

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Hundreds of angry residents halted train services at Badlapur railway station demanding action against the culprit on Monday.

Pic: PTI

Sexual abuse of girls in Badlapur

Govt forms SIT under IPS officer

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government on Tuesday ordered the setting up of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the alleged sexual abuse of two girl students of a school in Badlapur in Thane district which triggered a massive protest, leading to halting of local train services.

The SIT will be headed by Inspector General of Police-rank officer Aarti Singh, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who heads the Home Department, stated on X.

Fadnavis stated he has directed the Thane Police Commissioner to prepare a proposal to try the case in a fast-track court. Police on August 17 arrested an attendant at the school in Badlapur for allegedly abusing two girl students of the kindergarten, aged three and four years. As per the complaint, he abused the girls in the toilet of the school.

The school management has suspended the principal, a class teacher, and a female attendant, over the incident. The incident triggered a massive protest by parents of the children studying in the school and oth-

ers, including several women, who came onto the tracks at Badlapur station and blocked local trains, affecting services between Karjat and Kalyan section. They shouted slogans to demand action against the guilty. More than four hours have passed since the protesters descended on tracks but police and authorities are unable to convince protesters who refused to heed pleas for the withdrawal of the blockade. A call for Badlapur bandh has been given by several organisations to protest against the incident.

Three officers suspended

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday ordered the suspension of three police officials, including a senior police inspector, for alleged dereliction of duty in probing the sexual abuse of two girls at a school in Badlapur amid massive protests. "The orders of immediate suspension of the senior police inspector, assistant sub-inspector and head constable attached to Badlapur police station for the dereliction of duty have been issued," Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis post-

ed on X. The state government has already ordered the setting up of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the alleged sexual abuse of two female students. Earlier in the day, Fadnavis directed the Thane Police Commissioner to prepare a proposal to try the case in a fast-track court. The opposition parties have alleged that the parents of the victim girls were made to wait for 11 hours at Badlapur police station before taking their complaints

Attempt to rape charge

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said he has directed the police that the accused arrested for sexually abusing two girl students at a school in Badlapur in Thane district be booked under the attempt to rape charge.

He said that the case will be fast-tracked and a special public prosecutor will be appointed for the case. "I have spoken to the Thane Commissioner of Police. The accused has been arrested. I have asked the case to be fast-tracked and book the accused under the charges of attempt to rape and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act," he said.

Task force to formulate protocol for ensuring safety of doctors

By Correspondent

New Delhi: Observing that the safety and well-being of doctors is a matter of national interest, the Supreme Court on Tuesday constituted a 10-member National Task Force (NTF) to formulate a protocol for ensuring their safety and security in the wake of the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata.

The task force will submit its interim report within three weeks and the final report within two months, the court said.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said a lack of institutional safety norms at medical establishments against both violence and sexual violence against medical professionals is a matter of serious concern.

It said there are legislations to protect medical professionals but they do not address the systemic issues.

The 10 members of the task force are -- Vice Admiral Arti Sarin, Director General, Medical Services (Navy), Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman and Managing Director, Asian Institute of Gastroenterology and AIG Hospitals, Hyderabad, Dr M Srinivas, Director of Delhi-AIIMS, Dr Pratima Murthy, Director, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, Dr Goverdhan Dutt Puri, Executive Director, AIIMS Jodhpur, Dr Saumitra Rawat, Chairperson, Institute of Surgical Gastroenterology, GI and HPB Onco-Surgery and Liver Transplantation and Member, Board of Management, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi.

The other members are -- Professor Anita Saxena, Vice-Chancellor, Pandit B D Sharma Medical University, Rohtak, former Dean of Academics, Chief Cardio thoracic Centre and Head Cardiology Department



A doctor watches the Supreme Court hearing on her mobile Chandigarh on Tuesday.

Pic: PTI

AIIMS, Delhi, Dr Pallavi Saple, Dean, Grant Medical College and Sir JJ Group of Hospitals, Mumbai, and Dr Padma Srivastava, formerly Professor at the Department of Neurology, AIIMS Delhi.

The bench said the cabinet secretary and the home secretary to the Union government, secretary, Ministry of Health, chairperson, National Medical Commission and president, Nation-

al Board of Examinations shall be the ex-officio members of the task force.

The apex court asked the NTF to formulate an action plan under two sub-heads -- Preventing violence, including gender-based violence against medical professionals; and providing an enforceable national protocol for dignified and safe working conditions for interns, residents, senior residents, doctors, nurses and

all medical professionals. "The NTF shall be at liberty to make recommendations on all aspects of the action-plan highlighted above and any other aspects which the members seek to cover. They are at liberty to make additional suggestions, where appropriate.

"The NTF shall also suggest appropriate timelines by which the recommendations could be implemented based on the existing facilities in Hospitals. The NTF is requested to consult all stake-holders," the bench said. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will provide all logistical support including making arrangements for travel, stay and secretarial assistance and bear expenses of the members of the NTF, it said.

"All State Governments and UT Governments, through their Secretaries, in the Ministries of Health and Family Welfare and the Central Government, through the Secretary, Un-

ion Ministry of Health and Family Welfare must collate information from all hospitals run by the State and the Central Government, respectively on how many security personnel are employed at each Hospital and each department;

"Whether there is a baggage and person screening mechanism in place at the entrance of the medical establishment. The total number of resting/duty rooms in the Hospital and specific details of the number in each Department. The facilities provided in the resting/duty rooms. The data as submitted shall be tabulated and filed with an affidavit by the Union Government within one month of this order, it said.

The apex court was hearing a suo motu case related to the rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata amid nationwide protests over it.

UPSC drops lateral-entry recruitment drive

Government budges before pressure

By Correspondent

New Delhi: Taking a step back the UPSC on Tuesday cancelled its latest advertisement to fill key posts in government departments through lateral entry, amid a political row over the lack of a reservation provision for those positions.

The move came after Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh wrote to Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Chairperson Preeti Sudan to cancel the advertisement, so that marginalised communities get their rightful representation in government services.

The commission had, on August 17, issued a notification for the recruitment of 45 posts -- 10 of joint secretaries and 35 of directors or deputy secretaries -- through lateral entry, which is referred to as the appointment of specialists (including those from the private sector) in government departments. It was one of the biggest tranches of lateral recruitment announced by the commission.

The decision had ignited criticism from the opposition parties, which claimed that it undermined the reservation rights of the Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

In the letter to the UPSC, Singh said for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reservation in public employment is a cornerstone of "our social justice framework", aimed at addressing historical injustices and promoting inclusivity. "Since these positions have been treated as specialised and designated as single-cadre posts, there has been no provision

Reservation in lateral entry

The Union government has decided to apply the principle of reservation in lateral entry to ensure social justice, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister for Railways, said on Tuesday. "We have decided to apply the Principle of Reservation in that too. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji has always shown his commitment towards social justice. We gave constitutional status to the OBC Commission which was earlier an ordinary body. Be it NEET, medical admission, Sainik Vidyalaya or Navodaya Vidyalaya, we have implemented the principle of reservation everywhere," he said.

for reservation in these appointments. This aspect needs to be reviewed and reformed in the context of the Hon'ble Prime Minister's focus on ensuring social justice."

"Hence, I urge the UPSC to cancel the advertisement for lateral entry recruitment issued on 17.8.2024," he added. Under earlier governments, posts as important as those of secretaries in various ministries, the leadership of the UIDAI etc. were given to lateral entrants without following any process of reservation, he said.

"Further, it is well known that the members of the infamous National Advisory Council used to run a super-bureaucracy that controlled the Prime Minister's Office," the minister added.

Student stabbed

Puttur (Karnataka): A college student in Puttur town allegedly stabbed his college mate and injured her in the hand on Tuesday. The girl was rushed to the government hospital.

Upon receiving the report, Puttur police arrived at the scene, reviewed CCTV footage, and arrested the suspect. The motive behind the stabbing remains unclear. Following the incident, a large crowd of people arrived at the college.

Three Delhi govt hospitals directed to set up isolation rooms for Mpox cases

New Delhi: The Delhi government has directed three of its hospitals to set up isolation rooms for management of suspected and confirmed cases of Mpox, officials said on Tuesday, even as they stressed that there were no patients detected here till now.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared Mpox a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) in view of its prevalence and spread across many parts of Africa.

"Three Delhi government hospitals -- LNJP, GTB and Baba Saheb

Ambedkar -- have been directed to set up isolation rooms for suspected and confirmed cases of the disease. While LNJP has been designated as the nodal facility, two other hospitals are on standby," a senior health department official told PTI.

The Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) Hospital will have a total of 20 isolation rooms for the patients, including 10 for confirmed cases. The Guru Teg Bahadur (GTB) Hospital and Baba Saheb Ambedkar will have 10 rooms each for such patients, with five rooms each in them for suspected cases.

However, the official said that there was no need to panic and the government is fully prepared.

"There are no cases as of now. We are fully alert and monitoring the situation," he added.

An earlier statement from the WHO stated that 99,176 cases and 208 deaths had been reported due to Mpox from 116 countries globally since 2022. Mpox cases have been steadily increasing in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Last year, the number of reported cases around the world increased significantly. This year, the number



of cases reported so far has already exceeded last year's total, with more than 15,600 cases and 537 deaths.

Since 2022, thirty Mpox cases were reported in India. The last case of Mpox was detected in March 2024.

- PTI



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Congress President Nana Patole during a 'Sadbhavana Diwas' event to mark the birth anniversary of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi on Tuesday. Pic-PTI

Congress keeps mum on Uddhav's demand

By Suyash Padate

Mumbai: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray who had recently insisted that MVA decide its chief ministerial face first rather than going by the logic of which party wins most seats, asserted he would back any candidate announced by the Congress and NCP (SP). However, no word on this contentious issue was uttered at the Congress meeting on Tuesday.

The meeting which was started under the shadow of the Badlapur incident concluded with political speeches. Targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday

day said that Modi is trying to control the power by becoming a dictator that is not in the interest of the nation.

Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) leaders Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar shared the dais with Congress leaders as the grand old party took off its campaign for the Maharashtra Assembly polls on Tuesday. The rally, marking the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, was attended by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and AICC in-charge for Maharashtra, Ramesh Chennithala.

NCP President Sharad Pawar said that Mumbai and Congress, Mumbai

and Rajiv Gandhi have a different relationship. Rajiv Gandhi has played a major role in building the country, he has given a new direction to the nation. Those who are in power today don't know what Nehru-Gandhi was, it is wrong for the Prime Minister and his colleagues to take a blind stance towards those who gave everything for the country. The Nehru and Gandhi family have made a great contribution in building the nation, no one will be able to erase the contribution of the Nehru-Gandhi family from the history of the country.

Shiv Sena chief and former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said that

the Congress party was in power for a long time but never acted with revenge towards Shiv Sena. ED and CBI never came to the house of Shiv Sena leaders during the Congress government's tenure. Rajiv Gandhi never treated Shiv Sena in good faith but BJP is out to finish Shiv Sena. Rajiv Gandhi was a decent and cultured person. Rajiv Gandhi crossed 400 seats in Lok Sabha election without raising any slogan.

On the occasion of former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Rajiv Gandhi's birth anniversary, the Goodwill Day and Sankalp Mela was organized at Shanmukhananda Auditorium.

Two more held for alleged swapping of blood samples

Pune: The Pune police have arrested two more persons in connection with the alleged swapping of blood samples in the Porsche car crash case, a top official said on Tuesday.

With the arrest of the duo late Monday night, the number of persons held in the Porsche car crash case has gone up to nine, the police said.

"The blood samples of two minors who were with the juvenile accused in the car, were swapped with those of these two persons, who include a father of a minor," Pune Police Com-

missioner Amitesh Kumar said this morning.

The high-end car allegedly driven by the minor under the influence of alcohol knocked down two motorbike-borne IT professionals, one of them a woman, in Pune's Kalyani

PUNE PORSCHE CASE

Nagar area in the wee hours of May 19, killing them.

The boy's father is a prominent builder.

The boy's parents and doctors - Dr Ajay Taware, then HOD of forensic medicine department, Dr Shri-

hari Halnor and one Atul Ghatkamble, a staffer from Sassoon are already arrested for allegedly swapping the blood samples of the minor with those of his mother.

Two other accused - Ashpak Makandar and Amar Gaikwad - acted as middlemen between the father and the doctors to facilitate financial transactions to swap the blood samples. They were also arrested earlier.

The Pune police recently filed a chargesheet of 900 pages in the case against seven accused arrested earlier.

AIMIM offers to join hands with MVA

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) is keen to join hands with the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance in Maharashtra with an aim to defeat the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that is currently ruling the state along with two other parties, former MP Imtiaz Jaleel has said.

Jaleel, who is the AIMIM's state unit president, was talking to Marathi news channel ABP Majha after a meeting of the party in Mumbai.

Replying to a query, he said, "We had said this dur-

ing the Lok Sabha elections and we are giving an offer to the MVA again to join hands as we want to defeat the BJP. But it is up to them whether to include us in the alliance or not."

"If they (MVA parties) take us along, it will be beneficial for them. If not, we are ready to move ahead alone...If they think we have some power and have a vote bank, then they will ask us, otherwise they will not," Jaleel added.

He said, "The BJP has damaged the country, so we want to keep them away from the government by any means."

Centre does not have any option now, says Ambedkar

By Correspondent

Nagpur: Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) chief Prakash Ambedkar on Tuesday said the BJP used to work arbitrarily when it was in full majority at the Centre earlier, but it was left with no option and had to cancel the latest lateral entry recruitment after it was challenged.

A row erupted after the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Saturday issued a notification for recruiting 45 joint secretaries, directors and deputy secretaries through

lateral entry -- referred to as the appointment of specialists (including those from the private sector) in government departments.

The decision ignited criticism from the opposition parties, which claimed it undermined the reservation rights of OBCs, SCs and STs. Following this, the Centre asked the UPSC to cancel the advertisement "so that marginalised communities get their rightful representation in government services".

Ambedkar stressed the need for the VBA and tribal outfits to work together

towards protecting the rights of the tribal community.

When asked about the Centre's move of withdrawing the advertisement on the lateral entry in bureaucracy, Ambedkar said, "BJP used to work arbitrarily when it was in full majority and it would appoint officers through direct recruitment."

"The entry points of government jobs are UPSC and MPSC. Even ministers, the President or the Prime Minister do not have the right to make a direct recruitment," he said.

Quality Assurance Certificate Must For Builders- MahaRera

Provision to help homebuyers get better quality flats

By Anand Mishra

Mumbai. In order to ensure higher construction standards and accountability from the developers, the Maharashtra Real Estate Regulatory Authority (MahaRera) has made it mandatory for the developer to present a "Quality Assurance Certificate" to the authority at the end of every financial year and publish it on their respective websites. This certificate will be based on various factors that determine the quality of the project, including the project's structural design, stability, various tests, the types of materials used, and the skill level of the workforce involved, fire safety and fire resistance measures, etc.

Defect liability period matters the most

According to a statement issued by the authority, the project's engineers and supervisors, the developer now will have to verify the details prior to making the 'Quality Assurance Certificate' public. As per the provisions with regards to the defect liability period, a developer is obliged to rectify any deficiency in the residences for a period of five years from the date of possession. Every complaint will be attended within 30 days without any cost to the homebuyer. Notably, henceforth, every developer will have to ensure quality control at each of the project's stages, as this will improve a structure's overall condition. While every developer claims that their project is best on all aspects, so far, a standard framework or parameters has been missing. Hereon, developers will be required to provide such assurance to their purchas-



"Authority has been working to establish preliminary parameters to ensure that constructions are of better quality. A consultation paper was also issued in December. Considering the ambit and importance of the subject, a draft circular discussing all aspects of the matter was issued in April's last week for opinions and suggestions. Now, the proposal has been given a final shape."

ers through MahaRERA on an annual basis.

Keep the record of structural design and stability

According to the statement, some of the key aspects for certification includes- was soil testing conducted prior to finalising structural design and stability of the ground where the project will be constructed? Was a structural engineer appointed for the project? Is a record maintained at the project site to allow periodic certification by the project's engineer for quality control of works? Is there a testing facility available on-site to check raw material's quality? In case of a multi-story building, is an earthquake-resistant system in place? Is there a requirement for flood prevention measures?, among others.

Additionally, it must be ensured that the materials utilised such as concrete, cement, steel, iron, electrical cables, plumbing, fixtures, etc. conform to the standards as set by Bureau of Indian

Standards/ Indian Standard/ National Building Code. Also the water to be utilised should be tested to ensure it is suitable for construction purposes. A record of these should be maintained at the project site. There should also be due diligence and records documented for critical works such as electrical, water supply, drainage, etc. carried out under the supervision of registered contractors and supervisors.

In case if there is involvement of independent third parties towards project's quality checks during and post construction phases, details of the same should also be documented and certified. Post certifying all of these aspects by project's engineers and supervisors, the onus is on the developer to verify the information provided and give his stamp of approval to the 'Quality Assurance Certificate'. This will significantly enhance developer's responsibility and project's construction quality.

Brothers meet tragic end

Nagpur: In a gruesome road accident, two brothers were crushed to death by a truck in Kamleshwar taluka of Maharashtra's Nagpur district in which their heads got severed from their torsos, police said.

The accident took place near Seloo village around 7.30 pm on Monday, an official of Kamleshwar police station said.

The victims were identified as Sandeep Chandrabhan Kande (34) and his 28-year-old brother Praveen, both residents of Astikala village, he said.

"Sandeep had gone to Pachmarhi in Madhya Pradesh. On his return to Kamleshwar, his brother Praveen went to pick him up. The siblings were returning home on the two-wheeler when the tragedy struck," he said.

While trying to cross the road through a small opening in the divider, they were hit by the truck coming from the opposite direction. They fell down off their two-wheeler due to the impact and were crushed under the wheels of the heavy vehicle, he added.

Their heads got severed from their torsos and dragged for several metres. The driver of the truck immediately fled from the scene, he said.

HC halts recruitment Students say decision affecting studies



Latur: Students of government polytechnic colleges in Maharashtra have written to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, expressing concern over their "educational loss" in the wake of the high court's direction to the government to halt the recruitment process of visiting lecturers.

The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High court on July 23 directed the government to halt the recruitment process of visiting lecturers in all polytechnic colleges across the state.

The court gave this decision while hearing a petition filed by 144 visiting lecturers seeking regularisation and permanent jobs.

Students from various colleges have written an email to CM Shinde to express anxiety that the high

court's move will cause educational loss.

"The lack of a permanent lecturer has left us in the lurch. We are worried about our preparations for the exams and the overall quality of education we are receiving," the letter by the students said.

Due to this, students from two divisions are made to attend the classes together due to which their combined strength goes up to around 150, which affects the quality of education, it said.

Purushottam Bahetwar, secretary of the Tantraniketana Abhyagat Adhyakhata Welfare Association, said that due to halting the recruitment of visiting lecturers in colleges, students are facing losses in terms of the classes.

- PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform in public at large that my client Smt. Dimple Kishor Jain and Shri. Kishor Parasraj Jain, Having Flat No. 302, 3rd Floor, Baldev Bhavan Co-op. Hsg. Soc. Ltd., Narayan Nagar Road, Bhayander (W), Dist. - Thane had purchased said flat from Mr. Girdharbhai Durlabhbhai Rathod and Mrs. Kamala Girdharbhai Rathod, but first Atricles of Agreement for Sale dated 27th July 1981 executed between M/s. Bhagyoday Construction Co., Builder and Developers and Shri. Jagdish Bag and Shri. Gopal Beg and third Agreement dated 29th June 1990 between Shri. Savajibhai M. Bhalala and Shri. Girdharbhai L. Sangani are missing and not traceable. That, my client lost above said original agreement, if any third persons, bank/financial institution having right, interest and title over the said flat and loss of above said agreements found to any one in that case inform at below mention address within 15 days after publication of this notice and if not receive any reply in that case it is declare that no persons, Bank/Financial Institution not found above said Original Agreement and declare as missing Original Agreement. Date: 19/08/2024 Sd/- MR. MUKESH N. RATHOD, Advocate High Court Sh. No.16, Santok Tower, Station Road, Bhayander (W), Dist. - Thane.

Priyanka's Marathi film in October

Mumbai: Priyanka Chopra Jonas on Tuesday announced the release date of Marathi feature film "Paani", which she has produced under her banner Purple Pebble Pictures along with her mother Madhu Chopra.

The Marathi film, which won the national award for 'best film on environment conservation/preservation' in 2019, will be released in theatres on October 18.

Priyanka, who produced the project with Rajshri Entertainment and in associa-



tion with Kothare Vision Pvt Ltd, shared the announcement in an Instagram post.

"This is very very special. Our Marathi feature film 'Paani' is all set to release



theatrically on 18th October. See you in the theatres!" the 42-year-old actor wrote alongside a teaser of the project.

"Paani" marks the directorial debut of Addinath M

Kothare, who also features in the movie along with Rucha Vaidya, Subodh Bhawe, Rajit Kapur, Kishor Kadam, Sachin Goswami, Mohanabai, Shripad Joshi and Vikas Pandurang Patil.

It is written by Nitin Dixit.

The film follows the story of a common man living in a village plagued with drought. It revolves around his journey towards making the village a self-sufficient place, all while dealing with local goons and other disruptions of daily life.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Mallikarjun Kharge, President, Congress

"Recently they introduced lateral entry. They tried to appoint joint secretary (rank officers)...But I heard that lateral entry appointments have been withdrawn. This is because the opposition is strong."

Sexual abuse of school girls

Anger bursts in Badlapur

By Correspondent

Mumbai: A large scale protest erupted at Badlapur railway station and in the vicinity of a private school on Tuesday after a school attendant at the school sexually abused two kindergarten girl students aged three and four. The agitators blocked the tracks, halting local train movement for more than 14 hours. They also barged inside the school demanding action against the culprit.

The angry agitators vandalised the school and also indulged in stone-pelting at the local railway station during the 'rail blockade', police said.

Two girl students of a kindergarten at the school in Badlapur were allegedly sexually abused by a male attendant recently. On August 17, the police arrested the school attendant at the school for allegedly abusing two girls studying in the kindergarten, aged three and four years. As per the complaint, he abused the girls in the toilet of the school.

Angry parents of the school children and local citizens, including many women, gathered outside the school on Tuesday morning and also held a 'rail roko' protest at the Badlapur railway station, blocking the path of suburban trains from around 8.30 am. They demanded action against the school and strict punishment against the accused involved in the incident.

Some of the protesters, including women, later broke the gate of the school and vandalised it by breaking the window panes, benches and doors, police said.

At the railway station, as the protest hampered the movement of trains and caused inconvenience to scores of commuters, police personnel and other authorities tried to convince the protesters to end the agitation, but in vain. Some of the agitators hurled stones during the protest, but the situation was soon brought under



Protesters block train movements for more than 10 hours at Badlapur demanding stern action against the accused on Tuesday.

Pic: PTI

control, the police said.

Commissioner of Government Railway Police (GRP) Ravindra Shisve reached at the railway station to bring the situation under control and attempts were on to disperse the crowd till late in the night.

Police used force to disperse hundreds of protesters at around 6 pm, hours after they hurled stones at the railway station while rejecting pleas of the state government and senior police officers to call off the agitation, which affected the services of local trains and forced diversion of some outstation trains, an official said.

The tracks at Badlapur station were finally cleared of demonstrators after 6 pm, the police official said.

Protesters refuse to withdraw
State minister Girish Mahajan tried to pacify the protesters in the afternoon who responded with slogans like "justice" for the victim girls and capital punishment for the arrested accused. Mahajan's appeal to vacate the train tracks was met with the chanting of "hang, hang" by demonstrators.

Mahajan, a close aide of Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, said police

officials who allegedly failed to address the complaints of the parents of the victim girls have been suspended. "The state government has expressed deep concern regarding the (sexual abuse) incident.

The accused person will face the most severe punishment," Mahajan said.

A BJP MLA from the Murbad assembly constituency in Thane district, Kisan Kathore, alleged the protest at Badlapur railway station is politically motivated. He claimed agitators have come from neighbouring areas and not from Badlapur. "These

demonstrators are not from Badlapur city; they have arrived from neighbouring areas such as Ulhasnagar. A comprehensive investigation is conducted against the school principal and staff members who allegedly attempted to suppress the incident," Kathore said.

NCPDR to dispatch probe team
New Delhi: The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) will dispatch a team to Thane in Maharashtra following the alleged sexual assault of a four-year-old girl in a school in the district. The apex

child rights body has also questioned the delay in the registration of an FIR in the matter.

The incident has sparked outrage, particularly due to a reported delay by the local police in lodging the First Information Report (FIR). NCPDR Chairperson Priyanka Kanoongo took to social media to express his distress over the incident and announced that a team would be dispatched to investigate the matter.

He questioned why police made the victim's parents wait for 12 hours to get an FIR lodged. "I will personally monitor the investigation, and ensure that all negligent police officers are punished," Kanoongo said in a post on X.

Police deny charges

Deputy Commissioner of Police, zone IV, Sudhakar Pathare, told reporters that a case had been registered against the accused, who was nabbed "within three-and-a-half hours of registering the FIR".

He said three police officers, including two women, are gathering all evidence to ensure a comprehensive probe.

Pathare in a statement urged the residents of Badlapur to avoid taking to the streets or engaging in protests, as such actions could hinder the investigation process.

He emphasised that the police administration is fully engaged in addressing the case and any form of agitation or bandh could obstruct the progress of the investigation given prohibitory orders in place.

The DCP rejected allegations of a 12-hour delay in registering the FIR. The registration process began at 11:30 pm and the accused was arrested by 3:30 am.

The complexity of gathering information from very young victims, who are between 3 and 4 years old, contributed to the time required for case registration, he claimed.



The management of a school at Badlapur in Maharashtra's Thane district has suspended its principal and two staffers in connection with the alleged sexual abuse of two girls, while angry parents of the school children have been staging a blockade since Tuesday morning at the local railway station seeking stringent action against the accused.

Hundreds of irate parents and local citizens came onto the tracks at the Badlapur railway station

around 8 am and blocked the path of trains to draw the administration's attention to their demand. The protest has affected the movement of trains on Up and Down routes since around 8 am.

On August 17, the police arrested a school attendant at the school for allegedly abusing two girls studying in the kindergarten, aged three and four years. As per the complaint, he abused the girls in the toilet of the school.

School principal among three suspended

The girls had told their parents that the attendant touched them inappropriately, following which a complaint was filed and a case was registered against him under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. He was later arrested, the police said.

In the wake of the incident, the management of the school said on Monday late evening that it has suspended the principal, a class teacher and a female

attendant, holding them responsible for it. The school management also tendered an apology over the episode. It said it has blacklisted the firm which has been given the contract for housekeeping.

Vigilance on the school premises will be increased in the wake of the incident, the school authorities said.

The Badlapur police also transferred the police station in-charge for allegedly failing to act when the parents approached the police.

Parents made to wait for 11 hours

Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra assembly Vijay Wadetiwar on Tuesday alleged that the parents of a girl who was sexually abused at a school in Badlapur were made to sit at the police station for 11 hours to file their complaint.

In a video message posted on X (formerly Twitter), the Congress leader said the incident -- where two kindergarten girls were allegedly abused inside the school -- was "bigger" than the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at a hospital in Kolkata which has produced national outrage.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray demanded a fast-track trial and speedy justice in this case. He claimed the school was linked to BJP leaders. "The case should be fast-tracked."

Schools to form Vishakha committees

Amid outrage over the alleged sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls at a school in Badlapur, Maharashtra School Education Minister Deepak Kesarkar on Tuesday said 'Vishakha committees' will be formed in schools.

Schools will face action if CCTV cameras installed on their premises are found to be non-functional, he told reporters here.

Formation of internal committees to deal with complaints of workplace sexual harassment is mandatory as per the Supreme Court's guidelines in the landmark 'Vishakha' judgement. "Vishakha committees will be formed at the school level," Kesarkar said, adding that they will provide a platform for raising grievances to girl students, especially those in standards 9th, 10th and

junior college.

There was already a government resolution mandating that schools should have CCTV cameras, but at the school in Badlapur where two girls were allegedly abused the CCTV cameras were not functional, the minister noted.

A circular stating that schools will be accountable for this lapse will be issued, he said. A notice has already been issued to the Badlapur school, and its principal, a few teachers and two assistants have been suspended.

A review meeting was held with education officials earlier this year to check if 'Sakhi Savitri committees' were formed in schools, and if the Badlapur institution had not formed such a committee, action will be taken, the minister further said.

10 outstation trains diverted

The rail roko protest to the diversion of 10 long-distance trains via alternate routes. As protesters came on railway tracks and blocked traffic, local train services between Ambernath and Karjat stations were suspended from 10:10 am.

Senior Divisional Security Manager along with 60 jawans and 10 officials of RPF, are closely monitoring the situation at Badlapur station with the Government Railway Police (GRP) staff.

The out station trains on the Pune line were the most affected by the protest. The railway official were busy in normalising the train traffic on this affected route till late Tuesday night. The situation is expected to be normal on Wednesday.

Rs 1.09 cr compensation to family of CRPF personnel

Mumbai: The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) in Maharashtra's Thane district awarded a compensation of Rs 1.09 crore to the family of a CRPF personnel run over by a speeding bus in 2019.

The tribunal chaired by S B Agrawal ordered that the respondent, the insurance company, must

pay the compensation with an interest rate of 7.5 per cent per annum from the date of the petition till the realisation of the amount on Rs 73 lakh (excluding future prospects).

The copy of the order passed on August 12 was made available on Tuesday.

The petitioners included the wife of the deceased, Dhanjibhai Shanabhai Solanki, and his two minor children. They sought compensation from the owner and insurer of the bus.

Appearing for the petitioners, advocate S B Ghatge submitted that Solanki (37), a driver with the

CRPF driver, was run over by a speeding luxury bus after his vehicle broke down on Sion-Panvel Highway on June 18, 2019.

It was established that the accident had occurred due to the negligent driving of the bus. Despite the insurance company's claim that the policy had been can-

celled because of a dishonoured cheque, the tribunal held that the insurer remained liable to compensate the victims.

The tribunal found that the insurance company could recover the amount from the vehicle owner but must first pay the compensation to the petitioners.

Man held for molesting 11-year-old girl

Thane: A 42-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly molesting a differently-abled girl on the premises of a civic hospital in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident occurred at the civic hospital in Kalwa on Monday morning, an official said. The accused allegedly brought the 11-year-old girl to the hospital around 11 am and molested her.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Uddhav Thackeray,
Chief, Shiv Sena
(UBT)

"Sena chief Bal Thackeray harshly criticised Rajiv Gandhi (when Gandhi was PM) but at no point I recall CBI, ED or Income Tax knocking on the doors of Shiv Sena leaders," he further said, taking a veiled swipe at the BJP-led Union government."

My next about looking at life: Shoojit

By Bedika

New Delhi : Filmmaker Shoojit Sircar says his yet-untitled movie, like his previous films, starring Abhishek Bachchan is a story that looks at everyday life with a smile.

Sircar, who has worked with megastar Amitabh Bachchan on multiple films including "Piku" and "Gulabo Sitabo" and "Pink", which he produced, has teamed up with his son Abhishek Bachchan for the

first time.

Set to release in theatres on November 15, the film will once again explore a father-daughter relationship, similar to 2015's "Piku".

It was a collaboration long in the making and is one of Abhishek Bachchan's finest works so far, he said.

"It's a very simple observation of life with a little smile. When I watch the film, its post-production, it brings a smile (to my face).

And, I can guarantee that it is one of the finest of Abhishek Bachchan films. We always wanted to work together but we were not getting the right kind of script," the filmmaker told PTI in an interview.

Asked about the long gap this time between his stories considering "Gulabo Sitabo" (2020) and "Sardar Udham" (2021) released on streamers during the pandemic, Sircar said he did not have a script.

"When I have a script

and when I know that this script is ready to move on to the floor, that's when I do it. Because of the Covid and 'Gulabo Sitabo' and 'Sardar Udham Singh' releasing back-to-back, I didn't have the time to focus on a script," he said.

The director said he normally takes a year and sometimes more to finalise a story. His last big-screen release was 2018's "October", starring Varun Dhawan and Banita Sandhu. "I make very few films

and my subjects are very offbeat but it's usually stories of everyday life that I see. Some love them and some don't but I am okay with it. I'm thankful to those who appreciate them," he said.

Despite the slice-of-life nature of his films, Sircar has managed to strike a balance between commerce and story with his releases, which he believes is important for any director to stay in the business for the long run.

BRIEF

Greaves Finance to offer low-interest loans for electric scooters

Greaves Finance, a non-banking financial subsidiary of Greaves Cotton Ltd has partnered with Bengaluru-based River Mobility Pvt Ltd, a start-up building stylish multi-utility electric scooters. This collaboration aims to provide River customers with access to competitive financing options, including low-interest competitive loans of just 5.99 percent.

Optimus Electronics into telecom equipment

Optimus Electronics is working with Tejas Network as a manufacturing partner for several telecom equipment like 4G base band units, remote radio head, broadband switches and routers from its Noida facility. Optimus with two facilities in Noida, aims to significantly enhance the domestic manufacturing capabilities of telecom equipment.

Wanbury net profit drops

Wanbury, a pharma company, reported a net profit of Rs 1 crore for the Apr-Jun quarter compared to Rs 4.7 crore in the corresponding quarter last year and Rs 8.1 crore in the preceding sequential quarter. Revenue for the quarter stood at Rs 131.1 crore compared to Rs 146.3 crore in the corresponding quarter last year. The company's net profit margin declined to 0.8 percent compared to 3.2 percent in the same quarter last year and 5.8 percent in the preceding quarter.

Zappfresh acquires Bonsaro

New Delhi: Startup Zappfresh, which sells meat through its online platform, has acquired Mumbai-based Bonsaro to expand its business in West India. In a statement on Tuesday, Zappfresh said it has acquired Bonsaro (Majestic Aliments India Pvt Ltd), which specialises in poultry, goat, and seafood online delivery. Zappfresh has taken over the entire operations and business of Bonsaro, including all assets, to expand its presence in the western region. With this acquisition, the company is expecting a revenue of Rs 160 crore in FY 25 with a significant jump in profit. Deepanshu Manchanda, the founder of Zappfresh, said, "By integrating Bonsaro into our portfolio, we are poised to build a pan-India brand that operates in key markets. Mumbai, being a critical market, will contribute significantly to our footprint in the west."

Research paper warns against abandoning inflation target

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) inflation targeting regime has worked well and need not be abandoned in favour of a more discretionary regime that could be risky and counterproductive, a new research paper has said.

The paper titled 'Inflation Targeting in India: A Further Assessment' said the weight of food-price inflation in the CPI inflation basket should be reduced to better reflect the circumstances of Indian households.

"The RBI's inflation targeting regime has worked well. Given this record, radical changes such as broadening its mandate or abandoning the target in favour of a more discretionary regime would be risky and counterproductive," it said.

The paper is authored by economists Barry Eichengreen (University of California, Berkeley) and Poonam Gupta

(NCAER). In contrast, the paper noted that the 4 per cent point target, +/- 2 per cent tolerance band and focus on headline inflation remain broadly appropriate.

"That said, the regime can be tweaked to improve performance," it suggested.

The government and the RBI signed an inflation-targeting agreement in February 2015 and amended the RBI Act in May 2016.

The inflation target was set by the government in consultation with the RBI with the possibility of revisiting it after five years.

Accordingly, the government announced, via the Official Gazette, 4 per cent Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation as the target from August 5, 2016, with an upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent and a lower limit of 2 per cent.

For most part, the paper pointed out that targets set under the inflation-target-

ing agreement have been met; and on almost all counts, it has performed as envisaged.

"It has been only once that inflation exceeded the upper tolerance band of 6 per cent for three consecutive quarters (during January 2022-September 2022)," the paper said.

According to the paper, evidence points to improved outcomes during inflation targeting.

"Inflation is lower and less volatile; inflation expectations are better anchored, and the transmission of monetary policy is more effective," it said.

Recently, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran had pitched for excluding food inflation from the rate setting calls, saying that the monetary policy has no bearing on the prices of food items, which are dictated by supply side pressures.

Finally, contrary to earlier skepticism, the paper argued that it does not ap-

pear that inflation-targeting agreement has made the RBI overly hawkish or reactive to every small deviation in inflation rate from its target of 4 per cent or to every spike in food inflation.

Since September 2016, the RBI has changed the key policy rate 17 times, majority of them during two turbulent years -- in 2019-20 when the policy rate was eased five times by a cumulative 185 basis points in response to a sharp growth slowdown; and in 2022-23 when the policy rate was increased six times by a cumulative 210 basis points in response to accelerated inflation emanating from global shocks.

During the remaining six years, the policy rate was changed only six times, about once every year. Compared to this, the RBI changed its policy rate 24 times in the eight years prior to IT.

-PTI

By
Mahesh Nayak

Markets do not like uncertainty. However, despite the global market being volatile due to concerns over the US recession, global geopolitical challenges or the Japanese economy increasing its interest rates after two decades, the Indian equity market continues to demonstrate remarkable resilience, scaling to its all-time highs.

All thanks to the Indian retail investors who have been pumping billions of dollars into the equity market via the mutual fund industry. On an average, the net SIP (systematic investment plan) inflow into mutual funds is over a billion dollars monthly.

In the first six months of 2024, the mutual fund industry in its various equity categories has seen a net inflow of Rs 1,65,500 crore (Rs 1.65 lakh crore), surpassing the total net inflow for the entire 2023 of Rs 1,61,600 crore (Rs 1.61 lakh crore).

While the flows have been more robust, the performance has been dismal. Nearly two-thirds of equity mutual funds have reported lower returns than their benchmark returns. Yet money comes guzzling into markets. Over the last decades, the mutual fund industry's AUM has jumped sixfold, rising from Rs 10.06 lakh crore in July 2014 to Rs 64.97 lakh crore in July 2024, representing a CAGR growth of 20.5%.

The question then arises: Kya Mutual Fund 'Sahi Hai'? Because when the tide turns, poor-performing funds may even erode capital for their investors.

As an industry, mutual funds have done a fabulous job of inculcating the habit of investing, primarily via SIP. It reminds me of the concept of fill it, shut it and forget it. The experts will take care of the money, and with SIP, it also ensures the power of compounding one's wealth.

Until now, as a piped piper, the mutual fund industry has channelled the sleeping household money that was predominantly invested in FDs and gold into the capital market. But here is where one needs to be cautious, as retail investors are investing disproportionately in riskier products

such as small caps, mid-caps, and thematic and sectoral funds, in hopes of outsized returns.

Around 58% of the money invested in mutual funds flows into small caps, mid-caps, and thematic and sectoral funds. This used to be 38% in 2022. The introduction of numerous new fund offers (NFOs) is contributing to the challenges in the current liquidity-driven bull market, signalling excessive greed.

This situation calls for the market regulator to intervene to protect retail investors from potential losses. The mutual fund industry and its association are trying to squeeze every pound of flesh in this market to garner AUM. Some mutual funds that had stopped subscriptions in a few mid and small-cap categories have reopened, accepting money for fear of missing out on their peers, as the money is still flowing into the mid-and small-cap categories.

Retail investors are blindfolded and are assuming that this rally will last forever. Too much happiness can make one suscep-

tible to the danger of being overconfident, and today, that's the biggest fear.

Mutual funds are a good investment option for retail investors, but it is essential to understand the current market situation and the performance of specific schemes. It is crucial to ensure you're investing in a scheme aligned with your objectives and risk appetite. Look for schemes that have consistently beaten their benchmarks over various market cycles.

While the best option for investors would be to seek guidance from a financial expert, remember that mutual funds involve risks and that returns are not guaranteed. Therefore, it is essential to make informed decisions based on your investment profiles and stay vigilant, more so now than ever.

(The views expressed by the author is personal and does not reflect the views of any organisation or persons.)



New one-pound coins featuring King Charles III and British bees issued by the Royal Mint.

Pic: PTI

IndusInd into MF

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Shares of IndusInd Bank climbed by 2.5% on Tuesday after getting approval from the Reserve Bank on August 19. IndusInd Bank will now form new subsidiary dedicated to asset management and enter into the mutual fund sector. Moreover, the central bank granted permission to the private sector bank to infuse equity into the newly formed subsidiary.

IndusInd International Holdings (IIHL), a company based in Mauritius has investments in many banking and finance companies such as IndusInd Bank. IndusInd International Holdings Ltd is one of the founders of IndusInd Bank and holds a 12.48 percent ownership in the IndusInd bank as of June 30.

It had acquired a 60 percent stake in Invesco Asset Management in March of this year.

Centre prioritising eastern India's export growth, says Pradhan

Kolkata: Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday emphasised the need to enhance exports from eastern India and sought cooperation from the state governments in the region.

He also underscored the government's commitment to ensuring the region benefits from various free trade agreements under the export promotion policy.

In this year's budget, eastern India was highlighted as a priority area for development under the Purvodaya scheme, with matching infrastructure creation being a key focus, Pradhan said on the sidelines of an Exim Conference organised by the CII here.

"We have initiated long-term policy reforms, particularly in the mineral sector, which have already begun benefiting

the eastern states," he said.

"The Centre is making efforts, but state governments must cooperate.

Industrial growth and job opportunities are contingent on a stable environment," he said.

The minister also highlighted the need to diversify beyond the mineral sector, advocating for growth in various sectors like food processing, marine products, and malhusbandry, and especially the IT sector, given the talent and presence of reputed educational institutions in cities such as Kolkata, Jamshedpur, Patna, Ranchi and Bhubaneswar.

Pradhan also stressed that law and order must be a priority to attract industrial development and job creation.

Rs 5.75 crore GST demand

New Delhi: Vaccines maker Panacea Biotech Ltd on Tuesday said it has received a demand of nearly Rs 5.75 crore from GST authority in Mumbai on the sale of its leasehold land and building in Navi Mumbai.

The company has received a demand order dated August 19, 2024, from the office of the Assistant Commissioner of State Tax, Mumbai raising a demand of Rs 5,74,53,146 towards the balance amount of GST, including interest and penalty, on the sale of leasehold land and building in Navi Mumbai, Panacea Biotech said in a regulatory filing.

The order has alleged that the transaction is a sub-lease transaction, it added. The company had earlier deposited an amount of Rs 3,14,17,862 under protest in April 2024 and has also filed a writ petition before the Bombay High Court in this regard, Panacea Biotech said. Based on its assessment, the company said the "demand is not maintainable" and it is taking all necessary steps.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sonia Gandhi, Former President, Congress

"His (Modi) moral duplicity in paying deference to the national flag while pledging allegiance to an organisation that has remained, indifferent to it, is one matter. The rampant adoption of machine-manufactured polyester flags, with raw materials often imported from China and elsewhere, is another."

HMPL emerges lowest bidder for Maharashtra project

New Delhi: Infrastructure company Hazer Multi Projects Ltd (HMPL) on Tuesday said it has emerged as the lowest bidder for a road project worth around Rs 275 crore in Maharashtra.

The project will be executed on engineering, procurement and construction

(EPC) mode over a period of 2.5 years, the company said in an exchange filing.

The company said it won the project of the Maharashtra State Infrastructure Development Corporation (MSIDC) at a bid price of Rs 273.74 crore, excluding GST. The scope of the pro-

ject includes widening and improvement of road stretch from Paldhi Amalner Dondaicha Nandurbar Dhanora to Gujarat State Border Road on EPC mode, it said. HMPL is into building road projects on an engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) basis.

BSE SENSEX	TOP GAINERS	PTI CHANGES
% +3.25	Bajaj Finserv	1602.30
+2.29	IndusInd Bank	1378.50
+2.12	Tech Mahindra	1628.40
+1.57	Bajaj Finance	6722.85
+1.42	Kotak Bank	1806.55
+1.12	Axis Bank	1166.10
+1.03	Sun Pharma	1765.45
+0.84	NTPC	406.30
+0.82	Nestle India	2524.45
+0.82	Asian Paints	3101.65

BSE SENSEX	TOP LOSERS	PTI CHANGES
% -1.37	Bharti Airtel	1449.35
-0.46	ITC	498.85
-0.27	Adani Ports	1492.25
-0.21	JSW Steel	915.55
-0.16	UltraTech Cement	11291.65
-0.10	Tata Motors	1086.75

SII working on Mpxox vaccine

New Delhi: Serum Institute of India on Tuesday said it is currently working to develop a vaccine for Monkeypox, with positive outcomes expected in a year's time.

The World Health Organisation on August 14 declared the Mpxox outbreak a public health emergency of international concern.

The move came after a sudden increase in cases was recorded in parts of Africa.

In India, around 30 Mpxox cases have been detected since 2022. The most recent case in the country was reported in March 2024.

India's sanitaryware faces demand challenges

Mumbai: India's sanitaryware industry is facing demand challenges for the last few quarters, said an official of Cera Sanitaryware speaking to investors and analysts.

"The industry by itself has not been doing too great since quarter three of the last year. It is the industry as such which is facing some kind of demand challenges since Q3," said Deepak Chaudhary, - Vice President, Finance and Investor Relations at Cera Sanitaryware.

The first quarter of the

calendar year was particularly impacted because of elections and the intense heatwave conditions which were prevailing in the country, Chaudhary said.

The impact of the slowness of demand is concerning, it has impacted all regions, all cities or tiers and including the market segments, the official said.

"There is a demand slowness in all the tiers," Vikas Kothari, Chief Financial Officer said. The impact of the slowness of demand is concerning and it has impacted all regions,

cities or tiers including all the market segments.

Amid slowdown, the industry is also getting increasingly formalised with organised and unorganised sectors estimated at Rs 5,000 crore and Rs 4,000 crore for sanitaryware.

"There has been some shift from the unorganized to the organized, like post the coming of GST there was anticipation that there would be movement from the market share from the unorganized to the organized which has happened also," Chaudhary said.

But going forward, a shift from the unorganized sector, particularly those concentrated in the Morbi belt of North Gujarat to the organized sector, is seen though the process is slow. Those in the unorganised sector are facing a lot of challenges he said.

However, despite demand challenges, several domestic and global brands in the sanitaryware segment are entering and expanding in India including Grotto and Asian Granito and Germany's Duravit.

Hema committee report evokes strong reactions

Political storm in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram: The Justice Hema Committee report, which exposed the shocking harassment and sexual exploitation faced by women in the Malayalam film industry, sparked a political storm in Kerala on Tuesday.

While the opposition parties criticised the Left government for its silence and inaction over the past four years, despite receiving the report, the government affirmed its support for the victims.

The Congress-led UDF questioned whether the government had kept the report confidential to shield the accused and alleged the Pinarayi Vijayan government was siding with the 'hunters' rather than the hapless victims.

Coming down heavily on the government and Cultural Affairs Minister Saji Cheriyan, the BJP charged they had failed to take any legal action against the accused despite receiving information about the crimes committed by the them.

However, the government rejected the charges and made it clear that they had already started measures to implement the recommendations and suggestions made by the Committee.

"The government is always with the victims...and with the women community," Saji Cheriyan told reporters here.

Stating that no particular name has been heard in connection with the report, the minister said it was the

High Court and the Information Commission that had decided which portions were to be released.

Cheriyan said the government would discuss all aspects of the report and would take further action in the necessary areas.

"It was Justice Hema who had first said that the report should not have been published because of its confidential nature," the minister said, adding that a proposed cinema conclave, to be organised by the government, would discuss all these issues.

However, the minister's reply didn't go down well with the opposition Congress and BJP, which raised suspicions about whether the government had kept the report confi-



dential so far to protect the accused.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly V D Satheesan alleged the government was trying to protect the privacy of the accused and asked the authorities to register a case based on

the Hema Committee report.

"Sexual exploitation, including assaults under the POCSO Act, had happened. Still, the Cultural Affairs Minister is saying that a film conclave will be held to discuss the issues," Sathe-

san told reporters in Chempazhanthi near here.

Let the people of the state evaluate a cultural affairs minister who speaks about conducting a conclave when such serious offences have been reported, he added.

Senior BJP leader and former union minister V Muraleedharan attacked Cheriyan and said the cultural affairs minister had also become part of the crime by not taking any action over the report so far.

"Saji Cheriyan has no moral right to continue in his position. The Vijayan government has failed to protect the rights of women and children and ensure safe living conditions in the state," he told a press conference here.

1992 Ajmer rapes: Life to 6

Jaipur: A POCSO court has sentenced six accused in the sensational Ajmer sex scandal of the early 1990s to life imprisonment. Judge Ranjan Singh also slapped fines of Rs

The Ajmer sex scandal came to light in 1992. More than 100 girls were victimised by a gang, whose members befriended them and shot their photographs in compro-



5 lakh on each of them.

Nafees Chishti, Naseem alias Tarzan, Salim Chishti, Iqbal Bhati, Sohail Gani and Sayed Zameer Hussain were convicted of being involved in the crime, prosecution counsel Virendra Singh said. Bhati was brought to Ajmer from Delhi in an ambulance.

missing situations, and later raped them.

While 18 people were accused in the case, a separate trial was conducted for these six accused. The other accused have either completed their term or been acquitted by the courts. The girls were aged between 11 and 20 years.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim during the latter's ceremonial reception, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi, on Tuesday.

Pic: PTI

HC to hear as PIL Swamy's plea

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday said BJP leader Subramanian Swamy's plea, seeking directions to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to decide his representation seeking cancellation of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Indian citizenship, be treated a public interest litigation.

At the outset, the court asked Swamy what his legally permissible right was in such a matter. Justice Sanjeev Narula said it could only be a right, if at all it is, to be considered as a public interest and beyond that it cannot consider it. "Mr Swamy I am not able to find any

Rahul Gandhi's citizenship

legally permissible right which can be enforced," the judge said.

To this Swamy, who was arguing in person, said if the court feels that the plea be heard as a PIL, it was within the court's power to send it to the bench dealing with public interest litigations. "It is for the government of India. I am not doing it for my personal benefit," he said.

He said the complaint made by him to the ministry was acknowledged and Rahul Gandhi was called upon to give his response to it. However, since then there

has been no progress or intimation given to the petitioner.

The court, dictating its order, said "For this court to exercise jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution, enforceable constitutional rights must be demonstrated which the court cannot find." It added, "At the highest, the court could see that there could be a public interest involved which is the cause Swamy wishes to espouse in the present petition. In view of the above, the matter be listed before the roster bench dealing with PILs."

The court clarified that it had not expressed any opinion on the merits of the case and said the matter be listed before the roster bench dealing with PILs on September 26. Swamy, in his plea, also sought a direction to the MHA to furnish a status report on the representation filed by him against Gandhi, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha.

Swamy had written a letter to the ministry on "violations" by Gandhi in "voluntarily disclosing" to the British government that he was a citizen of British nationality, amounting to holding a British passport. - PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Gopal Rai, Environment Minister, Delhi

"I believe that with the central government's support, we can build on the foundation laid by the Delhi government and work towards a long-term solution to this crisis of air pollution. I trust that you will take the necessary steps to ensure a cleaner and healthier future for all."

SC sets aside Calcutta HC verdict on adolescent girls

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday set aside an order of the Calcutta High Court in which it acquitted an accused in a sexual assault case and made "objectionable" observations advising adolescent girls to "control sexual urges".

A bench of justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said it has passed several directions for the authorities on dealing cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Justice Oka, who pronounced the verdict on behalf of the bench, said directions have also been issued on how the judgements should be written by the courts.

The top court had on De-

ember 8 last year criticised the verdict and termed as "highly objectionable and completely unwarranted" some observations made by the high court.

The apex court had taken cognisance of some of the observations made by a division bench of the high court and initiated a writ petition on its own, observing that judges are not expected to "preach" while writing judgements.

The West Bengal government had also challenged the October 18, 2023 verdict of the high court in which these "objectionable observations" were made.

In its judgement, the high court had observed that female adolescents should "control sexual urges" as in the "eyes of the society she

is the loser when she gives in to enjoy the sexual pleasure of hardly two minutes".

The high court had made the observations while hearing an appeal by a man who was awarded a 20-year sentence for sexual assault. The high court had acquitted the man. While hearing the matter on January 4, the apex court had observed that certain paragraphs in the high court verdict were "problematic" and writing such judgements was "absolutely wrong".

In its order passed on December 8 last year, the apex court referred to certain observations made by the high court and said, "Prima facie, the said observations are completely in violation of the rights.

AI-enabled CCTV cameras on locomotives, yards

Prayagraj: To address the rising incidents of rail accidents across the country, the Railway Board will install CCTV cameras equipped with Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology on every locomotive and at key yards, according to officials.

In a press briefing at Prayagraj Railway Junction, Railway Board Chairperson and CEO Jaya Verma Sinha said these cameras will help detect any unusual situations. "We are installing CCTV cameras with AI technology on every locomotive and at all significant yards," she said. Regarding railway track safety, Sinha said security agencies will continuously

monitor the tracks during the Kumbh Mela to ensure no antisocial elements damage the tracks. Reviewing preparations for the upcoming Kumbh Mela, Sinha expressed confidence that infrastructure and capacity expansion projects will be completed before the event.

She noted that during the last Kumbh Mela in 2019, around 530 special trains were operated. For the main bathing event in Kumbh 2025, approximately 900 special trains are expected to run. Sinha said over 30 crore pilgrims are anticipated for this Kumbh Mela, and detailed plans are being made for managing the crowd in emergencies. - PTI

Stabbing victim boy cremated

Jaipur: A 15-year-old boy, who was stabbed by a fellow student and died after battling for his life for four days, was cremated in

Udaipur on Tuesday morning amid tight security.

A large number of people joined the funeral procession of Devraj, whose stab-

bing sparked communal violence in Udaipur. Sometime before he breathed his last on Monday, his sister tied a rakhi on his wrist.

WB Governor says people lost faith in present govt

By Sudipto Chowdhury

Kolkata: Terming the alleged rape and murder of a woman doctor in a Kolkata hospital as the "most shameful moment" for society, Governor C V Ananda Bose claimed that West Bengal is in a "state of flux" and the people have "lost faith in the present government".

Referring to a recent rally organised by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to demand justice for the deceased trainee doctor, Bose questioned her stance and alleged that her statements were merely rhetorical.

In an interview with PTI, Bose said, "Bengal is in a state of flux. Students have lost faith in the government, youths are scared and women are in a state of despair. There is a feeling that the government, which is supposed to protect the citizens, is not doing its role."

The postgraduate trainee

Probe against ex-principal

Kolkata: The Kolkata Police on Tuesday began an investigation against RG Kar Medical College and Hospital's former principal Sandip Ghosh for his alleged involvement in "financial irregularities" in the state-run health facility, a senior officer said.

The probe against Ghosh commenced after a four-member SIT was constituted to investigate the alleged financial irregularities at the hospital where the body of a postgraduate trainee doctor was found earlier this month.

The police are likely to summon Ghosh in connection with its investigation, the officer said.

The former principal of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital was also

booked for disclosing the identity of the postgraduate trainee doctor who was allegedly raped and murdered while on duty at the state-run health facility on August 9.

"There are allegations that Ghosh was involved in financial irregularities at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. Our officers will soon issue summons to him for questioning," the officer said.

"Ghosh also disclosed the identity of the deceased woman while speaking to reporters soon after her body was recovered. He will be questioned for that as well," he said.

The cases were lodged at the Tala Police Station, the officer said.

doctor was allegedly raped and murdered while on duty at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital here on August 9.

The healthcare services were severely affected at state-run hospitals across West Bengal as the cease-work agitation by junior doctors to protest against the incident entered the 12th day on Tuesday. They sought justice for the victim and legislation for better security at workplaces.

Bose also said, "Students have lost faith in the police. There is also a growing feeling of disenchantment among the youth, particularly women doctors and paramedics. As far as citizens are concerned, they are all aggrieved that the government does not act when action is called for."

He also alleged that Kolkata Police is "criminalised and politicised", and expressed concern over a "per-

ceived disconnect between the government's actions and the needs of its citizens".

"There is a lack of clarity about the chief minister's position. There was a rally in which the health minister complained to the home minister about the lack of security on campuses. The home minister complained to the CM that action was not taken. "People are not fooled, knowing that the health minister is also the home minister and the CM. This situation resembles Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde — everyone knows who is who. It's absurd that Bengal's chief minister parades around claiming that she seeks justice," Bose told PTI. The term - Jekyll and Hyde - is used to describe someone who has two sides to their personality, one good and one evil, or who is sometimes good and pleasant and sometimes bad or rude.



Wildlife in Melghat Tiger Reserve

No impact of new Akola-Khandwa railway



By Esha Lohia

the Melghat Tiger Reserve.

After the Independence Day 2020 flag-hoisting ceremony, Dharmesh Barai and his friends collected trash from Nerul Creek. They were motivated by the sight of two feet of waste, including thermocol, footwear, discarded lighting, and medical waste.

Dharmesh, who runs the 'Environment Life Foundation, defines its aim as "Every life depends on the environment, and the environment depends on every life".

Development can be in sync with the environment and wildlife as the new railway line proves. After long years of concerns and reviews, the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change's Regional Empowered Committee (REC) has approved the upgrade of the railway alignment between Akola and Khandwa from metre to broad gauge, while skirting

Earlier, the railway line was expected to traverse through the Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR) but did not get wildlife clearance. Melghat is one of the oldest tiger reserves in the country and sprawls across three districts in Maharashtra. It was notified in the early 1980s and is believed to be home to around 60 tigers.

The current metre gauge line was laid in 1959-60 and the operation was halted from January 1, 2017 for gauge conversion. There is a plan to convert the 473 kilometer-long railway line from Akola to Ratlam into a broad gauge and the Akola-Khandwa line is a part of that. Although the work on other sections of the line were ongoing, the Akot-Amlakhurd segment was awaiting wildlife clearance.

While it skirts the Melghat Tiger Reserve, the new alignment comes at a cost to the environment. The line

will pass through the contiguous reserve forest of Buldhana and over 7,000 trees will have to be cut to make way for a railway tunnel which is 30 metres below the ground level. The upgraded railway line will now pass through Akot, Hiwarkhed, Sonala, Jalgaon Jamod, and Usami.

The Melghat Tiger Conservation Plan states that the area is designated as a wildlife corridor that is home to various species such as tigers, leopards, nilgai, and wild boar. Answering the concerns of environmentalists, forest officials state that this project will include wildlife mitigation measures, land reclamation and debris disposal plans to minimise the environmental impact. Jayant Wadkatkar, secretary of Wildlife and Environment Conservation Society, Amravati, joined hands with several other local NGOs to oppose the initial railway plan for its primary concern regarding wildlife accidents and harm

to the flora and fauna of the reserve. He says, "The new railway alignment will benefit around 70 villages. While the concern for wildlife safety still persists, when it comes to the wildlife corridor pass, the comparative destruction and damage is far lesser than what it could have been if the earlier plan existed," says Wadkatkar.

While there are no proper and definite rules and regulations regarding the strictness of mitigation measures by the forest officials, Wadkatkar says: "Once the project is executed, a huge concern is regarding its execution and strict mitigations to be initiated by the forest officials as the corridor pass is an important forest reserve for tigers."

The REC reviewed comments from the Chief Wildlife Warden and recommendations from the Wildlife Institute of India before approving the project with specific wildlife mitigation measures in place. The project,



executed by the South Central Railway, requires the diversion of about 50 hectares of forest land in the Buldhana division. The affected forest area comprises approximately 24 hectares in Madh and 26 hectares in Sawala.

The Railway Board made a strategic decision in June 2022 to avoid expanding through MTR for the line's route because of future expansion

challenges and lack of permissions. Hence, the track alignment was modified. However, the revised route has led to an escalation in costs from the original estimate of Rs 1454 crore in 2014 to over 2000 crore due to factors like land acquisition rules and new construction plans.

The costs notwithstanding, the new route brings cheers to environmentalists and animal lovers.

ISRO shortlists few for SSLV

New Delhi: More than 10 companies and consortia have evinced interest in manufacturing the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), with a few being shortlisted as potential bidders for the transfer of technology, ISRO chairman S Somanath said on Tuesday.

He said the selected industry partner will first develop two SSLVs with assistance from ISRO over a two year period before venturing out on its own to build rockets to place small satellites in low earth orbits.

"More than 100 groups/consortia had come forward and showed interest in transfer of technology for the SSLV," he told reporters on the sidelines of an event organised by the AICTE and Indian Space Association.

Somanath said IN-SPaCE had organised a one-day interaction with industry players to understand issues that they may have related to technology transfer and how to do it, and expectations from ISRO for them.

He said a few companies/consortia have taken the Request for Proposals (RFP) documents for transfer of technology for the SSLV.

The company or a consortium identified for transfer of technology for



the SSLV can continue to build the rocket at ISRO facilities till it develops its own campus for manufacturing the launch vehicles.

After the third development flight of the SSLV on August 16, Somanath announced that the development of the launch vehicle was complete and the rocket was ready to be transferred to the industry for mass production.

"It is not just manufacturing technology that we are transferring. We are also transferring the knowledge on how things are done. They need to come inside ISRO and work with us and learn the techniques. We are teaching them how to build the rocket," he said.

"We will look at various criteria, including manufacturing, facilities and financial strength. There will be a technology transfer fee that they will have to pay," Somanath said.

-PTI

By Gaurav Saini

New Delhi: As the deadline to agree on a new climate finance goal nears, developed nations are pushing to expand the list of countries responsible for contributing funds to help developing countries address climate change, with Switzerland even proposing criteria to broaden the donor base.

Submissions made by some developed countries to the UNFCCC regarding negotiations on the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) -- the new climate finance goal to be finalised in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November -- suggest that wealthy nations might pressure countries with high emissions and high gross national income (GNI) per capita, such as Saudi Arabia, Russia and China, to contribute.

According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, high-income, industrialised nations (referred to as Annex II countries) are responsible for providing finance and technology to help developing countries combat and adapt to climate change. These countries include the

New climate finance goal
Developed countries push to expand contributor base

United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and European Union (EU) member states such as Germany, France and the UK.

Some developed countries, led by the EU and the US, argue that the global economic landscape has changed significantly since 1992.

They suggest that nations which have become wealthier during this period, like China and some Gulf states, should also contribute to the new climate finance goal.

Developing countries view this as an attempt to shift responsibility from

those who have historically benefited from industrialisation and contributed the most to greenhouse gas emissions. They argue that expecting them to contribute, especially when many are still struggling with poverty and inadequate infrastructure amid worsening climate impacts, undermines the principle of equity.

In a submission to the UNFCCC last week, the European Commission said that the "collective goal can only be reached if parties with high GHG emissions and economic capabilities join the effort".

The US said that while current contributors will continue to support developing countries, other nations with the "capacity to support others in pursuing mitigation and adaptation must also be accountable for delivering on the NCQG's support layer".

"Their contributions will also enable a larger quantum for the support layer of the NCQG," the US said, adding that contributing parties could be identified in various ways -- through a "definitional approach, a criteria-based approach, a de facto approach, or otherwise".

"We are open to discussing various options. In no event are we considering a large number of new contributing parties," said the US, the world's second-largest GHG emitter.

Switzerland proposed that in addition to developed countries, parties that are among the "10 largest current emitters and have a purchasing power parity-adjusted gross national income per capita of more than USD 22,000" should also contribute to the new climate finance goal.

This proposal puts the spotlight on countries such as Saudi Arabia, Russia and China.

-PTI

Study looks at how brain 'resets' itself while

New Delhi: While sleep is known to help with forming and storing memories during the day, a new study has found answers to how this continues to happen over one's lifetime without running out of neurons or brain cells.

Researchers found that at certain times during deep sleep, certain parts of the hippocampus -- one of the brain regions involved in learning new things and forming memories -- go silent, allowing those neurons to 'reset'.

"This mechanism could allow the brain to reuse the same resources, the same neurons, for new

learning the next day," said Azahara Oliva, an assistant professor of neurobiology and behaviour at Cornell University, US, and corresponding author of the study published in the journal Science.

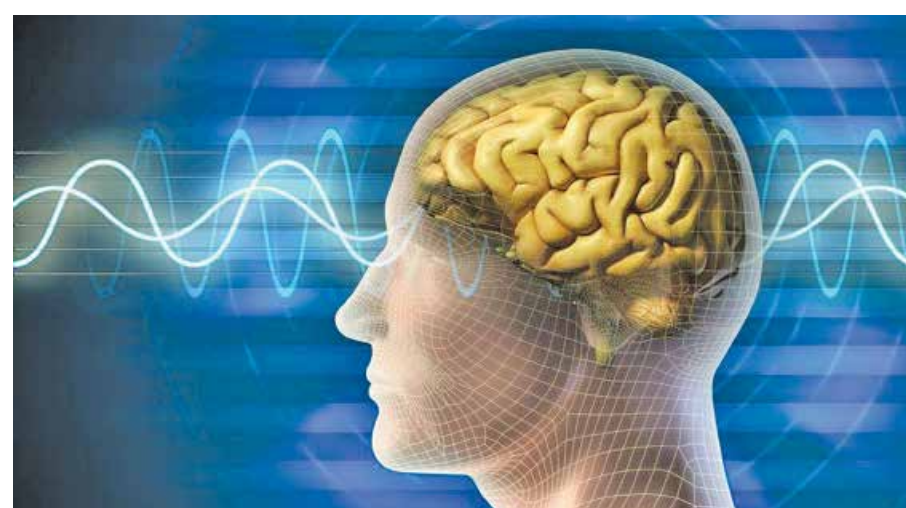
While we sleep, the brain cells go over everything we learn or experience during the day by repeating the patterns that were activated the first time, thereby helping with how memories are stored.

The process is called 'memory consolidation', following which the memories are then stored in a large area in the brain

called the cortex. Both the hippocampus and the cortex play a role in memory, with the hippocampus transferring temporary or 'short-term' information to the cortex to form permanent or 'long-term' memories.

The researchers said that the hippocampus is divided into three regions, two of which are well-known to help form memories related to time and space. The third, they said, is involved in silencing and resetting parts of the hippocampus during sleep, which this study found.

"We realised there are



other hippocampal states that happen during sleep

where everything is silenced. The (two) regions that had been very active

were suddenly quiet. It's a reset of memory, and this state is generated by the (third) region," Oliva said.

For the study, the researchers implanted electrodes into the hippocampi of the brains of mice, which are commonly studied as they are known to bear genetic material similar to humans. This allowed the team to observe the brain's activity during learning and sleep, they said.

The study's results help explain why all animals require sleep, not only to fix memories but also to reset the brain and keep it working during waking hours, the researchers said.

They believe that by tinkering with the pro-

cesses at play during memory consolidation, they now have the tools to boost memory.

The tools could be applied when memory function falters, such as in Alzheimer's disease, in which memory and decision-making are impaired, thereby interfering with one's daily activities, the authors said.

They also said that the evidence could be used to explore means for erasing negative or traumatic memories, which could then help treat conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

-PTI

US intelligence officials report

Iran is to blame for hacks

Washington: US intelligence officials said Monday they were confident that Iran was responsible for the hack of Donald Trump's presidential campaign, casting the cyber intrusion as part of a brazen and broader effort by Tehran to interfere in American politics and potentially shape the outcome of the election.

The assessment from the FBI and other federal agencies was the first time the US government has assigned blame for hacks that have raised anew the threat of foreign election interference. The hacking also underscored how Iran, in addition to more sophisticated adversaries like Russia and China, remains a top concern to US officials tasked with protecting democratic processes. Besides breaching the Trump campaign, officials also believe that Iran tried to hack into the presidential campaign of Kamala Harris.

The hacking and similar activities, federal officials



said, reflect Iran's determination to "complicate the ability of any US administration to pursue a foreign policy at odds" with its own interests. The goal is to sow discord, weaken faith in democratic institutions and influence the outcome of elections that Iran perceives to be "particularly consequential in terms of the impact they could have on its national security interests," officials said.

"We have observed increasingly aggressive Iranian activity during this election cycle, specifically involving influence operations targeting the American public and cyber operations targeting Presidential campaigns," said the statement released by the FBI, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

Iran's mission to the United Nations denied the hacks, saying that Iran had neither the motive nor in-

tervention to interfere with the election, and challenged the US to provide evidence. The statement was released at a time of significant tensions between Washington and Tehran as the US hopes to halt or limit a threatened retaliatory strike on Israel over the assassination of Hamas official Ismail Haniyeh. An Israeli strike last month in southern Beirut killed Hezbollah's top commander, but

while Tehran and Iran-backed Hezbollah have vowed to retaliate, they have not yet launched strikes as diplomatic endeavours and Gaza cease-fire talks continue in Qatar.

The US did not detail how it reached the conclusion that Iran was responsible, nor did it describe the nature of any information that may have been taken from the Trump campaign. But it said the intelligence community

was confident "the Iranians have through social engineering and other efforts sought access to individuals with direct access to the Presidential campaigns of both political parties."

At least three staffers in the Biden-Harris campaign were targeted with phishing emails, but investigators have uncovered no evidence the attempt was successful, The Associated Press reported last week.

"Such activity, including thefts and disclosures, are intended to influence the US election process. It is important to note that this approach is not new. Iran and Russia have employed these tactics not only in the United States during this and prior federal election cycles but also in other countries around the world," the statement said.

The Trump campaign disclosed on Aug. 10 that it had been hacked and said Iranian actors had stolen and distributed sensitive internal documents.

Israel recovers bodies of 6 hostages in Gaza



Jerusalem: The Israeli military said Tuesday that it recovered the bodies of six hostages taken in Hamas' October 7 attack that started the war in Gaza.

The recovery came as the United States, Egypt and Qatar are trying to mediate a cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas that would see the release of scores of hostages held by the militant group.

The military said in a statement that its forces recovered the bodies in an overnight operation in southern Gaza. It identified the hostages as Yagev Buchshtab, Alexander Dancyg, Avraham Munder, Yoram Metzger, Nadav Popplewell and Haim Perry, without saying when or how they died.

Five of the hostages were over 50 years old when they were captured, and three had family members who were released during a week-long cease-fire in November.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised the recovery effort and said "our hearts ache for the terrible loss." "The State of Israel will continue to make every effort to return all of our hostages — both alive and dead," he said in a statement.

Hamas is still believed to

be holding around 110 hostages captured in the October 7 attack. Israeli authorities estimate around a third of them are dead.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is on his ninth visit to the region since the start of the war, said Monday that Netanyahu has accepted a proposal to bridge gaps in the cease-fire talks and called on Hamas to do the same.

Hamas has accused the United States of embracing Israeli demands and trying to impose them on the militant group.

Hamas-led militants burst through Israel's defense on October 7 and rampaged across the south, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage. Over 100 hostages were released in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned in Israel during a weeklong cease-fire last year.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were militants. Air and ground operations have caused widespread destruction and forced the vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million residents to flee their homes.

- AP

Taiwan conducts live-fire missile drills aiming China

Jiupeng (Taiwan): Taiwan's military launched surface-to-air missiles in live-fire drills conducted Tuesday in response to growing military pressure from China.

The exercises took place at the Jiupeng Military Base in a remote area in southern Taiwan. Among

the missiles launched were Taiwan's domestically made Sky Bow III anti-ballistic missiles along with the US-made Patriot PAC II and surface-to-air Standard missiles.

China claims the democratically ruled island of Taiwan as its own territory, to be brought under its con-

trol by force if necessary and ramped up its military threat in recent years.

Beijing in particular dislikes Taiwan's new President Lai Ching-te, who took office earlier this year and whom Beijing has called a separatist.

Taipei has boosted its deterrence capabilities in re-

sponse. Missiles, both domestically built and US-made, are key to its defence strategy.

Defence Ministry spokesperson Sun Li-fang said all the missiles launched Tuesday hit their targets. "This shows our training is very strict and solid," he said.

- AP

Students in UK organise protests

London: A UK-based Indian students' group organised a protest in Scotland and submitted a memorandum to the Indian mission in Edinburgh demanding urgent steps to address gender-based violence in the wake of the rape and murder case of a medic in Kolkata.

The Students' Federation of India-United Kingdom (SFI-UK) held a peaceful demonstration outside In-

dia's Consulate in Edinburgh on Monday and a delegation submitted their memo to the Acting Consul General of India, strongly condemning the brutal rape and murder of the on-duty female doctor at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. The group is planning further protests, including a gathering in Liverpool on Wednesday, to continue to highlight their demand for justice.

- AP

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Hillary Clinton, Former Secretary of States, US

"I know her heart and her integrity. We both got our start as young lawyers helping children who were abused or neglected. Those kids stay with you. Kamala carries with her the hopes of every child she protected, every family she helped, every community she served."

Greek authorities detain migrants

Athens: Authorities on the southern Greek island of Crete detained 76 migrants early Tuesday after they arrived on three boats as smugglers seek new routes in the region to evade coast guard patrols.

The migrants, from Syria, Egypt, Sudan, and Bangladesh, included six children and arrived before dawn on the tiny island of Gavdos, near Crete's southern coast, local officials said. Usually, they are detained for identification and processing.



South Korean army soldiers conduct an anti-terror drill as a part of the Uchi Freedom Shield military exercise between the U.S. and South Korea in Seoul, South Korea on Tuesday. Pic: PTI

Divers resume search for 6 missing

Porticello (Sicily): Police divers resumed searching Tuesday for six people believed trapped in the hull of a superyacht that sank in a storm off Sicily, including a British tech magnate recently acquitted of fraud

charges, his lawyer and a key defense witness at trial.

The resting place of the luxury sailboat, off Porticello, is some 50 meters (164 feet) underwater — a depth that requires special pre-

cautions: Rescue crews said they were working in 12-minute shifts, a measure that slowed down their work to reach the cramped inside of the wreck.

The Bayesian, a 56-meter British-flagged luxury

yacht, was moored about a kilometer off Porticello when a storm rolled in before 4 am Monday. Civil protection officials said they believed the ship was struck by a tornado over the water, known as a waterspout.

At 99, woman faces conviction for Nazi concentration camp

Berlin: A German court on Tuesday rejected an appeal by a 99-year-old woman who was convicted of being an accessory to more than 10,000 murders for her role as a secretary to the SS commander of the Nazis' Stutthof concentration camp during World War II.

The Federal Court of Justice upheld the conviction of Irmgard Furchner, who was given a two-year suspended sentence in December 2022 by a state court in Itzehoe in northern Germany.

She was accused of being part of the apparatus that helped the camp near Danzig, now the Polish city of Gdansk, function. She was convicted of being an accessory to murder in 10,505 cases and an accessory to

attempted murder in five cases.

At a federal court hearing in Leipzig last month, Furchner's lawyers cast doubt on whether she really was an accessory to crimes committed by the commander and other senior camp officials, and on whether she had truly been aware of what was going on at Stutthof.

The Itzehoe court said that judges were convinced that Furchner "knew and, through her work as a stenographer in the commandant's office of the Stutthof concentration camp from June 1, 1943, to April 1, 1945, deliberately supported the fact that 10,505 prisoners were cruelly killed by gasings, by hostile conditions

in the camp," by transportation to the Auschwitz death camp and by being sent on death marches at the end of the war. Prosecutors said during the original proceedings that Furchner's trial may be the last of its kind. However, a special federal prosecutors' office in Ludwigsburg tasked with investigating Nazi-era war crimes says three more cases are pending with prosecutors or courts in various parts of Germany. With any suspects now at a very advanced age, questions increasingly arise over suspects' fitness to stand trial.

Germany's main Jewish leader welcomed the ruling. "For Holocaust survivors, it is enormously important for

a late form of justice to be attempted," Josef Schuster, the head of the Central Council of Jews, said in statement. "The legal system sent an important message today: even nearly 80 years after the Holocaust, no line can be drawn under Nazi crimes," he added.

The Furchner case is one of several in recent years that built on a precedent established in 2011 with the conviction of former Ohio autoworker John Demjanjuk as an accessory to murder on allegations that he served as a guard at the Sobibor death camp. Demjanjuk, who denied the allegations, died before his appeal could be heard.

German courts previously required prosecutors to

justify charges by presenting evidence of a former guard's participation in a specific killing, often a near-impossible task.

However, prosecutors successfully argued during Demjanjuk's trial in Munich that helping a camp function was enough to convict someone as an accessory to murders committed there. A federal court subsequently upheld the 2015 conviction of former Auschwitz guard Oskar Groening on the same reasoning.

Furchner was tried in juvenile court because she was 18 and 19 at the time of the alleged crimes, and the court couldn't establish beyond a doubt her "maturity of mind" then.

- AP

BNP asks India to extradite Hasina

Dhaka: Bangladesh Nationalist Party's Secretary-General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on Tuesday asked India to extradite deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina to face trial as he accused her of plotting to thwart the country's revolution.

Hasina, 76, resigned and fled to India on August 5 following massive protests by students and others against her government over a controversial quota system in government jobs.

"It is our call to you that you should hand her over to the government of Bangladesh in a legal way. The people of this country have given the decision for her trial. Let her face that trial," Fakhrul was quoted as saying by the Daily Star newspaper.

Khaleda to get bank accounts after 17 years

Dhaka: Tax authorities in Bangladesh have decided to unfreeze the bank accounts of Bangladesh Nationalist Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia, 17 years after they were blocked.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) on Monday instructed banks to unfreeze the accounts of BNP Chairperson Zia, the Daily Star newspaper reported.

In August 2007, the NBR's Central Intelligence Cell directed banks to freeze the accounts of the BNP Chairperson, who has been elected Bangladesh's prime minister twice since 1990. The decision was based on a recommendation of a panel formed during the then Army-backed caretaker government, said a senior official of the NBR.

Since then, her accounts have remained blocked. The

BNP has on several occasions demanded that they be unfrozen. Later, she was allowed to withdraw a certain amount of money every month from Rupali Bank's Shaheed Moynul Road branch of Dhaka Cantonment for running regular expenses. The then caretaker government also blocked Sheikh Hasina's bank accounts but they were unfrozen after she became prime minister.

The latest move comes after a mass uprising toppled Hasina, a long-time rival of Khaleda, on August 5, ending the Bangladesh Awami League's 15-year rule. An interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was sworn in on August 8. Zia, 79, was released from jail after Hasina, 76, fled to India on August 5.

- PTI

EDITORIAL

A Chief Minister Under Siege

Mamata Banerjee, the indomitable Chief Minister of West Bengal, has had a long record of emerging unscathed through political fire. Her tenacity in dismantling the 35-year Left Front hegemony, which marked her ascension to power in 2011, was a watershed moment in Indian politics. Despite resoundingly defeating the ruling BJP in the Lok Sabha election, Banerjee's leadership stands at a crossroads today.

For years, she has vociferously opposed the involvement of central investigative agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate, viewing them as instruments of harassment wielded by the BJP-led central government.

Mamata Banerjee's recent announcement that she would welcome a CBI probe into the brutal rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College marks a stark departure from her defiant stance. This uncharacteristic concession—coming after years of railing against central intervention—raises questions about her grip on power and the integrity of her administration. For the first time since taking office, Banerjee has implicitly acknowledged the limitations of the state police, an institution long under her iron grip. This reluctant admission is a telling indicator of the growing cracks within her governance. Her tenure has been marred by a series of controversies that have gradually eroded her image as a leader of the people. The 2013 Saradha chit fund scam exposed the murky nexus between politicians and fraudulent financial schemes, with several TMC leaders allegedly implicated. The scandal not only shook the state's political establishment but also shattered the trust of thousands of ordinary Bengalis who had invested their life savings in the hope of better returns. The Narada sting operation (published on a private website in 2016) further dented Banerjee's credibility. The footage of senior TMC leaders accepting bribes was a stark reminder of the corruption that continues to plague West Bengal's political landscape.

The state has witnessed a spate of political violence, often pitting TMC cadres against opposition workers, particularly from the BJP notably during the 2021 assembly elections and its aftermath, which saw widespread voter intimidation and booth capturing. Under Banerjee's leadership, West Bengal's economy has stagnated, with the State's industrial sector struggling to attract investment. The much-publicized Tata Nano debacle in Singur, where Banerjee led a successful campaign to oust the automaker, remains a symbol of missed opportunities for industrial growth. While Banerjee's focus on social welfare schemes has garnered her substantial support among the rural poor, it has come at the cost of long-term economic planning. The state's education and healthcare sectors, once the pride of Bengal, are now in decline with appointments often based on loyalty rather than merit. As West Bengal navigates these turbulent waters, the cracks in Banerjee's once formidable edifice are widening, and the stakes have never been higher.

By
Abhijit Mulye

Maharashtra has made significant strides in implementing women-centric policies, with a focus on education, health, safety, and economic empowerment. Due credit is given to Sharad Pawar for setting Maharashtra on the path of women's empowerment. It was under his leadership that the state administration rolled out the first Women Policy in 1994, a landmark initiative that laid the groundwork for similar policies in the future. The state administration has released three more women's

Maharashtra's evolution in women-centric policies, starting with Sharad Pawar's 1994 initiative, now aims at gender equality. Despite Eknath Shinde's new schemes, high crime rates against women, ineffective political representation, and gaps in policy application remain significant barriers.

PUBLIC INTEREST

Maharashtra's Women Policies: Progress Amidst Persistent Challenges

policies since then, with the latest one introduced earlier this year.

Maharashtra's fourth and latest women's policy is aimed at advancing gender equality. Included in this policy is a notable new mandate requiring mothers' names to be prioritised on official documents. The policy focuses on eight key areas: women's health, education, and skill-building opportunities; combating gender-based violence; economic opportunities; infrastructure; political participation; climate change adaptation; and a specialised sports policy for women.

Apart from this policy, the present government under Eknath Shinde has rolled out several ambitious schemes aimed at promoting gender inclusiveness. The latest of these, the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, specifically targets the financial empowerment of women. Under the scheme, women between the ages of 21 and 65 will receive financial assistance amounting to Rs 1500 every month. Single, unmarried women, single mothers, destitute, divorced, and widowed women are expected to be the beneficiaries of the scheme, enabling them to live with dignity and independence.

The present government has also rolled out other major schemes aimed at improving the lives of women in Maharashtra. These include a 50% concession in travel fares for women of all ages on state transport corporation buses. The Mukhyamantri Annapoorna Yojana scheme promises to provide three free cooking gas cylinders to women every year. The Lek Ladki Yojana offers total assistance of Rs1,01,000/- to every girl child born in the state at five different intervals, a scheme aimed not only at financial empowerment but also at ensuring that the girls don't drop out of school and don't leave their education halfway.

However, despite these well-intentioned schemes, the state of women in Maharashtra remains a cause for concern. According to the latest National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) report, the state ranks only next to Uttar Pradesh (UP) in terms of the number of crimes



against women. This alarming statistic indicates an increasing perception that the state is becoming increasingly unsafe for women. Several challenges must be tackled and issues addressed to ensure the effective implementation of the schemes and achieve maximum impact.

Maharashtra is also one of the few states in India that have enacted laws to ensure equal representation of women in the elected wing of city governments and as presidents of councils. However, despite this equal representation, women political leaders are often not sufficiently empowered and enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Thus, they cannot respond fully to the needs of local governance. Women in such leadership positions also face discrimination and bias when it comes to decision-making, often because of their lack of experience in local politics, compounded by inadequate technical and administrative knowledge. This leads to decisions being taken by a selected, dominant few. Thus, the intent of the law to empower women in local governance is not fulfilled. This problem is intersectional and often affects women at all levels, both at the decision-making level and those in administrative positions implementing programmes and policies.

At the community level, women's representation is also visible through self-help groups (SHGs), which are predominantly composed of women from

low-income and marginalised communities. Maharashtra is one of the few states that has a strong SHG network. However, when it comes to empowering them with livelihood opportunities, there is inequitable treatment. Women's SHGs face biases in being awarded formal contracts and other livelihood opportunities, preventing these women from developing their collective agency and fully participating in the economic life of their communities.

At the household level, gender dynamics continue to pose challenges, particularly in decision-making related to access to sanitation. Men often dominate these decisions, with insufficient involvement from women, leading to outcomes that do not adequately address women's needs. As a result, women and girls are forced to use shared toilet facilities, which is detrimental to their menstrual hygiene management (MHM) needs and poses a risk to their overall health and well-being.

Despite these well-intended policies, the gap between policy formulation and effective implementation remains a major challenge. It is now upon the well-rooted political parties to address the issue of these gaps between policies and implementation, ensuring that the ambitious goals set out in these policies are translated into tangible outcomes. The state would need visionary leadership to see this happen.

GLOBAL WATCH

An Elusive Peace in Gaza: The Limits of Diplomacy

As Israel's war in Gaza grinds on, the prospect of US-backed talks to end the conflict remain fraught with challenges. The Biden administration, in its bid to curb the humanitarian disaster and limit regional destabilization, is spearheading a diplomatic effort that recalls previous attempts at resolving the seemingly intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Even as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived to promote a U.S.-backed cease-fire proposal in Gaza, which he described as potentially "a last-ditch chance" to restore calm to the Middle East, Hamas, the militant group governing Gaza, claimed responsibility for a bombing that shook Tel Aviv on August 18, reported the Washington Post.

Al Jazeera quoted Blinken as describing ongoing negotiations as "maybe the last" chance to secure Israeli captives' release and a Gaza ceasefire.

Hamas has put forward a series of demands that reflect its long-standing position: an immediate cessation of hostilities, the lifting of the Israeli blockade, and the release of Palestinian prisoners. In exchange, Hamas offers little more than a temporary ceasefire, a tactical pause in a war it views as part of a broader struggle for Palestinian liberation.



While the US-backed talks offer a glimmer of hope, history counsels caution. The conflict's underlying drivers—territorial disputes, national identity, and regional power struggles—are as entrenched as ever. Without a fundamental shift in the positions of Israel and Hamas, and a broader regional alignment towards peace, the current negotiations will join the long list of failed attempts to bring lasting peace.

These proposals are hardly new. Similar demands were made during the 2014 Gaza conflict, the 2008-2009 Gaza War, and the 2006 conflict sparked by Hamas's capture of an Israeli soldier. Each time, the underlying issues—Hamas's refusal to recognize Israel, its commitment to armed resistance, and Israel's insistence on disarmament—have rendered negotiations a stopgap rather than a solution.

History offers a sobering perspective on the prospects for success in the current talks. The Oslo Accords of the 1990s, hailed as a breakthrough, ultimately faltered due to mutual mistrust, political assassination (that of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin) and the collapse of subsequent agreements. The Camp David Summit in 2000, another high-profile attempt at peace, ended in failure and gave way to the Second Intifada, a period of intense violence

that further entrenched divisions.

More recently, the 2014 Cairo talks, held under the auspices of the US and Egypt, secured a temporary truce but failed to address the root causes of the conflict. The cyclical nature of these negotiations—brief periods of calm punctuated by outbreaks of violence—suggests that without a fundamental shift in the positions of the key actors, the current talks are unlikely to produce a lasting resolution. The current US-backed initiative faces formidable obstacles. Israel, under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, remains adamant about the need to dismantle Hamas's military capabilities, while Hamas continues to view armed resistance as its raison d'être. The broader regional context, with Iran and Hezbollah poised to influence the outcome, further complicates the picture.

Then, there is the internal dynamics within the Palestinian territories, where Hamas's rule in Gaza is contested by the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, to be considered. In this environment, the prospects for a breakthrough seem slim. The Biden administration, while committed to diplomacy, may find that its efforts are constrained by the same factors that have thwarted past peace initiatives.

STATES WATCH

Wayanad's Wounds: can the region rebuild after the July landslides?



Nestled in the Western Ghats, Wayanad was once a jewel in Kerala's crown, its misty hills and verdant valleys a paradise for tourists and locals alike. But the region now bears deep scars, both physical and psychological, after the devastating landslides of 30 July which has claimed nearly 250 lives, displaced thousands and rendered nearly 60% of the district's arable land rendered unusable.

Triggerred by relentless monsoon rains, these landslides have uprooted entire communities and worse, left a Damocles' Sword hanging over the future of tourism in the district. As the dust settles, a pressing question looms: Can Wayanad rebuild?

The immediate impact on agriculture, Wayanad's economic backbone, has been catastrophic. Once a thriving producer of coffee, spices, and rice, the region now faces a bleak harvest, with the soil in many areas washed away or buried under debris. The loss of topsoil, compounded by the destruction of irrigation channels, spells long-term trouble for farmers already grappling with fluctuating market prices and the after-effects of climate change.

The region's tourism industry, another pillar of the local economy, has ground to a halt. The picturesque landscapes that drew visitors have been disfigured, and the perception of Wayanad as a disaster-prone area

is likely to deter tourists for years to come.

The government, both at the state and central levels, has pledged to rebuild Wayanad, with promises of financial aid and infrastructure projects. However, the task at hand is daunting. The region's topography makes large-scale reconstruction difficult and expensive. Deforestation, unregulated construction, and quarrying have long been issues in Wayanad, as in much of the Western Ghats.

KERALA

The environmental degradation has weakened the natural barriers that once protected the region from such calamities. Any reconstruction efforts must, therefore, be accompanied by stringent environmental regulations and sustainable development practices.

Central to this debate is the Gadgil Committee report, which has long advocated for stricter regulations on development in ecologically sensitive areas. The report's recommendations, aimed at limiting construction and infrastructure in high-risk zones, have been a point of contention. The subsequent Kasturirangan Committee was tasked with evaluating these proposals but faced criticism for diluting the original recommendations. Enforcing such measures in a region

where livelihoods are so closely tied to the land will require political will and public cooperation—both of which are often in short supply.

Kerala is no stranger to rebuilding after disasters. The state's response to the devastating floods of 2018 offers some hope. Then, the government, aided by NGOs and international organizations, had implemented a series of successful rehabilitation programs that included rebuilding homes, restoring agriculture, and improving disaster preparedness.

The lessons learned from that experience could be invaluable in Wayanad's recovery. That said, the ecological fragility of the Western Ghats adds a layer of complexity that was absent in the lowland areas affected by the floods in 2018. While the Army's and the State government's response in co-ordinating the rescue effort has been exemplary, the Kerala government has received hard knocks for not doing enough on climate mitigation and adaptation measures, especially in its dismissal of the Gadgil report.

For Wayanad to rebuild, it will need more than just funds and infrastructure. There is an urgent need for better disaster preparedness. Early warning systems, community-based disaster management, and stricter land-use planning could mitigate the impact of future calamities.



KALEIDOSCOPE

1. A man pushes a loaded cart through a waterlogged road after heavy rainfall, in New Delhi on Tuesday.
2. Ram Mandir float during the India Day Parade organised by Federation of Indian Associations (FIA), in New York on Sunday.
3. A plane passes by the supermoon over Copenhagen on Monday.
4. Protesters march to the Democratic National Convention after a rally at Union Park on Monday.
5. Vehicles stuck in a traffic jam on Delhi-Gurugram Expressway after heavy rains, at Rajiv Chowk, in Gurugram on Tuesday.



All Picture PTI AP



THE BIG FACE-OFF

PART - 2

Donald Trump and Kamala Harris offer worlds-apart contrasts on top issues in presidential race



Vice President Kamala Harris has replaced President Joe Biden atop the presidential ticket, but his “finish the job” campaign mantra can still largely apply to her top policy goals. She’s promising to continue a lot of what Biden was doing during the past four years if she’s elected to four of her own. Former President Donald Trump, for his part, is itching to get back to the White House and accomplish what he didn’t during his first term. On nearly every issue, the choices — if the winner gets his or her way — are sharply defined.

- AP

The former president has sought to distance himself from “Project 2025,” despite his close ties to many of its key architects. He has nonetheless vowed an overhaul of the federal bureaucracy, which he has long blamed for blocking his first term agenda, saying: “I will totally obliterate the deep state.” The former president plans to reissue the Schedule F order stripping civil service protections. He says he’d then move to fire “rogue bureaucrats,” including those who “weaponized our justice system,” and the “warmongers and America-Last globalists in the Deep State, the Pentagon, the State Department, and the national security industrial complex.”

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Like Biden, Harris has campaigned hard against “Project 2025,” a plan authored by leading conservatives to move as swiftly as possible to dramatically remake the federal government and push it to the right if Trump wins back the White House. She is also part of an administration that is already taking steps to make it harder for any mass firings of civil servants to occur. In April, the Office of Personnel Management issued a new rule that would ban federal workers from being reclassified as political appointees or other at-will employees, thus making them easier to dismiss.

The former president promises to mount the largest domestic deportation in U.S. history — an operation that could involve detention camps and the National Guard. He’d bring back policies he put in place during his first term, like the Remain in Mexico program and Title 42, which placed curbs on migrants on public health grounds. And he’d revive and expand the travel ban that originally targeted citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries. After the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel, he pledged new “ideological screening” for immigrants to bar “dangerous lunatics, haters, bigots, and maniacs.” He’d also try to deport people who are in the U.S. legally but harbor “jihadist sympathies.” He’d seek to end birthright citizenship for people born in the U.S. whose parents are both in the country illegally.

IMMIGRATION

Attempting to defuse a GOP line of political attack, the vice president has talked up her experience as California attorney general, saying she walked drug smuggler tunnels and successfully prosecuted gangs that moved narcotics and people across the border. Early in his term, Biden made Harris his administration’s point person on the root causes of migration. Trump and top Republicans now blame Harris for a situation at the U.S.-Mexico border that they say is out of control due to policies that were too lenient. Harris has attempted to counter that by arguing that a bipartisan Senate compromise that would have included tougher asylum standards and hiring more border agents, immigration judges and asylum officers was poised to clear Congress before Trump came out in opposition to it.

The former president has expressed support for Israel’s efforts to “destroy” Hamas, but he’s also been critical of some of Israel’s tactics. He says the country must finish the job quickly and get back to peace. He has called for more aggressive responses to pro-Palestinian protests at college campuses and applauded police efforts to clear encampments. Trump also proposes to revoke the student visas of those who espouse antisemitic or anti-American views.

ISRAEL/GAZA

Harris says Israel has a right to defend itself, and she’s repeatedly decried Hamas as a terrorist organization. But the vice president might also have helped defuse some backlash from progressives by being more vocal about the need to better protect civilians during fighting in Gaza, where the civilian death toll has now exceeded 40,000. Like Biden, Harris supports a proposed hostage for extended cease-fire deal that aims to bring all remaining hostages and Israeli dead home. Biden and Harris say the deal could lead to a permanent end to the grinding nine-month war and they have endorsed a two-state solution, which would have Israel existing alongside an independent Palestinian state.

To be continued...

Sports life is beautiful: Manu

Chennai: Crisscrossing the country since returning from Paris with two historic Olympic medals, ace shooter Manu Bhaker was in the southern metropolis on Tuesday, exhorting students to try making a career out of sports as it offers "a beautiful life".

Manu, 22, scripted history in Paris by becoming the first Indian athlete post Independence to win two medals in a single edition of the Olympics, more than making up for her forgettable games debut in Tokyo three years ago.

"My journey, coming from

the Tokyo Olympics, it was very difficult for me to be confident again. I was world number two, but I did not do good in it," a garlanded Manu said after being felicitated by the Velammal Nexus School here.

"I know the taste of losing and then winning. It's the beauty of sports. One competition you lose, and you can win the other. But, it would only happen if you put in hard work."

Urging young students to take up sports as career options, Manu emphasised on "dreaming big" and "hard work".

"To achieve the goal, we must put in a lot of hard work and effort. It doesn't always start with aiming for something big, you also have to work to achieve it."

"If you can dream big, you can achieve big. So, always start by dreaming big."

"I always tell myself that no matter if I win or lose in any competition, I'll always be very confident and hold myself high and together, and be very confident."

"We have many career options. You don't have to become a doctor or an engineer. Sports life is a beautiful life. From financial support to

any kind of it, you get everything in sports," she asserted.

Manu, who won a bronze each in the women's 10m air pistol and 10m air pistol mixed team event -- where she had teamed with Sarabjot Singh -- weighed in on the role of her parents in inspiring her.

"My inspiration came from my mother. She made me the way I am today. She told me to take inspiration, but not to become like anyone else. Without parents' support, a child cannot do much," Manu said.

"My shooting career and

journey started at my school. In any sporting career, the beginning happens first from home, and then from school. All the parents and teachers play a very significant role in what you become and what you do with your life."

In her career so far, Manu has won innumerable medals in top competitions across the world.

Reflecting on her journey, the champion shooter said she has learnt a lot in the last few years and urged the youngsters to never shy away from learning new things.



Paris Olympic bronze medalist Manu Bhaker during a felicitation event, in Chennai, Tuesday.

(PTI Photo)

"I have had eight and a half years in my shooting career. I have travelled almost half of the world. I have seen different kinds of people and cultures, their backgrounds and struggles, and also known their journeys."

"We should never be ashamed of where we come from -- the cultural background. You should carry it with pride, and you should

be proud of yourself, how far you have come, and you have a long way to go."

"I never knew English, how to talk to people, and many other things I never knew. But, I taught myself."

"People helped me to learn different things. You can always approach a teacher or your parents to learn something new. You can always ask somebody to

teach you."

Manu also asked the students to not give up after facing setbacks.

"Do not give up on any small setbacks that you face. If you do not win a competition or do not perform well in an exam, do not give up, but hold yourself together, get back up and keep going on," she signed off.

- PTI



Draw for Praggnanandhaa

Saint Louis (USA): Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh held reigning world champion Ding Liren of China to a draw in a highly anticipated contest in the first round of the Sinquefeld Cup chess tournament here.

The clash resembled more of a shadow boxing match than a genuine contest, as both Gukesh, the World Championship challenger, and Liren avoided revealing their true preparations for their upcoming World Championship battle

later this year.

The Italian opening met with some usual response and Liren's attempt to complicate matters through a king side attack met with a cold-water treatment.

In the end, the Chinese decided to end the game through perpetual checks after sacrificing a Bishop and a rook.

After a rather disappointing show in the Saint Louis rapid and blitz tournament where he finished last, Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa made some amendments taking a draw with Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan in his opening game.

There was hardly any recovery time for Praggnanandhaa but it seems that the young gun has moved on from the last event.

Praggnanandhaa faced the Petroff defense from Abdusattorov and could do little as the queens got traded in the early middle game. The remainder was a position wherein neither players could push for more and drew the game in just 36 moves.

Alireza Firouzja of France continued from where he left in the Saint Louis Rapid and blitz tournament and defeated American Fabiano Caruana in what was an important contest

for the Grand Chess tour ranking.

Leading over Caruana after a fantastic show that netted him the winner's trophy in the rapid and blitz that ended just a couple of days back, Firouzja is now a firm favourite to win the crown from Caruana in the overall rankings on the tour that had five tournaments this year.

There are eight more rounds to come in the ten player double round robin tournament that has a total prize pool of USD 350000 apart from the Grand Chess tour bonus prize fund of USD 175000.w

Satya Prakash named chef de mission

New Delhi: Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) vice president Satya Prakash Sangwan was on Tuesday appointed as the chef de mission of the Indian contingent at the upcoming Paris Paralympics.

Sangwan brings with him over a decade of dedicated service and experience within the Paralympic movement.

As the CDM, he will lead India's largest-ever contingent of 84 para-athletes competing across 12 sports disciplines.

Nagal to feature in Mumbai TPL

Mumbai: Ace Indian player Sumit Nagal and France's Hugo Gaston will be the main attractions in the men's category of the sixth Tennis Premier League to be held here from December 3-8.

Poland's Magda Linette, who is ranked 41st in the world, and Armenia's world No 52 Elina Avanesyan, will headline the women's category in the tournament which will be held at the Cricket Club of India.

The tournament will be played in a 25-point format in which each franchise will play a total of five matches to make the semifinals.

The matches between two franchises will include men's singles, women's singles, mixed doubles and men's doubles as there will be a total of 100 points at stake with each category carrying 25 points.



"Each team will play a total of 500 points (100 points x 5 matches) at the league stage and the top four teams in the points table to qualify for the semifinals," the organisers said in a release on Tuesday.

A total of seven franchises, PBG Pune Jaguars, Bengal Wizards, Punjab Patriots, Hyderabad Strikers, Gujarat Panthers, Mumbai Leon Army and defending champions Bengaluru SG Pipers will vie for top honours.

In order to discover and monitor young players, the organisers said TPL has

tied up with Gujarat State Tennis Association (GSTA), Delhi Lawn Tennis Association (DLTA) and Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association (MSLTA) for conducting district ranking tournaments apart from introducing their own mobile app.

"Over 100 academies have been affiliated with TPL app from various regions of India. It connects the tennis community across India and allows them to compete with each other and helps the tennis players to track their progress," it added.

Punjab FC signs Argentine midfielder Ezequiel Vidal

Mohali: Indian Super League club Punjab FC on Tuesday announced the signing of Argentine midfielder Norberto Ezequiel Vidal as the fifth foreign signing for the 2024-25 season.

The Argentine player last featured for Indonesian top-flight side Persija Tangerang.

The 29-year-old was born in Bahia Blanca in Argentina and primarily plays as an attacking midfielder or a winger.

He started his professional career in 2011 with Club Olimpo in his hometown. He spent eight years with the club and appeared 45 times, scoring on three occasions. He was loaned out to

Atletico Independiente in Argentina, Delfin SC in Ecuador and Atletico Juventud in Uruguay.

In 2019, he signed for Argentine Primera B side San Martin SJ and in the following year represented Atletico Alvarado, scoring five times in 37 appearances.

He had a short stint with Independiente Rivadavia before signing for Indonesian side Persija Tangerang in 2022. He played for two seasons in the club and scored 17 goals in 60 appearances.

Speaking about the signing, technical director of Punjab FC, Nikolaos Topoliatis said, "He is an exciting player who will add more speed and creativity to our midfield."

Ashmita, Malvika out of Japan Open badminton

Yokohama (Japan): Indian shuttlers Ashmita Chaliha and Malvika Bansod bowed out with opening-round losses in the women's singles competition at the Japan Open here on Tuesday.

While Ashmita lost 16-21 12-21 to top seed Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei, Malvika was shown the door by Ukraine Polina Buhrova 21-23 19-21.

Later, Aakarshi Kashyap encountered the same fate as her compatriots as she also crashed out in the opening round of the women's singles competition of the BWF World Tour Super 750 event.

Aakarshi lost 13-21 12-21



against Korea's Kim Ga Eun.

In mixed doubles, the Indian pair of Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath also made a first-round exit, going down to the Indonesian

combination of Rehan Nafual Kusharjanto and Lisa Ayu Kusumawati 10-21 18-21.

None of the Indian shuttlers, who competed in the recent Paris Olympics, are playing in this event.

Biopic on Yuvraj Singh announced



Mumbai: An upcoming biographical movie will chronicle the inspiring journey of former Indian cricketer Yuvraj Singh, the makers announced Tuesday.

The yet-to-be-titled biopic will be produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series and co-produced by Ravi Bhagchandka, known for "Sachin: A Billion Dreams" and the upcoming Aamir Khan-starrer "Sitaare Zameen Par".

The film is touted as a "grand celebration of Singh's unparalleled journey and contributions to cricket, capturing the essence of his career, unforgettable six sixes in the 2007 T20 World Cup, his courageous off-field battles and his subsequent return to cricket in

said. Singh, who began his career at the age of 13, said he is hoping his life story will inspire people to overcome challenges.

"I'm deeply honoured that my story will be showcased to millions of my fans across the globe by Bhushan and Ravi. Cricket has been my greatest love and source of strength through all the highs and lows. I hope this film inspires others to overcome their own challenges and pursue their dreams with unwavering passion," the former India all-rounder said.

Kumar, known for backing blockbuster films such as "Drishyam 2", "Animal", "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2", "Ka-

bir Singh" and "Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior", said he is excited to bring out the inspiring journey of Singh on the big screen.

"Yuvraj Singh's life is a compelling narrative of resilience, triumph, and passion. His journey from a promising cricketer to a cricketing hero, and then to a hero in real life, is truly inspiring."

"I'm thrilled to bring a story that needs to be told and heard through the big screen and to celebrate his extraordinary achievements," he said.

The makers are yet to announce the key details about the film, including the director and cast.

IOC fillip for ESports



New Delhi: In a move aimed at promoting ESports globally, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has entered into a partnership with the National Olympic Committee of Saudi Arabia to host the inaugural edition of Olympic ESports Games.

This comes after the Olympics Executive Board proposed the creation of the ESports Games.

Abhishek Issar, Founder, UNIV Sportatech and Founding Member, FEAI (Federation of ESports Associations India), said, "Today, every country will

look at ESports as an Olympic medal winning opportunity - this is a game changer for the industry."

"As India witnesses a strong performance at the Paris Olympics, our appetite for growth in the sector corresponds the country's highly commanding Geo-economic status in the world."

Players in the ESports category grew four-fold between 2021 and 2022 (from 150,000 to 600,000) and future projections estimate this number to reach 15,00,000 by the end of 2027.