

# THE PERFECT VOICE



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## Ajit does an Uddhav; Wants CM chair rotated

By Suyash Padate

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar wants to rotate the CM's post among the alliance partners if the Mahayuti returns to power after the Assembly elections. Pawar recently met the Union Home Minister Amit Shah and urged him to consider this demand. Shah was on a three days tour of Maharashtra. Before leaving for Delhi, the BJP leader met Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and his two deputies Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar individually. During this meeting Pawar

made this demand. He emphasized that if the Mahayuti assumed power in Maharashtra again, the post of Chief Minister should be kept rotating for a fixed period to the three constituents of the alliance. Shah was in Mumbai to look into the fracas between BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP over the seat sharing impasse. Though Shah has not given any assurance to Pawar but he too was surprised by this demand, a source said. NCP leader Praful Patel has denied that any such demand was made by Pawar. State NCP chief Sunil Tatkare said, "I will not comment on the meeting between Ajitdada and Amit Shah. However, it is our commitment to contest the election as part of the Mahayuti alliance." He said the seat-sharing formula would be determined on the basis of the outcome of the 2019 polls. "BJP will contest the seats it won in 2019. It holds the same for the NCP and the Shiv Sena. Thus, the seat-sharing formula is clear on 200 seats. The remain-

ing 88 seats will be divided among the allies". Devendra Fadnavis recently indicated that the BJP's Parliamentary Board would decide on the Chief Minister position after the elections. "The decision taken by the main leaders of the National Democratic Alliance will be acceptable to all of us," he said. The BJP leadership is tightlipped over the demand of Ajit Pawar. According to sources, the BJP is unlikely to give its nod to this demand. The party might leave some more seats to the NCP and pacify the party leadership. Interestingly, Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray had made the same demand before the 2019 elections in his one-on-one meeting with Amit Shah when his party was in alliance with the BJP. Thackeray claims that Amit Shah had promised to make him CM for two and half years but he later retracted the promise. Eventually, that led to a break-up between BJP and Shiv Sena. The friends

### Floods, landslides kill 66 in Nepal

By Shirish B Pradhan

**Kathmandu:** Floods and landslides caused by incessant rain killed at least 66 people and injured 60 others in Nepal, officials said on Saturday. Parts of Nepal have been inundated with rainfall since Thursday, prompting disaster authorities to warn of flash floods. Nepal Police Deputy Spokesperson Bishwo Adhikari said that out of the 66 people killed in the Himalayan nation due to the continuous rainfall, 34 were killed in the Kathmandu valley. As many as 60 people were also injured in the floods. A total of 79 people remain missing countrywide, with 16 unaccounted for in Kathmandu Valley. More than 3,000 people have also been rescued. Adhikari said the main highways have been blocked in 63 locations across the country. Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Urban Development Prakash Man Singh called an emergency meeting involving various ministers, including the Home Minister, Home Secretary, and chiefs of security agencies, instructing them to expedite search and rescue operations. The government has ordered the closure of all schools across Nepal for three days.

### Nirmala Sitharaman booked for extortion

FALLOUT OF ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME



**Bengaluru:** The Bengaluru police on Saturday registered a case against Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials, and a few BJP leaders in connection with a complaint relating to the now-scrapped electoral bonds scheme. The FIR was registered under sections 384 (punishment for extortion) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) on the directions of a special court in the city. The complaint, lodged by Adarsh R Iyer, Co-President of 'Janaadhikaara Sangharsha Parishath' (JSP), also names Karnataka BJP chief B.Y. Vijayendra, son of B.S. Yediyurappa's, and party leader Nalinkumar Kateel among others. The complainant has alleged that the accused "committed extortion under the guise and garb of electoral bonds and benefited to the tune of more than Rs 8,000 crore." He further alleged that Sitharaman, through the clandestine aid and support of ED officials, facilitated extortion of thousands of crores of rupees for the benefit of others both at the state and national levels. "The entire extortion racket under the garb of electoral bonds has been orchestrated hand in glove with officials of BJP at various levels," the complaint stated. Barely weeks before the Lok Sabha elections, the Supreme Court, in February, had struck down the electoral bonds scheme launched in 2018 of anonymous political funding, terming it as "unconstitutional, arbitrary and violative of Article 14". Highlighting that "the information about funding to a political party is essential for a voter to exercise their freedom to vote in an effective manner", a five-judge Constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, said that changes made in the laws to implement the unconstitutional.

### Nasrallah killing: Life disrupted in Srinagar

**Srinagar:** In a shocking incident, anti-Israel protests broke out in several parts here on Saturday against the killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon. A large number of people, including children, carrying black flags, poured on roads in Hassanabad, Rainawari, Saidakad-

al, Meer Behri, and Ashai-bagh areas of the city, officials said. The protesters chanted anti-Israel and anti-US slogans and denounced the killing of the top leader of the Lebanon-based militant group. The protests remained peaceful. Police are deployed in the areas ensured

that the demonstrations do not turn violent, officials said. Long traffic jams were reported from several parts of the city, including the Khanyar-Hazratbal axis, where most of the protests took place. Lok Sabha member from Srinagar Aga Ruhullah, who was canvassing for National Conference candidates, suspended his campaign. PDP president Mehbooba Mufti also suspended her next day's election campaign. "Cancelling my campaign tomorrow in solidarity with the martyrs of Lebanon & Gaza especially Hassan Nasarullah. We stand with the people of Palestine & Lebanon in this hour of immense grief & exemplary resistance," Mufti posted on X. The protest has taken place when the union territory is gearing up for the last leg of polling for Assembly elections.



President Droupadi Murmu during the inauguration of Bhartiya Kala Mahotsav at Rashtrapati Nilayam, Secunderabad on Saturday. Pic: PTI

### 17 killed in two mass shootings

**Johannesburg:** Seventeen people including 15 women were killed in two mass shootings that took place in close proximity to each other in a rural town in South Africa, police said Saturday. A search was underway for the suspects, national police spokesperson Brig. Athlenda Mathe said in a statement. The victims

were 15 women and two men, she said. One other person was in critical condition in the hospital. The shootings took place Friday night in the town of Lusikisiki in Eastern Cape province in southeastern South Africa. Video released by police showed that the shootings occurred at two houses in the same neighbourhood, which is a

collection of rural homesteads on the outskirts of the town. Twelve women and a man were killed in one house and three women and a man were killed in the other house, police said. "A manhunt has been launched to apprehend those behind these heinous killings," Mathe said. Police did not give any details on a possible motive.

### Rahul's Ram temple remark faces flak

**New Delhi:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi came under attack on Saturday for his "naach-gaana" comment on the January 22 consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, with the ruling BJP calling him a "liar of the highest order". The saffron party also said the Congress leader's comments show the Gandhi family's real nature and contempt for Hinduism. The reaction of the BJP came after a video clip of Gandhi went viral on social media, in which he is heard saying, "Amitabh Bachchan, Anbani and Adani were invited" to attend the consecration of the Ram temple but "no poor people, labourers or farmers" were called to attend the event. "Naach-gana (dancing-singing) was happening there," the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said, addressing a poll rally in Haryana's Barwala on Thursday. That is why the BJP lost the Ayodhya Lok Sabha

seat to the Samajwadi Party's Awadhesh Singh in the parliamentary election, the Congress leader said. BJP's national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi accused the Congress of repeatedly disrespecting the Ram temple and pointed out that the workers involved in the construction of the shrine were felicitated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and showered with flower petals. "It is very sad and serious that Rahul Gandhi, who did not take the oath (in the Lok Sabha) in the name of god, is speaking various kinds of nonsense regarding religious matters," Trivedi told a press conference at the BJP headquarters here. The workers involved in the temple's construction in Ayodhya were felicitated by Modi and showered with flower petals, he said. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad also condemned Gandhi's remarks. The organisation said Gandhi insulted people's sentiments.

## Usha vs IOA: CEO's appointment leads to internal war

By Philem Dipak Singh

**New Delhi:** The feud between Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president PT Usha and revolting Executive Council members took another ugly turn after a dozen of them shot off a letter to senior IOC official Jerome Poivey accusing the legendary athlete of running the organization in an "autocratic" manner. During Thursday's meeting, there was a bitter confrontation during the IOA meeting where the embattled Usha outrightly rejected their appeal of removing Raghuram Iyer from CEO's post. In a letter to Poivey, the head of Institutional Rela-

tions and Governance at the International Olympic Committee (IOC), who attended the stormy IOA Executive Council meeting via video-conference, the 12 EC members said they want the national body to be governed "democratically". Usha, on her part, has already said that the appointment of Iyer was done by strictly adhering to the IOA constitution in an EC meeting on January 5, which was video-graphed, and there was no reason to backtrack from that decision. The EC members wrote to Poivey that they will re-advertise for the position of the IOA CEO, "aiming to appoint a suitable candi-

date within the next two months collectively and along with the president". "While appreciating your understanding, we are deeply concerned with the conduct of the IOA President, whose autocratic behaviour has always been regrettable, and we also regret subjecting you to such an experience which has become a norm for her to run down the views and concerns of her colleagues in every single meeting or opportunity. Senior vice president Ajay H Patel, vice presidents RajLaxmi Deo and Gagan Narang, Treasurer Sahdev Yadav, Joint Secretaries Alaknanda Ashok and Kalyan Chaubey, other



Her approach of 'My way or the Highway' contradicts the democratic principles envisioned in the IOA constitution. While we trust that you would believe the efforts of all Council members is to have an approach of inclusivity and consensus while aligning opinions in diversity. IOA members in letter

In the last minute (of the meeting), Jerome was telling them (the EC members) that you should not do like this, you should ratify this (appointment of Iyer). I am saying as I want to help you. P.T. Usha

Executive Council members Amitabh Sharma, Bhupender Singh Bajwa, Rohit Rajpal, Dola Banerjee, Harpal Singh and Yogeshwar Dutt signed the letter. Chaubey and Harpal had joined Thursday's EC meeting online, where Usha had rejected the demand of the majority members to remove Iyer.

Usha, on the other hand, had said after Thursday's meeting that Poivey counselled the revolting EC members to ratify Iyer's appointment. She also said that the revolting EC members had earlier in the month assured Poivey that they would ratify Iyer's appointment. The bone of contention is

the Rs 20 lakh per month salary for Iyer, along with other perks. Usha had said she offered to renegotiate Iyer's salary in Thursday's meeting but the 12 EC members were adamant about starting the process afresh. She said the latest development could jeopardise India's chances of bidding for the 2036 Olympics. "Only after the appointment (of the CEO) was done, the Future Host Commission agreed to have a dialogue with us, otherwise they would not agree to it. The CEO will have to lead the negotiations, we have to show professionalism, otherwise how would we get to present our bid?" she asked.

# All parties want us keep Diwali in mind, says CEC

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Saturday expressed concern over the "apathy" of urban and young voters in Maharashtra, and said efforts are being made to ensure maximum polling in the coming assembly elections in the state.

Speaking at a press conference here after reviewing poll preparedness, CEC Kumar informed that strict instructions have been given to the administration that officers who have completed three years in their posting should be transferred immediately.

The CEC, who wrapped up the poll body's two-day visit to the state, also

warned that fake news during the polls will be dealt with sternly.

Besides disclosing in their affidavits, candidates have to prominently declare criminal cases they are facing, if any, thrice in newspapers in print as well on television, he said, adding that political parties too have to publish within three days of nomination why a candidate with criminal background was selected.

"You (political parties) have to tell the public whether you did not get any (other) candidate and why was it necessary to select them (those with criminal background)," he said.

The CEC informed that webcasting of proceedings

will be done at a minimum of 50 percent of booths -- 100 per cent in urban areas and at more than 50 per cent booths in rural areas.

"We are committed to provide free, fair, inducement-free, accessible and inclusive elections at every stage. We will make all efforts sincerely to provide absolutely level-playing field," he said.

All parties wanted the Election Commission to keep Diwali and Chhath celebrations in mind while scheduling the elections, he said.

Efforts are being taken to ensure that there is maximum enrolment and voting in Maharashtra assembly elections, Kumar said,



adding that if any name is yet to be enrolled, it can be done even now.

On transfer of officials, the CEC said the poll body made it clear to the Maharashtra Chief Secretary and Director General of Police that those who have completed three years must be transferred.

"There can be no dis-

agreement on this. We are not reconsidering this. Everybody must be transferred," he said.

"We have asked Maharashtra Government to shift officials who have served in their home district or current posting for over three years," Kumar said, adding he has asked for a compliance report in

the next couple of days.

About the Opposition Congress demanding transfer of Director General of Police Rashmi Shukla to ensure free and fair polls, he said individual complaints are not discussed in press conferences, but the poll body will go through the process rigorously and take decision.

Daily wage earners and others in the unorganised sector should be informed by the administration that voting day will be a paid holiday for them, he said.

There will be checking of all helicopters (during electioneering) to ensure inducement-free elections, he said.

Kumar warned that those spreading fake news

and using deep fake technology on social media (to spread wrong or misleading information about elections or candidates) will be dealt with sternly.

"I am confident Maharashtra will contribute to the ensuing festival of democracy," Kumar said.

"We met all the stakeholders, including political parties and officials during our stay in Mumbai, he added.

To a question about whether the Maharashtra elections will be held in a single phase or multiple phases, he said, "You will come to know that later."

There will be 1,00,186 polling booths in the assembly elections of which 42,585 would be in urban

areas and 57,601 in rural parts. As many as 350 booths will be managed only by the youth -- those who have recently joined government service, while there will be 388 booths will all-women staff.

During the visit to the state, the Election Commission met leaders of 11 parties -- BJP, BSP, AAP, CPI (M), Congress, MNS, SP, Shiv Sena (UBT), Shiv Sena, NCP and NCP (SP), Kumar said.

Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Dr Sukhbir Singh Sandhu were also present at the press conference.

The term of the current 288-member Maharashtra assembly will come to an end on November 26.

## 2008 Malegaon blast trial near completion

Mumbai: Sixteen years have passed since a blast rocked Maharashtra's Malegaon on a quiet September day in 2008, killing six people and injuring more than 100, and the trial in the case has just about reached the concluding stages.

While the prosecution has presented its final say in the case, the defence is likely to commence its closing arguments on September 30.

Six people were killed and more than 100 injured when an explosive device strapped to a motorcycle went off near a mosque in Malegaon, a town about 200 km from Mumbai in north Maharashtra, on September 29, 2008.

Lt Col Prasad Purohit,

BJP leader Pragya Thakur-Major (retired) Ramesh Upadhyay, Ajay Rahirkar, Sudhakar Dwivedi, Sudhakar Chaturvedi and Sameer Kulkarni are facing trial under the provisions Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad initially began a probe into the case before it was transferred to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in 2011.

"The trial is finally nearing the end, and we can expect the court to conclude it soon," said advocate Shahid Nadeem, representing the victim side.

He said in the pursuit of justice, victims have inter-

vened and opposed the discharge and bail applications of the accused, but the ATS's lack of interest in the case has been their biggest concern.

Nisar Ahmed, who lost his son Sayed Azhar to the blast, expressed his anguish at the slow progress of the trial but said he has faith in the court. Ahmed said the trial has dragged on for 16 years, as the alleged accused were influential persons. He requested the court not to allow anybody to take it for granted and emphasised the early disposal of the case in the interest of the victims. During the trial, the prosecution examined 323 prosecution witnesses, of which 34 turned hostile. -PTI

## Five baby Caiman crocodiles seized

Mumbai: Two passengers were caught allegedly attempting to smuggle baby Caiman crocodiles at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport here, a Customs official said on Saturday.

The air intelligence unit (AIU) of Mumbai Customs intercepted two passengers who had arrived on a Vistara flight from Bangkok (Thailand) the late Friday night, the official said.

Five baby reptiles were found concealed in toothpaste boxes in their hand luggage, he said.

The officials said the reptiles, which were around 5 to 7 inches long, appeared dehydrated and distressed. They are being examined and treated by RAWW (Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare).

## Modi to launch projects worth Rs 11,200 cr today

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch projects worth more than Rs 11,200 crore for Maharashtra through video-conferencing on Sunday.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Saturday said Modi will inaugurate the Pune Metro section from the district court to Swargate, which will also mark the completion of the Pune Metro Rail Project (Phase-1).

The cost of the underground section is around Rs 1,810 crore.

Modi will lay the foundation stone for the Swargate-Katraj extension of Pune Metro Phase-1, to be developed at a cost of around Rs

2,955 crore. This southern extension of around 5.46 km is completely underground with three stations -- Market Yard, Padmavati and Katraj -- the PMO said.

The prime minister will also inaugurate the Bidkin Industrial Area, a transformative project covering an expansive 7,855 acres under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme of the Centre.

The project developed under the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor holds immense potential as a vibrant economic hub in the Marathwada region. The Centre has approved it with an overall project cost of more than Rs 6,400 crore for development in three phases, the PMO said.

Modi will inaugurate the Solapur airport as well. It will significantly improve connectivity, making Solapur more accessible to tourists, business travellers and investors.

The existing terminal building at the airport has been revamped to serve around 4.1 lakh passengers annually, the PMO said.

Modi will lay the foundation stone for a memorial at Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule's first girls' school at Bhidwada in commemoration of the noted social reformer.

The PM was to launch most of these projects from Pune in the poll-bound state a few days ago but his visit was cancelled due to massive rains.

## Man sentenced for molestation

Thane: A court in Thane district sentenced a man to three years of rigorous imprisonment for molesting his 14-year-old relative.

Additional sessions judge N.K. Karande of the Bhiwandi sessions court found the 30-year-old accused guilty of charges under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

In an order passed on September 26, the judge also imposed a fine of Rs 2,000 on him.

Special public prosecutor Vijay M Mundhe informed the court that the accused lived in the same locality as the girl.

He said in September 2021, the accused called the girl to his house on some pretext and touched her inappropriately.

## CRIME WATCH

### Boy runs away from home

Thane: A 16-year-old boy ran away from home at Shahad in Maharashtra's Thane district after his parents scolded him for not studying, police said on Saturday.

The incident occurred on September 25, they said. "The boy's parents scolded him for not studying, following which he left the house around 9 pm on Wednesday. His parents carried out a frantic search for him for two days, but failed to find him," an officer of Ulhasnagar police station said. Based on the missing person's report filed by the parents, the police registered a case of kidnapping against an unidentified person, and efforts to trace the boy were on.

### Two booked for cramming cattle

Thane: Police have registered a case against two persons for allegedly cramming 24 bovine animals in a truck and transporting them illegally in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Saturday. The police took the action in Ulhasnagar town on Thursday following a tip-off, he said. "We received information that some domestic animals were crammed into a truck and being transported. Accordingly, a suspicious truck was stopped at a checkpoint near Birla Gate. A total of 24 domestic animals, including 14 buffaloes, were found tied up and crammed into the vehicle," the officer of Ulhasnagar police station said.

### Woman booked for cheating

Thane: The Navi Mumbai police have registered a case against the wife of a policeman for allegedly cheating people of Rs 82.28 lakh by luring them to invest in schemes, an official said on Saturday. Based on a complaint by one of the investors, a first information report (FIR) was registered against the 40-year-old accused on Thursday, assistant inspector Mahendra Aher of the CBD police station said. The accused, the wife of a police havildar, accepted money from people promising them good returns in small schemes, he said. The woman allegedly collected Rs 82.28 lakh from at least 22 persons since 2019 and later failed to return their money, the officer said.



Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari being presented a memento by with CII Maharashtra Chairman Vishal Vithal Kamat during the 10th edition of CII-MSME Summit & Exhibition in Nagpur. Pic: PTI

## Dhangar outfit says it won't support Shiv Sena

By Correspondent

Thane: An outfit of the Dhangar community on Friday announced that it will not support the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, citing its unaddressed demand for quota under the ST category.

Dhangars, a shepherd community from western Maharashtra and Marathwada region, have been demanding inclusion in the ST category.

The community says it has been deprived of the quota as the Centre's database has no mention of 'Dhangar' but instead identifies 'Dhangad' as part of STs. Dhangars are currently on the NT list.

Addressing the media here, Madhav Bhau Gade, chief of the outfit Yashwant Sena, said, "If the Chief Minister does not have time to understand the Dhangar reservation and our other demands, we don't need him either."

Gade said while the Yashwant Sena had initially backed the Shinde-led party in the Lok Sabha elections, the lack of concrete decisions regarding reservation for the community caused disappointment.

There were approximately 300,000 Dhangar voters in Thane district, he said, warning that if their concerns continue to be overlooked, the outfit would consider fielding candidates in the upcoming assembly elections.

## Students Parliament inaugurated

Latur: Throughout history, student contributions have played a crucial role in revolutions worldwide. The Student Parliament serves as a significant platform for developing leadership qualities and personal growth among students. This initiative aims to help students understand the workings of the Indian Parliament and the essence of democracy, fostering the leadership our nation needs, asserted teacher Vinod Chavan.

"Today's students are the architects of a developed India, holding the power to shape history," he added. He was the chief guest at the inauguration ceremony of the Student Parliament at Yashwant School, run by Shiv Chhatrapati Shikshan Sanstha.

The event was graced by prominent figures including President of the School Committee Anandrao Mane, Member Swapnil Manale, Assistant Headmaster Shivaji Jadhav, Supervisor Dayanand Kamble, and Student Parliament President Dinesh Dhangar, Vice-President Durgesh Shinde.

## First list of Sena (UBT) during Navratri: Danve

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar: The first list of Shiv Sena (UBT) candidates for the upcoming Maharashtra polls might be released during Navratri, Leader of Opposition in Legislative Council Ambadas Danve said on Saturday.

Speaking to the Marathi news channel ABP Majha, Danve said, "We won 60 seats in 2019. We will go beyond that."

Once the seat-sharing formula among the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) partners -- Sena (UBT), NCP (SP) and Congress -- is finalised, his party will announce the first list, he said.

Elections to the 288-member Maharashtra assembly will likely be held in November.

"We don't actually need to convey to someone officially that they will contest the elections. It's a question of understanding. Accordingly, many of our leaders have already started preparing for the elections," Danve said.

Since the 2019 polls, the original Shiv Sena has split, with the party name and its 'bow and arrow' symbol going to the faction led by Chief Minister Eknath



Shinde. Shiv Sena is a partner in the ruling coalition of Mahayuti that also comprises BJP and NCP headed by Ajit Pawar.

Danve belongs to the other faction, Shiv Sena (UBT), headed by Uddhav Thackeray.

The Sena (UBT) leader said Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar earlier this week and talked of winning 30 out of 46 seats in the Marathwada region. "I'm not sure if they will even contest on 30 seats in Marathwada," he said.

"BJP cadres are being told to persuade workers from other parties to join their camp, but their members are switching to our side. The entire BJP unit of Vajapur joined us recently. Even those from BJP's Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar (West) unit have also joined us," he claimed.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"For the past few days I have been holding a 'janata darbar' (public interaction) in my constituency. Many persons are insisting that I contest upcoming assembly polls from Indapur. I will take a decision on these demands of my constituency persons once Pitru paksha is over."

Harshvardhan Patil, Leader, BJP



## Planets, periodic table and noble thoughts

### AN MSRTC BUS THAT DRAWS STUDENTS IN DROVES

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar: A state transport bus in Maharashtra's Beed district has become a huge draw among students for its education-themed interiors after its driver and conductor took it upon themselves to make the ride fun-filled and informative.

From outside, the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) bus appears no different from the thousands of similar passenger carriers, with

a white-orange colour scheme, plying across the state.

But the ST bus turns vibrant with an array of images and messages pasted on the roof and side walls, resembling a mobile classroom inside.

"Students love what we have done to the interiors of the bus. In fact, more students are now travelling on our bus," conductor Vaishali Mule told PTI.

The bus covers a distance



of 200 km daily, both ways, to pick up students from their respective villages and drop them back from schools on the Beed-Nalwanda route.

Mule said she and her

driver colleague Siraj Pathan have spent Rs 35,000 from their own pockets to deck out the bus with educational materials, visuals concerning personalities like Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Swami Vivekananda and Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and messages imparting values.

"Most of the students using our bus are children of labourers engaged in sugarcane cutting. These families didn't bother much about

sending their kids to schools. We think our initiative has changed that as more students, including girls, are going to school," she said.

While bright images of planets in the solar system have been plastered on the roof, the bus also has a periodic table and photos and information about yoga asanas (poses), she said. The bus has become a hit among students, she added.

"Students of Vishwanath school in Wangi and Sangameshwar Vidyalaya at Nalwanda travel on our bus," Mule said.

Divisional Transport Superintendent of Beed Shivraj Karad said, "The driver and conductor of the bus took the initiative and we supported them. The number of students particularly girls travelling by this bus has risen to 290 from 200 in a year."

-PTI

# Majority of employees vouch for mental health



Mumbai: Even as the corporate sector in India is taking steps to address mental health issues at workplaces, a majority of employees believe companies could do more to improve their overall well-being, a survey report said on Saturday.

Over 79 per cent of those participated in the survey opined their organisations could do more to address mental health issues and well-being, according to the report by HR services and workforce solutions provider Genius Consultants.

"We must recognise that employee well-being is not just a trend, but a crucial aspect of organisational success. The data reveals that a significant number of employees are grappling with anxiety and feeling

overwhelmed in their work environments. Companies need to take proactive steps to foster a supportive atmosphere that prioritises mental health and work-life balance," Genius Consultants Chairman and Managing Director R.P. Yadav said.

The report is based on a survey carried out between August 5 and September 2, 2024, among 1,783 employees working across sectors.

It further showed that over 45 per cent of employees experience anxiety and stress every Sunday evening when they prepare to return to work on Monday, while 13 per cent carry mixed feelings about the same.

Moreover, 78 per cent respondents reported a harsh workplace characterised



**Anna Sebastian Peralay, a 26-year-old chartered accountant at Ernst & Young (EY) in Pune, had passed away from a cardiac arrest this July reportedly because of work pressure. Her father, Sibi Joseph, had said that she often worked late into the night. She had previously raised concerns about extreme work pressure with senior officials but no action was taken.**

by peer pressure and behavioural expectations from management and colleagues, it said.

Only 17 per cent disagreed with this assessment, highlighting the need for a more supportive culture within organisations, the report said.

Meanwhile, 66 per cent of employees feel overburdened by their current work structures, believing that their work-life balance is being severely disrupted, said the report.

This alarming percentage suggests that a substantial portion of the workforce is struggling to manage their professional and personal lives effectively, it added. -PTI

## Ahead of festivals, police tighten security

Mumbai: As part of their anti-terror preparedness ahead of the festival season, Mumbai police have stepped up security near religious sites and other crowded places across the city, an officer said.

All senior police officers have been asked to pay special attention to security arrangements in their jurisdiction. Considering the upcoming festivals and elections, mock drills are being conducted, he said.

Police on Friday conducted mock drills at places like Bhaucha Dhakka, Barkat Ali Road, Iskon temple in Juhu, and Zaveri Bazar to check their security preparedness in the country's financial capital, which has experienced terror attacks in the past. All temples in the city have been asked to remain vigilant and report suspicious activities as a precautionary measure.

In a routine preventive order on Friday, the Mumbai police said subversive or anti-social elements might seek hideouts in residential areas and there is every likelihood of "breach of peace and disturbance of public tranquility with grave danger to human life and injury to private or public property on that account".

It asked landlords have rented out their properties, including hotels, guest houses and 'musafir khana's to immediately furnish the particulars of their tenants through the citizen portal of Mumbai police. If the tenant is not an Indian citizen, then the owner and the foreigner will have to furnish information about the renter, including passport details, failing which action would be taken, the officer added.



Devotees carry Goddess Durga idol to the pandal ahead of Navratri festival at Dharavi in Mumbai on Saturday.

Pic: Bhushan Koyande

## 'State will control Dharavi, not Adani'

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has made it clear that the state government will have a final word in the development of Dharavi. He also pointed that the previous Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had not capped the Transferrable Development Rights (TDR) while awarding the contract to Adani Realities, the developer of Dharavi.

Fadnavis alleged that Thackeray is against development. "When our government was not there they stopped our metro. They stopped our coastal road. They stopped our airport. So they have experience in stopping," he said at a function.

Fadnavis said Uddhav government cancelled the tender for Dharavi redevelopment awarded by us. "They decided on new conditions. In the tender conditions that were finalised by Uddhavji's Cabinet, there



was no cap on the TDR that was to be received. That means whoever gets the tender becomes the owner of Mumbai and the entire TDR market in Mumbai is in his hands. If I were there, we would have said that it would not work, we would not let it happen this way, we would have done it at 90 per cent value."

"We have a capping on TDR and TDR was put on a digital platform which is in front of everyone. Its value will never exceed 90 per cent. We have put this type of capping in it. These people who are levelling such allegations (that Adani will control Mumbai's real estate) are ignorant or they

have not studied the tender or want to do politics."

Fadnavis said Uddhav government had considered only 70,000 people of Dharavi for rehabilitation, which is ground floor residents. "We considered those who are on the first floor and are called ineligible, whose structures came after 2011. All such people will be provided accommodation and after 10 years that rental housing will be converted into their ownership."

The former CM laid a plan for Dharavi's redevelopment. He said, "17 per cent of the land will go to roads and 17 per cent will go to the green spaces. If we consider the total space then 45-50 per cent space would be required for housing. Dharavi is not a slum. It is our commercial centre as well in a way. There is a big industry there and we will rehabilitate that industry and for five years we will not take any tax from them."

Fadnavis also refuted the allegation that huge land parcels have been transferred to Adani in lieu of Dharavi's redevelopment. "The land parcels have not been given to Adani. They have been given to DRP, which is Dharavi Redevelopment Project. This is government body. The government is holding the share. It has not been transferred to Adani."

On allegations that multiple Dharavis are being created, Fadnavis said, "What was originally decided, those conditions were decided by Uddhav ji and in that only the DRP was there. We ensured that an officer at the secretary level of the Maharashtra government, who is equivalent to the Municipal commissioner of BMC, will call the shots. Adani does not decide."

Fadnavis said the DRP does not have the authority to formulate development rules. It can be approved only by the government."

## MMRDA approves Rs 8498 cr slum rehab scheme

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority has approved a Rs 8,498 crore slum rehabilitation scheme at Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar and Kamraj Nagar in Ghatkopar East, an official said on Saturday.

The moves come just ahead of Maharashtra assembly polls, which will be held before the term of the

development. Spread over 31.82 hectares, the scheme will provide free 1BHK homes of 300 square feet to eligible residents. It will also improve infrastructure, including gardens, health centres, and educational facilities," the release said.

This project is expected to be completed in 48 months and will also support the extension of the Eastern Freeway till Thane.



House ends on November 26.

In a release issued on Friday evening, MMRDA said the approval came during the authority's 158th meeting chaired by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

"The project will be executed in collaboration with Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) and aims to rehabilitate around 17,000 slum dwellers while promoting sustainable urban

This initiative underscores the government's commitment to improving the living conditions of slum dwellers while boosting infrastructure growth, the release quoted CM Shinde as saying.

MMRDA metropolitan commissioner Sanjay Mukherjee called the project a step towards transforming the life of slum dwellers and a crucial step in building a modern and inclusive Mumbai.



Aaditya Thackeray with mother Rashmi celebrated Yuva Sena victory in the Mumbai University's senate elections on Saturday.

Pic: Bhushan Koyande

## Two held with pistols

Mumbai: Two persons have been arrested for alleged possession of country-made pistols and bullets in suburban Powai here, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, a crime branch team on Friday laid a trap and apprehended the duo who had arrived in the area allegedly to deliver the weapons, an officer said.

The accused, Sachin Kishwah (18) and Amarkumar Nai (23), hail from Katni in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh, he said.

## Ambergris worth Rs 6 crore seized

Thane: Crime branch seized over 5 kg ambergris (whale vomit) with an estimated value of Rs 6.20 crore from a car in Dombivli township, a senior officer said on Saturday.

Ambergris is a waxy substance produced by the digestive system of sperm whales and is used in perfumery.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Shivraj Patil told reporters that police

acted on an input and intercepted a car in Manpada area on Friday.

Police seized 5.64 kg of ambergris with an estimated value of Rs 6.20 crore (in the black market) from the car and arrested three occupants, who are residents of Navi Mumbai. Goods and mobile phones were also seized, a police official said.

An FIR was registered under relevant sections of the Wildlife Protection Act.

## AP Dhillon to perform in Mumbai

Mumbai: Popular Punjabi rapper AP Dhillon is set to perform in Delhi, Mumbai and Chandigarh as part of his upcoming Brownprint India Tour.

This would be the second India tour for the Canada-based singer, who is known for hits such as "Brown Munde", "Excuses" and "Insane".

Promoted and produced by White Fox India, the first show will begin in Mumbai on December 7 followed by another performance in New Delhi on December 14 and the final stop in Chandigarh on December 21.

The 31-year-old singer, who will also be joined by his long-time collaborator Shinda Kahlon, said he is excited to return to the country once again.

"The love and support I've received from Indian fans have been overwhelming. I can't wait to reconnect with them and share the energy of 'The Brownprint' live," he said in a statement.

Aman Kumar, Co-Founder, White Fox India, said they are confident that the upcoming concert tour will "surpass all expectations". -PTI

## Kin of IT employee get Rs 4.50 cr compensation

Thane: The National Lok Adalat held in Maharashtra's Thane district on Saturday settled a death claim by ordering compensation of Rs 4.50 crore to the relatives of a man who was killed in a road accident in 2022.

Pankaj Shedge, who was a senior employee of an IT company located at Irvine in California of the USA, earned an annual salary of USD 110,000. On December 9, 2022, when he was going on his scooter on Panvel-Mumbra Road, he was hit by a truck, which ultimately resulted in his death.

The family sought a compensation of Rs 30 crore from the insurance company.

Advocate G.A. Vinod, who represented the claimants, emphasized the emotional and financial devastation the family faced due to the loss of their primary breadwinner. The insurance company settled the claim for Rs 4.50 crore.

Apart from this case, claims of different amounts, including Rs 1.33 crore, Rs 75 lakh, Rs 65.40 lakh, Rs 62 lakh and Rs



56.80 lakh were settled during the Lok Adalat.

The settlement cheques were presented to the claimants during a formal ceremony attended by District Judge A.N. Sirsikar, Chief Judicial Magistrate S.K. Fokmare, member of the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) S.N. Shah and District Legal Services Authority (DLA) Secretary I.K. Suryavanshi.

A claim of Rs 1.33 crore for the death of Sushil Mohan Sawant was also settled at the Lok Adalat.

Sawant, a 46-year-old manager at a computer firm, was commuting to work when a bus hit his motorcycle, resulting in his death in March last year. His family members demanded a compensation of Rs 2 crore from the insurance company. -PTI

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"If you remove my part from some movie, would it be the same name? If it makes a difference, then I would want to be part of that film even if it's one scene in the film. Having said that, there are great roles (for women)."



Mrunal Thakur, Actor

## Breastmilk bank helps 10,000 newborns

By Talim Ansari

Mumbai: More than 43,000 women have donated breastmilk to civic-run Sion Hospital, home to Asia's first breastmilk bank, in the last five years, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has said.

The donations from 43,412 lactating mothers have helped 10,523 newborns, according to the data released by the civic body during the National Breastfeeding Month in

August. Breast milk donations play a crucial role in bringing down mortality rates among low-weight premature and at-risk newborns.

Talking to PTI, Dr. Mohan Joshi, dean of Sion Hospital, said, "The milk bank was started in 1989 by Armida Fernandes, and it received donations of Rs 1 lakh from Tata Group's Indian Hotels Company Limited which was its chairman. It's the first breastmilk bank in Asia."



He said mother's milk is special because it contains haemoglobin and vital vita-

mins essential for a newborn's growth and development.

The donations at the breastmilk bank have supported infants with low birth weight and insufficient growth and babies of women who are unable to breastfeed due to postnatal complications.

The hospital is now helping medical establishments in western India to set up similar milk banks.

Dr. Swati Manerkar, head of the neonatology department, said, "The objective of the milk bank is to ensure that no infant dies due to scarcity of

breastmilk. We take all safety precautions while procuring milk from donors. We approach lactating mothers who can give their milk once they have fed their babies."

The milk is then processed in the pasteurisation area, and once cleared, it is stored at -40 degrees Celsius, she said.

Dr. Manerkar said milk is given when prescribed by doctors. "The milk bank helps around 2,000 to 2,500 newborns each year, she said. -PTI

# Tata Motors holds ground-breaking in TN



By Correspondent

**Chennai:** Tata Motors held its ground-breaking ceremony to set-up its new vehicle manufacturing facility at Panapakkam in Ranipet district of Tamil Nadu to produce next-gen vehicles.

This international benchmark greenfield manufacturing facility, that will cater to both domestic and international markets, will see an investment of Rs 9,000 crores, which has been designed for an annual production capacity of over 250,000 vehicles.

Production will begin in a phased manner and progressively increase to reach this capacity over the next 5-7 years, the company statement said.

This facility has the potential to create over 5,000 employment opportunities

(direct and indirect) and will be guided by principles of sustainability and use 100 percent renewable energy for running operations.

"We are pleased to make Panapakkam as the home of our next generation of cars and SUVs, including electric and luxury vehicles. We now intend to build our advanced vehicle manufacturing plant here using cutting-edge manufacturing technology and world-class sustainability practices. Our endeavour will be to have a high share of women employees across levels, in line with our focus towards greater empowerment of women," said N Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons on the occasion.

The USD 44 billion global automobile manufacturer of cars, utility vehicles, pick-ups, trucks, and

buses with operations in India, UK, South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia, has six principal manufacturing facilities in India including Jamshedpur in the state of Jharkhand, Pune in Maharashtra, Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, Pantnagar in Uttarakhand, Sanand in Gujarat and at Dharwad in Karnataka.

## Fire at Tata Electronics

A fire broke out at a chemical godown of the electronics component factory of Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd in Tamil Nadu's Hosur in the small hours of Saturday, police said.

There were no casualties nor anyone injured due to the incident, they said. Seven fire tenders from Hosur and nearby districts were pressed into service. They doused the flames after battling for hours.

## India pledges Rs 474 million 12 projects in Nepal

**Kathmandu:** India has pledged NRs 474 million to build 12 High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) in Nepal in the education, health, agriculture, drinking water and culture sectors, according to an official statement.

The Embassy of India here and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration of the Nepalese government signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for the projects on Friday.

The 12 projects are being undertaken with the grant assistance of NRs 474 million from the Indian government. These include the construction of school buildings and a multipurpose foundation building, according to a press release issued by the Embassy of India here.

The projects also include the constructions of the Basepu-Hulu Water Supply Project in Solukhumbu, a building for the Agriculture Promotion Centre for Food Grain Collection and Distribution Centre in Bajura, a Health Post-Birthing Centre in Dhading, and the Operation Theatre Building of Rapti Eye Hospital in Dang.

These projects will be implemented through the local authorities of the government of Nepal, according to the press release.

It said the construction of these projects will help provide better educational, health care, drinking water, agricultural products storage and cultural facilities to the local community.

## MONEY MATTERS

# How to Choose the Right Financial Advisor?



By Kaustubh Kale



In India, where managing money and paperwork can be complex, having a financial advisor is essential. You need a single point of contact (not yourself) to help navigate your financial journey. But what makes a good financial advisor, and why is it so crucial to choose the right one?

## Key Qualities of a Good Financial Advisor

First and foremost, your financial advisor must be well-qualified. Just as you wouldn't trust your health to an unqualified person and instead go to a doctor, you shouldn't entrust your wealth to someone without the necessary expertise. Health and wealth are both sensitive and complex domains that significantly impact your life in various ways. Credentials ensure that the advisor has the education and experience to manage your financial health effectively.

Second, a good advisor should be an entrepreneur, not an employee of a bank or brokerage firm. Why? Because employees are often product-focused and driven by sales targets. Their advice may be biased toward selling you specific products rather than focusing on your financial goals. On the other hand, an independent advisor who runs their own business is more likely to focus on

tailored solutions for your needs. They typically offer multiple financial products and strategies, balancing key factors like risk, return, liquidity, and time period requirements. Their knowledge of financial ratios, formulas, and diverse products is crucial in balancing your portfolio across different asset classes, adding value beyond a one-size-fits-all approach.

This allows them to create the right mix for your financial goals. Additionally, this person should be a full-time advisor (not part-time), so they can dedicate the time and focus required to understand your long-term financial vision. Their only business should be managing your money—not juggling multiple ventures.

A good financial advisor must be someone who you can trust for the long-term. You are entrusting them with your money and your future. They should be a long-term partner who is there throughout your entire investment journey, not just someone who makes a sale and moves on. This sets them apart from bank or brokerage relationship managers, who often change jobs and provide inconsistent service.

## Why You Shouldn't Go It Alone

Many people hesitate to pay for financial advice, thinking they can manage their finances on their own. The cost of not having an advisor could far exceed the fees you pay for professional advice. Without the right guidance, you risk making costly mistakes that could jeopardize your financial goals. Remember, it takes years of education, expertise, experience, and wisdom to write a prescription—so don't self-medicate. The cost of going wrong or doing nothing is massive—it might cost you your financial goals!

Ultimately, finding the right financial advisor is a critical step toward achieving financial freedom. Choose wisely. Look for a well-qualified, entrepreneurial advisor who serves as a single point of contact, deals with multiple products and solutions, and is long-term oriented—someone who will be there from the beginning of your investment journey to the end.

*(The writer is a Chartered Accountant and CFA (USA). Financial Advisor. Views personal.)*

## Dearth of quality leading to vacant mall spaces

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** India lacks good quality retail space despite a surge in malls compared to developed countries leading to vacant spaces at low grade malls, said a report by a domestic brokerage house.

As a point of comparison, the total Grade A retail stock in New York City alone was over 600 million square feet while in Shanghai it was over 130 million square feet at the end of 2021. However, the total Grade A retail space stock in top-7 Indian cities was around 90 million square feet in June 2024 as the average annual addition in India was just around 3 million square feet.

On the other hand, Grade B and Grade C malls have fragmented ownership and sub-optimal sizes, with design issues. These malls with smaller sizes offer limited ability to attract marquee tenants and also face design related issues, poor store visibility, thereby leading to lower footfalls and consequently lower rents.

A Knight Frank report had earlier said that shopping malls with vacant

space of over 40 percent are termed as ghost malls are seen increasing in India. In 2023, there was a 59 percent rise in area of ghost malls across top eight cities with 13.3 million square feet of retail space lying vacant resulting in revenue loss of USD 800 million.

Nuvama reports that India's per capita stock of Grade A malls is less than 1 square foot, which is the lowest in major economies and abysmal compared with around 24 square feet for the US and less than 12 square feet for the UK. In fact, it compares unfavourably even with other developing countries in Asia such as Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

As a result, there is a wide difference in quality and performance of malls in India. While Grade A malls have very low vacancies, Grade B and Grade C malls have had to contend with high vacancy levels. Grade A malls with leadership positions in their respective micro markets with more than 0.5 million square feet of gross leasable area are able to attract better quality tenants.



Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri at the Pune International Centre's (PIC) 14th Foundation Day lecture.

## Strategic fuel reserves key to energy security: Puri

By Correspondent

Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri warned that rising geopolitical tensions could lead to increased oil prices

**Pune:** India needed to focus on strategic petroleum reserves and prioritise exploration and production to reduce its heavy reliance on imported fuel in order to enhance its energy security, said Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Speaking on Friday at the Pune International Centre's (PIC) 14th Foundation Day lecture, Puri

underscored that with a population of 1.4 billion and energy consumption projected to be three times the global average, the country is positioned to be a key player in the global energy landscape.

In a lecture titled 'Strategy and Measures for Enhancing India's Energy Security in the Coming Decade,' Puri said India is

expected to contribute to 25 percent of the world's increase in energy consumption over the next two decades.

While advocating for bringing petrol and diesel under the Goods and Services Tax (GST), he said there were challenges in achieving this due to the differing interests of different state governments

## Non-basmati white rice exempted from export duty

**New Delhi:** Withdrawing a blanket ban on overseas shipments of non-basmati white rice, the government on Saturday imposed a floor price of USD 490 per tonne and exempted the commodity from export duty.

Exports of non-basmati white rice have been banned since July 20, 2023 to boost domestic supply.

"The export policy for non-basmati white rice (semi-milled or wholly milled rice, whether or not

polished or gazed) ...is amended from prohibited to free, subject to MEP (minimum export price) of USD 490 per tonne with immediate effect and until further orders," the directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) said in a notification.

The measures came at a time when the country has ample stock of rice at government godowns and retail prices are also under control. The government has exempted non-basmati

white rice from export duty, while reducing the levy on parboiled rice to 10 per cent. The duty cut came within a fortnight of the government's decision to remove the minimum export price on basmati rice. In a notification issued on Friday, the revenue department under the finance ministry said it has also reduced export duty on husked (brown rice), and rice in the form of husk (paddy or rough) to 10 per cent. -PTI

## Demand for skilled workers grows

**Mumbai:** The demand for workers skilled in sustainable construction practices in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) grew 25 per cent since May last year due to higher pay.

From May 2023 to April 2024, the demand for workers skilled in sustainable construction practices surged 25 per cent in Building Information Modelling (BIM), digital twin technologies, energy efficiency and safety compliance.

## Bangladesh, US top two in foreign tourist arrivals

**New Delhi:** Foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India from January to June stood at nearly 4.78 million, with Bangladesh and the US being the top two source countries, according to official data issued by the Ministry of Tourism.

The data sheet was shared on Friday on the occasion of the World Tourism Day and figures showed that inbound tourism in the country is trailing the pandemic levels.

The ministry shared the figures for the month of

June as well as for the January-June period.

The FTAs in June 2024 were 7,06,045 as compared to 6,48,008 in June 2023 and 7,26,446 in June 2019 registering a growth of nine per cent and a fall of 2.3 per cent with respect to 2023 and 2019 respectively, according to the data.

"The FTAs during the period January-June 2024 were 47,78,374 as compared to 43,80,239 in January-June 2023 and 52,96,025 in January-June 2019, registering a growth of 9.1 per

**Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Thailand and South Korea in the Asia Pacific Region are among the top 20 tourism source countries for India.**

cent and minus 9.8 per cent with respect to 2023 and 2019 respectively," it added.

According to a data chart on the percentage share of FTAs in India during Janu-

**9.24 million – No of foreign tourists**  
**1.22 million – No of tourists from six countries of Asia Pacific Region**

ary-June 2024, the top five source countries were Bangladesh (21.55 per cent), the US (17.56 per cent), the UK (9.82 per cent), Canada (4.5 per cent) and Australia (4.32 per cent).

The FTA trend for June 2024 was similar with Bangladesh (28.49 per cent) occupying the first spot among the top five source countries, followed by the US (22.59 per cent), the UK (6.10 per cent), Australia (3.74 per cent) and Canada (3.01 per cent), as per the data shared by the ministry. Leisure holiday and recreation formed the bulk of the segment in the FTAs when it came to the purpose of travelling.

Unprecedented student-led protests had begun in

Bangladesh from July 1 which swelled into an uprising that led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5.

According to a report by Crisil Market Intelligence and Analytics on Wednesday, inbound tourism in the country is trailing the pandemic levels as FTAs in January-June this year stood at 4.78 million, which is about 90 per cent of the first half of 2019. However, forex earnings are up, indicating that per person arrival spending is more.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The overwhelming demand for our green bonds, amidst a challenging global financial environment, reflects the established standing of India as a key player in the green finance market."



Vivek Kumar Dewangan, CMD, REC Ltd.

# Street vending has to be done, says Vikramaditya

The Himachal minister shows Congress a mirror

**New Delhi:** Himachal Pradesh Minister Vikramaditya Singh on Saturday said he has assuaged the Congress high command's concerns about ideology following his recent remarks on the street vendors issue and termed as "misconception" the perception that Uttar Pradesh model was being followed in his state.

He said the multi-party committee formed by the Speaker in Himachal Pradesh would discuss all issues about street vending on October 3.

Singh's remarks came a day after the Congress top brass chided him over his remarks on mandatory display of names by the street vendors and told him that no one was allowed to go against the party's policies and ideologies.

Amid a row over the comments, Congress general secretary in-charge organisation KC Venugopal had a meeting here with Singh on Friday during which the minister was told that the party believed in Rahul Gandhi's mantra of fighting hatred with love.

In an interview with PTI Videos,



Singh said that there was no controversy on the ground and it was all a "media-created" issue which had been blown out of proportion.

"I apprised Venugopal ji of the real situation and I assuaged his concerns about ideology and assured him that we are dedicated and loyal soldiers of the party and will not do anything which is against party line. I assured him that," said the PWD minister in the Himachal Pradesh government led by Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu.

"But at the same time, I also told him that in Himachal, for the last one

and a half months, first there was the mosque issue and other protests...as well as in light of the law, the High Court and Supreme Court directives and our 2016 law on urban livelihood, the implementation has to be done in a phased manner," he said.

Singh said he told Venugopal that the state government has to ensure internal security as well as maintain a good environment.

"Any person can come to the state from anywhere. Himachal is an amazing part of India, any Himachali can go to any other state and similarly anyone can come there. But the street vending that is taking place, identification and verification, according to rules, has to be done for which I have said there are High Court and Supreme Court directives," Singh said.

So, the vendors' registration is to be done as if there is any untoward activity, any law and order situation or there are local concerns, then the record, be it Aadhaar card or GST number, must be there with the authorities, he said.

-PTI

## Helmet theft sparks legal row

**Lucknow:** A mere helmet theft at Lucknow General Post Office last month turned into a legal battle when the police refused to lodge the 33-year-old advocate's complaint.

However, a case was registered following a court order.

Recalling the incident, Prem Prakash Pandey told PTI on Saturday that his black helmet was stolen on August 17 when he went to the General Post Office (GPO) around 2.24 pm to send a notice issued by the court.

He said it was stolen by some unidentified individual(s) while waiting in the queue.

"The helmet was neither bought by me on a special occasion nor was gifted to me by anyone. However, it getting stolen from inside a government (in the state capital) is definitely a serious issue," Pandey said.

According to advocate Pandey, he was prompted to move court when the local police initially did not register a case of theft.

"I am annoyed by the system and was forced to move court. I don't mind the theft of the helmet, but the delay on the part of the system is hurtful," he said.

The advocate said that he has started avoiding going to places like the post office as a precautionary step to ensure that his new helmet, that was bought 10-15 days ago, doesn't get stolen.

A case of theft was registered against the unidentified police station on Thursday following a court order, Station House Officer (SHO) Vikram Singh said on Saturday.

-PTI



JMM leader Kalpana Soren during a programme as part of her 'Maiya Samman Yatra', at Chaibasa in West Singhbhum district, Jharkhand on Saturday. Pic: PTI

## Kumaraswamy says 6-7 min will have to resign

**Bengaluru:** Hitting out at the Siddaramaiah-led government in Karnataka on a host of issues, including 'corruption', JD(S) leader and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Saturday said if he released the documents in his possession, six to seven state Ministers will have to resign.

He claimed that the Congress administration was trying to "fix" him in some cases, after he began cornering the state government in connection with some alleged irregularities and started discussing them in public.

"Siddaramaiah had accused (previous BJP government) of being 40 per cent commission govt and came to power. Today his own party is saying after this government coming to power it is more than 40 per cent (commission). Mr Siddaramaiah, did people give you power for this?" Kumaraswamy asked.

Addressing reporters here, he said, "I have things (with me), I'm not running away. If I release the documents I have, six to seven Ministers will have to resign...I will release, will not run away with fear, no hit and run..."



Targeting the CM on the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case, the JD(S) state president asked, "If he (Siddaramaiah) had no role in the Mysuru (MUDA) scam, then why are certain decisions are

being made by the cabinet hurriedly?" citing the government withdrawing general consent given to CBI to investigate cases in the State.

Accusing the government of bringing in a new kind of legal system in the state as per which arrests are being made in several cases just because someone gives a complaint, he said, "but in your (Siddaramaiah) case despite 48 hours, after the court issued directions, FIR was not registered."

The Lokayukta police on Friday registered an FIR against Siddaramaiah and others in the MUDA site allotment case, following a Special Court in Bengaluru ordering a probe against him.

Kumaraswamy had on Friday appeared before the Lokayukta police for questioning in connection with a land denotification case. -PTI

## Three dead in blast at factory

**Chandigarh:** Two women and a child were killed, while nine others were injured in a blast at an "illegal" firecracker unit in a village in Haryana's Sonapat district on Saturday, police said.

Workers and some of their family members were present at the site when the incident took place at the factory, located in Riddhau village, they added.

The cause of the fire that led to the blast is being investigated, a police officer from Sonapat said.

## AI passenger finds cockroach in food

**New Delhi:** An Air India passenger has complained of finding a cockroach in an omelette served onboard the flight from the national capital to New York, with the airline saying the matter has been taken up with the catering service provider for further investigation.

"We are aware of a social media post by a passenger regarding a foreign object in the onboard meal offered to them on AI 101 operating from DEL to JFK on 17 September 2024," an Air India spokesperson said in a statement and also ex-

pressed concern over the incident.

In a post on X, the passenger said a cockroach was found in the omelette served on the flight from Delhi to New York.



"My 2 year old finished more than half of it with me when we found this. Suffered from food poisoning as a result," she said.

The passenger also shared a short video and

pictures of the food items served during the flight.

She tagged Air India, aviation regulator DGCA and Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu in the post. In the statement, the spokesperson said the airline is concerned about the experience of the customer in the said instance and has taken it up with the catering service provider to investigate further.

"We will take necessary actions to prevent any recurrence of such instances in future," the spokesperson said.

-PTI

## IIMA suicide: Father claims victim harassed

**Ahmedabad:** The father of the IIMA student who died allegedly by suicide has claimed that someone from the institute was harassing his son over an event that was to be sponsored by a private organisation, police said on Saturday.

The student, Akshit Hemant Bhukya (24), who was studying in the second year of the MBA programme at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA), was found hanging from the metal grille of the ventilator in his hostel room on Thursday.

"Bhukya's father has claimed that someone from

ing investigation, he said.

A Vastrapur police station official said that the matter related to the use of the IIMA logo was resolved on September 20. The private institute even withdrew the sponsorship and removed the video with the IIMA logo it had uploaded on its Instagram page.

"We even took statements of the students who were part of the team involved in the event and they have refused this to be the case," said sub-inspector RL Patel, the investigation officer.

The police official said the mortal remains of the



Supporters during a public meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the ongoing J&K Assembly elections in Jammu on Saturday. Pic: PTI

## Anti-encroachment drive near Somnath

**Gir Somnath:** As many as 135 people were detained during a demolition drive to clear encroachments from government lands near Somnath Temple in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district on Saturday.

Hundreds of police personnel were deployed for the drive undertaken to remove unauthorised structures on government land at Prabhas Patan in Veraval, the site of Somnath Temple, the district admin-

istration said in a statement.

The administration said religious structures and concrete houses were demolished during the drive that began in the early hours of the day, and it has freed around 15 hectares of government land valued at Rs 60 crore.

Labourers were brought in on 52 tractors, 58 bulldozers, two hydra cranes, five dumpers, two ambulances and three firefighters were

involved in the exercise, the release said.

As per the release, 788 police personnel and the state reserve police force (SRPF) were deployed along with senior police and district officers.

"Around 135 people were detained as part of the operation," it said.

The law-and-order situation is under control in the area, and no untoward incidents have occurred, police said. -PTI

## Man, four daughters found dead in rented home

**New Delhi:** The decomposed bodies of a 46-year-old man and his four daughters, two of whom were differently-abled, have been found in their rented accommodation in south-west Delhi's Vasant Kunj area, police said on Saturday.

The bodies, discovered on Friday afternoon, did not have injury marks but police found three packets of cephos poison, five glasses and a spoon containing a suspicious liquid in the house.

While police said the man's two youngest daughters were differently-abled,

neighbours claimed that all four were challenged. Police are verifying the claim, said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Rohit Meena.

According to the locals, the daughters hardly came out of their room. The neighbours claimed that they last saw the man and his daughters on September 24. The deceased were identified as Heeralal Sharma, who worked as a carpenter in the Indian Spinal Injury Centre in Vasant Kunj for the past 28 years, and his four daughters -- Neetu (26), Nikki (24), Neeru (23) and Nidhi (20).

## Huge cache of arms seized

**Imphal:** A huge cache of arms and ammunition have been seized by security forces from three districts in ethnic conflict-hit Manipur, a police statement said on Saturday.

A joint team of Manipur Police and Assam Rifles seized two .303 rifles, one 9mm pistol with magazine, cartridges, four hand grenades, two detonators, and one each of country-made mortar and long-range improvised mortar from Loiching ridge in Kangpokpi district. The combined forces of state police, BSF and CRPF seized two improvised mortars, locally known as 'pumpi'.



IIMA was harassing his son over the use of the IIMA logo by a private institute for an event," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone 1) Himanshu Verma said.

Prima facie, this does not appear to be the reason why the student took the extreme step, but police will register an offence if something comes up in the ongo-

IIMA student have been handed over to his father.

The incident took place in the hostel situated on the new campus of IIMA, and no suicide note was found. Police have sent the student's mobile phone and laptop for forensic analysis to get a clue about the reasons for this tragedy, officials said. -PTI

## Ban on laddu sale sought

**Sohore:** The trust managing a famous temple dedicated to Vindhya Vasni Beejasa Devi has submitted a memorandum to the collector of Sohore in Madhya Pradesh seeking a ban on the 'laddus' being sold by a self-help group on the premises. Devotees have been complaining that the laddus are smelling and tasting different so a ban was sought, temple trust chairman Mahesh Upadhyaya said.

## Villagers protest 'illegal' mosque

**Bareilly (UP):** BJP MLA M P Arya, party workers, and locals sat on a dharna against a mosque being built "illegally" in a village last night here. They ended the protest only after the police stopped the construction work, officials said on Saturday.

Meanwhile, some people allegedly demolished a portion of the under-construction mosque and a few suspects have been detained in the matter, they said.

Heavy police force has

been deployed to ensure a peaceful atmosphere.

Arya, MLA from Bareilly's Nawabganj assembly constituency, said, "A mosque was being constructed illegally in Kela Dandi village with the help of the local police, which has caused anger in the surrounding villages. People are protesting, angry with the attitude of the police department."

On Friday night, the BJP MLA led party workers and many people in the protest.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The BJP will contest the Jharkhand elections in alliance with AJSU Party and JD(U). The seat-sharing agreement with the allies has been done on 99 per cent of the seats. Discussions are underway for the remaining one or two seats."



Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister, Assam

## 'Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama' to re-release

**New Delhi:** "Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama", the 1999 Japanese-Indian anime film, will be updated with new dubs in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu alongside its original English version for its first-ever theatrical release in India, the distributors said on Saturday.

Directed by Yugo Sako, Ram Mohan and Koichi Sasaki, the animated film will hit the cinema halls on October 18 in the 4K format.

Geek Pictures India, AA Films and Excel Entertainment will distribute "Rama-

yana: The Legend of Prince Rama" across India cinema halls.

"Driven by our unwavering commitment to making this timeless film accessible to all, we have taken the responsibility of reviving this cherished epic. In our dedication to honouring the vision of the original creators, we meticulously produced new language versions in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi, under the guidance of esteemed industry veteran V. Prasad.

"While preserving the original English dialogue



and maintaining the iconic, powerful visuals as they were originally conceived, we aim to offer a renewed cinematic experience that

resonates with children and families across India." Geek Pictures India said.

The distributor company also said the film will com-

ply with the latest guidelines set by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) of India, incorporating enhanced accessibility features for the hearing impaired, ensuring a more inclusive viewing experience for all.

In the Hindi version of "Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama", "Ramayan" star Arun Govil voiced the character of Ram, Namrata Sawhney voice starred as Sita, and the late Amrith Puri lent his voice to Ravan, with veteran actor Shatrughan Sinha serving

as narrator.

Composed by Vanraj Bhatia and penned by PK Mishra, "Shri Raghuvir Ki Vaanar Sena", "Janani Main Ramdoot Hanuman" and "Jai Lankeshwar" were some of the popular songs from the film's Hindi dubbed version. "Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama" was screened in India at the 24th International Film Festival of India but wasn't released in cinema halls. It became popular with Indian audiences upon its re-runs on TV channels in the early 2000s.

# SC bats for preserving green lungs in Mumbai

The High Court had quashed the Maharashtra government's 2021 decision to relinquish a 20-acre land in Navi Mumbai for a "Government Sports Complex" and shifting it to a remote place at Mangaon in Raigad district, 115 km from the existing site.



**New Delhi:** The few remaining green lungs in cities like Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, which are only witnessing a vertical growth, need to be preserved, the Supreme Court said on Friday.

The observations were made by a bench comprising Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice Manoj Misra during the hearing of an appeal filed by the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO), Navi Mumbai against a Bombay High Court verdict.

The land was earmarked for the sports complex in 2003 and in 2016, the planning authority allotted a portion of it to a private developer for residential and commercial purposes.

"It is a much-known

practice. The government creeps into whatever green spaces are left and give them to the builders," the top court said during a brief hearing.

"There are a very few green lungs left in cities like Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. These cities have vertical growth.... You have to preserve them and not give to builders to build, build, build and build...." the CJI said.

The bench was prima facie astonished to know that the land, meant for the state-level sports complex, is being given for some development and the proposed facilities are to be shifted to Raigad district.

Who will travel 115 km to avail the facilities of the sports complex, the court wondered and said even

that land will meet the same fate after a few years.

In a lighter vein, the bench asked how gold medalists will emerge in such a scenario.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing in the court on behalf of CIDCO, assailed the high court order, saying it wants to run town-planning activities, which fall under the state's domain.

Twenty acres are not sufficient for constructing the sports complex and moreover, the state has earmarked the land at an alternative site, the top law officer said. He said the matter does not pertain to green lungs of cities and it is rather town-planning activities that the high court decided.

The bench has now fixed the plea for further hear-

ing on September 30.

The high court had, while setting aside the state government's decision on July 2, made some sharp comments on the case.

Sports play a significant role in the development of people and a nation and it is high time the government gave it equal importance than the "commercialisation and concretisation mantra", it had said.

A progressive state can never be oblivious to such needs of the society, it had said, adding that authorities are required to be alive to not only the present but the future rights of citizens to open places, playgrounds and sports complexes.

The court had said the sports complex is of paramount importance to children and youngsters, who form a large mass of population in urban areas, and it is wholly against the public interest to deprive them of best sporting facilities.

The high court order was passed on a PIL filed by the Indian Institute of Architects, Navi Mumbai Centre, challenging the state government's decision to shift the sports complex from Ghansoli in Navi Mumbai to Mangaon.

The PIL had also challenged the decision taken by CIDCO, allotting part of the land to a private developer for residential and commercial development. -PTI



Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar takes part in a cleanliness drive in Patna on Friday.

Pic: PTI

## Conservation of freshwater turtles, gharials in Ganga

**New Delhi:** The government has approved an initiative aimed at conserving freshwater turtles and gharials in Ganga, officials said on Friday.

According to officials, the approval was granted for the freshwater turtle and gharial conservation breeding programme at the Kukrail Gharial Rehabilitation Center in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

The development came during the 57th Executive Committee meeting of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) on Friday, chaired by DG Rajeev Kumar Mittal, where projects totalling Rs 1,062 crore were approved, the offi-

**Operated under the Namami Gange Mission-II, the programme will receive Rs 2 crore to help restore the endangered species in the Ganga river and its tributaries.**

cial said.

The projects are focused on conserving the Ganga river and preparations for Mahakumbh 2025, they said.

Key among the approvals is a 350-crore project in Katihar, Bihar, aimed at improving the city's drainage and sewage systems. -PTI

This includes the construction of two sewage treatment plants (STPs) with a combined capacity of 55.5 million litres per day (MLD) and the interception of nine drains, the official said.

In Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, a Rs 488-crore project was approved to build two STPs with a total capacity of 113 MLD, alongside a septage co-treatment facility.

The project, which will intercept and divert sewage, is expected to be completed within two years and will also include 15 years of operation and maintenance, the officials said. -PTI

## Leopard beaten to death for attacking jawan

**Bijnor (UP):** A leopard was allegedly beaten to death in a village here for attacking a home guard jawan, a forest department officer said on Saturday.

The incident occurred on Friday evening in Amannagar village, he said.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Gyan Singh said Homeguard Jawan Surendra had gone to a tubewell behind his house with his children -- Disha (20), Reshu (14) and Deepanshu (18) -- where the leopard was sitting on a mango tree. -PTI

## Earth will have a temporary 'mini moon' for two months

By Christina Larson

**Washington:** Earth's moon will soon have some company — a "mini moon".

The mini moon is actually an asteroid about the size of a school bus at 10 metres. When it whizzes by Earth on Sunday, it will be temporarily trapped by our planet's gravity and orbit the globe — but only for about two months.

The discovery by Carlos de la Fuente Marcos and Raúl de la Fuente Marcos was published by the American Astronomical

**The space rock — 2024 PT5 — was first spotted in August by astronomers at Complutense University of Madrid using a powerful telescope located in Sutherland, South Africa.**

**These short-lived mini moons are likely more common than we realise. This happens with some frequency, but we rarely see them because they're very small and very hard to detect. Only recently has our survey capability reached the point of spotting them routinely.**

- Richard Binzel, astronomer at Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Society.

This one won't be visible to the naked eye or through amateur telescopes, but it "can be observed with relatively large, research-grade telescopes," Carlos de la Fuente Marcos said in an email. Binzel, who was not involved in the research.

The mini moon will circle the globe for almost 57 days but won't complete a full orbit. On November 25, it will part ways with the Earth and continue its solo trajectory through the cosmos. -AP



Elephants during a state level function on the World Tourism Day at the Manas National Park in Assam.

Pic: PTI

## Panic over suspected leopard, wolf

**Budaun (UP):** The forest department in Uttar Pradesh's Budaun district has stepped up vigil after animal footprints, suspectedly of leopard or wolf, were reported in a few villages.

However, forest officials said the footprints belong to a canine species.

"The tracks found could be of a dog, jackal or another canine species. There is no evidence of a tiger (leopard) in the area,

as the prints belong to the dog family," Forest Ranger Akanksha Gupta said.

Locals in Budaun claimed that the prints indicate the presence of a leopard or wolf, amid reports of leopard and wolf

sightings in neighbouring Bahraich district.

The forest department received calls from Yaad Ram and Mahipal Singh of Nurpur village regarding the sighting of footprints, Gupta said. -PTI

## Waste management key issue globally, says US Consul General

**Pune:** Consul General of the United States in Mumbai, Mike Hankey, has said that waste management was an important issue, not just for an urbanising Maharashtra, but for communities across India and around the world.

He was speaking here on Thursday the sidelines of "TechCamp Pune", an event focused on the theme of redesigning sustainable urban waste management.

The US Consulate General, Mumbai, in partnership with the Symbiosis International University Centre for Waste Resource Management, ExploreIT and the Climate Reality Project held the "TechCamp Pune", a release said.

The event brought together US and international trainers and over 45 waste management professionals from Maharashtra.

Participants worked together over four days to define pressing waste management challenges and develop practical solutions to address them. -PTI

## Ex-SC judge calls for comprehensive climate law



**New Delhi:** Retired Supreme Court judge Justice Hima Kohli has advocated for a robust national climate law, saying the current environmental legislations are often fragmented and insufficient to tackle the complexities of climate change.

Addressing an event on the topic "Climate Liability, Justice, and Jurisprudence" on Friday, she also said the top court's landmark judgment in the M K Ranjit Singh case paves the way for strengthening India's environmental laws and integrating human rights into climate discussions.

"There is a pressing

need for comprehensive legislation dedicated specifically for climate change. India has several environmental laws in place, but they are often fragmented and sometimes found to be insufficient to address the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change. "A robust national climate law grounded in constitutional principles and aligned with international obligations is, to my mind, the way forward," she said.

Justice Kohli said such legislation should include provisions for climate adaptation and mitigation, mechanisms for holding both state and non-state actors accountable. -PTI

## Japanese fans bid farewell to panda pair

**Tokyo:** Thousands of Japanese fans bid tearful farewell to their beloved panda couple that made their final public appearance at Tokyo's Ueno Zoo on Saturday before returning to China for medical treatment.

The pair, Ri Ri and Shan Shan, are the parents of Xiang Xiang, the park-born idol that had returned home last year.

More than 2,000 visitors, many wearing T-shirts and carrying items decorated by panda motifs, queued outside the zoo hours before the opening. Some said they camped

out overnight to secure their chance.

The pandas, both 19 years old, arrived at the Ueno Zoo in 2011. Although their lease is good through 2026, Japan and China agreed to their return home as the aging couple need treatment for high blood pressure, according to the zoo.

Hirono Sasaki, who waited to enter the zoo since 5 a.m., was crying. "They were always my source of comfort, so I'm feel extremely sad," she said.

"I loved seeing Ri Ri climbing trees in her old

enclosure. I hope she can climb trees again when she is back in China."

After their hours long wait, visitors were given only a few minutes inside their hut to view the black-and-white animals. Lucky ones could get a glimpse of them nibbling on bamboo branches, but others could only catch them during their naps.

China sends pandas abroad as a sign of goodwill but maintains ownership over the animals and any cubs they produce. The animals are native to southwestern China and are an unofficial national



mascot.

Pandas, which reproduce rarely in the wild and rely on a diet of bamboo,

remain among the world's most threatened species. An estimated 1,800 pandas live in the wild, while an-

other 500 are in zoos or reserves, mostly in Sichuan. -AP

## First consignment of Hilsa reaches WB

**Kolkata:** Over 50 metric tonnes of Hilsa have reached West Bengal from Bangladesh, after the interim government in the neighbouring country allowed export of the fish to till mid-October during the Durga puja festival.

Another consignment of the same amount of 'Padmar Ilish' (hilsa caught from Padma river), a favourite delicacy of Bengalis, is expected soon. The Fish Importers' Association recently wrote to Bangladesh's interim government urging it to allow export of Hilsa as a goodwill gesture. -AP

# Hezbollah confirms Nasrallah dead

## Israel says not end of strikes, moves troops closer

Beirut: Lebanon's Hezbollah group confirmed on Saturday that its leader and one of its founders, Hassan Nasrallah, was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut the previous day.

A statement Saturday said Nasrallah "has joined his fellow martyrs." Hezbollah vowed to "continue the holy war against the enemy and in support of Palestine."

Nasrallah, who led Hezbollah for more than three decades, is by far the most powerful target to be killed by Israel in weeks of intensified fighting with Hezbollah. The Israeli military said it carried out a precise airstrike on Friday while Hezbollah leadership met at their headquarters in Dahiyeh, south of Beirut.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an army spokesperson, said the airstrike was based on years of tracking Nasrallah

ahead of time with intelligence and legal experts.

### Israel vows to keep up attacks on Hezbollah

Israel's Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Herzli Halevi, said Saturday that the elimination of Nasrallah was "not the end of our toolbox," indicating that more strikes were planned. He said that the strike targeting Hezbollah leadership was the result of a long period of preparation.

It was not immediately clear what effect the strike would have on Hezbollah or fighting between the sides that has dragged on for nearly a year. Israel has vowed to step up pressure on Hezbollah until it halts its attacks that have displaced tens of thousands of Israelis from communities near the Lebanese border. The recent fighting

### Iran says senior commander killed

Iran announced Saturday that a prominent general in its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard sanctioned by the US died in an airstrike that killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut. Abbas Nilforushan, 58, was killed Friday in Lebanon, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported. The US Treasury had identified Nilforushan as the deputy commander for operations in the Guard.

Shoshani, the army spokesperson, said that Israel has inflicted heavy damage on Hezbollah's capabilities over the past week by targeting a combination of immediate threats and strategic weapons, such as larger, guided missiles. But he said much of Hezbollah's arsenal still remains intact and that Israel would continue to target the group.

### A year of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah

Hezbollah started firing rockets on Israel in support of Gaza on October 8, a day after Hamas militants launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, killing some 1,200 people and abducting another 250. Since then, the two sides have been engaged in cross-border strikes that have gradually escalated and displaced tens of thousands of civilians on both sides of the border.

Hostilities escalated dramatically last week when thousands of explosives hidden in pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah detonated, killing dozens of people and leaving thousands, including many civilians, with severe injuries to the eyes, face and limbs. Israel is widely believed to be behind the attack. Israel has also killed several top Hezbollah commanders in Beirut in addition to the

**60,000** – No of Israelis who have been evacuated from their homes along the Lebanese border

**720** – No of people killed in Lebanon over the past week from Israeli airstrikes



This isn't a threat that has gone away. We hope this will change Hezbollah's actions. We have been looking for solutions, looking for a change in reality that will bring our civilians home.

Lt. Gen. Herzli Halevi, Chief of Staff, Israel

Nasrallah's death is a historical moment. This doesn't mean that Hezbollah is destroyed, because Hezbollah is made up of tens of thousands of people.

Orna Mizrahi, Researcher, Institute for National Security Studies

The resistance movement, heading by Hezbollah, will decide the fate of the region. All regional resistance forces are to stand by and support Hezbollah.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader, Iran

attack that killed Nasrallah.

### A window of opportunity for Israel, Lebanon

Orna Mizrahi, a senior researcher at the Tel Aviv-based think tank Institute for National Security Studies and former intelligence analyst for the Israeli military and prime minister's office, noted that Nasrallah was sometimes a "voice of reason," interested in engaging Israel in a war of attrition and holding the militant group back from using the full force of their for-

midable arsenal against Israel.

Nasrallah's death could prompt some less senior members of Hezbollah to unleash much stronger weapons than have been used in the nearly yearlong exchange of hostilities between Hezbollah and Lebanon, she said. The biggest question mark right now, though, is how Iran will respond, said Mizrahi. Mizrahi added that Nasrallah's death could provide a window of opportunity, while the organization is significantly weakened, for Lebanon to dilute Hezbollah's far-reaching

influence, especially in the south, that threatens to drag Lebanon into a full-scale war with Israel.

### Strikes on both sides

On Saturday morning, the Israeli military carried out more than 140 airstrikes in southern Beirut and eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, including targeting a storage facility for anti-ship missiles in Beirut suburb of Dahiyeh. Israel said the missiles were stored underground beneath civilian apartment buildings. -AP



along with "real time information" that made it viable. He said Nasrallah's death had been confirmed through various types of intelligence, but declined to elaborate.

Shoshani declined to say what munitions were used in the strike or provide an estimate on civilian deaths in the strike, only saying that Israel takes measures to avoid civilians whenever possible and clears strikes

has also displaced more than 200,000 Lebanese in the past week, according to the United Nations.

The military said it was mobilising additional reserve soldiers as tensions escalate with Lebanon, activating three battalions of reserve soldiers to serve across the country. The call comes after it sent two brigades to northern Israel earlier in the week to train for a possible ground invasion.

## Delhi's Strong Right Of Reply In UNGA

# Pakistan must realise cross-border terrorism will invite consequences

By Yoshita Singh

United Nations: In a strong retort, India has slammed Pakistan in the UN General Assembly, saying its "fingerprints" are on terrorist incidents across the world and the country should realise that cross-border terrorism against India will "inevitably invite consequences."

India exercised its Right of Reply in the UN General Assembly on Friday in response to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif raising the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in his address at the General Debate of the 79th session of UN General Assembly.

Bhavika Mangalanandan, First Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the UN, asserted that as the world knows, Pakistan has long employed cross-border terrorism as a weapon against its neighbours.

"It has attacked our Parliament, our financial capital Mumbai, marketplaces and pilgrimage routes," she said, referring to the



**This Assembly regrettably witnessed a travesty this morning. A country run by the military, with a global reputation for terrorism, narcotics trade and transnational crime has had audacity to attack world's largest democracy.**

Bhavika Mangalanandan, First Secretary, India's Permanent Mission to UN

2001 Indian Parliament attack and the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks carried out by Pakistan-based terror groups.

"The list is long. For such a country to speak about violence anywhere is hypocrisy at its worst," Mangalanandan said.

In his address, Sharif raised the Kashmir issue,

as expected, and said that to "secure durable peace", India should reverse the Abrogation of Article 370 and enter into a dialogue for a "peaceful" resolution of the issue.

Responding to this reference "to some proposal of strategic restraint", India asserted that there "can be no compact with terror-

ism. In fact, Pakistan should realise that cross-border terrorism against India will inevitably invite consequences."

Reminding the international community that this was a nation that for long hosted Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, Mangalanandan said Pakistan's "fingerprints are on so many terrorist incidents across the world, whose policies attract the dreads of many societies to make it their home.

"Perhaps it should come as no surprise that its prime minister would so speak in this hallowed hall. Yet we must make clear how unacceptable his words are to all of us. We know that Pakistan will seek to counter the truth with more lies. Repetition will change nothing. Our stand is clear and needs no reiteration," she said.

India stressed that it is even more extraordinary for a country with a history of rigged elections to talk about political choices, that too in a democracy. -PTI

## Russian strikes on medical center kill 8

Kyiv: Two consecutive Russian attacks on a medical center in the northeastern Ukrainian city of Sumy killed at least eight people on Saturday morning, officials said.

The first strike killed one person. Russia attacked again while patients and staff were evacuating, said Ukraine's Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko.

Local officials in Sumy said Shahed drones were used in the attack. Eleven other people were wounded, the head of the Sumy City Military administration, Oleksii Drozdenko, said.

Sumy lies some 20 miles (32 kilometers) from Russia's Kursk region, where Ukrainian troops have been deployed since Aug. 6 in a bid to divert the Kremlin's military focus away from the front line in Ukraine.

Ukraine's air force said it shot down 69 of 73 Russian drones launched overnight as well as two of the four missiles. City authorities in Kyiv said about 15 drones had been shot down over the Ukrainian capital and its outskirts. -AP

# UK backs India's bid for permanent UNSC seat

By Aditi Khanna

London: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer joined the leaders of the US and France in backing India's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to make it a more representative body that is not "paralysed by politics".

During his speech at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York on Thursday, Starmer called for reforms to ensure the global multilateral system is "more representative and more responsive". Besides permanent representation for India, Africa, Brazil, Japan and Germany, the UK also made a pitch for more seats for elected members of the Security Council.

"We need to make the system more representative and more responsive to those who need it most," said Starmer.

"So we will make the case not just for fairer outcomes, but fairer representation in how we reach them; and this also applies to the Security Council. It has to change to become a



more representative body, willing to act – not paralysed by politics. We want to see permanent African representation on the Council, Brazil, India, Japan and Germany as permanent members, and more seats for elected members as well," he said.

### France too backs India

Earlier, French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday also backed India's bid for permanent membership in the UNSC to make the UN more efficient and representative.

"France is in favour of the Security Council being expanded. Germany, Japan, India, and Brazil should be permanent members, as well as two countries that Africa will decide to represent it," he said.

### Bhutan backs India

India with its significant economic growth and leadership of the Global South deserves a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay has said. He also expressed "deepest" gratitude to India for its "support and friendship" for his country's journey of graduating from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) category.

"The United Nations must evolve to meet the realities of today's world. The Security Council, as it stands, is a relic of the past. We need a Council that reflects the current geopolitical, economic landscape and social realities," Tobgay said in his address to the General Debate of the 79th session of UN General Assembly.

It follows President Joe Biden reiterating the US stance in favour of such an expansion of the UNSC, which comprises five permanent members and 10 non-permanent member countries – elected for a two-year term by the General Assembly of the UN.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

**"The need for a (Baltic) defence line stems from the security situation and supports NATO's new forward defence concept. It is extremely important to coordinate our activities with Poland."**

Hanno Pevkur, Defence Minister, Estonia



# In game of influence, China turns to fake news

By Didi Tang and David Klepper

Washington: When veteran US diplomat Kurt Campbell travelled to the Solomon Islands to counter Beijing's influence in the South Pacific country, he quickly saw just how far China would go to spread its message.

The Biden administration's Asia czar woke up one morning in 2022 to a long article in the local press about the US running chemical and biological labs in Ukraine, a claim

that Washington calls an outright lie. Started by Russia, the false and incendiary claim was vigorously amplified by China's vast overseas propaganda apparatus.

It was another example of "clearly effective Russian and Chinese disinformation," Campbell told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in July.

Two years later, the claim still reverberates online, demonstrating China's sprawling effort to reshape global perceptions. The campaign, costing



many billions per year, is becoming ever more sophisticated thanks to artificial intelligence. China's operations have caught the attention of intelligence analysts and policymakers in Washington, who vow to combat any actions that could influence the Novem-

ber election or undermine American interests.

The key tactic: networks of websites purporting to be legitimate news outlets, delivering pro-China coverage that often parallels official statements and positions from Beijing.

Shannon Van Sant, an

adviser to the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation, tracked a network of dozens of sites that posed as news organizations. One site mimicked The New York Times, using a similar font and design in what she called an attempt at legitimacy. The site carried strongly pro-Chinese messages.

When Van Sant researched the site's reporters she found no information. Their names didn't belong to any known journalists working in China, and their photos bore tell-

tale signs of being created with AI.

"Manipulation of the media is ultimately a manipulation of readers and the audience, and this is damaging to democracy and society," Van Sant said.

Liu Pengyu, spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in the US, said allegations that China uses news websites and social media to spread pro-Beijing information and influence public opinion in the US "are full of malicious speculations against China, which China firmly opposes."

## MY CORNER

Kohima, WWII's  
Overlooked Turning PointBy  
Sumer Brar

The year 1944 marked a pivotal chapter in the Second World War. June 6 saw the Normandy landings, the audacious Allied invasion of mainland Europe. A day earlier, Rome had fallen to the Allies, becoming the first European capital to be liberated. By September, the Allies launched 'Operation Market Garden' - an ambitious and risky attempt to outflank German defenses by seizing key bridges in the Netherlands which ultimately became a heroic failure.

Today, as these events are commemorated on their 80th anniversaries, another titanic clash of the war, largely forgotten by history, took place in a remote corner of colonial India. The Battle of Kohima, fought between March and July 1944 between British Commonwealth forces and the Imperial Japanese Army, was just as brutal and consequential, yet it remains overshadowed by the European theatre.

Stalingrad may capture the popular imagination, but Kohima, fought on the Indo-Burma border, was no less significant. By halting the Japanese advance, it changed the trajectory of the war in Southeast Asia and set the stage for the British and Commonwealth forces to retake Burma. The Japanese dream of an imperial empire collapsed along the 'Road of Bones.' Until recently, the Battle of Kohima remained on the fringes of history, mostly preserved in the memoirs of servicemen like Arthur Swinson's 'Kohima' and John Henslow's 'A Sapper in the Forgotten Army'. However, Field Marshal William Slim's 'Defeat into Victory' emerged as the definitive account. Recent works, notably Fergal Keane's 'Road of Bones', have helped bring this overlooked theatre into the spotlight.

But why does Kohima matter? In early 1944, Japan was on the back foot. In the Pacific, the Americans' island-hopping campaign was drawing ever closer to Japan's home islands, threatening strategic bombing raids on its cities. The Japanese high command, desperate to relieve this pressure, gambled on an offensive into India. A successful push into the Assam plains, they believed, might trigger the collapse of British colonial rule and open the door to a negotiated settlement with the Allies. Thus, the Japanese launched Operation U-Go, aiming to seize Imphal, Kohima, and Dimapur, critical logistical hubs on the route to Assam and Bengal.

Facing them was Slim, commander of the British 14th Army, who had been quietly rebuilding a demoralised force battered by defeat in Malaya and the humiliating fall of Singapore in 1942. The British and Indian armies had endured the longest retreat in Commonwealth history, following the Japanese invasion of Burma.

Kohima came under siege on April 4, 1944. For over two weeks, 15,000 crack Japanese troops surrounded the garrison, which was outnumbered and short on supplies. But Slim's men, bolstered by one battalion of the 161 Indian Brigade and the 1st Assam Regiment, held firm. Vital supplies were airdropped, and the garrison endured, testing and proving the theory that troops could stand and fight while being resupplied from the air.

The battle's significance cannot be overstated. The Japanese offensive was decisively crushed, securing Imphal, safeguarding Dimapur, and delivering a fatal blow to Japan's war effort in Southeast Asia. For the Indian Army, Kohima was transformative. The battles at Kohima and Imphal helped forge a modern, mechanised force capable of waging an all-arms war. Many of the formations that fought there would later serve in post-independence India, notably the 161 Indian Brigade, which was rushed to defend Srinagar during the 1947-48 Kashmir conflict. Kohima deserves far greater recognition.

(The writer is an advocate at the Punjab and Haryana HC and a military history enthusiast)

## AROUND THE WORLD

## A Truce Vs Durable Peace

By  
Priya Samant

The Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in his address to the UN General Assembly on Friday, displayed two maps; one was titled "The Blessing," and the other "The Curse!" "The Blessing" did not identify the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but showed all the territory as one nation, Israel! He announced the continuation of military actions in Lebanon and said "I've come here today to say enough is enough. We won't rest until our citizens can return safely to their homes."

It's been a year since Hamas's October 7 unprecedented attack, more than 1500 Israelis have been killed and hundreds abducted into deep dark tunnels of Gaza. Hezbollah, a Shia militia of Lebanon is targeting the north of Israel whereas the southern parts of the country are attacked by Houthis, the Yemeni Shia rebels. Houthis have also been attacking commercial vessels near Israel's shoreline, disrupting the global maritime trade. The Iraqi Shia militants targeted Israel's strongest ally, the United States by launching rockets at bases hosting US troops in Iraq, Syria and Jordan! Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthis have relentlessly launched over 11000 missiles and mortar shells into Israel, displacing over 100,000 Israelis in the past year. Iran's 'Operation True Promise' alone targeted Israel's Golan plateau with over 300 missiles and drones fired in a single

night of April 2024! Iran with its proxies has adopted a horizontal escalation strategy to wipe off Israel.

For the past half-century, Israel has been only retaliating and has not subdued the enemy with full-scale war. The world's best military weapons have been targeting only the positions exposed due to the firing from enemy's lines, rather than demolishing the sites pinpointed by years of deep research.

In Sep 2024, when thousands of pagers and other communication devices exploded in the hands of sworn enemies, the world marvelled at the Israeli intelligence and capabilities. Once again, it is proved that Israel is bending over backwards to conduct precise-targeted killings and destroy the command structure of the enemy force. As these proxies remain deeply embedded within the civilian population and are using civilians as human shields, Israel is using such sophisticated precision targeting to ensure minimal damage.

However, these target actions by Israel have been criticised by experts as killing the leader does not destroy the entire militia; the destruction of critical infrastructure does not eliminate all the risks. These slim victories do not ensure long-term security; rather, such actions help the enemy to win grassroots support. This targeted retaliatory policy of Israel has led to enemy aggressions from all sides. "A crushing response from the Axis of Resistance" is what was promised by Iran's Commander Hossein Salami to Hezbollah Chief. Israel's actions are also condemned for putting many noncombatants at risk. But this 'moral radar' malfunctions when hundreds of Hamas, Hezbollah missiles race towards Israel with a genocidal intent.

When Israel finally took up arms against Hezbollah's infra-



structure in Lebanon for conclusive victory, a sudden call for a ceasefire echoed in the UN assembly. The UN has turned a blind eye to the sufferings of Israelis and Israeli settlers for a long time. In September this year, the UN assembly passed a resolution demanding Israel to end its "unlawful presence" and remove its settlements from Palestinian territory within the next 12 months. Issuance of such directives and condemnation by the UN are not new to Israel. In the 90s when Israel relinquished control over parts of Gaza, the Palestinian faction attacked and killed one thousand Israelis.

Hezbollah started The Second Lebanon War when Israel withdrew from Lebanon in the past. In 2005, Israel withdrew completely from Gaza, and since then, the Israelis have endured war atrocities. Israel's "Iron Lady" Golda Meir once said "Give up this and give up the other place. Give up the Golan Heights. What happened when we were not on the Golan Heights? We were not on the Golan Heights before '67, and for 19 years, Syria had guns up there and shot at our agricultural settlements below. So what, if we give up the Golan Heights, they will stop shoot-

ing? They say we must be dead. And we say we want to be alive. Between life and death, I don't know of a compromise. And that's why we have no choice."

Can peace be decreed only upon one nation that is constantly targeted by neighbours, when her neighbours refuse to accept her very existence right from the day of her formation; when geopolitical conflicts are fuelled by third parties to earn enormous defence export profits? Isn't peace a shared responsibility?

The UN directives and peace accords could not safeguard Israelis from unprovoked attacks. The Iran-proxies have not retreated from Israeli borders. On the contrary, they built secret tunnels, procured the lethal arsenal and mapped 'The Conquest of the Galilee Plan' as fighting Jewish land is the only reason why they exist! Peace cannot be decreed solely through truce and treaties! A truce without considering its potential impact does not resolve the conflict. An accord without justice fails to restore durable peace!

(The writer is a foreign affairs expert. Views personal.)

## NEWSMAKER OF THE WEEK

## Chequered Legacy

By  
Kiran D. Tare

first Assembly seat, championing issues like Kannada language rights and regional pride. His efforts to promote a state flag reflected a deep-rooted commitment to Karnataka's identity.

After shifting allegiances among various parties—including the Janata Party and Janata Dal—Siddaramaiah found a stable platform in the Congress Party in 2006, following a fallout with JD(S) patriarch H.D. Deve Gowda. His governance has been characterized by a strong emphasis on welfare initiatives, notably the 'Anna Bhagya' (free rice) scheme,



Siddaramaiah

exemplified his commitment to tackling poverty.

His long association with various political parties eventually led him to enter the Congress fold, where he has served with distinction, particularly during his tenure as chief minister from 2013 to 2018.

And yet, for a political career built on seemingly hallowed ideals and lofty principles, Siddaramaiah now finds himself under siege after the Lokayukta Police registered a First Information Report (FIR) against him concerning allegations of illegalities in the allotment of 14 prime sites worth Rs.56 crore to his wife, Parvathi. This move followed a special court's directive for an investigation after an RTI activist lodged a complaint. The Karnataka High Court upheld the Governor's decision to sanction this inquiry, adding legal

weight to the accusations.

Amidst these developments, Siddaramaiah remains resolute, asserting that he will not resign from his position despite the opposition BJP clamouring for his ouster.

The political implications of the MUDA case extend beyond Siddaramaiah himself. The BJP has characterized the Congress government's recent withdrawal of general consent for the CBI to investigate state cases as evidence of corruption.

As the political temperature heats up in the wake of the MUDA scam, Siddaramaiah's relationship with D.K. Shivakumar, the state Congress president, will be crucial especially given that it was the latter who was primarily responsible for the Congress' victory in the 2023 Karnataka Assembly election and was seen as a CM candidate. However, following prolonged negotiations, Shivakumar had accepted the role of deputy CM. Yet the power dynamics between the two leaders could impact the party's cohesion and effectiveness in governance in what is arguably Siddaramaiah's most critical political hour.

As Siddaramaiah navigates this political quagmire, he also has to address pressing issues, particularly those affecting the AHINDA coalition (acronym representing minorities, backward classes, and Dalits) that has been central to his political ideology. Balancing the diverse needs of his constituents with the call for transparency and accountability will be critical as he seeks to retain public trust likely to have been eroded following the MUDA case developments.

Either way, Siddaramaiah's second term as CM is slated to be extremely complex. In the event he manages to weather the MUDA tempest, his ability to manage the fiscal challenges of welfare programs and deliver genuine benefits without compromising the state's fiscal health will be vital in the coming days. This will be key in demonstrating his skill as a shrewd political operator or mark the decline and fall of his political fortunes.

## BY INVITATION

We Dig, We Suffer: The Climate  
Crisis of Our Own MakingBy  
Sneha Johari

Ten years may seem trivial in ecological terms, yet the seeds of today's climate change were sown as far back as the 1800s. In her sweeping biography of geographer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt titled 'The Invention of Nature', historian Andrea Wulf reveals that Humboldt was already observing the impact of human settlements on the pristine landscapes of South America in 1800 and 1801. Like the resilient human body, which endures a kaleidoscope of experiences until it can bear no more, the global environment has tolerated over two centuries of resource exploitation, reminiscent of the British Empire's unsustainable expansion. Yet, it is in the past decade that we have truly accelerated our trajectory toward ecological disaster.

The days of blaming the Baby Boomer generation for our current climate woes are long gone. The recent floods in Kerala serve as a stark

reminder of a crisis that has intensified in recent years. These floods are part of a troubling pattern, with cities like Chennai, Pune, and Uttarakhand experiencing their own deluges in recent years. What Indian urban centres have faced over the last decade transcends mere climate change. It is a consequence of our actions, exacerbated by changing weather patterns.

A 2020 study by researchers at IISER Pune examining the devastating floods in 2019 revealed a troubling trend: heavy rainfall events have become more frequent over the past 20 years. Despite the absence of discernible patterns in rainfall data from 1978 to 2020, they noted a "marked increase" in days of intense precipitation, which significantly heightens the risk of flooding.

What transpired in the last decade to precipitate such a severe impact on our environment?

Take Pune as a case study. The city's road concretisation, a project proposed as early as 2002, only commenced in earnest in 2013, despite opposition from citizens and environmentalists, and continues unabated today. A single rainstorm this July resulted in the tragic deaths of at least eight residents, as activists struggle to access a report on the floods from the Pune Municipal Corporation's (PMC) tight grasp. This situation, compounded by a burgeoning population, rapid urban expansion, unequal access to resources, and rampant deforestation, has rendered Pune increasingly inhospitable. Long-time residents recall that this year's peak temperature of 43.3°C was alarmingly high, contrasting sharply with last year's frigid 7.4°C.

A report from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), prepared with the Government of Maharashtra, highlights that in 2022, the annual mean land surface air temperature for the state was 0.30°C above its long-term average for 1981 to 2010,

marking it the 14th warmest year on record since 1901.

While scientists and logicians remind us that correlation does not imply causation, the power of observation remains compelling. Even if we dismiss the impassioned pleas of environmentalists, citizen activists, and concerned citizens regarding the degradation of our urban and natural infrastructure, the question remains: how extreme will climate events become in the next decade? Based on current trends, the answer is clear - and it is not promising.

The Mula-Mutha River, an integral part of the city's history and culture like the Shaniwar Wada Fort and the Parvati Hill, has been subjected to decades of neglect and urban encroachment. Yet, indiscriminate urbanisation has transformed the river into one of the country's most-polluted water bodies. In 2018, the Central Pollution Control Board had listed sections of the river among the 351 most critically polluted stretches, earning Mula-Mutha the ignominy of being not only the most polluted river in Pune and Maharashtra but also in the country.

Globally, cities, be it Jakarta or Miami, are grappling with the repercussions of rapid urbanization, where inadequate infrastructure has left them vulnerable to flooding, exacerbated by rising sea levels. In each case, the relentless drive for urban growth, often at the expense of environmental safeguards, illustrates the leitmotif of the failure to balance development with ecological stewardship. As I write this amidst the cacophony of construction, replete with the incessant banging, clanging, and drilling of ongoing real estate redevelopment, it is all the more ironic to contemplate the impact of our choices on the environment.

(The writer is an independent journalist with a keen interest in environmental issues and urban ecology. Views personal.)





### KALEIDOSCOPE

1. People visit the second edition of the Uttar Pradesh International Trade Show, in Greater Noida on Friday.
2. Miss Universe Great Britain Christina Dela Cruz Chalk poses for photos at the Elephant Conservation and Care Center in Churmura of Mathura district on Friday.
3. Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud with Union Minister for Women & Child Development Annpurna Devi during the 9th National Annual Stakeholders Consultation on 'Protecting the Rights of Children Living with Disabilities in Delhi on Saturday.
4. Artists perform 'Mahishasur Mardini' act ahead of Durga Puja festival in Nadia district of West Bengal on Saturday.
5. A man jumps on a tree as tries to flee a charging bull during the annual folk festival that celebrates the feast day of Our Lady of Mercedes in Guarare, Panama on Friday.

All Pictures PTI, AP

## LETTER FROM PAKISTAN

# Is Pakistan's War Rhetoric a Distraction or a Dangerous Reality?



By Kaswar Klasra

South Asia teeters on the edge of another potential conflict, as the threat of war between nuclear-armed neighbors, Pakistan and India, looms. In a recent UN speech, Pakistan's PM Shehbaz Sharif addressed terrorism, climate change, and conflicts in Palestine and Kashmir. While his words resonated, many question if this is a genuine concern or a distraction from domestic issues.

Sharif's speech highlighted global conflicts, terrorism threats, and the devastating impacts of climate change. He warned of a 'new Cold War,' referencing U.S.-China tensions and Pakistan-India hostilities. These long-time adversaries have shaped South Asia's political and security dynamics.

The Prime Minister made an emotional plea over Gaza, calling for action. He stressed the need for an immediate two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders, with full United Nations membership for Palestine. Without such a resolution, Sharif warned, the Middle East could be dragged into a war with consequences far beyond anyone's imagination.

Sharif's pivot from Palestine to

**Sharif's speech serves domestic political needs but heightens the risks of conflict. With both Pakistan and India nuclear-armed, even minor skirmishes could escalate, as Modi's India focusses on military modernisation.**

Kashmir while drawing a direct comparison between the Palestinian struggle and the ongoing conflict in Jammu & Kashmir. Sharif described the plight of the Kashmiri people as a parallel tragedy, and their century-long struggle for self-determination, casting India as the aggressor in the region.

Since India revoked Jammu & Kashmir's special status in August 2019, tensions have escalated. Sharif accused the Indian government of taking "unilateral illegal steps" in the region and implementing a "Final Solution" for Kashmir, invoking chilling echoes of the Holocaust. He went on to detail the presence of 900,000 Indian troops in the region, accusing them of terrorising the population with curfews, extrajudicial killings, and mass abductions of young Kashmiris.

His warning was clear: Pakistan would respond if provoked by India. "Pakistan will respond most decisively to any Indian aggression," he stated, signalling that his government views the situation as a ticking time bomb. However, as he spoke of defending Kashmir's rights and resisting Indian aggression, many observers questioned the timing and the intensity of his rhetoric. With Pakistan grappling with severe domestic challenges, was this speech a way to rally nationalist sentiment and distract from his government's failures?

To understand the implications of Sharif's address, one must consider the situation in Pakistan. The country faces an economic crisis with record-high inflation, soaring unemployment, and mounting debt. The floods two years ago worsened matters, causing over \$30 billion in damages and displacing millions. Though Pakistan contributes less than 1% to global emissions, it has suffered disproportionately from climate change. Sharif underscored this imbalance, stating, "We must uphold the axiom: the polluter pays!"

Sharif's government is also facing mounting political pressure from opposition parties, particularly Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), who have been vocal in their criticism of the government's handling of the economy and its failure to address the needs of ordinary citizens. Protests have erupted, with demonstrators calling for better governance and account-

ability. In this context, Sharif's strong rhetoric on Kashmir and India could be a strategic effort to shift focus from domestic crises. By portraying India as the aggressor, Sharif may be rallying for national unity and undermining his political opponents.

Sharif's speech, while politically useful at home, poses serious risks. South Asia is a conflict hotspot, and a war between nuclear-armed Pakistan and India would be catastrophic. Even a limited conflict could escalate dangerously. Under Prime Minister Modi, India treats Kashmir as a domestic issue while continuing to modernise its military, likely to counter Pakistan.

This arms race is escalating between the two countries, and the dangers are clear. A single spark could ignite a conflict neither side truly wants but may feel compelled to fight. The international community has remained on the sidelines, unwilling or unable to mediate. Strategic alliances—Pakistan with China and India with the United States—further complicate the situation. Any conflict between the two would destabilise South Asia and risk drawing in these external powers, with unpredictable and far-reaching consequences.

Sharif's speech raises an important question: is this political theatre, or is it a warning of impending conflict? It is likely somewhere in the middle. While Sharif's government faces domestic pressure, his concerns about Kashmir and India's military expansion are valid. The situation in South Asia remains fragile, with the risks of escalation and a catastrophic conflict ever-present.

The international community must act swiftly to de-escalate tensions between Pakistan and India, as the stakes are too high to ignore. Both nations have much to lose in another conflict, but neither seems prepared to back down. Amid global challenges like climate change and rising geopolitical tensions, nuclear-armed confrontation in South Asia is the last thing the world needs.

While Sharif's speech may serve political aims, tensions between Islamabad and New Delhi are real, the risk of conflict remains, and global intervention is crucial.

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

## IN MEMORIAM

# The Prime of Dame Maggie Smith



By Shoumojit Banerjee

It seems almost a curse that the obituaries of great British and Irish thespians—whether Richard Harris, John Hurt, Alan Rickman, or Michael Gambon—are inevitably bound to their roles in the 'Harry Potter' franchise, reducing their extraordinary careers to a single chapter in a vast and diverse body of work.

Dame Maggie Smith, who has died aged 89, appears to be the latest inheritor of that curse. While she leaves behind a legacy that transcends the stage, to 21st century masses, she was 'Professor Minerva McGonagall' in the 'Harry Potter' franchise. To legions of television viewers, she was the acerbic Dowager Countess of Grantham in 'Downton Abbey' with her barbed witticisms and regal bearing.

These roles, whilst undeniably popular, are far removed from her finest work, hardly measuring up to her luminous performances in a magnificent seven-decade-long stage and film career.

Smith's cinematic legacy will be indelibly defined by her electrifying portrayal of Miss Jean Brodie in the 1969 film version of Muriel Spark's classic novel 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie,' which secured her an Academy Award for 'Best Actress.'

As the eccentric and self-assured teacher at an all-girls school in Edinburgh during the 1930s, Smith was magnetic. Convinced that she is in her "prime" (a phrase Jean repeats throughout the film, believing herself to be at the height of her intellectual and cultural powers), Miss Brodie's character is marked by her strong, unorthodox views.

She rejects the traditional curriculum, instead teaching students about art, politics, and life through her own subjective lens. Brodie idolizes figures like Mussolini and Franco, and her political sympathies lean disturbingly toward fascism and while she encourages her students to live boldly and unconventionally, she subtly exerts control over their personal and romantic choices.

It was an incredible feat of acting, with Smith stunning as the non-conformist exerting a near-messianic influence on her young charges. With razor-sharp diction and a haughty, almost feverish idealism, she made Miss Brodie terrifyingly real - a woman blinded by her own certainties.

Her second Oscar, for Neil Simon's 'California Suite' (1978), showcased her mastery of comedy. As a neurotic, aging British actress, Smith brought vulnerability and wit to what might have been a throwaway part. Her ability to oscillate between self-deprecating



Maggie Smith

humour and deep emotional resonance was masterful, and her duelling with Michael Caine, who plays a closet homosexual, was the film's high point.

Smith was born in Essex in 1934, a doctor's daughter who found her way to the Oxford Playhouse in her early twenties. The theatre became her true home, and the early promise she showed blossomed under the tutelage of Laurence Olivier. Her Shakespearean career highlights include a stunning Lady Macbeth to a heart-wrenching Desdemona in the film version of Othello (1965), for which she received an Oscar nomination playing opposite Olivier as the Moor in blackface.

More memorable cinematic performances followed in 'Travels with My Aunt' (1972), another Oscar-nominated turn adapted from Graham Greene wacky novel. Smith was perfect as 'Aunt Augusta', bringing a wry exuberance and mischievous charm to her character.

Whether in comedy or tragedy, her performances were marked by a rare combination of intellectual precision and emotional depth. She played every moment as if it were a chess move, each word and glance a deliberate choice in service of character.

Her long and fruitful association with the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company yielded some of the most lauded performances in modern theatre. Yet, unlike many of her contemporaries who eventually faded into genteel retirement, Smith continued to work well into her eighties, a tireless figure whose love for her craft never dimmed.

She was a paradox: at once the Grande Dame of British theatre and film, and a fixture in popular culture.

As Dame Maggie Smith takes her final curtain, her legacy will be felt most keenly not as a pop-culture icon, but as a master of her craft. For those who witnessed her brilliance on stage and screen, she will be remembered not just for her roles, but for how completely she embodied them. The Prime of Dame Maggie Smith was not fleeting. It was eternal!

# AITA associations withdraw no-confidence motion

**New Delhi:** The proposed no-confidence motion against All India Tennis Association (AITA) President Anil Jain has been withdrawn, sources told PTI on Saturday.

Eight state tennis associations, affiliated with AITA, had proposed to move a no-confidence motion against Jain and an Extra Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) was called on Saturday ahead of the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Jain had moved the court seeking a stay on the EGM but the plea was not entertained. He had also alleged that certain candidates, who filed nominations for posts, were in violation of the Sports Code.

"The no-confidence motion has been withdrawn, so EGM was not required," a source told PTI without sharing the details.

Jain, who is a BJP Rajya Sabha MP, faced charges of "loading the association with his personal 'entitled' expenses by travelling with his family abroad several times."

The state units that proposed the no-confidence motion were: Assam, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Tripura.

One of the state associations had accused Jain of using his position in AITA for personal gains.



## New office bearers

The AITA on Saturday elected unopposed a new set of office bearers but the result was not declared officially as per the directions of the Delhi High Court, which is hearing a petition into Sports Code violations by the federation.

The AITA was to conduct election at its Annual General Meeting (AGM) but there was no need for voting since the Returning Officer received only one nomination for each post.

Apart from getting a new President, secretary general and treasurer, the national tennis federation elected eight vice presidents, four joint secretaries and 10 executive members.

It has been learnt that initially Rohit Rajpal and one more candidate had filed their nominations for the post of President but later India's non-playing

Davis Cup captain withdrew his candidature.

Former India players Somdev Devvarman and Purav Raja had sought a stay on the AITA elections, claiming that the federation was not following the Sports Code and several candidates in fray were ineligible to contest the polls.

The Court did not stay the elections but asked AITA and the Sports Ministry to file their response.

"The Election shall remain subject to the outcome of the instant writ petition. Let the result of the Election be placed in a sealed cover by the Election Officer, meaning thereby, the result of the Election shall not be published," the Court said.

The matter will be heard on October 14.

Till that time, the outgoing team and the new team will jointly take care of the federation work.

-PTI

## Treesa and Gayatri's campaign ends

**Macau:** Indian pair Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand's women's doubles campaign at the Macau Open Super 300 badminton tournament came to an end as they lost to Chinese Taipei's Hsieh Pei Shan and Hung En-Tzu in the semifinals here on Saturday.

The third-seeded Indian duo fought hard but lost 17-21, 21-16, 10-21 to the world No. 54 Chinese Taipei pair, bringing India's journey at the tournament to a close.

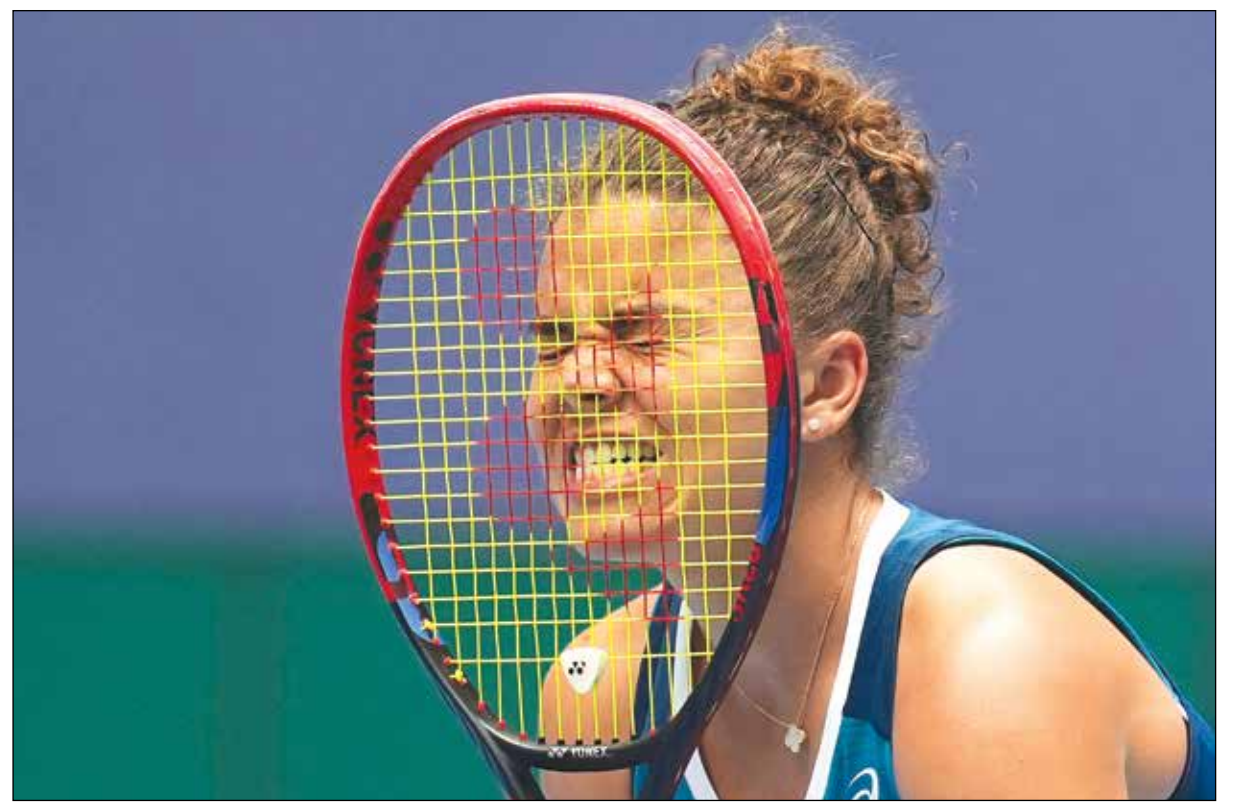
Ranked 23rd in the world, Treesa and Gayatri had already faced defeat against Hsieh and Hung twice this year, but they looked determined to turn the tables this time.

Hsieh and Hung opened strong, leading 8-5, and despite the Indians levelling at 8-8, the Chinese Taipei pair won five consecutive points to secure a 13-8 lead.

Treesa and Gayatri fought back to 15-15, but Hsieh and Hung regained control to take the first game.

In the second game, both pairs went toe-to-toe, with the Indians holding a narrow 11-10 lead at the interval. Treesa and Gayatri then raised their intensity to stretch their lead to 17-12 before clinching the second game and forcing a decider.

However, Hsieh and Hung came out firing in the final game, racing to a 14-2 lead. The Indians tried to mount a comeback, reducing the deficit to 10-18. But the early gap proved too large and the Chinese Taipei pair sealed their third victory over the Indian duo this year.



Jasmine Paolini of Italy reacts during play against Tauson of Denmark for the China Open tennis tournament held at the National Tennis Center in Beijing on Saturday.  
Pic: AP/PTI

## Musheer Khan stable after road accident

**Lucknow:** Mumbai all-rounder Musheer Khan, younger brother of India batter Sarfaraz, is "stable" after suffering a road accident on the outskirts of Lucknow but is set to miss cricketing action for a prolonged period starting with the upcoming Irani Cup.

The 19-year-old is expected to be out of action for at least three months due to neck injuries he sustained in the accident, effectively ruling him out of Mumbai's matches at the start of the Ranji Trophy 2024-25 season, starting from October 11.

It is learnt that Musheer was en route to Lucknow from Azamgarh, his hometown, for the Irani Cup beginning on October 1. He was accompanied by his father Naushad Khan, who also suffered minor scratches



in the accident that took place on the Purvanchal Expressway after his car hit a divider and overturned.

Dr. Bhola Singh, Medical Superintendent at Medanta Hospital, Lucknow, said in a statement that the cricketer is out of danger.

"Cricketer Musheer Khan, injured in a road accident on the Purvanchal Expressway, was brought to the emergency department of Medanta Hospital due to pain in his neck. His treatment is being conducted

under the supervision of Dr. Dharmendra Singh, Director of the Department of Orthopedics.

The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) said Musheer is currently "stable, conscious, and well-oriented".

"He has sustained a fracture in the neck region and is under close observation. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) medical teams are closely monitoring his progress to ensure he receives the best possible care," the MCA secretary Abhay Hadap said in a release.

"Once Musheer is deemed medically fit for travel, he will be flown to Mumbai for further evaluation and additional medical treatment. The timeline for his recovery will be deter-

mined following these assessments," he added.

The development comes as a blow for the teenager who has already scored three centuries and a half-century in nine First-Class games. He had a double hundred in last season's Ranji Trophy quarter-final, a half-century in the semi-final and a match-winning century in the final against Vidarbha.

He had also begun the 2024-25 domestic season with a hundred in the Duleep Trophy for India B against India A in Bengaluru recently.

Reigning Ranji Trophy champions Mumbai are slated to take on Rest of India in the Irani Cup match at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium here from October 1-5.

-PTI

## Bopanna-Dodig out of China Open

**Beijing:** Indian tennis star Rohan Bopanna and his Croatian partner Ivan Dodig suffered a shock loss to the pair of Francisco Cerundolo and Nicolas Jarry in a first round match of the China Open ATP 500 tournament here on Saturday.

The second-seeded Indo-Croatian pair lost 5-7 6-7 to the unseeded Cerundolo (Argentina) and Jarry (Chile) duo in the round of 16 match that lasted one hour 31 minutes. Bopanna's regular partner Matthew Ebden of Australia chose not to participate in the ATP 500 event. Bopanna has had stints partnering Dodig in the past -- in 2017 and 2021 -- with their best result being reaching the final at the 2017 ATP Montreal Masters 1000 event.

The 44-year-old Indian won two titles this year -- Australian Open Grand Slam event and Miami Open.

-PTI

## Rain washes out second day



**Kanpur:** The second day of the second Test between India and Bangladesh was on Saturday called off without a ball being bowled due to persistent downpour.

The drizzle in the morning turned into heavy rain, not letting the action begin on day two at Green Park Stadium.

The groundsman put the three super soppers to work around 11:15 am after the rain stopped. The visibility

was also poor.

As conditions did not improve, the second day's play was called off officially at 2:15pm.

As per the weather forecast, the city is expected to receive rain even on Sunday but Monday and Tuesday are likely to be sunny and warm. In that scenario, the match seems to be headed for a draw.

Bangladesh had ended the rain-curtailed opening

day at 107 for three as only 35 overs could be bowled.

India pacer Akash Deep accounted for Bangladeshi openers -- Zakir Hasan and Shadman Islam -- while off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin sent back rival skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto.

India are leading the two-match series 1-0, having won the Chennai Test by 280 runs.

-PTI

## India face Laos in must-win game

**Vientiane (Laos):** Smarting from a heartbreaking loss to Iran, the Indian team faces hosts Laos in a must-win game in the AFC U20 Asian Cup Qualifiers here on Sunday, in order to make it to the main tournament.

The last time they played in the AFC U20 Asian Cup final rounds (formerly known as the AFC Youth Championship and the AFC U19 Championship) was back in 2006 when they hosted the tournament.

For successful qualification campaigns, one would have to go even further back -- to 2004 when Turkmenistan's withdrawal from the tournament meant that India, who had finished second in qualification Group H, got the chance to compete, or back to 2002, when they topped their qualifying group to make it to the final rounds.

India are also the former champions of the Asian Youth Championship.

## India beat Nepal to enter SAFF U17 final

**Thimphu (Bhutan):** India beat Nepal 4-2 in a high-octane match to progress to the final of the 2024 SAFF U17 Championship at the Changlimithang Stadium here on Saturday.

After a goalless first half, India scored through Vishal Yadav (61st and 68th minutes), Rishi Singh (85th) and Hemneichung Lunkim (90+5), while Subash Bam (81st) and an own goal by India's Mohammed Kaif (89th) allowed Nepal to reduce the margin.

In the title clash to be played on Monday, India await the winners of the second semifinal between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The first half was devoid of too many clear chances as teams were cautious committing too many numbers forward, and sizing each other up.

India's midfielders were the ones who held more of the possession but found it



tough to break down Nepal's defence.

India got the first chance in the 12th minute, when a defensive mix-up within the Nepal box saw the ball fall to Md Arbash on the left wing. Spotting the goalkeeper off his line, Arbash took a first-timer from a tight angle and distance, but it flew high and wide.

In the 38th minute, a cross from Bharat Lairenjam dropped perfectly into a dangerous area, begging to be put into goal. An on-rushing Arbash dove in a

vain attempt to get his head to it and then so did Samson Ahongshangbam behind him, but to no avail.

The best chance of the half went begging and the two teams went into the break locked in a tight stalemate.

India took the lead in the 61st minute through a combination of smart tactical play and a poacher's instinct for goal. A neatly worked corner saw the ball cross deep towards the far post from the right wing.

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Over 5,600 players, 610 matches

# 72-year-old Bordoloi Trophy set for resurgence

**Guwahati:** Bordoloi Trophy, one of India's oldest and popular football tournaments, is set for a resurgence with over 5600 players featuring in a revamped competition, which will see 610 matches being played across three months from January next year.

The Guwahati Sports Association (GSA), the tournament's organisers, have pledged its commitment to reviving and re-branding the 72-year-old football competition.

The tournament is named after Assam's first Chief Minister Gopinath Bordoloi and its first edi-

tion was held in 1952.

"Since its inception till about first half of the 1990s, Bordoloi Trophy had been a hugely popular tournament not only in Assam, but also in northeastern and other neighbouring states. People waited the entire year for this tournament," GSA general secretary Devajit Saikia said, recalling the iconic status the competition once enjoyed.

Initially played at the Judges' Field, the GSA's home ground, the tournament was later shifted to the Nehru Stadium.

Over the last 10 years

however, the tournament was held in different towns of the state.

Saikia maintained that alongside Bordoloi Trophy, the popularity of other legacy football tournaments such as the Rovers Cup of Mumbai and DCM Cup of Delhi has also gone down.

"GSA has been making efforts to bring back the glorious days for Bordoloi Trophy, with which the people of Assam have an emotional and sentimental connect. With support of the state government, we are unveiling it in a new



format," he said.

Under the new, expanded format, the tournament will be held in three phases.

"It will be a 45-day tour-

nament with about 610 matches, with participation of over 280 clubs and 5,600 players. The district level matches will be from January 20 to February 5, 2025, followed by cluster level, and then the final round," the GSA general secretary said.

"The Bordoloi Trophy will be kicked off simultaneously in all 35 districts of the state on the same day for the first time," he added.

Each district sports association will select its top eight clubs, which will compete in the first phase. The

district champions will play at the cluster round, and the winners and runners up from the cluster level will qualify for the final round.

The final round will be played at the Judges' Field here from March 1 and will also feature the top two teams of Guwahati Premier League.

"We are dividing the 35 revenue districts of the state into six clusters based on geographical location. Our aim is to provide maximum players with opportunity to compete and evolve Bordoloi Trophy into a talent scouting ground for top

clubs," Saikia said.

He extended his gratitude to the state government and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for coming forward to help GSA in expanding the tournament.

"The new format requires financial and other support, and we are thankful to the government for agreeing to be with us in this regard."

Saikia said the two teams to be invited for the final round could be top clubs from Kolkata or Kerala, or from Bangladesh or Bhutan.

"We will be inviting them

so that our players can compete with the best footballers," he added.

Saikia hoped that the new format will benefit the state's football more than the previous practise of inviting top clubs only for participation.

Besides top clubs of the country, teams from Bhutan, Bangladesh, Iran and Russia, among others, had previously participated in the tournament.

Mohan Bagan have been the most successful team with seven title triumphs, while Oil India had won in the last edition.

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