

THE PERFECT VOICE



Prisons undergo major upgrades; get enhanced facilities

... pg 2



85 pc of districts exposed to extreme climate events

... pg 6



Canoe sprinter Pooja misses final

... pg 10

Principal deletes Ganesh Chaturthi posts, arrested

Kota (Rajasthan): A government school principal was arrested here after he allegedly deleted Ganesh Chaturthi greetings posted on the school WhatsApp group, which triggered protests by people of the village, officials said on Sunday.

Villagers held demonstrations outside the school, demanding the removal of Shafi Mohammed Ansari, principal of government senior higher secondary school at Latari village.

SHO at Bapawar Police Station Uttam Singh said Ansari was arrested for disturbing communal harmony. He was granted bail and released later in the evening, the officer said.

The situation in the village remained normal and peaceful, the SHO said.

According to police, a man posted a Ganesh Chaturthi greetings message on the WhatsApp group, which the principal deleted. The group is named School Management Development Committee or SMDC, the SHO said.

Around two hours lat-

The principal allegedly removed posts that had a picture of Lord Ganesh from a school WhatsApp group. Parents and teachers are part of the group, DSP Narendra Nadar said.

er, a school teacher also uploaded a Ganesh Chaturthi greeting in the same group and Ansari allegedly deleted the post again, police said.

After this, some villagers gathered outside the school, held demonstrations against the principal and demanded his removal.

Police rushed to the spot upon getting information about the incident, the SHO said.

Police arrested the school principal for alleged breach of communal harmony and initiated proceedings under Section 127 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS) against him, he said. He added that Ansari was granted bail and later released on the same day.

-PTI



A volunteer immerses Lord Ganesh idol in an artificial pond during the one-and-half day Ganapati immersion, at Dadar, in Mumbai on Sunday. Pic: Bhushan Koyande

NSA off to Russia; role in Ukraine conflict?

New Delhi: A couple of days after Russia President Vladimir Putin said that he was in touch with India over solution to war with Ukraine the National Security Advisor Ajit Doval is travelling to Russia this week. His visit is touted as India's possible role in finding a solution to the war following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Moscow and Kyiv.

Doval is visiting Russia primarily to attend a conclave of national security advisors of the BRICS (Bra-

zil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) grouping that is taking place amid a renewed push for peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv to end the conflict.

NSA Doval is travelling to Russia for the BRICS meet, official sources said. He is also expected to hold talks with his Russian counterpart and is likely to discuss ways to bring peace to the region.

Doval's visit to Russia comes two-and-half weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-profile

trip to the Ukrainian capital Kyiv.

On Saturday, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, following her talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said India and China can play a role in finding a solution to the dragging conflict.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, speaking at a panel discussion at the Eastern Economic Forum in the Russian city of Vladivostok on Thursday, named India, Brazil and China as possible intermediaries

that could play a role in resolving the conflict

In his talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Modi had said both Ukraine and Russia should sit together without wasting time to end the ongoing war and that India was ready to play an "active role" in restoring peace in the region. The PM said India was on the side of peace since the beginning of the conflict and he would even like to contribute personally to a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

-PTI

No lynching, be it of cows or men: Indresh Kumar

Patna: Senior RSS functionary Indresh Kumar on Sunday asserted there should be "no man lynching and no cow lynching", in order to ensure that people from different faiths lived together in peace.

Talking to reporters here, the national executive member also said the RSS stood by the views expressed by its chief, Mohan Bhagwat, in favour of a caste census.

He added, "Likewise, we are also of the view that there are, and there will be, many religions. But we must be on guard against religious fanaticism and the violence that it leads to. People should follow their own path while having respect for all".

When asked about frequent incidents of lynching by cow vigilantes, which opposition parties have blamed on the ascendance of BJP, an offshoot of the RSS, he said "In many parts of the country and the world people eat meat. But we must recognize that people are sensitive about cows. So, we should strive to create an environment in which there is no cow lynching and no man lynching. We should cele-

What honourable Mohan ji has said is a view held by cent per cent volunteers of RSS. Caste is a reality which we cannot wish away. But we must take care to keep at bay the venom of casteism (jaativad ka dansh)

-Indresh Kumar

brate unity in diversity".

The RSS functionary, who is also a patron of "Pancham Dham", said the "international cultural organization's Bihar chapter" launched a programme on Ganesh Chaturthi which will conclude on Maha Shiv Ratri next year.

He said "the state-wide programme is aimed at creating a society that is free from riots and caste based discrimination and is characterized by compassion for the poor."

-PTI



Women shout slogans as they take part in a protest march over the alleged sexual assault and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata on Sunday. Pic: PTI

Must get MLA other than me, says Ajit

Baramati: Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Sunday said he was satisfied with the development work he had carried out as a legislator, adding that people of Baramati for once must get an MLA other than him so that they could make comparisons.

The Nationalist Congress Party chief has been MLA of Baramati since 1991, with his victory in the 2019 assembly polls, over the BJP's Gopichand Padalkar, coming with a record margin of 1.65 lakh votes.

Pawar said, "We have done all round development in Baramati. Most funds in Maharashtra are sanctioned for Baramati. I am now 65 years old and I am satisfied. Baramatikars once should get someone other than me as an MLA. They can then make comparison between me and the new MLA."

First suspected Mpox case in India

New Delhi: A young male patient who recently returned from a country with ongoing Mpox (monkeypox) transmission has been identified as a suspected case of the virus, the Union health ministry said on Friday. The patient has been placed in isolation at a designated hospital and is reportedly in stable condition.

The health ministry confirmed that samples have been taken and are undergoing testing to verify whether the patient has contracted Mpox.

"Samples from the patient are being tested to confirm the presence of Mpox. The case is being managed in line with established protocols, and contact tracing is ongoing to identify potential sources and assess the impact within the country," the ministry said in a statement.

The government has assured that the situation is



under control, stating that the development is consistent with previous risk assessments conducted by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

"There is no cause of any undue concern," the ministry said. "The country is fully prepared to deal with such isolated travel related case and has robust measures in place to manage and mitigate any potential risk."

The suspected Mpox case was detected in India three weeks after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreaks in 12 African countries a global emergency.

Mizoram teens return home

Aizawl: With their heads tonsured and cigarette burns on bodies, two teenage boys returned home in Mizoram after being held captive by militants in adjoining Myanmar's Chin state for nearly a week, an Assam Rifles officer said on Sunday.

The two boys, aged 16 and 15, were allegedly abducted by the Hualgoram unit of Chin Defence Force (CDF), one of several militant organisations fighting the military junta in Myanmar, on September 1 from Rih Dil Lake, a tourist spot in the neighbouring country near the Indian border, the officer said.

"A group of five boys from Zokhawthar village in Mizoram had gone to Rih Dil Lake on motorcycles on September 1. On reaching there, they were stopped by cadres of CDF, who thrashed them because of a previous scuffle they had with some other boys from Zokhawthar."

India emerges as Paralympic power in Paris

Paris: Differently-abled but exceptionally resolute, India's para-athletes would look back at their Paralympics campaign with pride as most of the established names lived up to expectations and many talented greenhorns made the big stage their own in a record-smashing medal haul of 29.

Seven of these 29 medals are gold, which is another first for the country that started to make its presence felt only in the 2016 edition, where it won four medals. The upswing in performance after that has been meteoric with Tokyo yielding 19, a number that was surpassed this time.

India is still far away from becoming a force at the Olympic level but the nation has certainly

emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the competition for the differently-abled.

Unexpected medals in track and judo

The contingent of 84 ensured plenty of firsts for India in Paralympic history including medals in track events with sprinter Preethi Pal winning a bronze in the women's 100m T35 and 200m T35 class.

T35 classification is meant for athletes who have coordination impairments such as hypertonina, ataxia and athetosis. Preethi was born with weak legs and it became progressively worse as she grew up.

Another first ever medal

came via Kapil Parmar in Judo. He made India proud by securing a bronze in the men's 60kg J1 class.

His was another story of remarkable resolve as the 24-year-old lifted himself from a life altering accident in his childhood when he got electrocuted while playing in the fields of his village. Kapil was forced to sell tea as well later in his life to make ends meet but he turned things around and how.

Archery and club throw prop up tally

The likes of Harvinder Singh and Dharambir pushed India considerably higher up the medals tally by securing path-breaking gold medals in archery and club throw respectively.



Armless archer Sheetal Devi, who was born without arms, was already a beacon of hope to millions but with her mixed team bronze, the 17-year-old gave her community another good reason to never give up. No wonder she became a

crowd favourite in Paris as she left everyone in awe using her legs instead of arms to hit the bulls' eye.

The crowd was left hugely disappointed as she narrowly lost her 1/8 elimination contest in the singles event.

The 29 medals in five sports, including a whopping 17 at the track and field events, have ensured that the country will end in the top 20 of the mega-event that was once again dominated by China with over 200 medals.

Days later, Harvinder kept his nerve under extreme pressure to land the first ever gold for India in archery, also changing the colour of his medal from the Tokyo edition where he won bronze.

In the club throw event, it was a rare one two finish for India with Dharambir and Pranav Soorma ending

up on the podium in the F51 class.

A tragic diving accident had Dharambir paralysed from waist down but the Sonapat resident found much needed support from fellow para athlete Amit Kumar Saroha who guided the latter in his darkest days.

Sumit Antil and Avani Lekhara defend titles

While plenty of firsts were registered, some of the Indian athletes including javelin thrower Sumit Antil and shooter Avani Lekhara had high expectations to meet, having won gold in Tokyo.

Sumit, whose left leg was amputated after an accident, broke his own Paralympic record for a second

successive javelin gold while wheelchair-bound rifle shooter Lekhara dominated the field in the air rifle SH1 final.

A gold also came from the badminton court via Kumar Nitesh who pipped Britain's Daniel Bethell in a thrilling final. Nitesh too lost his leg after a train accident. He took to badminton while pursuing his graduation from IIT-Mandi.

Going forward, India can aspire to finish in the top-10 if it manages to create a pool of para swimmers too. Only one swimmer represented the country in Paris. Table topers China won as many as 54 medals in swimming including 20 gold.

-PTI

Prisons undergo major upgrades, get enhanced facilities

By Anand Mishra

Mumbai: In a stark contrast to the daily lives of many common citizens, thousands of prisoners across Maharashtra's jails are now enjoying the facilities which a common man can only think of. The latest facility for them provided by the state govt this week is starting community radio and on the lines of Nagpur, Yerwada, Nashik and Kolhapur Central Jail. While many outside may not have access to industrial-grade washing machines or TVs, inmates in Maharashtra's prisons are benefiting from these luxuries, along with several other upgrades aimed at improving their living conditions.



cent response in exhibition cum sale shows as well as on E-commerce sites.

The turning point

This transformation is relatively recent. Until January 2023, conditions in many prisons were far from ideal. The turning point came when Amitabh Gupta, the then Additional Director General (Prisons), took charge and launched a mission to upgrade the facilities. He initiated several key initiatives that not only improved the inmates' living conditions but also garnered praise.

Introduction of regular health check-ups led to the early detection of ailments and a significant reduction in inmate death rates. Smart card phone facility, video calling, and e-visiting services, which have allowed convicts to stay con-

nected with their families, relatives, and legal representatives. Maharashtra has now become a leader in presenting inmates through video conferencing. A prison department official told The Perfect Voice, "While efforts were already underway, they gained momentum under Gupta's leadership. His prior experience in the handlings of home department affairs equipped him with a deep understanding of governmental processes, enabling him to navigate the system effectively and accelerate the implementation of these much-needed improvements."

The Game Changer

On July 12, 2024, the Maharashtra State government tabled the Maharashtra Prisons and Correctional Services

Bill, 2024, in the State Legislative Assembly, which once enacted, will be a game changer. After the implementation of this act, the prison authorities will organise spiritual, cultural and recreational programmes for the prisoners and the facilities like games, sports and yoga sessions will also be held at regular intervals. It also provides secured walls, central monitoring systems, watch towers, power fencing, intelligence gathering systems, and closed-circuit television in the prison premises. This legislation also provides for quick response teams to handle emergencies and implement disaster management protocols.

Prisons precariously over-populated

Maharashtra state has nine central prisons, 31 district

Table with 2 columns: Category and Count. State of prisons: >Central Prison - 09, >District Prison - 28, >Special Jail Ratnagiri - 01, Mumbai District: >Women Jail - 01, >Juvenile Correctional Home, Nashik - 01

prisons, 19 open prisons, one open colony, that accommodate 40,825 prisoners in 60 prisons all over. However, the state's prison system is grappling with an acute overcrowding crisis, with these 40,825 inmates languishing into facilities originally designed to accommodate only 26,377 prisoners. Constructions of new prisons at Yerwada, Palghar, Ahmednagar, Hingoli, Baramati are underway that accommodate at least 7,000 new inmates in the coming two to three years. Understandably, overloaded prisons often lead to precarious living conditions, heightened tensions among prisoners, increased risk of violence, and difficulties in providing essential services and programs aimed at prisoner rehabilitation.

"In such a situation, the various schemes launched by the prison department will certainly extend some most sought-after relief to the inmates," said the prison official adding the issue of prison overcrowding also highlights challenges within the criminal justice system, including issues related to sentencing policies, bail procedures, and access to legal representation.

Have quit BJP, will join Cong, says former MLA

Gondia: BJP leader and former MLA Gopal Das Agrawal on Sunday said he was leaving the saffron party and joining the Congress on September 13.

Addressing a press conference, the former MLA from Gondia said he was leaving the BJP with a heavy heart as its policies were not acceptable and party workers had not worked with full commitment for him. "I have tendered my resignation from the primary membership of the BJP in a letter to party president J.P. Nadda. I joined the BJP in 2019 to contest the assembly polls but faced defeat at the hands of Independent candidate Vinod Agrawal due to lack of cooperation from the party workers," said Agrawal, who won from the seat on a Congress ticket in 2004, 2009 and 2014.

"I am forced to leave with a heavy heart. I have also spoken about my decision to Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and state BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule. I will return to the Congress on September 13 in the presence of Maharashtra in charge Ramesh Chennithala," he told reporters.

He claimed senior leaders like Chennithala and others have said the Congress will contest from Gondia in the upcoming assembly polls as part of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi but added he was not joining his old party for the sake of a ticket.

CBI arrests CGST official for bribery



Mumbai: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested three accused including a Superintendent of CGST (Anti-Evasion), Mumbai West Commissionerate and two private persons - one of them a Chartered Accountant (CA), during the trap proceedings, while accepting part bribe amount of Rs 20 lakh, out of the negotiated undue advantage of Rs 60 lakh demanded as bribe. An amount of Rs 30 lakh of the total bribe amount was allegedly paid earlier through hawala, agency officials said on Sunday.

Those named in the FIR have been identified as Additional Commissioner, CGST Commissionerate, Mumbai West Deepak Kumar Sharma, CGST Superintendents Sachin Gokulka, Bijender Janawa, Nikhil Agrawal, Nitin Kumar Gupta, Joint Commissioner CGST Rahul Kumar, Chartered Accountant Raj Aggarwal and one Abhishek Mehta (Private Person). Those arrested by the CBI are Sachin Gokulka, Raj Aggarwal and Abhishek Mehta.

The CBI had registered a case on a complaint against eight accused including six officers of CGST from a Goregaon resident alleging therein demand of bribe of Rs 60 lakhs by Sachin Gokulka and other CGST officers through middlemen Raj Aggarwal, for settling the matter of a pharma

company pending with Gokulka.

It was alleged that when the complainant visited CGST Office at Santacruz in the evening of 04.09.2024, he was kept confined in the office whole night and released after about 18 hours on 05.09.2024. It was also alleged that during the complainant's confinement, one of the accused Superintendent CGST (bribe receiver) demanded Rs 80 lakh bribe for not arresting him which was subsequently reduced to Rs 60 lakhs. Further, it was alleged that three other colleagues of said Superintendent (all Superintendents of CGST) also joined him in pressurising the complainant including through repeated use of force and hurling abuses," said a CBI officer.

"The complainant was, allegedly, made to call his cousin while in confinement, to convey the demand of undue advantage by CGST officers for not arresting the complainant and favouring him in the ongoing probe by CGST. It was also alleged that the cousin of the complainant subsequently contacted an accused CA who further contacted other accused private person and senior CGST officers including accused JC, CGST. Both accused CA and other accused private person visited the CGST office during the intervening night and negotiated the bribe with CGST officials.

CRIME WATCH

Three held for man's murder

Palghar: Police have arrested a couple and another member of their family for allegedly killing a 58-year-old man following a dispute in Palghar district, an official said on Sunday. The victim, identified as Gajanan Ganpat Davne, was brutally assaulted on Friday evening, leading to his death, he said. An altercation took place between the victim's family and the accused following a long-standing dispute over an approach road near their homes at a locality in Talasari area of the district, the official from Gholwad police station said. The accused allegedly beat up the victim and hit him with a wooden stick, inflicting multiple injuries, including on his eyes, nose and private parts, he said.

Four acquitted in murder case

Thane: A court in Maharashtra's Thane district acquitted four persons accused of murdering a 29-year-old man in 2014, noting that the evidence was insufficient to link them to the crime. Additional sessions judge D.S. Deshmukh acquitted the men booked under sections 302 (murder) and 201 of the Indian Penal Code due to insufficient evidence. The order passed on September 2 was made available on Sunday. The prosecution alleged that the accused, Ganesh alias Ganya Nivrutti Rakhpasre (50), his brother Mangesh (42), Sahadev alias Sajya Vitthal Londe (34), and Badal Sadashiv Bodke (38) were involved in the killing of Ganesh alias Ganya Sukhdev Abhang.

UPSC aspirant ends life

Thane: A 28-year-old civil services aspirant allegedly committed suicide by jumping from the eighth floor of a building in Thane city of Maharashtra, police said on Sunday. The incident took place at around 8.30 pm on Saturday in Vartak Nagar area, they said. The police found a 'suicide' note in the man's house wherein he apologised to his family members saying he could not fulfil everyone's high hopes and was finding it difficult to survive in this world, an official from Vartak Nagar police station said.

Man sweeps away in river

Thane: The authorities in Maharashtra's Thane district have launched a search after a man got swept away in a river, an official said on Sunday.

The man, Bhaskar Padhir, and one Ruchika Pawar tried to cross the Vaitarna river in Shahapur on Saturday when the water level suddenly rose.

Padhir saved Pawar from strong currents, helping locals to pull her to safety. However, the swirling waters dragged him away and he went missing, the official said.

Locals from Sawarde village have alleged that the accident occurred due to an unannounced release of water from the Middle Vaitarna dam. They also protested at the dam.

A search is underway to locate Padhir, while an investigation is being carried out to ascertain if there was any negligence on the part of the dam staff, officials said. -PTI



Union Home Minister Amit Shah being welcomed by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde upon his arrival in Mumbai on Sunday.

Preamble of Constitution read out after 'aarti'

Jalna: Devotees read out the Preamble of the Constitution after 'aarti' at a Ganesh pandal in Maharashtra's Jalna district, with one of the organisers on Sunday saying the novel move was aimed at fostering democratic principles and national unity as well as make people aware of their fundamental rights.

By reading out the Preamble on Saturday, the mandal is not only paying obeisance to Lord Ganesh but also to the values enshrined in the Constitution, said Ashok Pangarkar, president of the Ganesh Mahasangh, which organised the festivity.

Those who were invited for the event included former Union minister and senior BJP leader Raisaheb Dane, MLA Kailash Gorantyal, among others, he added.

Society doesn't like anybody breaking own family

Ajit Pawar says have realised his mistake

Gadchiroli: Noting that society doesn't like rifts in families, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has said he experienced it and has already admitted his mistake, an apparent reference to the contest between his wife Sunetra and cousin Supriya Sule in the recent Lok Sabha polls.

This is the second time in less than a month that Pawar publicly admitted he had made a mistake by fielding his wife against NCP (SP) leader Sule, the daughter of his uncle Sharad Pawar, and noted politics should not enter the home. The "admission" of mistake came against the backdrop of poor performance by the NCP, one of the constituents of the Mahayuti alliance in the state, in its maiden general elections after a split in the party.

Addressing the Jansamman rally organised by the NCP in Gadchiroli city on Friday, Ajit Pawar tried to



discourage party leader and state minister Dharmarao Baba Aatram's daughter Bhagyashri from crossing over to the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP).

"Nobody loves a daughter more than her father. Despite giving her away in marriage in Belgaum, he (Aatram) stood by her in Gadchiroli and made her the president of Zilla Parishad. Now you (Bhagyashri) are set to fight against your own father. Is this right?" the deputy CM asked the gathering. "You should support your father and help him win because only he has the capacity and determination to develop the region. The society never accepts breaking one's own family," he said.

This is like breaking the family, Ajit Pawar said, referring to the rift between Bhagyashri and her father over her political move. The

Quote box: Society doesn't like this. I have experienced the same and accepted my mistake. -Ajit Pawar, Deputy CM

NCP led by Ajit Pawar suffered a severe douring in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, losing three of the four constituencies, including Baramati, it had contested. In contrast, the Sharad Pawar-led faction won eight out of the 10 seats it contested. Aatram, an MLA from Aheri in Gadchiroli district, sided with Ajit.

"Aatram's daughter learnt politics from her father. Aatram was a 'vastad' (master) in politics who always kept one move close to his chest and played it at the appropriate time. Like the vastad, Aatram too doesn't teach everything to his pupil," Ajit Pawar quipped.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sanjay Raut, MP, Shiv Sena (UBT)

"In 2019, did Devendra Fadnavis know what Sharad Pawar was thinking and planning? Even if he is born 100 times, Devendra Fadnavis will fail to fathom what goes on in Sharad Pawar's head. If there is any courage left with the ruling dispensation in the state, they should give a call for the election."

Window reopened for CA final exam

Mumbai: In a relief to CA final exam aspirants who missed the registration deadline for the November 2024 exams due to the shortened registration period, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has reopened the application window for two more days.

Candidates can now submit their applications with a late fee of Rs 600 on September 11 and 12.

Following changes to the examination and registration process by ICAI, many students expressed concerns about missing the application window for the November 2024 CA fi-



nal exams.

On September 7, ICAI issued a notification addressing these concerns. "Given the reduction in the registration period from 28 days to 17 days—an unprecedented change for CA Final and Post Qualification Course examinations—and following re-

quests from students, we have decided to reopen the online application process for Chartered Accountants Final and Post Qualification Courses (including Insurance and Risk Management (IRM) Technical Examination and International Taxation - Assessment Test (INTT-AT)) for

two days, from September 11, 2024 (11:00 AM) to September 12, 2024 (11:59 PM), with a late fee of ₹600 (US\$10). This measure is a one-time adjustment for the benefit of the students," the notification stated.

The registration window for the CA final exam scheduled for November 2024 was initially open from August 7 to 23. This shorter window, reduced from the usual 28 days, led to widespread complaints from aspiring CAs, who missed their chance to register due to a lack of awareness about the new deadlines.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that MR. SHYAMBALI MAULU PRAJAPATI & MRS. MUNNIDEVI S. PRAJAPATI who are the owners of Room no. B/04, SAI RAJ NIWAS Chawl-2, Mahadev nagar, Alkapuri, Achole Road, Nallasopara (E), Tal. Vasai, Dist. Palghar- 401209, admeasuring 300 sq. feet, and first Agreement between BUILDERS MR. SATISH SINGH & MR. LAXMAN MARU laying, being and situated Achole, bearing S.N. 109 (New), Village Achole Notrized Agreement however my client has lost the original Agreement. If any person having any objection or claim in respect of the above said lost agreement by way of sale, exchange, charge gift, possession, lease, mortgage, lien or otherwise howsoever, they/she/he is request to inform me and undersigned his claim with proper evidence within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice at shop No. 11, Gurus Govind Singh Nagar, GHS. Ltd., Lodha Marg, Achole, Nallasopara (E), Tal. Vasai Dist. Palghar. Sig. NEEL RATAN RAI Advocate

Elaborated security measures at chowpaty

From QR code to steel plates BMC readies for Ganesh immersion



Devotees immerse an idol of Lord Ganesh into the Arabian Sea during the 'Ganesh Chaturthi' festival, at Juhu in Mumbai on Sunday. Pic: PTI

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has ramped up its preparations to ensure the smooth and safe immersion of Lord Ganesh idols across the city. This year, the BMC has introduced various additional facilities and resources to accommodate the massive influx of devotees expected on this auspicious day.

Over 12,000 BMC officials and employees have been mobilised, working across 71 control rooms strategically set up to monitor and manage the proceedings. These facilities will support 69 natural immersion sites and 204 artificial sites that have been designated across Mumbai for the immersion of Ganesh idols.

According to Deputy Commissioner Prashant Sapkal 478 steel plates have been laid out at Girgaum Chowpaty to prevent vehicles from getting stuck in the sand. In addition, 43 German rafts have been arranged for the smooth immersion of smaller Ganesh idols.

The BMC has deployed 48 motorboats and stationed 761 lifeguards at major immersion sites to ensure safety of the devotees. The administration has also taken steps to

On September 17, the following tide changes will occur:

- ▶ High tide: 4.54 meters at 11:14 am
- ▶ Low tide: 0.86 meters at 5:22 pm
- ▶ High tide: 4.39 meters at 11:34 pm

manage the environmental impact of the festival, with 274 Nirmalya collection vehicles and 163 Nirmalya urns positioned across immersion sites to collect offerings before idols are immersed.

At Girgaum Chowpaty, where large crowds are expected, the BMC has set up 66 observation towers, and 72 reception rooms, and has deployed 67 ambulances and 75 first-aid centres to handle any medical emergencies. The health and safety of the devotees remain a top priority, the civic body said.

Effective lighting and sanitation

Approximately 1,097 floodlights and 27 searchlights have been installed, in collaboration with the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST). For the convenience of devotees, 127 mobile toilets have been set up near popular immersion sites. Fur-

thermore, trained fire-fighting personnel and vehicles will be stationed to deal with any emergencies, the civic body said.

QR codes for artificial ponds

The BMC has introduced a QR code system that provides real-time information about artificial ponds. Devotees can scan the QR code to access the location and directions to nearby artificial immersion sites via Google Maps, making it easier to opt for environmentally conscious immersion options, the BMC said.

The BMC and Mumbai Police have issued a joint appeal to the public. "Citizens are urged to maintain cleanliness, sanctity, and order at all immersion sites. Devotees are reminded to stay vigilant, especially in crowded areas, and follow all instructions provided by authorities to ensure a peaceful and harmonious conclusion to the festivities."

The BMC has issued important warnings regarding tide timings and safety precautions. Devotees visiting the city's beaches, especially Chowpaty, are advised to stay alert during high and low tides.

On September 18, the tides will be as follows:

- ▶ Low tide: 0.48 meters at 5:27 am
- ▶ High tide: 4.71 meters at 11:37 am
- ▶ Low tide: 5:49 pm

MBMC starts control room for students safety



By Correspondent

Thane: The Mira Bhayander Municipal Corporation (MBMC) in Maharashtra's Thane district has launched a new 'Central School Control Room' to bolster the safety of students by monitoring CCTV footage across the civic schools, officials said.

The move comes after two four-year-old girls were sexually assaulted allegedly by a male attendant in the washroom of a school in Badlapur area of the district last month.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on September 5 inaugurated the MBMC's 'Central School Control Room' via video conferencing.

The facility, located at the Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar Auditorium

in Mira Bhayander area, is designed to monitor CCTV footage across municipal schools to enhance student safety, a civic release said on Saturday.

Municipal Commissioner Sanjay Katkar said the control room, which can monitor nearly 1,000 CCTV cameras, is equipped with advanced technology and a UPS generator backup. It will oversee footage from 200 cameras installed in 36 municipal schools with approximately 10,000 students.

The control room promises to address security concerns proactively and provide a secure learning environment for students, parents and school staff.

Initially focusing on municipal schools, the initiative plans to include private institutions in the future, the release said.

Actor Vikas Sethi dies of cardiac arrest

Mumbai: Actor Vikas Sethi, best known for TV shows such as "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi", "Kahiin To Hoga", and "Sasural Simar Ka", died in Nashik on Saturday night in his sleep following a cardiac arrest. He was 48.

According to his wife Jhanvi Sethi, they were in Nashik to attend a family function. "After we reached my mother's house in Nashik, he had vomiting and loose motions. He didn't want to go to the hospital so we asked the doctor to come home..."



"When I went to wake him up at around 6 am in the morning (on Sunday), he was no more. The doctor there told us he passed away last night in his sleep due to cardiac arrest," she told PTI. His mortal remains have been sent for post-mortem to Mumbai's Cooper Hospital, said Jhanvi.

Besides being a familiar face on television, Sethi was part of the 2001 superhit film "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham..." in which he played Robbie, a friend of Poo (Kareena Kapoor Khan). Sethi is survived by his wife and their twin sons.

Three booked for assault

Thane: A couple and their son allegedly assaulted a 24-year-old jeweller residing in their neighbourhood following a dispute over water leakage from his house in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Friday at Kamatghar in Bhiwandi area where the jeweller's shop is located on the ground floor of a building while his residence is on the second floor.

An altercation began when water leaked from his residence on to the house of the accused, who allegedly attacked and abused him.

Mandal worker killed in Hit-N-Run

By Correspondent

Mumbai: One worker of fason Mulund Cha Raja Ganesh Mandal died after being hit by a speeding BMW. Another worker is in critical condition, the police said.

The incident happened at 4 am. Police have registered a case," said a statement by Mumbai Police.

According to the police, the two workers, Pritam Thorat and Prasad Patil were putting up banners near the Aakruti Tower in Gavanpada when a speeding BMW hit and ran over them.

As the driver fled the location, the onlookers rushed the victims to a nearby hospital. While



Pritam Thorat

Thorat succumbed to his injuries, Patil continues to be critical and is undergoing treatment.

Mulund Police traced the accused driver's location to Navi Mumbai and arrested him. Police have identified him as Shakti Alagh, a Mulund (West) resident.

Alagh told the police that he was helping with festive preparations at a local

Ganesh Mandal till 10 pm on Friday, before going home. Police believe that Alagh, who worked in a call centre earlier, had bought the BMW second-hand.

According to a police officer Alagh could not fall asleep and decided to take his newly serviced BMW for a test drive. "It was while out on a drive that the incident took place. Fearing he would be beaten up, he fled from the spot and parked his car in his building. He took a bike and fled from there to Navi Mumbai. Eventually, we arrested him from Kharghar," the officer said.

The police have sent Alagh's blood samples for medical tests.

Crocodile rescued from residential area

Mumbai: A nine-foot-long crocodile strayed into a residential area in Mumbai from where it was rescued on Sunday morning, a wildlife welfare group representative said.

The forest department control room received a distress call in the morning about the huge crocodile being spotted at the Nirmal Lifestyle housing society in Mulund area, he said.

Later, members of the Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare (RAWW)



led a rescue operation in coordination with forest officials.

They safely rescued the female Indian Marsh crocodile at around 6.30 am. After a medical examination,

the reptile was released into its natural habitat, said Pawan Sharma, founder of the RAWW and honorary wildlife warden with the forest department.

-PTI

Khan wants holiday on Sep 18

Mumbai: Congress leader Naseem Khan on Sunday urged Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to declare holiday on September 18 for Eid-e-Milad instead of September 16. "Anant Chaturdashi falls on September 17 and members of the Muslim community have decided to take out Eid-e-Milad processions on September 18 so that both festivals can be celebrated with pomp and gaiety," Khan said.

One killed, two injured

Mumbai: A 20-year-old man was killed and two others were injured when a car dashed their scooter on a bridge in central Mumbai on Sunday, police said.

The accident occurred in the Currey Road area in the afternoon, an official from NM Joshi Marg police station said.

The victims were travelling on a scooter when a car dashed the vehicle. Passersby and police rushed the trio to a hospital, where one of them died during

treatment, he said.

The deceased, Ayush Kailash Singh, was travelling with his colleagues Shivam Kamlesh Singh (22) and Vishal Prembahadur Singh (21), who sustained serious injuries, the official said.

The car driver, Manish Singh, has been arrested under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Act, and further investigation is underway, officials added.

-PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Asha Bhosale, Singer

"If you ask Didi to do staccato, she would do that. But she wouldn't change her voice, she didn't like doing it. But I did it for 'Eena Meena Deeka' (from the 1957 film 'Aasha')... I was also thorough in Classical singing. Whatever people are singing today, they are modelling it on whatever they have heard me sing."

Salt pan land set to be transferred to DRP

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Union government is set to hand over 256 acres of salt pan lands to the Maharashtra government on lease for 99 years for relocating ineligible Dharavi residents, a source in the state government said.

These land parcels have been set aside for constructing affordable housing in the BMC's Development Plan (DP) 2034, which got approved in 2018 when



Shiv Sena-BJP was holding the reins of BMC. The transfer of salt pan lands is likely to expedite the Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP).

The state government had approached the Centre for these land parcels after identifying defunct salt units whose lease had expired long back and could

be used for constructing affordable housing. A DRP officials has refuted the allegations that construction on salt-pan land will cause flooding during monsoon and destroy habitat of migratory birds. "These land parcels do not fall in the Coastal Regulation Zone. No salt-making activity is taking place on these lands for the past several years," he said. "Also, portions of these lands have been already given to the MMRDA for a metro car shed and for

the line 6 between Lokhandwala Complex to Vikhroli East. The MMRDA has started preliminary work on this land. These land parcels fall on the westward side of Eastern Expressway while traveling from Sion to Thane and not on the creek side, so no question of flooding during high tide."

Besides this, on a salt pan land parcel at Wadala, the central government's customs department has already built offices and staff quarters, he added.

Struggling Starbucks turns to celebrity CEO

Brian Niccol takes over as Chairman and Chief Executive



New York: To Howard Schultz, the chaos he observed at a Starbucks in Chicago one recent morning summed up the troubles of the company he long led as chairman and CEO.

Commuters tumbled off trains and into a Starbucks store to pick up the orders they had placed on their cell-phones. Drinks weren't ready when the mobile app said they would be. Customers couldn't tell which beverage was theirs.

"Everyone shows up and all of a sudden we've got a mosh pit," Schultz said during a June episode of the podcast "Acquired." "That's not Starbucks."

Fifty-three years after its founding, the Seattle coffee giant is unhappy with what it's become — and trying to figure out how to meet customers' changing needs without losing its

coffeehouse roots. To recapture what once made it special — and turn around sagging sales — Starbucks is turning to Brian Niccol, an experienced marketer who previously led Taco Bell and Chipotle.

With nearly 40,000 stores around the world, Starbucks feels like it's on nearly every corner, but its premium prices are a turnoff to many customers who just want a quick jolt of caffeine, analysts say. At a Manhattan Starbucks, a medium Pumpkin Spice Latte is now almost \$8.

Even convenience stores like Wawa now offer great coffee, noted Chris Kayes, a professor of management at The George Washington University. Consumers who want a higher-end coffee experience, meanwhile, are seeking out independent cafes or upscale chains like Blue Bottle.

"From a marketing perspective, Starbucks has really lost its way," Kayes said.

Kayes called Niccol a highly regarded "celebrity CEO" who has proven he can turn around a struggling company. When Niccol arrived



Even as the beverages have gotten more complex — down to the number of flavour pumps each customer prefers or the amount of caramel drizzle they want on their Frappuccino — baristas have come under pressure to make them more quickly. Almost 75 per cent of Starbucks' orders now come through Starbucks' mobile app, drive-thru windows or delivery partners like DoorDash. Fewer customers linger in stores.

40,000

No of Starbucks stores all over the world

at Chipotle in 2018, the Mexican chain was reeling from multiple food poisoning outbreaks. Five years later, its annual sales had nearly doubled.

Since he was named Starbucks' incoming CEO on Aug 13, Niccol has been visiting US stores, listening to baristas and observing the challenges the brand is facing, Starbucks said. "We look forward to the fresh ideas that Brian will bring to our business," the company said in a statement.

Streamlining Starbucks' menu is key to eliminating the kind of disarray Schultz reported seeing in Chicago, said Phil Kafarakis, president and CEO of the International Foodservice Manufacturers' Association trade group. Niccol needs to figure out who Starbucks' core customers are, what they like to drink and then start trimming the excess, Kafarakis said.

Because of the many ways patrons can customise their drinks, Starbucks baristas

are tasked with making around 100,000 different variations on a consistent basis, Schultz said in the June podcast. Drinks are iced, blended, foamed, shaken and flavoured. Starbucks lists 11 different kinds of creamers and milks on its US website.

"They really have created innovation. They have been very progressive. But the problem is, it's gotten complicated," Kafarakis said. "Some poor human being has to make all those."

New drinks can also muddy Starbucks' messaging. Six years ago, the company announced an environmental milestone: it would eliminate single-use plastic straws globally by 2020. But this summer, single-use plastic straws were back, tucked into Starbucks' new cold boba drinks.

Starbucks said the new straws are made of compostable plastic. But the Ocean Conservancy, which once praised Starbucks as a "shining example" for eliminating single-use straws, said many composting systems aren't equipped to manage compostable plastics. Companies should move away from disposables altogether, the conservancy said.

-AP

Adani floats China subsidiary

New Delhi: Adani Group has formed a subsidiary in China to carry out business of providing supply chain solutions and project management services, according to a regulatory filing.

Adani Enterprises, the group's flagship firm, in the filing said a Singapore-based step-down subsidiary incorporated a wholly-owned subsidiary, Adani Energy Resources (Shanghai) Co. (AERCL), domiciled in Shanghai, China on September 2, 2024. "AERCL is incorporated to carry out business of providing supply chain solutions and project management services," it said without providing details. The subsidiary was incorporated by Adani Global Pte (AGPTE), Singapore - a step-down subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL).

AEL houses the conglomerate's mining, roads, airports, data center and water infrastructure businesses. "AERCL has been incorporated and registered under the laws of Company Law of the People's Republic of China on September 2, 2024," the filing said. AERCL is yet to commence its business operations.

Mauritius FPIs 'challenge' SEBI has lot to explain: Cong

New Delhi: The Congress on Sunday said the SEBI investigation into "the Adani Group's brazen attempt" to bypass regulations is still languishing and the capital markets regulator has a lot to explain.

Congress General Secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh's remarks attacking SEBI came after a media report which claimed that two Mauritius-based foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), who were mentioned in the January 2023 report on the Adani Group by short-seller Hindenburg Research, have petitioned the Securities Appellate Tribunal, seeking urgent relief from complying with SEBI's new foreign investor norms.

"Two Mauritius-based foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), a part of the revelations in the still-unfolding Modani mega scam, have now petitioned the Securities Appellate Tribunal, seeking urgent relief from complying with SEBI's new foreign investor norms before the upcoming September 9th deadline," Ramesh said.

Both the FPIs are alleged to be violating rules that require investors to not be over-invested in a single



stock, he said.

These rules are meant to ensure that black money routed through tax havens does not flood back into Indian capital markets, Ramesh said, adding they must be upheld at all costs.

"These are the very same FPIs who stand accused of participating in the Adani Group's brazen attempt to bypass SEBI's regulations and amass benami stakes in its own companies. These are the very firms that benefitted from SEBI's removal of the requirements to identify the 'ultimate beneficial owner' of offshore funds, a decision that it was forced under public pressure to reverse in June 2023 in a tacit admission of its guilt," the Congress leader said in his post on X.

"The basic fact is that a SEBI investigation into

these violations that was supposed to be completed in two months and shared with the Supreme Court is still languishing 18 months later," Ramesh said.

SEBI has a lot to explain, quite apart from the multiple conflicts of interest of its Chairperson that are now unravelling, he said.

Ramesh's remarks come weeks after Hindenburg Research launched a fresh broadside against market regulator SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch, alleging that she and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the Adani money siphoning scandal.

SEBI Chairman Buch and her husband have denied the allegations levelled against them as baseless and asserted that their finances are an open book.

-PTI

Gen Z scripting big shifts in consumption

New Delhi: The digitally-native, app-first Gen Z cohort is assuming the centre stage in India's consumer markets by scripting "big shifts" in consumption trends, including the rise of quick commerce delivery and direct-to-consumer brands, according to a report by Bernstein.

Brands are seeking a

deeper connection with this digitally-native, app-first generation that 'swipes up' for practically everything from social media to ride-hailing and food delivery.

Indian Gen Zs are the world's largest, the report said about the cohort born into a digital age, that shops, works and eats online. Gen Z is the generation born be-

tween 1996 and 2010. Indian Gen Zs make up 20 per cent of the world and about 27 per cent of India's population, it noted.

Gen Zs have become the "Swipe Up" generation considering the amount of time they spend on social media. They swipe up for practically everything - social media, ride-hailing, and food

delivery, according to Bernstein's report on 'India Internet'.

"We see big shifts in consumption trends dominated by GenZs...scale up of short-form content (Instagram, Youtube shorts)...preference for quick commerce delivery, 15-20 minutes (Blinkit, Zepto)...the emergence of D2C brands."

SpiceJet's Ajay Singh may sell 10 pc stake

New Delhi: SpiceJet promoter and chairman Ajay Singh may offload more than 10 per cent stake in the struggling carrier as part of the latest funding round that is expected to close by the end of September, according to sources.

The budget carrier -- which is grappling with multiple woes, including financial challenges, legal battles and grounding of aircraft -- is looking to raise money that will help it meet various obligations. One of the sources said that Singh could offload up to a 15 per cent stake in the airline if certain conditions are conducive.

Singh, who is the Chairman and Managing Director, would be offloading around 10 per cent shareholding in the airline and the quantum could go up, the second source said.

For the proposed QIP (Qualified Institutional Placement), there is already a commitment for up to Rs 2,000 crore and the airline is in discussions with potential investors. Meetings with investors have been held in India and overseas, the sources in the know said.

There was no official comment from SpiceJet.

The funding round is expected to be completed by the

74

No of planes SpiceJet had in 2019

20

No of planes SpiceJet has today

"Spicejet plans to raise Rs 2,500 crore through QIP and Rs 736 crore through previous warrants and promoter infusion, the airline said in an investor presentation," it had said in the presentation to investors. In January, SpiceJet could raise only Rs 1,060 crore through preferential issues against its Rs 2,250 crore funding plan that was announced in December 2023.

end of September.

At the end of June 2024, the promoter group had a little over 47 per cent stake in the carrier, as per data available on the BSE.

-PTI

Vedanta will progress with demerger, says Agarwal

New Delhi: The proposed demerger of Vedanta's diverse verticals that represent more than 15 commodities, will see the company progress from being asset managers to asset owners, Chairman Anil Agarwal has said. The proposed demerger will create independent companies housing aluminium, oil and gas, power, steel and ferrous materials, and base metals businesses. The existing zinc and new incubated businesses will remain under Vedanta Ltd. "Our expansionary moves are aligned with our business model transformation. The upcoming demerger of our diverse verticals that represent more than 15 commodities, will see us progress from being asset managers to asset owners," Agarwal said in a latest report. As the company passes through the transition phase, Vedanta is focusing on consolidating and strengthening its asset base to emerge as world leaders in each of its verticals, the Chairman said. Diversified natural resources company Vedanta Ltd has filed the demerger scheme with the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)

New service to connect Jeddah Port to Mundra, Nhava Sheva

Dubai: A leading maritime services company announced on Sunday the launch of a new liner service connecting the Red Sea's Jeddah Islamic Port to India's Mundra and Nhava Sheva, two of the largest commercial ports in the country.

Folk Maritime Services Company, a Public Investment Fund and one of the region's emerging leaders in providing regional liner and feeder services, said the 10-day facility with two vessels will commence in September.

According to a company statement, the services will strengthen trade ties by facilitating the movement of consumer cargo from India and products from Saudi Arabia, including petrochemicals.

"In addition to deploying its vessel, Folk Maritime has also signed a Vessel Sharing Agreement (VSA) with Oman's Asayd, which will also deploy a vessel for the new route," the statement revealed.

Announcing the new India Redsea Service (IRS), Poul Hestbaek, Chief Executive Officer of Folk Maritime, said the new route would further "enhance



Union Minister Piyush Goyal receives Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in New Delhi on Sunday. Pic: PTI

bilateral trade between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and India, and underlines our ambition to become one of the leading maritime service providers in the region". "It will also contribute to the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 to establish the Kingdom as a global logistics hub by enhancing connectivity and maritime sector growth, Hestbaek said.

The new route represents the growth in 'friend-

sourcing' between Saudi Arabia and India and builds on the strong bilateral ties between the two countries.

The visit of Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, to India in 2019 following the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Kingdom in 2016, has marked a new era in bilateral cooperation, including the establishment

of a Strategic Partnership Council co-chaired by the two leaders.

Folk Maritime started its official operations in the Red Sea with two liner services - one that connects the Kingdom's Jeddah Islamic Port, Neom and Yanbu to the Red Sea ports Sokhna and Aqaba, and a second route offering service between Port Sudan and Jeddah Islamic Port.

The company plans to

The new service is an exciting development for the business community with new and existing customers having more solutions to better meet their requirements. We are excited that we can now offer a sustainable service for our customers and the new route is expected to create more value for them in the near and long term.

Saleem Kadernani,
Chief Commercial Officer, Folk Maritime,

continue to enhance its fleet through its chartered tonnage and better serve its customers by offering increased coverage to more regional trades and wider access to global markets.

-PTI

Daava Sookhak to track claim status

New Delhi: The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) has launched an online tool Daava Sookhak for depositors to track their claim status.

The DICGC's mandate since its inception has been the reimbursement of insured amounts to depositors of failed banks. Daava Sookhak, a user-friendly online tool, is part of DICGC's ongoing commitment to improving the services provided for depositors.

"Depositors can now track the status of their claims by



entering their mobile number (registered with their bank) on the DICGC website," said DICGC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

To begin with, depositors can view the status of their claims for banks placed under All Inclusive Directions (AID) post-April 01, 2024.

The corporation ensures that all categories of deposits with banks except institutional deposits. The deposit insurance coverage limit has been enhanced six times since 1962, from Rs 1,500 per depositor held in the same right and same capacity at all the branches of the insured bank to Rs 5,00,000 on February 04, 2020.

In terms of value, 43.1 per cent of the deposits were insured as of March 2024.

In the case of liquidated banks and banks under the Reserve Bank's All-Inclusive Directions (AIDs), the

At present, 97.8 per cent of the total deposit accounts are fully protected. Of the remaining 2.2 per cent of accounts, deposits are insured up to the limit of Rs 5 lakh.

DICGC settled claims amounting to Rs 1,432 crore during 2023-24.

During the year, it received repayments of Rs 900.73 crore, of which Rs 760.83 crore was from liquidated/transferee banks and

Rs 139.90 crore from banks under AID.

All banks operating in India are registered with the corporation for deposit insurance. The number of banks registered with DICGC was 1,997 as of March 31, 2024, of which 140 were commercial banks and 1,857 were cooperative banks.

The total premium received by the corporation during 2023-24 stood at Rs 23,879 crore, with commercial banks contributing 94.4 per cent and cooperative banks accounting for the remaining 5.6 per cent.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



S. Krishnan,
Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and IT

"The government has cleared five projects under the India Semiconductor Mission. The construction of the main plant by Micron in Gujarat is at an advanced stage. They have completed their pilot facility. From the main facilities, sometime towards the later half of 2025, we should see the rollout of the first chips."

Gradual integration of Andaman tribals into mainstream

By Sujit Nath

Port Blair: The gradual integration of tribals in Andaman and Nicobar Islands into mainstream society has sparked mixed reactions with some experts expressing concern that it could lead to their exploitation by outsiders, while others believe it is essential for their survival, advocating for education to help them adapt to societal changes.

This trend is primarily noticed among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) such as Shompens, Jarawas (Ang), Onges, and the Great Andamanese who live in their respective reserved dense forests where non-tribals are barred.

A watershed moment took place on April 19, 2024, when Nauaaw and six other Shompens, including Jetuwai, Thuwae, and Chemai, voted in the Lok Sabha elections for the first time, marking a significant milestone for their community.

Shompens are predominantly uncontacted nomadic hunters, with a population of 244 on Nicobar Island.

However, local administration officials claimed that the project is proposed for an area not inhabited by the Shompens, as they had already moved inside jungles following the 2004 tsunami. Amidst the controversy surrounding the project, some Shompens,



A Shompen tribe flaunts his inked finger after exercising his voting right for the first time in the history of Great Nicobar in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Pic: PTI

who had preferred isolation, participated in the voting process, signalling a step towards gradual integration into mainstream society. Additionally, some members are in touch with government tamiyons (caretakers in Shompen language) for essentials, which

anthropologists view as the beginning of a broader shift towards integration at their own willingness.

Dr. Pronob Sircar, Tribal Welfare Officer at the Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti (AAJS), explained, "The gradual integration of PVTGs is occurring through

Nicobar Island is currently in the news due to the Rs 72,000-crore international transshipment project by the Centre, which some fear might displace the Shompens.

tribal policies that encourage developing communication channels and participation based on their willingness."

He added that the Ang tribe is also adapting to mainstream lifestyles, with initiatives like the 'Ang Katha' educational module documenting their rituals and ethnobotanical knowledge.

"Similar educational modules are in place for other PVTGs, which will help them differentiate between societal norms," he said. While some experts argue that such integration threatens indigenous cultures, the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs asserts that it aims to empower and stabilise these populations. Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Jai Oram emphasised, "Integration is based on the tribes' willingness, not coercion, and aims to balance modernisation with cultural preservation."

-PTI

CRPF moves in over 4,000 troops in CH

New Delhi: The CRPF is moving in four battalions comprising more than 4,000 personnel in the worst Naxal-violence affected areas of Bastar in Chhattisgarh as part of a strategy to launch a "decisive battle" to match the Union government's latest resolve of ending the Maoist problem by March 2026.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while declaring this deadline in the Chhattisgarh capital of Raipur last month, emphasised that a "strong and ruthless" plan of action was required to rid the country of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) -- termed the country's biggest internal security threat. Official sources said the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) -- the lead internal security and anti-Naxal operations force in the country -- withdrew three battalions from Jharkhand and one from Bihar for deployment in the Bastar region, about 450-500 kilometres south of Raipur.

-PTI

Filmmaker suspended over sexual harassment charge

Kolkata: Bengali filmmaker Arindam Sil was suspended by the Directors' Association of Eastern India (DAEI) following a complaint of sexual misconduct by an actress.

Sil was the first big name in the Bengali film industry, also called Tollywood, against whom action was taken after allegations of sexual harassment shook the entertainment industries of the southern states.

The suspension came into force with immediate effect, said a letter sent by DAEI late on Saturday.

"Due to certain allegations made against you, and prima facie evidence we have with us, which are of deep concern and is maligning to the entire organisation, DAEI has decided to suspend you from membership for indefinite period or till the allegations against you are cleared," said the letter sent by DAEI president Subrata Sen and secretary Sudeshna Roy.

Sil, who is also a well-



known actor, told reporters that what was being construed as misbehaviour was unintentional.

He said the incident being referred to happened recently when he was explaining a scene to the actress during the shooting of a film.

"No one objected to my actions or conduct at that time," he claimed.

The DAEI took up the matter after the actress filed a complaint with the West Bengal Commission for Women.

The DAEI then sought an explanation from Sil, and

he wrote a letter to it, "expressing apology".

Sil claimed that everyone who worked in the film and was present at the time of the incident would testify that his action was "unintentional".

"They just took the decision," he said, referring to the suspension.

Roy said the DAEI took a considered view of the matter after talking to all sides.

Sil is known for his detective films such as 'Har Har Byomkesh' and 'Mitin Mashri', besides the Shabor series.

-PTI

Will win each battle: Vinesh

Chandigarh: Wrestler and Congress candidate Vinesh Phogat on Sunday said she expects to win each battle with the blessings of people as kicks off her campaign for the upcoming assembly election.

Phogat (30) has been fielded from the Julana assembly segment for the upcoming assembly poll.

Phogat was accorded a



warm welcome when she reached Julana as her supporters, including elderly people and women and members of various

'Khaps', greeted her with garlands and gave their blessings.

The Congress had on Friday released its first list of

32 candidates for the Haryana Assembly polls, naming her among the party candidates.

Standing atop a car, Phogat took the blessings of people who surrounded her four wheeler to get a glimpse of her. Amid beats of a 'dhol', her supporters chanted 'Vinesh Phogat zindabad.'

Replying to a question on former BJP MP and then Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, Phogat said, "Brij Bhushan is not the country. My country stands by me. My loved ones stand by me and they matter to me."

-PTI

Stone-pelting at Ganesh procession

Ratlam (MP): A procession carrying an idol of Lord Ganesh in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam faced stone-pelting following which heavy security was deployed at important places in the city, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place in Mochipura area on Saturday night when some people were carrying the deity's idol for installation as part of the 10-day Ganesh festival.

Later, when police reached the spot, their vehicle was damaged in the subsequent stone-pelting, an official said. The situation is currently under control, Superintendent of Police Rahul Kumar Lodha told PTI.

He said that nearly 500 persons gheraoed the Station Road police station on Saturday night demanding action against an unidentified person who threw a stone at the Ganesh procession in Mochipura area.

Police registered a case against the unidentified person. The crowd followed the police to the scene, the official said. Someone threw a stone again and stone-pelting ensued in which a police vehicle's glass broke.

Parliament Security Breach Chargesheet

Accused wanted to discredit Indian democracy

By Alok Singh

New Delhi: The December 13, 2023 Parliament security breach accused wanted to discredit India's democracy, gain instant global fame, usurp power and achieve "richness and glory" by targeting the "very symbol of democracy", according to the chargesheet filed in the court by Delhi Police.

The accused first met on social media and planned their move for nearly two years before executing it last year on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament attack. According to the chargesheet, a source said, their first in-person meeting was held in February, 2022 at Mysuru.

The chargesheet mentioned that the group of young people, led by Manoranjan D, a resident of Karnataka, met on social media.

Manoranjan, according to the chargesheet, is suspected to be among the main conspirators of the parliament breach, who allegedly "instigated and motivated" the young people by promising them "richness, glory and wealth" and by targeting the "very symbol of democracy".



While citing the chargesheet, a source said that driven by his "ultra Maoist-inspired thinking" Manoranjan decided to target the Parliament building to gain immediate and lasting attention. The source said the accused wanted to send out a wider message that the "Indian Democracy is ineffective and needs to be replaced".

The major security breach took place on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack. The accused launched coordinated gas attack both inside and outside the parliament house during the Zero Hour on December 13, 2023.

Two persons -- Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan D -- jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery and opened canis-

ters that released yellow gas in the House. They also shouted slogans before parliamentarians overpowered them.

Outside the Parliament premises around the same time, two other accused -- Amol Shinde and Neelam Azad -- also sprayed coloured gases from canisters while shouting "tanashahi nahi chalegi (dictatorship won't be allowed)"

-PTI

What chargesheet says

Citing the chargesheet, a source said that Manoranjan dropped out of an engineering course and travelled to Cambodia in 2014 where he stayed for eight months.

The source said that after coming back to India, he travelled to Ladakh on a motorcycle in 2015, which "mirrors" the famous "Motorcycle Diaries" penned by Che Guevara, a Cuban revolution communist icon.

During his trip to Ladakh, a Chinese student, who was then studying at Hyderabad, also accompanied him as a pillion rider to Delhi, via Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Citing the chargesheet, the source further said the first meeting of the accused was held in February, 2022 in Mysuru at a flat of Manoranjan's friend which was attended by 10 people including Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Amol Shinde, Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat.

In this meeting, Manoranjan showed some videos of violent protests to the participants, and floated the idea of building an organisation. They discussed the idea of using the "protective gel" while executing their design inside and outside the Parliament, the source said.

They also discussed usurping power using "tear gas previously used in March 2018 in Kosovo", the source added.

Their second meeting was held at a hotel in Gurugram in August, 2022, which was attended by seven people as some of the members had already "backed out" knowing

their "nefarious" plan, another source said.

He said that in this meeting, they decided to include a woman in their plan and that is how they inducted Neelam into their group.

In their third meeting held at a hotel in Paharganj in central Delhi in August 2023, they decided to use the smoke canisters for their act in the Parliament. This meeting was attended by all the six accused arrested in the case, the source said.

They met again at the same Paharganj hotel in September, 2023 and discussed getting entry passes and the use smoke canisters inside Parliament. They also decided to enter into the Parliament during the winter session, the source said.

Their last meeting was held at Gurugram and subsequently, near the Delhi's India Gate on December 13, 2023, the final day of the execution of their plan.

The four accused -- Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Amol Shinde and Neelam Azad -- broke their SIM cards and handed them over to Lalit Jha, who was tasked to destroy them all, the source said.

Jha was also given the task of recording Shinde and Neelam as they executed their plan at the Parliament gate and upload the video on social media.

The police also said in the chargesheet that the accused were members of a social media page "Bhagat Singh Fan Club", and they mostly used the signal app to communicate, according to the source.

Signboards say no to outsiders

Rudraprayag: Villagers in several areas of Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag district have put up signboards at the entrances of their villages, prohibiting the entry of outsiders.

The signboards earlier banned the entry of "non-Hindus" but have been now prohibit from entering the villages.

Locals said the boards have been put up to prevent unknown individuals and unfamiliar vendors from entering, following incidents of theft in the villages.

A resident of Fata village said locals installed these signboards around 20-25 days ago after reports of outsiders being involved in thefts at temples and homes.

Such signboards have been put up in villages such as Sirsi, Rampurnyalsu, and others. Initially, the boards stated a ban on "non-Hindus", but the phrasing was later changed to "ban on outsiders" following police intervention, according to villagers.

-PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Jawhar Sircar, MP, TMC

"I made a public statement that corruption must be tackled by the party and government, but I was heckled by senior leaders in the party. I did not resign then as I had hoped that you would carry on your public campaign against 'cut money' and corruption that you had started a year earlier."

Community radio new tool against 'sarpanch pati'

New Delhi: To enhance its outreach among the rural population, the Panchayati Raj Ministry is using community radio to spread awareness about a range of issues, including combating the "sarpanch pati" practice and promoting digital initiatives.

The "sarpanch pati" system is a practice in which the husband of an elected woman sarpanch wields the actual power.

According to officials, the pilot project for using community radio has been



started in three states -- Bihar, Karnataka and Maharashtra -- and have received a good response.

"Jan Jan Tak Jankari", a series of community radio programmes launched by the Ministry of Panchayati

Raj, aims at involving the local populace in grassroots governance by providing them with updates on various activities, interventions, and initiatives spearheaded by the government, an official told PTI.

Five community radio stations have been engaged in different districts of the three states, the ministry official said.

In Bihar, the pilot project is being run through five community radio stations -- Radio Snehi, Siwan, Radio Active in Bhagalpur,

Radio Rimjhim in Gopalganj, Radio Mayur in Chapra, and Radio Risarch in Munger.

Similarly, Radio Sarang, Radio Manipal, Radio Shivamogga, Nammadhvani Radio, and Antarvani Radio have been engaged in different places of Karnataka.

In Maharashtra, Radio Manbhavan in Jalgaon, Guruwani CRS in Kalyan, Radio Vishwas in Nashik, Radio Wardha in Wardha, and Radio Nagar in Ahmednagar have been engaged.

"The objective is to ac-

tively involve the local populace in grassroots governance by providing them with critical updates on various activities, interventions, and initiatives spearheaded by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj," the official told PTI.

"Even in the digital era, radio continues to be a powerful mass medium, reaching millions of listeners. Rural communities, in particular, still rely heavily on radio for information and entertainment," the official said.

-PTI

85 pc of districts exposed to extreme climate events

New Delhi: More than 85 per cent of districts in India are exposed to extreme climate events such as floods, droughts and cyclones, according to a new study.

The study by IPE Global and Esri India also found that 45 per cent of the districts were experiencing a "swapping" trend, where traditionally flood-prone areas were becoming drought-prone and vice versa.

Using a penta-decadal analysis, the study compiled a catalogue of extreme climate events during a 50-year period from 1973 to 2023, employing spatial and temporal modelling.

The last decade alone saw a five-fold increase in these climate extremes, with a four-fold increase in extreme flood events, it said. Districts in eastern India are more prone to extreme flood events, followed closely by the country's northeastern and southern parts.

The study also shows there has been a two-fold increase in drought events, especially agricultural and meteorological droughts, and a four-fold increase in

It found that more than 60 per cent of districts in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Assam were experiencing more than one extreme climate event.



cyclone events.

Abinash Mohanty -- head of climate change and sustainability practice at IPE Global and the study's author -- said, "The current trend of catastrophic climate extremes that makes nine out of 10 Indians exposed to extreme climate events is a result of a 0.6 degree Celsius temperature rise in the last century."

"Recent Kerala landslides triggered by incessant and erratic rainfall episodes, floods in Gujarat, the disappearance of Om Parvat's snow cover, and cities getting paralysed with sudden and abrupt downpours is a testament that climate is changing. Our analysis suggests that more than 1.47 billion Indians will be highly exposed to climate extremes by 2036," he said.

The study revealed that more than 45 per cent of districts were experiencing a swapping trend, ie, some flood-prone districts were becoming more susceptible to droughts and vice versa. The number of districts that have transitioned from ex-

Districts in Tripura, Kerala, Bihar, Punjab and Jharkhand exhibit the most prominent swapping trends, it said.

periencing floods to facing droughts surpassed those that have shifted from droughts to floods.

The study recommended establishing a Climate Risk Observatory, a risk-informed decision-making toolkit for policymakers at the national, state, district and city levels under its National Resilience Programme, and the creation of an Infrastructure Climate Fund to support sustained investment in climate-resilient critical infrastructure and foster locally-led climate actions.

Ashwajit Singh, founder and managing director of IPE Global, said, "To meet climate goals, India must shift its budget focus from mitigation to adaptation. Current practices underfund climate resilience, risking

India, in particular, experienced an 8 per cent GDP loss in 2022 and a cumulative capital wealth decrease of 7.5 per cent due to climate impacts.

-Ashwajit Singh, Founder and managing director of IPE Global

long-term sustainability."

Agendra Kumar -- Esri India's managing director -- said the increasing frequency and intensity of heat waves, in conjunction with intense precipitation, was causing significant impacts on lives, livelihoods and infrastructure.

A holistic, data-driven approach is essential for informed policy decisions, climate adaptation and resilience, he said.

-PTI

IMD predicts heavy rain in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: The well-marked low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal has turned into a depression, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Sunday.

As per an IMD bulletin, the depression was located at a distance of about 310 km east of Kalingapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), 260 km east-southeast of Gopalpur (Odisha), 290 km south-southeast of Paradip (Odisha) and 410 km south of Digha (West Bengal).

The weather system is expected to move towards north Odisha-West Bengal coasts and intensify into a deep depression during the next 24 hours, it said.

Thereafter, it is very likely to move across north Odisha-Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand and adjoining north Chhattisgarh during the subsequent two days, it said.

The weather office issued an 'Orange' warning (be prepared) for heavy to very heavy rain at one or two places over Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Malkangiri, and Koraput districts of Odisha for Sunday.

A 'Yellow' warning (be updated) for heavy rain has also been issued for one or two places of Kendrapara, Khurda, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Nayagarh, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, and Nabarangpur districts for Sunday.

The IMD also forecast rain in most parts of the state for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

-PTI

2024 on track to be warmest year on record



New Delhi: With global temperatures for the January-August period recorded at 0.70 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average, the European climate change service Copernicus said on Friday that it was increasingly likely 2024 would be the warmest year on record.

It was also 1.51 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, making it the 13th month in the past 14 during which the global average surface air temperature exceeded 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels.

The year-to-date (Janu-

For 2024 not to surpass 2023 as the warmest year, the average anomaly for the remaining months would need to drop by at least 0.30 degrees Celsius. This has not occurred since 1940, making it increasingly likely that 2024 will be the warmest year on record, the scientists said.

ary-August) global average temperature anomaly is 0.70 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average, the highest on record for this period, and 0.23 degrees Celsius warmer than the same period in 2023, C3S scientists said.

"The temperature-related extreme events witnessed this summer will only become more intense, with more devastating consequences for people and the planet unless we take urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," she said.

The global average temperature for the past 12 months (September 2023 to August 2024) is the highest on record for any 12-month period, at 0.76 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average and 1.64 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average. These values are identical to those recorded for the previous two 12-month periods, ending in June 2024 and July 2024.

The average sea surface temperature for August across the 60-degree south-60-degree north latitudes was 20.91 degrees Celsius,

During the past three months of 2024, the globe has experienced the hottest June and August, the hottest day on record, and the hottest boreal summer on record. This string of record temperatures is increasing the likelihood of 2024 being the hottest year on record.

-Samantha Burgess, Deputy Director, C3S,

the second-highest value on record for the month, and only 0.07 degrees Celsius below the August 2023 value.

While the equatorial Pacific had below-average temperatures, indicating a developing La Nina, sea surface temperatures across many ocean regions remained unusually high.

India, Bhutan look forward to harnessing space science



Thimphu: India and Bhutan have said they look forward to further "deepening collaborative activities" under the joint space initiative to harness space science and technology for societal good and the betterment of people from both countries.

At the first meeting of the Bhutan-India Joint Working Group held here, both sides reviewed the ongoing bilateral space cooperation and charted out the way forward on the differ-

ent areas outlined in the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) on Space Cooperation, a joint press release said. The JPOA -- which provides a concrete roadmap for bilateral cooperation in the Space sector -- was signed during the official visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bhutan in March 2024. In consonance with the JPOA, signed by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and GovTech Agency of Bhutan, additional 16 MHz

bandwidth was allocated to Bhutan on the South Asia Satellite by the ISRO, the joint press release said.

"India and Bhutan look forward to further deepening collaborative activities under the JPOA on Space Cooperation, to harness space science and technology for societal good and the betterment of our two peoples," it added. India and Bhutan share a dynamic partnership in the Space sector.

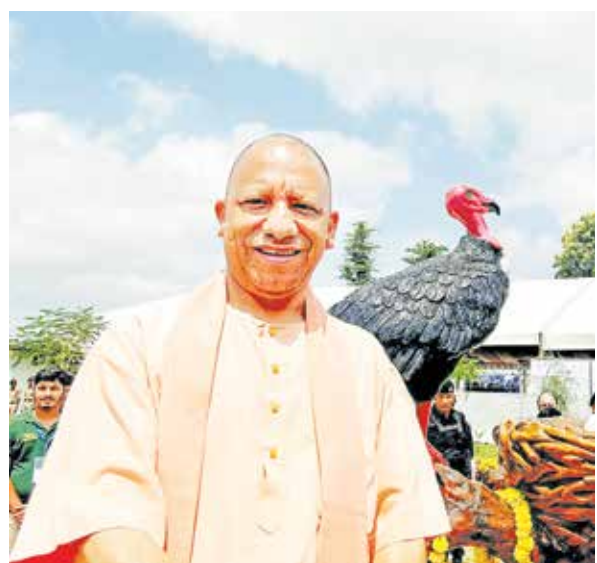
-PTI



Smoke rises from the Line Fire over the mountains in Running Springs Calif on Saturday.

Pic: AP/PTI

Yogi inaugurates vulture conservation centre



Gorakhpur (UP): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday inaugurated a vulture conservation and breeding centre here and recalled the story of vulture king Jatayu, calling him the "first martyr" of the Ramayana period to protect religion and dignity.

He also said when development is done by saving nature and environment, it will be a sustainable development.

Due to the ill-effects of pesticides, the number of vultures has decreased rapidly, an official statement quoted Adityanath as

saying.

"When development is done by saving nature and the environment, it will be sustainable development. Its benefits will be reaped in the long run. Development at the cost of nature and environment is short-lived and dangerous. It has far-reaching consequences," he said in his address, after inaugurating the centre in Campierganj.

Adityanath directed officials of the forest department to establish a forestry college in Gorakhpur with degree and diploma courses for forest-related studies.

This will also enable the youths to get jobs in various posts according to the requirement of the forest department. Along with this, it will also become a big medium for developing forestry and forest conservation, the statement said.

Recalling the Ramayan connection of the vultures, Adityanath said, "Today, through the Jatayu Conservation Centre, we are expressing our gratitude towards our Vedic and Puranic tradition. Vulture king Jatayu was the first martyr of the Ramayana period to protect religion and dignity. By hearing

Sitaji's sad words, he recognised that this voice was of the wife of Shri Ram."

"Vulture king Jatayu was a friend of King Dasharath (of Ayodhya). To maintain friendship and protect a woman's dignity, he fought unarmed with (demon king) Ravan and sacrificed himself. From Ramayan, we get inspiration of friendship, woman's dignity, decorum, discipline and keeping one's word," Adityanath said.

Even in today's times, the work done by Jatayu's descendants for the purification of the environment is unforgettable, he said.

"To express gratitude towards Jatayu, to preserve his memories of the Ramayana period, a huge statue of vulture king Jatayu has been installed in front of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and now this Jatayu Conservation Centre is also a part of the same," he said.

It is also a matter of happiness that people from the Vantangiya community are also employed as caretakers in this centre, Adityanath said, and added that it is the responsibility of all of us to save nature and its creatures.

Noting that the government is working with a de-

termined spirit to protect nature and the environment, Adityanath said, "It is because of our work that today Uttar Pradesh is the first state not only in the country but in the world to achieve the target of planting 200 crore saplings in 7 years."

"Before 2017, where we used to see deforestation, now trees are being planted and saved on a large scale. It is also necessary to save nature, environment and the present generation, because if nature is not safe, then humanity will also be in danger," he said.

-PTI

US wants to work with India, says Biden official

By Lalit K Jha

Washington: The US is keen on working with India to address some of the key global problems, including in areas like healthcare, clean energy and climate change, a top Biden administration official has said.

The remarks by Nisha Desai Biswal, Deputy CEO of the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), came ahead of her visit to India this week. "It's not about what India needs help with, as much as how the US and India are working together to address problems," Biswal told PTI in an interview. "We have always said if you don't solve it in India, you can't solve it for the world," Biswal said before leaving for India, her first to the country in four years and first as the Deputy CEO of the DFC, which is a development finance institution and agency of the US.

Her four-day trip to India will start on Tuesday.



She said there are several areas -- like climate change and the issues of addressing global warming and controlling greenhouse gas emissions, supporting a clean energy transition and tackling health challenges -- where the two nations can work together as they did during the Covid pandemic.

India was a vital partner in not only containing the pandemic when it spread within India but also played a key role in helping and supplying vaccines to control the pandemic globally, she said.

"So, I think the way we

think about it is, what are the problems that we want to try to solve together," Biswal said in response to a question.

Biswal said during her India trip she is eager to explore how DFC can support the goals and objectives of the US-India Strategic Partnership.

She said that the DFC has invested enormous amounts in India during the Biden administration. "India is our largest country in which DFC is investing. I think we have over USD 3.8 billion in active projects in India. Really USD 2.5 billion of that has

come during the Biden administration and in key sectors like infrastructure, in supporting manufacturing, health and vaccine and insulin, in supporting India's economic growth and access to capital. So just a very diverse range of areas that we're working in partnership with India on," Biswal said.

DFC, she said, is deploying its financing in India to address climate and clean technology diversification. Biswal, as the Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia and then as head of the US India Business Council had played a key role in the India-US relationship.

"As someone who has been watching and active in the US-India relationship ... and passionate indeed, a true believer, I have to say I'm just very gratified to see how much deeper the US-India ties are and how broad-based they are," India-born Biswal said.

-PTI

Sharif declares education emergency

Islamabad: Pakistan on Sunday declared an education emergency on International Literacy Day to educate around 26 million out-of-school children in the country. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced the measure and urged the private sector and civil organisations to join hands with the government, the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan reported.

The 72-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader reaffirmed his commitment to advancing the education agenda, striving for a more informed and sustainable nation. "We have declared an educational emergency across the country, launched an enrolment campaign for students and initiated midday meals for children in schools," he stated. He said that literacy is a fundamental human and constitutional right that guarantees the future of our country and added that literacy was not merely the ability to read and write but rather a "gateway to empowerment, economic opportunities and active participation in society".

-PTI

Pope brings in a ton of humanitarian aid, toys

Vanimo (Papua New Guinea): Pope Francis celebrated the Catholic Church of the peripheries on Sunday as he travelled to the remote jungles of Papua New Guinea, bringing with him a ton of medicine and toys and a message of love overcoming violence for the people who live there.

Francis flew aboard a Royal Australian Air Force C-130 transport plane from Port Moresby to Vanimo, on the northwest coast of the South Pacific nation, close to the border with Indonesia. There, Francis met with the local Catholic community and the missionaries from his native Argentina who have been ministering to them.

A crowd of an estimated 20,000 people gathered on the field in front of the Vanimo cathedral singing and dancing when Francis arrived, and he promptly put on a feathered headdress that had been presented to him. In remarks from a raised stage, Francis



praised the church workers who go out to try to spread the faith. But he urged the faithful to work closer to home at being good to one another and putting an end to the tribal rivalries and violence that are a regular part of the culture in Papua New Guinea.

He urged them to be like an orchestra, so that all members of the community can come together harmoniously to overcome rivalries.

It was a reference to the tribal violence over land and other disputes that have long characterised the

country's culture but have grown more lethal in recent years. Francis arrived in Papua New Guinea to urge an end to the violence, including gender-based violence, and for a sense of civic responsibility and cooperation to prevail.

Earlier in the day, an estimated 35,000 people filled the stadium in the capital, Port Moresby, for Francis' morning Mass. It began with dancers in grass skirts and feathered headdresses performing to traditional drum beats as priests in green vestments processed up onto the altar.

-AP

Romania says Russian drone violated airspace

Kyiv: A Russian drone violated Romania's airspace during nighttime attacks on neighbouring Ukraine, the NATO member reported Sunday, urging Moscow to stop what it described as an escalation.

The incident occurred as Russia carried out attacks on "civilian targets and port infrastructure" across the Danube River in Ukraine, Romania's Ministry of Na-

tional Defence said. Romania deployed F-16 warplanes to monitor its airspace, and NATO allies were kept informed, the ministry said. Romanian emergency authorities also issued text alerts to residents of two eastern regions. Preliminary data indicates there may be an "impact zone" in an uninhabited area near the Romanian village of Periprava, the ministry said.

London (Kentucky): Multiple people were shot along Interstate 75 in a rural area of southeastern Kentucky, authorities said.

The Laurel County Sheriff's Office said in a post on Facebook on Saturday that it was an "active shooter situation" and "numerous persons" were shot near the highway. It added that the interstate was closed 9 miles north of London.

In a video statement, London Mayor Randall Weddle said was told seven people were hurt, but not all of those were wounded

Multiple people shot in rural US

by gunfire. Some of the victims were injured in a vehicle accident, he said.

"There are no deceased at this time. No one was killed from this, thankfully, but we ask that you continue to pray," Weddle said.

The sheriff's office also announced that a "Person of Interest" has been identified in connection with the shooting, saying he should be considered armed and dangerous and people



should not approach him. The man's name was given as Joseph A. Couch, a 32-year-old white male, and

anyone with information about his location was urged to call the county 911 centre.

A "heavy presence of police and fire personnel" was on the scene and "working diligently to address the situation", the Mount Vernon Fire Department said in a statement. It advised motorists to avoid I-75 and US 25.

"I am receiving initial reports from the Kentucky

State Police and our Office of Homeland Security -- together we are actively monitoring the situation and offering support in any way possible," Gov. Andy Beshear said in a post on the social platform X. "Please pray for everyone involved."

"We will provide more details once they are available," Beshear said.

London is a small city with a population of about 8,000 located about 75 miles (120 miles) south of Lexington.

-AP

Houthi rebels shoot down another US drone

By Jon Gambrell

Dubai: Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed early Sunday they shot down another American-made MQ-9 drone flying over the country, marking potentially the latest downing of the multi-million-dollar surveillance aircraft. The US responded with airstrikes over Houthi-controlled territory, the rebels said.

The US military did not immediately respond to a request for comment over the Houthi claim. The rebels offered no pictures or video to support the claim as they have in the past, though such material can appear in propaganda footage days later. However, the Houthis have repeatedly downed General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper drones in the years since they seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014. Those attacks have exponentially increased since the start of the Israel-Hamas war and the Houthis launched their campaign targeting shipping in the Red Sea corridor.

Houthi military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree made the claim in a pre-recorded video message. He said the Houthis shot down



80 - No of merchant vessels Houthi have targeted
USD 30 million - Cost of one piece of Reapers

the drone over Yemen's Marib province, a long-contested area home to key oil and gas fields that's been held by allies of a Saudi-led coalition battling the rebels since 2015. Saree offered no details on how the rebels downed the aircraft. However, Iran has armed the rebels with a surface-to-air missile known as the 358 for years. Iran denies arming the rebels, though Tehran-manufactured weaponry has been found on the battlefield and in seaborne shipments heading to Yemen despite a United Nations arms embargo.

The Houthis "continue to perform their jihadist duties in victory for the oppressed

Palestinian people and in defense of dear Yemen", Saree said.

Reapers, which cost around USD 30 million a piece, can fly at altitudes up to 50,000 feet (15,240 metres) and have an endurance of up to 24 hours before needing to land. The aircraft have been flown by both the US military and the CIA over Yemen for years.

After the claim, the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel reported multiple US-led airstrikes near the city of Ibb. The US military did not immediately acknowledge the strikes, but the Americans have been striking Houthi targets intensely since January.

USD 100,000 aid to Bangladesh

Singapore: Singapore on Sunday pledged USD 100,000 to support the Singapore Red Cross' (SRC) public fund-raising efforts following severe floods in eastern Bangladesh.

"The contribution will support humanitarian relief efforts and the immediate needs of affected communities," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

On September 5, the SRC pledged USD 50,000 to support emergency operations in Bangladesh, providing essential aid and relief to affected communities through the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS).

It said it is in contact with the BDRCS as well as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to monitor the situation and is ready to provide further assistance. The Straits Times newspaper reported.

The SRC also launched a public fund-raising appeal to support the recovery efforts in Bangladesh. It will run until October 31.

"We are deeply saddened by the loss of lives and displacement caused by the severe floods," said Benjamin William, SRC's secretary-general and chief executive.

-PTI

Three Israelis killed in attack

Jerusalem: Three people were shot and killed Sunday at the border crossing between the West Bank and Jordan, Israeli officials said.

The military said the gunman approached the Allenby Bridge Crossing from the Jordanian side in a truck and opened fire at Israeli security forces, who killed the assailant in a shootout. It said the three people killed were Israeli civilians.

Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service said the three men who were killed were in their 50s.

There was no immediate comment from Jordan, which made peace with Israel in 1994 but is fiercely critical of its policies toward the Palestinians. The Allenby crossing is mainly used by Israelis, Palestinians and international tourists.

The Israeli-occupied West Bank has seen a surge

of violence since Hamas' Oct 7 attack out of Gaza triggered the war there. Israel has launched nearly-daily military arrest raids into dense Palestinian residential areas, and there has also been a rise in settler violence and Palestinian attacks on Israelis.

In Gaza, meanwhile, an Israeli airstrike early Sunday killed five people, including two women, two children and a senior official in the Civil Defence --

first responders who operate under the Hamas-run government.

The Civil Defence said the strike targeted the home of its deputy director for north Gaza, Mohammed Morsi, in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. The army says it tries to avoid harming civilians and only targets militants.

-AP



People protest against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government and call for the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas militant group, in Tel Aviv, Israel on Saturday. Pic: PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Dennis Francis, President, General Assembly, United Nations

"India has an ambition to become a permanent member of the Security Council. Members will decide when they arrive at that point as to how to reform the Council. But for a democracy of 1.4 billion people, I'm sure no one overlooks the fact that India has a bright future in making a continued strong contribution to world affairs and in the realm of international affairs."

Pope to use chairs by Indian-origin carpenter

By Gurdip Singh

Singapore: During his visit to Singapore next week, Pope Francis will use two handmade chairs crafted by an Indian-origin carpenter here for his inter-religious dialogue sessions.

The chairs are made by 44-year-old Govindharaj Muthiah, who took his passion for woodworking full-time in 2019, according to a Channel News Asia report last week.

Muthiah said when he received the fortuitous call



from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore around end-July, he did not expect to be presented with the coolest addition to his CV to date.

Even though he complet-

ed both "100 per cent handmade" chairs within a whirlwind month, Muthiah said the news of being assigned to do the chairs still had not sunk in.

"When I got the call, the first question was: 'Hi, we knew you do furniture. We were introduced by someone.' And they asked if I could make a chair. I was like, 'Okay, do you have the dimensions? I'll work on it,'" he told CNA.

"Then (the caller) said, 'No it's more than that, there's a lot of specific details.' And I said, 'Okay,

send me the drawing.' Usually what I tell customers is, if you can draw it and show me, I will build it for you. So likewise, I said that, thinking he's on the same page. He paused for a while and said, 'It's for the Pope.' I was like, 'Sorry? Who?' He (repeated himself): 'For the Pope,'" Muthiah recalled.

Pope Francis will be in the city-state from Sep 11 to 13, in the last leg of his 12-day four-nation Asia-Pacific tour to Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Singapore. It is his

longest trip away from the Vatican since he became head of the worldwide Catholic Church in 2013.

In Singapore, the 87-year-old Pope's itinerary includes meeting President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, presiding over mass at the National Stadium, and holding an interreligious dialogue session with youth at Catholic Junior College.

The chairs will be used during the interreligious dialogue.

-PTI

EDITORIAL

A Rare Rebuke

In a striking and unusual move, the Bombay High Court on Friday directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to take over the investigation into the murder of former Shiv Sena (UBT) corporator Abhishek Ghosalkar, citing lapses and unaddressed angles in the Mumbai Police's probe. This decision not only underscores the judiciary's dissatisfaction with the quality of the police investigation but also highlights the deeper systemic issues that undermine the credibility of law enforcement in Maharashtra.

The judiciary's direct involvement in transferring the case to the CBI bypasses the usual protocol where the state government makes such requests, signalling an extraordinary lack of faith in the state's ability to manage its own police force effectively.

Ghosalkar's murder was particularly shocking due to its public nature. He was fatally shot on February 8 this year during a Facebook Live session from his Borivali office by local businessman Mauris Noronha, who then turned the gun on himself. According to police, Noronha believed that Ghosalkar had meddled in his political career and played a role in a rape case registered against him. Despite the grim clarity of the event, the investigation quickly grew murky.

The High Court's decision to involve the CBI was driven by concerns that the police had not thoroughly explored several critical aspects of the case. The bench emphasized that even "innocent lapses" by the police could derail the pursuit of truth. This intervention marks a rare and severe rebuke of the Mumbai Police, pointing to a broader erosion of trust in a force once considered one of India's finest. It is not merely a procedural anomaly but a damning critique of an investigative process that appears, at best, complacent and, at worst, compromised.

Compounding this censure, the High Court had similarly noted the police's shoddy response to the Badlapur molestation case involving minors.

The High Court was careful to note that, despite Ghosalkar's political connections, his wife did not implicate any political party in his murder, suggesting that the lapses in the investigation were not politically motivated but were indicative of broader procedural failings. While the CBI is often seen as a more impartial investigative body, its involvement is not without its own set of challenges. The CBI's history is marred by allegations of political influence and bureaucratic inefficiency. However, in this instance, the agency's intervention serves as a necessary corrective to a local police force that has seemingly lost its way.

For the Maharashtra government, the High Court's actions should be a wake-up call. The state's law enforcement must be empowered to conduct investigations with integrity, free from undue influence and operational incompetence. Without such reforms, the judiciary will continue to find itself stepping in to ensure that justice is not denied. The onus now lies with the state government to heed this judicial rebuke and take decisive action to rebuild a police force that commands both competence and public trust.

NATIONAL INTEREST

Ransacking History: Bickering over Shivaji Maharaj's Legacy

By
Kiran D. Tare

The legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj has sparked a political storm in Maharashtra, with NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) leader Jayant Patil's comments labelling the great 17th century warrior-king's raids on Surat as "extortion" inciting backlash from the ruling BJP. Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis swiftly condemned these remarks, asserting that describing the great leader as "a looter" was unacceptable.

Fadnavis called on Indian scholars to correct historical narratives about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, particularly those shaped by English historians. His

As Maharashtra's political leaders bicker over Maharaj's legacy, they might benefit from a closer reading of their own history. The narrative of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as a looter misses the broader context of his actions.

plea reflects a broader sentiment in Maharashtra, where Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is venerated as a symbol of Maratha pride and valour. While Marathi-speaking historians will be laudatory (and perhaps uncritical), it is instructive to begin with views of Englishmen. James Grant Duff, in his flawed three-volume 'History of the Maharathas' (1826), felt constrained to extol Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj by saying "the richest plunderer never made him deviate from the rules he had laid down for its appropriation."

Dennis Kincaid, in his 1932 book, 'The Grand Rebel: An Impression of Shivaji, Founder of the Maratha Empire,' offers a stunningly readable and sympathetic portrayal of the great ruler as a charismatic leader who defied the odds to build a powerful empire.

Kincaid praises Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's military genius, guerrilla warfare tactics, and his capacity to inspire loyalty among his followers, describing him as "a man of extraordinary foresight and intelligence," not merely a warrior, but a visionary leader with a strong sense of administration and justice.

Kincaid, who tragically drowned in 1937, gives Maharaj the greatest tribute when he compares Maharaj's humanity to his brutal 17th century European contemporaries like Oliver Cromwell, whose genocidal practices in Ireland are still remembered and Count Tilly, whose brutal actions in the '30 Years War' which ravaged Central Europe still continue to chill independent India's first President, Rajendra Prasad, described Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as the builder of "an epoch in his-



tory," who employed tolerance to supplant bigotry and lay the foundations of an enlightened government to end tyranny. He noted how the great leader had more than a dozen Muslim commanders in his army and navy. On the other hand, Sir Jadunath Sarkar's classic biography, 'Shivaji and His Times,' (published in 1919 and revised in 1952), provides a more nuanced view. Sarkar hails the warrior-king with transforming a disorganized band of warriors into a formidable nation, calling it "one of the most remarkable achievements in the history of mankind." Despite his critiques, Sarkar acknowledges Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's profound impact, lauding him as "not only the maker of the Maratha nation but also the political saviour of the Hindu race."

Marathi-speaking historians offer a perspective deeply rooted in regional pride and cultural reverence. The great G. S. Sardesai, in his classic 'New History of the Marathas' (1946), provides a detailed account of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's military cam-

paigns, including the famed raids on Surat in 1664 and 1670. Sardesai views these actions as calculated moves necessary to fund the expansion of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's kingdom and weaken the Mughal Empire's economic stronghold. "The raid on Surat was not just an act of plunder; it was a statement of defiance against the might of the Mughal Empire," Sardesai notes.

Babasaheb Purandare, one of the most celebrated chroniclers of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's life, portrays the king as an almost mythical figure in his two-part, 900-page magnum opus, 'Raja Shivchhatrapati,' which was first published in the late 1950s.

He describes the Surat raids as bold strikes against a wealthy Mughal stronghold, carefully planned to fund the Maratha state and underscores Maharaj's chivalrous conduct during the raids, noting that his orders spared non-combatants, illustrating a moral code even in conflict. "Shivaji's Surat raids were not mere plunder but strategic strikes against the economic backbone of his enemies,"

Purandare writes. Setu Madhavrao Pagadi celebrates the Surat raids as examples of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's daring and innovative military strategies. Pagadi views the raids as more than financial manoeuvres; he considers them psychological blows to Mughal dominance. In the first raid on Surat, Maharaj's forces targeted wealthy Mughal and Portuguese merchants while sparing local traders who paid protection money while the second raid in 1670 further cemented Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's reputation as a leader capable of repeatedly defying Mughal power. These historians argue that the Surat raids symbolize Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's broader strategy: destabilising Mughal control in the Deccan while simultaneously strengthening the Maratha state's finances and military. If only today's leaders could look beyond the petty politics and embrace the principles Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj stood for, they might find common ground in the enduring legacy of Maharashtra's revered king.

NEWSMAKER OF THE WEEK

Lateral upgrade to ailing annihilation

By
Mangesh Kulkarni

Being the first person from the private sector to be appointed as chairperson of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) as part of the government's lateral initiative, Madhabi Puri Buch also holds the honour of being the first woman to hold the top post as capital market regulator.

But the laurels that the former private sector banker enjoyed in her earlier stint with ICICI Bank, was marred with allegations that she and her husband were having a stake in offshore entities, which were used to artificially inflate shares of Adani group companies.

Terming the allegation as 'character assassination', Buch clarified that all disclosures have already been furnished and the fund in question did not invest in any securities involving the Adani group.

When it rains, it pours. This allegation was subsequently followed by Congress Party allegation that Buch had received salary and post-retire-

SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch has been facing allegations of conflict of interest. Can she come clear from these accusations at a time SEBI employees are demanding her ouster?



Madhabi Puri Buch

ment benefits from ICICI Bank after she quit the private sector bank.

In its clarification to the stock exchanges, ICICI Bank asserted that the payments made to Buch were purely retirement benefits after her exit from the bank and they were neither salary nor employee stock options.

Prior to these allegations, Buch tenure at SEBI was all about bringing in quick reforms on operational issues by changing the format of consultation paper to bring in larger responses digitally. Being data savvy, the rationale of her decisions were democratic based on big data analysis derived from the responses received to the consultation papers.

Further she bifurcated the duties of the SEBI staff between operations and enforcement, which were done by the same persons earlier. Having worked for the private sector in the capital market domain space, Buch had a better understanding of the subject compared to officers from the administrative service in the past that reflected even in her orders as a whole-time director at SEBI before becoming the chairperson. As a whole time director at SEBI, her orders on adjudication issues were more directional to the capital market space, according to experts in the compliance space. She was also quick to revamp the old provisions of the 90s at SEBI.

Being tech and data savvy, Buch enhanced regulatory surveillance and detection of market manipulation, in-

sider trading and fraud while also emphasizing on strengthening corporate governance by introducing stricter rules for independent directors and enhancing disclosures for related-party transactions.

To put in perspective, the annual report of the capital market regulator in the just concluded financial year revealed that the number of investigations related to insider trading jumped to 175 in 2023-24 from 85 in the preceding year while probes related to front running jumped over three times to 83 from 24 in the preceding year.

Transparency in mutual funds by implementing measures to protect retail investors along with tightening norms for initial public offers, particularly in the SME platforms were some of her other positive initiatives including confirmation of denial of any market rumours within 24 hours for the top 100 listed companies which will be extended to top 250 companies from December 1. However increased transparency and compliance with tightening regulations led to increased operational costs for the market participants and hence faced resistance from certain quarters. Born in 1966, Buch completed her primary education in Mumbai and graduated with specialization in Mathematics from Delhi and later obtained a management degree from Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. In between, she got engaged to Dhawal Buch, a director at a consumer goods multinational at the age of eighteen and got married at the age of 21.

Besides ICICI Bank, Buch also worked as a lecturer at a college in England, worked at Greater Pacific Capital in Singapore and ICICI Securities as its CEO. She also worked as executive director on several private sector companies and as a consultant for New Development Bank (Brics Bank).

What now remains to be seen, is whether Buch, who survived the 26/11 terror attack when she along with her husband, was attending a meeting at Taj, be able to overcome the current ordeal. Keeping fingers crossed for the times to come.

GLOBAL WATCH

France bets on Michel Barnier to Steady Ship of State

France has found a new leader for its fractious political landscape in Michel Barnier, the veteran conservative politician and former EU Brexit negotiator. Appointed by President Emmanuel Macron, Barnier, aged 73, assumes the role of Prime Minister following a turbulent snap election in early July that yielded no clear winner. This move reflects a strategic manoeuvre by Macron, who seeks to stabilize his administration and counter a growing populist wave.

Barnier is a seasoned European political operator, best known as the EU's chief Brexit negotiator from 2016 to 2021, where his steady diplomacy earned him a reputation as a staunch defender of European interests. Before this, he held several ministerial roles in French governments and served as a European Commissioner, demonstrating his versatility and extensive experience.

His appointment signals a shift towards a conciliatory approach in French politics, contrasting sharply with Macron's previously combative stance. The July snap election underscored the deep divisions within France, marked by rising support for both far-right and far-left factions. Macron's centrist La République En Marche! struggled to maintain its once-dominant position, leaving the president in need of a coalition partner to govern effectively. By selecting Barnier, a figure respected across the political spectrum, Macron appears to be betting on Barnier's ability to bridge divides

In selecting the former EU negotiator as new Prime Minister, Macron has opted for a steady pair of hands to steer a country roiled by political uncertainty



and negotiate compromises in a fragmented National Assembly.

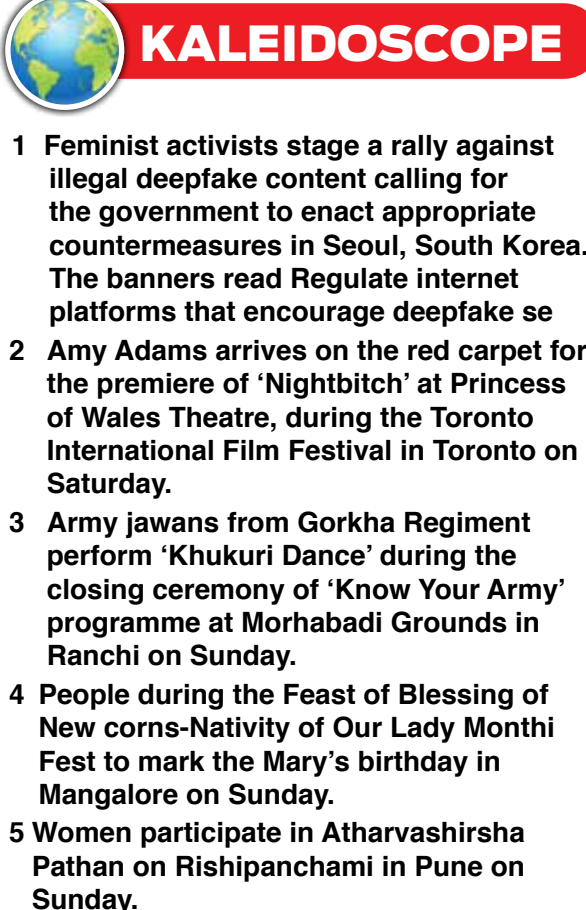
Barnier's conservative roots and his experience in Brussels also make him a palatable choice for those wary of Macron's sometimes unpredictable leadership. His presence may reassure the centre-right electorate, who have been disillusioned by Macron's progressive reforms and perceived aloofness. However, Barnier's appointment is not without risks. His establishment credentials may alienate voters who are increasingly drawn to anti-establishment rhetoric, a sentiment that Marine Le Pen's National Rally and Jean-Luc Mélenchon's France Insoumise have skillfully exploited. In navigating this polarized landscape, Barnier will need to leverage his diplomatic acumen to maintain stability without appearing to be a relic of the old guard.

On the international stage, Barnier's premiership could reinforce France's commitment to the European project at a time when Euroscepticism is gaining ground in various quarters. His reputation as a staunch Europhile aligns neatly with Macron's vision of a stronger, more integrated Europe. But it also poses challenges: Barnier's ap-

proach may face resistance from nationalist elements within France who feel that EU integration comes at the expense of national sovereignty. Balancing these domestic and European imperatives will be a delicate task, one that Barnier is uniquely equipped to handle, given his extensive experience in both arenas.

Domestically, Barnier's first challenge will be to forge a viable governing coalition capable of enacting policy. With the National Assembly divided and political alliances in flux, his ability to broker deals will be put to the test. Economic recovery, social unrest, and a cost-of-living crisis exacerbated by the war in Ukraine are pressing issues that will require deft management. Barnier's technocratic skillset may prove invaluable here, particularly in navigating complex economic and regulatory challenges. However, he will also need to demonstrate empathy and responsiveness to a populace grown weary of technocratic elites.

Barnier's tenure will likely be defined by his ability to steer a divided nation through these turbulent times, all while upholding France's position as a key player in the European Union.



KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 Feminist activists stage a rally against illegal deepfake content calling for the government to enact appropriate countermeasures in Seoul, South Korea. The banners read Regulate internet platforms that encourage deepfake se
- 2 Amy Adams arrives on the red carpet for the premiere of 'Nightbitch' at Princess of Wales Theatre, during the Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto on Saturday.
- 3 Army jawans from Gorkha Regiment perform 'Khukuri Dance' during the closing ceremony of 'Know Your Army' programme at Morhabadi Grounds in Ranchi on Sunday.
- 4 People during the Feast of Blessing of New corns-Nativity of Our Lady Monthi Fest to mark the Mary's birthday in Mangalore on Sunday.
- 5 Women participate in Atharvashirsha Pathan on Rishipanchami in Pune on Sunday.

All Pictures PTI, AP

LETTER FROM PAKISTAN

Will Bollywood Welcome Pakistani Artists Back?



By Kaswar Klasra



Mahira Khan

Whether the Indian film industry will reopen its doors to talented Pakistani actors is a million-dollar question. The megastars and media moguls of Bollywood—such as the Khans and Karan Johar—seem unable to offer an answer at this moment. So, who is qualified to respond? Could it be the Modi government?

Pakistani stars await opportunities to shine on Indian cinema's global stage. But since 2016, that door has been shut, leaving fans and artists wondering when, or if, things will change.

Before the abrupt freeze in cultural exchange, several Pakistani actors like Mahira Khan, Fawad Khan, and Saba Qamar had made significant marks in Bollywood. Mahira Khan's role opposite Shah Rukh Khan in Raees and Fawad Khan's memorable performances in Kapoor & Sons and Ae Dil Hai Mushkil cemented their status as talented artists who could stand tall among Bollywood's best.

Feroze Khan, a Pakistani actor, is set to star alongside Gathika Tiwari, a renowned Tamil and Hindi actress, in an upcoming feature film. This cross-border collaboration offers a glimmer of hope that artistic exchanges between the two nations may someday resume. However, the larger question remains: Will Bollywood welcome Pakistani actors back?

In September 2016, the Indian film industry banned Pakistani talent. The trigger for this decision was the attack in the Uri region of Kashmir, which resulted in the deaths of 19 Indian soldiers. India blamed the attack on militants allegedly supported by Pakistan, sparking a diplomatic crisis between the two nuclear-armed

neighbours. At the time, TP Aggarwal, president of IMPPA, declared that no Pakistani would ever be hired by Indian producers again. Eight years later, the ban remains in place against the perception that it would be temporary. The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), a far-right political party in India, called for all Pakistani-origin workers in the Indian film industry to leave the country and for their films to be boycotted.

Pakistani actors and singers, often referred to as "Ambassadors of Peace," have played significant roles in bridging the gap between India and Pakistan. Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, a celebrated Pakistani singer, enjoyed immense popularity in India before the ban. His soulful voice earned him fans in Bollywood before the ban ended his projects. Despite the artists' efforts to promote peace through art, the deep-seated political differences remain a formidable barrier.

The film industry is often seen as a reflection of society, and in this case, it mirrors the strained relations between India and Pakistan. While artists may wish to transcend borders and foster unity through their work, they are often caught in the crossfire of geopolitical tensions. The ban on Pakistani talent in Bollywood is not just a professional setback for the artists involved but also a missed opportunity for cultural exchange that could help ease the tensions between the two nations. The question now is whether the stars of Pakistan and India can play a role in mending the fractured ties between their coun-

tries. Can the combined charisma of actors and singers from both sides work its magic in fostering better relations? The answer is not straightforward, but the potential is undeniable.

Art has always been a powerful tool for diplomacy. Cultural exchanges between nations can help break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and promote understanding. In the past, Bollywood films like Raees and Kapoor & Sons, featuring Pakistani actors, were met with enthusiasm from audiences in both countries, offering a glimpse of what could be possible if the two nations were to embrace cultural collaboration once again.

However, both sides need to be willing to separate politics from art. The Modi government, which has taken a hardline stance on issues related to Pakistan, may not be inclined to lift the ban anytime soon. But as political climates shift, there may come a time when the doors of Bollywood reopen to Pakistani talent.

Despite the ongoing ban, there are reasons to remain hopeful. Moreover, with the rise of digital platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime, there are new avenues for collaboration that bypass traditional barriers. Pakistani dramas have gained immense popularity in India through these platforms. This growing demand for Pakistani content could eventually pressure Indian filmmakers to reconsider their stance.

The question of whether the Indian film industry will reopen its doors to Pakistani actors remains unanswered. However, the desire for collaboration, both from the artists and their fans, is clear. As geopolitical tensions ebb and flow, there may come a time when art is once again allowed to bridge the divide between these two nations. Until then, Pakistani stars like Feroze Khan and many others will continue to wait, hopeful for the day when they can share the screen with their Bollywood counterparts and bring their unique talents to a global audience.

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

NEWS POINT

Fate of anti-rape bills in limbo



By Esha Lohia

The pitch is growing louder for stricter laws against rape as politicians and activists are demanding quick and effective justice even as three anti-rape bills await the President of India's nod. On September 2, while West Bengal passed the Aparajita Bill, Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar) working president Supriya Sule staged a protest against the President's delay in approving the Shakti Bill passed by the Maharashtra legislature in 2020.

It may seem ironic that at a time when cases of heinous sexual crimes against women are flooding the news every day, three anti-rape bills that seek strict punishment for the culprits are still awaiting approval from the President. The bills that need the



President's nod are the Aparajita Woman and Child Bill passed by West Bengal and the Disha and Shakti Bill. Shaken by the rape and murder of a young doctor Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, the West Bengal Assembly, on September 3, 2024, passed the 'Aparajita Woman and Child Bill (West Bengal Criminal Laws and Amendment) Bill 2024' to amend provisions in existing laws to provide for stricter punishment for crimes against women and children.

While speaking in the Assembly, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said: "Rape is now a national shame. Let us come together for social reform which is needed to prevent rapes."

The Bill tweaks section 64 in the Bharatiya Nyay Samhita (BNS) and enhances the jail term to the "remainder of that person's natural life and fine, or with death". Additionally, it adds that this fine shall be fair and reasonable to meet the victim's medical expenses and rehabilitation costs. The Bengal Bill proposes death penalty for rape resulting in the victim's death or causing her to be in a vegetative state, while the existing Section 66 of the BNS allows for 20 years jail term, life imprisonment, and death for such a crime. In the cases of gangrape, the Bill seeks to amend Section 70 of BNS, increasing the punishment from 20 years to life imprisonment and death for those convicted of gangrape. The Bengal legislation also toughens the punishments in child abuse cases as laid down by the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The proposed legislation seeks to penalise printing or publishing of any matter relating to court proceedings without permission with a pun-

ishment of "imprisonment of three to five years and fine". The Bill mandates that a probe and trial must be completed within 21 days, with a possible extension of up to 15 days. The extension must be justified by a senior police officer. Trials in all sex crimes and acid attacks must be completed within 30 days. The Aparajita Bill legislation also includes provisions for setting up special courts to hear sexual violence cases and task forces to investigate them.

The legislation, while moved by the ruling Trinamool Congress, was unanimously passed but requires President Droupadi Murmu's assent before it can come into force.

However, this is not the first time that a state assembly had tried to seek President's assent regarding an anti-rape bill. The Andhra Pradesh Disha Bill 2019 and Shakti Bill passed by Maharashtra in 2020, both introduced in India in the wake of high-profile cases of sexual violence against women, demanding strict punishment, are still awaiting a nod from the President.

Both bills mandate death penalty for certain offenses against women, such as rape and gang rape. Additionally, both bills provide for the establishment of special courts to handle cases of violence against women and children. While the Shakti Bill was largely modelled after the Disha Bill, there were some minor differences in the specific provisions and timelines for investigations and trials. "Politics is involved in delaying the approval for the bill as a lot of MPs in BJP are accused in rape cases. The BJP fears that if this bill gets implemented, the death penalty will also apply to them as well," says Vidya Chavan, Chief Spokesperson of the NCP (SP).

There has to be categorisation of cases; either the accused accepts their crime or not. The case can be solved easily in the former scenario. However, in the latter, the trial is difficult to be completed within just 30-36 days. A provision of expediting the trial by extending it for a few more days should be there as well. Allocating a task force to solve only such crimes is one of the good possible solutions in fast tracking these cases.

-Kanika Bhardwaj, Advocate, Supreme Court



Delegates at the 44th Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) General Assembly in New Delhi on Sunday. Pic: PTI

Randhir Singh first Indian to be elected as OCA president

New Delhi: Veteran sports administrator Randhir Singh on Sunday became the first Indian to be elected as the president of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) during the 44th General Assembly of the continental body here.

A five-time Olympic shooter, Randhir was the lone eligible candidate for the OCA president's post. His tenure will run from 2024 till 2028, and his election was unanimous.

The 77-year-old Randhir has been the OCA acting president since 2021, filling in for Kuwait's Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, who was handed a 15-year ban from sports administration in May this year over ethics breaches.

Randhir, who held differ-

ent administrative posts in Indian and Asian sports bodies, was officially named OCA president in the presence of Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and top sports leaders from all 45 countries of Asia.

He hails from Patiala in Punjab and belongs to a family of sportspersons.

His uncle, Maharaja Yadavindra Singh, played Test cricket for India and was an IOC member. His father Bhalindra Singh, also a first-class cricketer, was an IOC Member between 1947 and 1992.

Randhir was also a member of the IOC between 2001 and 2014, after which he continued as the honorary member of the global sports body.

India to bid for 2030 Youth Olympics

New Delhi: Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday said India is set to bid for the 2030 Youth Olympics, a precursor to the country's ambition to host the 2036 Olympics.

The 2030 Youth Olympics will be the fifth edition of the international event.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi we are going to bid for the 2030 Youth Olympics but our focus remain on hosting the 2036 Olympics," Mandaviya said on the sidelines of the Olympic Council of Asia's (OCA) 44th General Assembly here.

"Under Modi's leadership we have been able to host multiple international sporting events, including cricket World Cups, football U-17 World Cup," BJP president JP Nadda, who was the chief guest for the event, added.

India will fight against Peru, Colombia, Mexico, Thailand, Mongolia, Russia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina to get the hosting rights for the 2030 Youth Olympics.

Yogasana included as demonstration sport

India's ancient sport, yogasana was on Sunday included as a demonstration event at the 2026 Asian Games to be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

Yogasana's inclusion in the Asian Games calendar as a demonstration sport was unanimously passed at the 44th General Assembly of Olympic Council of Asia, where India's Randhir Singh was elected unopposed as the OCA president for a term of four years from 2024 till 2028.

"Yoga will be a demonstration sport in Nagoya as the calendar for 2026 Asian Games has already been made and approved," Randhir said.

"In 10 days time we have managed to convince all members and include yoga, which is being promoted by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Paris Paralympics Canoe sprinter Pooja misses final

India sign off with record 29 medals



Paris: Pooja Ojha failed to finish inside the top-three to miss the final berth of the women's kayak single 200m KL1 sprint canoeing event, bringing an end to India's record-breaking campaign at the Paralympics here on Sunday.

The final addition to India's unmatched medal count came from the athletics arena late on Saturday, where Navdeep Singh's silver medal in the men's javelin F41 category was upgraded to gold, capping a spectacular finish to the Games.

On the concluding day of

At the last edition in Tokyo, India were ranked 24th with five gold, eight silver and six bronze medals.

the Paralympics at the Vaires-sur-Marne Stadium, Pooja was the last Indian in fray and she finished her semifinal 1 with a timing of 1:17.03, which was 7.03 seconds behind the third-placed Eleonora de Paolis of Italy.

The top-three make the final. Brianna Hennessy of Canada (57.00) and Maosan of China (57.26) claimed the top-two spots of semifinal 1.

During the Heats, Pooja had finished in the fifth place. As a result of this contemporary result, India's para-canoeing stint in the event has ended.

Besides her, Prachi Yadav was another canoe sprinter who, on Saturday, had finished eighth in the women's VL2 200m.

India's only male canoe sprinter, Yash Kumar, had settled for the fifth spot in the KL1 200m semi-final on Saturday.

The KL1 category is primarily for canoe sprinters who propel with their arms only, with very limited or no trunk function and no leg function.

India thus concluded the Paris Paralympics with a record haul of seven gold, nine silver, and 13 bronze medals, set to finish 18th in the overall medals tally.

Udaipur half marathon

Jaipur: Runners from across the world will participate in the Vedanta Zinc City Half Marathon to be organised in Udaipur on September 29. 'Run For Zero Hunger' is the theme of the event which stresses on combating rural malnutrition.

As an official member of the Association of International Marathons (AIMS) and Distance Races, this event has received AIMS certification and is a globally listed marathon.

The company has unveiled the official marathon poster, highlighting the breathtaking views of Udaipur, also known as Zinc City.

Talent comes from everywhere

Bengaluru: The legendary Rahul Dravid on Sunday said that Indian cricket has evolved into an "extremely powerful" force, thanks to the growing talent pool that now extends to even the remotest corners of the country.

Dravid, who masterminded India's triumph in the T20 World Cup, said a strong club cricket culture has a lot to do with bucking the old trend of city cricketers dominating the passage to the national team.

"If you look at Indian cricket today, Indian cricket is extremely strong, it's extremely powerful. One of the big reasons for that is that talent comes from everywhere, from all over the

country," said Dravid during the 50th year celebration of Mount Joy Cricket Club.

"I think if you go back to the time of say GR Vishwanath or even when I was starting out my career, most of the talent came from the big cities or from few other states.

"Even if they were talented boys in smaller places, they had to come to the big cities to play cricket. But today I think you see in Indian cricket that boys are coming from everywhere," he added.

Dravid said it's getting reflected in the standards of domestic cricket in India.

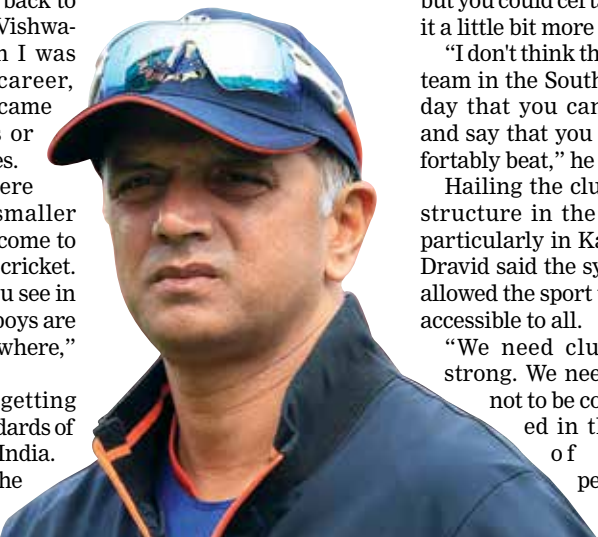
"You just look at the standard of the

Ranji Trophy. In the old days when you played in the South Zone, other than playing Hyderabad or Tamil Nadu, I think it is fair to say, without being disrespectful, that a lot of other teams you could take it not for granted but you could certainly take it a little bit more lightly.

"I don't think there is any team in the South Zone today that you can walk in and say that you will comfortably beat," he added.

Hailing the club cricket structure in the country, particularly in Karnataka, Dravid said the system has allowed the sport to remain accessible to all.

"We need clubs to be strong. We need cricket not to be concentrated in the hands of a few people.



India beat China ACT opener

Hulunbuir (China): The Indian men's hockey team launched its title defence with a commanding 3-0 win over hosts China in the Asian Champions Trophy here on Sunday.

Sukhjeet Singh (14th minute), Uttam, Singh (27th) and Abhishek (32nd) were the goal-scorer for India, while China drew a blank. Coming into the tournament after securing a second successive bronze at the Olympics, India looked the more enterprising side as they grabbed the opportunities up front and was rock solid in defence to emerge winners.

Moeen Ali retires

London: Cricketer Moeen Ali has announced his retirement from international cricket. "I've done my part," said the 37-year-old.

In an interview with the Daily Mail, the spin bowling all-rounder said the decision comes after he was overlooked for England's forthcoming white-ball series against Australia.

He told the paper: "I'm 37 years old and didn't get picked for this month's Australia series. I've played a lot of cricket for England. It's time for the next generation, which was also explained to me. It felt the time was right. I've done my part."

Matthew Mott was sacked as head coach of the limited-overs side last



month after disappointing title defences in the ODI and T20 World Cups and the appetite for change continued with the removal of Moeen and Jonny Bairstow - two senior men sharing over 400 caps.

Moeen has been an influential vice-captain to Jos Buttler in recent times.

Deserve same respect, says Navdeep

Paris: Navdeep Singh, who suffered from dwarfism, endured not just the usual rigours of training but cruel taunts from onlookers while growing up in his village in Haryana's Panipat district.

On Saturday, having turned those taunts into his biggest triumph on sport's grandest stage, the four feet four inches tall para-athlete expressed his concerns with the indignities visited upon people whose bodies don't fit the usual moulds, and demanded "same respect" for them.

The 23-year-old Indian javelin thrower won an unparalleled gold in the F41 classification at the Paris Paralympic Games.

Humein bhi utna darja milna chahiye, maine bhi desh ka naam roshan kiya hai (We deserve the same respect, I too have brought glory to the country," Navdeep said, flashing his gold medal in a video shared by the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI).

"My aim is to educate society that we also exist in this world and nobody



should make fun of us, which is often the case. We also can make our country proud.

"There were a lot of hurdles initially but I kept at it and strengthened myself, which led to good results. This is the biggest moment of my life, I feel proud to sign off with a gold medal," he added.

As the track and field competitions concluded at the Paris Games, Navdeep's golden throw in the final ensured the hallowed Stade de France echoed with the Indian national anthem.

His personal best effort of 47.32m initially placed him in second position but

it was upgraded to gold after the top finisher, Iran's Sadegh Beit Sayah, was disqualified for repeatedly displaying an objectionable flag.

It was a defining moment for Navdeep who silenced all his doubters.

Born prematurely in 2000, Navdeep's struggles began from the start.

It wasn't until he was two years old that his parents realised their son had dwarfism, setting the stage for a life filled with both struggles and triumphs.

His father, Dalbir Singh, a national-level wrestler, kept motivating him and saw his son as an extension

of his own aspirations.

Navdeep started his athletic journey at the age of 10, dabbling in wrestling and sprinting before finding his true calling in javelin throw after being inspired by national icon Neeraj Chopra.

"The first thing that comes to my mind is my dad (Dalbir Singh). I really miss my family now. Initially, it felt like a burden. I wondered why I couldn't enjoy life like others -- go to school and have fun.

"But he (dad) kept me motivated and on track. In this journey, I can't credit just one person. Champions are made with support, so my coach, my family, the government -- all contributed to our success, taking our medal tally beyond the expectation of 25, reaching 29 already."

Early success

Navdeep made his international debut at the Asian Youth Para Games, clinching his first gold medal and setting the stage for a remarkable career.

He continued to train

tirelessly at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres in Gandhinagar and Bangalore, honing his skills and refining his technique.

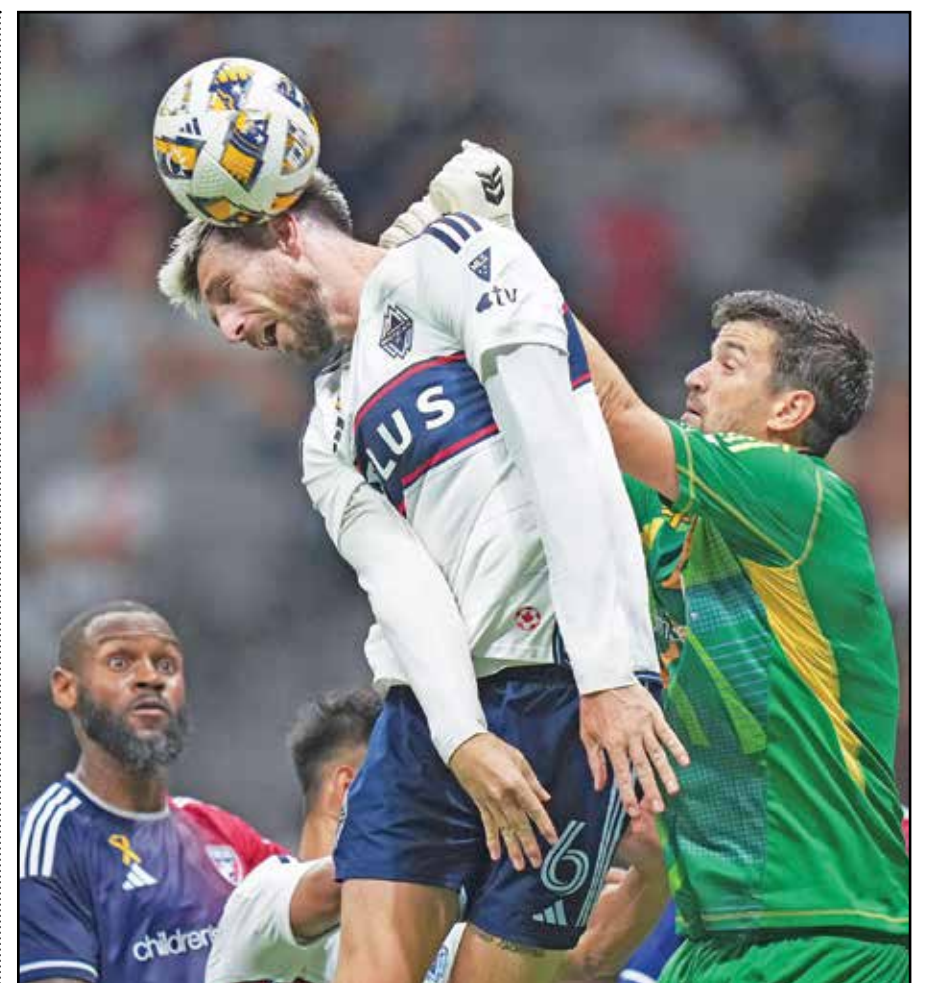
At the Fazza International Championship in Dubai in 2021, he secured another gold medal.

Amid high expectations, Navdeep also faced setbacks, finishing fourth at the Tokyo Paralympics three years ago and Asian Para Games last year. He finished with a bronze at the World Para Athletics Championship in 2024, and faced criticism.

"I suffered a lot, so I wanted to achieve something for my country. My event was on the last day, but I came on the August 31, so I kept preserving myself.

"I heard things like, 'He can't do this, he only performs well in India, but fails in competition'. I heard these from several quarters, but I just had to ignore all this. I just needed guidance and the right path.

"I carried all my past baggage, the training, the hard work, the criticisms."



Vancouver Whitecaps' Tristan Blackmon, front left, gets his head on the ball on a free kick but fails to score against FC Dallas goalkeeper Jimmy Maurer, right, during the second half of an MLS soccer match in Vancouver, British Columbia on Saturday. Pic: AP/PTI