-wing populist party has emerged as a significant political force, shaking the foundations of German politics. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) has won in Thuringia with 32.8% of the vote, while in Saxony, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) narrowly held onto first place with 31.8%, just ahead of the AfD's 30.8%. This electoral earthquake has sent shockwaves through the political establishment, raising questions about the future of Germany's democracy and the federal coalition led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

The AfD's rise in Saxony and Thuringia is not merely a regional phenomenon but resonates with a deeper, more disquieting historical undertone. Thuringia and Saxony, part of the former East Germany, have long harboured a sense of disillusionment with mainstream politics, stemming from a legacy of economic hardship and a perceived neglect by the political elite in Berlin.

However, the surge of the AfD, classified as 'right-wing extremist' by domestic intelligence, evokes chilling memories of Germany's pre-1945 history, when economic de-



spair and political fragmentation paved the way for the rise of the Nazi party. The AfD's anti-immigrant, nationalist rhetoric has drawn comparisons to those darker times, prompting urgent calls for political containment, or the so-called 'Brandmauer' (firewall), by mainstream parties.

The recent elections underscored the growing discontent with traditional parties. In Thuringia, the AfD emerged as the largest party, while the CDU finished a distant second with 23.8%. In Saxony, although the CDU narrowly edged out the AfD, the rightward drift of CDU minister-president Michael Kretschmer signalled a broader shift within the conservative camp. The newly formed populist-left Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) also made significant inroads, finishing third in both states, reflecting a volatile electorate disillusioned with the federal government's policies.

The results have left the federal coalition in disarray. Chancellor Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens, and the Free Democrats (FDP) were all but obliterated, with their combined vote share falling below 15% in both states. The Greens and FDP failed to clear the 5% threshold in Thuringia, crashing out of the state parliament entirely.

The far-right's resurgence poses a critical test for German democracy. Voter turnout was notably high, with three-quarters of eligible voters casting their ballots, suggesting that disillusionment has not dampened democratic engagement but rather intensified it. Among young voters, support for the AfD was particularly striking, with 37% in Thuringia and 31% in Saxony.

This generational shift further underscored the urgency for mainstream parties to address voters' concerns on issues like immigration, economic insecurity, and national identity if they wish to retain their grip on the electorate.

Writing in The Guardian, acclaimed historian Katja Hoyer observed that while there are good reasons to place a political firewall around the extremists, mainstream parties must also address the electorate's loss of trust.

"Immigration tops the list, followed by energy prices, war and the economy. The word I heard over and over again in recent months was angst. Given that a growing number of immigrants are being charged with violent crimes, which are on the rise, many feel this is an issue of safety," said Hoyer, in her opinion piece.

The success of the far-right AfD in two state elections exemplifies the failure of Germany's centrist parties to reckon with the electorate's growing sense of alienation over key issues.

This Teachers' Day, we commemorate Dr. Kalu Lal Shrimali, India's second Education Minister, who played a pivotal role in introducing Teachers' Day in schools.



KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 The sunsets over Manhattan, seen from the U.S. Open tennis championships in New York on Tuesday.
- 2 New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon burns incense during a visit to National Cemetery in Seoul, South Korea on Wednesday.
- 3 Sveva Alviti poses for photographers upon arrival for the premiere of the film 'Queer' during the 81st edition of the Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy on Tuesday.
- 4 Indian Air Force's aerobatics team Surya Kiran during the 2nd phase of multinational air exercise Tarang Shakti, in Jodhpur on Tuesday.
- 5 A woman and her child drink water on a hot day during their visit at the Taj Mahal, in Agra on Tuesday.



All Pictures PTI, AP

GUEST VOICE

Strategies for Prevention of Violence in Healthcare



By Pravin Dixit

Reports of physical and verbal violence at healthcare institutes are regularly reported across India. In some instances, mobs have resorted to arson, destroying costly equipment. An Indian Medical Association (IMA) study found that over 75% of doctors have faced workplace violence. The ghastly rape and murder of a resident doctor at Kolkata's R.G. Kar hospital stands out as one of the most gruesome of these.

Violence against healthcare professionals in India is severe, with over 75% of doctors affected. Despite a promised central Act, no legislation has been enacted. Maharashtra's new security measures, including deploying personnel and installing CCTV cameras, show promise. Part 2 of this series will explore additional solutions.

Despite the Union Health Minister's promise of a central act to prevent such violence, no legislation has been enacted.

Violence against doctors is not exclusive to India. In the US, Dr. Michael Davidson, director of endovascular cardiac surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital, was killed by Stephen Pasceri, who blamed Dr. Davidson for his mother's death. Similarly, violence against nurses in the US is commonplace. According to a study, nearly a million attacks, some extremely violent, against healthcare institutes are reported in China annually.

To prevent such violence, almost 29 states in India, including Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, and Delhi, have enacted legal provisions in the last few years. As per this Act, violence means activities causing any harm, injury, or endangering the life or intimidation, obstruction, or hindrance to any healthcare service person in the discharge of duty in the healthcare service institution or damage or loss to property in the healthcare service institution. The healthcare service persons include registered medical practitioners working in healthcare institutions (including those having provisional registration), registered nurses, medical students, nursing students, and para-medical workers employed and working in medical service institutions. The Act provides stringent punishment, including imprisonment and a fine, as well as double the amount of damage as compensation to the institute. These stringent legal provisions do not permit bail for the accused. The Act also allows patients to lodge criminal complaints against doctors if they feel aggrieved. The Acts have not effectively deterred attackers, with few convictions reported.

Dr. Neeraj Nagpal, Medico-Legal Action Group, argues that a central act alone will not suffice. He suggests changes in the Indian Penal Code. In his opinion, the arrest of doctors under Section 304A of The



IPC is a part of the problem of violence against doctors because invariably cross-FIRs are registered by the patient party and the doctor, which results in an inevitable compromise.

In public general hospitals, violence is usually targeted against young resident doctors. Analysis shows that incidents often happen during emergencies when senior doctors are absent and medical equipment is unavailable or not working. In a few incidents, resident doctors were reported to be under the influence of alcohol and allegedly misbehaved with their relatives.

Given these repeated violent incidents, I was tasked with devising a scheme for medical colleges-cum-hospitals run by the State Government of Maharashtra and Mumbai Corporation. With the medical superintendents, we noticed that trouble ignites in the emergency departments, or if a patient dies. Our resolution involved deploying armed contingents from the Maharashtra Security Force (MSF), equipping them with training and communication tools, and installing CCTV cameras, and restricting access. These measures have improved safety and a better focus on treatment for resident doctors.

These measures are just the beginning of a comprehensive approach. In part 2, we will explore additional solutions, including advanced security protocols, the role of training, and innovative practices to protect healthcare professionals and institutions further.

(The writer is a former DGP of Maharashtra. Views personal)

EXPLAINER

Philadelphi Corridor: Block in Israel-Hamas Talks



Amid the outrage over the gruesome murder of six Israeli hostages by the militant Palestinian faction Hamas and the paralyzing protests in Israel, the Philadelphi Corridor, a narrow strip of land along the Egypt-Gaza border, has come into focus.

Stretching about 14 kilometres and separating the Egyptian Sinai from the southern Gaza Strip, control over the Philadelphi Corridor has become a flashpoint in Israeli-Hamas relations especially after Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005.

Originally established as a buffer zone under the Oslo Accords, the corridor has since evolved into a major smuggling route, with a network of tunnels used by Hamas to transport weapons, militants, and goods into Gaza—stoking the conflict that has kept the peace process in a state of perpetual deadlock.

In 2005, Israel's unilateral disengagement plan, implemented under

then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, saw the removal of Israeli troops and settlements from Gaza, but the strategic importance of the corridor did not diminish. Israel retained control over Gaza's airspace, territorial waters, and border crossings, including the corridor, to monitor and restrict the flow of arms into the Strip.

Israel's blockade of Gaza, aimed at restricting the flow of weapons to Hamas, turned the corridor into a critical supply line for the militant group. However, when Hamas violently took control of Gaza in 2007, ousting the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, the smuggling networks along the Philadelphi Corridor expanded rapidly. Despite numerous Egyptian efforts to curb smuggling, including the construction of barriers and the flooding of tunnels, the corridor remains a key entry point for arms into Gaza. For Hamas, these smuggling routes are not just a means of military supply but also a vital economic lifeline, circumventing Israel's stringent blockade and maintaining the group's authority in the Strip.

The corridor is emblematic of the enduring mistrust and conflicting narratives that plague the Israel-Hamas relationship.

The corridor's strategic importance makes it a central issue in Israel-Hamas negotiations. Israel insists that any lasting peace agreement must include stringent measures to cut off Hamas's access to weapons smuggling, which runs directly through the Philadelphi

Corridor. Conversely, Hamas views the corridor as a necessary channel for circumventing what it considers an illegal blockade that strangles the Gazan economy. This fundamental disagreement has proven a major stumbling block in peace talks, with Israel demanding tighter security controls and Hamas refusing any measures that could threaten its military capabilities.

The killings of the six Israeli hostages, carried out amid ongoing negotiations, have sent shockwaves through Israel, hardening its stance on security and deepening mistrust of Hamas. For Israeli officials, the murders are a stark reminder of Hamas' unrelenting hostility and the dangers of any perceived concession. In previous rounds of violence, such as the 2014 Gaza War, tunnels under the Philadelphi Corridor were used by Hamas to launch attacks into Israel, underscoring the strategic threat posed by this porous border.

The Philadelphi Corridor now stands as a symbol of the intractability of the Israel-Hamas conflict. As long as the corridor remains a conduit for weapons and a point of contention, progress in peace talks is likely to be elusive. The murders of the Israeli hostages have only reinforced the corridor's role as a critical, if often overlooked, roadblock in the peace process.

WORLD CHAMPION SACHIN KHILARI WINS SILVER

The javelin thrower from Sangli sets Asian record



Paris: World champion Sachin Khilari clinched a silver in men's shot put F46 event with an Asian record distance of 16.32m as the country's track-and-field athletes continued their unprecedented medal-winning run in the Paralympic Games here on Wednesday. The 34-year-old Khilari achieved his best throw of the day in his second attempt to better his own Asian record of 16.30m which he set while winning gold in the World Para-Athletics Championships in Japan in May.

However, the effort, which was also his personal best, was not enough for the top honour as Greg Stewart of Canada defended his Tokyo Paralympics gold with a throw of 16.38m. Luka Bakovic of Croatia took the bronze with 16.27m.

Khilari's silver is the 11th medal from para-athletics in the ongoing Games and took India's overall tally to 21, including three gold.

Stewart had finished second to Khilari in the World Para-Athletics Championships in Kobe in May, and the tables were turned at Stade de France on Wednesday.

F46 classification is for athletes with arm deficiency, impaired muscle power or impaired passive range of movement in arms, with athletes competing in a standing position.

Late on Tuesday night, Indians won silver and bronze in both men's high jump T63 and javelin throw F46 after Deepthi Jeevanji's bronze in the women's 400m T20 category.

Sharad Kumar and Mariyappan Thangavelu won silver and bronze respectively in the men's high jump T63 while Ajeet Singh and Sundar Singh Gurjar took the second and third spots in the javelin throw F46 final.

I had wanted to win the gold medal, but it did not happen. It's my best distance but I am not satisfied. I feel I could have done better. It was not my day. It was a tough competition and Greg Stewart is a great player. I made small mistakes in my technique. I will work harder and I hope to beat him next time.

- Sachin Khilari

A mechanical engineering degree holder, Khilari, who had also won a gold in last year's Asian Para Games in China, has an impaired left hand. Hailing from a farming family at Karagani village in Maharashtra's Sangli district, Khilari met with an accident during his school days. The injury resulted in gangrene of the skin on his elbow and muscle atrophy. Even after several surgeries, his arm never recovered. He also lost his mother when he was young. Despite all these setbacks, he took up javelin while he was studying to become an engineer. A shoulder injury during competition forced him to switch to shot put

Khilari was introduced to para sports in 2015 and later met well-known coach Satyanarayana who supported him in improving his game.

He also worked as a visiting faculty member at various institutions, assisting students in their

UPSC and Maharashtra Public Service examination preparations.

The previous best show by India's track and field contingent in a single Paralympics was in Tokyo when it won one gold, five silver and two bronze medals. -PTI

LET'S TALK CRICKET

Maidanwala at the helm



By Sharad Kadrekar

On Tuesday when Abhay Hadap won the election for the post of Mumbai Cricket Association's Secretary a circle came into full for the 'Maidan Man', as he is known in the cricket circle. Hadap defeated Suraj Samat by 55 votes. Hadap secured 196 votes against Samat's 141. The election was necessitated after Ajinkya Naik's elevation to the post of President. Naik got elected to the coveted post after the demise of then President Amol Kale.

Abhay is a popular. He is down to earth. He is accessible and approachable. Most importantly, he has a strong connect with the ground. He has a firsthand experience of each and every cricket tournament played all over Mumbai.

"I never dreamt that I will become MCA secretary one day or reach this far. This is common man's victory," Abhay said in his first reaction. That shows his humbleness too.

Abhay Hadap's election to the post of MCA Secretary is good news for all those who believe cricket in played in ground and not in swanky offices. Mumbai cricket can hope for happy days during his stint.

The 62-year-old never played cricket but he has been a keen follower and spectator of this noble game. A true Mumbaier can never miss any update on cricket. Similarly, Hadap can never miss the ethos of the game.

Born and brought up in Worli, Abhay smelt cricket when his friends used to take him to watch Ranji Trophy matches. The ticket at that time was as cheap as Rs 5. Some good samaritans took him to Shivaji Park Gymkhana to watch Kanga league. Times Shield matches SPG were closer to his home in Adarsh Nagar. Many of his friends celebrated his victory with full gusto at Wankhede Stadium's Lounge with the chants of Ganpati Bappa Morya. That was a sign that Abhay is a team person. A quality that will help him in his new job.

Abhay worked in Bombay Mercantile Co-Op Bank and rose to the post of Senior Officer. He took VRS few years ago to follow his passion - Cricket. In the 2011 World Cup final played at Wankhede Stadium he served as a volunteer.



Abhay Hadap

This affection and love towards ground gave a germ to Abhay and his two friends in Worli, Shirish Malapurkar and Bernard Santiago. The trio started cricket tournament for Under-14 boys in the memory of former Mumbai all-rounder Ajit Naik in 1996 with great fanfare. It was the brainchild of this Worli Trio. All leading Mumbai cricketers and India cricketers like Rohit Sharma, Ajinkya Rahane, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, Shardul Thakur, Sarfraz Khan, Musheer Khan have played in Ajit Naik Memorial Cricket Tournament.

MCA President Ajinkya Naik while expressing happiness and joy over Abhay's victory told an interesting tale. "When I played Worli Sports Clubs under -14 tournament, Hadap was one of the organisers. I am 37 now and he is still organising tournaments. That is his dedication."

Abhay organised 105 tournaments in last season. Incredible! With Ajinkya Naik as President and Abhay Hadap as Secretary the MCA can to bring back the happy days for Mumbai cricket.

(The writer is a senior sports journalist. Views personal.)



MUMBAI CRICKET ASSOCIATION

Prof Ratnakar Shetty, former MCA Secretary and BCCI Officer-in-Charge helped and guided Abhay a lot for which he is grateful to him. In a few years, Abhay who used to look after MCA's cricket tournaments and got sufficient experience in conducting and organising tournaments all over the city throughout the year. He got elected in MCA's biennial elections as Executive Committee Member. Knowing the length and breadth of Mumbai from Churchgate to Virar and CSMT to Kalyan and Nerul Abhay has been well versed with grounds and the staff members and the curators very well. That makes him real Maidanwala!

US Open Bopanna-Sutjiadi lose in semifinal

New York: Indian tennis star Rohan Bopanna and his Indonesian partner Aldila Sutjiadi lost to the American pair of Donald Young and Taylor Townsend 3-6, 4-6 in the mixed doubles semifinal of the US Open here.

In the quarterfinals, Bopanna-Sutjiadi had recorded a hard-fought win over Ebden and Czech Republic's Barbora Krejickova in a contest lasting more than one hour and 30 minutes.

The 44-year-old Bopanna had also lost in the men's doubles in the third round when he and his Australian



partner Matthew Ebden were beaten by the Argentine duo of Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni.

Earlier in the tournament, Sumit Nagal had crashed out in the first round of men's singles while Yuki Bhambri and N Sriram Balaji were also beaten at different stages.

-PTI



India's Manvir Singh (9) heads the ball during the Intercontinental Cup 2024 football match between India and Mauritius, in Hyderabad on Tuesday. Pic-PTI

Sharath, Manika to lead Indian squad

New Delhi: Veteran Sharath Kamal and star female player Manika Batra were on Wednesday named in the India squad for the 27th Asian Table Tennis Championships, scheduled to be held in Astana, from October 7 to 13.

Sharath, the 42-year-old who recently featured in his fifth and last Olympics, is the captain of the men's team comprising Manav Thakkar, Harmet Desai, G Sathiyar and Manush Shah.

Manika will lead the women's team which also has Sreeja Akula, Ayhika Mukherjee, Diya Chital and Sutirtha Mukherjee.

"The selection process was rigorous, with the TTFI giving precedence to the world ranking, international experience, and performance at the national level as key criteria for the final squad," said the TTFI in a statement.

The Indian team has been under the guidance of foreign expert Massimo Constantini, who has been working to fine-tune the players' skills and strategies since his return to India in June.

"I am hopeful they will put their best foot forward in the Astana championships," Constantini said.

The squad, especially the women, had done well in the Paris Olympics, reaching the quarterfinals. The men's team had lost to the mighty China in the round of 16. It was the first time that India qualified for team events at the Olympics.

As a crucial qualification event for the World Table Tennis Championships and the Asian Games, the Asian Championships hold significant importance for the Indian team.

-PTI

Duleep Trophy Pant in focus on red-ball return

By G Unnikrishnan

Bengaluru: Rishabh Pant's red-ball return will be closely monitored but the national selectors will also trace suitable backup options to frontline stars when Duleep Trophy, which prelude an important Test season, begins across Bengaluru and Anantapur on Thursday.

Pant, who returned to white-ball formats after that horrific car crash, is yet to play in a longer-duration match. His last red-ball outing was against Bangladesh in December 2022.

Now, he will turn out for Abhimanyu Easwaran-led Team B against Shubman Gill-captained Team A at the Chinnaswamy Stadium.

Satisfying his outings in the shorter versions were, but this four-day tournament offers him a unique challenge - batting and 'keeping for an undefined number of overs.

Pant is the designated stumper in Team B, and it is



evident that the Ajit Agarkar-led selection panel is intending to take a deep look into his role as the wicketkeeper-batter in a season that will culminate with the World Test Championship Final at the Lord's next June.

But that is just one piece of the puzzle as other worthy contenders are there for the wicketkeeper-batter's slot.

The front-runner is Dhruv Jurel (Team A), who was impressive in his debut

series will gobble up two batting slots along with Gill at No. 3.

Hence, there will be a jostle between KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Sarfaraz Khan, who impressed all with an excellent Test debut against England, for settling into the available middle-order space.

It's imperative for Rahul, who is in Team A as a pure batter, and Shreyas to come good in Duleep Trophy as they missed a large chunk of the home matches against England - the former with an injury and the latter was dropped after the second Test at Visakhapatnam.

Dark horses

There is a litany of fringe players who would want to give a further fillip to their career after showcasing talent at various levels.

Karnataka's Devdutt Padikkal had a roaring Ranji season in 2023-24, which earned him a Test debut against England at

| SQUADS |
|---------------------------------------|
| India A: Shubman Gill |
| India B: Abhimanyu Easwaran |
| India C: Ruturaj Gaikwad |

Dharamsala.

Baba Indrajith of Tamil Nadu is a consistent domestic performer and he once again underlined his prowess making 767 runs in the last Ranji season, and Musheer Khan, younger brother of Sarfaraz, smoothly graduated to First-Class cricket for Mumbai after blazing the Under-19 circuit.

B Sai Sudharsan of Tamil Nadu, who made white ball debut for India, too has given an early indication of his readiness for red-ball cricket with a hundred for Surrey in English county cricket. He will play for Team C under Ruturaj Gaikwad.

Hockey Championship from today

Pune: Hockey Maharashtra will host the fourth edition of the Hockey India Senior Men Inter-Department National Championship here from September 5 to 15, featuring 18 teams divided in four pools.

The 10-day tournament will be played at the Major Dhyanchand Stadium in Pune, which will be the third city to host the competition after Bengaluru and New Delhi. Among the competitors will be two-time winners and defending champions Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) and the 2022 winners in Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB).

Four teams will feature in each pool while top two will advance to the last-eight round. Among the players to feature in the competition are Surender Kumar, Asian Games gold medallist Akashdeep and Olympians Dharamveer, Devinder Wal-miki, and Dilpreet Singh.



Sevilay Ozturk, of Turkey, adjusts her glasses during a warm up ahead of the competition, during the Paralympics in Paris on Tuesday. Pic-APPTI