

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Failed youths were given electric shocks

Shocking details in the NIA chargesheet in cyber fraud case | Sudarshan Darade, CEO of Laos company named as key culprit

Mumbai/New Delhi: The NIA on Tuesday chargesheeted the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Laos-based Long Sheng company for his involvement in international human trafficking syndicate, alluring gullible youth on the pretext of job and eventually forcing them to commit online frauds, according to an official statement.



The NIA investigations have revealed that Sudarshan Darade's company, Long Sheng, based in Bokeo province of the Southeast Asian country, was actively involved in the racket relating to trafficking of youth to the Golden Triangle Laos in Bangkok on the pretext of job offers. The company would conduct WhatsApp interviews and send appointment letters to the youth, who, on reaching the destination, were forced to commit online crypto currency frauds, the statement said.

Shah urges use of AI
Union Home Minister Amit Shah Tuesday urged cybersecurity agencies to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to identify the modus operandi of criminals duping people of their hard-earned money, spreading fake news and abusing women and children online.

46	The per cent of global digital transactions hosted in India
95 cr	No of Internet users in India
1930	National cyber helpline number
5000	Cyber commandoes to be trained over the next five years

Shocking details of the investigation show that re-

"Some youths were even given electric shocks if they failed to meet their targets of befriending prospective victims on social media," said the statement issued by the NIA.

fusal by the trafficked youth to engage in cyber fraud in the Golden Triangle Laos led to starvation and lashing in locked rooms, it said.

The accused Sudarshan Darade, who was arrested by the NIA in June this year, has been named as a key culprit in the chargesheet filed before a

court in Mumbai, it said.

Darade is the sixth accused to be chargesheeted in the case and the third, after Jerry Jacob and Godfrey Alvares, to have been arrested, it said.

On Darade's instruc-

tions, Jacob would arrange for the transportation of the Indian youth to the Golden Triangle Laos, the probe agency said.

A large amount of incriminating material has been recovered from Da-

rade's mobile phones. Darade has also revealed details to the NIA regarding another wanted accused, Sunny Gonsalves, as well as foreign nationals Niu Niu and Elvis Du, who are still absconding, it said, adding the agency is following up on the information to get leads on the absconders.

-PTI



Junior doctors holding broom shout slogans as they march towards Swasthya Bhawan during a protest over RG Kar Hospital rape and murder incident in Kolkata on Tuesday. Pic:PTI

Wing commander booked for rape

Srinagar: An FIR has been registered against a Wing Commander following complaints of rape by a woman flying officer.

Both the IAF officers are currently stationed in Srinagar.

After the complaint, the FIR under "relevant sections of the law" was filed at Budgam police station in central Kashmir on Saturday, a senior police officer said.

Protesting doctors defy SC, reject CM's talk proposal

Kolkata: The protesting junior doctors defied the Supreme Court's directive to join duties by 5 pm on Tuesday. They also rejected West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's offer for dialogue.

The doctors, who are protesting near the Swasthya Bhawan, claimed that the invitation for the talks was sent by the state

Health Secretary, terming it as an insult. They further said that they are open to talks, if the invite is sent through a proper communication channel by the state government.

The state government claimed that the CM waiting in the Nabanna building, the state secretariat, till 7:30 pm to hold talks. The agitating doctors ear-

lier said that they will continue with their cease work till their demands are accepted and the R.G. Kar rape and murder victim is given justice. The Supreme Court had expressed concern over the lack of a crucial document needed for the postmortem of a doctor who was raped and murdered at R.G. Kar Medical College in Kolkata.

India, UAE ink pact on nuclear plants

New Delhi: India and the UAE have inked a pact that provides a framework for giving services for operation and maintenance of nuclear plants in the emirate.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Bhuwan Chandra Pathak, Chairman and Managing Director of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), and Mohamed Al Hammadi, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC) of the UAE.

The MoU was inked during the ongoing visit of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to India. Al Nahyan held talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday.

"The MoU provides a general framework for the possible collaboration between the NPCIL & ENEC in the relevant fields, which inter alia include developing supply chains."



Bollywood actor Neil Nitin Mukesh with his daughter Nurvi offers prayers before Lord Ganesh in Mumbai on Monday. Pic:PTI

Was scared to visit Lal Chowk, says Shinde

New Delhi: Recalling his experiences of visiting Jammu and Kashmir while he was the Union Home Minister, Congress leader Sushilkumar Shinde said that he used to feel scared but was not able to tell anyone about it.

During the launch of his memoir 'Five Decades of Politics' on Monday at the India International Centre in Delhi, Shinde said that when he used to visit Kashmir's Lal Chowk and Dal Lake in Srinagar as the Home Minister, he used to get scared and was unable to share all this with anyone despite getting good publicity for his visits.

Shinde stated that he used to visit those places on the advice of educationalist Vijay Dhar, who was also his advisor. Shinde stated that this advice had sent a good message and used to get him good publicity and people thought that there was a Home Minister who visited the place without

any fear but in reality, he used to get scared.

"Before I became the Home Minister, I visited him (educationalist Vijay Dhar). I used to ask him for advice. He advised me to not roam around but to visit Lal Chowk (in Srinagar), meet people and go around Dal Lake. That advice gave me publicity and people thought that here is a Home Minister who goes there without any fear, lekin meri fat'ti thi wo kisko bataoon? (But who do I tell that I was scared?) I told you this just to make you laugh, but an ex-policeman can't speak like this."

Shinde's remarks come in the middle of the election season in JK. The BJP has been reiterating that the withdrawal of Article 370 has resulted in the return of peace to the region.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said that there were people who became CM when there was peace in the territory.

American killed 'unintentionally'

Ramallah: The Israeli military said Tuesday that an American activist who was killed in the West Bank last week was likely shot "indirectly and unintentionally" by Israeli forces who were aiming at someone else.

Aysenur Ezgi Eygi, a 26-year-old activist from Seattle, was killed Friday following a demonstration against Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, according to Jonathan Pollak, an Israeli protester who witnessed the shooting.

The military said its inquiry "found that it is highly likely that she was hit indirectly and unintentionally by (Israeli army) fire which was not aimed at her, but aimed at the key instigator of the riot."

The White House had earlier said it was "deeply disturbed" by the killing of Eygi, who also held Turkish citizenship, and called on Israel to investigate what happened.

-AP

Teen completes solo English Channel for charity

By Aditi Khanna

London: A British Indian schoolgirl who recently turned 16 has made history as one of the youngest to cross the notoriously choppy English Channel to raise funds for a charity fighting against childhood hunger across India and the UK.

Prisha Tapre, a pupil at Bushey Meads School in north London, was motivated by a family discussion about the English Channel to take on the challenge when she was just 12.

After four years of training, she went on to complete the 34-kilometre swim from the coast of Dover in England to Cap

Gris Nez in France last week in 11 hours and 48 minutes.

"It was quite choppy at the start, but when the sun started to rise, I knew that the worst bit was done with," said Tapre, reliving her mission in an interview from her home at Watford in Hertfordshire.

The swimming enthusiast, who describes the lake near her home as her "calm place", used lots of meditative techniques and even felt a strange bond with the jellyfish that stung her along the way.

"The jellyfish stings were probably my favourite bit because it's just an extra feeling. After



It's always the first two hours that are the hardest part of the swim because it's about getting your mind around the fact that this is where you're going to be for the next few hours. I was actually beginning to get quite sleepy and my eyes were about to shut, but then the sun started to come up and the sleep went away. The weather conditions were amazing, really still; the best I could have asked for.

Prisha Tapre

swimming for like nine hours, you're in a sort of trance. But then the jellyfish stings kind of reminded me that I'm actually alive. I know it sounds odd, but it was something to tick off my bucket list," she shared.

The UK-born teenager, whose parents hail from Maharashtra, raised GBP 3,700 for her chosen

charity - Akshaya Patra UK, the British chapter of the India-headquartered non-profit organisation with a mission to provide hot meals to children in need.

"Part of the reason I chose my charity Akshaya Patra is because I wanted a charity that I could relate to. When I found out

Akshaya Patra helps kids both in England and India, it really connected with me. I wanted a charity that has both sides of me. My heart goes out to all those kids who live in poverty, both in England and India, where there's no promise of a meal at the end of the day," said the fundraiser. -PTI

BJP membership swells past two cr

New Delhi: The BJP's rank has swelled past two crore in just eight days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a nationwide membership drive, the party said here on Tuesday during a meeting held at its headquarters.

The party launches the drive to renew the membership of its existing members and enroll new members every six years in line with its constitution.

"The PM had on September 2 launched the national membership drive. The membership number of BJP has crossed two crores," national general secretary Vinod Tawde said.

Ill prepared Greater Noida fails cricket

Greater Noida: Using traditional tarpaulin to protect outfield, electric fans to dry wet patches, loaning ground cover from one state unit and super sopper from the other while deploying untrained ground staff, the Greater Noida Authority encountered colossal failure in not being able to get second day's play underway in the one-off Test between Afghanistan and New Zealand.

For the second successive day, not a single ball could be bowled at the Shaheed Vijay Singh Pathik Sports complex here putting the venue under scanner and making it

an international embarrassment.

The game, the first between the two nations, was scheduled to begin on Monday but no play was possible as the umpires cited "players safety" as a concern.

The mid-on and mid-wicket areas remained a cause of concern as the groundsmen were bringing in dry sections of grass from the practice area to "transplant" it to the mid wicket area.

Additionally, three table fans were used to dry patches of grass on the off-side as the groundsmen continued to work all day.

Tale of a fight between father, daughter

By Suyash Padate

Mumbai: From the epic battles of Pandavas and Kauravas to more recent political rivalries among the powerful political family members have often found themselves at opposite ends of the political spectrum. Political ambitions have split them and now familial conflicts over the claim to the political throne have been recurrent. Breaking the mold, the daughter has challenged male chauvinism by claiming their fathers' political legacies.

Bhagyashree Atram Halsekar, daughter of senior NCP Minister Dharmarao baba Atram is all set to join the NCP-SP led by Sharad Pawar on September 12. Bhagyashree is expected to contest the upcoming Assembly election against her father from his home turf, the Aheri assembly constituency in the Maoist-infested Gadchiroli district. It will be for the first time in Maharashtra's political history that a fight between a father and a daughter is likely to take place in the Assembly elections.

Atram, who is Maharashtra Minister of Food and Drug Administration has come out in open against his daughter and son in law. He has urged the voters of Aheri Assembly constituency to throw his daughter Bhagyashree and son-in-law Rituraj Halsekar in the Pranhita river for 'treachery' after re-



ports surfaced that she could join the rival NCP faction led by Sharad Pawar.

Atram made the controversial remarks in the presence of the party's national president and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who was in Aheri during his 'Jansanman Yatra' to promote the Mahayuti government's Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana and other welfare and development schemes.

Against this backdrop, while speaking to The Perfect Voice, Atram said, "People join and leave the party, nothing new in it and there is no need to pay attention to them. Some people from my own family have made up their mind and all set to join another party by using my political clout.

For 40 years, people have engineered defections in state politics. Now Sharad Pawar and some of the leaders of his party are making a full-fledged at-

tempt to divide my house and field my daughter against me".

Brothers, uncle-nephew, brother-in-law and sister-in-law, father-in-law and mother-in-law and even son-in-law all are pitted against each other many times in the past across India. Then why you are so upset, on this question, the Minister screamed and said, "These people have ditched me. She has done nothing. She doesn't know anything."

He further said, "they got in touch with Bhagyashree, had a meeting with her and convinced her to contest against me. She is now ready to enter the arena against me". "Sharad Pawar's party is leaving no stone unturned to ensure that my daughter switches to their side. Their plans are clear. They have decided to pit her against her own father in the election. A girl who could not become a good daughter of her father, how can she become yours?"

You have to think about it. What justice will she give to you and even voters? Don't trust her. Don't trust my son-in-law too," Atram categorically stated.

"The whole family has gathered behind me sending a clear message to her that I am not worried about my poll prospects. One daughter has deserted me but another daughter and my son are still with me. Barring one person the entire family is with me. I am least bothered about her," he further pointed out.

Dharmarao baba, has made her the president of Zilla Parishad. I don't know what she thinks of herself. I can only say don't commit this mistake and be with your father," helpless Atram appealed to his daughter.

Now it is certain that a father-daughter fight is inevitable in the election. The political landscape of Maharashtra will see an electoral fight for making them take on each other in quest for power.

'Shivshahi' catches fire, no injuries

Mumbai: Thirty passengers travelling in an air-conditioned bus had a narrow escape when it caught fire on Pune-Satara highway in Maharashtra on Tuesday afternoon, officials said.

The incident took place at 1.50 pm when the state transport's 'Shivshahi' bus was at Vadhefata near Satara city on Swargate-Sangli route, they said.

The AC bus had 30 passengers on board apart from two crew members, a spokesperson of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) said. It caught fire after its left side rear tyre burst, he said.

All passengers and crew members were safe, the official said. "There was no injury to anyone in the blaze," he said. The bus suffered damages of nearly Rs 25 lakh, he added.

MSRTC has fleet of more than 15,000 AC and non-AC buses.

Jarange to launch indefinite fast on Sept 16

By Correspondent

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar: Activist Manoj Jarange on Tuesday announced the launch of an indefinite fast from September 16 midnight to press for the Maratha reservation demand.

In February, the Maharashtra legislature passed a bill providing 10 per cent reservation for the Maratha community in education and government jobs, but Jarange has insisted on the inclusion of Marathas in the Other Backward Class (OBC) category. The activist has been leading protests demanding OBC certificates for recognising all Kunbis (agriculturists) and their "sage soyre" (blood relatives) as Marathas.

Kunbi, an agrarian group, falls under the OBC



category, and Jarange has been demanding that Kunbi certificates be issued to all Marathas, thus making them eligible for quota benefits.

Talking to reporters at Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district, Jarange said, "September 17 is Mukti Sangram Din (Marathwada Liberation Day). On the same day, (we) will start an indefinite fast with the same demands (for reservation)...will sit on the indefinite fast from September 16 midnight."

Women can do whatever men can: Bhagwat

Nagpur: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Tuesday said women can do all the work that men can, adding that women can even do work which men cannot.

Speaking at an event organised by a women's multi-state cooperative society here, Bhagwat also dwelt on the usage of the term "women's emancipation".

"The language of 'women's emancipation' feels wrong. If women are given freedom to do whatever they want to do, then everybody is automatically emancipated," Bhagwat said.

"Women in India don't just think for themselves. The quality of vatsalya (maternal love) is inbuilt in them and that is why they think about everyone's welfare," he said. "We see from our homes to institutions that women think of everyone's welfare," he said.

-PTI

Official flags discrepancy in onion cultivation

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar: The Maharashtra Agriculture Commissionerate has asked the collectors of eight districts to check the ground situation after pointing out that the insured area of onion crop in these areas is much bigger than the actual area where onion is cultivated.

A letter was sent by agriculture director Vinaykumar Awate to the district collectors and superintending agriculture officers of Nashik, Dhule, Ahmednagar,

Pune, Solapur, Satara, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and Beed in this regard, official sources said on Tuesday.

Onion has been planted over 75,312 hectares across these districts. However, going by insurance applications, 2,63,136 hectares of land - 349 percent more - appears to be under cultivation, the letter said.

The amount of premium for onion per hectare of land is between Rs 46,000 to 81,422, and the entire amount is paid by the government. It is farm-

ers who declare that they have planted a particular crop, but there is no verification, the letter noted.

Insuring a crop without actually planting it amounts to cheating the government, it said.

District officials should obtain reports from villages through the employees of insurance companies about such discrepancy and action should be taken against those who have filed bogus applications, the letter added.

-PTI

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to general public that my client PRATAP KHATU PATRA is negotiating with DHANESHWARI DEVI BALESHWAR JADHAV an owner of the Flat No. 105, First Floor, A-wing, VANITA CHS LTD., Navghar Road, Bhayander (East), Tal. & Dist. Thane 401105 to purchase the said flat. The owner has informed that the Original Agreement of dtd. 15/09/1994 executed between New Super Builder and BALESHWAR B. JADHAV is misplaced and not traceable. My client has requested me to issue no claim certificate. So, any person having any right, title and interest, heirship rights, Mortgage, Gift Deed, etc., of the above referred Flat, its agreements, Share Certificate or having any objection to purchase the said flat by my client then please write to the undersigned with necessary documents within 14 days from the publication of this notice, failing which No Claim Certificate will be issued to my client which please be noted.

JOHN M. RODRICKS
ADVOCATE
Office No. 2, First Floor,
New Shanti Ganga Apt.,
Opp. Bhayander Rly. Stn.,
Bhayander (E), Thane 401105
Mob.9892401349

CRIME WATCH

Man dies after suicide bid

Thane: An unidentified man died after allegedly trying to commit suicide by jumping into a creek in Maharashtra's Thane city, an official said on Tuesday. The man, believed to be in the age group of 35 to 40 years, jumped into the Kalwa creek on Monday night, Thane Municipal Corporation's disaster management cell chief Yasin Tadvi said. Due to the low water level, he got stuck in a marshy area of the creek, he said. Firefighters and members of the regional disaster management cell rushed to the spot. They pulled out the man from the water body and took him to a government hospital where he was pronounced dead upon arrival, the official said.

Court official held for bribe

Mumbai: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has arrested an official from the Court of Small Causes here for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 25 lakh from a hotelier for settling a case in his favour, an official said on Tuesday. Based on a complaint, a team from the ACB laid a trap at a hotel in the LT Marg area on Monday and caught the accused, Vishal Chandrakant Sawant, while accepting the bribe amount, the official said. The accused is a translator-interpreter at the Court of Small Causes, he said. The complainant, a hotelier, has alleged that Sawant demanded Rs 25 lakh from him to settle a pending case of hotel ownership rights in his favour, he said.

Horse knocks down man

Thane: Police have registered a case against a horse owner after the animal galloping at a high speed knocked down a 35-year-old man in Thane district, police said on Tuesday. The victim, working in a powerloom unit, received serious injuries in the incident which took place in Bhiwandi area on Monday evening, they said. He was riding his scooter when the horse approaching towards him from the opposite direction collided with the vehicle, an official from Bhoiwada police station said.

Shinde launches campaign to popularise 10 govt schemes



Chief Minister Eknath Shinde meets beneficiaries of 'Mukhyamantri Ladki Bahin Yojana' in Thane on Tuesday. Pic:PTI

Mumbai: Ahead of the Maharashtra assembly polls, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has launched a campaign to create awareness on 10 schemes of his Mahayuti government catering to the youth, women, farmers and elderly people.

Under the 'Ladki Bahin Kutumb Bhet Abhiyaan' launched on Monday, Shinde's party Shiv Sena aims to reach out to more than one crore families in the state.

The move comes amid cracks in the ruling alliance over the 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana', with a Shiv Sena minister raising objection against ally NCP and its president Ajit Pa-

war for "omitting" Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's name from advertisements and promotional material of the government's flagship scheme.

The state assembly polls are likely to be held in November. The CM, who launched the campaign on Monday, said his party workers will try to increase the awareness of 10 government schemes like the Mukhyamantri Ladki Bahin Yojana, which provides Rs 1,500 every month to eligible women in the state, the Mukhyamantri Yuva Prashikshan Yojana, Mukhyamantri Vayoshree Yojana, Mukhyamantri Tirtha Darshan Yojana and Mukhyamantri Electricity Pump Bill Waiver scheme,

among others. The campaign's aim is to assess whether families are getting benefit of the government schemes, and if not, then what issues are they facing in availing them, he said.

The scheme of empowering women will help the state's economy, Shinde said. The progress on the campaign by the party workers will be monitored through a geo-tracking application, he said.

Last week, state Excise Minister Shambhuraj Desai, who belongs to the Shiv Sena led by CM Shinde, expressed disappointment over Deputy CM Ajit Pawar virtually "hijacking" the 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin' scheme.

Ex scientist goes missing

Mumbai: City police has formed a special team to trace a former scientist of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) who has gone missing from his Bandra residence, an officer said on Tuesday.

A reward of Rs 10,000 has been announced for any information about Vinayak Kolvankar, 76, he said.

Kolvankar, who suffers from dementia, went missing from his house in New MIG Colony on September 5, said inspector Ramesh Khilare of Nirmla Nagar police station.

As per the complaint lodged by his wife Vaishali, he left home to buy flowers but did not return.

CCTV footage showed Kolvankar boarding a train at Bandra station and getting down at Santacruz, roaming in the area, then taking another train back to Bandra. He is last seen exiting the station from the Bandra West side.

"We have formed a ten-member team to trace him and announced a Rs 10,000 reward for information."

Fadnavis trying to get me : Deshmukh

Nagpur: Former home minister and NCP (SP) leader Anil Deshmukh on Tuesday alleged Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis was trying to get him arrested with the help of central agencies.

In a post on X, Deshmukh claimed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) recently filed an FIR against him in a four-year-old incident at the behest of the senior BJP leader.

Fadnavis, who holds the home portfolio in the Mahayuti government, dismissed the NCP (SP) leader's allegations and maintained Deshmukh was trying to gain sympathy for himself.

"It has been alleged that four years ago when I was the home minister of Maharashtra, I pressured a Jalgaon police officer to take action against BJP leader

Girish Mahajan," Deshmukh said.

"As per my information, Fadnavis is trying to get a raid conducted on me and get me arrested. I want to tell Devendra Fadnavis, who with the help of Delhi (Centre) and ED-CBI has brought Maharashtra politics to a shallow level, 'Devendra Fadnavis, I am waiting for my arrest'," asserted the opposition leader, striking a defiant note.

Asked about the allegations, the deputy CM told reporters in Nagpur that Deshmukh was engaging in a petty attempt to gain sympathy for himself. "The case (in Jalgaon) was filed against him based on a statement issued by an SP-rank police officer. The officer claimed Deshmukh had pressured him to file a false case against BJP leader Girish Mahajan.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Raosaheb Danve, Leader, BJP

The decision regarding the next Chief Minister will be taken only after the results of the Assembly polls are out. Nobody will talk about it before the elections. There will not be any friendly contests among the NDA constituents. We will find an amicable solution to seat-sharing and contest accordingly.

No action against Bawankule's son in rash driving case

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Police have arrested the driver of a luxury car, owned by Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule's son Sanket, after it hit several vehicles in Nagpur city.

The person driving the Audi car, Arjun Hawre, was arrested on Monday night and later released on bail (at the local police station), a senior police official told PTI.

"No action has been taken so far against Sanket Bawankule and two other occupants who reportedly escaped from the scene at Mankapur bridge," an official from Sitabuldi police station said.

After the incident took place in the early hours of Monday, a case of rash driving and other offences was registered on the complaint of Jitendra Sonkamble, whose vehicle was hit by the Audi car, he said.

The occupants of the Audi car were returning from a beer bar in Dharampath when the incident took place, the official said adding the medical examination will include blood tests for alcohol detection. "We are checking the CCTV footage to ascertain the chain of events, after which further action on all aspects, including other occupants, will follow," he said.



Sanket Bawankule



According to our information, the son of BJP state president Chandrashekhar Bawankule was allegedly drunk and seriously injured two persons in Nagpur. Surprisingly, his name was not mentioned in the First Information Report (FIR), and the car's number plate was removed after the accident. As long as Devendra Fadnavis is the Home Minister and Rashmi Shukla is the director general of police, there will never be any fair investigation in any matter in the state.

-Sanjay Raut, MP Shiv Sena (UBT)

Police are conducting probe and an FIR has been registered. The facts of this case have surfaced already. However, the way the Opposition is targeting (Chandrashekhar) Bawankule is inappropriate.

-Devendra Fadnavis, Home Minister

Police should conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the accident without any bias. Those found guilty should be charged and appropriate action should be taken against them. I have not spoken to any police official. The law must be equal for all.

-Chandrashekhar Bawankule, President, Maharashtra BJP

The car owned by Sanket hit several vehicles in Ramdaspath area, after which Hawre and one more occupant - Ronit Chittamwar - were apprehended by police. The luxury car first collided with complainant

Sonkamble's car and then with a moped, leaving two youth riding it injured, the official said.

"The Audi car struck some more vehicles moving towards Mankapur area. At T-Point there, the vehicle hit a Polo car. Its

occupants chased the Audi and stopped it near Mankapur bridge. Two occupants, identified as driver Arjun Hawre and Ronit Chittamwar, were stopped by those in the Polo car," he said. The duo was taken to

Tehsil police station, from where they were handed over for further probe to Sitabuldi police, he said. After the incident, Chandrashekhar Bawankule admitted the Audi car was registered in the name of his son Sanket.

Sena worker covers Ajit's photo with black cloth

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The cold war between Shiv Sena and NCP looks to intensify further after Sena workers covered Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's photo with a black cloth in his home town Baramati. This particular incident has added fuel to the fire in Mahayuti.

Meanwhile, the NCP spokesperson Amol Mitkari while reacting to this act said that Shinde group has become discredited. Unless there is unanimity among the three parties, success in the assembly elections will not be achieved.

Ganesh Festival has been organised in Baramati on behalf of Shiv Sena. Posters and banners of this program have been installed at various places in Baramati city. Along with Shinde photos of both the Deputy Chief Ministers were prom-



inently displayed on the poster. Ajit Pawar did not attend the inauguration of the Eknath festival organised by Baramati Shiv Sena. With this Sena workers became furious and they covered Pawar's photo with black cloth. This sudden action by Shiv Sena workers has not gone down well into the NCP camp.

The cold war between the NCP and Shiv Sena has created a political slugfest in the alliance. Prior to this the differences between the two parties came to the fore on various issues including Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana. Both the parties have adopted aggressive stance

on various issues. However, on Tuesday it took ugly turn when the Sena workers covered Ajit Pawar's photo black cloth.

Surendra Jewre, the Sena activist who covered Ajit Pawar's photo with black cloth was detained by police. After this tension was created in Baramati for some time.

NCP spokesperson Amol Motkari strongly reacted to the whole episode. "Ajit Pawar is the Deputy Chief Minister of the state. Covering his photo with black cloth does not mean that the development of Baramati has been covered".

Mitkari has also said that this is like covering the sun with a black cloth. What happened in Baramati was not fair. Shiv Sena should keep in mind that we also have feelings and in case of an outburst of these feelings, there will be a big destruction.



Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan along with Indian businessman Mukesh Ambani and Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal during the UAE-India Business Forum in Mumbai on Tuesday. Pic: PTI

Eight injured as bus crashes into pillar

Thane: Eight persons were seriously injured when a state transport bus crashed into a pillar at a metro rail construction site in Maharashtra's Thane city in the early hours of Tuesday, an official from the state road transport corporation said.

The accident occurred near Ovla village on Ghodbunder Road around 5.30 am when the bus from Ambejogai was heading towards Borivali, Sagar Palace, the Thane Divisional



Controller of MSRTC, told PTI. A container truck coming from the opposite direction nearly collided

with the bus, and to avert the collision, the bus driver swerved, causing the vehicle to crash into a pillar at a metro rail construction site, he said.

Eight persons, including the bus driver and conductor, sustained serious injuries and were rushed to different hospitals, the official said.

The front portion of the bus was damaged in the crash, he said, adding that teams from the traffic and local police were probing into the incident.

BMC relaxes educational criteria for recruitment

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Tuesday announced that it has relaxed the educational criteria for the post of executive assistants (clerks), removing the condition of clearing the Class 10 and degree exams in the first attempt.

The civic body initiated the online process for filling 1,846 posts in August and sought applications from eligible candidates before September 9. However, it had received representations from different quarters to relax the educational criteria. In a release issued on Tuesday, the BMC said it has



decided to remove the "first attempt" condition and revise the educational criteria, noting that the decision will provide relief to lakhs of aspirants.

It said a new advertisement will be issued in the next 15 days, and the recruitment process will resume.

Candidates who have already submitted their applications need not reapply, it said. Politicians, including Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray, NCP (SP) MP

Supriya Sule and leaders of the Aam Adami Party, had objected to the education criteria.

Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had recently written to BMC chief Bhushan Gagrani, asking him to relax the condition.

"You must be aware that some students, due to some family or any other unavoidable reasons, can't clear examinations in the first attempt, but this does not mean the student is not brilliant. This has created an impression that injustice will be done to students who could not pass exams in the first attempt," Fadnavis stated in his letter to the BMC chief.

Mhada holds Lokshahi Din

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) successfully conducted its fifth Lokshahi Day on Monday, under the chairmanship of Vice President and CEO, Sanjeev Jaiswal, during which successful hearing was conducted on nine applications received.

Once again, it was evident that the common citizens are getting a rightful platform for grievance resolution on MHADA's Lokshahi Din.

The issue of regularizing a flat, pending for approximately 35 years, concerning applicant Milind Rele, was resolved. On the occasion of Lokshahi Din, MHADA Vice President and CEO Sanjeev Jaiswal ensured justice for the Rele family.

During the hearing held at the MHADA headquarters on the application submitted by Milind Rele, Jaiswal directed that the flat in the name of the late B. S. Rele, a member of a housing society in D.N. Nagar, Andheri, be regularized in the name of his legal heirs. This decision resolved a case pending for almost 35 years.

BUREAUCRACY MATTERS

Is The Shinde Sarkar Against Women Officers?



By Vikrant Joshi

Yesterday, I came across a WhatsApp forward mentioning that, following the cases of V. Radha and Deepa Mudhol-Mundhe, it appears that yet another senior IAS officer—namely, I. A. Kundan—is now facing a transfer before completing her tenure. This trend of prematurely transferring

Senior IAS Officer I. A. Kundan's unexpected transfer, like those of V. Radha and Deepa Mudhol Mundhe, highlights a troubling trend of abrupt transfers driven by political pressures. This raises concerns about bureaucratic integrity and questions the Shinde government's commitment to women's empowerment.



Sujata Saunik

officers is becoming increasingly concerning.

From what I have gathered, the root of the issue seems to lie with Minister Deepak Kesarkar, under whose department IAS Officer I. A. Kundan is currently serving. Reports suggest that the minister has grown increasingly dissatisfied with her approach to the job. Kundan has reportedly refused to comply with a series of instructions from Kesarkar, which she deemed irrelevant and unnecessary. These directives, however, are being aggressively pushed by the Minister, likely due to the pressure of the upcoming elections.

Senior IAS Officer I. A. Kundan assumed this position just four months ago, following her transfer from a position under Minister Abdul Sattar. I couldn't help but feel relieved and thankful that she emerged from that situation unscathed, without any controversy or label attached to her. After all, Minister Abdul Sattar is known to be a difficult person to work with, and she would likely have faced some challenges.

Is the Shinde government's claim of being women-centric and prioritising women's empowerment



I. A. Kundan

just a façade? While it may project an image of supporting women, the reality within the bureaucracy seems to tell a different story. If female officers in the government are not being heard, or worse, are being pressured by their ministers to sign off on questionable files, how can such a system function effectively? No woman officer with a sense of integrity would compromise her principles under such circumstances, especially in these challenging times.

We might as well set aside the 'Ladki Bahin Yojana'—the scheme intended to provide financial support to women—if we cannot ensure stability and security for the women already serving in our bureaucracy. While it is understandable that some officers may be reluctant to sign documents without a justification, why should capable officers who are committed to development, like Officer I. A. Kundan, be treated poorly?

This is far from an isolated incident. Just 15 days ago, a similar situation unfolded involving Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik. She found herself under immense pressure, primarily driven by intense media scrutiny that essentially 'transferred her out' of her



V. Radha

position as Chief Secretary. The situation escalated to the point where the Prime Minister himself had to step in and publicly commend Saunik in his speeches. This public acknowledgement signalled that any official attempt to remove Saunik from her post would not go unnoticed, especially in Delhi's political circles.

There is an urgent need to investigate and ensure that abrupt transfers of IAS officers are thoroughly examined and justified. I would recommend that Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik take the lead in forming a panel and include a few senior politicians, such as Devendra Fadnavis. This panel should conduct a detailed inquiry into the reasons behind the sudden transfers of all IAS officers, especially when they haven't completed their full tenure. Such a report would provide transparency in the decision-making process, ensuring that any future transfers are fully justified and not influenced by external pressures. It's crucial to keep the process fair and impartial to maintain the integrity of the system.

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

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sunil Tatkar
Chief, Maharashtra NCP

Our goal is to come to power again. We had a detailed discussion on contesting polls unitedly. There was no discussion on the Chief Minister's post. Ladki Bahin Yojana and waiver of electricity bills of farmers are getting an overwhelming response. They need to be communicated to the people.

Google loses antitrust shopping case

London: Google lost its final legal challenge on Tuesday against a European Union penalty for giving its own shopping recommendations an illegal advantage over rivals in search results, ending a long-running antitrust case that came with a whopping fine.

The European Union's Court of Justice upheld a lower court's decision, dismissing the company's appeal against the 2.4 billion euro (USD 2.7 billion) penalty from the European Commission, the 27-nation bloc's top antitrust enforcer.

The commission's original decision in 2017 accused the Silicon Valley giant of unfairly directing visitors to its own Google Shopping service to the detriment of competitors. It was one of three multibillion-euro fines that the commission imposed on Google in the previous decade as Brussels started ramping up its crackdown on the tech industry.

Google made changes to comply with the commission's decision requiring it to treat competitors equally. The company started holding auctions for shopping search listings that it would bid for alongside other comparison shopping services.

At the same time, the



Google is also appealing the other two EU antitrust penalties involving its Android mobile operating system and AdSense advertising platform. The company was dealt a setback in the Android case when the EU General Court upheld the commission's 4.125 billion euro fine in a 2022 decision. Its initial appeal against a 1.49 billion euro fine in the AdSense case has yet to be decided.

company appealed the decision to the courts. But the EU General Court, the tribunal's lower section, rejected its challenge in 2021 and the Court of Justice's adviser later recommended rejecting the appeal.

Those three cases foreshadowed expanded efforts by regulators worldwide to crack down on the tech industry. The EU has since opened more investigations into Big Tech companies and drafted new laws to clean up social media platforms

and regulate artificial intelligence.

Google is facing particular pressure over its digital advertising business. In a federal antitrust trial set to begin Monday, the US Department of Justice alleges the company holds a monopoly in the "ad tech" industry. British competition regulators accused Google last week of abusing its dominance in "ad tech" while the EU is carrying out its own investigation. -AP

JSW Infra to expand capacity in Maharashtra

By Correspondent

Mumbai: JSW Infrastructure will expand its capacity at Dharamtar port in Raigad district and Jaigad port in Ratnagiri district on the west coast of Maharashtra by 21 million tons per annum and 15 million tons per annum, respectively, the company said in its filing with the stock exchanges.

The expansion will take the total capacity of the two ports at Dharamtar and Jaigad to 55 million tons per annum and 70 million tons per annum.

JSW is India's second largest private port operator and it will incur a capital expenditure of Rs 2,359 crore at both the ports.

The Dharamtar port expansion primarily aims to cater to the increased cargo volume of the anchor customer on the back of the proposed 5 million tons per annum steel-making facility at Dolvi near Dharamtar.

The expansion plan includes mechanical, civil, and electrical work for the new berths and additional infrastructure, such as railway siding for Jaigarh Port, to boost third-party cargo movement. The expansion at both ports is expected to generate an additional cargo handling volume of approximately 27 million tons per annum and the construction at both ports is anticipated to be completed by March 2027, the company said.

JSW Infra currently operates 10 ports located on the west and east coasts of India and its international presence includes a Liquid tank storage terminal of 4,65,000 cubic meters in Fujairah, UAE.



Union Minister of Heavy Industries H. D. Kumaraswamy drives an electric vehicle during the 2nd edition of the SIAM India Green Plate EV Rally at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Monday. Pic: PTI

Century Textiles buys ownership of Worli land

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Century Textiles and Industries Ltd has acquired ownership rights of approximately 10-acre leasehold land parcel in Worli from Nusli Wadia for Rs 1,100 crore, as per the filing with the stock exchange.

With this transaction, the existing leasehold interest of Century Textiles is merged with the ownership rights and will be developed through its wholly owned subsidiary, Birla Estates Pvt Ltd.

Worli today is seen as a hotspot for buyers in not just South Mumbai but also beyond, reaffirming the

trend of consumers seeking a curated lifestyle in premium locations and this 10-acre land parcel adds an approximate booking value potential of Rs 14000 Cr. to the company, the filing said.

It also paves the way for a gross 30-acre contiguous landholding in this prime area, with an overall booking value potential of approximately Rs 28000 Cr. This includes Birla Niyaara, the flagship project of Birla Estates, launched a few years ago, which achieved great success and is one of the fastest selling Uber luxury projects in MMR, with cumulative sales of over Rs 5700 Cr. since its launch. With a 125-year

legacy that started as a single-unit textile entity in 1897, Century Textiles and Industries Ltd, is part of Aditya Birla Group, the diverse conglomerate with presence in Real Estate and Pulp and Paper sectors while Birla Estates Private Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Century Textiles and Industries Limited is real estate venture of the Aditya Birla Group.

Last week, Birla Estates completed the acquisition of a 30.8 acre land parcel in Kalwa near Thane from its group company Hindalco Industries for an undisclosed amount with mixed-used development potential of 5.4 million square feet.

Adani Airports launches 'aviio'

New Delhi: Adani Airports Holdings Ltd, the Adani group firm that operates seven airports in the country, has launched 'aviio' digital platform to provide passengers real-time data on variety of airport accesses - from wait times to gate change and bags on belt.

Aviio aspires to bring the aviation community together to collaborate and serve passengers better, a top official said. By enabling airport stakeholders to access real-time data, passengers can expect easier access to airport information in the form of updates related to security checks, wait times, gate change and bags on belt, among other aspects, he said. -PTI

Congress targets Adani over China investments

New Delhi: With the Adani Group floating a China subsidiary for providing project management services, the Congress on Tuesday alleged the risk is now that the conglomerate's investments in China will add national security and territorial sovereignty to the growing list of sacrifices that India has made at the altar of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "special friendships".

Congress General Secretary In-Charge Communications Jairam Ramesh also alleged that "the non-biological PM's clean chit to China on June 19, 2020" was one of the most damaging statements ever made by an Indian prime minister.

"It was a flat-out lie that eroded the sanctity of the position, and it enabled the Chinese to deny the reality of their infringement on and continued occupation of Indian territory," Ramesh said in a statement.

Since then, it has also underpinned the government's inattention to the risks of uncontrolled Chinese imports, investments, and immigration, he said.

With the Adani Group planning to invest in China,

● The Adani Group's previous operations in China and East Asia have been highly suspicious. Chang Chung-Ling, a Taiwanese businessman, has served as director on several Adani Group firms. In 2017, a ship owned by Chung-Ling's family was caught smuggling oil to North Korea in a violation of UN sanctions - it emerged that the smuggling ship's operation were partly financed by a firm owned by Shanghai Adani Shopping Company.

● This Shanghai Adani Shipping Company has done business with Adani Global and the Chung-Ling owned Hi Lingos, alongside another firm called Adani Shipping (China) Company. None of these firms which appear to be implicated in globally illegal activities - have been acknowledged as Adani subsidiaries so far.

it appears that the clean chit to China is all set to become a "letter of support", the Congress leader said.



Apple CEO Tim Cook talks on the stage during an announcement of new products at Apple headquarters in Cupertino, Calif on Monday. Pic:AP/PTI

No funding issue for semicon projects, Meity Secretary

New Delhi: The government has committed about Rs 62,000 crore in incentives for electronic plants and there is no issue in funding semiconductor projects, Electronics and IT Secretary S Krishnan has said.

He told PTI that out of Rs 76,000 crore approved earlier, the government still has scope to accommodate small projects and will approach authorities when there are new projects in place.

Roy demands calling SEBI chief, Dubey objects

New Delhi: Trinamool Congress leader Saugata Roy on Tuesday demanded calling SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch, who faced allegations of conflict of interest, before the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee, sources said.

At a meeting convened to take up the performance audit of Jal Jeevan Mission, Roy said Buch should depose before the panel. BJP leader Nishikant Dubey, however, objected to the demand saying it was against rules, the sources said. Quoting Dubey in the

meeting, the sources said CAG principal auditor cannot audit Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) without the mandate of the central government, hence the PAC too cannot summon officials of regulators without evidence of "flaws" in finances provided by the government. Dubey is learnt to have said that the PAC being the oldest parliamentary panel has its sets of defined rules and if a suo motu cognisance has to be taken, it has to be substantiated with evidence. -PTI

Indian companies move ahead on EV space

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Indian companies Mahindra & Mahindra and Greaves Electric Mobility have moved up the ladder in the electric vehicle space, as per the separate corporate filing by the two companies with the stock exchanges.

To begin with, Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) will launch its commercial four-wheeler electric vehicle next month on October 3 that will be called 'eZeo'.

Expect EV market to touch 1 cr units: Gadkari

India's electric vehicles market is expected to grow to one crore units annual sales mark by 2030 creating 5 crore jobs, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Tuesday. Addressing the annual

The name 'e-ZEO', stands for "Zero Emission Option", to electrify the last-mile transportation and will be a compelling EV option in the ICE (internal combustion

engine)-dominated SCV (small commercial vehicle) category.

convention of Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) Gadkari, the Minister for Road Transport and Highways, also expressed hope that India will become the number one

automotive manufacturing hub in the world in future. "India's EV market is expected to grow to one crore annual sales by 2030 and create five crore jobs," he said.

The 'e-ZEO' comes with an efficient high-voltage architecture that gives supe-

rior energy efficiency, higher range and faster charging times. Commenting on the rationale behind the name, Suman Mishra, MD & CEO

30 lakh	No of electric vehicles registered in India
56 per cent	Percentage of electric two-wheelers in total sales
45 per cent	Increase in sales of EV in 2023-24

of Mahindra Last Mile Mobility, a subsidiary of M&M, said "This name resonates deeply with our purpose and aligns with global efforts to accelerate EV adoption, particularly in the sub-two-tonne category."

Meanwhile, Greaves Electric Mobility Private Limited (GEMPL), the emobility business of Greaves Cotton Limited has received approval for the registration of its two-wheeler models—Nexus, Primus, Magnus, and Zeal—under the EMPS (electric mobility promotion scheme), making the company eligible for the Government of India's EV demand incentive scheme.

BSE SENSEX		TOP GAINERS	
%	POINTS	%	POINTS
+2.15	HCL Tech 1783.35	+1.81	Bajaj Finserv 1825.30
+2.10	Bharti Airtel 1575.00	-1.45	Bajaj Finance 7240.10
+1.78	Tech Mahindra 1608.15	-0.81	Hindustan Unilever 2898.50
+1.73	NTPC 396.70	-0.68	M&M 2692.10
+1.72	Power Grid 334.20	-0.30	Tata Motors 1035.45
+1.40	Axis Bank 1187.00	-0.22	SBIN 782.60
+1.21	TCS 4506.90	-0.10	Reliance 2923.00
+1.19	Titan 3727.95	-0.05	ICICI Bank 1237.20
+1.16	Adani Ports 1452.50		
+0.96	Infosys 1912.90		

BSE SENSEX		TOP LOSERS	
%	POINTS	%	POINTS
-1.81	Bajaj Finserv 1825.30		
-1.45	Bajaj Finance 7240.10		
-0.81	Hindustan Unilever 2898.50		
-0.68	M&M 2692.10		
-0.30	Tata Motors 1035.45		
-0.22	SBIN 782.60		
-0.10	Reliance 2923.00		
-0.05	ICICI Bank 1237.20		

AI Express to phase out biz class

New Delhi: Air India Express, which is set to complete the merger of AIX Connect with itself next month, will phase out business class seats in its aircraft in 2025, according to a senior airline official.

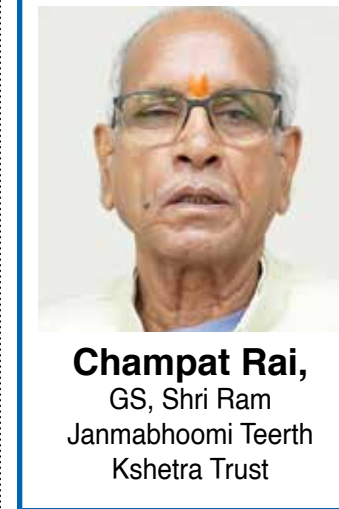
Currently, the carrier, part of Tata Group, has a fleet of 85 aircraft -- 25 A320 family planes and 60 Boeing 737s. By year-end, the total number is expected to be around 100.

The airline has 34 white tail Boeing 737-8 aircraft and out of them, 29 have business class seats of varying numbers. Their count will rise to 50 by the end of this year. Generally, white tail planes are those that were originally manufactured for a particular airline and later taken by another airline.

The airline official told PTI that aircraft with the business class seats will be phased out by reconfiguring them next year as business class does not fit into the Air India Express model. These white tail aircraft have varying number of business class seats, the official added. In the existing fleet of Air India Express, there are 20 A320s, 5 A320 neos, 26 B737-NGs and 34 B737-8 planes.

At present, the airline offers economy and business class seats. The global aviation industry continues to grapple with supply chain woes that have also resulted in instances of delayed aircraft deliveries and shortage of planes amid rising air traffic demand post the coronavirus pandemic.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



My estimate is that the government will get around Rs 400 crore as GST from the Ram temple construction work. A total of 18 temples will be built in the complex being developed on 70 acres. It will include temples of Maharishi Valmiki, Shabri and Tulsidas. We will pay 100 per cent tax. Not a rupee in tax will be reduced.

Sandip Ghosh, three sent to judicial custody

Kolkata: Former principal of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital Sandip Ghosh was on Tuesday sent to judicial custody till September 23 by a special CBI court in a financial irregularities case.

The court also sent his security personnel Afsar Ali and two alleged associates – medical equipment vendor Biplab Singha and pharmacy shop owner Suman Hazara – to judicial custody till September 23.

Although the accused were previously remanded to CBI custody for eight days leaving the probe agency with the option to pray for another six days of maximum remand, the investigators made no such petition before the court.

“The CBI has already secured large amounts of digital evidence on the alleged crime. We need time to analyse that evidence. We do not need the accused in police custody immediately. But we may seek their custody again later, if required,” the agency counsel submitted in court.

Chaotic scenes were witnessed at the Alipore Court premises where Ghosh and others were produced, when lawyers, mostly women, demonstrated against the former RG Kar principal and tried to block the



courtroom exit when he was being escorted out by security personnel.

Even the judge's appeals to refrain from agitation fell on deaf ears.

The police summoned central paramilitary jawans to gain control over the situation.

While the protestors shouted ‘chor chor’ (thief, thief) at Ghosh, one person was seen hurling a slipper at the accused ex-principal and banging the prison van with it after the suspects were made to board the vehicle headed for the Presidency Correctional Home.

The lawyers alleged that “special treatment” was being offered to the accused by allowing them to use the courtroom exit used by the judges.

The agitating lawyers were heard raising ‘We want Justice’ slogans and chorused that the “blood of the victim won't go in vain”. They even demanded that the accused “be hanged” for “abetting the

gruesome rape and murder of the victim”.

Earlier, the court rejected the CBI's application for a hearing on virtual mode and producing all four accused from the agency's Nizam Palace office, where they were being held, in apprehension of violence at court premises.

The court directed that the accused will have to be produced before the judge in person and set a 3 pm deadline for it.

The agency's anticipation of security concerns of the accused was based on the chaos at the court premises during Ghosh's previous production on September 3 where he was slapped from behind by an agitator.

Ghosh and the others were arrested by the CBI on charges of financial irregularities on September 2 amid protests over the rape and murder of the trainee doctor at the RG Kar MCH on August 9.

15 convicted in conversion case

Lucknow: A special Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) court of the Uttar Pradesh Police on Tuesday convicted Umar Gautam and 15 others in connection with an illegal religious conversion case of 2021.

The court, while sending all the convicts to jail, summoned them on Wednesday to hear arguments on the quantum of sentence to be awarded to them, according to the order.

Mohammad Umar Gautam along with Mufti Qazi Jahangir Alam Qasmi were held from Delhi's Jamia Nagar on June 20, 2021, according to UP police.

They were allegedly running an outfit involved in converting students with hearing disabilities and poor people to Islam in Uttar Pradesh with suspected funding from Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI, they said.

-PTI



National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah's sons Zamir Abdullah and Zahir Abdullah during an election campaign in support of party candidate Ajay Kumar Sadhotra ahead of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections in Jammu on Wednesday.

Pic: PTI

Interim bail to Engineer Rashid

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Tuesday granted interim bail till October 2 to Lok Sabha MP from Kashmir Engineer Rashid in a terror funding case to enable him to campaign in the upcoming state assembly elections.

Sheikh Abdul Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, defeated former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls in Baramulla.

Elections are scheduled to be held for the 90-member legislative assembly of the union territory in three phases from September 18

to October 1. The results will be declared on October 8.

Additional Sessions Judge Chander Jit Singh granted the relief to Rashid on a personal bond of Rs 2 lakh and one surety of the like amount. “I am granting interim bail till October 2. He will have to surrender on October 3,” the judge said. The judge also imposed various conditions on him including that he shall not influence the witnesses or the probe.

Rashid has been in jail since 2019 after he was arrested by the NIA.

BJP not synonym with country

New Delhi: The Congress on Tuesday hit back at the BJP over its criticism of Rahul Gandhi's remarks in the US, saying the ruling party should not treat itself as being synonymous with the country.

The principal opposition party in the Lok Sabha also said it would keep criticising the policies of the government.

Responding to the BJP criticism, Congress general secretary, in-charge organisation, K.C. Venugopal said the BJP ecosystem is “nervous and flailing” because Gandhi has spoken the plain truth.

-PTI

Rahul trying to set dangerous narrative: BJP

New Delhi: The BJP came down heavily on Rahul Gandhi over his remarks in the US about the Sikh community, saying the Congress leader is trying to create a “dangerous narrative” by speaking on “sensitive issues” abroad.

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri told a press conference at the BJP headquarters here that Gandhi's remarks were “sinister” in nature as he tried to spread falsehood among the members of the Sikh community living abroad to “eke out a living” and do not have much connection with India.

With his remarks, the

Congress leader has attacked the country, its legal system and electoral system, he said. “I condemn in the strongest terms the statement he has made about Sikhs not being able to wear turbans and kadas,” the BJP leader from the Sikh community said.

Referring to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots that happened during the Congress' rule, Puri said, “If there has been one time in our history when as a community we have felt anxiety, a sense of insecurity and existential threat, it has been the times when Rahul Gandhi's family has been in the seats of power.”

-PTI



CBI Director Praveen Sood (R) and Director General of CISF Rajwinder Singh Bhatti during the 1st foundation day celebration of 'Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre' (I4C), in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Pic: PTI

Caught in crossfire, woman killed

Imphal: A 46-year-old woman was killed after getting caught in a clash between two armed groups in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident happened in the remote Thangbuh village on Sunday night, they said. A few houses in the village were also torched, forcing the locals to flee to nearby forests, they added. The deceased woman was identified as Nemjakhol Lungdim. Her body was handed over to her family after a post-mortem examination at the Churachandpur district hospital, police said.

A significant number of powerful bombs were discharged during the clash between the two sides.

PIL seeks autonomous body to regulate OTT

New Delhi: A PIL was filed on Tuesday in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Centre to set up an autonomous body to “monitor and filter” content and regulate videos on over-the-top (OTT) and other platforms in India.

The PIL also referred to Netflix series IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack to highlight the need for such a regulatory mechanism as the OTT platform claimed it was based on real-life incidents.

“However, (what) the series have shown is a vile attempt to rewrite history, downplay the terror inflicted by the actual hijackers, and subtly glorify their actions...by reducing the tragedy of IC 814 to a farcical narrative, the series tried to promote the insidious

agenda that seeks to whitewash the brutality of terrorism and vilify the Hindu community,” said the plea filed by lawyer Shashank Shekhar Jha and Apurva Arhatia.

It said there exists a statutory film certification body- Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)-tasked with regulating public exhibition of films under the Cinematograph Act. The cinematograph law outlines a strict certification process for commercial films shown in public venues, it said.

The petitioners who have made the ministries of Information and Broadcasting, Health and Family Welfare, Women and Child Development, Defence and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India parties

and members of academia.

The OTT and other digital media platforms have given a way out for filmmakers and artists to release content without being worried about getting clearance certificates for films and web series from the censor board, it said.

“The Union of India and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) introduced IT Rules 2021 to self-regulate OTT platforms, however the same has been inefficient. These unregulated portals are putting everything without any moderation and common people in India are watching the same at the comfort of their houses which could ultimately lead to various problems in the coming future,” it said.

The petition said such a board must be headed by a secretary-level IAS officer and shall have members from varied fields including the film industry, cinematography, media, defence forces, the legal profession

40
- No of OTT and video streaming platforms

to the plea, urged the top court to direct the Centre “to constitute an autonomous body/board namely ‘Central Board for Regulation and Monitoring of Online Video Contents’ to monitor and filter the contents and regulate the videos on various platforms for viewers in India”.

The petition said such a board must be headed by a secretary-level IAS officer and shall have members from varied fields including the film industry, cinematography, media, defence forces, the legal profession

Mpox patient at LNJP hospital stable

New Delhi: The mpox patient admitted at LNJP Hospital here is in a stable condition, Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said on Tuesday.

Bharadwaj conducted a surprise inspection of the hospital to assess preparations for dealing with mpox and dengue.

“There is one confirmed patient of mpox at LNJP hospital. He has a travel

history and it's believed that he got infected during his travel abroad,” the minister said.

“The patient has been isolated in a separate ward. He is in a stable condition,” he added. The 26-year-old patient, a resident of Haryana's Hisar, has only genital ulcers and skin rashes but no fever, a health department official said.

Bharadwaj emphasised

that there was no need to panic over mpox, as it spreads through contact, not through the air.

The Union Health Ministry on Monday said that it was an “isolated case” and there was no immediate risk to public. “The individual, a young male who recently travelled from a country experiencing ongoing mpox transmission, is currently isolated at a des-

ignated tertiary care isolation facility. The patient remains clinically stable and is without any systemic illness or comorbidities,” the ministry had said.

The patient was admitted at the Delhi government-run LNJP Hospital on Saturday. The World Health Organisation (WHO) last month declared mpox a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

No internet in five Manipur districts

Imphal: The Manipur government on Tuesday issued an amended order, stating that the suspension of internet services in the wake of intensified agitation by students applies only to the state's five valley districts. Earlier, the government had issued a notification for suspension of internet in entire state.

Kedarnath death toll climbs to five

Rudraprayag(U'khand): Bodies of four more pilgrims were recovered on Tuesday from the debris of a landslide that occurred on Monday evening on the Kedarnath route, taking the toll in the incident to five, officials said.

More pilgrims could be trapped under the debris, Rudraprayag Police said on Tuesday.

A group of pilgrims returning from a visit to Kedarnath were trapped in the landslide at around 7.20 pm on Monday.

SDRF and NDRF personnel had launched a rescue operation immediately and retrieved one body of a pilgrim identified as Gopal (50) from Dhar in Madhya Pradesh besides rescuing three others who

were rushed to Sonprayag in an ambulance.

The rescue operation had to be suspended due to bad weather and boulders still falling from the hillside intermittently on Monday night.

As rescue efforts were resumed on Tuesday morning, bodies of four more pilgrims, including three women, were pulled out of the debris.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Mallikarjun Kharge, President, Congress

You (Sushilkumar Shinde) are 82-83 only. Look at Morarji Desai. I believe no one should retire in politics. Those who have faith in their ideology, want to serve the nation, want to serve their community, then you have to work till your last breath and awaken the people of your country.

Hema Committee Report

Kerala HC slams Left govt for inaction

Kochi: The Kerala High Court on Tuesday pulled up the Left government in the state saying its inaction on the Justice Hema Committee report was “alarming.”

A special division bench of Justices A K Jayasankaran Nambiar and CS Sudha said the government got the report years ago and ought to have immediately responded and directed that the full report be handed over to

the Special Investigation Team (SIT) to take requisite action.

It also asked why the state was silent for so long. The bench said women are more in number in Kerala and asked what the state was doing about the problems being faced by them in society.

It said the government took action only more than four years after it got the report.

23
- No of cases lodged based on the complaints by female actors

It directed the government to hand over the full report of the committee to the SIT constituted to look into the complaints of sexual harassment and assaults by female actors

against some of their male counterparts and others in the film industry.

The bench said the SIT can take action based on the report and the court will examine on the next date what steps have been taken by the special team.

At the same time, the court also said that the SIT should not act in haste and that the details of the victims and the accused should not be disclosed.

The court also refused to issue any gag order, but said that the media should restrain itself and directed the police not to disclose unnecessary details of the cases they are investigating. The court also said that there should be comprehensive legislation on the issue and directed the government to file an affidavit, indicating steps taken by it, before the next date of hearing on October 3.

Wrong sighting reports, crowds hampering 'Operation Bhediya'

Bahraich: Incorrect reports of wolf sighting and crowds gathering at search sites are denting the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department's efforts in Bahraich's Mahasi tehsil to capture or neutralise a pack that has killed eight people and injured more than 20 since mid-July.

To track the movement of the pack that has struck fear in more than 50 villages in the tehsil, the department has deployed 165 forest personnel and 18 shooters. Aiding their search are thermal camera-equipped drones and snap cameras in forests.

Four wolves have been captured under "Operation Bhediya", said officials but rued incorrect sighting reports have led to difficulties in launching immediate searches. The size of the pack remains elusive but they say that two remain to be caught.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Ajit Pratap Singh said sometimes "we receive reports of wolves being sighted in 10-15 different places, and at other times, there could have been none (in an area)". "This causes undue pressure for immediate searches. However, our decisions are made based on our discretion," he said.

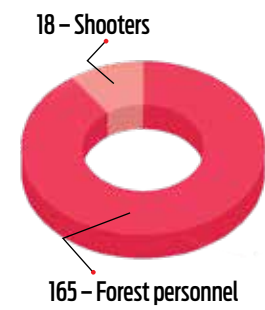
Singh said from a



The fifth man-eater wolf was captured near Ghaghra river close to Harabnspur village, Divisional Forest Officer Ajit Pratap Singh told PTI.

distance one can confuse a hyena for a wolf. Their behaviour is different as a wolf will flee upon hearing a drone, while a hyena remain unaffected.

Recently a wolf was traced but it managed to flee before the search team could close the perimeter, possibly because it heard a drone, the DFO said. Besides incorrect reports, Singh said, "whenever we conduct a search operation based on pugmarks, public curiosity disrupts our efforts. Crowds cause interference, increasing the chances of the animals



escaping."

"Over the past two to three days, the troublesome wolves have not been located by either drones or snap cameras," he said.

With searches underway, teams are putting up

posters and banners in villages and organising meetings to educate locals on how to stay safe from wolves, including keeping doors closed and not sleeping outside. Singh said to prevent the entry of a wolf into a village, firecrackers are being burst to scare it.

District Magistrate Monika Rani said necessary arrangements have been made by the district administration in the affected areas of Mahasi. A fifth wolf was captured on Tuesday as part of the 'Operation

“Eight people have died and 20 have been injured in wolf attacks. Out of six wolves sighted, we have captured four, but no wolf has been apprehended since the last capture on August 29. Night shelters have been established in panchayat buildings and schools for those without accommodation. Doors have been installed in 120 houses, and over 300 more houses have been identified for door installation. Solar lights have been installed in some areas, with work ongoing in others.”

-Renu Singh, Chief Conservator of Forests

Bhediya' campaign that has been ongoing in in Bahraich's Mahasi tehsil to catch a pack of six wolves that have killed eight people and injured more than 20 since mid-July, officials said here.

-PTI

Annual census of monsoon birds begins

Kendrapara (Odisha): The Bhitarkanika National Park authorities, on Monday, began the annual census of monsoon birds, which through the wetland sites for nesting in large numbers every year.

Four teams comprising ornithologists and wildlife personnel of the park are on the job to conduct the headcount of the avian species, park officials said.

As the spell of rain was not uniform, their arrival was delayed this time. Still, an impressive congregation of monsoon birds was spotted along the mangrove covers of the park, they said.

The enumerators would cover all the major congregation zones inside and outside the national park for five days.

Besides the core area of the national park, peripheral wetland sites like Satabhaya and Barunei are also being taken up for the census programme.

Lack of human interference, ideal climatic conditions, cool breeze and the river system here have emerged to the liking of these delicate chirpy-winged species.

Over a dozen types of local residential birds congregate at the heronries in and around the national park for nesting and breeding every year.

The species are open bill stork, little cormorant, intermediary egret, large egret, little egret, purple heron, grey heron, night heron, darter, white ibis and cattle egret, the forest officials said.

-PTI

Wangchuk urges PM act on Ladakh's demands

New Delhi: Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday to include Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, granting law-making powers to local people to protect their land and cultural identity.

On September 1, Wangchuk and around 75 volunteers embarked on a foot march from Leh to New Delhi to request the Centre to resume dialogue with Ladakh's leadership regarding their demands.

At a virtual press conference, Wangchuk said he has not received a response to the memorandum of demands submitted to the prime minister during the latter's visit to Dras for the 25th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas in July.

Wangchuk also said the creation of five additional districts in Ladakh could be "indirectly linked" to their protest.

"However, we still do not know if these districts have been granted decision-making powers," he said, adding that it would be unfortunate if that is not the case. "Ladakh is an ecologically-fragile region facing industrial and climate-related challenges. I urge the prime minister to include it in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to safeguard the autonomy of its people," Wangchuk said.

He said through the march, he aimed at drawing the attention of world leaders and the global community to the severe impacts of climate change in the region.

The noted engineer had earlier told PTI that land in Ladakh is being allocated for solar-power projects without the consent of the LAHDCs.

With around 320 clear sunny days a year and an average daily global solar radiation of 2022 kWh/m sq./annum, Ladakh is a solar-power generation hotspot in the country. The cold desert also has the potential to generate 35 GW from solar energy and 100 GW from wind energy.

The government has already approved a 13-GW renewable-energy project, with a 7.5-GW solar park, in Ladakh.

Responding to a question from PTI, Wangchuk said the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) of Leh and Kargil have only been granted authority to spend development funds. "The people of Ladakh want law-making powers too," he added. Wangchuk acknowledged that a single march would not resolve the issue. "We want the Centre to resume discussions on the demands of the Ladakhi people," he said. Wangchuk said he has no intention of joining politics and that the march is unrelated to the upcoming Assembly elections in several states.

In fact, "we are considering avoiding Haryana, which is about to hold elections," he said.

-PTI

Special committee on Himalayan conservation

Dehradun: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has said a special committee on the conservation of the Himalayas will be formed in Uttarakhand.

To be constituted under the convensorship of Uttarakhand State Council for Science and Technology (UCOST) Director Durgesh Pant, the committee will address concerns related to Himalayan conservation, Dhami said at an event here on the occasion of Himalaya Diwas.

Climate change and global warming pose a threat to the Himalayan ecology and a collective effort is needed to conserve the Himalayas, he said.

"We need to understand the importance of the Himalayas in a new way. The government is continuously working towards the revival of water sources and rivers. The Spring and River Rejuvenation Authority has been formed in the state for the purpose. The Himalayas are our invaluable heritage, which needs to be saved," the chief minister said.

He said Uttarakhand is

“Uttarakhand's own population is 1.25 crore but it has to make arrangements for an additional 10 crore visitors every year. A request has been made in the meeting of NITI Aayog to make plans keeping in mind the floating population coming to the state.”

-Pushkar Dhami, Chief Minister

the first state to introduce Gross Environment Product index which assigns monetary value to natural resources like air, water, forest, and soil.

"Development work is being done in the state by maintaining a balance between ecology and economy. The government is continuously working in the field of plantation, water conservation and environmental protection," he said. -PTI

NGT seeks response on Ganga Mission

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has sought a response from the National Mission for Clean Ganga and others in a matter regarding the alleged tardiness of river-cleaning projects being executed in various states.

The green body was hearing a matter where it had taken suo motu (on its own) cognisance of a newspaper report claiming the slow pace of the project expenditures.

In a recent order, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and expert member Afroz Ahmad noted that according to the report, around Rs 37,550 crore was sanctioned under various Namami Gange projects but only Rs 18,033 crore had been spent till June 2024.

It also said that the director general of the NMCG had allegedly observed that the pace of expenditure so far was extremely slow.

"The news item raises substantial issues relating to compliance of environmental norms," the tribunal said. -PTI



An idol of Ganpati with a scene of Varanasi Ganga ghats created by artist Franklin Paul during Ganesh Utsav in Mumbai on Monday. Pic: PTI/ Kunal Patil

Need Rs 30 lakh cr for renewables by 2030

Gandhinagar: Union New & Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday said as much as Rs 30 lakh crore is required to meet the target of 500 GW by 2030.

He also announced that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 4th RE-INVEST 2024, a global summit for renewables. The fourth

edition of the Global Renewable Energy Investors Meet & Expo (RE-INVEST) 2024 is scheduled from September 16 to 18 at Mahatma Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre in Gandhinagar, Joshi told reporters in a curtain raiser press conference here.

He said that India requires Rs 30 lakh crore

investment to meet the ambitious target of having 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030.

"We thought that Gujarat is the right place to organise the conference to achieve the 500 GW renewable energy target by 2030," he said, citing the example of Vibrant Gujarat. He also informed that India presently has 203GW of

renewable energy capacity. The minister stated that there will be a session on startups.

The 4th edition of RE-INVEST will explore the future of renewable energy by delving into key trends, emerging technologies, and policy frameworks that are shaping the global renewable energy landscape. -PTI

Worst drought in Brazil; Amazon falls to record low

Brasilia: Brazil is enduring its worst drought since nationwide measurements began over seven decades ago, with 59 per cent of the country under stress — an area roughly half the size of the U.S.

Major Amazon basin rivers are registering historic lows, and uncontrolled manmade wildfires have ravaged protected areas and spread smoke over a vast expanse, plummeting air quality.

"This is the first time that a drought has covered

all the way from the North to the country's Southeast," Ana Paula Cunha, a researcher at the National Center for Monitoring and Early Warning of Natural Disasters, said in a statement Thursday. "It is the most intense and widespread drought in history."

Smoke on Monday afternoon caused Sao Paulo, a metropolitan area of 21 million people, to breathe the second most polluted air in the world after Lahore, Pakistan, according to data gathered

by IQAir, a Swiss air technology company.

About 1,100 kilometers (683 miles) to the north, a wildfire is sweeping through Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, one of Brazil's most famous tourism sites.

"This year, the dry season started much earlier than in previous years, whereas the rain season was intense yet short," Nayara Stacheski, head of the park, told The Associated Press. "The wind is strong, the air humidity is very low and

it's extremely hot. All this worsens the wildfire."

On Monday, there was one uncontrolled wildfire in a remote area. A helicopter was expected to arrive to transport firefighters. Another fire was controlled by 80 firefighters, with support from two aircraft. Two other fires were threatening to enter the park. The blazes in one of the few protected areas of Cerrado, the Brazilian savanna, are just the latest drama in the country beset by months of blazes. -AP

“This used to be the Amazon River. Now it's a desert. If things get worse, our people will disappear. Now we are realizing the severity of climate change.”

-Myrian Tikuna, Local Leader



Low river levels have stranded dozens of communities only accessible by water. One of the largest is Fidadelfia, inhabited by 387 families of the Tikuna tribe. Due to the drought, there is shortage of potable water and children are drinking dirty water, leading to a surge in illnesses. Food is becoming scarce as crops die and it's increasingly difficult to travel to the city, local leader Myrian Tikuna told the

Fire is not the only problem. More than 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) from Chapada dos Veadeiros to the Northeast, the Amazon — the world's most voluminous river — and one of its main tributaries, the Madeira River, have registered new daily record lows at the city of Tabatinga. There's no end sight — significant rain is not expected until October.

Will think of scrapping reservation when India is a fair place

By Lalit K Jha

Washington: The Congress Party will think of scrapping reservations when India is a fair place, which is not the case right now, Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition has said.

Gandhi made these remarks while talking to students at the prestigious Georgetown University.

"We will think of scrapping reservations when India is a fair place. And India is not a fair place," Gandhi told students at the university here in response to a question on reservation and how long it would continue.

"The problem is that 90 per cent of India is not able to play. Go through the list of every single business leader in India. I have done it. Show me the tribal name. Show me the Dalit name. Show me the OBC name. Out of the top 200, I think there is one OBC. They are 50 per cent of India. But we are not treating the symptom," he said.

"That's the problem. Now, it (reservation) is not the only tool. There are other tools," he said.

When asked about the Uniform Civil Code, Gandhi said he would comment on it only after he knows what is BJP's proposal.

"BJP is proposing a uniform civil code. We haven't seen it. We have no idea what they're talking about. For us to comment on it doesn't make sense. When they pull it out, then we'll have a look



“What the RSS is basically saying is that certain states are inferior to other states. Certain languages are inferior to other languages. Certain religions are inferior to other religions. Certain communities are inferior to other communities. This is what the fight is about. That is the ideology of the RSS. Tamil, Marathi, Bengali, Manipuri. These are all inferior languages.”

“When you look at the financial numbers, then tribals get 10 paise out of 100 rupees; Dalits get Rs 5 out of Rs 100, and OBCs get a similar number. The fact of the matter is that they are not getting participation.”

“There are many people who come from the upper caste who say, look, what have we done wrong? Why are we being punished? So, then you think about increasing dramatically the supply of some of these things. You think about decentralising power. You think about involving many more people in the governance of our country. You think of opening up. With all due respect, I don't think any of you are ever going to become Adani or Ambani. There's a reason for that. You can't. Because those doors are closed. So the answer to people in the general cast is you open those doors.”

and we'll comment on it," he said.

Gandhi also said members of the INDIA coalition had differences but agreed on a lot of things. "We agree that the Constitution of India should

be defended. Most of us agree on the idea of the caste census. We agree that two businesspeople, namely Adani and Ambani, shouldn't run every single business in India. So, for you to say that we

don't agree, I think, is inaccurate," he said.

"Second thing is that all coalitions... A certain amount of to and fro will always take place. That is perfectly natural. -PTI

Over 140 Ukrainian drones target Russian regions

Moscow: Over 140 Ukrainian drones overnight targeted multiple Russian regions, including the capital Moscow and the surrounding areas, Russian officials reported Tuesday, in one of the biggest Ukrainian drone attacks on Russian soil in the 2 1/2-year war.

In the town of Ramenskoye just outside Moscow, drones hit two multistory residential buildings and started fires, Moscow region Gov. Andrei Vorobyov said. A woman was killed and three more people sustained injuries. Five residential buildings near one of those damaged have been evacuated as emergency services were handling drone debris, Vorobyov said.

The attack also prompted the authorities to temporarily shut down three airports just outside Moscow — Vnukovo, Domodedovo and Zhukovskoy. A total of 48 flights were diverted to other airports, according to Russia's civil aviation authority Rosaviatsia.

In Moscow, drone debris fell on a private house on the outskirts of the city, but no one was hurt, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said. He counted over a dozen drones heading toward Moscow that were shot down by air defences as they were approaching the city. Overall, Russia's Defence Ministry said it "intercepted and destroyed" 144 Ukrainian drones over nine Russian regions, including those on the border with Ukraine and those deeper inside Russia.

It is the second massive Ukrainian drone attack on Russia this month. On September 1, the Russian military said it intercepted 158 Ukrainian drones over a dozen Russian regions in what Russian media described as the biggest Ukrainian drone barrage since the start of the war. -AP

Shashi Tharoor highlights India's growing global influence

By Seema Hakhu Kachru

Houston: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor emphasised India's importance as a global economic and political power during a conversation here at Rice University's Baker Institute.

"India matters," Tharoor said, stressing that "what happens in India affects a sixth of humanity".

The Thiruvananthapuram Member of Parliament explained that India, now the third-largest economy in purchasing power parity, can no longer be ignored or underestimated on the world stage.

Delivering a compelling talk on India's global influence, moderated by David Satterfield, the institute's director and former US ambassador to Lebanon and Türkiye, Tharoor highlighted how India's rise as the world's most populous nation and fastest-growing major economy positions it as a significant player in world affairs.

Tharoor, who was visiting Houston as a prominent author and speaker at the seventh edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival from September 6-8, also addressed the geopolitical challenges faced by India, particularly its relations with China, Pakistan, and the US.

He noted India's delicate balancing act in these complex relationships while asserting the country's growing role in shaping the future of the region. The discussion explored India's technological advancements, with Satterfield noting the country's



“India is a key player on the world stage and the choices it makes today will have a lasting impact on the world.”

rapid growth in this sector.

Tharoor acknowledged the increasing influence of India's tech industry, which is driving innovation and economic development, making the country a key player in global trade.

Domestic issues were also a key focus of the conversation, with Tharoor touching on India's energy challenges and its ambitious goals for renewable energy. He also spoke about the country's infrastructure development needs, acknowledging the gaps while expressing optimism about future improvements.

Tharoor further discussed the rise of Hindu nationalism and its impact on India's social and political landscape, noting that it poses new challenges to the country's long-standing democratic fabric.

Afghanistan's Norway embassy closing this week

Islamabad: Afghanistan's Norway embassy is closing, the country's second diplomatic mission to announce closure this week.

The move comes months after the Taliban said they no longer recognise diplomatic missions set up by the former, Western-backed government, including the one in Norway.

In a statement on the social media platform X, the embassy announced the closure would take place on Thursday.

"The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, like many other political and consular missions of Afghanistan, will continue its activities with the values of human rights, pluralism and peace, despite the many difficulties and limited resources," the embassy statement said. The embassy premises would be handed over to Norway's Foreign Ministry, according to the statement in Dari.

The UK government said on Monday that the London embassy would close on September 27, following the dismissal of its staff by the Taliban authorities in Kabul. Britain does not recognise the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

Diplomats who served under the former Afghan government were left in limbo when the Taliban seized Kabul and returned to power in August 2021. Many embassies in Europe and beyond continued to operate, but have been accused by the Taliban in Kabul of failing to cooperate with the authorities.

The Taliban have sent ambassadors or diplomats to most countries in the region, including China and the United Arab Emirates.

The Taliban were not available for comment. -AP

Amitav Ghosh shortlisted for book prize

London: Renowned Indian author Amitav Ghosh was on Tuesday shortlisted for the British Academy Book Prize for Global Cultural Understanding 2024, a leading international non-fiction prize worth GBP 25,000 now in its 12th year.

Ghosh's 'Smoke and Ashes: Opium's Hidden Histories' is in the running along with five other international titles for the prize open to authors of any nationality based anywhere in the world and working in any language, provided that the nominated work is available in the English language.

The Kolkata-born author, who is based in the US, was hailed by the judges for his "storytelling skills to bring to life this highly readable travelogue, memoir and history".

"In 'Smoke and Ashes: Opium's Hidden Histories', Amitav Ghosh draws on decades of archival research for his Ibis Trilogy novels to trace the economic and cultural impact of the global opium trade from the 18th century to the present-day opium crisis and the Oxycontin scandal in the USA," notes a British Academy Book Prize statement. -PTI



Foreign Minister of India Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Foreign Minister of Germany Annalena Baerbock, and German Ambassador to India Philipp Ackermann speak at the Business Day of the Conference of Heads of German Missions. Pic

India, Philippines to review ties

New Delhi: India and the Philippines will carry out a comprehensive review of their defence and strategic partnership on Wednesday with a focus on ramping up military ties against the backdrop of mutual concern over China's aggressive posturing in the South China Sea.

The two sides will deliberate on various issues relating to bilateral defence ties and regional security situation at the fifth meeting of India-Philippines joint defence cooperation committee to be held in Manila, officials said.

The defence ties between the two countries have been

on a significant upswing in the last few years.

In April, India delivered the first batch of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines, in reflection of the growing military ties.

The supplies came over two years India signed a USD 375 million deal with

the Southeast Asian nation to supply the weapon systems.

While Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane will lead the Indian delegation at the talks, the Filipino team will be headed by Senior Under Secretary in the Ministry of National Defence Irineo Cruz Espino.

Kim vows to put nuclear force ready for combat with US

Seoul: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to redouble efforts to make his nuclear force fully ready for combat with the United States and its allies, state media reported Tuesday, after the country disclosed a new platform likely designed to fire more powerful intercontinental ballistic missiles targeting the mainland US.

Kim has repeatedly made similar pledges, but his latest threat comes as outside experts believe Kim will perform provocative weapons tests ahead of the US presidential election in November. In recent days, North Korea has also resumed launches of trash-carrying balloons toward South Korea.

In a speech marking the 76th founding anniversary for his government on Monday, Kim said North Korea faces "a grave threat" because of what he called "the reckless expansion" of a U.S.-led regional military bloc that is now developing into a nuclear-based one. Kim said such a development is pushing North Korea to boost its military capability, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.



Kim said North Korea will "redouble its measures and efforts to make all the armed forces of the state including the nuclear force fully ready for combat," KCNA said.

North Korea has been protesting the July signing of a new U.S.-South Korean defense guideline meant to integrate U.S. nuclear weapons and South Korean conventional weapons to cope with growing North Korean nuclear threats. North Korea said the guideline revealed its adversaries' plots to invade the country. U.S. and South Korean officials have repeatedly said they don't intend to attack the country.

Since 2022, North Korea has significantly accelerated its weapons testing activities in a bid to perfect its capabilities to launch strikes on the U.S. and South Korea.

The U.S. and South Korea have responded by expanding military drills that North Korea calls invasion rehearsals.

Many analysts believe North Korea has some last remaining technological barriers to overcome to acquire long-range nuclear missiles that can reach the U.S. mainland, though it likely already possesses missiles that can hit key targets in South Korea and Japan.

South Korean officials and experts say North Korea could conduct nuclear tests or ICBM test-launches before the U.S. election to increase its leverage in future diplomacy with the U.S. Observers say North Korea likely thinks a greater nuclear capability would help it win U.S. concessions like sanctions relief. -AP

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Kurt Campbell, Deputy Secretary of State, US

The US has invested significantly in expanding our strategic partnership with India, and we are pursuing a robust agenda to deepen cooperation for the rest of the year – not only diplomatically, but also through iCET (initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology). Our defence establishments, research institutions, private industry, and startups possess a deep bench of talent and mutual thirst for innovation.

India-funded projects to continue in Bangladesh

Dhaka: A top adviser of the interim government said Tuesday that India-funded projects are "very important" and will continue under the new administration in Bangladesh.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed also said that Dhaka looks forward to "enhanced cooperation" with New Delhi during his meeting with Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma here, the state-run BSS news agency reported.

"Already, the projects they (India) have with us are big projects, and we'll continue those, as those are not small projects and we'll take another big project for the benefits of ours..." the report quoted him as saying.

"We'll not stop on whatever we have got, and we'll talk about those projects...funding of the projects and also their implementation part," he added.

The financial adviser's remarks come amid concerns about the timely im-



plementation of projects funded under India's three lines of credit following

the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government last month after a mass uprising.

Indian envoy Verma said New Delhi has not stopped any of its line of credit projects to Bangladesh as those are major projects.

"Those projects are going on, and those are basically very big projects and located at different sites. So, the contractors will be coming back to start the projects," he was quoted as saying in the report. Ahmed thanked the In-

dian government for their continued cooperation and said, "We're looking forward to future and enhanced cooperation."

Addressing the importance of the Indian-funded projects, he said they were initiated based on Bangladesh's own needs. "While there have been some disbursement issues, we are in the process of resolving them." In the meeting the two sides also discussed ways to enhance the existing bilateral economic cooperation. -PTI

EDITORIAL

Familiar Refrain

Each time Rahul Gandhi embarks on his international tours, whether to the United States, the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, a familiar refrain emerges. The Congressman, who is Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and scion of India's Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, repeatedly seizes these opportunities to criticize Prime Minister Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). These critiques, while not unusual for a politician, often reveal more about Gandhi's own contradictions and the strategic quandaries of India's opposition than about the targets of his ire.

During his latest tour of the United States, Gandhi claimed that Modi has been "psychologically trapped" given the BJP's muted performance in the recently concluded general election. Gandhi asserted that despite the Congress party's financial challenges—highlighted by frozen bank accounts—they managed to undermine what he described as "Narendra Modi's idea of India."

At Stanford University in May 2023, he declared that India was experiencing a "full-blown assault" on its democracy, attributing this to the BJP's authoritarian tendencies and the RSS's ideological influence. The RSS, he argued, is reshaping India into a nation antithetical to its pluralistic roots. He accused the BJP of wielding power with a heavy hand, silencing critics, and co-opting institutions, from the judiciary to the media. These criticisms were echoed in similar terms during his earlier visit to Cambridge University in March 2023. While frequently describing the Modi government as "divisive" and accusing it of undermining India's democratic institutions, the irony of Gandhi's comments abroad is not lost on many.

His family's political history, which spans several decades of Congress rule, is riddled with episodes that similarly stretched the boundaries of democratic norms. His grandmother, Indira Gandhi, imposed the infamous Emergency in 1975, a period marked by mass arrests of political opponents, press censorship, and the suspension of civil liberties — an authoritarian measure that remains a dark stain on Indian democracy.

Gandhi's rhetoric often appears to be strategically timed for international audiences. His speeches abroad are not just criticisms of his domestic adversaries but are also appeals to a global liberal elite that views India's current trajectory with unease. These international forays provide him with a platform largely free from the rough-and-tumble of Indian politics, where his message resonates with audiences already inclined to view the Modi government with suspicion.

Whether or not Gandhi's grievances have merit, his choice to voice these grievances on foreign soil rather than engaging domestically in India's lively public discourse lays him open to accusations of hypocrisy with his opponents accusing him of undermining India's image abroad rather than confronting the issues head-on within the country.



By
Abhijit Mulye

India generates around 9.3 million metric tonnes of plastic waste annually, far exceeding its neighbours. With nearly 20% of global plastic waste, India's problem is driven by uncollected municipal waste and inadequate recycling. Although recent innovations offer hope, substantial investments, and regulatory support are crucial for effective solutions.

PUBLIC INTEREST

It's Time to Put a Brake on the Plastic Pollution Crisis

India produces approximately 9.3 million tonnes of plastic waste every year. This is much more than what our neighbours China and Pakistan do. This growing problem is due to uncollected municipal waste. It poses a serious threat to both the environment and public health.

If we think on a global scale, India generates nearly 20 percent of the world's total plastic waste. To put this into perspective, the amount of waste produced in India could fill approximately 604 Taj Mahals. If laid end-to-end, the total length of global plastic waste would encircle the globe over 1,500 times.

A recent University of Leeds report, published in *Nature*, utilised advanced AI models to track plastic waste across over 50,000 municipalities globally. It reveals that more than 90 percent of this waste is municipal, with over two-thirds of the world's plastic pollution stemming from uncollected municipal waste. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that 1.2 billion people—15 percent of the global population—lack access to essential waste collection services, worsening both environmental and public health impacts.

Plastic pollution has severe environmental consequences. It ends up in rivers and oceans, risking the marine ecosystem. Animals and birds often mistake plastic for food, leading to severe injuries and, in many cases, tragic deaths. Because plastic does not decompose easily, it remains in natural habitats for an extended period, causing long-term pollution. It has also been revealed that most of the plastic



waste is burnt uncontrolled. This adds to the problem of air pollution.

Apart from the environmental harm, poor communities in various parts of the world bear the brunt of plastic pollution. People in these areas are exposed to harmful chemicals and plastic-burning residue. This leads to respiratory illnesses and other health issues. Improper disposal of plastics after their use could contaminate drinking water and end up harming public health.

The Indian government has taken various decisions and initiatives to reduce plastic usage. Measures like banning single-use plastic have faced various challenges. Major contributors to this are rapid urbanisation, inadequate waste management systems, and consumer habits. Other factors include unawareness or misinformation among vendors and consumers alike.

The absence of government incentives for manufacturers to produce eco-friendly packaging, coupled with a lack of regulatory mechanisms to monitor its

use, hinders the green future progress. Eco-friendly packaging is often more expensive and less durable than plastic, which discourages both vendors and consumers from making the switch.

Despite the challenges, a few renowned companies are shifting towards more sustainable packaging solutions. New packaging innovations are being implemented that reduce plastic use by 90%. Paper-based packaging is in high demand to reduce plastic to align with global sustainability goals. However, this change comes with a set of challenges. Paper composites often contain non-fibre materials, complicating recycling. Eco-friendly alternatives may have a shorter shelf life and higher costs, hence making them less appealing to vendors.

While India still has a long way to go in dealing with its plastic pollution crisis, there are a few silver linings. Companies are developing recyclable materials, and global trends are promoting more sustainable prac-

tices. Nonetheless, greater government support is necessary to promote the use of eco-friendly alternatives. It is crucial to strengthen regulations, provide incentives to manufacturers, and raise public awareness to address the problem at its core. India can reduce its plastic footprint and safeguard both its environment and its people with collective efforts.

Recent innovations suggest that with sufficient investment in the necessary infrastructure and the development of effective recycling strategies, nearly two-thirds of plastic waste could be recycled. This improvement in recycling capabilities could reduce environmental stress by 20 to 50 percent.

However, mere technological interventions won't work alone. It will also need the strong support of a robust social movement to stop the menace. The ever-growing consumerism will need to be replaced with traditional Indian values and a strong Indian ethos to curb this ever-increasing issue of plastic waste.

GLOBAL WATCH

Modi's Diplomatic Blitz Across Continents

Each stop in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diplomatic odyssey in form of historic visits to Ukraine, Poland, Brunei, and most recently, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), underscores a strategic objective aimed not just at securing bilateral benefits but leveraging energy deals, strategic partnerships and economic agreements to enhance India's geopolitical positioning.

During his visit to the UAE earlier this week, Modi and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan signed several key agreements that could redefine India's energy landscape and economic partnerships. Among these, a 15-year deal for liquefied natural gas (LNG) from ADNOC to Indian Oil Corporation Limited highlights a significant boost to India's energy security. This agreement, part of a broader strategy, complements recent long-term contracts with ADNOC, reflecting India's commitment to diversifying its energy sources amid rising global demand.

Additionally, the memorandum of understanding (MoU) for civil nuclear cooperation between the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) and the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC) signifies a deepening of strategic ties. This partnership will facilitate the exchange of nuclear technology and expertise, underscoring the UAE's commitment to becoming a leader in nuclear ener-



gy in the Arab world.

Modi's diplomacy is more than just about energy and trade; it reflects a broader strategy of enhancing India's strategic footprint across the globe. His visits to Kyiv and Poland earlier in the year focused on strengthening ties in Eastern Europe amidst the ongoing Ukraine conflict, while engagements in Brunei highlighted India's growing role in Southeast Asia.

The PM's visit to Kyiv amid the grinding stalemate of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War signalled India's intent to diversify its international partnerships and assert its relevance in a region critical to European security dynamics.

Despite India's historical ties with the former Soviet Union and Russia, the Kyiv visit aligns with India's broader strategy of enhancing its global diplomatic footprint, as exemplified by its recent efforts to strengthen ties with NATO countries.

Likewise, the visit to Poland, a NATO member and a pivotal player in Central Europe, further underscores India's strategic recalibration. Poland, with its growing economic clout and geopolitical importance, represents a valuable partner in India's quest to expand

its influence in Europe. The historical backdrop here is important: Poland, like many Central European countries, has navigated its post-Soviet identity by aligning more closely with Western institutions. By engaging with Poland after 45 years, India not only seeks to tap into Central Europe's burgeoning economic opportunities but also to strengthen its position within the European sphere, balancing its traditional ties with Russia with newer alliances.

In that vein, the Brunei visit was emblematic of India's ongoing efforts to bolster ties with the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region. Brunei, though small, holds strategic importance due to its location and its role in regional diplomacy. This visit was not merely a formality but a calculated move to enhance India's influence in Southeast Asia.

Historically, India has sought to increase its presence in ASEAN countries to counterbalance China's growing influence in the region. By fostering closer ties with Brunei, India is positioning itself as a key player in the broader ASEAN framework, which is crucial for its strategic ambitions in the Indo-Pacific.

STATES WATCH

Siddaramaiah faces gauntlet of Rameshwaram Café Blast

The recent filing of a chargesheet by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the Rameshwaram Café blast case has cast a spotlight on the emerging security challenges in Karnataka under the Congress-led Siddaramaiah administration. The low-intensity improvised explosive device (IED) explosion that rocked the bustling Brookefield area of Bengaluru on March 1, 2024, injured nine people and sent shockwaves through the city's security apparatus. The chargesheet names four accused, including Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taaha and Mussavir Hussain Shazib, both allegedly inspired by the Islamic State (IS), and lays bare a chilling blueprint of radicalization and violence.

According to the NIA, Taaha and Shazib meticulously planned and executed the attack, allegedly under the guidance of an "online handler" suspected to be based abroad, who is believed to have indoctrinated the "Thirthahalli module" of extremists. This handler, whose identity remains shrouded in mystery, has now become the focal point of investigations. The NIA's probe has intriguingly linked this case to two earlier terror conspiracy cases in Karnataka from 2012 and 2020, suggesting a persistent and



Karnataka

coordinated effort by external actors to destabilize the region through local radical modules.

The ramifications of these revelations are not confined to the realm of security alone. Politically, the blast and the subsequent NIA investigation pose a significant challenge to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's government, which is already grappling with the fallout from the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) corruption scandal. The Congress administration, elected on promises of governance reform and economic revival, now finds itself on the defensive, battling accusations of laxity in handling security threats. The Siddaramaiah government's ability to navigate these twin crises—terrorism and corruption—is being closely

watched by the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has wasted no time in seizing the moment to criticize the Congress government's handling of internal security.

In the immediate aftermath of the blast, senior BJP leader R. Ashoka had accused the Congress-led government of attempting to manipulate forensic reports related to the blast while alleging that the state government was trying to obscure facts and mislead the public.

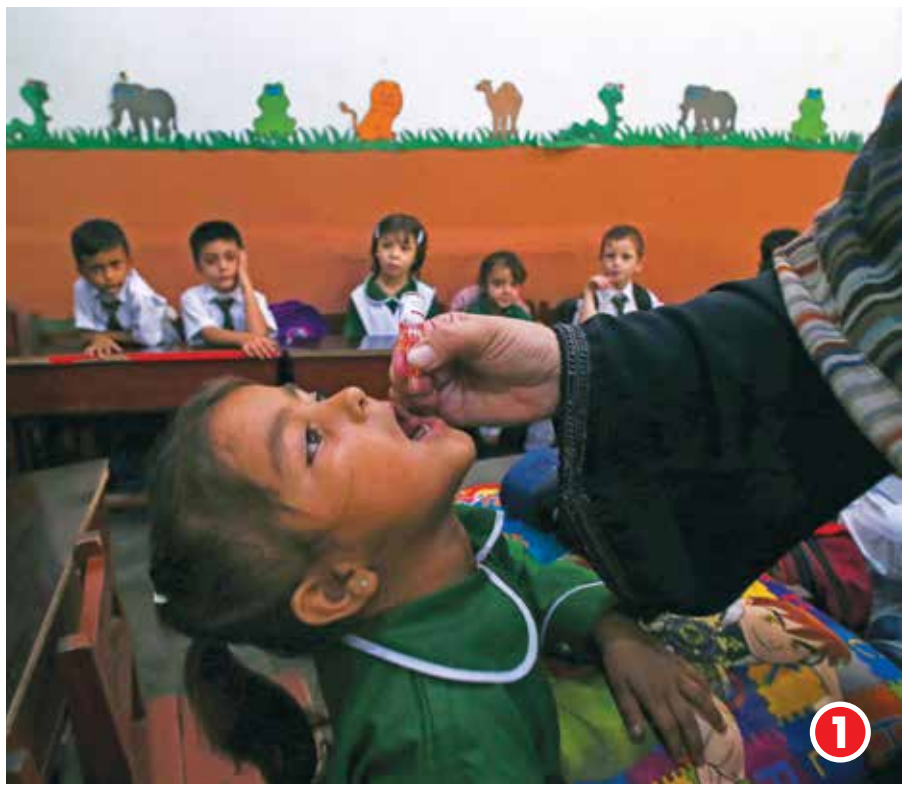
The BJP has accused the state administration of being soft on radical elements, pointing to the Congress's history of alleged appeasement politics. This narrative, while not new, gains fresh currency in the wake of the NIA's chargesheet, particularly with the unresolved question of the "online handler" adding an aura of international intrigue to domestic vulnerabilities.

The Siddaramaiah government must also contend with the broader implications of the case on its law-and-order credentials. Bengaluru, often touted as India's Silicon Valley, relies heavily on its image as a safe, cosmopolitan city to attract global business and talent. Any perception of rising insecurity, especially linked to terrorist activities, could have ripple effects on investor confidence and public morale.

As the NIA intensifies its efforts to unmask the elusive online handler and dismantle the terror networks operating within Karnataka, Siddaramaiah's administration will need to demonstrate not just reactive measures but proactive strategies to combat radicalization. The challenge lies not only in securing convictions in the Rameshwaram Café blast case but in restoring a sense of security and stability across the state. Failure to do so could provide the BJP with ammunition to question the Congress's competence on the core issues of safety and security.

The PM's peregrinations highlight India's ambition to enhance strategic ties and assert its influence on the world stage

The political implications of the Rameshwaram Café blast and the MUDA scandal could very well shape the trajectory of Karnataka's political landscape in the months to come.



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KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 A health worker administers a polio vaccine to a child at a school in Peshawar, Pakistan on Monday.
- 2 India's Permanent Representative designate to the UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish greets UN Secretary General António Guterres, at the UN headquarters in New York on Monday.
- 3 IIT Guwahati students stage a protest after a third-year Computer Science student of the institute was found dead in his hostel room in Guwahati on Monday.
- 4 Low clouds cover the mountains after rainfall in Shimla on Tuesday.
- 5 Vehicles stuck in a traffic jam on Delhi-Gurugram expressway on Tuesday.



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All Pictures PTI, AP

READERS' CHOICE

A Man with a Golden Arm and an Even More Golden Heart



By
Krishna Hegde



Karsan Ghavri

It is rare when an idol becomes a close friend, but Karsan Devji Ghavri, known affectionately as Kadu Bhai, feels more like an elder brother. Even decades after his retirement, Karsan Ghavri remains widely admired, so much so that Prime Minister Narendra Modi twice offered him a political position, which he declined both times—first while coaching West Bengal's cricket team and later to care for his ailing 90-year-old mother, Ba.

Hailing from a joint family from Rajkot, Gujarat, Karsan Ghavri started playing cricket at the age of 11 and went on to represent India in the All Schools tournament in Australia. The story is that a Mumbai batsman who heard of this fierce young pace bowler from Gujarat suggested the Mumbai team management import him to Mumbai so that he did not have to face the wrath of his pace, and that is how Karsan Ghavri played for Mumbai and went on to become a "Pakka Mumbaikar."

His neighbours once ambushed him at a movie theatre with drums and garlands upon hearing of his selection for the Indian cricket team under Tiger Pataudi in 1975. His biggest concern then wasn't his performance but how to accommodate all 35 relatives eager for tickets to his debut Test match. Kadu Bhai, known for his charm both on and off the field, remained unfazed even when his dalliance with a Pakistani beauty caused a stir. Despite being labelled as "lady killer," he humbly credits legends like Tiger Pataudi and Salim Durrani as far more charming.

Karsan Ghavri holds the record of being the first Indian pace bowler to take 100 wickets, a record that remains unbroken. He represented India for 8 years, playing 39 test match-

es and 19 one-day internationals. Whether at the school, university, Ranji Trophy, or international level, Karsan Ghavri served Indian cricket with distinction. He represented West Zone, Mumbai, and his club with pride. Legend has it that Ghavri lost his spot on the Indian cricket team due to a disagreement with his captain at the time.

Beyond his achievements on the field, Karsan Ghavri has a knack for spotting talent, having discovered Shubman Gill at age 10 and identified Cheteshwar Pujara as a teenager. Many young cricketers who have represented India have played under his guidance, and he remains respected not only for his cricketering prowess but for his gentlemanly demeanour.

Karsan Ghavri ranks Dilip Kumar as 1 to 10 among actors and Sir Gary Sobers as 1 to 10 among cricketers, with everyone else starting from 11. A style icon, Ghavri's clothes were impeccably tailored. He reflects that, despite earning very little throughout their careers, they wore the finest clothes and dined at the best places, but had no savings.

Earning just a few hundred rupees per day to play a Test for India, Ghavri appreciates how the Board has revolutionised Indian cricket, taking good care of both current and retired players. He recalls that it was a dream to play for India under any conditions—on underprepared pitches, without protective gear, and facing the world's fastest bowlers. "It was an honour to wear the Indian cap and play for India," says Ghavri, a proud nationalist.

After 60 years, Karsan Ghavri is bidding farewell to Mumbai, returning to Rajkot, and fulfilling his 90-year-old mother's dreams. While Mumbai cricket's loss will be Indian cricket's gain, his focus includes looking after his mother, being a mentor of the Saurashtra cricket team, and running his upcoming Karsan Ghavri cricket academy in Morbi, Gujarat. With two successful daughters and a son, he remains a devoted family man, never speaking ill of anyone in the 20 years I've known him. His unwavering dedication to his family and cricket continues to define him.

He promises to return to Mumbai every month for four days to meet his many friends and fans and to enjoy a round of golf, a game he excels at.

Wishing him the best at his new home, new academy, and Saurashtra cricket.

Kadu bhai, Yaaro ka Yaar
Cheers to a Champion!!

(The writer is a spokesperson for Shiv Sena. Views personal.)

MY CORNER

Swanand Shloka: Reviving Sanskrit, Childhood Traditions



By
Shalmali Karmarkar



Since April 2022, Mangesh Khisty, a resident of Cosmos Horizon Complex, Thane, has been gathering children in the "Radha Krishna Mandir," located within the housing society premises, every Sunday evening. He has been teaching some well-known and lesser-known Sanskrit shlokas to these young and impressionable minds. What started as a small group of three to four children has increased to about 20 children between the ages of 4 and 12.

The children enjoy this weekly meet and look forward to it, as it is now no longer limited to just shloka recitation alone but also encom-

Since April 2022, Mangesh Khisty has been teaching Sanskrit shlokas to children at Cosmos Horizon Complex, Thane. His "Swanand Shloka" initiative includes games and cultural activities and has grown to 100 sessions, benefiting children's cognitive skills, emotional well-being and cultural preservation.

passed long-lost childhood games, mythological and religious stories, and activities such as tree plantation drives. As a result, not only children but their parents and grandparents have started regularly joining these sessions.

An important benefit of teaching these shlokas to children would be the preservation of the Sanskrit language, which, despite its profound historical significance, has seen declining use in modern times. Children exposed to Sanskrit develop an appreciation for Indian philosophy, history, and values.

Reciting shlokas offers unique mental benefits. Sanskrit's precise structure sharpens children's analytical and thinking skills. Studies show that memorising and reciting these complex sound patterns improves memory, focus, and flexibility in thinking. Regular practice also boosts pronunciation, especially in Marathi and Hindi, while enhancing language comprehension and verbal reasoning.

This initiative, aptly named "Swanand Shloka," recently completed 100 sessions, and a programme was organised by the parents to celebrate this occasion. The children performed about 30 Shlok recitations ranging from Aarthees such as "Yei O Vitthale" to "Mahishasuramardini Stotra" and "Shri Ram Jay Ram Jay Jay Ram" to Marathi folk songs such as "Mani Nahi Bhaav, Mhane Devaa Mala Paav." These renditions were well-appreciated by the audience and

received generous praise and applause.

The presence of eminent personalities and speakers graced this event. Dr. Rajeev Puri, a motivational speaker and historian, mesmerised the audience with his immense knowledge of Indian history and his zeal and passion. He praised this noble initiative and acknowledged that such initiatives are the need of the hour if we wish to preserve our culture and heritage and pass on our values to the next generation.

Khisty plans to extend the Swanand Shloka initiative to other societies and communities in and around Thane, with efforts focused on creating a network of children and families committed to preserving these timeless traditions.

Additionally, the practice of chanting shlokas is also known to have a calming effect on the mind, reducing anxiety and promoting emotional well-being. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of chanting fosters mindfulness, helping children focus and remain present in the moment, a skill that is crucial for emotional regulation and resilience in today's fast-paced world.

As the sound of shlokas continues to echo through the halls of the Cosmos Horizon Complex and beyond, one can't help but feel that this is only the beginning of something truly transformative.

(The writer is a resident of Thane. Views personal.)

