

THE PERFECT VOICE



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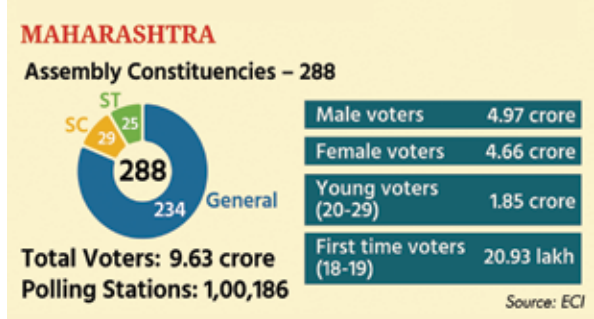
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Voting for Assembly on Nov 20, results on 23

By Correspondent

New Delhi: The Assembly polls in Maharashtra will be held in a single phase on November 20, while Jharkhand polls will be held in two phases on November 13 and 20, the Election Commission of India announced on Tuesday. The votes for the two states will be counted on November 23.

By-elections to 47 Assembly seats and the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat, vacated by Congress leader



Rahul Gandhi, will be held on November 13. By-polls to the Kedarnath assembly seat in Uttarakhand and the Nanded Lok Sabha

seat in Maharashtra will be held on November 20. The BJP is keen to retain power in Maharashtra along with allies Shiv



Rajiv Kumar, Chief Election Commissioner

Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the NCP led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

The BJP led Mahayuti alliance is facing a challenge from the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi of the Congress-NCP (SP)-Shiv Sena (UBT), which hopes to repeat its performance in the Lok Sabha elections.

Voters to be identified as per rules

Voters at polling booths will be identified as per election rules but with due respect to their cultural values, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said on Tuesday.

He made the comments in response to a question

CEC rebukes allegations

"Kuch to log kahenge, logon ka kam hai kehna" (people will say things, it is their job to say such things) -- was the response of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar when asked about critics alleging irregularities in the poll process in the recently-concluded Haryana Assembly election. "Election by election, the participation in the process is increasing, violence is reducing and there are record seizures. Voters are giving a clear indication that they have belief in the electoral process and they are very participative," Kumar said.

on controversies surrounding women wearing hijab to polling booths and debate around democratic rights versus cultural rights.



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar being welcomed upon his arrival in Islamabad, Pakistan on Tuesday.
Pic: PTI

Man falls off train, dies

By Correspondent

Dombivli: A 20-year-old man died after falling off a local train in Maharashtra's Thane district during the morning peak hours on Tuesday, an official from the Government Railway Police said.

The accident occurred between Dombivili and Kopar railway stations around 9am. Senior Inspector Kiran Undre said Ayushya Jatin Doshi, a resident of Dombivili, fell off a CSMT-bound train and sustained critical injuries. He was declared dead at a hospital. A case of accidental death was registered, he said.

Culpable homicide charge in car crash case dropped

Mumbai: A court here has said that a man accused of driving a car rashly and causing an accident that killed his teenage friend cannot be tried for 'culpable homicide not amounting to murder'.

Sourya Jain, the accused, allegedly crashed a car into a stationary bus in Marine Drive area here in May 2020, injuring himself as well as his friend Aryaman Nagpal, who was on the front seat. Nagpal, son of a hotelier, succumbed to his injuries.

Additional sessions judge S.D. Tawshikar, in an order passed on October 14, noted that "no doubt an innocent young boy has lost

his life, but at the same time one cannot lose sight from overall circumstances in which offence took place." Police first registered a case against Jain under Indian Penal Code sections 304-A (rash or negligent act not amounting to culpable homicide) and 279 (rash driving). But section 304 (II) (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) was pressed when it was found that Jain possessed no valid driving licence at the time of the incident.

Defence lawyer Hrishikesh Mundargi argued that the incident was unforeseen, and Jain could not have had the intention to cause the accident.



Seven flights get bomb threats via X

New Delhi: Seven flights, including one bound for the United States, received bomb-threat messages through a social media handle on Tuesday, prompting security agencies to undertake specific counter-terrorist drills at various airports, official sources said.

The threats via micro-blogging platform X came a day after three international flights originating from Mumbai received bomb threats, causing trouble to hundreds of passengers and airline crew. The messages posted on Monday were declared a hoax.

Two more flights received similar threats on Tuesday but a confirmation was awaited.

The sources said an X handle issued threats on

Tuesday to five flights -- an Air India Express flight from Jaipur to Bengaluru via Ayodhya (IX765), a SpiceJet flight from Darbhanga to Mumbai (SG116), an Akasa Air flight from Bagdogra to Bengaluru (QP 1373), an Air India flight from Delhi to Chicago (AI 127) and an Indigo flight from Dammam (Saudi Arabia) to Lucknow (6E 98).

An Air India Express spokesperson told PTI in a statement that they, along with a few other operators, received a "specific" security threat from an unverified social media handle.

"In response, security protocols were promptly activated as directed by the government-appointed Bomb Threat Assessment Committee."
-PTI

Over 1,000 tourists stranded in Nepal

Kathmandu: More than 1,000 foreign tourists have been stranded in Nepal after bad weather led to the cancellation of flights to Lukla, the gateway to Mt Everest, according to state-run media on Tuesday.

Lukla serves as a major transit point for trekkers heading to the world's highest peak.

Around 1,300 tourists, en route to the Everest base camp, have been stranded in Manthali at Ramechhap district for the past two days after dozens of flights were grounded due to inclement weather, the government-owned daily Gorkhapatra reported.

Some tourists have opted to travel by land via Faplu, while others have taken helicopters to Surkhet.

An official from the Civil Aviation Authority at Manthali confirmed that the stranded tourists had arrived there through various private airlines.

Fourth accused sent to police custody till Oct 21



Baba Siddique Murder

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Police on Tuesday said the fourth accused arrested for the murder of NCP leader and former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique had provided financial help and firearms for the operation.

A court here on Tuesday remanded the fourth accused, Harishkumar Nisad (23), in police custody till October 21.

Nisad was apprehended from Bahaich, Uttar Pradesh, earlier in the day. The police had earlier identified the fourth accused as Harishkumar Balakram.



Accused Harish Balkram being produced at Esplanade court in Baba Siddique murder case in Mumbai on Tuesday.
Pic: PTI

The additional chief judicial magistrate (Esplanade Court) V R Patil, while sending the accused to police custody, noted that the "offence is serious in nature" and his presence with the probe agency "is essential for custodial interrogation".

The crime branch informed the court that Nisad had provided money to the others involved in the

crime, and a probe was necessary to find "the upper link and lower link" with regard to financial assistance.

It further stated that information about bank accounts and other modes of transactions Nisad used for financial assistance to the other accused needs to be gathered from him.

The police said they also have to ascertain how he

supplied weapons used in the crime to the other arrested accused.

Police had earlier arrested Haryana resident Gurmil Baljit Singh (23), Uttar Pradesh native Dharmaraj Rajesh Kashyap (19), both alleged shooters, and "co-conspirator" Pravin Lonkar from Pune. They have been remanded in police custody till October 21.

During the remand hear-

ing, the police told the court that Nisad and Kashyap belonged to the same village as the wanted accused, Shivkumar Gautam.

Moreover, Nisad ran a scrap shop in Pune, where the wanted accused used to reside, and further investigation is necessary to gather information about Gautam's whereabouts, police said.

According to the police, the accused conspired and carried out the crime after conducting a recon of the victim's residence and the crime scene.

Nisad's lawyer, Ajay Dubey, opposed the remand plea, saying that the accused was a "victim of the circumstances and a scapegoat".

The court heard both sides and remanded the accused in police custody.

Siddique (66) was waylaid by three persons in Mumbai's Nirmal Nagar area, just outside his MLA son Zeeshan Siddique's office, and shot at on Saturday night. He was rushed to the Lilavati Hospital, where he was declared dead, according to police.

Stage set for Priyanka's electoral debut from Wayanad

New Delhi: With the Election Commission (EC) announcing the bypoll to the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat, the stage is set for Congress leader Priyanka Vadra's electoral debut from the Kerala constituency that could see her enter Parliament five years after joining active politics.

Days after the Lok Sabha polls, the Congress announced in June that Rahul Gandhi will retain the Rae Bareilly parliamentary constituency in Uttar Pradesh and vacate the Wayanad seat in Kerala, from where his sister Priyanka will make her electoral debut.

If elected, this will be the

first time that Priyanka Vadra will enter Parliament as an MP. This will also be the first time that the three Gandhi family members -- Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka -- will be in Parliament together.

The EC on Tuesday announced bypolls to the Wayanad and Nanded Lok Sabha seats as well as in 48 Assembly constituencies.

The bypoll to the Wayanad parliamentary seat and 47 Assembly seats will be held on November 13, along with the first phase of polling for the Jharkhand Assembly.

Since her entry into active politics in 2019, Priyan-

ka has been in the past projected as a possible challenger to Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Varanasi and also, as a successor to Congress veteran Sonia Gandhi in the family pocket borough of Rae Bareilly.

However, the Congress has decided to field her from Wayanad, the parliamentary seat that her elder brother Rahul won for two consecutive elections. Priyanka was earlier the Congress in-charge of Uttar Pradesh.

She emerged as the party's strategist and star campaigner, helping the Congress make impressive



gains in some states as well as in the Lok Sabha polls held earlier in the year.

After her name was announced for the Wayanad bypoll, Priyanka had said,

"I am not nervous at all... I am very happy to be able to represent Wayanad. All I will say is that I will not let them feel his (Rahul Gandhi's) absence. I will work

hard and try my best to make everybody happy and be a good representative."

"I have a good relationship with Rae Bareilly as I worked there for 20 years and that relationship will never break," she had said, adding that both she and her brother will work together in both the constituencies.

After joining active politics, Priyanka was made the Congress general secretary in-charge of the crucial eastern Uttar Pradesh in January 2019 and then as the general secretary in-charge of the entire state. Though the performance of her party in the 2019 Lok

Sabha polls was not very good, she continued with her efforts to strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level.

In December 2023, Priyanka was made a Congress general secretary "without a portfolio". She emerged as the party's key strategist and later, its star campaigner for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

She also helped strengthen the organisation and led the party's campaign in Himachal Pradesh, where the grand old party wrested power from the BJP. Her campaign helped the Congress in the general election, in which the party got

99 seats, up from 52 in 2019.

Priyanka is married to businessman Robert Vadra.

With the Congress putting up a surprisingly good show in the Lok Sabha polls, Priyanka cemented her position as the party's talisman.

Priyanka Vadra's poll debut comes at a time when the Congress has been jolted by an electoral defeat in Haryana and it would be interesting to see if she would be able to steer the Wayanad campaign, along with the canvassing for the Jharkhand and Maharashtra polls, to put the grand old party back on track.

-PTI

India-Canada diplomatic row escalates

By Lalit K Jha

Washington: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has accused India of choosing to use its diplomats and organised crime to attack its citizens and make them feel unsafe on their soil, calling it a "monumental mistake" by New Delhi.

These remarks were made by Trudeau on Monday on a day India expelled six Canadian diplomats and announced withdrawing its High Commissioner from Canada and other "targeted" officials from Canada after strongly dismissing Ottawa's allegations linking the envoy to a probe into the killing of Sikh extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Canada has also announced expulsion of six Indian diplomats.

India has been strongly rejecting Canada's charge of involvement of Indian agents in Nijjar's killing last year.

The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar.

Trudeau spoke to reporters on Monday, hours after the head of the RCMP laid out stunning allegations accusing agents of the Indian government of playing a role in "widespread violence" in Canada, including homicides, and warned that it poses "a serious threat to our public safety," the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

"I believe that India has made a monumental mistake by choosing to use



India rejects Trudeau's charges

India on Tuesday trashed Canada's attempts to link Indian agents with criminal gangs in that country with official sources rejecting Ottawa's claim that it shared evidence with New Delhi in the Nijjar case. The sources also rejected Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations that India was engaging in activities, including carrying out covert operations targeting Canadian nationals in his country. The ties between India and Canada witnessed a major downturn on Monday as India expelled six Canadian diplomats and announced withdrawing its High Commissioner from Canada after dismissing Ottawa's allegations linking the envoy to a probe into the killing of Sikh extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. "Canadian PM Trudeau's press conference yesterday was the same old Trudeau saying the same old things for the

same old reasons," said a source. The sources said the assertions by Canadian officials that Canada presented credible evidence to India in the Nijjar case is simply not true. "The central assertion from all Canadian officials is that credible evidence has been presented to India. This was also repeated by their Charge d'Affaires Stewart Wheelers to the press. This is simply not true," the source said. "From the very beginning, the Canadian approach has been to make vague accusations and put the burden of denial on India," it added. The sources also rejected attempts by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to link Indian agents to the Bishnoi gang. At the RCMP press briefing, assertions were made about connections of certain individuals to India. In no case were any specifics provided, the sources said.

their diplomats and organised crime to attack Canadians, to make them feel

unsafe here at (their) home, and even more, to create acts of violence and

'Everything on table,' says Canadian foreign minister

Ottawa: Hinting at the possibility of sanctions against India following the diplomatic row over the killing of a pro-Khalistani leader for which Canada has blamed India, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly has said that "everything is on the table." Tensions between India and Canada escalated after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday accused the Indian government of supporting criminal activities targeting Canadian citizens. Joly on Monday told reporters the evidence collected by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) was

the basis for the decision to expel Indian diplomats and urged the Indian government to cooperate in the ongoing investigation for the mutual benefit of both countries. She said India was asked to waive diplomatic and consular immunity and cooperate in the investigation but refused. The foreign minister in response to a question whether the country is looking to impose sanctions on India said expelling diplomats was one of the toughest measures that a country could take under the Vienna Convention.

"For the rest, we will continue to push India to make sure they cooperate. We will continue to engage with our five eyes partners. We will also continue to engage with the G7 partners. Everything is on the table," she said. "We don't want diplomatic confrontation with India. We know that thousands of Canadians go to India every year. We have lots of people from India coming to Canada as well. So we know that there are deep people-to-people ties, and want to make sure that these are still possible," Joly said at the press conference alongside Trudeau.



even murder. It's unacceptable," Trudeau alleged.

Trudeau also said that, "From the beginning, as of last summer, we've worked closely with our Five Eyes partners, particularly with the United States, where they have gone through a similar pattern of behaviour from India in regards to an attempted extrajudicial killing," Trudeau told reporters at a news conference in Ottawa.

We will continue to work with our allies as we stand up together for the rule of law, he said. The US State Department has so far not made any statements on the diplomatic crisis between its two close allies and partners.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in a

statement, said that India reserves the right to take further steps in response to the Trudeau government's support for extremism, violence and separatism against India.

"In 2018, his visit to India, which was aimed at currying favour with a vote bank, rebounded to his discomfort. His cabinet has included individuals who have openly associated with an extremist and separatist agenda regarding India. His interference in Indian internal politics in December 2020 showed how far he was willing to go in this regard," the MEA said.

During the press conference on Monday, Trudeau said that the situation is extremely undesirable.

"Not only do we not want Canadians to be subjected to violence in their communities, in their homes, but we also do not want to have these tensions in relations with India," he said.

"That is why last week, we approached the Government of India through our security agencies, diplomats and police agencies, to look for a way to resolve this deep difference...to protect Canadians...but not to come and destroy the good relations or the relations between India and Canada," Trudeau said.

Unfortunately, India has "not chosen to work with us. They have chosen to deny, repel and to make personal attacks against

this government and question the integrity of our agencies and our institutions, and we have had to respond to protect Canadians", he said.

Trudeau said he met and spoke with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on this last week.

"As the RCMP Commissioner stated earlier, they have clear and compelling evidence that agents of the Government of India have engaged in and continue to engage in activities that pose a significant threat to public safety, including clandestine information gathering techniques, coercive behaviour targeting South Asian Canadians, and involvement in over a dozen threatening and vio-

lent acts, including murder," he said.

While attempts have been made by the RCMP and national security officials to work with India and their law enforcement counterparts on this matter, they have been repeatedly refused, Trudeau claimed.

"This is why, this weekend, Canadian officials took an extraordinary step. They met with Indian officials to share RCMP evidence which concluded six agents of the Government of India are persons of interest in criminal activities," he alleged.

"Despite repeated requests to India, it has decided not to cooperate," he claimed. -PTI

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill 15 in hours

Jerusalem: Israeli strikes in the southern Gaza Strip killed at least 15 people overnight, including six children and two women, Palestinian medical officials said on Tuesday.

In northern Gaza, where Israel has been waging an air and ground campaign in Jabaliya for more than a week, residents said families were still trapped in their homes and shelters.

It's been more than a year since Hamas-led militants blew holes in Israel's security fence and stormed in, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. They are still holding about 100 people captives inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many were fighters but say women and children make up more than half of the fatalities. The war has destroyed large areas of Gaza and displaced about 90 per cent of its population of 2.3 million people.



In solidarity with Hamas, Lebanese militant group Hezbollah has exchanged cross-border fire with Israel for the past year. Israel escalated its campaign against the group in recent weeks.

Rumors circulated for weeks over head of the expeditionary arm of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard Gen. Esmail Qaani's status after an Israeli airstrike that killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut in late September.

But Qaani, the head of the Quds Force, was seen in a black bomber jacket, wiping away tears at an event early Tuesday morning at Tehran's Mehrabad

International Airport. Iranian leader shown on state TV

Dubai: The head of the expeditionary arm of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard has appeared in television footage aired Tuesday by Iranian state television.

While Iranian state television did not acknowledge the rumours, it made a point to film Qaani for over a minute and later share the footage from the airport ceremony online.

Qaani was on hand for the repatriation to Iran of the body of Revolutionary Guard Gen. Abbas Nilforushan, 58, who was killed in the airstrike. -AP

North Korea's symbolic display of anger

Seoul: In a symbolic display of anger, North Korea on Tuesday blew up the northern section of unused roads that once linked it with the South, with the rivals exchanging threats days after the North claimed that its rival flew drones over its capital Pyongyang.

The roads' choreographed demolition underlines North Korea's growing anger against South Korea's conservative government. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to sever relations with South Korea and abandon the goal of achieving peaceful Korean unification.

Observers say it's unlikely Kim will launch a preemptive, large-scale attack on South Korea because of fear that an almost certain massive retaliation by the more superior forces of the United States and South Korea would threaten Pyongyang's survival.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said its military fired within southern sections of the border as it bolstered its readiness and surveillance posture.



French President Emmanuel Macron sits aboard a Peugeot Inception concept car as he visits the Stellantis stand at the Paris Auto Show in Paris on Monday. Pic: AP/PTI

UN Security Council voices 'strong concern'

United Nations: The UN Security Council expressed "strong concern" Monday as Israel has fired on and wounded UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon during intensified fighting, reiterating its support for their role in supporting security in the region.

It's the first statement by the UN's most powerful body since Israel's attacks on the positions of the peacekeeping force known as UNIFIL began last week,

drawing international condemnation.

UN peacekeeping chief Jean-Marie Lacroix told reporters that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres confirmed Monday that peacekeepers will remain in all their positions even as Israel has urged the peacekeepers to move 5 kilometers (3 miles) north during its ground invasion in Lebanon.

Israel has been escalating its campaign against

Hezbollah in Lebanon across a UN-drawn boundary between the two countries. The sides have been clashing since the Iranian-backed militant group started firing rockets a year ago in solidarity with its ally Hamas in Gaza.

The Security Council statement, issued after emergency closed consultations on Lebanon, did not name either Israel, Lebanon or Hezbollah. -AP

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Bharat believes in bringing all together and not breaking. That is why we are making every possible step to take the friendly neighbouring nations along."



Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister

Over 400,000 children in Lebanon displaced: UN

Beirut: More than 400,000 children in Lebanon have been displaced in the past three weeks, a top official with the U.N. children's agency said Monday, warning of a "lost generation" in the small country grappling with multiple crises and now in the middle of war.

Israel has escalated its campaign against the Lebanon-based Hezbollah militant group, including launching a ground invasion, after a year of exchanges of fire during its war with Hamas in Gaza.

The fighting in Lebanon has driven 1.2 million people from their homes, most of them fleeing to Beirut and elsewhere in the north over the past three weeks since the escalation.

Ted Chaiban, UNICEF's deputy executive director for humanitarian actions, has visited schools that have been turned into shelters to host displaced families.

"What struck me is that this war is three weeks old and so many children have been affected," Chaiban told The Associated Press



in Beirut.

"As we sit here today, 1.2 million children are deprived of education. Their public schools have either been rendered inaccessible, have been damaged by the

war or are being used as shelters. The last thing this country needs, in addition to everything else it has gone through, is the risk of a lost generation." While some Lebanese

private schools are still operating, the public school system has been badly affected by the war, along with the country's most vulnerable people such as Palestinian and Syrian refugees.

What I'm worried about is that we have hundreds of thousands of Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian children that are at risk of losing their learning," Chaiban said.

More than 2,300 people in Lebanon have been killed in Israeli strikes, nearly 75% of them over the last

month, according to the Health Ministry. In the last three weeks, more than 100 children were killed and over 800 were wounded, Chaiban said.

He said displaced children are crammed into overcrowded shelters where three or four families can live in a classroom separated by a plastic sheet, and where 1,000 people can share 12 toilets. Not all of them work.

Many displaced families found have set up tents along roads or on public beaches. -AP

EDITORIAL

Rage Unleashed

In a country where the roads are already fraught with overcrowding, potholes, and reckless driving, a disturbing new menace has begun to grip the streets - road rage. This alarming trend, seen vividly in Maharashtra's bustling cities like Mumbai and Pune, has turned mundane commutes into mortal confrontations.

A tragic event unfolded in Mumbai's Malad area epitomizing this growing epidemic. A 27-year-old man was beaten to death in broad daylight, in front of his horrified parents, over a minor traffic dispute. The incident began when an auto-rickshaw overtook the deceased's vehicle, triggering a heated argument. What followed was a brutal escalation, with the rickshaw driver and his associates pummeling the motorbike driver while bystanders passively recorded the horror. In a desperate attempt to protect her son, the hapless mother of the deceased lay on top of him, trying to shield him from the blows. His father, who pleaded in vain for the mob to stop, suffered a serious eye injury in the process.

This chilling story, which went viral across social media platforms, is not an isolated case. In July this year, Pune witnessed a similarly violent episode when a 27-year-old woman, travelling with her two children, was beaten and left bleeding on the side of the road after an overtaking incident. In Bengaluru, just last week, a man was publicly humiliated and beaten, his clothes stripped off, in another shocking case of road rage. And in a particularly devastating event in Latur, a man lost his wife and young daughter when five assailants chased their vehicle for five kilometres before running them over.

Roads, meant for transit, have today become the stage for extreme violence in urban India. Congested roads, inadequate infrastructure, and the high pressure of daily commutes are surely part of the problem. Cities like Mumbai and Pune are notorious for their gridlock, where long hours in bumper-to-bumper traffic lead to frayed nerves. Add to this the common disregard for traffic rules - vehicles routinely flouting lane discipline, honking incessantly, tailgating.

The rise of road rage in India signals a breakdown in social order and personal restraint. The roads, much like social media platforms, have become an outlet for unchecked aggression.

The question that haunts these tragedies is: why are people losing their tempers to such a dangerous degree over something as routine as traffic?

The surge in road rage cases is symptomatic of a broader issue—a loss of empathy in a society stretched to its limits. Something in the social fabric has frayed as drivers no longer see the person in the other vehicle; they see only an adversary.

Reversing this trend will require more than just punitive action against offenders. Stronger traffic enforcement, better infrastructure, and public campaigns that promote responsible driving are essential. But perhaps the most crucial change must come from within—the recognition that the roads belong to all, and that no journey is worth another's life.

NATIONAL INTEREST

A Diplomatic Death Spiral? Khalistan, Trudeau and the Collapse of India-Canada Relations



By
Kiran D. Tare

In the annals of international diplomacy, crises often emerge slowly, building like a storm on the horizon. But occasionally, relations between two nations deteriorate in a fiery flash, leaving the world gaping at the scorched ruins of what was once a stable, if not particularly close, partnership. The latest diplomatic skirmish between India and Canada is precisely such an episode. It has been a rapid descent to the nadir, with accusations of state-sponsored assassination and the conspicuous role played by the curious political theater of Justin Trudeau.

The recent expulsion of diplomats by both nations marks a culminating moment in a crisis that has steadily worsened with the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Khalistani activist and Canadian citizen, on Canadian soil in June last year.

Trudeau's initial allegations in September, that Indian intelligence was involved in Nijjar's murder, had triggered

The expulsion of diplomats marks a dramatic escalation in the India-Canada diplomatic crisis, with the Canadian PM's stridency threatening to have potential ripple effects on multilateral platforms

a firestorm. Trudeau's fiery claims that India is engaged in "coercive behavior" and "violent acts" raises troubling questions about his approach to global diplomacy and the broader issue of Canada's domestic handling of pro-Khalistan activism.

New Delhi has long been troubled by Canada's perceived leniency toward pro-Khalistan elements, with India accusing Trudeau's government of allowing a safe haven for separatist and extremist voices, largely unchallenged by Canadian authorities.

The Trudeau government's insistence that India's actions constitute a fundamental violation of Canadian sovereignty and international law is striking, not only for its sharp rhetoric but also for the sheer magnitude of the claim: that India orchestrated the extrajudicial killing of a Canadian citizen on foreign soil.

Such accusations are marked by sheer absence of compelling, public evidence. India has repeatedly denied any involvement, dismissing Trudeau's allegations as "preposterous" and accusing Canada of pursuing its diplomats in a smear campaign designed for domestic political consumption.

The current crisis is not without precedent. In fact, tensions between India and Canada have simmered for years, with the Khalistan issue acting as the fault line. Trudeau's tenure as Prime Minister has seen multiple flashpoints in this regard, often rooted in Canada's significant Sikh diaspora, which includes both moderate and more extreme voices supportive of Khalistan.

One of the earliest diplomatic contretemps between Trudeau and India occurred in 2018, during Trudeau's much-hyped official visit to India. Ostensibly a goodwill tour, the trip quickly became mired in controversy after it was revealed that a convicted Khalistani terrorist, Jaspal Atwal, had been invited to a formal dinner hosted by the Canadian High Commissioner. Atwal had been convicted of the attempted assassination of an Indian politician in British Columbia in



1986, and his presence on the guest list sent shockwaves through diplomatic channels.

The Atwal affair was far from the only instance where the Trudeau government found itself at odds with India over Khalistan. Pro-Khalistan rallies in Canadian cities have long vexed India. In 2020, we again raised concerns about the increasing visibility of Khalistan activists in Canada, many of whom openly called for the secession of Punjab from India. Trudeau's government, however, cavalierly framed these protests as an expression of 'free speech', disdaining India's urgency to view it as an existential issue of national security.

Trudeau's politics have long been a study in bizarre contrasts. He projects himself as a preening panjandrum of liberal values, a torchbearer for multiculturalism, and a leader with a flair for high-profile grandstanding on the world stage.

Yet, all this show is to pander to his domestic base as Canada's significant Sikh population, particularly in British Columbia, where pro-Khalistan sentiment is notably vocal. By taking such a hard line against India, Trudeau has been shoring up his political position at home, where he faces growing challenges on multiple fronts. Yet, this high-risk

strategy threatens to burn bridges that may not be easily rebuilt.

Compounding the diplomatic friction was the farmers' protest in India during 2020-2021, which saw significant support from the Sikh diaspora in Canada. Trudeau, in an opportunistic move aimed at placating his constituency, openly commented on the protests, expressing 'concern' for the farmers' right to peaceful protest. New Delhi lashed out at Trudeau's remarks, calling them "unwarranted" and warning of the potential damage to diplomatic ties.

India under the Modi government has made it clear that the rise of Khalistani activism in Canada as a non-negotiable issue.

What happens next in this bitter saga is anyone's guess. The expulsion of diplomats is a potent symbolic move, but it may only be the first in a series of escalations that will deepen the divide. India has already taken steps to reduce cooperation with Canada on issues of trade and security, and further economic and political decoupling may follow. For Canada, the costs could be significant. India is a growing power, both economically and geopolitically, and alienating one of the world's most important emerging markets could be a misstep Trudeau may come to regret.

GLOBAL WATCH

Encircling Taiwan: China's Largest Military Drill Yet Tests U.S. Patience

In an unprecedented show of force, Taiwan detected a record 153 Chinese military aircraft in the skies around the self-governed island over a 25-hour period, marking the largest such incursion to date. The sorties, coupled with the presence of Chinese navy ships and coast guard vessels, formed part of large-scale drills held by Beijing, which declared the exercises a direct response to "separatist" tendencies in Taiwan.

These provocative moves by China reflect its long-standing claim over Taiwan and its increasing pressure on the island to submit to its rule. Taiwan, for its part, has condemned these actions as "irrational and provocative." The U.S. swiftly echoed these concerns, urging Beijing to exercise restraint. Japan, which scrambled jets of its own near its southern island of Yonaguni, also expressed its "concerns" over China's action.

The Joint Sword 2024B drills, featuring a coordinated deployment of fighter jets, drones, and naval assets around Taiwan, escalated tensions across the region, with 111 of the 153 aircraft crossing the sensitive median line of the Taiwan Strait. This breach of longstanding norms reflects China's increasing disregard for the unofficial buffer

While these latest drills stand out

China's record deployment of 153 military aircraft around Taiwan highlights escalating tensions in the region, prompting strong condemnations while raising concerns about potential for conflict.



for their sheer scale, they are part of a broader trend. Over the past two years, China has conducted four such large-scale exercises, with the last, Joint Sword-2024A, held in May. That drill came just three days after Taiwan's new President Lai Ching-te assumed office, signaling Beijing's dissatisfaction with his assertive defense of Taiwan's sovereignty.

Lai, who has been more vocal than his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen in challenging Beijing's claims, has earned a reputation as a "separatist" in China's eyes. In his National Day speech last week, Lai reiterated his firm stance, vowing to "resist annexation" and stating unequivocally that Taiwan and China "are not subordinate to each other."

Tensions have flared before. The most notable prior to this recent wave occurred in 1996, when China conducted a series of missile tests off Taiwan's coast in response to the island's first direct presidential elections. At that time, the U.S. responded by sending two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region, a move that temporarily cooled tensions but left the underlying conflict unresolved.

The roots of this modern-day crisis date back to 1949, when the Chinese Civil War culminated in the nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek fleeing to Taiwan after their

defeat by Mao Zedong's communist army. Since then, Taiwan has operated as a separate entity, while China has never relinquished its claim to the island. Both sides have since existed in a state of uneasy detente.

China's military capabilities have vastly improved since then, giving Beijing a far greater ability to project power. Its military modernization has been accompanied by an increasingly aggressive stance on Taiwan, from frequent incursions into the island's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) to the construction of artificial islands and militarization of the South China Sea.

The U.S., long the principal defender of Taiwan's autonomy, now finds itself at a crossroads. President Biden has, on multiple occasions, implied that the U.S. would come to Taiwan's defense in the event of a Chinese attack, a departure from past presidents' more measured rhetoric. These comments have raised alarm in Beijing.

While China has ramped up military pressure, it has thus far stopped short of any direct military confrontation, instead relying on a strategy of intimidation. Taiwan, under Lai's leadership, remains defiant but cautious, aware of the delicate balance that has maintained peace for decades.

STATES WATCH

ED Raids Rock Govt as Political Battle Heats Up Ahead of Elections

In the shadow of looming elections, the eastern state of Jharkhand finds itself at the centre of a political firestorm. The week started with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducting a series of high-profile raids in a crackdown on alleged corruption within the state's water and sanitation department. These searches, targeting a senior IAS officer, associates of a cabinet minister and others, have intensified the political battle in the poll-bound state.

The raids were conducted as part of a multi-crore money laundering probe, with sources revealing that officials from the water and sanitation department were involved in an illegal 10 percent commission scheme. These kickbacks, reportedly shared among politicians, bureaucrats, and contractors, have put Jharkhand's political elite under the spotlight. Over 23 locations in Ranchi and Chaibasa were searched by ED officials, bolstered by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) for security.

Among those targeted was Manish Ranjan, a secretary-level IAS officer, and Harendra Singh, a staffer to Drinking Water and Sanitation Minister Mithilesh Kumar Thakur. Thakur's brother, Vinay Thakur, was also implicated. Ranjan, already under scrutiny in a separate case involving former minister Alamgir

A sweeping corruption probe and high-stakes alliances set the stage for a fierce electoral showdown in poll-bound Jharkhand.



JHARKHAND

Alam, has now found himself at the centre of this raging storm.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren has predictably dubbed the raids "politically motivated," suggesting they were a shopworn tactic as elections approached. Soren pointed fingers at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), whose members - including Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan - have been actively campaigning in the state. Both Sarma and Chouhan are leading the BJP's election strategy and have repeatedly attacked the Soren government, citing corruption, infiltration, and the state's deteriorating law and order situation.

Minister Mithilesh Kumar Thakur, whose associates were also targeted, also denounced the raids while accusing the BJP of pressuring him to defect to their ranks. The incident comes as the BJP ramps up its efforts to challenge the incumbent Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led coalition. The BJP has

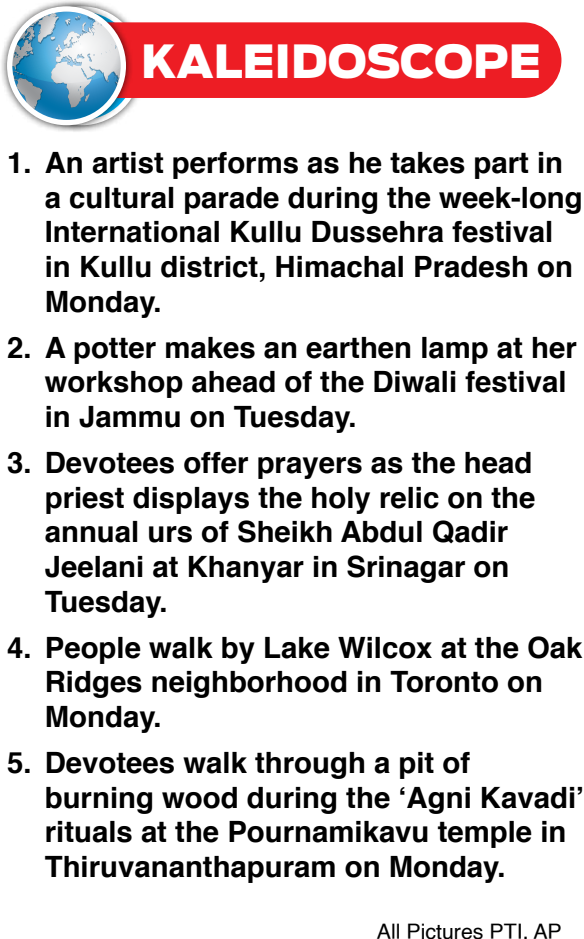
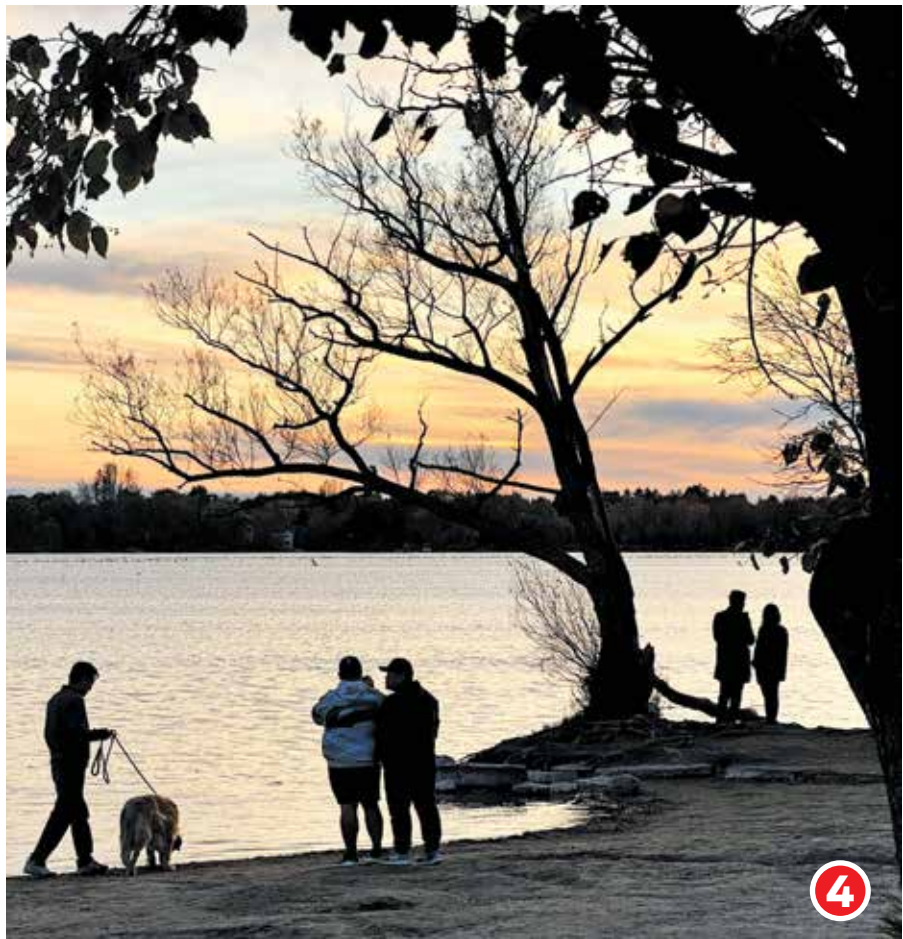
finalized its poll strategy, reviving its alliance with the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU), the regional heavy-weight led by Sudesh Mahto.

The alliance, though successful in past elections, stumbled during the recent Lok Sabha polls, losing three crucial seats compared to its 2019 performance. Despite these setbacks, the BJP-AJSU pact remains intact, with Mahto announcing the partnership after meeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The alliance's seat-sharing talks are almost final, according to Sarma. AJSU is expected to contest 9 to 11 seats, while Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United) will take two, as per sources.

The BJP is determined to reclaim lost ground in Jharkhand given that in the 2019 Assembly elections, the party won only 25 out of 79 seats it contested, a significant drop from its 2014 performance. The BJP hopes to capitalize on the momentum generated by its recent victories in Haryana and an increase of seats in Jammu and Kashmir.

To counter the saffron party's strategy, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren held a strategic meeting with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi last week to discuss the JMM-Congress alliance. The JMM has been running the government in alliance with the Congress and the RJD since 2019.

While Soren announced that the JMM-led alliance will contest all 81 seats, a swift resolution of seat-sharing negotiations is seen as crucial to the alliance's electoral strategy, given that the BJP has intensified its campaign with high-profile leaders in the fray.



KALEIDOSCOPE

1. An artist performs as he takes part in a cultural parade during the week-long International Kullu Dussehra festival in Kullu district, Himachal Pradesh on Monday.
2. A potter makes an earthen lamp at her workshop ahead of the Diwali festival in Jammu on Tuesday.
3. Devotees offer prayers as the head priest displays the holy relic on the annual urs of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani at Khanyar in Srinagar on Tuesday.
4. People walk by Lake Wilcox at the Oak Ridges neighborhood in Toronto on Monday.
5. Devotees walk through a pit of burning wood during the 'Agni Kavadi' rituals at the Pournamikavu temple in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday.

All Pictures PTI, AP

FOOD SAFETY

The Truth About Ultra-Processed Foods



By
Dr. Rizwan Pinjari



In today's health-conscious world, the term "Ultra Processed Foods" (UPFs) frequently surfaces in discussions about diet and nutrition. These foods are often viewed as unhealthy, though opinions vary on their necessity and role in modern lifestyles. Before diving into these debates, let's first define UPFs. According to the NOVA classification system, developed by Brazilian researchers, UPFs are foods that undergo extensive industrial processing and contain additives like colourants, emulsifiers, and flavour enhancers to improve taste, texture, and shelf life. These processes transform the original ingredients into products that bear little resemblance to their natural form.

Depending on the level of processing, foods are classified into four categories: unprocessed or minimally processed foods, processed ingredients, processed foods, and ultra-processed foods. Each category reflects a different stage in transforming raw ingredients into consumable products.

1. Unprocessed or minimally processed foods include fresh fruits, vegetables, and milk, which have no added ingredients or undergo minimal processing. These are the closest to their natural state.
2. Processed ingredients refer to items such as salt, sugar, and oils, which are not eaten on their own but are added to foods to enhance flavour or shelf life.
3. Processed foods combine unprocessed foods with processed ingredients, such as homemade dishes or pickles. These are typically prepared at home using basic methods.
4. Ultra-processed foods, on the other hand, are factory-made and contain ingredients rarely found in a home kitchen, such as preserva-

tives, emulsifiers, sweeteners, artificial colours, and flavours.

The United Nations (UN) has declared 2016-2025 as the Decade of Action on Nutrition, recognising the growing need to address dietary challenges worldwide. In this context, ultra-processed foods have been highlighted as a global crisis, contributing significantly to the rise of non-communicable diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, which are reaching epidemic levels in many parts of the world. Despite the growing awareness of the health risks associated with ultra-processed foods (UPFs), their production and consumption continue to rise at an alarming rate. This surge is largely due to the appeal of their taste, convenience, extended shelf life, wide availability, and relatively low cost, making them a popular choice for many.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), UPFs fall into Group C, which includes a wide variety of commercially produced items such as bread, biscuits, mayonnaise, chips, fries, jams, sausages, cakes, breakfast cereals, and refined oils. Other products in this category include artificially flavoured cereals and pulses, mass-produced milk and soft drinks, energy and health drinks, fruit juices, and commercially manufactured ice creams. These foods, despite their widespread consumption, are heavily processed and often contain artificial additives that can have adverse

effects on health over time.

To effectively reduce the intake of ultra-processed foods (UPFs), it's essential to adopt mindful habits that promote healthier eating choices.

Each of these steps can make a significant difference in reducing reliance on processed foods and ensuring a more balanced and nutritious diet.

Despite the harmful effects of ultra-processed foods (UPFs), the global food industry faces significant challenges. A key concern is the reduction of post-harvest losses, which occur when food is wasted after harvesting but before reaching consumers. Additionally, extending the shelf life of raw materials and preserving perishable foods is critical, especially in areas with limited refrigeration and storage access.

There is also a strong push to promote the growth of food processing industries, as they play a vital role in ensuring that food remains available and affordable for a growing global population. While addressing these concerns, it is equally important to strike a balance that prioritises health.

This delicate balance between food security, convenience, and accessibility on one side and health on the other poses a pressing challenge for policymakers, researchers, and the food industry. So, do you have an answer? The time to act is now.

(The author is a food processing expert. Views personal.)

MUSLIM WORLD

Feminism Redefined: The Empowering Voices of Muslim Women



By
Huba Patel

A few months ago, I stumbled upon a social media post where radical feminists criticised a Muslim woman for claiming that Islam liberates women more than any Islamic community. Her perspective brought her peace against claims that religion oppresses women. This opened a new perspective for me as a Muslim: no matter how much Western feminism liberates women regardless of gender or religion, it often alienates women with different colours and religions.

This dynamic is evident in Indian media, where Muslim women are marginalised under the politics of 'saving' them. Recently, in discussions with Muslim and non-Muslim women about politics, I asked their views on external forces of liberation and how majoritarian media alters narratives about Muslim communities to spread hate and doubt. One woman said, 'Muslim society needs religious knowledge. Islam does not oppress women, and both men and

women should understand this. Women should also gain religious knowledge just as men do. Muslim women should show that Islam does not oppress women and they can achieve as much as a non-muslim woman can.' Another young woman pointed out how there are Muslim men who are patriarchal and highly misogynist, further adding, 'These men are monsters and are not true Muslims who treat his wife, daughter, mother, or any other woman incorrectly.'

I understand that feminists can sometimes narrow down their understanding, especially towards Muslim women, but islamophobia, often disguised in 'isms', will always prevail and preach to others as rescuing women from oppression, even though it is a fact that some women practice hijab in devotion to their God. One woman said, 'Muslim society needs religious knowledge. Islam does not oppress women, and both men and women should understand this. When I asked these women about the Waqf Bill, revealed fear and anger. One woman remarked, 'The Indian government is trying to steal Muslim waqf lands for their own benefit, as they do not like the fact that in Islam Muslims have the choice of donating their property for public welfare.' Another woman added, 'To leave us stranded in our own country.'

These women, much like those who protested for CAA in 2019, are prepared to resist the Waqf bill. However, they call for inclusivity from others and adherence to Islamic values in their protest. 'We, as Muslim women, can protest as much as we can in ways possible, but it is important that we should do it in an Islamic way,' one woman explained. I got to know that as much as these women were aware of the news and were firm in their ideologies, there was something else that was leading their existence. The ongoing islamophobia and marginalisation of Muslim women in India, while also confronting patriarchy within their communities, need to be studied. It is just as Irene Oh, in her essay, 'Theoretical Construction of Muslim Motherhood,' pointed out that we need to examine how women continue to suffer in Muslim commu-

nities due to their gender and patriarchy.

Indian Muslim women do not need liberation from any external saviours. They need to be heard and empowered within their contexts. When I asked these women what they think and where else the focus should be apart from islamophobia, all of the responses were pointing towards one thing, and that is "be more knowledgeable." One woman pointed out, "Muslim women should also try to learn about their religion so that they can know what is right and wrong instead of blindly following what some people say."

Indian Muslim women's liberation requires space, identity, faith, and autonomy. "Islam does not restrict women from going out of the house, from gaining education, getting employment, or , other things for that matter. And to stand up for this, one should not be called a feminist," said a woman when I asked her about where the line blurs when it comes to feminism for Indian Muslim women. It is not uncommon to find islamophobia in any place, regardless of how modern or liberal the environment or people are. My last question to these women was whether they have faced discrimination towards their gender, especially because of their Muslim identity; every response was positive. A young woman said, "Well, it happened rarely, which I cannot recall, but I did face it, and if we don't raise our voice(s), maybe I might face it every day in the coming future," which made me think, Is this the feminism that oppresses Muslim women? Then I remembered why Muslim feminists exist like Asma Barlas professes Islamic feminism.

Feminism or the nationalist Hindu government should leave a need to save Muslim women from oppression to the colonialists. I think we should understand how colonial Western feminism is especially for women of different faiths and colours and normalise women with faith to liberate themselves through expression.

(The author is a student of Maharashtra College, Mumbai. Views personal.)

GILL, JAISWAL look to continue GOOD FORM

By G Unnikrishnan

Bengaluru: Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill, the torchbearers of India's transition phase, will have to be the team's driving force in its quest to lord over an unsettled New Zealand when the two sides square off in a three-Test series, beginning here on Wednesday.

The baton has not been completely passed, but Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma are certainly running their last lap and these two young superstars will have to show that they can carry forward the legacy of the titans.

Since a productive series against England earlier this year, Gill is now more familiar and comfortable with the rigours of Test cricket.

His last 10 innings contain three hundreds and two fifties, while Jaiswal's last eight outings in Test cricket feature a 214 and five fifties.

Those numbers are not to be scoffed at. But at the same time, it is important for them to build on the foundation through this series, a precursor to the much tougher journey to Australia next month.

Gill seems to have sorted his issues with the in-coming deliveries from pacers,

but a trace of the old failing still remains.

In Chennai, Bangladesh pacer Hasan Mahmud troubled him with nip-backers before eventually grabbing his wicket.

Similarly, Jaiswal has a penchant to go for expansive shots against pace bowlers to get dismissed, evidenced by his three dismissals recently against Bangladesh quicks.

In all, the left-hander has fallen to pacers 12 times in 20 innings, and he would want a better record before facing a clutch of top-class Australian pacers.

While these concerns are not deeply rooted, they serve as cautionary points against a New Zealand attack that has capable hands in pacers Matt Henry, William O'Rourke and the experienced Tim Southee, if he gets to play here after a sharp decline in his form.

There is another angle to the emergence of Jaiswal and Gill as the pillars of the Indian line-up, as Kohli and Rohit have not precisely set the field ablaze.

Rohit, who has played 15 innings this year, has made two hundreds but managed only one fifty in the remaining 13, totaling 497 runs in eight Tests at just over 35.

Kohli, 53 runs shy of 9000 Test runs, has not made



even a fifty in six innings this year, and while Rohit often perishes in his attempt to grab the momentum, his colleague offers a much more curious case.

The 35-year-old Kohli has not been able to convert the two starts he got this year, ending up with 46 (vs SA) and 47 (vs Bangladesh), stirring the uncomfortable memories of that great slump between 2019 and 2023.

The master batter will also have to keep an eye on New Zealand left-arm spinners - Ajaz Patel and Rachin Ravindra - the tribe which has been a thorn in his flesh in the past.

It has been a while since these two stalwarts embossed their mark across a full series, and a nervy

New Zealand could be their golden chance to do so.

India has only minor concerns, but New Zealand's troubles across batting and bowling departments are more pronounced.

Their batsmen struggled copiously against Sri Lankan spinners recently while losing an away series 0-2, and here they will have to negate two modern-day greats in Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja.

They took 20 wickets together against Bangladesh and with the Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch expected to give some assistance to spinners, the veterans might be itching to have a bowl here.

-PTI

Lakshya, Malvika make first-round exits

Odense: India's Lakshya Sen battled hard against China's Lu Guang Zu but ultimately lost in three games to make an early exit from the Denmark Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Tuesday.

Lakshya, a 2021 World championship bronze medalist, squandered an opening game advantage, losing 21-12 19-21 14-21 to Lu in a men's singles opening round match which lasted 70 minutes.

The 22-year-old from Almor, who finished fourth at the Paris Olympics, had previously lost in the second round of the Arctic Open in Finland last week.

Malvika Bansod, who had reached the quarterfinals at China Open, also couldn't cross the opening hurdle, going down to Vietnam's Nguyen Thuy Linh 13-21 12-21 in women's singles.

Panda sisters - Rutaparna and Swetaparna - also made a first-round exit after losing 18-21 22-24 against Chinese Taipei's Chang Ching Hui and Yang Ching Tun in women's doubles.

Lakshya, competing in his second event since the Olympics, kept pace with his Chinese rival before pulling ahead at 8-8 to take an 11-9 advantage at the break.

The Indian kept his nose ahead after resumption and jumped to 20-11 with a seven-point burst to comfortably pocket the opening game.

After the change of sides, Lakshya surged to 8-2 but Lu rallied to narrow the gap to 11-12. The Indian extended his lead to 16-11 but Lu's persistence paid off as he kept troubling Lakshya and reversed the situation, taking 19-18 lead.

All India FIDE Chess Soni scores calculative win, in joint lead



By correspondent

Mumbai: Atharv Soni of Maharashtra registered a calculative win against compatriot Om Gada to share the lead with IM Vikramaditya Kulkarni, Yash Watarkar, Arnab Kherdekar and AIM Saikat Nath with 5.5 points at the end of the sixth round of the SMCA Chess School organized first All India FIDE Rating Open Chess Tournament 2024 played at the Russian House, Peddar Road.

The Thane-based Soni (rating 1968) playing with the black pieces started with the French Tarrasch variation. Gada (1807) made a mistake on the 24th move by playing the pawn to g4 and that allowed Soni the upper hand and the black Bishop pair proved very strong and was instrumental in securing the win.

Meanwhile, on the top two boards, IM Vikramaditya Kulkarni (2125) was forced to share honours with city mate Arnab Kherdekar (1846) while Pune's Yash Watarkar (1963) faced quite a challenge from Delhi's AIM Saikat Nath (1829) before splitting two points.

Following closely behind the lead pack are, Sanjeev Mishra, Kshaunish Jaiswal and Yash Kapadi, all winning their respective sixth-

round matches and with five points each are still in contention of finishing among the top.

Mumbai-based Mishra (1885) defeated Thane's Anirudh Subramanian (1627) on the fourth board. Shaunish Jaiswal (1641) of Mumbai beat the higher-ranked Saurabh Kulkarni (1839) and Yash Kapadi (1818) of Palghar outwitted Manya Balani (1590) of Gujarat to stay in the hunt.

Darsh Shetty (Mumbai), Deepak Soni (Palghar), Yuti Patel (Mumbai) and Tarun N (Delhi) also won their sixth round matches and are in contention of finishing at the top all having five points each.

Results: Top-10: Round-6: IM Vikramaditya Kulkarni (5.5) drew Arnab Kherdekar (5.5) 0-0.5-0.5; Yash Watarkar (5.5) drew AIM Saikat Nath (5.5) 0-0.5-0.5; Om Gada (4.5) lost Atharv Soni (5.5) 0-1; Sanjeev Mishra (5) beat Anirudh Subramanian (4.5) 1-0; Kshaunish Jaiswal (5) beat Saurabh Kulkarni (4) 1-0; Yash Kapadi (5) beat Manya Balani (4) 1-0; Dhruv Muthe (4) lost Darsh Shetty (5) 0-1; Shriyans Agharkar (4) lost Deepak Soni (5) 0-1; Rajeev Rudra (4) lost Yuti Patel (5) 0-1, Shrivana Agrawal (4) lost Tarun N (5) 0-1.

Abhishek Jadhav brace in St. Thomas win

By correspondent

Mumbai: Abhishek Jadhav's twin strikes were the highlight of St. Thomas, Goregaon's 4-1 win against St. Paul's 'B', Dadar in a Men's Open match of the 44th Willingdon Catholic Gymkhana Annual Rink Football Tournament 2024, played under floodlights at the WCG courts.

Aditya More and Varun Sawant scored the other two goals for the winning side while St. Paul's pulled one back through Schneider Dennis' efforts.

In another match, St. Blaise 'A' Amboli got the better of Holy Cross, Kurla by a narrow 2-1 margin. Strikers Harold Fernandes and Dustin D'Costa were bang on target with a goal each for the Amboli outfit, while Aditya Shinde scored the lone goal for Holy Cross.

Results - Men's Open: St. Blaise 'A', Amboli 2 (Harold Fernandes, Dustin D'Costa) beat Holy Cross, Kurla 1 (Aditya Shinde); St. Joseph's 'A', Umerkhandi 4 (Sahil Tandel, Emaad Rohane, Dixit Bhoj, Dwayne D'Costa) beat St. John the Evangelist, Marol 1 (Danush Nadir); Our Lady of Health 'A', Sahar 3 (Imran Shaikh, Shoab Khan, Laksh Paske) beat Our Lady of Egypt, Kalina 0; Holy Family 'B', Andheri 2 (Faiz Shaikh, Clen Moares) beat St. Anthony's 'A', Vakola 0; St. Thomas, Goregaon 4 (Abhishek Jadhav 2, Aditya More, Varun Sawant) beat St. Paul's 'B', Dadar 1 (Schneider Dennis).

SAI, Union Bank of India, and RSPB win

New Delhi: Oct 15 (PTI) Sports Authority of India, Union Bank of India, and Railway Sports Promotion Board registered comprehensive victories in their respective pool matches of Senior Women Inter-Department National Hockey Championship here on Tuesday.

Sports Authority of India defeated UCO Women's Hockey Academy 11-0 in a Pool C game. A comprehensive performance from Sports Authority of India saw goals from Preeti Dubey (5, 24), Edula Jyothi (22, 23), Meenu Rani (13), Sakshi Shukla (20), Kanchan Nidhi Kerketta (29), Sumita (40), Vartika Rawat (45) Beena Pandey (47), and Deepali (56).

In a Pool D match, Union Bank of India beat Sashtra Seema Bal 4-2. Jiwani Kishori Toppo (1, 27), captain Rutuja Dadaso Pisal (12) and Nidhi (17) scored for Union Bank of India. Monu (39) and Manisha (46) were the scorers for Sashtra Seema Bal.



Groundsmen cover the pitch at M Chinnaswamy Stadium as it rains ahead of the first test match between India and New Zealand in Bengaluru on Tuesday. Pic: PTI

Online ticket sale for Mumbai Test

Mumbai: Online ticket sales for the third and final Test between India and New Zealand, scheduled to take place from November 1-5 at the Wankhede Stadium, will begin on Friday.

The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) announced the date of ticket

sale after its apex council meeting here on Tuesday.

The apex council unanimously agreed on the proposal made by MCA president Ajinkya Naik that free passes for the Test match should be given to children from Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation schools

as well as the semifinalists of the Harris and Giles Shield tournaments.

The upcoming contest between India and New Zealand will be the first Test in three years at the iconic Wankhede Stadium, with these two teams facing off here in December 2021

last. The season pass for the North Stand, the Sachin Tendulkar Stand as well as the Vijay Merchant Stand for general public will be of Rs 1500. For the Sunil Gavaskar Stand, the price will be Rs 325 (east lower) and Rs 625 (east upper).

Udita attracts highest bid

New Delhi: Indian defender Udita Duhan emerged as the costliest buy at the Hockey India League women's auction after she was acquired by Shraichi Rarh Bengal Tigers for Rs 32 lakh here on Tuesday.

Dutch star drag-flicker Yibbi Janssen was the second most expensive player and was bought by Odisha Warriors for Rs 29 lakh, followed by young Indian forward Sunelita Toppo, who was picked up by Delhi SG Pipers for Rs 24.00 lakh.

Indian players Lalremsemi (for Rs 25 lakh to Shraichi Rarh Bengal Tigers), Sunelita Toppo (for Rs 24 lakh to Delhi SG Pipers), and Sangita Kumari (for Rs 22 lakh to Delhi SG Pipers) attracted significant attention during the auction.

Several overseas players, including Belgium's Charlotte Englebert (for Rs 16 lakh to Soorma Hockey Club), Germany's Charlotte Stapenhorst (for Rs 16 lakh to Soorma Hockey Club), and Australia's Jocelyn Bartram (for Rs 15 lakh to Odisha Warriors) were the notable buys.

Inaugural Women's Kabaddi League Season preceded by selection trials, auction



New Delhi: The upcoming inaugural season of Women's Kabaddi League (WKL) will be preceded by nationwide selection trials leading to the auction process, the organisers said on Tuesday, without specifying any dates.

The WKL will feature several teams, including the Bengaluru Hawks, Delhi Durgas, Gujarat Angels, Haryana Hustlers, Great Marathas, Rajasthan Raiders, Telugu Warriors, and UP Ganga Strikers, according to a release from the organisers.

"The selection trials for WKL are set to be a major highlight of the upcoming season, as they will open doors for thousands of aspiring female players nationwide," it said.

"The league aims to identify the most talented athletes who will then be selected for the auction process and logically segmented for the playing."

The WKL's structure will follow a round-robin and home-away format during selection trials. It also plans participation of international players. -PTI

Waited for many years for women's HIL, says Rani

New Delhi: Rani Rampal waited for the women's Hockey India League as a player for years but now that the league will finally see the light of the day, the former India captain will wear a different hat.

Rani, who captained India to a historic fourth place finish at the Tokyo Olympics, will be the mentor and coach of Soorma Hockey Club of Punjab and Haryana in the women's HIL which will make its debut later this year.

"Hockey is my passion and I played my entire career with that. It was always in my mind that I will definitely accept any opportunity to serve Indian hockey.

Hockey was always on my mind," Rani said on the sidelines of the HIL women's auction here on Tuesday.

"I tried a lot to make a comeback in the national team but could not do so before the Paris Olympics. I had waited for many years for this women's league and when it started, it felt very good to be a part of the coaching staff and not as a player," said the 30-year-old Padma Shri awardee, who has scored 134 goals in 212 matches for India.

Asked why she opted out of the league as she had not officially announced her



retirement yet, Rani said: "I am a female player and I have faced a lot of struggles. A player is always a player. The desire to play never ends."

"But sometimes you have to make a difficult decision

and I decided to join the coaching staff. "It is difficult to talk about retirement right now. Now I will face a new challenge in the league and after that I will take a final decision."

Rani admitted that India's failure to qualify for the Paris Olympics was a setback for women's hockey in the country, but said there is no point in thinking about the past now. "Finishing fourth at the

Tokyo Olympics was a watershed moment for Indian women's hockey. It took many years for this and the players, federation, and coaches worked very hard.

"We did not qualify for Paris which was a big setback but there is a new learning in sports every day. Winning and losing are part of the game," she said.

"No team wants to lose. We cannot change the past but now we have to look for 2028. The first goal should be to win gold in the 2026 Asian Games and qualify directly for the Olympics. The women's league can be very helpful in preparing a pool of players."

Rani also lauded the appointment of Harendra Singh as the women's team coach.

"Harendra Sir always thinks of winning for the country and instills the same feeling in players. Language is a great medium to touch the hearts of the players and we are sure that under Harendra Sir, the team will do well in 2028 Los Angeles Olympics."

Talking about the auction, Rani admitted that the purse in the first season of the women's league is small but remains optimistic.

"The purse for the auction is less but the first step is always difficult. Same is

the case with Hockey India but hopefully more teams will come forward and the purse will also increase," she said.

"Our players come from very humble backgrounds so this league will help them a lot financially too."

The four teams in the first season of HIL Women's League are Soorma Hockey Club, Shraichi Rarh Bengal Tigers, Delhi SG Pipers and Odisha Warriors.

The teams have been given a cap of Rs 2 crore in the auction, while the players have been divided into three price slabs - Rs 10 lakh, Rs 5 lakh and Rs 2 lakh. -PTI