

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Statue

CM says ready to apologise 100 times

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Under fire over the collapse of a Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Thursday asserted he would not hesitate to touch the feet of the warrior king 100 times and apologise for the incident if required.

Talking to reporters here, Shinde said the op-

position has other issues to do politics on but Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, a revered figure in India, should be kept out of it.

As the collapse of the statue four days ago in Sindhudurg district continued to generate heat, the state government set up a technical committee to find out reasons for the crash, while members of



the ruling Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, staged silent protests across Maharashtra over the incident.

His remarks come a day after Ajit Pawar apologised to the people of the state for the collapse of the structure.

Shinde said the Navy has demanded that the

area where the statue was installed by cordoned off for inspection and starting rebuilding work.

In a related development, activists of the Sambhaji Brigade, a Maratha outfit, stated a protest outside the house of Jaidheep Apte, the sculptor who built the statue, in adjoining Thane city. Protesters accused Apte

of disrespecting Shivaji Maharaj, and their demonstration included blackening his house's door, posting a "Shivdrohi" label, and breaking eggs.

Opposition leaders have announced that the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) will take out a protest march in Mumbai on September 1 against the statue collapse.

Foundation of Vadhvan port today

By Correspondent

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Maharashtra on Friday during which he will address Global Fintech Fest (GFF) 2024 in Mumbai and lay foundation stone of Vadhvan Port project worth around Rs 76,000 crore in Palghar.

Modi will address GFF 2024 at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai at 11 am and thereafter around 1:30 pm, he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of various development projects at CIDCO ground, Palghar.

The Vadhvan Port aims to establish a world-class maritime gateway that will boost the country's trade and economic growth by catering to large container vessels, offering deeper drafts, and accommodating ultra-large cargo ships.

GFF is being jointly organised by the Payments Council of India, the National Payments Corporation of India and the Fintech Convergence Council. Around 800 speakers, including policymakers, regulators, senior bankers, industry captains and academicians from India and various other countries will address more than 350 sessions in the conference.

First foreign university to set up India campus



New Delhi: The UK's University of Southampton has become the first foreign university to set up its offshore campus in India under the new National Education Policy, the Centre announced on Thursday.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) had in 2023 announced Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India Regulations.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar handed over a Letter of Intent (LoI) to university representatives at an event here.

According to officials, the University of Southampton submitted a proposal for opening a branch campus in Gurugram that was approved by the UGC standing committee, com-

prising noted academics from India and abroad, for issuing a LoI as per regulations.

"The degrees awarded by the India campus of the University of Southampton will be the same as in the host university. The programmes offered in the branch campus of University of Southampton in India will have the same academic and quality standards," UGC Chairman Jagadeesh Kumar said.

"The Indian campus of the University of Southampton is expected to start its academic programmes in July 2025. The courses offered will be in subjects focusing on business and management, computing, law, engineering, art and design, biosciences and life sciences," he added.



"Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is a patron deity of Maharashtra. I am ready to touch his feet 100 times and apologise (for the statue crash). I will not shy away from apologising. Our government functions keeping his ideals in mind,"

- Eknath Shinde, Chief Minister



Army personnel move towards the encounter site, in Lathi village in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Thursday. Pic: PTI

Infiltration bids foiled along LoC

Srinagar: Security forces have foiled two infiltration bids along the Line of Control in Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir, killing three terrorists, officials said on Thursday.

"One terrorist has been confirmed eliminated (in

Tangdhar operation). Two terrorists have been eliminated in the ongoing anti-infiltration operation in general area Machhal, Kupwara, along with the recovery of Two AK Rifles, one Pistol, four Hand Grenades and other war-like stores,"

Srinagar based Chinar Corps posted on its X handle.

The army said searches were in progress at both locations. Police officials said the two operations were launched on August 28 based on specific inputs by

Kupwara Police a day earlier.

They said police had been maintaining close vigil and developing on ground human intelligence regarding infiltration attempts from the LoC at Kupwara. - PTI

Jio users to get 100 GB free cloud

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Placing big bets on AI and deep tech, Reliance Industries Limited Chairman Mukesh Ambani on Thursday announced up to 100 GB of free cloud storage for Jio users and expects the company to double revenues over 3-4 years, a move that will set the path for a possible merger and listing in future.

Ambani said the company is doubling down on deep tech to further extend its competitive edge.

At the AGM of Reliance Industries, Ambani spoke about the AI service platform (Jio Brain), national AI infrastructure (gigawatt-scale AI-ready data centres in Jamnagar), Jio TVOS with voice assistant HelloJio, JioPhoneCall AI, as well as Jio AI-Cloud Welcome offer of up to 100 GB free cloud storage for Jio users.

"Jio users will get up to 100 GB of free cloud storage, to securely store and access all their photos, videos, documents, all other digital content, and data. And we will also have the most affordable prices in the market for those needing even higher storage," Ambani announced.

Jio AI-Cloud Welcome offer will be launched in Diwali this year and bring powerful and affordable solutions of cloud data storage and data-powered AI services to everyone everywhere.

Growth roadmap

Mukesh Ambani on Thursday unveiled the next phase of growth at Reliance Industries Ltd, with retail and telecom worth over USD 100 billion each, doubling revenues and pre-tax profit in 3-4 years, new energy business becoming profitable by 2031, and core oil and



chemical business continuing to be the robust growth engine.

While the growing cash cow, the oil and chemicals business, Reliance will step up AI adoption and will launch 'Jio Brain' - a suite of AI tools and platforms - and set up gigawatt scale IA-ready data centres in Jamnagar in Gujarat "to create the world's lowest AI inferencing cost" to make such applications more affordable in India than anywhere else.

Ambani said that in 2017, he promised that Re-

liance would enter the world's Top 50 before its Golden Jubilee. "I am pleased to inform you that this year, Reliance is among the world's Top 50 most valuable corporations".

In July 2018, Reliance crossed the USD 100 billion valuation mark, and in the next six years, it has become the first Indian company to cross USD 250 billion in market value.

He said three out of the five growth engines of Reliance - oil-to-chemical (O2C) business that houses oil refinery and petrochemical plants, retail comprising of both online and physical stores, telecom and digital venture Jio, media, and green energy - have a valuation of over USD 100 billion each and will continue to grow even faster.

O2C, retail and Jio are valued at over USD 100 billion each.

Professionals pursue musical dreams with gusto



Sudarshana (on the right) with her violin teacher Averell.

By Brian D'Souza

Mumbai: Nandan Yalgi, 55, always wanted to learn a western musical instrument from his childhood.

However, it was only in his 50s that he took the first steps towards achieving that dream.

Since then, the Mumbai-based managing director of a logistics company who began studying the violin in 2018, and has a hectic schedule takes the time out for his weekly classes.

Like Yalgi, Sudarshana Ghosh, a senior corporate banking lawyer always harboured a similar desire to learn western music. So when a colleague offered to sell her his violin, it rekindled her interest. She decided that the time had come to learn to play the instrument.

Both Yalgi and Ghosh take personal violin tuitions from Averell D'Souza, a Santa Cruz, Mumbai-based violinist who plays for the Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI). D'Souza has been teaching for over 30 years, balancing his home music classes with the schedule of the SOI which frequently plays overseas.

As Yalgi puts it, "I chose the violin because it is the one instrument that replicates vocals." Moreover, he adds, it is easy to carry around. For Ghosh, who had a "sense of rhythm" from her young days, the violin is an emotional connect for her, and that when she begins to play, "tears just naturally flow."

D'Souza, who turns 50 in October, tutors many young boys and girls but has no-

ticed that recently, those keen to learn are in their middle years. D'Souza comes from a musical family. While his father plays the violin, his daughter, Althea, 16, is a gifted pianist.

For senior corporate professionals like Ghosh and Yalgi, learning a challenging instrument like the violin is demanding as they have to balance out a hectic corporate life, and "take out the time" to practice. Yalgi says he has even taken his violin on a business trip to China so that he would miss practising. "In four years, he has rarely missed a class," he says. He even considered taking exams from the London School of Music but due to a miss match in exam dates, was not able to.

Both Ghosh and Yalgi are regulars at SOI con-

certs as well as many other recitals including jazz and chamber orchestras.

As Ghosh says, "When I attend a concert, I am confirmed in my choice to learn the violin." In her younger years, she says, coming from an academically-inclined Bengali family, music was seen as a hobby and not as a profession. Growing up, she was attracted to keyboards and drums, but never really focussed on learning western music. However, her father urged her not to give up her dream to learn western music, and that she should learn it one day.

In Mumbai, apart from private teachers like D'Souza, there are online and in-person tuitions available at the Furtado School of Music. Established in 2011, it provides

musical training in variety of instruments including the saxophone, Ukelele, piano and keyboards as well as western and Indian vocals. Also promoting western music through concerts and education is the Mehli Mehta Music Foundation, set up in 1995 in memory of violinist, Mehli Mehta, the father of Zubin Mehta, conductor emeritus of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra.

While Yalgi wants to give his music exams, and has progressed well enough to take the level 2 exams directly, Ghosh says that she hasn't so far thought deeply about her musical aspirations but says that playing the violin "takes me to a world of peace and quiet, and like legal work demands concentration."

Vadhvan high on PM's agenda

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay foundation stone of the Vadhvan Port in Palghar on Friday.

Vadhvan, located near Dahanu town in Palghar district, will be one of India's largest deep-water ports and will provide direct connectivity to international shipping routes, reducing transit times and costs. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology and infrastructure, the port will feature deep berths, efficient cargo handling facilities and modern port management systems, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office read.

The port is expected to generate significant employment opportunities, stimulate local businesses and contribute to the overall economic development of the region.

The Vadhvan Port project incorporates sustainable de-



velopment practices, with a focus on minimising environmental impact and adhering to stringent ecological standards.

Once operational, the port will enhance India's maritime connectivity and further strengthen its position as a global trade hub, the statement said.

Fisheries project

PM Modi will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of 218 fisheries projects worth around Rs 1,560 crore, aimed at bolstering

the sector's infrastructure and productivity across the nation.

These initiatives are expected to generate more than five lakh employment opportunities in the fisheries sector, the statement said.

Vessel Communication and Support system

PM Modi will also launch the National Roll Out of Vessel Communication and Support system at a cost of around Rs 360 crore. Under this project, one lakh trans-

ponders will be installed in a phased manner on mechanised and motorised fishing vessels in 13 coastal states and Union Territories.

The vessel communication and support system is indigenous technology developed by ISRO, which will help in establishing two-way communication while fishermen are at sea and also help in rescue operations as well as ensure safety of our fishermen, the statement said.

Other initiatives to be inaugurated by the Prime

Naseem wants action in scam

Mumbai: After the police hit a roadblock in recording statements in the Rs 12.50 Crore 'Pressure Cooker Scam' in Chandivali, former minister and State Congress Working President Naseem Khan has now demanded an investigation into the cooker scam.

Khan met the civic chief Bhushan Gangrani and demanded stern action. Khan asked that why the scheme is only implemented in L ward despite the city has 36 assembly constituencies and many municipal wards, whereas, what is the real purpose of distributing free pressure cookers only in Chandivali Assembly when there are three assemblies Kurla, Kalina and Chandivali in BMC's 'L ward. Khan further alleged that he had learnt of the Assistant Municipal Commissioner Dhanaji Herlekar's involvement who had joined hands with local MLA Dilip Lande for purchasing a cooker worth Rs 500 crore to Rs 2,500 crore.

The PM will also lay the foundation stone for important fishery infrastructure projects including development, upgradation and modernisation of fishing harbours, fish landing centres and construction of fish markets.

This is expected to provide necessary facilities and hygienic conditions for post-harvest management of fish and seafood.

HC directs on animal slaughter

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Thursday directed the civic bodies in Maharashtra to urgently consider and decide the representations made by a Jain public charitable trust seeking a temporary ban on animal slaughter and sale of meat in view of the community's upcoming religious event 'Paryushan Parv'.

The Sheth Motishaw Lalbaug Jain Charities had filed a petition in the high court seeking a direction to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the civic bodies of Pune, Mira Bhayandar and Nashik to expeditiously decide on the representation made by them.

The trust said it sought a ban on animal slaughter and sale of its meat from August 31 to September 7.

It highlighted various aspects of Jain belief, includ-

ing 'ahimsa' (non-violence). The plea said if animal slaughter takes place during the Paryushan Parv, then it would be detrimental to the cause of Jainism.

A division bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar said it does not see any impediment in directing the civic bodies to decide the representation made by the trust. "We accordingly direct the authorities to decide the representation of the petitioner seeking to impose a temporary ban on the slaughtering of animals and sale of meat during (from) August 31 to September 7. We urge the civic bodies to take a decision urgently since the festival commences from (on) August 31," HC said.

The trust in its plea said members of the Jain community were forced to witness animal slaughter during the period of Paryushan Parv. -PTI

342 special trains for Ganesh festival

Mumbai: As many as 342 special trains will be operated for the next month's Ganesh festival, Union railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Thursday.

Lakhs of people travel to their native places in Konkan from Mumbai every year during the ten-day festival, slated to start from September 7.

There was a demand for 300 Konkan-bound Ganpati special trains, but the Indian Railways has decided to operate 342 special trains, the minister said, speaking through video link at the flagging off of the inaugural run of a bi-weekly train between Bandra Terminus in

Mumbai and Madgaon in Goa.

Union commerce minister and local MP Piyush Goyal flagged off the train that provides direct connectivity between Mumbai's western suburbs and the coastal Konkan region.

The suburban train network in Mumbai will improve considerably with the completion of 12 ongoing infrastructure projects, Vaishnaw said on this occasion.

These projects include CSMT-Kurla 5th and 6th line (Rs 891 crore), Mumbai Central-Borivali 6th line (Rs 919 crore), extension of Harbour Line from Goregaon to



Borivali (Rs 826 crore), Borivali-Virar 5th and 6th line (Rs 2,184 crore), Virar-Dahanu 3rd and 4th line (Rs 3,587 crore), Panvel-Karjat Suburban Corridor (Rs 2,782 crore), Airoli-Kalva Elevated Suburban Corridor (Rs 476 crore), Kalyan-Asangaon 4th line (Rs 1,759

crore), Kalyan-Badlapur 3rd and 4th line (Rs 1,510 crore), Kalyan-Kasara 3rd line (Rs 792 crore), Naigaon - Juhichandra Double Chord Line (Rs 176 crore) and Nilaje-Kopar Double Chord Line (Rs 338 crore).

The budgetary allocation for the development of railway network in Maharashtra was Rs 1,171 crore before 2014, but in 2024-25 it was increased to Rs 15,940 crore, 13 times more, Vaishnaw further said.

New tracks of 1,830 km have been laid in Maharashtra in the last ten years, "more than the entire railway network of Sri Lanka," he said. -PTI

Rioting case against 122

Mumbai: Police in Sindhurdurg has registered a First Information Report against 122 supporters of the Shiv Sena (UBT) and BJP in connection with the clash at Rajkot fort during Aaditya Thackeray's visit, officials said on Thursday.

The FIR named 42 persons identified from CCTV footage. The other 80 accused were yet to be identified and police were examining the footage closely to ascertain every person's identity and role in the incident, said an official. No arrest has been made.

Teacher held for showing obscene videos to girls

Thane: Police have arrested a male teacher of a civic school at Bhiwandi in Maharashtra's Thane district for allegedly showing obscene videos to girl students on his mobile phone, an official said on Thursday.

The accused, identified as Muzammil, was arrested on Wednesday, he said.

His wrongdoing came to light after a girl told about it to her parents, the police said.

"Of late, a Class 7 girl was going late to her school.

As it happened on a regular basis, the school headmaster called her parents to know why this was happening. But the minor did not tell anything about it to them at that time," senior inspector Vinayak Gaikwad of Shanti Nagar police station said.

"When the victim returned home, she opened up and told her parents that she does not feel like going to school ever since a teacher showed obscene videos to her on his mobile phone and misbehaved with her.

She said he did the same thing to some other girl students as well," he said.

After knowing this, her parents approached the police and lodged a complaint against the teacher, based on which an FIR was registered, he said.

The teacher was later arrested and booked under section 74 (assault or use of criminal force on woman with intent to outrage her modesty) and 351 (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). -PTI

Puja Khedkar Forgery

HC extends interim protection

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday extended till September 5 the interim protection from arrest granted to former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, who has been accused of cheating and wrongly availing OBC and disability quota benefits.

Justice Subramonium Prasad deferred hearing on the anticipatory bail plea by Khedkar till then and granted liberty to the police to file a fresh status report in the meantime.

Both the UPSC and the Delhi Police have sought dismissal of her plea for pre-arrest bail.

In a rejoinder filed to the stand of the authorities, Khedkar has denied the allegations levelled against her and asserted that she has neither misrepresented nor cheated in the process of successfully clearing the Civil Services Examination-2022.

She also said the UPSC has no power to disqualify her candidature.

"(Her) selection (was) on the basis of merit in the category of Persons with Benchmark Disability (PwBD) and has attempted fifth time under the category whereas the available



documents were also verified. "There has been no change in the applicant's first name and surname, from 2012 to 2022, as consistently reflected in all DAFs (detailed application forms). The applicant has not manipulated or misrepresented her name to UPSC," stated the rejoinder.

Khedkar said since all material is with UPSC and no document is required from her, she is entitled to pre-arrest bail. Khedkar allegedly misrepresented information in her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination, 2022 to get reservation benefits. On July 31, the UPSC cancelled Khedkar's candidature and debarred her from future exams.

Khedkar further said it was wrong on the UPSC to claim that she misrepresented her name when the commission itself verified her identity through biometric data collected during the personality test and all

documents were also verified.

"There has been no change in the applicant's first name and surname, from 2012 to 2022, as consistently reflected in all DAFs (detailed application forms). The applicant has not manipulated or misrepresented her name to UPSC," stated the rejoinder.

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Two held for trafficking Bangladeshi woman

Thane: The Navi Mumbai police have arrested two persons and registered a case against five others for allegedly raping and trafficking a 24-year-old woman from Bangladesh and selling her for Rs 2 lakh for flesh trade, an official said on Thursday.

The police have also slapped the charge of rape against the accused, he said. The victim hails from Khulna district in Bangladesh, assistant inspector Nilesh Phule of Nerul police station in Navi Mumbai said.

"Some agents tricked the victim into coming to India on the promise of a job. After she arrived in India, a man allegedly raped her. Some other accused later took her to a lodge on Grant Road in Mumbai and handed her over to those operating a sex racket. They forced her into flesh trade," he said.

"The agents later took the victim and sold her to two other accused for Rs 2 lakh. She was again forced to become part of a sex racket."



Maharashtra Pradesh Mahila Congress President Sandhya Sawalke and others being detained by the police during the 'Nari Nyay Andolan' in Nagpur on Thursday. Pic: PTI

ATS uncovers illegal telephone exchange

3,788 SIM cards, equipment seized

Pune: An illegal telephone exchange, which caused revenue loss to the Department of Telecom and had the potential to assist in terrorist activities, has been busted by Maharashtra police's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) in Pune, officials said on Thursday.

According to the ATS officials from the Pune division, one Naushad Ahmed Siddiqui (32) was operating the unlawful telephone exchange in the city's Kondhwa area. "Seven SIM boxes, 3,788

SIM cards, nine WiFi routers, antennas, inverters and laptops were seized from the facility. By running the illegal telephone exchange, the accused had caused revenue loss to the Department of Telecom," an official said without providing any figure.

The centre could also be used in aiding terrorist activities, he informed. An offence has been registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Indian Telegraph Act, the Telecommunications Act, the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, and efforts were on to traced the accused, the official added.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Shabana Azmi, actor

"There has to be an outrage and not just today, the outrage should have taken place way back. And it should not be selective that in one case, it is political... All these incidents are extremely dangerous. If we continue looking (at these incidents) selectively, we won't be able to go to the root. It is all very shameful."

Man booked for harassing daughter

Thane: Police have registered a case against a 64-year-old man for allegedly sexually harassing his daughter in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Thursday.

The 18-year-old woman alleged in her complaint that on July 5 this year, when there was nobody else in the house, her father forced her to have sexual relationship with him, the official of Vartak Nagar police station told PTI.

Mahayuti seat-sharing talks soon, says Tatkare

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: NCP's Maharashtra unit president Sunil Tatkare on Thursday said the three constituents of the ruling Mahayuti alliance will soon hold seat-sharing talks for the upcoming assembly elections.

He was speaking to reporters in Nanded during party president and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar-led 'Jansanman Yatra'.

Elections to the 288-member Maharashtra assembly

is likely to be held in October-November.

Apart from the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the Mahayuti comprises the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

When asked about the elections, Tatkare said, "The Mahayuti allies will sit together in the next 4 to 5 days for primary discussions on seat-sharing. But there will be no discussion on the seats which are already currently

held by the respective parties."

On Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) chief Prakash Ambedkar's allegation that funds meant for different government schemes were being diverted towards the 'Ladki Bahin' scheme, he said, "I was a finance minister of the state in the past. The amount allocated for the tribal development and social justice departments cannot be shifted anywhere."

Juveniles shoot nude video

Thane: Police have registered an FIR against two juveniles in Bhiwandi for allegedly shooting a nude video of a 15-year-old boy in their neighbourhood and circulating it on social media, an official said on Thursday.

Based on a complaint by the victim's mother, an FIR under provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was registered against the juveniles (age not disclosed) at the Bhiwandi police station on Wednesday.

Collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Statue

Navy rebukes govt; says it was a joint project

Conceptualised, steered project with state which gave funds

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Indian Navy on Thursday said it conceptualised and steered the project of installing the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue, which collapsed in Maharashtra's Malvan on August 26, in coordination with the state government which also provided funding for it.

The statement has come after Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said that the Navy was solely responsible for erecting the statue and its maintenance.

The Navy said in a statement that it remains committed to assisting in all measures to repair, restore and reinstate the statue at the earliest.

A joint technical committee headed by Indian Navy officials, representatives of the state government and technical experts is being formed to probe the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue in Malvan, the Navy said.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde held a meeting of top officials of the state government and the Indian Navy on late Wednesday night.

The Navy said the statue was unveiled as part of the Navy Day celebrations, held for the first time in Sindhudurg district, aimed at honouring the legacy of the "Maratha Navy" and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj towards maritime defence and security, and its historical linkage with the modern Indian Navy.

"The project was conceptualised and steered by the Indian Navy, in coordination with the state government which also provided funding for it," the Navy said.

The 35-foot statue of the 17th-century Maratha empire founder installed at Rajkot Fort in Sindhudurg district's Malvan tehsil collapsed on August 26, nearly nine months after it was unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The state government has maintained that the structure was designed and built by the Navy and ordered a probe into the crash episode.

However, the incident has triggered a political storm in Maharashtra, with the opposition accusing the state government of corruption and insulting the Maratha warrior king.



Patil denies charges

Meanwhile, Chetan Patil, the structural engineer named in the offence registered in connection with the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue collapse, has claimed that he was not the structural consultant for the statue. "I am nowhere related to this. I did not have any work order that I was appointed to. The work was given to the Thane-based firm. I was just told to work on the platform on which the statue was being erected," he said.

"It was a company in Thane which had done the statue-related work," Patil is heard saying while speaking to the channel. Asked why he was named in the FIR, Patil said his name was drawn into it.

Panels set up to probe collapse

The Maharashtra Government has set up a technical committee comprising engineers, IIT experts and Navy officials to probe reasons behind the collapse

of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue. A release issued by the Chief Minister's office after midnight said the government has also constituted a committee

to build a "grand stature befitting the stature" of the warrior king.

The decision was taken by CM Eknath Shinde, who chaired a meeting with senior ministers, bureaucrats and Navy officials at his official

residence Varsha in South Mumbai Wednesday night, the release said. An FIR has been registered against the contractor of the 35-foot statue which collapsed on Monday just eight months after it was unveiled by

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 4. The FIR follows a complaint by the PWD, which claims the statue's construction was of poor quality, and the nuts and bolts used in the structure were found to be rusted.

Corroded nuts, bolts likely caused steel to fail

New Delhi/Mumbai: Corroded nuts and bolts likely contributed to the collapse of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue by causing a failure in steel members forming the frame inside the statue, according to a structural engineer.

'Ankles' of a statue, where the weight of the entire structure comes to rest upon, are most critical for stability and hence, require special attention during the design stage, said Amresh Kumar, a structural engineer with a consultancy.

While CM Eknath Shinde has claimed that winds blowing at speeds of 45 kilometres an hour caused the collapse, wind speeds up to almost three times these are accounted for while designing a structure, according to the Bureau of Indian Standards.

"In this statue's case, external factors such as loads or climatic conditions do not appear to have caused trouble. Rather, corrosion in the nuts and bolts, as mentioned in the PWD report, could have caused a failure of steel members making up the frame inside the statue," Kumar told PTI.

On August 20, an assistant engineer at the Maharashtra Public Works Department (PWD) had written to Naval commander Abhishek Karbhari, Area Coastal Security Officer and Area Civil-Military Liaison Officer, pointing out that the nuts and bolts used in fixing the statue on the fort were catching rust



because of exposure to ocean winds and rains.

"While steel members forming a structure – in this case, the statue's frame – are commonly protected against corrosion, the nuts and bolts used in connecting these members are commonly ignored, leaving them more vulnerable due to exposure to environment," Kumar said.

He recommended that along with members, nuts and bolts also be protected, either by painting or galvanising, especially in coastal regions where the air is rich in moisture and

salt, and is therefore, more corrosive. Galvanisation refers to applying a protective layer of zinc on steel or iron, usually by dipping them in molten zinc.

However, despite the highly corrosive environment, the corroding of nuts and bolts, thereby causing a collapse in about eight months following construction should not have happened, according to the engineer.

Bolts employed in connecting the steel members and providing stability can often be procured at a construction site much before they are due for installation, Kumar said.

He suggested that therefore, regular checks at the site, especially before installing them or using them in construction, are required.

The toppling of the Shivaji statue bears a striking resemblance to that of a 40-foot-tall statue near Birsas Munda Hockey Stadium and Rourkela Airport in Odisha, which happened in June last year – both the statues gave way near the 'ankle' region of the people they were depicting.

The 'ankles' of a statue – where the weight of the entire structure comes to rest upon – end up being the most critical to its stability, Kumar said.

The statue in Odisha had been installed in January last year, ahead of the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023, and was dedicated to hockey players.

NCP holds silent protests

The Ajit Pawar-led NCP, which is part of the Maharashtra government, on Thursday staged silent protests across the state over the collapse of Shivaji Maharaj's statue and demanded action against those responsible, while the party's state chief asserted that everyone has the right to agitate.

The opposition leaders on Wednesday announced that on September 1, the MVA will take out a protest march in Mumbai against the statue collapse, while the ruling NCP also said it would stage silent protests in every district and tehsil of the state on Thursday and demand the installation of a stronger and larger statue of the warrior king at the same spot.

Accordingly, party workers staged protests across the state. The local leaders also submitted a memorandum of demands with the tehsildars and district collectors seeking stringent action against the artist and others who were responsible for the poor quality of the statue.

The NCP's protest assumes significance given that the party is one of the three constituents in the Mahayuti government led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and considering the potential political ramifications amid huge outrage caused by the collapse of the statue.

Speaking in Nanded during Ajit Pawar's Jansanman Yatra, NCP's Maharashtra president Sunil Tatkare said the collapse of Shivaji Maharaj's statue was painful, and added that his party decided to protest against the incident as everyone has the right to do so.



"In democracy, everyone has a right to agitate. The incident of Shivaji Maharaj's statue in Malvan is unfortunate and painful. We are also agitating against it and demanding strong action against the culprits by submitting memorandums to the authorities."

Referring to the reported remarks passed by BJP leader Narayan Rane during a clash between his supporters and the workers of Shiv Sena (UBT) during Aadiya Thackeay's visit to the Rajkot fort on Wednesday, Tatkare said, "Rane's statement is improper. Though the statue collapse incident is painful, this kind of language does not befit a responsible leader. This is not in sync with the culture of Maharashtra."

In Pune, the city unit of the NCP staged a protest near the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Shivajinagar area.

Speaking during the protest, NCP's city unit president Deepak Mankar urged the state government to recon-

struct the statue as early as possible. "For us, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is a matter of pride and a symbol of our identity," he said.

Mankar said action should be taken against those responsible for the statue collapse.

Stating that party chief Ajit Pawar had also condemned the incident, he said the Pune unit of the party will submit a memorandum to the district collector in this regard.

Pradeep Deshmukh, NCP Pune unit's working president sought to know how the contract for the statue was given to someone who had no experience in constructing the huge statues. "Action should be taken against the responsible people, including officials," he said.

When asked why the NCP was protesting despite being a constituent of ruling Mahayuti alliance, he said Deshmukh said, "For the sake of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, we can sacrifice hundreds of such governments."

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Ajit Pawar, Deputy Chief Minister

"The opposition is trying to derail the schemes. Those born with a silver spoon in their mouth won't understand the plight of the poor. While the government is giving three free cooking gas cylinders per year to 52 lakh families across the state, it is also bearing the education fees of girls and women."

Study throws light on women's hair loss

90 per cent of women aged 18-36 with PCOS are susceptible to hair loss

By Swapnil R. Mishra

Mumbai: A groundbreaking study conducted from 2020 to 2024 revealed a surprising connection between Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) and female pattern hair loss (FPHL). The study, which involved 150,000 patients treated with the QR678® treatment, found that nearly 30 per cent of women with FPHL were diagnosed with PCOS only

after seeking treatment for their hair thinning or loss.

However, this research highlights the importance of considering PCOS in women experiencing hair loss and encourages them to seek medical attention if they notice hair thinning or loss. "Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is a multifaceted endocrine disorder affecting millions of women globally. Its symptoms can vary but often include ir-

regular menstrual cycles, weight gain, acne, and, most distressingly for many, hair thinning and loss. The condition's impact on hair health is frequently overlooked despite being a significant concern for those affected.

A recent report highlights the critical link between PCOS and hair health, emphasising the need for increased awareness and earlier diagnosis.

By recognising the connection between PCOS and hair thinning/loss, healthcare providers can offer more comprehensive care and support for patients experiencing these distressing symptoms.

Of the 150,000 patients treated for hair-related concerns, 30% (45,000) were diagnosed with female pattern hair loss (FPHL). Of these, 28,000 women were found to have PCOS, often

discovering the diagnosis only after seeking treatment for hair loss.

"The delayed diagnosis of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) highlights the need for healthcare providers to consider it a potential cause of hair thinning or loss in women. Unfortunately, a lack of awareness and understanding about the PCOS-hair health connection hinders early diagnosis and effective treatment.

Gautam Adani wealthiest Indian



Mumbai: Recouping the dent caused by the Hindenburg Research report, Gautam Adani's net worth shot up 95 per cent to Rs 11.6 lakh crore last year, which helped him replace Mukesh Ambani to become the richest Indian, a report said on Thursday.

Reliance Industries Chairman and Managing Director Ambani's overall net worth increased by 25 per cent to Rs 10.14 lakh crore, as per the 2024 Hurun India Rich List.

In 2023's report, Adani's wealth declined by 57 per cent to Rs 4.74 lakh crore, and Ambani was way ahead with a fortune of Rs 8.08 lakh crore.

It can be noted that Adani's networth declined sharply following various allegations levelled by US-based short seller Hindenburg Research. The conglomerate has denied all the allegations.

In the 2014 edition, Hurun had pegged Adani's fortunes at Rs 44,000 crore, which made him the tenth richest Indian then.

The list, which captures Indians with a net worth of over Rs 1,000 crore, grew by 220 individuals to 1,539 people in 2024. The cumulative wealth has seen a 46 per cent jump in the year.

Interestingly, 16 professionals also made it to the list with Arista Networks' Chief Executive Jayshree Ullal being the wealthiest at Rs 32,100 crore and followed by D-mart Chief Executive Ignatius Navil Noronha at Rs 6,900 crore, according to the list.

Gera Developments' Kumar Pritamdas Gera's wealth grew the fastest at 566 per cent in the 2024 list, while Ambani and Adani had the biggest growth by quantum, the list said.

-PTI

The other richest people

NO. 3 Shiv Nadar and family
Net worth - Rs 3.14 lakh crore

NO. 4 Cyrus Poonawalla
Net worth - Rs 2.89 lakh crore

NO. 5 Dilip Shanghvi
Net worth - 2.50 lakh crore

NO. 6 Radha Vembu
Net worth - 7,500 crore

NO. 7 Shah Rakh Khan
Net worth - Rs 7,300 crore

NO. 8 Juhi Chawla
Net worth - Rs 4,600 crore

NO. 9 Kaivalya Vohra and Aadit Palicha
Net worth - Rs 3,600 crore and Rs 4,300 crore respectively

Anuvrat Award to Ratan Tata

Mumbai: The prestigious Anuvrat Award for the year 2023 instituted by Anuvrat Vishva Bharati (ANUVIBHA) was presented to the noted industrialist and philanthropist Ratan Tata at his residence in Mumbai.

Led by Avinash Nahar, President, Anuvrat Visva-Bharati Society, the delegation presented a sum of Rs.1.51 lakh to Tata along with a memento and the citation as a part of the award. ANUVIBHA Secretary Bhikham Surana, Commissioner, Mumbai Customs, Ashok Kumar Kothari, Vice President ANUVIBHA, Vinod Kumar and Associate Secretary ANUVIBHA Manoj Singhvi were present. The Anuvrat movement has been active since last 75 years.

Luxury pre-owned market set to grow at rapid pace

By Correspondent

Mumbai: India's luxury pre-owned market is set to grow at a rapid pace, said Almona Bhatia, Chief Business Development Officer, Tata CLiQ & Tata CLiQ Luxury, which had earlier this year launched this category across key brands of watches and handbags.

Luxury pre-owned market in India is worth USD 618 million in 2023 and expected to grow at the rate of 10% to USD 1556 million by 2032, said Bhatia speaking at the inaugural session of Day 2 of India D2C Summit held here.

In its pre-owned category in the luxury segment, Tata CLiQ has launched Rolex, Omega, Breitling, in the

watches category and Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Fendi in the handbags category.

"Key categories include art, antique furniture, sneaker, fashion, jewelry and accessories like bags and watches," she said adding that sustainability and circular fashion is a huge peg for most companies in these categories.

Pre-owned is a softer way of saying second-hand, but it also connotes that it has retained more of its value while conserving ecology and environment.

With household income of over INR 50 lakhs and INR 20-50 lakhs, Elite plus segment and Elite groups respectively in India have a healthy footprint across metro, tier 1 and tier 2/3 cit-

ies with top 20 cities accounting for around 60% of households, Bhatia said.

Of the addressable market of 10 million and 44 million users for Elite plus and Elite for Tata CLiQ Luxury, the primary market target is around 1 million households, she said.

"Currently we have penetrated 1.3% of this market, the goal is to scale sustainably & profitably," she said.

With the number of affluent consumers in India set to rise from approximately 60 million in 2023 to 100 million by 2027, and one in three online shoppers coming from Gen Z category, India's e-commerce business is set to grow thick and fast, according to industry experts at the conference.

Housing sales in MMR may cross Rs 1.35 lakh cr

Mumbai: Housing sales in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) primary residential market are expected to cross Rs 1.35 lakh crore this calendar year, according to JLL India.

Real estate consultant JLL India on Thursday released its report 'Mumbai Residential Market-Through the Lens of Time' at the National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) event held here.

The consultant noted that Mumbai's resilient residential market continues its onward strides with significant growth in sales and new launches.

The MMR continues to attract substantial real estate investments, exemplified by record-high sales values and strategic infrastructure developments.



"As infrastructure projects continue to enhance connectivity and create new residential hubs, we foresee Mumbai's market not only maintaining its momentum but also setting new benchmarks in the coming years," said Prashant Sharma, President, NAREDCO-Maharashtra.

Mumbai includes Mumbai city, Mumbai suburbs,

Thane city and Navi Mumbai. Residential sales value is estimated based on the primary market (first sale).

"As of June 2024, Mumbai stands as one of the leading contributors to pan-India launches and sales. Residential sales value in 2023 breached Rs 1 lakh crore and is expected to surpass Rs 1.35 lakh crore in 2024, setting a record high for the city," JLL

said in a statement.

By 2030, the ongoing infrastructure projects are expected to foster new residential hubs and revitalize existing ones, it added.

"Looking ahead to the future, the Mumbai market is projected to surpass the remarkable milestone of Rs 2 lakh crore in residential sales value by 2030," JLL said.

-PTI

Indian D2C brands expand ambit

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Emerging Indian D2C brands are expanding their offering with ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) with every passing month, said a report released at the two-day India D2C Summit held here on August 28-29.

From 3.59 million retail segment orders in April, the platform recorded 5 million orders in May with a single day record of 200,000 retail transactions. The grocery and food delivery categories, each crossed one million orders for the first time, home and kitchen had 630,000 orders, fashion segment had 330,000 orders among others, the India D2C Report said.

Bypassing the intermediaries and traditional distribution channels, and leveraging digital platforms and cutting-edge technologies to service consumers directly, D2C brands have emerged as a disruptive force on the Indian retail landscape.

From USD 17 billion in 2023, India's D2C brand market currently with

over 600 brands is projected to more than triple to USD 61 billion by 2027, growing at a CAGR of 38%.

ONDC is a non-profit company established by the state-run Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade to develop open e-commerce.

Top three states with orders on ONDC were Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, wherein Uttar Pradesh saw order numbers nearly doubling up and Bihar reportedly growing 42%. In June, the e-commerce platform ONDC achieved 10 million (6.1 million non-mobility and 3.9 mobility) transactions, and 12 million (7.6 million non-mobility and 4.4 mobility) transactions in July with daily order peaking at 430,000.

Going by the trend, ONDC is hopeful of achieving 30-40 million monthly digital transactions by FY25-end, the report said. The government aims to increase India's e-commerce penetration to 25% with ONDC network, targeting a gross merchandise value of USD 48 billion in the next couple of years.

Sensex, Nifty all-time high

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty hit their all-time high levels on Thursday, driven by a fag-end rally in index majors Reliance Industries and Tata Motors.

Robust buying in energy and FMCG stocks also supported the domestic equities, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 349.05 points or 0.43 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 82,134.61, extending its winning momentum to the eighth day in a row. During the day, it soared 500.27 points or 0.61 per cent to hit a lifetime intra-day peak of 82,285.83.

The BSE gauge has surged 1,709.93 points or 2.12 per cent in eight straight trading sessions.

Rallying for the 11th straight session, the NSE Nifty surged 99.60 points or 0.40 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 25,151.95. During the trade, the benchmark climbed 140.55 points or 0.56 per cent to hit a fresh record intra-day peak of 25,192.90.

In 11 trading days, the NSE Nifty has jumped 1,012.95 points or 4.19 per cent.



SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch speaks during the Global Fintech Fest, in Mumbai on Thursday. Pic: PTI

F&O Trading

6,000 stakeholders put suggestions

Mumbai: Capital markets regulator SEBI has received suggestions from around 6,000 stakeholders on the consultation paper floated on Futures & Options (F&O) trading, its chief Madhabi Puri Buch said on Thursday.

In its consultation paper floated in July, the regulator proposed seven measures, including increasing minimum contract size and up-front collection of option premiums, intra-day monitoring of position limits, rationalisation of strike prices,

removal of calendar spread benefit on expiry day and increase in near contract expiry margin.

These measures are aimed at enhancing investor protection and promoting market stability in derivative markets.

Buch said that the regulator has received comments from around 6,000 stakeholders on the consultation paper on the F&O segment.

Also, technology has validated faster processing of such enormous amounts of feedback.

-PTI

Cargo between Haldia, UAE

Kolkata: The Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata (SMP, Kolkata) on Thursday announced the launch of the Bengal Middle East Express (BMEx), a new container vessel service connecting Haldia Dock Complex (HDC) with Jebel Ali Port in the UAE.

The BMEx service will operate on Haldia-Chittagong-Jebel Ali-Haldia route, linking Bengal and the eastern Indian industrial hub with a key Middle East port.

This service aims to cut transit time and cost for regional exporters and importers by bypassing traditional transshipment ports, the port said in a statement.

By reducing delays, lowering operational costs, and avoiding congestion, the BMEx route enhances supply chain efficiency, reliability, and competitiveness, providing businesses with better access to global markets, it added.

Initiated by Ocean Salute Line of Singapore in partnership with MBK Logistics, the BMEx service will improve global connectivity for the port. The inaugural vessel, Yong Yue 11, is scheduled to arrive at HDC on September 6, the statement said.

BSE SENSEX		TOP GAINERS	
%	POINTS	%	POINTS
+4.19	1119.65	Tata Motors	1119.65
+2.41	7065.00	Bajaj Finance	7065.00
+2.41	1755.25	Bajaj Finserv	1755.25
+1.72	1748.25	HCL Tech	1748.25
+1.57	504.95	ITC	504.95
+1.51	3040.85	Reliance	3040.85
+1.39	1650.00	Tech Mahindra	1650.00
+0.83	12460.60	Maruti	12460.60
+0.64	814.50	SBIN	814.50
+0.63	2783.85	Hindustan Unilever	2783.85

BSE SENSEX		TOP LOSERS	
%	POINTS	%	POINTS
-1.11	2766.00	M&M	2766.00
-1.01	939.80	JSW Steel	939.80
-0.85	1798.45	Sun Pharma	1798.45
-0.74	1777.50	Kotak Bank	1777.50
-0.46	153.00	Tata Steel	153.00
-0.36	333.10	Power Grid	333.10
-0.35	1932.40	Infosys	1932.40
-0.18	1221.55	ICICI Bank	1221.55
-0.17	3682.40	LT	3682.40
-0.14	11213.75	UltraTech Cement	11213.75

BoM opens branch on SC premises

New Delhi: State-owned Bank of Maharashtra on Thursday opened a branch within the premises of the Supreme Court of India to fulfill the financial needs of the court as well as its constituents.

The branch was inaugurated by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud in the presence of other Judges of the Supreme Court, Bank of Maharashtra said in a statement.

Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju who was also present at the inauguration expressed satisfaction with the initiative of the bank.

Speaking on the occasion the bank's MD & CEO Nidhu Saxena highlighted that internet-enabled interactive devices with multi-function kiosks help clients to do multifarious transactions without any assistance of Bank staff and are available 24x7.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Tushar Anand, VP - Operations, Aston Martin New Delhi

"Next week, on September 2, we are launching (globally) our V12 flagship, which is going to be under wraps on what it is going to be called... And for the first time, that car will also be available immediately for the Indian market as well."

Rape Case Against the CPI(M) MLA

Mukesh gets relief against arrest; more actors booked

Kochi: A local court here on Thursday provided relief from arrest to rape accused actor-politician K Mukesh, directing the police not to apprehend him till September 3.

Mukesh, a CPI(M) legislator from Kollam, had earlier in the day, moved the court seeking anticipatory bail after the Kerala police registered a rape case against him on August 28 following a female actor's allegation that he sexually assaulted her years ago.

This is the third FIR against a high-profile Malayalam film personality following allegations of

sexual harassment against various directors and actors in the wake of revelations in the Justice K Hema Committee report. On Wednesday, Thiruvananthapuram museum police had booked actor Sidhique for allegedly raping an actress in a hotel eight years ago.

The first case, under IPC Section 354 (assault or criminal force on woman with intent to outrage her modesty), was against director Ranjith on a complaint by a female actor from West Bengal regarding an incident which occurred in 2009.



Youth Congress activists take out a protest march to Mukesh's residence in Kollam demanding his resignation on Wednesday.

Granting interim relief to Mukesh, the Principal Sessions Court here stated

that the likelihood of the actor fleeing from the law is low.

"Taking note of the situation that there may not be chances to flee away from the clutches of law, the IO (Investigating Officer) is directed that the petitioner shall not be arrested till 3/9/24," the court said in its order. The alleged incident happened in the year 2010.

An FIR under IPC 376 (rape) was registered against Mukesh at Maradu police station in Kochi city on Wednesday night.

In his anticipatory bail plea, the actor claimed that the statement given against him by the victim was with malafide

intentions.

He claimed that the case was registered with ulterior motives and to tarnish his political and film career. The anticipatory bail came at a time when the opposition was clamouring for the resignation of Mukesh as a legislator.

Well-known names of Malayalam cinema, including Mukesh, Jayasurya and Siddique have been booked by the police for rape and sexual assault of a woman colleague, who came out with the allegation following the Justice K Hema Committee findings going public.

Following the allegation by the actor, Ranjith had resigned from his post as chairman of the state-run Kerala Chalachitra Academy. Sidhique had also resigned as general secretary of the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) following the allegations against him.

Mukesh should resign, says Raja

CPI leader Annie Raja on Thursday said M Mukesh no longer has the legal or moral standing to continue in his post as legislator following the registration of a rape case against him. "Now with a case being registered against him, he no longer has the moral or legal standing to continue in that post. He should resign from his post as MLA.

Jayasoorya, Maniyanpilla Raju booked

Separate cases have been registered in Kerala against popular Malayalam actors Jayasoorya and Maniyanpilla Raju following an allegation raised by a female actor that they had sexually assaulted her, police said on Thursday. A senior police official from Ernakulam said an FIR under Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code was registered at the Fort Kochi police station against Raju. The Cantonment police in Thiruvananthapuram confirmed that a case under the same section was registered against Jayasoorya. In a Facebook post, the woman actor had said, "I am writing to report a series of incidents of physical and verbal abuse I suffered at the hands of 1 Mukesh 2 Maniyan Pilla Raju, 3 Idavela Babu, 4 Jayasoorya (Jayasurya), 5 adv Chandrasekaran, 6 production controller Noble and Vichu, in the Malayalam film industry."

Protests in parts of Kerala

The Congress and the BJP on Thursday further intensified their call for the resignation of M. Mukesh, accused in a rape case, with protests being held by both parties and their wings outside his residence here and other parts of the state. Leader of Opposition in the Assembly V.D. Satheesan said it was wrong to say that the Congress did not seek the resignation of Mukesh.

Kerala govt tried to shield people: Muraleedharan

Former Union minister and BJP leader V. Muraleedharan on Thursday slammed the Kerala government for "not acting in a timely manner" over the Justice K Hema Committee report, which studied issues faced by women in the Malayalam film industry. He accused the Pinarayi Vijayan-led government of trying to protect the persons mentioned in the report, including a Communist Party of India (Marxist) MLA, despite countrywide protests over the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in a Kolkata hospital. "Kerala is a state where women are considered equal to men, in every field of activity. In the film industry of such a state, if women are treated as second grade citizens, it is the duty of the government to take action," Muraleedharan told PTI.

Assam Assembly

Bill to abolish Muslim marriages, divorce act passed

Guwahati: The Assam Assembly on Thursday passed a bill to repeal a law to register marriages and divorces of Muslims.

Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Jogen Mohan had on August 22 tabled The Assam Repealing Bill, 2024 in the Assembly to abolish The Assam Moslem Marriages and Divorces Registration Act, 1935 and the Assam Repealing Ordinance 2024.

Taking part in the discussion, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said: "Our aim is not only to abolish child marriages, ... also to get away with the Kazi system. We want to bring registration of Muslim marriages and divorces under the government system." He said that registration of all marriages has to be done as per a Supreme Court order, but the state cannot support a private body like that of Kazis for this purpose.

Mohan in the Statement of Object and Reasons of the Repealing Bill said, "There remains a scope of registering marriages of intended person below 21 years (in case of male) and 18 years (in case of female)."

It hardly had any provisions for monitoring the implementation of the Act throughout the state and it attracted huge amounts of litigation in the court, he added.

"There is a scope of misuse by both authorised licensee (Muslim marriage Registrars) as well as by



citizens for underage/minor marriages and forcefully arranged marriages without the consent of the parties," Mohan said.

Besides, the registration of marriages and divorces were not mandatory, and the registration mechanism was informal that left a lot of scope for non-compliance of the norms, he added.

"It is a pre-independence Act adopted by British India government for the then Province of Assam for Muslim religious and social arrangements," the minister said.

Last month, the Cabinet had approved the Repealing Bill to abolish The Assam Moslem Marriages and Divorces Registration Act and Rules of 1935, which permitted underage marriages under specific conditions. The Assam Cabinet had approved the decision to repeal the Act on February 23, in a bid to end the social menace of child marriage in the state.

The opposition parties had decried the decision, terming it "discriminatory against the Muslims" brought in to polarise the voters in an election year. -PTI



BRS leader K Kavitha takes blessings of father and party chief K. Chandrashekar Rao on Thursday. She was released on bail in Delhi liquor policy case.

Pic-PTI

Comments on bail to Kavitha SC raps Telangana CM

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday took strong objection to Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's comments related to the bail granted to BRS leader K Kavitha in cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

Irked over Reddy's statement hinting towards alleged deal between the BJP and the BRS for securing bail for Kavitha, the top court said such statements might create apprehensions in minds of people.

"Have you read in the newspaper what he said? Just read what he has stated. What sort of statement is this by a responsible Chief Minister? That might rightly create apprehension in the minds of people. Is this a kind of statement which should be made by a chief minister. A constitutional functionary

is speaking in this manner?"

"Why should they drag court in political rivalry? Do we pass orders on consultations with political parties? We are not bothered by politicians or if anybody criticises our orders. We do our duty as per conscience and oath," a three-judge bench headed by Justice B.R. Gawai told senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Reddy. Reddy on Tuesday had said there are doubts over MLC Kavitha getting bail in five months when Manish Sisodia got it after 15 months and Kejriwal is yet to get it.

"It is a fact that BRS worked for the victory of the BJP in the 2024 LS polls. There is also talk that Kavitha got bail because of the deal between BRS and BJP," he had alleged. -PTI

Three women Naxalites killed

Narayanpur: Three women Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh on Thursday, a senior police official said.

The gunfight broke out at around 8 am in the forest of Abhujmaad located on the border of Narayanpur and Kanker districts when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation, he said.

The personnel belonging to the Special Task Force (STF), District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Border Security Force (BSF) were involved in the operation which was launched based on inputs about the presence of Naxalites in the area, he said.

So far, bodies of three women Naxalites clad in 'uniform' along with a huge cache of weapons were recovered from the spot.

NIA searches in seven states

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has conducted searches at locations across seven states to probe the case of classified defence information leakage through a Pakistani espionage racket, according to an official statement issued on Thursday. The premises searched on Wednesday by NIA teams were linked with suspects who had received money from Pakistan to undertake spying activities in India, it said.

"Extensive searches were conducted at 16 locations in Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana in the case related to leakage of classified defence information through a Pakistani ISI espionage racket," the NIA statement said.

Twenty-two mobile

phones and a host of sensitive documents were seized during the searches conducted by the NIA, which had in July 2023 taken over the instant case, originally registered in January 2021 by the counter-intelligence cell of Andhra Pradesh.

The case involved the leakage of sensitive vital information pertaining to the Indian Navy as part of an anti-India conspiracy hatched from across the border, the federal probe agency said. The NIA had on July 19, 2023, filed a charge sheet against two accused, including an absconding Pakistani national identified as Meer Balaj Khan.

Investigations revealed that Khan, along with arrested accused Akash Solanki, had been involved in the espionage racket, the NIA said. -PTI

One cop dead, another hurt

Bijapur: A 39-year-old policeman was killed and another injured when their motorcycle fell into a ditch during an anti-Naxal operation in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Wednesday night near Bechhal village when a team of security personnel was out on a search operation on motorcycles in Mirtur police station area, a senior police official said.

Assistant sub-inspector Telam Chamru, belonging to the District Reserve Guard (DRG), who was riding the two-wheeler, died in the accident and constable Uday Kumar Patwa of Bastar Fighters sustained injuries, he said.

DRG and Bastar Fighters are units of the state police.

"As per the preliminary information, the motorcycle plunged into a roadside ditch, leaving the two injured. The duo were shifted to a hospital in neighbouring Dantewada, where the ASI succumbed to his injuries. The injured constable was later shifted to a hospital in Jagdalpur (Bastar district) and his condition was stated to be stable," he added. -PTI

US national arrested in Bihar

Sitamarhi: A 57-year-old US national was arrested in Bihar's Sitamarhi district while trying to cross over to Nepal without valid travel documents, officials said on Thursday.

Police said Christopher

Jay Chew, US national, was first intercepted by Sasashtra Seema Bal (SSB) personnel at Bitthamore-Jaleswar check-post during checking of a Bharat-Nepal Maitri bus on Wednesday.

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday refused to quash the defamation proceedings against Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on a complaint over his alleged "scorpion on shivling" remark targeting Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi. Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta dismissed Tharoor's plea challenging the defamation proceedings.

The high court, which had on October 16, 2020, stayed the criminal proceed-

ings against Tharoor in the defamation complaint, vacated the interim order and directed the parties to appear before the trial court on September 10.

"No grounds are made out for quashing the pro-

ceedings," judge said while pronouncing the order.

Tharoor sought setting aside of the trial court's April 27, 2019 order by which he was summoned as an accused in the criminal defamation complaint filed by

BJP leader Rajiv Babbar. He had also sought quashing of the complaint of November 2, 2018. The complaint was filed against Tharoor by Babbar, who had claimed that his religious sentiments were hurt. -PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Mohan Charan Majhi, Chief Minister, Odisha on Mamata Banerjee

"Odisha is a peaceful state and its people are responsible...who has given you the authority to make negative, divisive and insensitive remarks on Odisha? The people of Odisha will not accept such a hateful, negative remark and insensitive attitude towards our state."

SHe-Box portal for women's safety at work

New Delhi: Union Women and Child Development Minister Annapurna Devi on Thursday launched a centralised platform designed to make workplaces safer for women by addressing and managing complaints of sexual harassment.

The SHe-Box portal is a significant advancement in the government's ongoing efforts to safeguard women in the workplace, the ministry said in a statement.

The launch event in Delhi also witnessed the introduction of a revamped ministry website.

The ministry said the portal would function as a centralised repository for information related to internal committees and local committees across the country, covering both the government and private sectors. The portal will allow women to file complaints, track their status, and ensure that the grievances are processed in a

timely manner.

It also features a designated nodal officer to enable real-time monitoring of complaints, thereby providing a streamlined and assured redressal process, the statement said.

Addressing the gathering, Annapurna Devi emphasised the importance of the initiative in creating a more secure and inclusive working environment for women.

"This initiative is a critical step forward in provid-



ing a more efficient and secure platform for addressing workplace-relat-

ed sexual harassment complaints," she said. -PTI

Dal Lake pollution

NGT forms panel to take 'expeditious remedial action'

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has formed a panel to take "expeditious remedial" action regarding the pollution of Dal Lake in Kashmir.

The green panel, which was hearing the matter regarding the deteriorating condition of the water body, observed that immediate measures were required to check the pollutants, such as untreated sewage, from entering the lake.

In a recent order, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said the Jammu and Kashmir Pollution Control Committee (J&KPCC) had filed a report that untreated sewage was flowing into Dal Lake and there were about 910 houseboats in Dal and Nigeen Lake and their wastewater was being discharged into the lake.

"The said response reveals the unabated flow of

untreated domestic water into channels and violation of environmental norms in the sample analysis report such as high concentration of Bio-Chemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), total coliform and faecal coliform etc.," said the bench also comprising judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member A Senthil Vel.

The bench said that the lake's two backflow channels (Nayadar and Jogilankar) were "almost anaerobic", having a "high organic load" and that the sewage treatment plants (STP) were not operating properly.

"Expeditious remedial action is required to be taken to ensure that pollutants, including untreated sewage, do not enter the Dal Lake. Hence, we constitute a joint committee," the tribunal said.

The joint committee will



comprise the member secretary of J&KPCC, vice chairman of J&K Lake Conservation and Management Authority, deputy commissioner and district magistrate of Srinagar, a senior officer nominated

by the Central Pollution Control Board and the Chandigarh regional office of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, it said.

"The committee will ascertain the sources of pollu-

tion in Dal Lake, will find out the persons/entities responsible for the same and will take appropriate remedial and punitive action. The committee will also prepare environmental management guidelines for house-

boats," the tribunal said.

It directed that the exercise be completed within three months.

The matter has been listed for further proceedings on December 2.

-PTI

Notice to Bengal secretary

New Delhi: Expressing dissatisfaction with the reports submitted by district magistrates and the National Mission for Clean Ganga about the pollution in river Ganga in West Bengal, the National Green Tribunal has sought a reply from the state government's environment secretary.

The tribunal flagged certain issues in the reports about the river's pollution, such as a large number of untapped drains, "unhygienic status" of the river water with high faecal coliform levels, non-disclosure of a district-wise plan for preventing discharge and "too long" timelines for establishing sewage treatment plants (STPs).

The green panel referred to a 2017 direction of the Supreme Court, which fixed a three-year timeline for constructing central effluent treatment plants (CETPs) and STPs and said that the state environment secretary would be responsible for any default.

"The judgment was delivered on February 22, 2017, and the timeline of three years expired on February 21, 2020, yet the STPs in various urban local bodies (ULBs) abutting river Ganga have not been constructed and untreated sewage from these ULBs is flowing in the river," said the tribunal.

It said that the state's Environment Secretary needed to respond.

-PTI

Coast Guard gets vessel to fight pollution

Panaji: A Rs 2,500-crore pollution control vessel built by Goa Shipyard Limited for the Indian Coast Guard was launched on Thursday, with Union minister Sanjay Seth asserting that it would be an asset for the maritime security agency.

The Union Minister of State for Defence launched the newly built Pollution Control Vessel, GSL Yard 1267, for the Indian Coast Guard in a ceremony held at Vasco in Goa.

"This ship is 72 per cent 'atmanirbhar' and has the



capability to fight coastal pollution," Seth told reporters.

The Union Minister said the ship will be an asset for the Indian Coast Guard, which patrols "our shores to keep them safe from unwanted elements".

Seth said that during his

last 85 days as minister of state for defence, he spent much time learning about "our" forces. "After learning about our forces, I can say that the Indian defence sector is robust," he said.

He called the launch of the pollution control vehicle a significant step forward in the efforts to protect the country's marine environment and mitigate oil pollution. "Equipped with cutting-edge technology, this vessel will play a vital role in preserving marine life," he said.

Seth said the achievement is a testament to the country's progress towards becoming 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India). "I am proud to say that our Indian Coast Guard is among the best in the world, and this vessel will further enhance its capabilities," he added.

The ship, built at Rs 2,500 crore, was launched in the presence of Inspector General of the Indian Coast Guard Bhisham Sharma, Commander Coast Guard Region (West).

Tiger kills guard in Orang

Guwahati: A home guard was killed by a tiger in Assam's Orang National Park, a forest official said on Thursday. Two home guards were patrolling on foot in Bilpara range of the park when a tiger attacked and dragged one of them inside the forest on Wednesday evening, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Pradipta Barua told reporters. The other guard informed the forest officials and a search was launched till late evening, he said.

Taking hard stand not always practical, says minister

New Delhi: Many initiatives to combat climate change rely heavily on public support and taking a hard stand may not always be very practical in a democratic country, Union minister Kirti Vardhan Singh said on Thursday.

Addressing ASSOCHAM's Environment and Carbon Conference here, Singh -- the minister of state for environment -- said a forward-thinking

chief minister of Karnataka was promptly voted out after he decided to put a tax on "water usage for the farmers".

FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

"A lot of initiatives to prevent climate change are heavily dependent on people and being a democracy, you know what it means... Sometimes, taking the right stand, taking the hard

stand may not be very practical in terms of being a democratic country," the minister said.

He said farmers in his home state of Uttar Pradesh were very happy because they had "all the power to pump out as much water as they want".

"In the recent elections, this was the topic to talk about in a positive way because you need votes."

-PTI



Actor Salman Khan joined hands with Divjay Foundation along with Municipal Corporation of Mumbai, Mumbai Police and Chattrasansad for the initiative "Bacche Bole Morya" to advocate the need of cleanliness and eco-friendly Ganesh Chaturthi festival this season. Pic - PTI

Companion for lone African elephant

Delhi Zoo in talks with forest dept

New Delhi: The Delhi Zoo is holding discussions with the forest department for arranging a companion for Shankar, the lone African elephant in the national capital who has been in a 'musth' condition for a very long time, the officials said on Wednesday.

The 29-year-old African elephant at the National Zoological Park (Delhi Zoo), brought from Zimbabwe in 1998, is in a 'musth' condition and has been exhibiting aggressive behaviour for a prolonged period.

"Musth" is a natural condition associated with increased testosterone levels that occurs in male animals, particularly elephants and camels, during which they exhibit heightened aggression and unpredictable behaviour.

"We are still in talks with



the forest department regarding the pairing (of Shankar), and discussions are ongoing. As of now, no confirmation or decision has been reached," a Delhi Zoo official said.

According to the official, Shankar had previously charged aggressively, broken a wall, and injured zoo staff due to this condition.

Following this, he was chained for an extended pe-

riod, which led to wounds and pus formation on his legs. The chain was removed last month, and he is now held on a leash, the official said.

While Shankar is in a better position now, he still charges aggressively, the official added.

The zoo authorities said the walls of Shankar's enclosure are being reinforced and the work will be completed soon.

How urine stench a thing of past at Chennai beach

Chennai: For residents of Chennai, the yellow-sand Marina beach with its towering lighthouse has long been a favourite evening hangout where frolicking waves lap the feet and a gentle sea breeze caresses the face. And then there was something else that hit you too: the stench from unhygienic public restrooms.

That is a thing of the past now.

The vast stretch abutting the Madras University, government offices and even the Secretariat nearby is scripting a new story in providing accessible, hygienic, and safe public toilets under a Greater Chennai Corporation initiative called the Singara (charming)

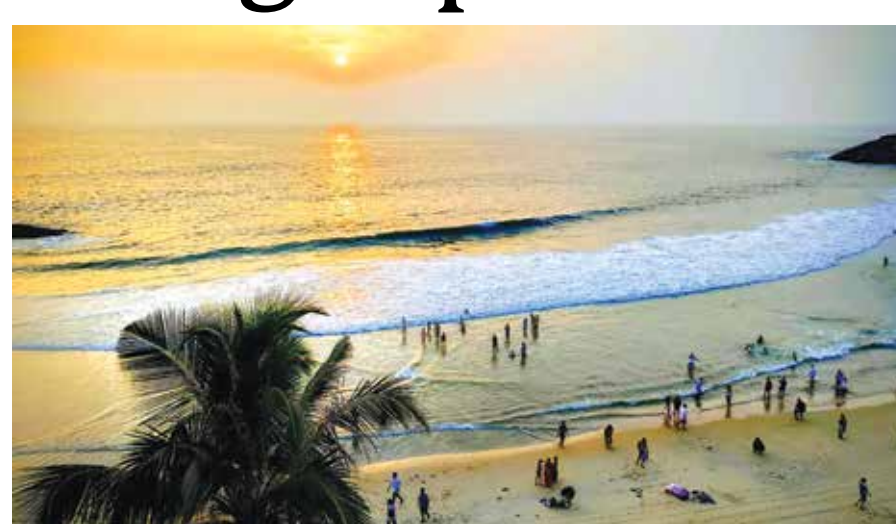
Chennai 2.0 campaign. Under the project, the local municipal body has commissioned the Chennai-based DRRSB PCT One PVT LTD to make toilets under the Design Build Finance Operate and Transfer (DB-FOT) model.

"Whether it's Sunday or a national holiday, public toilets can never be kept closed. They have to be operational round the clock and we have been doing everything to sustain the spirit of the campaign Singara Chennai by ensuring comfort to the users," says Michael James, Chief Operating Officer of DRRSB PCT One Pvt Ltd.

These free to use toilets, providing more than 3,000

seats, are designed with glass panels in the roof for optimal lighting, and are well maintained. There are separate toilets for men, women, transgenders, and the differently abled. The women's toilet is equipped with a feeding room for mothers and a separate bin for disposing of napkins. Plans are on to install sanitary pad vending machines.

A positive impact of the project was to bring about a behavioral change among the local youth, especially those from the slums of Anai Sathya Nagar. It is perhaps a largest slum with a population of about 5,000 persons. There was no proper toilet facility in the area



previously and the public could not walk on parts of the beach due to open defecation.

"We readied a volleyball field in the area and this weaned away the youth from indulging in acts

aimed at derailing the toilet construction project. They started showing interest and began to play in the

field. We even erected a fence around for the players," Michael said.

DRRSB currently employs more than 350 residents from the slums as janitors, which has ensured stable monthly income and dignity to them. Also, this has motivated the other residents to keep the toilets clean.

The work on the Chennai toilet project commenced in September 2023 covering Corporation Zones 5, 6, and 9 (Marina area only) aiming to provide 3,270 seats across these zones. Over 2,500 seats have been renovated, refurbished or rebuilt as per needs. Ninety locations have been identified to construct 662 additional seats

in the three zones and of them 300 have been completed and work is underway to complete the remaining seats.

New construction was carried out with the expertise from institutions like the IIT and the Green Council to ensure optimal ventilation and minimal carbon footprint.

As per the agreement, the firm was given one year for constructing, repairing, revamping or refurbishment of existing toilets, standalone urinals, and modular toilets and for constructing new toilets at locations specified by the corporation. It was given an eight-year period for operation and maintenance.

Afghan refugee repatriation

Pakistan to launch second phase

By Sajjad Hussain

Islamabad: Pakistan will launch the second phase of the repatriation of Afghan refugees, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has announced, emphasising the need for the role of the UN and the international community in their rehabilitation.

During a meeting on Wednesday with a UN delegation led by Special Representative for Afghanistan Indrika Ratwatte, Naqvi said Pakistan has been hosting Afghan refugees for decades, and the phase-wise repatriation of illegal foreigners has already started. Naqvi, who welcomed the UN delegation at the Ministry of Interior, said the second phase of the repatriation of Afghan refugees will be started soon, according to



a press release by the Interior Ministry.

Pakistan launched the first round of repatriation of what it called "undocumented aliens" in November last year after a spike in suicide attacks, which the government believes were carried out by Afghan nationals. Islamabad also blamed them for smuggling, militant violence and other crimes.

Around half a million Afghans are believed to have been expelled under this phase. In phase two of the repatriation plan, Afghans holding Afghan Citizen Cards (ACCs) will be expelled, while phase three is expected to target those with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)-issued

Proof of Registration (PoR) cards, the Dawn newspaper reported. Naqvi also emphasised the need for the role of the United Nations and the international community in the rehabilitation of Afghan refugees.

He said that no action is being taken against individuals holding legal documents but added that no

one can be allowed to stay in Pakistan without a visa or other legal documents. Asserting that terrorism was a global issue, the minister claimed that Pakistan was the most affected country.

He informed the UN delegation about the involvement of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the terrorist attacks in Pakistan and said the banned terrorist organisation is using Afghan soil for these attacks, which must be stopped. He said Pakistan was desirous of peace and stability in Afghanistan and is providing all possible support in this regard.

Ratwatte said the UN is closely working with the Afghan government for the permanent rehabilitation of Afghan refugees. -PTI

Russia bans 92 more Americans

Moscow: Russia's Foreign Ministry announced 92 additions Wednesday to its list of Americans banned from entering the country, including some journalists who formerly worked in Russia, and law enforcement and business people.

A ministry statement said the bans were imposed "in response to the Russophobic course pursued by the Biden administration with the declared goal of 'inflicting a strategic defeat on Moscow.'" It said the banned journalists represent "leading liberal-globalist publications involved in the production and dissemination of fakes" about Russia and the Russian armed forces.

The new list of banned Americans includes 11 current or former staff members of the Wall Street Journal — including its Editor in Chief, Emma Tucker. She had repeatedly criticised Russia for the arrest and conviction on espionage charges of WSJ reporter Evan Gershkovich, who spent 16 months behind bars before being released in August. -AP

Purulia arms dropping case

Danish court rejects suspect's extradition

Copenhagen: A Danish court on Thursday rejected the extradition request from India of a Danish national accused of being involved in an arms smuggling case 29 years ago, going against Denmark's top prosecuting authority which had given the green light to sending Niels Holck abroad.

Holck admitted taking part in dropping assault rifles, rocket launchers and missiles from a cargo plane at Purulia in West Bengal in 1995. Indian police said they were meant for a revolutionary group in the country. The Hilleroed District Court said that despite "the additional diplomatic guarantees" given by India "there is a real risk" that Holck will face torture or other inhumane treatment in India.

Holck, 62, said he feared for his life, if extradited. "I would like to be held accountable in front of a

judge because I believe it is a justified emergency, but I would rather not die from it," Holck told Danish radio DR Thursday morning before the ruling was announced.

While a British citizen and five Latvians were arrested by Indian authorities after they dropped arms, Holck — previously known as Niels Christian Nielsen — escaped.

India first asked Denmark to extradite Holck in 2002. The government agreed, but two Danish courts rejected his extradition, saying he would risk torture or other inhumane treatment in India. That led to tense diplomatic relations between the countries.

In June 2023, Denmark again looked into a 2016 Indian extradition request, saying that the requirements in the extradition act had been met. -AP

Pakistan invites PM Narendra Modi

Islamabad: Pakistan has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation heads of government meeting being organised here in October, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said here on Thursday.

During a weekly press briefing, the Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that invitations have been sent to the heads of countries to participate in the meeting which will take place on October 15-16, the Dawn newspaper reported.

NSA Doval in Colombo

Colombo: National Security Adviser Ajit Doval arrived here on Thursday to attend the Colombo Security Conclave to be held on Friday.

Officials said the Indian National Security Adviser (NSA) is due to make a call on President Ranil Wickremesinghe. -PTI

Israel says it killed five West Bank Militants

Jerusalem: The Israeli military says it has killed five more militants in a large-scale operation in the occupied West Bank, including a well-known local commander.

There was no immediate Palestinian confirmation of the death of Mohammed Jaber, known as Abu Shujaa, a commander in the Islamic Jihad militant

group in the Nur Shams refugee camp.

The military said he was killed along with four other militants in a shootout with Israeli forces early Thursday after the five had hidden inside a mosque. It said Abu Shujaa was linked to numerous attacks on Israel.

lis, including a deadly shooting in June, and was planning more.

He was reported killed earlier this year, but then made a surprise appearance at the funeral of other militants, where he was hoisted onto the shoulders of a cheering crowd.

The military said another militant was arrested in the operation in the West Bank city of Tulkarem, and that a member of Israel's paramilitary Border Police was lightly wounded.

Israel launched a large-scale operation in the West Bank overnight into

Wednesday. Hamas said 10 of its fighters were killed in different locations, and the Palestinian Health Ministry reported an 11th casualty, without saying whether he was a fighter or a civilian.

Violence has surged in the West Bank since Hamas' October 7 attack out of Gaza ignited the war there. -AP

China tells US to stop colluding with Taiwan

Beijing: A top Chinese military officer, in a rare meeting with a visiting American official, demanded Thursday that the United States stop "collusion" with Taiwan, the self-governing island that China says must come under its rule.

Gen. Zhang Youxia, one of two vice chairs of the Central Military Commission, told White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan that promoting what China calls the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland is "the mission and responsibility" of the military, according to a statement from China's Defence Ministry.

Sullivan was wrapping up a three-day trip to China, his

first as national security adviser and one aimed at maintaining communication to avoid differences over Taiwan and other issues from spiralling into conflict. Both governments are eager to keep relations on an even keel ahead of a change in the US presidency in January.

"Your request to meet with me shows the value you attach to military security and the relationship between our militaries," Zhang said in brief opening remarks.

Sullivan said "it is rare that we have the opportunity to have this kind of exchange" and underscored "the need for us to responsibly manage US-China relations."

The meeting came one day after the White House said that both countries would plan for a phone call between Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Joe Biden in the coming weeks. There was no indication whether the two leaders might meet in person before Biden leaves the Oval Office. The announcement followed Sullivan's main talks on this trip, a day and a half of meetings with Wang Yi, the foreign minister and the ruling Communist Party's top foreign policy official.

The US doesn't recognise Taiwan as an independent country but is its main supplier of arms for its defence. -AP

Two Journos convicted for sedition

Hong Kong: A Hong Kong court convicted two former editors of a shuttered news outlet on Thursday, in a sedition case that is widely seen as a barometer for the future of media freedom in the city once hailed as a bastion of free press in Asia.

Stand News former editor-in-chief Chung Pui-kuen and former acting editor-in-chief Patrick Lam were arrested in 2021 and previously pleaded not guilty to the charge of conspiracy to publish and reproduce seditious publications. Their sedition trial was Hong Kong's first involving media since the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997. -AP



South Korean firefighters prepare to lift a vehicle that fell into a sinkhole on a street in Seoul, South Korea on Thursday. An Indian tourist Vijaya Lakshmi Gali, 48 was swallowed by a sinkhole in Malaysia's capital. Pic-AP/PTI

Brazil court threatens to suspend X

Rio de Janeiro: A Brazilian Supreme Court justice has threatened to shut down the local operations of X, formerly Twitter, unless its billionaire owner Elon Musk names an in-country legal representative within 24 hours.

The order from Justice Alexandre de Moraes on Wednesday is the latest development in an ongoing feud with Musk's platform. The company has clashed with de Moraes earlier this year over free speech, accounts associated with the

far-right and misinformation, and it claims to be a victim of censorship.

Earlier this month, X said it was removing all remaining Brazil staff in the country "effective immediately," saying de Moraes had threatened its legal

representative with arrest.

"In case of non-compliance with the determination, the decision could bring about suspension of the social media network's activities in Brazil," the court said in a statement. -AP

Gas leak kills two, injures 10

Dubai: A gas leak caused the death of two people and injured 10 others at an Iranian Revolutionary Guard centre. The leak occurred Wednesday night at a workshop belonging to the guard in Isfahan province.

B'desh signs pact on forced disappearances

By Anisur Rahman

Dhaka: Bangladesh on Thursday signed the UN convention against forced disappearance, two days after it formed a commission to trace and identify "each and every" case of forced disappearance during de-

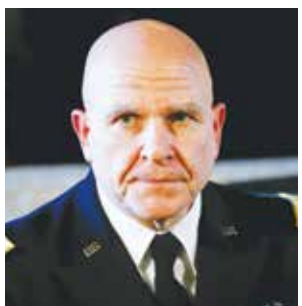
posed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's nearly 16-year regime.

"It is a historic occasion," the press wing of the interim government chief Muhammad Yunus quoted him as saying after he inked the Instrument of Accession to the International Conven-

tion for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances.

The development comes a day ahead of the UN-declared International Day for the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, observed on August 30, for the convention adopted by the UN.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Lt Gen (retd) H.R. McMaster, former US National Security Adviser

"The deepening partnership between the world's largest and the world's oldest democracies seemed logical, but India is fearful both of entrapment into competitions from which it would prefer to abstain and abandonment based on the short American attention span and ambivalence over South Asia."

EU urged to rethink ties with Israel

By Lorne Cook

Brussels: The European Union must rethink its relations with Israel as the death toll mounts in Gaza and the West Bank and impose sanctions on some Israeli government ministers accused of fomenting racial hatred, Ireland and the bloc's top diplomat said on Thursday.

At a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels, Ireland's foreign minister accused Israel of deliberately targeting civilians as

well as Hamas militants with the military campaign it launched almost 11 months ago.

"This is a war against Palestinians not just against Hamas. The level of civilian casualties and death is unconscionable," Micheal Martin told reporters. "It's a war on the population. No point in trying to fudge this." Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 40,000 people, according to local health officials, displaced 90 per cent of the population and destroyed its main cit-

ies. Hamas has lost thousands of fighters and much of its militant infrastructure.

Violence has also surged in the West Bank since Hamas' October 7 attack inside southern Israel ignited the war there. Israel launched a large-scale operation in the West Bank this week, in which Hamas said 10 of its fighters were killed in different locations. Martin said a legal opinion issued by the International Court of Justice that Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank

is unlawful obliges the EU to take action. The Palestinians have hailed it as "a watershed moment for Palestine, for justice and for international law".

"It cannot be business as usual," Martin told reporters. "It is very clear to us that international humanitarian law has been broken." Ties between the EU and Israel — which are major trading partners — are governed by a so-called Association Agreement. Ireland and Spain have been pressing their EU partners to exam-

ine whether Israel has broken the rules.

The EU is the world's top provider of aid to the Palestinians but holds little leverage over Israel, notably because the 27 member countries are deeply divided in their approach.

Austria, Germany and Hungary are staunch backers of Israel, while Ireland and Spain are more vocal in their support for the Palestinians. Nonetheless, the bloc does have credibility as a European project founded on peace. -AP

EDITORIAL

Conduct
Unbecoming

The current state of Maharashtra's political culture is marked by a troubling decline in civility and respect. The frequent use of aggressive rhetoric and the resort to street-level confrontations are symptomatic of an erosion in the norms of democratic engagement. This is especially disturbing as Maharashtra prides itself with a civil political culture even among the bitterest of ideological foes.

The clash between workers of the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) when both Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray and the BJP's Narayan Rane arrived simultaneously at the site of the collapsed Shivaji Maharaj statue in Malvan in Sindhudurg is a case that gives bad taste a bad name.

The event descended into chaos as Rane, the bete noire of the Thackeray clan, had a heated altercation with the police and clashed with Sena (UBT) and opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) activists wherein he was reportedly heard threatening that if the police cooperated with the MVA workers by permitting them to target the BJP, then he would "enter the house of each one (MVA activist) and kill them."

Exactly three years earlier 2021, Maharashtra's political climate was rudely disrupted by Rane's incendiary remark, where the senior BJP leader said "would have slapped" then Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray for allegedly forgetting the year of India's Independence. This statement triggered a chain reaction of fiery responses on behalf of Shiv Sena (UBT) activists, particularly the Yuva Sena, then led by Aaditya Thackeray. Within hours, Sena supporters had engaged in violent protests, pelting BJP offices with stones and clashing with BJP activists across Mumbai ultimately leading to Rane being arrested and hauled before a court in Mahad, where he was eventually let out on bail.

The 'slapgate' scandal revealed more than just the political tensions between the BJP and Shiv Sena (UBT); it highlighted a deeper malaise in Maharashtra's political culture. The broader deterioration in Maharashtra's political environment can be traced through several notable instances. Sanjay Raut, a Thackeray loyalist, has frequently used inflammatory and unparliamentary rhetoric to attack opponents, fostering a culture of animosity and division. His comments have often transcended political debate, contributing instead to a volatile atmosphere in the State.

Similarly, Abdul Sattar, a minister from CM Eknath Shinde's ruling Shiv Sena, has been involved in a string of verbal controversies that reflect a decline in the standards of political discourse. His derogatory comments on NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule shocked the political spectrum.

Maharashtra's political leaders would do well to reconsider their approach to communication. Instead of indulging in inflammatory rhetoric and personal attacks, there is a pressing need for a return to meaningful dialogue and debate. Politicians must prioritize clarity, respect, and substance in their public discourse, aiming to address the real issues facing the state rather than engaging in counterproductive verbal skirmishes.

AGE OF EXTREMES
Unleashing the Furies: Israel's
struggle with HezbollahBy
Shoumojit Banerjee

In the ancient Greek myth, the Furies were relentless deities of vengeance, punishing those who had committed heinous crimes. Today, in the Middle East, the spectre of retribution looms large as Israel and Hezbollah, the Shia militant group backed by Iran, inch perilously close to unleashing their own furies upon one another.

The Israel-Hezbollah conflict, long a simmering powder keg, now threatens to destabilize a region already teetering on the edge in the wake of Israel's mortal combat with the militant Palestinian faction Hamas in Gaza.

Despite the intense military engagement last week (August 24-25), with Israel, in a pre-emptive strike, deploying 100 jet fighters in a seven-hour assault over 40 targets, the toll has been relatively light.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) appear to have been careful to minimize civilian casualties in Lebanon - a stark contrast to their heavily censured ap-

Both Israel and Hezbollah are navigating a perilous path, where the costs of escalation could far outweigh the benefits of confrontation.

proach in Gaza. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz has emphasized that, while Israel remains committed to the complete dismantling of Hamas, it has no desire for an existential battle with Hezbollah.

Hezbollah's involvement in the recent escalation began on October 8 last year, when the group launched rockets at Israel in support of Hamas's attack the day before.

Its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, has since continued to engage in attacks from the north, and other Iranian proxy groups have also participated in these operations in solidarity with Hamas.

Unlike other militant groups (like ISIS) that have had their genesis in a destabilizing Middle Eastern incident, Hezbollah's rise during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-90) and its staying power have been remarkable by all accounts.

As historian David Crist observes in his 2012 book *The Twilight War*, Hezbollah (meaning 'Party of God') was born out of the crucible of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, moulded by Iran's Revolutionary Guards, and united by a shared vision of Islamic resistance.

For this shadowy band of 'Allah's stormtroopers,' a portentous alliance struck with the Assad family of Syria in the early 1980s was to have momentous consequences for the region.

At that time, Syria, under the leadership of Hafez al-Assad, sought to consolidate Syrian influence over Lebanon - a goal that aligned with Hezbollah's objectives of resisting Israeli occupation and establishing a Shia-dominated political order in Lebanon.

The Assad family's support for Hezbollah was strategic: by backing the group, the Assads not only extended Syria's influence over Lebanese affairs but also created a powerful proxy that could challenge Israeli hegemony in the region.

As Crist observes, Syrian president Hafez al-Assad had initially refused transit to many Revolutionary Guards-



men Khomeini's revolution in neighbouring Iran held little appeal for him.

But after the IDF under Ariel Sharon instigated the fight with the Syrian army during Israel's invasion of Lebanon, al-Assad opened the floodgates for Khomeini's bearded foot soldiers to strike back.

'Hezbollah' would be born of this kernel of two dozen men who were the vanguard of 800 Iranian Revolutionary Guards sent to this base in the fertile eastern Lebanese valley. Over the next coming years, these fighters morphed from a small guerrilla band into a major political party in Lebanon, one whose military wing eclipsed that of the Lebanese army.

They staved off the region's most powerful military—Israel—in two wars, and in one precise bombing inflicted the largest tactical defeat on the U.S. military since the Korean War.

Over the years, it has evolved from a guerrilla force into a formidable military and political power, entrenched in Lebanese society. The 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, which left over 1,000 Lebanese and 165 Israelis dead, marked a turning point. Though Israel managed to deal a severe blow to Hezbollah's infrastructure, the group emerged politically stronger, its narrative of resistance bolstered in the eyes of many in the Arab

world. The alliance with the Assad family was further cemented during the 2011 Syrian Civil War, when Hezbollah emerged as a crucial ally of Bashar al-Assad, Hafez's son and successor. The group's involvement in Syria was driven by both ideological and practical considerations. Ideologically, Hezbollah's commitment to the Assad regime was rooted in its shared opposition to Sunni extremism and its alignment with Iran's broader regional strategy. The group's military intervention, including its participation in key battles such as those in Qusayr and Aleppo, helped turn the tide in favour of the Assad regime.

Despite strenuous efforts of both Israel and the US in trying to decapitate Hezbollah, it has emerged as a hydra-headed monster. (The Mossad is reputed to have assassinated Hezbollah's brilliant, phantom-like military tactician Imad Mughniyeh in 2008, yet this has not slowed down the militant group).

With Iran activating its proxy, the danger of Israel-Hezbollah skirmishes escalating into a broader regional conflict cannot be overstated as any large-scale conflict could potentially draw in other regional powers, including Iran and Syria into a Middle Eastern Armageddon.

GLOBAL WATCH

The return of Jamaat-e-Islami

Bangladesh's interim government has made a dramatic policy shift by lifting the long-standing ban on Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir. The decision, announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs, came with a declaration that the organizations were reportedly not involved in terrorist activities. The move overturned the ban imposed by the erstwhile Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, with the interim government calling the ban "politically motivated."

The ban on Jamaat-e-Islami and its affiliates had been imposed under anti-terrorism laws on August 1, a decision preceded by a high court ruling in 2013 which nullified the party's registration. This was followed by the cancellation of the party's registration by the Election Commission in December 2018. The Supreme Court's appellate division further solidified the ban in November 2023.

This decision not only marks a significant shift in Bangladesh's domestic policy but also raises new concerns for neighbouring India which has long grappled with the bogey of Islamist extremism.

Jamaat-e-Islami's leader, Shafiqur Rahman, has criticized the previous government for damaging key institutions and ex-



pressed concerns about the integrity of upcoming national elections. He has called for a reassessment of Bangladesh's foreign policy with India, advocating for balanced relations with global powers like the U.S., China, and Pakistan.

The reinstatement of Jamaat-e-Islami carries profound implications for India, which shares deep historical, cultural, and economic ties with its eastern neighbour. While the two nations have enjoyed periods of cooperation, their relationship has often been strained by concerns over Islamist extremism and its impact on regional security.

Jamaat-e-Islami, founded in 1941 by Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, has had a tumultuous history in the region. Its advocacy for an Islamic state and its contentious role during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971—when it was accused of collaborating with Pakistani forces—has marred its reputation. After the war, the party was banned but re-emerged in the late 1980s, only to be banned again in 2013 following its involvement in violent protests against war crimes trials.

Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's political career has been marked by a delicate balance between promoting secularism and

managing the influence of Islamic fundamentalism.

Hasina's commitment to secularism stems from her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who enshrined it in the 1972 Constitution. After his assassination, Islamist ideologies gained ground. Upon taking power in 1996, Hasina sought to restore secularism, facing immediate resistance from Islamist groups. A key move was her crackdown on Jamaat-e-Islami. Her government established the International Crimes Tribunal in 2010, leading to the execution of several Jamaat leaders. This was seen as justice by many but also sparked unrest and led to Jamaat's exclusion from the 2014 elections.

Hasina also faced challenges from Hifazat-e-Islam, a radical group that demanded stricter Islamic laws. A crackdown on their 2013 protests resulted in violent confrontations, deepening tensions. The porous border between the two countries has long been a conduit for smuggling, human trafficking, and, at times, the movement of extremist elements.

The return of the Jamaat-e-Islami could shift Bangladesh's foreign policy priorities, potentially aligning it more closely with other Islamist-leaning nations, thereby challenging India's influence in the region.

STATES WATCH

Biswa Sarma talks tough

Earlier this week, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, a senior BJP leader, delivered a fiery speech in the Assam Assembly, unequivocally declaring his intention to "take sides" and prevent the 'Miya' Muslims from "taking over" Assam. His remarks, made in response to opposition allegations of partisanship, have once again brought to the fore the complex and fraught relationship between indigenous Assamese communities and Bengali-speaking Muslims in the state.

The tension between Assamese people and Bengali-speaking Muslims, referred to as 'Miya' Muslims, is not new. This demographic group largely comprises descendants of migrants who arrived from present-day Bangladesh during the colonial period and after the partition of India in 1947. Settling primarily in Lower Assam and the Barak Valley, their presence has long been a point of contention. Indigenous Assamese communities often view them as illegal migrants - a perception that has fuelled decades of socio-political strife.

These tensions came to a head in the 1980s with the Assam Movement, a six-year-long agitation demanding the identification and expulsion of illegal immigrants. One of the most tragic episodes in the violent conflict between indig-

The Assam CM's recent remarks against 'Miya' Muslims have reignited the longstanding and contentious relationship between indigenous Assamese communities and Bengali-speaking Muslims in the state.



enous Assamese communities and Bengali-speaking Muslims was the Nellie Massacre of 1983, where thousands of Bengali-speaking Muslims were killed in response to fears of illegal immigration.

This event underscored the deep-seated anxieties over demographic changes in the region. The Assam Movement culminated in the Assam Accord of 1985, which sought to address the issue through measures like the detection and deportation of illegal immigrants who had entered the state after 1971. However, the Accord's implementation has been inconsistent, and the issue remains unresolved, perpetuating a climate of suspicion and hostility. Himanta Biswa Sarma, who has built his political career on a mix of populism and rhetoric his detractors dub as 'polarizing', has seized upon these historical anxieties. His recent comments in the Assembly reflect a calculated strategy to appeal to the indigenous Assamese electorate, who feel increasingly marginalized in their own state.

During the Assembly session, Sarma addressed the contentious issue of demographic change, arguing that the rapid increase in the Muslim population—citing census data showing a rise from 24% in 1951 to 34% in 2011—posed a significant threat to the Assamese identity. He framed this demographic

shift as an existential crisis for Hindus in the region, suggesting that villages once populated by Hindus are now devoid of them.

Sarma said that his government would soon release a white paper to highlight the demographics changes that took place due to illegal migration of Muslims into Assam from neighbouring Bangladesh.

The CM has also sought to curtail the influence of 'Miya' Muslims through legal and administrative means like the introduction of the Assam Compulsory Registration of Muslim Marriages and Divorces Act, 2024. The new law, which mandates the registration of Muslim marriages and divorces, replaces the 1935 law that allowed child marriages and was silent on polygamy. Sarma has framed this legislation as a step towards implementing a Uniform Civil Code, a long-standing demand of the Hindu right. While Sarma has justified the law as necessary to curb child marriages and protect women's rights, critics argue that it is yet another tool to marginalize the 'Miya' Muslim community.

For all the sharp criticism of his detractors, Biswa Sarma once more proves that even within the BJP, he is one of the few willing to tackle the problem of illegal immigration head on and with continued tenacity.



KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 An artisan gives finishing touches to an idol of Lord Ganesha ahead of the 'Ganesh Chaturthi' festival in Gurugram on Wednesday.
- 2 An artist performs a traditional dance to promote the Kerala Tourism festival, in Mumbai on Wednesday.
- 3 Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud during inauguration of a crèche at the Supreme Court premises in New Delhi on Thursday.
- 4 Workers load bundles of jute on carts, at a jute market in Malda on Thursday
- 5 Jackie Chan carries the Paralympic torch Paris on Wednesday.



All Pictures PTI, AP

TALK OF THE TOWN

How Kamala's election would defy history

JUST ONE SITTING VP HAS BEEN ELECTED PRESIDENT SINCE 1836

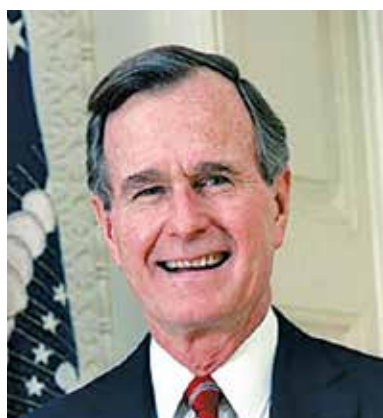
Since 1836, only one sitting vice president, George H.W. Bush in 1988, has been elected to the White House. Among those who tried and failed were Richard Nixon in 1960, Hubert Humphrey in 1968 and Al Gore in 2000. All three lost in narrow elections shaped by issues ranging from war and scandal to crime and the subtleties of televised debates. But two other factors proved crucial for each vice president: whether the incumbent president was well-liked and whether the president and vice president enjoyed a productive relationship.

"You really do want those elements to come together," says Julian Zelizer, a professor of history and public affairs at Princeton University. "If the person the vice president is working for is popular, that means people like what he's doing and you can gain from that. And you need to have the two principals working together."

In 1988, Bush easily defeated Democrat Michael Dukakis, the Massachusetts governor whom Republicans labeled as ineffectual and out of touch. Bush was otherwise helped by a solid economy, the easing of Cold War tensions and some rare luck for a vice president. President Ronald Reagan's approval ratings rose through much of the year after falling sharply in the wake of the 1986-87 Iran-Contra scandal, and Reagan and Bush worked well together during the campaign. Reagan openly backed his vice president, who had run against him in the 1980 primaries. He praised Bush at the Republi-



Kamala Harris



George H.W. Bush



Richard Nixon

can convention as an engaged and invaluable partner, appeared with him at a California rally and spoke at gatherings in Michigan, New Jersey and Missouri.

"Reagan was not a man to hold grudges," said historian-journalist Jonathan Darman. "And Bush did a good job of navigating the complexity of their relationship while he was vice president."

Past Vice Presidents who ran
When Gore ran in 2000, his advantages were similar to those enjoyed by George H.W. Bush. The economy was strong, the country was at peace and the president, Bill Clinton, had

high approval ratings despite his recent impeachment over his affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

Gore had worked closely with Clinton over the previous eight years, but the scandal led to enduring tensions between them. He minimized the president's presence during the campaign and pronounced himself "my own man" during his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention. Commentators would cite his distance from Clinton as a setback in a historically close race, decided by a margin of fewer than 1,000 votes in Florida. "Instead of finding a way to em-

brace the accomplishments of the Clinton administration, Gore ran away from Clinton as fast as his legs could carry him," Slate's Jacob Weisberg wrote soon after the election.

Like Gore, Nixon could not — or would not — capitalize on the incumbent Dwight Eisenhower's popularity. In 1960, Eisenhower was still so admired as he neared the end of his second term that Nixon's opponent, Democrat John F. Kennedy, feared the president's active support would prove critical. But Eisenhower and Nixon had a complicated relationship dating back to when Eisenhower ran eight years earlier. He had chosen Nixon as his running mate,

but nearly dropped him because of the so-called Checkers scandal, in which Nixon was accused of misusing funds donated by political backers.

Nixon was more than 20 years younger than Eisenhower, the victorious World War II commander who often looked upon his vice president as a junior officer, according to Nixon biographer John A. Farrell. At the end of a summer press conference in 1960, Eisenhower was asked if he could cite Nixon's influence on any important decision. He answered, "If you give me a week, I might think of one." Meanwhile, Nixon was reluctant to have Eisenhower campaign, out of a desire to forge his own path, and, allegedly, out of concern for the 70-year-old president.

"Nixon very much wanted to be his own man," says Farrell, whose prize-winning "Richard Nixon" was published in 2017. "He always said he was worried about Eisenhower's health, but there are also anecdotes that Eisenhower was chafing at the bit. Both could be true."

Nixon's luck changed when he ran eight years later against Lyndon B. Johnson's vice president. No vice president was more entrapped by his predecessor than Hubert Humphrey, whose candidacy was only possible because Johnson decided not to seek reelection.

Humphrey faced challenges within the party from the anti-war candidates Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy (who was assassinated in June 1968 after winning the California primary) and was tied to Johnson's divisive, hawkish stance.

Humphrey privately advocated a less headline approach to the war, but Johnson intimidated him into silence and he trailed Nixon badly in many polls. Only in the fall did Humphrey diverge and call for a bombing halt with North Vietnam. The vice president rallied, but ended up losing the popular vote by less than a percentage point while falling short more decisively in the Electoral College.

"Johnson did catastrophic damage to Humphrey, in my opinion," says Boston Globe columnist Michael Cohen, author of a book on the

1968 election, "American Carnage."

How does Harris fare?

Like Johnson, President Joe Biden declared he wouldn't seek a new term less than a year before Election Day, though he waited much longer in the cycle than Johnson did. Unlike Humphrey, Harris quickly consolidated Democratic support and accepted her party's nomination at an uplifting convention that concluded without significant damage from protests, unlike the violence-marred 1968 event in the same city, Chicago.

In an AP-NORC survey conducted in July, after Biden dropped out of the race, about 4 in 10 Americans approved of his performance as president, roughly where his approval numbers have stood since the summer of 2021 and comparable to those of the Republican nominee, Donald Trump. Eisenhower, Reagan and Clinton frequently held higher approval ratings than Biden, although all served in less polarized eras.

Harris wants to succeed a president who himself served as vice president and ran for president, four years later. President Barack Obama discouraged Biden from seeking election in 2016 and waited to endorse Biden in 2020 until the crowded Democratic primary field was clear.

"Obama became an enthusiastic backer, which helped unify the party at a time when Biden's record on race in the 1990s, including his support for the crime bill, was fueling doubts among young progressive voters," Biden biographer Evan Ossofsky says. "Obama's endorsement of Biden was about more than his candidacy; it was about his character, and that proved to be important."

As president, Biden has worked to include Harris on his major policy calls and conversations with foreign leaders. He's pledged to be Harris' top campaign volunteer and to do whatever she asks of him for her election, though aides are still determining where the still-unpopular president would best be utilized. On Labor Day, Biden and Harris will appear together in Pittsburgh for a campaign event in a key swing state, Pennsylvania. -AP

As United States Vice President Kamala Harris begins her fall campaign for the White House, she can look to history and hope for better luck than others in her position who have tried the same.



PARIS PARALYMPIC GAMES

Members of the Brazilian delegation parade on La Concorde plaza during the Opening Ceremony for the 2024 Paralympics in Paris on Wednesday. Pic-APPTI

Sumit, Bhagyashri lead India

Javelin throw star Sumit Antil and shot-putter Bhagyashri Jadhav led the Indian contingent out in the athletes' parade of the Paralympic Games' opening ceremony.

The 179-strong Indian contingent, which is the largest ever in the nation's Paralympic history, features 84 athletes in 12 different sports.

Antil, who won the javelin gold at the Tokyo Paralympics, had the honour of being the flag-bearer alongside Jadhav, a silver-medallist in shot-put at the Asian Para Games in China.

India had won 19 medals, including five gold at the previous edition of the Games, and the country is hoping to take the number to at least 25 with a double-digit haul of gold medals.

Nitish-Thulasimathi makes winning start

India's Nitish Kumar and Thulasimathi Murugesan had little difficulty overcoming country-mates Suhas Yathiraj and Palak Kohli in the opening group stage match of badminton mixed doubles (SL3-SU5) at the Paralympic Games here on Thursday.

The Nitish-Thulasimathi duo won the Group A contest 21-14, 21-17 in 31 minutes. Nitish, 29, who hails from Karnal district in Haryana, and young Thulasimathi, a veterinary science student from Tamil Nadu who had won the mixed bronze at the Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, encountered little challenge in the first game and at one stage they were leading by seven points. Unable to counter the pair's net play and deep tosses, Suhas and Palak quickly found themselves trailing, losing the game in just 14 minutes.

PARALYMPIC inaugurated with a four hour CEREMONY

Paris: Just weeks after hosting the Olympics, Paris inaugurated the 2024 Paralympics on Wednesday with a nearly four-hour-long opening ceremony in the heart of the city.

Against the backdrop of a setting sun, thousands of athletes paraded down the famed Champs-Élysées avenue to Place de la Concorde in central Paris where French President Emmanuel Macron officially declared the Paralympic Games open.

About 50,000 people watched the ceremony in stands built around the iconic square, which is the biggest in Paris and is visible from afar because of its ancient Egyptian Obelisk. Accessibility for athletes in wheelchairs was facilitated with strips of asphalt laid along the avenue and placed over the square. More than 4,000 athletes with

physical, visual and intellectual impairments will compete in 22 sports from Thursday until Sept. 8. Organizers say more than 2 million of the 2.8 million tickets have been sold for the various Paralympic events.

The opening ceremony was held outside the confines of a stadium, just like when the Olympics opened in the city on July 26. Fighter planes flew overhead, leaving red-white-and blue vapors in the colors of the French national flag, before the delegations entered the square in alphabetical order.

Some delegations were huge — more than 250 athletes from Brazil — and some were tiny — less than a handful from Barbados and just three from Myanmar.

Ukraine's delegation got a loud cheer and some of the crowd stood to applaud them.

Flag bearers Steve Serio and Nicky Nieves led the U.S. team's delegation. The French arrived last and to roars from the crowd, which then sang along to popular French songs, including "Que Je T'aime" by late rocker Johnny Hallyday.

Throughout the show, directed by Thomas Jolly who also led the Olympic opening ceremony, singers, dancers and musicians with and without disabilities performed on stage together seamlessly, projecting a theme of inclusion and overcoming physical differences. Lucky Love, a French singer who lost his left arm at birth, was joined by performers in wheelchairs. Other acts featured dancers with crutches.

International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons said he hoped the Paris Paralympics would start an "inclusion revolution" beyond the field of sport.

"The Paris 2024 Paralympic Games will show what persons with disabilities can achieve at the highest level when the barriers to succeed are removed," he said in a speech. "The fact these opportunities largely exist only in sport in the year 2024 is shocking. It is proof we can and must do more to advance disability inclusion — whether on the field of play, in the classroom, concert hall or in the boardroom."

As the ceremony concluded, the Paralympic torch was carried into the area by former Olympic wheelchair tennis gold medalist Michaël Jérémy, who was surrounded on stage by dozens of torchbearers. Five French Paralympians lit the Olympic cauldron, which is designed to look like a hot air balloon and glowed gold-like in the night. - AP

US Open

Balaji, Bhambri in second round

New York: India's doubles players made a stupendous start at the US Open with Davis Cupper N Sriram Balaji and Yuki Bhambri progressing to the men's doubles second round with their respective partners, here.

Balaji, who has been doing well of late, and his Argentine partner Guido Andreozzi overcame a one-set deficit to beat New Zealand's Marcus Daniell and Mexico's Miguel Reyes-Varela 5-7 6-1 7-6 (12-6) in a close contest that lasted two hours and 36 minutes.

Balaji had impressed at the French Open too where



he and Reyes-Varela had stretched Bopanna and Matthew Ebden in a grueling contest on red clay. A good run at the US Open before the Davis Cup

tie against Sweden will be ideal preparation for Balaji, who will enter the rubber as the country's main doubles player.

Bhambri, who has opted out of the tie, and his French partner Albano Olivetti also advanced with a 6-3 6-4 win over local wildcards Ryan Seggerman and Patrik Trhac.

They will now take on the American-Dutch combination of Austin Krajicek and Jean-Julien Rojer in the second round.

Second seeds Bopanna and Ebden will open their campaign on Thursday. -PTI

Aruna Tanwar loses to Turkish

Paris: India's Aruna Tanwar suffered a heavy 0-19 defeat to Nurcihan Ekinici of Turkey in a round of 16 contest in women's K 44-47kg category of the Paris Paralympics on Thursday.

Aruna was absolutely no match to her opponent from Turkey who garnered points at will in the five-minute round. Ekinici scored two points from body kick nine times during the contest while the Indian also conceded one penalty point (gam-jeom).

K44 category includes athletes who have impairments in one arm above the elbow.

Para taekwondo was introduced during Tokyo Paralympics in 2021.

Formula 1 in Imbola

Kush Maini completes second test

New Delhi: Kush Maini, India's sole representative in Formula 2 series, has completed his second Formula 1 test at Italy's Imola circuit as a member of Alpine's junior driver program.

Maini had driven Alpine's 2022 car for the first time at the Red Bull Ring in June.

The two-day test at Imola, a track renowned for its challenging layout and rich motorsport history, saw Maini behind the wheel of the Alpine A522, the 2022

season race car. Maini was a part of a two-day testing event for the Alpine team alongside Jack Doohan, who recently secured a promotion to Formula 1.

This latest test comes at a crucial time, as the team's reserve driver spot opened up earlier last week, presenting a significant opportunity for Maini.

After 99 laps and close to 500 Km of high speed and adrenaline, the 23-year-old shared his thoughts.

"Can't thank Alpine

enough for this opportunity. Very strong day, both qualification and race pace looked very good. Can't wait for the next one."

Representing Invicta in Formula 2, Maini will return to action at Monza over the weekend. In his second season in the F1 feeder series, Maini is ninth in the standings with 74 points.

He bagged his first ever Formula 2 win by topping the sprint race at the Hungarian GP.

- PTI

Achrekar statue at Shivaji Park

Tendulkar welcomes government decision

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar on Thursday welcomed the Maharashtra government's decision to install a statue of his childhood coach Ramakant Achrekar at the iconic Shivaji Park here.

The state's Urban Development Department had on Wednesday approved the proposal for a six-feet statue of Achrekar near Gate No. 5 of the Shivaji Park.

It was at the Shivaji Park that Tendulkar honed his skills to become one of the best batters the world has seen.

"Achrekar Sir has had an immense impact on my life and several other lives. I am speaking on behalf of all his students," Tendulkar wrote on Instagram.

"His life revolved around cricket in Shivaji Park. Being at Shivaji Park forever is what he would have wished



for, I am very happy with the government's decision to build a statue for Achrekar Sir at his karmabhoomi," Tendulkar added. The government said in its resolution that the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation will be responsible for the construction of the statue.

"Before erecting the said memorial sculpture, all necessary permissions/ approvals as per the rules/regulations should be obtained from the Commissioner, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation," it said.

"After the construction of the said memorial sculpture, the responsibility of its necessary maintenance and repair and provision of necessary funds will remain the responsibility of BV Ramath Memorial Secret Club," it added.

"Independent funds will not be available from the government for construction as well as maintenance and repair of the said memorial," the resolution added.

Achrekar, who coached 12 India players, was conferred the Dronacharya Award in 1990.

Besides Tendulkar, he also coached Ramnath Parkar, Balwinder Singh Sandhu, Lalchand Rajput, Chandrakant Pandit, Pravin Amre, Sameer Dighe, Vinod Kambli, Sanjay Bangar, Paras Mhambrey, Ramesh Powar and Ajit Agarkar. - PTI

Astronomy Olympiad

Indians bag gold

New Delhi: The Indian students have bagged one gold and four silver medals at the 17th International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA) held in Brazil.

Daksh Tayalia from Bengaluru won the gold medal while Aayush Kuthari and Sanidhya Saraf from Pune, Banibrata Majee from Hyderabad and Panini from Bihar were awarded silver medals, the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education-Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (HBCSE-TIFR) said in a statement.

The team led by Prof. Bhargav Vaidya from IIT-Indore and Pritesh Ranadive HBCSE-TIFR, Mumbai, while Prof. Arnab Bhattacharya and Dr Akshat Singhal (both HBCSE-TIFR), Dr Vaibhav Pant (Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), Nainital and Yash Mehta (Open AI) attended the event as Scientific Observers. - PTI



Orawan Paranang of Dabang Delhi TTC and Sathyan Gnanasekaran of Dabang Delhi TTC in action during the match of the Ultimate Table Tennis 2024 played between Dabang Delhi TTC and Goa Challengers, at Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium on Wednesday. Pic-APPTI