# THE PERFECT VO



Man goes from hospital to hospital looking for missing brother

... pg 3

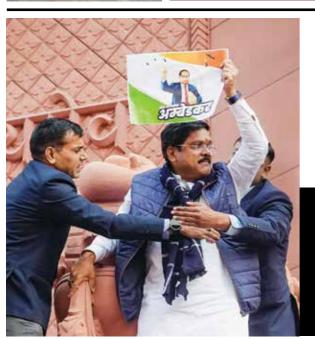


**Experts call for higher** 'Sin Tax' on tobacco



**Humiliation was** going on

... pg 10



# NEW LOW IN **DEMOCRACY**

- **UNPRECEDENTED FRACAS ON PARLIAMENT PREMISES**
- TWO BJP MPS INJURED; NDA, CONGRESS REACH POLICE



New Delhi: Plumbing new depths of political animosity, rival MPs screamed and shoved in the forecourt of Parliament on Thursday in unprecedented scenes of unruliness, capping three days of acrimonious debate inside the House over preserving the dignity of B R Ambedkar.

Two BJP MPs were hospitalised with injuries as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi became the centre of the ruling party's accusations, including one by a woman MP who said he misbehaved with her.

NDA leaders filed a police complaint against him for "attempt to murder, physical assault and incitement".

The sordid incident perhaps without parallel started in the morning as BJP and opposition MPs marched towards each other over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's comments on Ambedkar. As the two groups came closer, tempers and voices rose, soon resulting in a melee.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said he was pushed so violently that he lost his balance and sat down. "Now they are the ones who are accusing us of shoving them," the 82-year-old said.

However, the more apparent injuries were sustained by BJP's Balasore MP Pratap Sarangi, 69, who had to get stitches in the temple. His colleague Mukesh Rajput was also injured in the head.

The Congress vehemently denied the charges. Party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said Rahul Gandhi and the others were protesting peacefully, but were prevented from entering Parliament by BJP MPs carrying "sticks", it said.

The BJP MPs were seen carrying placards pinned to sticks. "BJP MPs stopped, threatened and intimidated me," Rahul Gandhi said.

The Congress also filed a complaint against the BJP in the Parliament House police station. Both sides also complained to the respective Chairs in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha against each other.

The scuffles and the controversy served to unite the opposition in defending Rahul Gandhi. National Conference leader Omar Abdullah said he knew Rahul Gandhi and he would not



Three NDA MPs, including Anurag Thakur and Bansuri Swaraj, file a complaint at the Parliament Street Police station.

push anyone.

The trouble broke out minutes before both Houses were to convene at 11 am.

A number of MPs of the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance were protesting at the steps of Parliament's 'Makar Dwar', an entrance and exit reserved for lawmakers, against the Congress' alleged insult of Ambedkar, while MPs from the

Congress and its allies were demonstrating over Union Minister Home Amit Shah's remarks on Ambedkar and accused the BJP of slighting the architect of the Constitution.

BJP MPs claimed that Gandhi tried to push his way inside Parliament through the middle of the stairs where they were standing, ignoring a side passage, and caused injuries in the ensuing jostling. However, some

opposition MPs claimed that the BJP members refused to give way to Gandhi who was heading to the Lok Sabha to attend the House proceedings.

BJP member Nishikant Dubey accused Gandhi of pushing Sarangi. "Are you not ashamed Rahul, you are resorting to rowdy behaviour ('gundagardi'). You pushed an old man," a furious Dubey told Gandhi.

"He pushed me," Gandhi countered Dubey, walking off after having a cursory look at Sarangi, who was being attended to by fellow BJP members. Sarangi was later wheeled off to an ambulance

"Rahul Gandhi pushed an MP, who fell on me and I got injured," he told reporters as BJP members squatted at the Makar Dwar raising slogans against the Congress

Hitting out at Gandhi, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said appropriate action would be taken in the matter. "Parliament is not a place to show physical strength. It is not a wrestling ring," he said.

Dubey told reporters, "I am a fourtime MP, I have seen something like this for the first time. I have never

seen Congress leaders barging into the BJP's protest or BJP members doing the same when Congress protests. Why did the Congress disrupt the BJP's protest today? This shows that their only aim is hooliganism.'

A number of ruling alliance MPs, including Union ministers, met their injured colleagues in the hospital as the incident blew up into a major

Both Houses witnessed massive uproar amid 'Jai Bhim' chants from both sides and were adjourned without witnessing any transaction. Congress MPs met Lok Sabha

Speaker Om Birla and submitted a complaint against the alleged unruly conduct of BJP MPs against Rahul Gandhi and attempts to stop him from entering Parliament House. As the INDIA bloc parliamentari-

ans came face to face with the ruling coalition MPs in front of the Makar Dwar of Parliament, the two sides engaged in loud sloganeering in a bid to outdo each other.

Rahul came too close to me, he shouted at me, says BJP's woman MP ... Page 5

### Locals assert claim on '250-yearold' temple

Bareilly (UP): Residents here in Katghar locality have alleged that a "250-year-old" Ganga Maharani temple in the area has been encroached upon by a cooperative body.

Narendra Singh, a local, claimed that his ancestors built the temple around 250 years ago.

"In 1905, the temple was officially documented, and prayers continued until 1950. However, the temple's premises were later rented out by the then-priest to a committee, which emploved a watchman from another community, who gradually stopped worship, removed idols, and eventually established control over the land, replacing the temple with the board of the Dauli Raghubar Dayal Cooperative Society," he

"We will soon submit a memorandum to the district administration, demanding the removal of the encroachment and the reinstatement of the temple," he said. -PTI



India Women's captain Smriti Mandhana interacts with Richa Ghosh. They equalled world record of highest partnership during the third T20 International cricket match of a series against West Indies in Navi Mumbai on Thursday.

## Nashik man comes for asthma treatment, dies with wife, son

**Mumbai:** It was just two The tragedy occurred af their five-year-old son accame to Mumbai, accompanied by his wife and minor son, for treatment of asthma. But little did he know that none of them would ever be able to return home.

The couple, Rakesh Ahire, wife Harshada and their five-year-old son Nidhesh, were among the 13 persons, who lost their lives in the ferry boat tragedy that took place off the Mumbai coast on and collided with a passenger ferry 'Neel Kamal' off Karanja near Mumbai at around 4 pm on Wednesday. The ferry, carrying more than 100 passengers, was going from the Gateway of India to Elephanta Island, a popular tourist

destination. "Rakesh Ahire, who resided in Nashik's Pimpalgaon Baswant, was in Mumbai for the treatment of his asthma. His wife and

days back that a man from ter a Navy craft undergoing companied him. The trio a town in Nashik district engine trials lost control had arrived in Mumbai just two days back," their relative said.

> "On Wednesday, they boarded the Neel Kamal ferry from the Gateway of India that was taking them to the Elephanta island. But their visit ended in a tragedy," the relative said.

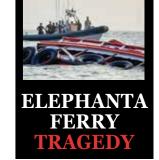
He added that the bodies of the trio were sent to their native place in Pimpalgaon Baswant and the last rites were performed on Thursday afternoon.

Body of passenger found, toll rises to 14

The body of a 43-year-old man who was among the two missing passengers after a Navy craft rammed into their ferry off the Mumbai coast, was found on Thursday, police said.

The body was found near the ferry, police said. The death toll in the tragedy has now gone up to 14.

Search operation continues to locate a seven-yearold boy who is still missing a day after the tragedy, a police official added.



The Navy on Thursday instituted a Board of Inquiry to probe the collision of the naval boat with the passenger ferry. "A Board of Inquiry has been ordered into the accident to establish the facts of the case," the Navy said. Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi offered condolences.

# BJP youth wing vandalises Congress office

Mumbai: Bharatiya Janata Party Yuva Morcha (BJYM) workers on Thursday vandalised the Congress office in Mumbai, claiming that the grand old party had always insulted Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.

The BJYM workers stormed the Congress office at Azad Maidan in south Mumbai and vandalised it, damaging furniture and tearing posters, police said. The workers also threw ink at posters of some Congress leaders.

The police used lathi charge to disperse

the crowd. The BJYM workers shouted slogans against the Congress while entering that party's office.

Wednesday.

Police detained a few BJYM workers and took them to the Azad Maidan police station, where they clashed with Congress

The BJYM protest came after Congress leaders accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah of insulting Dr Babsaheb Ambedkar during his speech in Rajya

Congress MP from Mumbai, Varsha Gaikwad, slammed the BJP for the

"This is what the BJP and Sangh Parivar have always done when they have heard Babasaheb's name - attack and vandalism. Look at the level BJP gundas are stooping to just to save Amit Shah and divert attention from the atrocious statement he made against Mahamanav, Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar," she posted on X.

"Around 50 BJP party karyakartas came

to our party office, threw chairs and tore posters, vandalised property. Our babbarsher karyakartas resisted their attacks. We shall be proceeding legally against this," she added.

Gaikwad demanded that Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis must immediately take strict action under the most stringent sections against those involved in the vandalism. "Is this the kind of political decorum in a progressive state like Maharashtra? Shame!" she added.

### HC relief to lesbian couple

Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh HC has upheld the right of a lesbian couple to live together, affirming their freedom to choose partners. The Court on Tuesday further directed the parents of Lalitha not to interfere with the relationship of the couple, asserting that their daughter

# India to play its CT matches at neutral venue

Dubai: The deadlock over the hosting of next year's Champions Trophy finally ended on Thursday when the ICC announced that India will play their matches of the 50-over event at a neutral venue instead of host country Pakistan, which will get a similar ar-

rangement for tournaments to be held in India till 2027. The agreement will also extend to the 2028 women's T20 World Cup, which will be held in Pakistan. Al-

though no formal announcement has been made, but India's Champions Trophy matches are likely to be held in the UAE.

> "The ICC Board has approved that all matches

between India and Pakistan played at ICC Events during the current rights cycle from 2024 to 2027 (which are to be hosted in India or Pakistan) will be played at a neutral venue proposed by the tournament host," said the ICC in a statement, confirming what PTI reported on December 5.

The arrangement will also cover next year's women's World Cup in India and the T20 World Cup in 2026, to be jointly hosted by India and Sri

"India's Champions Trophy games will most likely be played in the UAE. As far as the Women's ODI World Cup in India is concerned, the India-Pakistan game could be held in Sri Lanka,"

India had refused to travel to Pakistan for the event scheduled in February-March due to security concerns. The Indians have not played in Pakistan since the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks in which 150 people were killed. The two countries' last bilateral engagement was back in 2012.

Travelling to Pakistan also requires Indian government's clearance which has remained firm on the status quo.

"The schedule for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 is set to be confirmed soon," the ICC

The decision, that came after a series of backchannel talks, was on expected lines after the sport's governing body maintained prolonged silence on the contentious matter during the previous set-up led by chairman Greg Barclay.

His successor Jay Shah took charge on December 1 and all stakeholders, including the Pakistan Cricket Board, the BCCI and the broadcasters, were running out of time to organise the 50-over event that was last played in the UK in

Thursday's announcement meant it was the first major decision taken in Shah's tenure.

While BCCI's stance was always clear, the matter got stretched because of PCB's refusal to allow a "one-sided" arrangement of neutral venues. Led by Pakistan interior minister Mohsin Naqvi, the PCB was determined not to lose face in front of the local public.

PCB, which had sent its team to India for the ODI World Cup last year, had categorically opposed the hybrid model but eventually agreed to it on reciprocal grounds.

The PCB had earlier indicated that it wanted a greater share in the annual revenue cycle to accommodate the Indian demand for a hybrid model but there is no word yet on whether that has been discussed or accepted.

The tournament will feature eight teams, divided into two groups. The top two teams from each group will advance to the semifinals.

### Onion auctions briefly halt

Nashik: Angry over the drop in onion prices, farmers on Thursday briefly stopped auctions at the Lasalgaon APMC, the country's largest wholesale market of the key kitchen staple in Maharashtra's Nashik district.

The farmers demanded removal of the 20 per cent export duty on onions and an aid of Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,200 per quintal of the produce, the APMC officials said.

Onion prices have been witnessing a decline since the last few days.

However, as the prices dropped drastically at the Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC), onion farmers stopped the auctions and registered their protest on Thursday, the officials said.

Around 1,500 vehicles of onions arrived for auction at the APMC on Thursday.

In the morning session, the minimum price was Rs 800 per quintal, maximum Rs 2,900 per quintal and an average Rs 1,900 per quintal, as per the officials.

As the auctions began, the auctioneers announced the prices at Rs 1,200 to Rs 1,500 per quintal.

Angry over it, farmers stopped the auctions. Later, the prices improved slightly. The agitation was called off after about half-an-hour and the auctions restarted,

the officials said. The Centre has levied a 20 per cent duty on the export of onions due to which the kitchen staple from the state loses its competitiveness in international mar-

kets, according to farmers. On Wednesday, 1,950 vehicles of onions arrived at the Lasalgaon APMC. The prices were Rs 800 per quintal minimum, Rs 2,801 per quintal maximum and Rs 1,950 per quintal average.

# Will respond to the Oppon's criticism by work: Fadnavis

Nagpur: Striking a combative note, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said that during the recent state elections, the BJP-led alliance demolished the fake narrative spread by the Opposition in the Lok Sabha poll campaign.

Replying to a debate in the legislative assembly on the motion of thanks to the Governor for his joint address to both Houses of the state legislature, he asked the Opposition to introspect and accept the people's mandate it got in the assembly elections instead of blaming the EVMs.

He was a modern-day "Abhimanyu" who knew how to break the "chakravvuh". Fadnavis said. invoking the Mahabharata imagery.

He also assured that all the ongoing schemes of the government, including the flagship Ladki Bahin scheme for financial aid to women, will continue.

The winter session of the state legislature is underway in Nagpur following the BJP-led Mahayuti's massive victory in the November 20 assembly elections.

Lashing out at the Opposition for blaming the electronic voting machines (EVMs) for the Mahayuti alliance's win in the state elections, he said, "EVM means 'every vote for Maharashtra' which we got."

"If you win, it is people's mandate and victory of democracy. But if you lose, blame it on EVMs and the Election Commission of India (ECI). You are creating mistrust about the institutions which have constitu-



Opposition members stage a protest against Union Home Minister Amit Shah over his statement related to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar on the Vidhan Bhavan premises in Nagpur on Thursday.

tional authority. It is an insult of the people and the Constitution which gave them the right to vote," Fadnavis said.

"When you reject people's mandate, you insult people who have been given the right to vote by the Constitution. We are the fifth largest economy and now aiming to reach the third position. But many countries are not happy with this. So we have to be careful,' he said.

Trials for EVMs began on August 6, 1980 and the devices were first used in 1992. These machines were used in all Lok Sabha constituencies in 2004, he said.

In the 2004 and 2009 Lok

Sabha elections, the Con-

gress won, the CM said.

Later, the ECI asked political parties to show how EVMs can be tampered with. But nobody went ahead, he said, adding that opposition parties must accept the mandate with open mind and introspect.

"In the assembly elections, we destroyed your fake narrative spread during the Lok Sabha polls. We introspected after the Lok Sabha poll losses and worked hard to counter your fake narrative. We did not blame EVMs, but worked hard for the assembly polls," he said.

Fadnavis said people responded well to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's slogan "Ek hain toh safe hain"

slogan as they believed that Maharashtra will progress only if society stays united.

Maharashtra responded to the appeal and Mahayuti got a resounding success, he added.

"Between 2019 and 2024, the way I was targeted by my opponents, people sympathised with me. I thank my critics for spoiling the atmosphere as it created sympathy for me. The state has seen my work without bias of caste and region," he said

Attempts to polarise the society were foiled as people became united, the CM said. Fifty per cent votes were

polled by the Mahayuti, he

'I am a modern-day Abhimanyu. I can break the chakravyuh. The credit goes to my party and my colleagues," he said.

He asked the Opposition to beware of those using them to spread anarchy in the country.

Some organisations, which were declared as the frontal organisations of urban Naxals by the Congress-NCP government in Maharashtra and the Manmohan Sngh government at the Centre, participated in the Bharat Jodo Yatra, he

"Their aim is to create confusion among people about the constitutional bodies in the country. This is not about questioning

#### You will be CM one day, Fadnavis tells Ajit Pawar

Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said he and his deputies Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde would work 24/7 in shifts.

"Ajit Pawar will work in the morning since he is an early riser. I am on duty from 12 noon to midnight while throughout the night... you all know who," Fadnavis said, referring to Shinde, who is known to work till late

Turning to Ajit Pawar, Fadnavis said, "You are called 'permanent deputy CM'... but my wishes are with you... you will be the CM someday."

Ajit Pawar on December 5 took oath as the deputy CM of Maharashtra for the sixth time.

your patriotism, but you should realise who is using you,' Fadnavis said.

He said the Mahayuti government has to fulfil people's expectations as the massive mandate it has got has brought a lot of responsibilities.

"We will be working 24/7 and ensure citizens of all castes and religions get benefits of development,' he said.

All assurances and ongoing schemes will be implemented by the government,

The December instalment of the Ladki Bahin scheme will be deposited in the bank accounts of eligible women by the end of this month, the chief minister stated.

"There will be no blanket checking of the beneficiaries, but only the cases where a single beneficiary has opened four to five accounts and where men have opened bank accounts instead of women to avail of the benefits of the Ladki Bahin scheme will be checked " he said

He said his government will respond to the Opposition's criticism by its work and fight its fake narrative with a direct narrative.

"There are 10 states in the country that are competing with each other (to attract investment)...It is a competitive federalism... Investment projects are coming in all regions of the state. We are the number one state in foreign direct investment (FDI)," he said.

We have to stop extortionists from being given political patronage, he said.

On the development projects, he said the fourth Mumbai will come up around the Vasai-Virar belt in Palghar, while the third Mumbai will be set up around the Atal Setu bridge.

The third airport (in the Mumbai metropolitan region) will come up around the proposed Vadhvan Port in Palghar, he said.

For the next five years, no electricity bills will be given to farmers, he said.

## 'I started with a Sangh shakha, then Sena'

Nagpur: Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde paid tributes at the memorial of RSS founder Dr K B Hedgewar here on Thursday and said no one can ignore the Sangh's contribution to nation-building.

The ideologies of the Sangh Parivar and Shiv Sena are same. Shinde told reporters after visiting the Dr Hedgewar Smruti Mandir at Reshimbagh in Nagpur, where Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and other leaders of the ruling allies BJP and Shiv Sena also paid respects.

Ajit Pawar avoids visit

Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar's decision to stay

away from the meet to pay homage to RSS founder

Dr. K.B. Hedgewar underpins his thinking. At the RSS

Headquarters one of Pawar's MLA decided to defy Ajit

Pawar's stance and attend the ceremony on Thursday

hinting that not everybody within the party shares

morning. Tumsar MLA Raju Karemore arrived at Nagpur,

Pawar's stance on RSS. Karemore was welcomed by the

within NCP against visiting the event. "I was not given

that he had not discussed attending the event with

anyone in the party. "I came here on my wish," he said.

RSS workers. Karemore told reporters there was no diktat

any instructions from the party not to go to the memorial

temple. I will discuss this with Ajit Pawar," he said, adding



NCP leader and Deputy CM Aiit Pawar, who outfit is also a constituent of the ruling Mahayuti, was not present, while two of his party legislators visited the

As an organisation, the RSS works selflessly, Shin-

#### The Shiv Sena head further said that he earlier also visited Hedgewar's memorial and had a relation with the Sangh Parivar since childhood. "I started with a Sangh

shakha and then with a Shiv Sena shakha, Shiv Sena chief Balasaheb Thackeray's ideology and Anand Dighe sahab's teachings. The ideologies of the Sangh Parivar and Shiv Sena are same. How to work without expecting anything should be learnt from the Sangh Parivar."

> Shinde said one cannot ignore the contribution of the RSS to nation-building.

The RSS teaching seeks to unite and not divide, the deputy CM said. One gets inspired and energised after visiting Hedgewar's memorial, he added.

State assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar, council's deputy chairperson Neelam Gorhe and various other legislators of the ruling parties also paid homage at the memorials of Dr Hedgewar and M S Golwalkar, second Sarsanghchalak of the RSS. They also met with the Sangh office-bearers who gave them a brief introduction.



Violinist L. Subramaniam performs during the Sawai Gandharva Bhimsen Mahotsav in Pune on Wednesday.

### Police custody till Dec 27 for ex-NCP functionary

**Beed:** Former tehsil chief of NCP in Beed district, Vishnu Chate, arrested in an extortion case linked to the kidnap and murder of village head Santosh Deshmukh, was on Thursday remanded to police custody till December 27.

Chate is the fourth accused to be arrested in the murder case. He was produced before a court in Kej tehsil of Beed district on Thursday. Those arrested earlier are Jairam Chate, Mahesh Kedar and Pratik Ghule.

Police are on the lookout for three others who have been named as wanted accused for kidnapping and murdering Santosh Deshmukh, sarpanch of Massajog village in Beed district, and brutally killing him on December 9.

The post mortem report of Deshmukh mentions as many as 50 to 60 injury marks on the body, sources said.

Vishnu Chate, who was on the run after the murder, was arrested on Wednesdy by the crime branch from Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar in the extortion case being probed by the Beed police.

Vishnu Chate allegedly demanded Rs 2 crore from an energy company that had installed a windmill in the district and threatened to stop their operations if their demands were not met, police said.

Deshmukh had tried to intervene and stop the extortion due to which he was abducted from his car and taken in another car on December 9. He is alleged to have been tortured and killed by the accused persons following which an FIR was registered against seven, including Vishnu

### AI pilot suicide: Boyfriend seeks bail

Mumbai: The jailed boyfriend of an Air India pilot, who allegedly committed sought bail from a Mumbai court, claiming no case of abetment is made out against him by any "stretch of imagination"

Aditya Pandit (27), argued in his bail plea that he was arrested only because an FIR was registered against him and contended his custody was contrary to provisions of law

The plea, filed recently, came up for hearing before an Additional Sessions Judge, Dindoshi court on Thursday. The judge asked the police to file their response and adjourned the hearing to Monday.

Pilot Srishti Tuli (25), who lived in a rented flat in Marol area, was found dead in her apartment on early hours of November 25.

A day later, police arrested Pandit, her boyfriend, and charged him with abetment of suicide under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita section 108.

Tuli hailed from Uttar Pradesh and had been living in Mumbai for work since June last year. She and Pandit had met while pursuing a commercial pi-

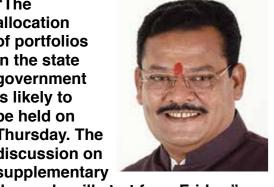
lot course in New Delhi two years ago. Pandit had come to temporarily stay with suicide late last month, has 
Tuli and was returning to New Delhi by his car when he received a call from his girlfriend saying "she would end her life".

As per the complaint registered by the late pilot's father, the pair had different food preferences and this was a matter of contention between them. Tuli was a non-vegetarian and the accused a vegetarian. Pandit constantly putting pressure on Tuli to change her food habits may have led her to commit suicide, complainant has alleged.

Pandit, in his bail application, mentioned that when he was on his way to the national capital he called Tuli multiple times, but got no response. He got worried and rushed back to Mumbai and found the door of her flat locked from inside. When Tuli did not open the door despite repeated knocks, Pandit called a key maker and got it opened. On finding his girlfriend hanging in the flat, he, as a law-abiding citizen, rushed her to hospital in order to save her life. However, the said effort became infructuous. -PTI

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

"The allocation of portfolios in the state government is likely to be held on Thursday. The discussion on supplementary



demands will start from Friday." Sanjay Shirsat, Minister

#### HC notice to political parties Mumbai: The Bombay High Court **ILLEGAL HOARDINGS**

on Thursday termed the increasing number of illegal hoardings and banners in Maharashtra as "horrendous" and "a sad situation".

A division bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar issued notice to all political parties directing them to show cause as to why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against them for defiance of court orders.

For the past several years, the HC has been calling for strict action against illegal banners and hoardings and had also ordered all political parties to file an undertaking assuring that their workers would not put up such hoardings.

All political parties- BJP, Congress, Shiv Sena, NCP and MNS - had then submitted an undertaking.

"The court had in its earlier orders taken on record the undertakings given by the political parties. However, it appears that these political parties have not come true with the same," the HC said.

"We issue notice requiring them (political parties) to show cause as to why appropriate action for defiance of the judgment passed in 2017 should not be taken against them under the provisions of the Contempt of Court Act," it said.

The bench noted that post elec-

tions the number of unauthorized hoardings, banners and posters have increased across the state.

"What can be more horrendous than this? Despite our judgment (of 2017) directing strict action against illegal hoardings, see where we are headed to. This is a very sad situation," the court said.

The bench questioned as to why orders and judgments are required in such cases when there is a duty cast upon the government and civic bodies under law.

The bench also cautioned civic authorities and said if the court was pushed to a corner then it would be compelled to take strict action.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given to all that, my client Mr. Prafful Pandurang Jawlekar, presently residing at: D-503, Gokul Vihar-I, Thakur Complex, Kandivali (East) lumbai - 400101 have lost an original Kharedikhat (along with all annexur cluding Receipt of Consideration) dated 12.11.1993 which was executed between Mr.Anant Shivappa Magdum & 1.Mrs. Manisha Jagdish Patel and 2.Mrs. Manga

Laxman Lagad, in respect of the below scheduled property.

In view of the above and on behalf of my client, hereby invites claims and/o objections from the claimant or claimants/objector or objectors who have any ight, title and interest in the said property prejudicial to the interest of the other ngint, the and interest in the said property projudical to the interests of the other party and who have already file any legal proceedings or obtained any decree or award concerning the subject matter of the said property to submit all their claims. objections in writing along with copies of such documents and other proofs on support of his/her/their claims/ objections in writing to the undersigned within the period of 7 days from the publication of this notice. Failing which my clients will presume that, no adverse claim or objections concerning the said property exist or if they do exist they stand waived hereinafter and in such event my clients will proceed to complete the further transaction. Please do note.

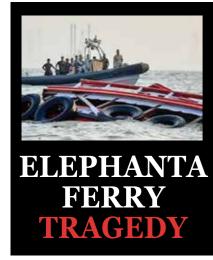
Schedule of the property A piece of Land, Survey No.50, Hissa No.6/1, Lay out Plot No.4 & Survey No.50, Hissa No.6/2, Lay out Plot No.4 N.A. Plot total area 736.62 sq.mtrs. situated at Village-Temghar, Taluka-Bhiwandi, Dist-Thane in the Registration District and sub District of Bhiwandi, within the assessment jurisdiction of Bhiwandi Nijampur

Place: Mumbai Date: 19.12.2024

Dilip Yashavant Lad (M.com.LL.B.,GDC&A,DCM) ADVOCATE HIGH COURT B-22/304, Saraf Choudhari Nagar, Thakur

Complex, Kandivali (East) Mumbai-400101.M:9833506305 E- mail:advdiliplad@gmail.com

# Man goes from hospital to hospital looking for missing brother









Mumbai: Jogaram Bhati, 60, has not slept a wink since Wednesday as he is making rounds of hospitals in the city, looking for his younger brother who is one of the two people missing after a Navy craft crashed into the ferryboat `Neel Kamal'

Hansaram Bhati, 43, a Mumbai resident, was accompanying relatives from Rajasthan who were visiting Elephanta Island when the incident took place off Mumbai coast on Wednesday

Speaking to PTI outside Colaba Police Station where he was called by the police for inquiry, Jogaram said his brother lived in Malad, a western suburb, and was in the imitation jewellery business.

On Wednesday, Pravin Rathod, the son of Hansaram's brotherin-law, and his wife Nitu, arrived from Rajasthan and wanted to do sightseeing in Mumbai, he said.

His brother took a day off from his work and accompanied them on a trip to Elephanta Island.

They left Malad around 2 pm and reached the Gateway of India where they boarded the ill-fated

After the Navy craft rammed the ferry and it began to capsize, Pravin and his wife spoke to their relatives in Rajasthan on phone amid the rescue operations and informed them about the incident

"Our relatives in Rajasthan told me, and I reached Gateway of India around 4.15 pm. Pravin and his wife were rescued, but my brother was not there "he said

"I do not know how he is and what ordeal he must have gone through.....I want my brother back," said an emotional Jogaram.

"He is a very good human being, and most lovable among all us siblings," the elder brother added.

A relative of Deepak Wakchaure (50), a resident of Govandi area in the city who was among the 13 deceased, demanded that the government give a job to a family member of every deceased person.

He also claimed that a gold chain and other jewelry worn by Sandeep was missing when the family collected his body.

Colaba Police has asked them to lodge a complaint, he said.

Of the 113 persons on board both the vessels, 13 died after the collision and 98, including two injured, were rescued

#### Tourist inflow to Elephanta Island dwindles

A day after a Navy craft rammed into a ferry killing 13 persons, there was a decline in the number of tourists taking the ferry to visit Elephanta Island, a popular tourist attraction near Mumbai coast, going by the number of ferry passengers on Thursday. At the Gateway of India in south Mumbai, where passengers of the ill-fated ferry had boarded the vessel to visit Elephanta Island, people were still seen queuing up for tickets, but their numbers were far less than the crowd seen yesterday. Tourists come from various parts of the country to visit the Gateway of India, and from there hop on to ferries for a short ride or to visit tourist attractions like the Elephanta Island in the Arabian Sea. On Thursday afternoon, some tourists who were seen in the queue to get their ferry tickets to visit the iconic Elephanta caves were unaware of the Neel Kamal ferry tragedy a day earlier. The ferry service for the Elephanta caves, which is a part of the 'Mumbai Darshan' guided tour, began at 9 am as usual, a booking supervisor of Mumbai Jal Vahatuk Sanstha told PTI at the Gateway of India.

The boat service to Alibaug and Mandwa was also operational since 6 am this morning, he said. "There were fewer tourists than any

other day, due to the ferry capsize tragedy," he said, adding that the number of tourists, who prefer to ride boats in the Mumbai harbour, also dwindled this morning. Ferry boats with depleted strength of passengers were seen leaving from the Gateway of India for Elephanta Island.

Kashmir Singh, who had come to the Gateway of India from adjoining Palghar district with his son and daughter-in-law, said that he knew about Wednesday's accident and avoided to take the 30-minutes boat ride. "I know about the incident, but such tragedies don't happen every day," he said. Madinaben, a tourist from Ahmedabad who enjoyed the harbour boat ride on Thursday with her two children said she was unaware about the

"I didn't know about the tragedy, I learnt about it when I was on the boat. My daughter called and told me not to take the ride, but it was too late", she said.

Punit Chaturvedi, who had come from Delhi, said that he knew about the incident but it didn't prevent him from taking the boat ride. "There was no question of getting scared as we were provided life jackets during the boat ride," he said.

### Life jackets mandatory for boat rides

Authorities on Thursday made life jackets mandatory for all people taking boat rides from the Gateway of India. Some tourists, however, said the life jackets would be of help only if people know how to use them. The authorities should instruct people how to use the life jackets in case of an emergency, they said. Some survivors of the tragedy on Wednesday claimed the ferry did not have enough life jackets. Devidas Jadhav, an assistant boat inspector deputed at the Gateway of India, told PTI that they have made the use of life jackets mandatory for every passenger taking ferry boat to Mandva near Alibaug (in neighbouring Raigad), Elephanta Island or while going for a short ride of the Mumbai harbour. Sangeeta Dalvi, who was travelling to Mandva with her husband for some work, said passengers must use life jackets as they can save lives in case of an emergency. She also said there was no need for the people to be scared after Wednesday's accident. "Such tragedies do not happen every day. We do not avoid travelling by roads though everyday several accidents occur on roads."

#### Two still missing

Two passengers, a man and a child, were still missing a day after a Navy craft carrying out engine trials rammed into their ferry off Mumbai coast, police said on Thursday. The two missing persons have been identified as 43-year-old Hansraj Bhati and seven-year-old Johan Mohammad Nisar Ahmed Pathan, the police said.

Tourists here do not want to wear the life jacket, but the same people use it without any complaint when they go to other countries like Singapore or Malaysia. It is because the authorities there do not allow a

without a life jacket." Sameer Bamane, Boat owner



boat to move if even one person is

### **Badlapur Sexual Abuse Case**

### HC asks why kin of deceased accused being punished

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Thursday said the parents of the deceased accused in the Badlapur sexual assault case ought not to be punished.

The court also asked the Maharashtra government to see if it can make arrangements for their shelter and employment.

A division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan briefly spoke to the parents of the accused in the case, who was killed in an alleged shootout with the police in September.

The accused was arrested in August for allegedly sexually assaulting two minor girls inside the toilet of a school at Badlapur in Thane district. He worked as an attendant there.

The parents told the court that ever since their son's arrest they have been targeted anywhere they go and have been unable to even live in their house at Badlapur.

"We have been thrown out of our house. We are living at the Kalyan railway station. We are also not able to find any jobs. We have no money," the parents told the court.

The bench then asked public prosecutor Hiten Venegaonkar to see if any help can be provided to the parents by the state government or through any NGO.

"They (parents) are not the accused. It is not their fault. Why should they suffer? They should not be punished for something their son is accused of doing," the bench said.

The court said the parents should not be facing the wrath of the government and the public at

"What can be done? Can they not be rehabilitated somewhere with the help of their government? Some NGO can help find them a job or shelter. They need to be able to survive and have a livelihood," the bench

The court posted the matter for further hearing on January 13, 2025

-PTI



Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi chief Prakash Ambedkar during a protest against Union Home minister Amit Shah in Mumbai on Thursday.

### VCs from 125 universities to meet

By Correspondent

Navi Mumbai: Vice Chancellors of around 125 universities from the Western Zone states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa will gather for a twoday meet at the D Y Patil deemed to be University here in Navi Mumbai starting Friday, Dr Pankaj Mittal, Secretary General of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) said.

Rajasthan Governor Haribhau Bagde will inaugurate the conference on Friday wherein the VCs shall discuss and deliberate various aspects related to crucial factors of higher education, governance and administration, Dr Mittal

Association of Indian Universities is the apex institution of higher education in India formed in 1925.

Along with the VCs, eminent personalities from industry and academia will participate in the meet that will feature 10 engaging panel discussions on topics ranging from Sustainable Practices in Education, Leadership & Governance, Leveraging Technology in Higher Education, Achieving National Goals of 2047

and Artificial Intelligence

Revolutionizing Research

in Academia. The technical sessions on the first day are woven around topics like Role of Leadership in Promoting Innovations & Ranking and Autonomy & Accountability in Higher Education Institutes, while the ones on the second day would revolve around Leadership and E-Governance and the AIU Business Session.

The VCs will also get to view the ongoing Women's match between India and West Indies at the D Y Patil stadium, Dr Vandana Mishra, VC of the DY Patil University said.

### Process to revoke driver's licence begins More will not be able to

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Motor Vehicles department has initiated the process of revoking the driving licence of the bus driver involved in the December 9 Kurla accident, which left nine persons dead and around 40 injured, officials said on Thursday.

The Regional Transport Office (RTO) at Wadala, which has jurisdiction over the eastern suburbs of Mumbai, has issued a show cause notice to bus driver Sanjay More as part of the process to revoke the licence, they added.

Deputy Regional Transport Officer Pallavi Kothawade confirmed the development and said the process of cancelling More's licence started earlier this week.

"We issued a show cause notice to More on Monday. Further action will be taken under Motor Vehicles Act based on his reply to the notice," Kothawade told PTI.

Wadala RTO regional transport officer Ravi Gaikwad did not respond to queries on the issue.

Meanwhile, other officials said Mumbai police had written to Wadala RTO seeking revoking of More's



#### **Death toll** rises to nine The death toll in Kurla

bus tragedy rose to nine after a 22-year-old man succumbed to his injuries at a hospital here, civic officials said on Thursday. The deceased, Mehtab Shaikh, undergoing treatment at the civic-run Sion Hospital, was declared dead a little before midnight on Wednesday, an official said.

licence due to the severity of the accident.

An electric bus wetleased by the civic-run Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) undertaking had rammed into several vehicles on the night of December 9 in Kurla, killing nine and injuring more than 40 persons. Several vehicles were totalled drive any vehicle once his licence, which he has held for the past 23 years, is revoked, the officials said More was employed by a

third-party agency that supplies drivers to EVEY TRANS, a subsidiary of electric bus manufacturer Olectra. He had been driving mi-

ni-buses of BEST's wet lease operators for the last four years and was deployed to the drive the 12-metre e-bus, the kind that was involved in the accident, from December this vear after he joined the new company, officials said.

As per RTO records, More's transport category licence, initially valid for light motor vehicles like tempos and taxis was issued on July 5, 1990 and on August 8, 1991 he got a heavy vehicle licence required to drive trucks and buses.

More also has a driver's badge, which is mandatory for driving public service vehicles, including buses in the fleets of BEST and Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC). This badge was issued to him by the RTO on December 18, 1999.

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

"The demand to make Mumbai a **Union Territory is** condemnable. Be it the Congress or the BJP, the Shiv Sena (UBT) will never tolerate any attempt to break Mumbai away from Maharashtra. "



Aaditya Thackeray Leader, Shiv Sena (UBT)

### **Production activity for first Fast Patrol Vessel** Mumbai: The Mazagon Dock

Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), a Navratna defence PSU, on Thursday commenced the production activity for the first Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) of 14 FPVs project for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), a statement said.

Along with this, plate cutting of a second ship of Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels (NGOPVs) was also undertaken.

Plate cutting ceremony for FPV1 marks the official start of the production activities for this project, the MDL said.

Biju George, director Shipbuilding, presided over the plate cutting ceremony in the presence

of senior officials of the Indian Coast Guard.

MDL has signed a contract with ICG to design, build and deliver a total of 14 Fast Patrol Vessels. The project is valued at Rs 1,070.47 crore.

Each vessel will feature a waterjet propulsion drive, built to meet contractual speed in excess of 33 knots and shall be classified under Dual class (ABS & IRS).

The vessels will be designed as high-speed craft, equipped with a waterjet propulsion, high-speed diesel engine. The vessel will be used for patrolling coastal waters and protection of fisheries.

These vessels will be capable of



carrying a small high-speed boat to carry out search and rescue missions in shallow waters. They will also have inherent capability to switch over to wartime roles such as providing communication link, escort coastal convoys, logistic support, medical evacuation

and supplement Indian naval resources, the statement said.

As regards to NGOPVs, the plate cutting ceremony of the second ship was also held on Thursday.

The first plate cutting was held on May 31. MDL has signed a contract with ICG to design, build and deliver six Next Generation

Offshore Patrol Vessels. The project is valued at Rs 1,614.89 crore. Each vessel is fitted with twin Controllable Pitch Propellers driven by 9,000 kW engines to meet contractual speed in excess of 23 knots and will be classi-

fied under Dual Class (ABS&IRS). The vessels will be designed as high-speed craft under Class HSC rules, to be used primarily for Coastal and Offshore patrolling and policing Maritime zones of

Their primary role also includes Fisheries Protection, Anti-Smuggling and Anti-Piracy, Search and Rescue operations, Ocean Surveillance and Monitoring of Sea lines of Communication (SLOCs).

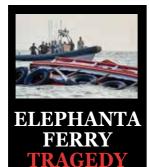
The first vessel of FPV is scheduled for delivery in March 2026. The delivery of first NGOPV is scheduled in July 2027 and second NGOPV is scheduled in December 2027.

# Speedboat driver's stunt ended in midsea tragedy: survivor



Mumbai: The driver of the Navy speedboat that collided with a ferry packed with passengers on way to a tourist site off the Mumbai coast was in a "playful mood" and was "showing off", said a survivor who lost his aunt in the crash.

The survivor, Gautam Gupta, on Thursday recounted the moments leading up to the horrific speed-



Deputy Chief Minister Aiit Pawar on Thursday said three persons injured in the boat tragedy

Making a statement in the Lower House of the state legislature, he said the third injured

The driver of the naval speed boat and other concerned have been booked under clause

106 (1) (causing death by negligence), 125 (a), 125 (b) (rash or negligent acts that put

human life or personal safety at risk), 282 (whoever navigates any vessel in a manner

so rash or negligent as to endanger human life), 324 (3), 324 (5) (mischief causing

"The rescue operations are still continuing. Out of the 110 passengers, 96 have been

damage to property) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), he added.

off Mumbai coast includes a four-year-old girl and an eight months pregnant woman.

"The condition of the four-year-old girl and the pregnant woman is stable," he said.

Four-year-old girl, pregnant woman among three injured

boat-ferry collision on Wednesday afternoon that claimed the lives of 14 individuals, including Navy personnel.

The ferry was on its way to Elephanta Island, which has a collection of ancient caves, from the Gateway of India in south Mumbai when it sank off the city coast after the collision.

"The driver was in a play-Gupta, a vegetable ven-

ful mood, zig-zagging through the waters. Suddenly, he turned the speedboat and headed directly towards us. He must have thought he could pass by our ferry narrowly, but his stunt ended in tragedy," Gupta said. Initially, Gupta did not grasp the gravity of the situation.

"One occupant from the speedboat was thrown onto our ferry. We assumed our ferry was safe and that no damage had occurred. But soon, the ferry began to

ioining Palghar district. was on the ferry 'Neel Kamal' with his aunt and relatives who had travelled to Mumbai to attend his wedding last week.

"I met my aunt after many years. She came for my wedding, and I took her for sightseeing and a ferry ride in the sea. I had no idea it would be the last day of her life," said a distressed

Gupta, contesting the Navy's claim of "engine failure" in the speedboat leading to the crash, described the vessel's driver as someone who was "showing off."

He said many passengers, including himself, were busy recording videos of the speedboat as the driver zig-zagged through the waters. "It felt like a display," Gupta said.

As they headed towards Elephanta Island, he said the speedboat approached with 5 to 6 people on board.



Shiv Sena MLAs stage a protest against Congress party on the Vidhan Bhavan premises in Nagpur on

### Bhuse's son unhurt

Nashik: Four persons suffered injuries in an accivi Kadam defended for 3:00. dent involving three vehi-3:20 min to dash the hopes cles, including one carrying of Shri Samarth of victory. the son of Maharashtra minister Dada Bhuse's son, Sonam Shelar of Shri Samarth defended for 2:10 in Malegaon on Thursday,

min and dismissed one play-

er in attack. Grantha War-

ghade defended 1.20 min.

and dismissed one player in

attack, whereas Yukta Patel

All-rounder: Adhiraj

Gurav (Om Saishwar), Kad-

ambari Teravankar (Om

defended 1.20 min.

competition:

Samarth)

Saishwar).

The minster's son Avishkar Bhuse was not injured in the accident that occurred at around 4 am, he said.

an official said.

The first four winning It was alleged that two teams of the competition vehicles tried to overtake were awarded Rs. 7,000, from both sides of the Bo-5,000, 3,000 and 2,000 and lero in which Avishkar and trophies respectively. two of his friends were The best players of the travelling. They were returning from a Ganesh tem-

Best Defender: ple, he said. The Malegaon Chhavani Prathamesh Tarpe (Saraswati), Sonam Shelar (Shri police have registered a case for rash driving, en-Best Attacker: Mahek dangering life or personal Aadwade (Saraswati), Arya safety and mischief and Achrekar (Om Saishwar) further investigations are

> underway, he added. Shiv Sena's Bhuse represents the Malegaon Outer assembly constituency.

### Saraswati Mandir, Om Saishwar win title

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Saraswati Mandir High School and Om Saishwar Seva Mandal won the title in the boys and girls groups respectively in the Under-14 Sub Junior Mumbai District Kho-Kho Championships organised by the Maharashtra Amateur Sports Association at Matunga

In the boys final, Saraswati Mandir defeated Om Saishwar Sewa Mandal, the two-time champions, by two points, 8-6 (6-4, 2-2). For Saraswati Mandir, Varun Gupta (5 min. defense and 1 point), Prathamesh Tarpe (5.40 min. defense and 4 points), Mahek Aadwade (1.20, not out 1.20 min defense and 2 points) played

For Om Saishwar, the fight given by Adhiraj Gurav (unbeaten 4 min. de-

beautifully.

Shrathik Gami (2020, 1.40 min. defense), Aarav Satam (1.40 defense and 1 point) and Arnav Rane (1.20 min. defense) went in vain as they missed out on a hattrick of winning the championship. In the girls final, Om

Saishwar Sewa Mandal scored a one-sided victory over Shri Samarth Vyayam Mandir 10-4 by 1 innings and 6 points and pocketed the championship for the first time. Om Saishwar's players played strongly from the beginning and did not give even a single chance to Shri Samarth to raise their heads.

Om Saishwar's Kadambari Teravankar defended 1:30 not out, 1:10 not out and took out one player in attack. Arya Jadhav defended for 2:30 min and dismissed 1 player in the attack. Yashas-

### **Held over** molestation

Pune: The Pune police have arrested the president of a private English medium school in connection with the alleged molestation of a few students by a 39-yearold dance teacher.

We have arrested the president of the school for alleged negligence and failure to do the required verification of the teacher as the alleged acts by the teacher were taking place for the last two years.

"It was the duty of the school to ensure the safety and security of the students and it should have done the necessary due diligence of the teacher, who was involved in the alleged act," said Deputy Commissioner of Police Sambhaji Kadam.

He said that the president of English medium school has been arrested under the Juvenile Justice Act.

Police on Tuesday apprehended a male dance teacher of the school in the city for allegedly molesting an 11-year-old student and another child. He was booked under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO)

On Monday, the accused teacher had allegedly touched the 11-year-old student inappropriately. -PTI

# Modi likely to inaugurate Marathi Sahitya Sammelan

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has indicated his willingness to inaugurate the 98th All India Marathi Literary Convention in the national capital on February 21, former Union minister Sharad Pawar, chairman of the re-

More than 5,000 literature enthusiasts are expected to attend the three-day Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, scheduled to be held at the Talkatora Stadium here.

ception committee of the

event, said on Thursday.

The venue will be named 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Sahitya Nagari' and the hall where the convention will be held will be named after Babasaheb Ambedkar. Pawar said. Two entry gates to the venue will be named after Lokmanya Tilak and Yashwantrao Chavan, he said.

Pawar said he had written to the prime minister inviting him to inaugurate the convention. He said there were inquiries from the Prime Minister's Office regarding the time of the inaugural function, which was an indication that Modi was inclined to attend the

Pawar said if the prime minister agrees to attend the convention, the inaugural function could be shifted to Vigyan Bhawan. Pawar said an invitation

has also been extended to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and he would soon be writing to the two deputy CMs. He said Marathi-speak

ing people from the world over, including Pakistan, have expressed their desire to attend the event.

The literary event is returning to the national capital after 71 years. The event was last held in Delhi in 1954 when freedom fighter and senior Congress leader Kakasaheb Gadgil was the chairman of the reception committee and prominent Sanskrit scholar Lakshman Shastri Joshi was the president of the convention.

The then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had inaugurated the event.

Writer and folk culture researcher Tara Bhawalkar has been elected as the president of the convention, becoming the sixth woman to hold the post.

### Terror funds used in polls: Fadnavis

is a Navy personnel and his condition is serious.

Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said the Anti-Terrorism Squad is probing across 21 states with 201 acthe use of terror funds in the recent assembly polls and asserted there was "evidence of foreign interference in Indian elections".

rescued," Pawar said.

Fadnavis referred to a case being probed in Malegaon in the state's Nashik district as well as a meeting held in Nepal which deliberated on removal of EVMs and the need for ballot papers in polls.

Speaking in the assembly, Fadnavis said the opposition used all means to win the state polls.

"To win elections, vote jihad was spoken about. Seventeen demands were given to you and you keep quiet. This year, in Malegaon, some youth complained to police about Rs 114 crore in benami money being deposited into their accounts. The accused, Siraj Mohammad, used Aadhaar and PAN details of 14 individuals to create 14 accounts in Nashik Merchants Cooperative Bank in Malegaon," the CM said.

The Rs 114 crore deposited in this manner was then diverted to Siraj Mohammad and 21 other ac-

Nagpur: Chief Minister counts, he said, adding the case is not restricted to Malegon but is spread counts seeing transactions to the tune of Rs 1000 crore.

> Out of the Rs 1000 crore, Rs 600 crore was sent to Dubai and Rs 100 crore was used for different purposes in the Maharashtra polls, Fadnavis said. "The ATS is probing it as

> part of terror funding. There was evidence of foreign interference in Indian elections. The opposition is allowing their shoulders to be used by someone else,' Fadnavis said.

> On November 15 this year, a meeting was held in Nepal capital Kathmandu that was attended by some organisations which took part in the (Rahul Gandhiled) Bharat Jodo Yatra and issues like opposing electronic voting machines (EVMs) and introduction of ballot papers in Maharashtra and BJP-ruled states were discussed. Forty of the 180 outfits that took part in the Bharat Jodo Yatra were named as frontal organisations when the Congress-(undivided) NCP ruled Maharashtra and the UPA was in power at the Centre, he pointed out.



Workers put up a tent during preparations for the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj on Thursday.

### Akanksha in second round

**By Correspondent** 

Mumbai: India's top seeded Akanksha Salunkhe defeated compatriot Tanvi Khanna 11-3, 11-8, 8-11, 8-11, 12-10 in a women's secod-round match of the 79th Western India Slam, a USD 9,000 prize-money Professional Squash Association (PSA) Challenger event played at the CCI on Thursday.

Meanwhile Hong Hong's Bobo Lam sored a shock win over 4th seed Malta's Colette Sultana 9-11, 11-3, 11-2, 11-9.

In Men' competition, Ser-

bia's top seed Viktor Byrtus defeated India's Suraj Kumar Chand (IND) 11-6, 11-7,

Top seed Viktor Byrtus (CZE) bt. Suraj Kumar Chand (IND) 11-6, 11-7, 11-4;

Results - Women (round 2): Bobo Lam (HKG) bt. 4-Colette Sultana (MLT) 9-11, 11-3, 11-2, 11-9; 5-Jana Swaify (EGY) bt. Janet Vidhi (IND) 11-1, 11-3, 11-2; 1-Akanksha Salunkhe (IND) bt. Tanvi Khanna (IND) 11-3, 11-8, 8-11, 8-11, 12-10; Sze Wing Wai (HKG) bt. 7-Tamara Holzbauerová (CZE)3-0: 12-10, 11-4, 11-9; Sunita Patel

(IND) bt. Mahak Talati (IND) 11-1, 11-2, 11-1; Pooia Arthi Raghu (IND) bt. Mehak Dinesh Gupta (IND) 11-2, 11-1, 11-1,

Men (round 2): 1-Viktor Byrtus (CZE) bt. Suraj Kumar Chand (IND) 11-6, 11-7, 11-4; 7-Wailok To (HKG) bt. Tay Jun Qian (MAS) 11-6, 12-10. 11-4: Abhishek Pradhan (IND) bt. Shamil Wakeel (SRI) 4-11, 12-10, 11-7, 11-7; Rahul Baitha (IND) bt. 8-Shing Fung Lam (HKG) 4-11, 12-10, 17-15, 11-3; 4-Rowan Damming (NED) bt. Lap Man Au (HKG) 11-2, 12-10,

# Developed countries spent more on fossil fuel

New Delhi: Developed countries spent USD 378 billion subsidising fossil fuels in 2023, more than the USD 300 billion they have collectively committed to provide annually to the developing world by 2035 to tackle climate change, ac-

cording to the latest data. An analysis by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) showed that government support for fossil fuels reached at least USD 1.5 trillion in 2023, the secondhighest annual total on record, after 2022 when the Russia-Ukraine war triggered a global fossil fuel price crisis.

The 10 largest subsidisers of fossil fuels in 2023 included Russia, Germany, Iran, China, Japan, India, Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, France, and Indonesia.

The data revealed that 23 developed nations (Annex II countries) -- mandated under the UN climate convention to provide climate finance to the developing world -- spent USD 378 billion on fossil fuel



At the UN climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, last month, these nations committed to providing USD 300 billion to developing countries by 2035 to help them tackle climate change -- a far cry from the USD 1.3 trillion that the Global South needs

annually to cope with the rapidly warming world.

India, Bolivia, Nigeria, and Malawi, speaking on behalf of a group of 45 least developed countries (LDCs), severely criticised the new climate finance package for the developing

India argued that USD 300 billion is insufficient to implement ambitious national climate plans known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and pointed out that when adjusted for inflation, it falls short of the previous USD

100 billion goal agreed in

IISD researchers said developed countries spending USD 378 billion on fossil fuel subsidies shows that public funds are available but are being "directed in the wrong direction". They suggested that fiscal space freed up through fossil fuel subsidy reforms could be redirected to meet climate finance commitments.

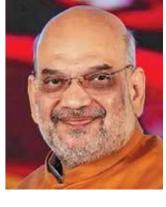
Fossil fuels -- coal, oil, and gas -- are the largest contributors to climate change, accounting for over 75 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions.

Although many governments have taken steps to reduce the carbon intensity of their economies, certain policies still encourage fossil fuel production and consumption. Fossil fuel subsidies are a prime example of such policies.

A fossil fuel subsidy refers to a government intervention that provides benefits or preferences for fossil fuel production or consumption relative to alternatives.

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

"We will achieve the goal of 'terrorfree Jammu and Kashmir' at the earliest. All necessary resources will be allocated to support this mission."



Amit Shah, Union Minister, Home

# 'Rahul came very close to me, I really felt very uncomfortable'

New Delhi: Rajya Sabha proceedings were disrupted on Thursday due to protests by the treasury benches, which alleged misconduct by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi towards BJP MPs, and the opposition parties which demanded a discussion on Union Minister Amit Shah's remarks on Dr. Ambedkar.

Treasury bench members started sloganeering to demand action against the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, after BJP member S Phangnon Konyak alleged that he shouted at her when she was protesting on the Parliament premises

As BJP leaders alleged that two other MPs were injured due to Gandhi's actions and expressed outrage at his conduct, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar said Konyak had met him in his chamber and he was looking into her complaint.

DMK leader Tiruchi Siva contested the allegations against Gandhi and added that the Congress leader has said that he was pushed by ruling party members

"Today while protesting, it was a peaceful protest. I was standing outside just below the staircase of Makar Dwar. Something happened to me for which I feel really disheartened. Leader of Opposition of Lok Sabha Shri Rahul Gandhi ji came in very close proximity to me. I really felt very uncomfortable and he started shouting at me which I felt is very unbecoming of a leader of the opposition," Konyak said.

The BJP MP from Nagaland said that she could have defended herself but did not do so.

"His action was really bad and I feel disheartened and no lady member, let alone me, an ST (scheduled tribe) member



Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and other INDIA bloc members during a protest demanding the resignation of Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Thursday. PicPTI



BJP MPs stage a protest alleging insult of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar by the Congress party at Parliament complex in New Delhi on Thursday.

"Will @RahulGandhi

Parliament is not his

personal fiefdom. His

arrogance, sense of

entitlement and

feudal behaviour

today has caused

grievous injuries to

put life in danger."

elected MPs and has

not cowards but if our people

will also start manhandling like

Rahul Gandhi then how will de-

mocracy work. Therefore the

entire Congress party should

Dharmendra

**Pradhan**, Union

Minister, Education

ever grow up? The

from Nagaland, should not be made to feel like this. So, I seek your protection for this letter for which I have already shared notice to you," Konyak.

She was given a chance to speak after Rajya Sabha Secretary-General PC Mody laid a copy of the ruling on the noconfidence motion against Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar without reading out the ruling.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju alleged Rahul Gandhi had "pushed" a female MP and "charged" at her "physically". He said that Rahul Gandhi pushed two more members with such force that they were bleeding and had been hospitalised.

"This behaviour of the Congress party is shameful beyond our belief. We have numbers. We are not going to be afraid but we don't want to plummet the standard of Parliament by manhandling to this low. I plead to

### Ruckus in Lok Sabha over Shah's remarks

Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day on Thursday amid continuous noisy protests by opposition benches over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks related to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The House was adjourned for the first time soon after it met at 11 am following noisy protests by the Opposition seeking an apology from Shah for his remarks on Ambedkar.

As soon as the House met, opposition members were on their feet raising their voices and staging protests. Speaker Om Birla tried to pacify them and announced the demise of former Union minister EV K S Elangovan, who was a member of the Lok Sabha from Tamil Nadu.

After he paid tributes to the departed leader, the House observed silence for sometime. As soon as the obituary reference was over, the opposition members again staged noisy protests.

you -- all Congress members --

that the entire Congress should

apologise to this House and the

He said Parliament is not a

nation." Rijiju said.

Even before the House re-assembled at 2 pm, opposition members, including Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi, were raising slogans including 'Jai Bhim', holding posters of the iconic leader. At 2 pm, the noisy protests continued and Dilip Saikia, who was in the Chair, adjourned the proceedings for the day. While he was announcing that the House

Birla immediately adjourned the House till 2 pm.

proceedings were being adjourned, some Congress MPs came near the Chair. House marshals were seen protecting the Chair as Saikia left the Lok Sabha chamber. The opposition sloganeering continued well after adjournment was announced till the BJP and other ruling alliance members had left the House chamber. The government had listed a resolution for Thursday to refer the two bills on simultaneous polls to a joint committee of the two Houses.

> are agitated. Had we also manhandled in the same manner then what would have been the situation?

"We have numbers. We are

not only apologise to the Parliament but to the entire nation," Rijiju said.

Dhankar said that he has received communication from Konyak and she also met in his chamber. "I am looking into it. She was literally in tears.... she could never believe that as a lady

member of Parliament," Dhankar. DMK's Tiruchi Siva contested

member she could suffer so

much at the hands of another

the claims made by the treasury bench members. "This is the version of one

side. There was a demonstration going on outside and Mr Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in the other house. is a very senior person and he has complained that he was only pushed. We respect all elder members. We respect every woman in this country. Nothing has happened of that sort,

### Notice seeking Dhankhar's removal dismissed: Sources

New Delhi: Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh on Thursday dismissed the impeachment notice given by the Opposition seeking the removal of Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar while ruling it as an act of impropriety, being severely flawed and drawn in haste to mar his reputation, sources said.

In his ruling, which was tabled in the House by Raiya Sabha secretary general PC Mody, the deputy chairman said the impeachment notice is part of a design to denigrate the nation's constitutional institutions and malign the incumbent Vice President, the sources said. At least 60 opposition

members had signed the notice for removal of Dhankhar from his post on December 10, alleging that they did not have trust in him and that he was "biased". The notice was moved by the opposition members under Article 67(b) of the Constitution as intention of a no-confidence motion against the Vice President of India.

The deputy chairman ruled that the gravity of this "personally targeted" notice which is bereft of facts and aimed at securing



publicity.

He also held that the notice was a "misadventure" in "deliberate trivialising and demeaning" of the high constitutional office of the Vice President of the largest democracy. Worrisomely for the

prestige of Parliament and its members, the notice is replete with assertions only to malign the incumbent Vice President, the deputy chairman ruled, the

The deputy chairman in his ruling said the notice invoked Article 67(b) peremptorily mandates 'at least 14 days' prior notice for any resolution contemplating the Vice President's removal.

Thus the December 10, 2024 notice of intention could permit such a resolution only after December 24, 2024, he noted, adding that the current 266th session of the Council of States, as notified on November 6, 2024, commenced on November 25 and is scheduled to conclude on December 20, 2024, as known to all signatories.

In full know of the situation that the resolution cannot be brought during this session, this was initiated only to set a narrative against second highest constitutional office and the Vice President, the deputy chairman said

Harivansh also said the notice's "lack of bona fides", and subsequent events unfolding revealed "it being a calculated unwholesome attempt to garnish publicity; run down the constitutional institution; insinuate the personal image of the incumbent Vice President-notably, the first from the agricultural community to hold this office in the history of independent India". Sources said the deputy chairman has also ruled that the prejudicial intent manifested through orchestration of a coordinated media campaign, including a televised press conference initiated by the LoP and Chief whip of Congress.



wrestling arena and a member

of Parliament cannot raise

beaten our two MPs, our MPs

"The way Rahul Gandhi has

hands on any other member.

Security forces personnel during an encounter with terrorists at Kadder in Kulgam district, J & K on Thursday.

### Five terrorists killed, two security personnel injured

jahideen terrorists, including a self-styled top commander of the outfit, were killed in an encounter with security forces in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, officials said here.

Two security forces personnel sustained injuries in the operation that was launched in the early hours of the day, they said.

Security forces launched a cordon and search opera-

tion at Kadder in Behibagh area of the district on Wednesday night following information about the presence of suspected terrorists there, the officials said.

They said the search operation turned into an encounter as the terrorists opened fire on security forces, who retaliated.

The slain ultras include a self-styled commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen Farooq Ahmad Bhat alias Nali, who was allegedly in-

volved in a series of terror related crimes in south Kashmir area

The other ultras killed in the operation have been identified as Irfan Lone, Adil Hussain, Mushtaq Itoo and Yasir Javaid, all local residents.

Search operations were continuing in the area as police requested local residents not to go close to the encounter site due to safety

### Kolkata Doctor Rape and Murder Case

he said.

### Parents move Calcutta HC seeking fresh probe

Kolkata: The parents of and Hospital ex-principal the doctor who was raped and murdered at the RG lice station's officer-in-Kar hospital moved the Calcutta High Court on Thursday, seeking a fresh investigation into the crime.

Expressing a lack of confidence in the ongoing probe into the incident that led to huge protests, they prayed for a direction for a fresh investigation into the rape and murder of their daughter.

Sandip Ghosh and Tala pocharge Abhijit Mondal in the case. They were granted bail

as the CBI failed to file

charge sheets against them within the 90-day statutory period, according to their lawvers While Ghosh was accused of tampering with

evidence in the case, the police officer was accused



Justice Tirthankar Ghosh asked their lawyer to add the CBI, which is probing the case, as a party in the petition and mention the matter again before the court on Monday.

The on-duty postgraduate trainee doctor's body was found in the seminar room of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9.

The Sealdah court on December 13 granted bail to RG Kar Medical College

of delaying the filing of an FIR after the body was found.

CBI has filed a charge sheet against the prime accused, Sanjay Roy.

In its charge sheet, the CBI said Roy, who was working as a civic volunteer with the local police, allegedly committed the crime when the victim had gone to sleep in the hospital's seminar room during a

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

"Amit Shah has gone mad. He is obviously full of hatred for our revered Babasaheb. I strongly condemn



Of course, I want Shah out of the cabinet. He should resign. Not only that, he should give up politics."

> Lalu Prasad Yadav, Supremo, RJD

# Srinagar: The CPI(M) and Peo-

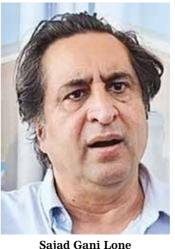
ple's Conference on Thursday criticised the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (BOSE) for removing the chapter on the life of revered saint Sheikh Noor-ud-din Noorani from the 9th-grade textbook, with former Minister Sajad Gani Lone calling it "cultural terrorism."

However, ruling National Conference spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq said the chapter on the saint will not be removed from the textbooks and the state education minister had asked the officials concerned to rectify the issue.

"The chapter on Sheikh-ul-Alam will not be removed from textbooks. The Education Minister has directed the Principal Secretary to address and rectify the issue found in the PDF version," Sadiq told reporters here.

Taking to X, CPI MLA M Y Tarigami had called the incident deeply troubling and urged CM Omar Abdullah to intervene to ensure that the chapter is reinstated.

"It is deeply troubling that an entire chapter on the revered Sufi saint Sheikh-ul-Alam has been dropped from the Class IX textbook. This censorship, carried out prior to the Assembly polls, is unacceptable to a society rooted in rich Sufi traditions," Tarigami



Parties condemn removal of chapter on revered sufi saint

Sajad Gani Lone

posted on his X handle.

"I urge Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to intervene and ensure that this crucial chapter is reinstated, thereby preserving and honouring our rich cultural and Sufi heritage," he added.

People's Conference chief Sajjad Lone said that the BOSE had removed a chapter based on the life of the revered saint of Kashmir from the Class 9 textbooks and called it "an assault on our culture and ethos.'

"We have all revered him, and people, irrespective of religion, hold him in the highest esteem. This is pure cultural terrorism. It is an assault on our culture and

ethos. I, as a Kashmiri, strongly condemn it," Lone posted on X.

The former minister said that the teachings of the great saint are a beacon of hope in these troubled times filled with "violence, greed and hatred.'

"More than ever, the current times are smudged with violence, greed, and hatred. In these times, our great saint is a beacon of hope and a role model for emulation,"

"And for those who removed the chapter from BOSE - our great saint and his saintly ways were etched in our hearts and minds long before BOSE came into existence," he added. -PTI

# Experts call for higher 'Sin Tax' on tobacco

New Delhi: Ahead of a crucial GST Council meeting on tax rationalisation health and economic experts have called for a higher 'Sin Tax' on tobacco and similar harmful products to curb their consumption and bolster public health and the economy.

At a webinar organised by 'Tobacco Free India', a citizens' initiative, experts endorsed the recent recommendation by the Group of Ministers (GoM) for a 35 per cent 'Sin Tax' slab on tobacco products, up from the current 28 per cent.

They argued that increasing taxes on tobacco would not only save lives but also strengthen the economy and advance the vision of a healthy and Viksit Bharat.

They emphasised that this step would curb tobacco consumption and fund preventive healthcare initiatives

"Tobacco-related diseases place an unsustainable burden on India's health system. Tax hikes have proven globally effective in reducing tobacco consumption," said Dr Alok Thakar, Head of the National Cancer Institute, Govt. of India and Professor at AIIMS, New Delhi.

He also suggested that India must include all tobacco products under a stronger tax net to prevent users from shifting to cheaper, harmful alternatives

The GST Council,



human capital. For the past

decade, tax burdens on to-

bacco products have stead-

ily declined in real terms.

falling short of global

benchmarks. Reversing

this trend through the Sin

Tax will send a strong sig-

nal about prioritizing pub-

He added that India's Na-

tional Health Policy (2017)

and the Parliamentary

Standing Committee on

Health (2022) have already

prioritized tobacco taxa-

tion as a proven measure to

with India's vision for

growth, where people's

well-being drives economic

progress," Dr. Mohan

Dr Prashant Kumar Sin-

gh, scientist at ICMR's Na-

tional Institute of Cancer

Prevention and Research

(NICPR), highlighted to-

bacco related mortality,

noting that such diseases

caused 2.6 million deaths

"This aligns taxation

reduce consumption.

reiterated.

lic health," he said.

chaired by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, is scheduled to meet on December 21 to deliberate on the GoM's proposals.

These include introducing a new 35 per cent slab for Sin Goods like tobacco and aerated drinks while reducing GST rates on essential goods like notebooks, bottled water and bicycles as well as lowering premiums on health and life insurance.

Experts argue that the increased revenue from Sin Goods could help offset these rate cuts, offering relief to citizens while advancing public health

Professor of Health Economics at the University of Lucknow Dr Arvind Mohan linked tobacco taxation with India's aspiration to become a developed

"Tobacco use compromises our greatest asset? between 2019 and 2021 in

He emphasised that this is a health emergency demanding urgent intervention.

He highlighted the need to reverse affordability trends caused by rising incomes and stagnant taxation, explaining that increased taxes are not just a revenue tool but a critical step towards discouraging harmful consumption.

"Redirecting revenue from tobacco taxation to preventive healthcare can help India achieve its goal of Universal Healthcare," Dr Singh said.

Providing a fiscal analysis, Dr. Pritam Datta, Fellow at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), warned about the country's lagging tax rates

"The WHO recommends tobacco taxes should constitute at least 75 per cent of the retail price. In India, however, taxes currently account for just 57.6 per cent for cigarettes and as low as 22 per cent for machine-made bidi," he said.

With the Compensation Cess set to end in March 2026, Dr Datta emphasized the need for urgent action.

"If effective tax measures are not implemented, India risks further declining tax rates on tobacco. Aligning with WHO standards will ensure strong compliance, reduced consumption, and better health outcomes," he

### 'Diversify into ethanol'

New Delhi: Road, Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday called upon the sugar industry to explore multiple avenues for diversification, including ethanoldiesel blending and green hydrogen production.

Addressing the annual general meeting of the Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) virtually, the minister emphasised the need for setting up ethanol and CNG pumps, including through private sector participation.

There is a huge potential for flex engines, ethanolbased engines, and bioCNG as alternatives to fossil

Five automakers including Tatas, Suzuki, and Toyota are set to launch flex engine fuel cars in the market, he said and urged the tractor makers to start manufacturing tractors on alternative fuels.

The minister suggested examining possibilities of exporting ethanol to neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka to expand market opportunities.

Bio-bitumen production using lignin and biomass sources, along with green hydrogen generation from sugar industry infrastructure, were highlighted as potential areas for expansion.

He emphasised the potential of green hydrogen as an alternative fuel source and suggested using existing infrastructure in the sugar and ethanol industries to produce green hydrogen. "I know that making sugar is not an attractive job, but at the same time, because of ethanol, CNG, hydrogen and other by-products, we can increase the productivity and profitability in industry."



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the exhibition put up by defence industries during the Annual Convention of Indian National Academy of Engineering in New Delhi on Thursday.

# Indian markets join global selloff, Sensex sinks

Mumbai: Equity benchmark Sensex on Thursday plunged about 965 points to crash below the 80,000 level due to heavy selling in global equities after the US Federal Reserve signalled fewer rate cuts next year.

Besides, deep losses in consumer durables, banking and IT stocks amid foreign fund outflows added to the gloom, analysts said.

Falling for the fourth day running, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 964.15 points or 1.20 per cent to settle at 79,218.05. During the day, the bluechip index cracked 1,162.12 points or 1.44 per cent to 79.020.08.

The NSE Nifty tumbled

247.15 points or 1.02 per cent to sink below the 24,000 mark at 23,951,70.

"The Indian market saw a widespread decline following a global sell-off driven by the US Fed's hawkish stance on interest rates. Sectors sensitive to interest rates, such as banking and real estate, bore the brunt.

"However, the BoJ's decision to keep its interest rate steady, which surprised economists, aided in reducing the selling pressure. Despite this, investor caution persisted amid ongoing FII selling, with a strategic shift towards defensive sectors like pharma as evidenced by their outperformance," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the 30 blue-chip pack, Infosys, Bajaj Finserv, JSW Steel, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, ICICI Bank, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra were the biggest laggards.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Power Grid and Hindustan Unilever were the gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were trading in the negative territory. Wall Street ended sharply lower on Wednesday.

### **Coal-based** power rises

New Delhi: The government on Thursday said coal-based power generation rose 3.87 per cent in the April-October period of the current fiscal year.

"...there was a significant growth of 3.87 per cent in coal-based power generation from April 2024 to October 2024 compared to the same period last year," the coal ministry said.

The ministry further said the imports for blending purposes by thermal power plants dropped 19.5 per cent during the same period.

This decline emphasises the country's commitment to achieve self-sufficiency in coal production and reducing reliance on imports

"Increase in coal import for power sector is attributed to the import of coal by imported coal-based power plants (designed to utilise imported coal only) i.e. 30.04 MT during this period, up from 21.71 MT, reaching a growth of 38.4 per cent in the corresponding timeframe last year," it said. Coal imports during April-October period of the current fiscal year dropped 3.1 per cent to 149.39 million tonnes (MT) over 154.17 MT in the corresponding period of the last financial year.

# Remove 20 per cent export duty on onions: Ajit

Thursday urged the BJPled Centre to remove the 20 per cent levy on onion exports and provide relief to the grower of the bulbous vegetable

In a letter to Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, Pawar highlighted the issues concerning farmers from Nashik district, where onion is grown in large quantities. "The onions grown here (in Nashik) are available in other states of India and also exported in large quantities. As of today, onions from the summer yield have been exhausted and the fresh crop has reached various Market Committees in Maharashtra," Pawar wrote.

Due to the arrival of a large stock of onions, farmers are now in distress as they are forced to sell their produce at a much lower rate since they have yet to receive any minimum support price, said Pawar. They are selling onions at an average of Rs 2,400 per quintal, he said.

Unseasonal rains and changing climate have al-

Nagpur: Deputy Chief ready caused a huge dent in ers, wrote the NCP leader. who is currently in Nagpur for the Winter Session of Maharashtra's state legislature.

NCP is a partner of the BJP in the ruling Mahayuti coalition in Maharashtra.

If they are further made to receive a rate less than the production cost, the onion farmers will incur a huge loss, said Pawar.

Onions from Maharashtra are in great demand abroad, he said. While Maharashtra is the largest onion-producing state in the country. Lasalgaon in the Nashik district has Asia's largest wholesale market for it.

The Centre has levied a 20 per cent duty on the export of onions due to which the kitchen staple from the state loses its competitiveness in international markets, according to farmers.

The 20 per cent export duty on onions should be removed so that the farmers can heave a sigh of relief and recover some of their losses, Pawar wrote in



bandh call in protest against the Union Minister Amit Shah's remarks on BR Ambedkar in Solapur on Thursday.

### Spanish to buy Titanic builder

**London:** The future of the Northern Ireland-based Harland and Wolff shipbuilder, which famously built the Titanic, appears to have been safeguarded on Thursday after the Spanish state-owned business Navantia stepped in to buy it.

The purchase of the company, which was placed into a type of bankruptcy in September for the second time in five years. is subject to regulatory approval.

If approved, the deal will secure 1,000 jobs at Harland and Wolff's four shipyards, including at the iconic one in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Two of the others are in Scotland, while the fourth is in England.

The deal is important for the Royal Navy as Harland and Wolff is a subcontractor in part of a consortium that landed a major contract to build new ships. Navantia's UK, division is the main contractor on that contract.

'This deal is a major vote of confidence in the UK

from Navantia, which will not only secure the future of UK shipbuilding, but protect 1,000 jobs across the country and bring future investment into shipbuilding right across the UK," Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said. He wouldn't be drawn on how much extra taxpayers' cash would be spent on the contract for Royal Navy support vessels to get a deal to help Harland and Wolff over the line.

# Lanka lifts vehicle import ban first time in four years

Colombo: Sri Lanka has tention of safeguarding forlift the vehicles import ban which was put in place in 2020 to ease the pressure on foreign exchange reserves due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

By the gazette issued on Wednesday the importation of public transport vehicles have been allowed for the first time since early 2020.

The Ministry of Finance said the policy to ban vehicle imports was implemented with the intention of easing the pressure on foreign exchange reserves due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic downturn of 2022.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake addressing Parliament on Wednesday said the importing cars for private use will be allowed from February 2025.

The decision is subject to rules so as to protect the island nation's effort to build foreign reserves. All importers must sell

their imports within three months, if not a three per cent fee would be charged. "These conditions have

been imposed with the in-

the country by way of discouraging importation of an excessive number of vehicles and keeping unnecessary stock of motor vehicles by the importers while spending substan-

tial amounts of foreign exchange," a statement said.

The vehicle importers association hailed the move. They had lobbied the government extensively to lift the import ban.

The IMF bailout conditions dictate that Sri Lanka must build up its forex reserves to prevent a crisis similar to 2022 when shortage of foreign reserves led to the absence of fuel and essentials.

The IMF in recognition of Sri Lanka's recovery from the economic downturn had allowed vehicle imports as a measure of increasing state revenue by way of import duties.

Depleted foreign reserves in April 2022 led to an unprecedented economic crisis in Sri Lanka, forcing the island nation to announce its first-ever sovereign default.

## Women hold only 10 pc key managerial positions:

Mumbai: Women constitute less than 20 per cent of the overall workforce, and only 10 per cent hold key managerial personnel (KMP) positions even as companies are making efforts for diver-

sity, according to a report. Women constitute less than 20 per cent of the overall workforce and hold just over 10 per cent of KMP positions, while female directors account for less than 20 per cent of the total board director positions, according to the 'Mind the Gender Gap' report by CFA Institute and CFA Society

The 'Mind the Gender Gap' report is based on insights from 300 Indian companies through their Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) disclosures.

The report also revealed that women board members and KMPs receive significantly lower compensation compared to their male counterparts, highlighting a gender pay disparity at the top

Female directors earn only 44 per cent of the median salary of their male counterparts, while female KMPs receive less than 25 per cent of the remuneration paid

to male KMPs. it added. The IT sector employs the highest percentage of women (34 per cent), followed by consumer discretionary and financial sector (25 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively), with the lowest women participation in the utilities sector (4 per cent), the report said.

For BoDs, the Real Estate, Information Technology, Consumer Staples, Health Care, and Consumer Discretionary sectors show a more equitable gender distribution, it added.

However, the Financial Services and Energy sectors exhibit the most pronounced gender imbalance among BoDs, it said.

"There is a pressing need for stronger gender equality initiatives within Indian corporate

structures. While there has been significant progress, the data reveals persistent gaps in women's representation and remuneration parity, particularly in the senior positions, which require immediate attention from both companies and policymakers," CFA Institute Country Head, India, Arati Porwal said.

Companies with diverse leadership teams demonstrate greater innovation, improved decisionmaking, and enhanced financial performance, she added.

"To achieve this, Indian companies must encourage a culture of inclusion by attracting and retaining female talent and ensuring fair and equitable remuneration practices. CFA Institute, with its analysis and reporting on BRSR parameters, remains committed to bridging the gender diversity gaps and encouraging inclusivity at all levels," she noted.

Corporate India must adopt meaningful initiatives and inclusive strategies to retain female talent, diminish the remuneration gaps, and subsequently pave the way for Indian workplaces to become more diverse and inclusive for women and differentlyabled individuals, CFA Society India CFA Chairperson Rajesh Sehgal said.

### "Women's self-help

**QUOTE OF THE DAY** 

groups have also driven women-led microenterprises. This phenomenon, which can also be seen in other developing countries, has created fertile soil for women



farmers to engage in agritech." Isha Ambani Piramal,

Board Member, Reliance Industries

# Israeli airstrikes hit Yemen's rebel-held capital

**Dubai:** A series of intense Israeli airstrikes shook Yemen's rebel-held capital and a port city early Thursday and killed at least nine people, officials said, shortly after a Houthi missile targeted central Israel,

The strikes further escalate Israel's campaign against the Iranian-backed Houthis, who have so far avoided the same level of intense military strikes that have targeted the Hamas militant group and Hezbollah, members of Tehran's self-described "Axis of Resistance."

Israel and Iran have exchanged direct fire while the government of Syria, an enemy of Israel since its founding in 1948, collapsed in the face of a rebel advance as the region's wars have upended Iran's network of allied groups.

Thursday's strikes risk further escalating conflict with the Houthis whose attacks on the Red Sea corridor have drastically impacted global shipping.

The Houthi-controlled satellite channel al-Masirah said that some of the strikes targeted power stations in the capital, as well as the Ras Isa oil terminal on the Red Sea. The channel, citing its correspondent in the port city of Hodeida, said at least seven people had been killed at a port, while another two had been killed at the Ras Isa oil terminal.

An Israeli military statement offered no specifics on



The targets struck by

the (Israeli military)

military purpose. The

regime, preventing it

from exploiting the

targets for military

and terrorist purposes,

smuggling of Iranian

weapons to the region.

Israel will not hesitate

**Rear Adm Daniel** 

Hagari, Military

Spokesman, Israel

missile attack, but said an

important military state-

ment would be issued in the

coming hours, following a

pattern of how they claim

to act in order to

citizens from the

Houthi attacks."

defend itself and its

strikes degrade the

were used by the

Houthi forces for

**Houthi terrorist** 

including the

Rear Adm Daniel Hagari, an Israeli military spokesman, said the strikes hit energy and port infrastructure, which he alleged the rebels "have been using in ways that effectively contributed to their military

Rebel-held Hodeida, some 145 kilometers (90 miles) southwest of Sanaa, has been key for food shipments into Yemen as its decadelong war has gone on. There's also longstanding suspicion that weapons from Iran have been transferred through the port.

The strikes happened just after the Israeli military said its air force intercepted a missile launched from Yemen before it entered country's territory.

"Rocket and missile sirens were sounded following the possibility of falling debris from the interception," the Israeli military said. Sirens sounded near Tel Aviv and the surrounding areas, and a large explosion was heard overhead at the time. The Houthis did not immediately claim the

Israel previously struck Hodeida and its oil infrastructure in July after a Houthi drone attack killed one person and wounded 10

American forces have also launched a series of strikes on the Houthis over nearly a year due to Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea corridor. On Monday, the US military's Central Command said it hit "a key command-and-control facility" operated by the Houthis in Sanaa, later identified as the al-Ardi complex once home to the government's Defense Ministry. But Israel appears to have carried out Thurs-

day's strikes alone. The Houthis have targeted some 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones since the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip started in October 2023 after Hamas' surprise attack on Israel that killed 1 200 people and saw 250 others taken hostage. Israel's grinding offensive in Gaza has killed over 45,000 Palestinians, local health officials say

The Houthis have seized one vessel and sunk two in a campaign that has also killed four sailors. Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by separate U.S.- and European-led coalitions in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets, which have also included Western military



Men hold a replica of the 155th Marine Brigade banner representing the Pacific Fleet while participating in a special military operation in Ukraine during Russian President Vladimir Putin's annual news conference in Moscow, Russia on Thursday.

### French president reviews **Cyclone** situation

Mamoudzou: French President Emmanuel Macron arrived Thursday to the Indian Ocean archipelago of Mayotte to survey the devastation wreaked by Cyclone Chido

Marcon will overfly the area for an aerial appraisal of the damage before visiting the hospital. He will then visit a destroyed neighbourhood.

French authorities said at least 31 people have died and more than 1,500 people were injured, more than 200 critically.

But it's feared hundreds or even thousands of people have died after the strongest cyclone in nearly a century ripped through the French territory of Mayotte off the coast of Af--AP : rica on Saturday.

# 'Oreshnik response to West's weapons'

### THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT USES ANNUAL NEWS **CONFERENCE TO REINFORCE HIS AUTHORITY**

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin boasted about the economy and hailed his troops' gains in Ukraine during his annual news conference and call-in show Thursday, an event he uses to reinforce his authority and demonstrate sweeping control of the country's political scene.

Putin began the tightly choreographed session by saying that Russia's economy is on track to grow by nearly 4 per cent this year. He acknowledged that consumer prices are high, with inflation at 9.3 per cent, but insisted that the economic situation remains "stable."

Putin, who has held power for nearly a quarter-century, also said the military was "advancing toward achieving our goals" in what he calls the special military operation in Ukraine, where his forces have made steady gains.

"The situation is changing radically, we are advancing along the entire front line," he said, asking people in the audience to unfurl a banner presented to him by marines fighting the Ukrainian forces that launched an incursion into Russia's Kursk region.

That incursion has proved a major embarrassment for the Kremlin. Asked when Russian troops will drive Ukrainian forces out, Putin responded that "we will certainly kick them out" but wouldn't say how long it will take.

In response to a question about a new hypersonic intermediate-range ballistic missile that Russia used for the first time last month to strike Ukraine, Putin scoffed at claims by some Western experts that it could be intercepted by NATO's air defences

He mockingly challenged Ukraine's Western allies to a "high-tech duel," suggesting that Moscow could give advance notice of a strike on Kviv with the Oreshnik missile — and see if the West could protect the city. "Let's see what happens, he added with a smile.

Putin said Russia's use of Oreshnik was a response to the West granting permission for Kyiv to use their longer-range weapons for strikes. He threatened that Moscow could launch more strikes on Ukraine with the

# Assad's fall spurs hope for families split by Golan Height

Majdal Shams (Golan Heights): The four sisters gathered by the side of the road, craning their necks to peer far beyond the razor wire-reinforced fence snaking across the mountain. One took off her jacket and waved it slowly above her head. The six Safadi sisters belong to the Druze community, one of the Middle East's most insular religious minorities. Its population is spread across Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Golan Heights, a rocky plateau that Israel seized from Syria in 1967 and annexed in 1981.

The US is the only country to recognise Israel's control; the rest of the world considers the Golan Heights occupied Syrian territory. Israel's seizure of the Golan Heights split families apart.

Five of the six Safadi sisters and their parents live in Majdal Shams, a Druze town next to the buffer zone created between the Israelicontrolled Golan Heights and Syria. But the sixth, 49-year-old Sawsan, mar-



ried a man from Jaramana, a town on the outskirts of the Syrian capital, Damascus, 27 years ago and has lived in Syria ever since. They have land in the buffer zone, where they grow olives and apples and also maintain a small house.

With very few visits allowed to relatives over the years, a nearby hill was dubbed "Shouting Hill," where families would gather on either side of the fence and use loudspeakers to speak to each other. The practice declined as the internet made video calls widely accessible, while the Syrian war that began in 2011 made it difficult for those on the Syrian side to reach the buffer zone.

But since the Dec. 8 fall of Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime, families like the Safadis, are starting to revive the practice. They cling to hope, however faint, that regime change will herald a loosening of restrictions between the Israeli-controlled area and Syria that have kept them from their loved ones for so

After Assad fell, the Israeli military pushed through the buffer zone and into Syria proper. It has captured Mount Hermon, Syria's tallest mountain, known as Jabal al Sheikh in Arabic, on the slopes of which lies Majdal Shams.

### Germany worried after Assad's fall

Berlin: Thousands of Syrian doctors work in Germany, and the fall of Bashar Assad is raising concern over the potential consequences for the health sector if many of them were to return home.

Germany became a leading destination for Syrian refugees over the past decade, and some politicians were quick to start talking about encouraging the return of at least some after rebels took Damascus earlier this month

Others noted that the exiles include many wellqualified people and said their departure would hurt Germany — particularly that of doctors and other medical staff.

"Whole areas in the health sector would fall away if all the Syrians who work here now were to leave our country," Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said last week. "For us it is important that we make the offer to the Syrians who are here, who have a job, who have integrated, who are crime-free, whose children go to school, to stay here and be there for our

# US slaps sanctions on Pak's aerospace

Washington: The United States on Wednesday slapped sanctions on four Pakistani entities, including the state-owned flagship aerospace and defence agency -- National Development Complex (NDC) -- on charges of them contributing to Pakistan's ballistic missile programme.

In light of the continuing proliferation threat of Pakistan's long-range missile development, the United States is designating four entities for sanctions which targets proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, the State Department

In addition to the NDC, the three other entities are Akhtar and Sons Private Limited, Affiliates International and Rockside Enterprise. All three are based in Karachi, while the NDC is in

Islamabad. The NDC has worked to acquire items in furtherance of Pakistan's longrange ballistic missile programme -- including special vehicle chassis intended to be used as launch support equipment for ballistic missiles and missile-testing



Representational image

equipment.

The United States assesses that the NDC is responsible for Pakistan's development of ballistic missiles. including the SHAHEENseries ballistic missiles, the State Department said.

Akhtar and Sons Private Limited has worked for the NDC to supply a range of equipment to Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile programme. Affiliates International has facilitated procurement of missile-applicable items for the NDC and others in support of Pakistan's ballistic-missile programme.

Rockside Enterprise has worked for the NDC to sup-

Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile programme, the State Department said. All these entities "having

engaged, or attempted to engage, in activities or transactions that have materially contributed to, or pose a risk of materially contributing to, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or their means of delivery (including missiles capable of delivering such weapons), including any efforts to manufacture, acquire, possess, develop, transport, transfer or use such items, by Pakistan," State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

The NDC -- which is responsible for Pakistan's ballistic missile programme and has worked to acquire items to advance Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile programme -- and Affiliates International, Akhtar and Sons Private Limited, and Rockside Enterprise worked to supply equipment and missile-applicable items to Pakistan's ballistic missile programme, including its long-range missile programme, Miller said.

### **US** govt urges SC to dismiss Rana's plea Washington: The United

States government has urged the Supreme Court to dismiss "the petition for a writ of certiorari" filed by Mumbai-attack convict Tahawwiir Rana a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, against his extradition to India.

India is seeking the extradition of Rana as he is wanted in the Mumbai terror attack case

Having lost the legal battle in lower courts and several federal courts, including the US Court of Appeals for the North Circuit in San Francisco, Rana on November 13 filed a "petition for a writ of certiorari" before the US Supreme Court.

In a long battle, this is Rana's last legal chance to not be extradited to India.

"The petition for a writ of certiorari should be denied," US Solicitor General Elizabeth B Prelogar said in its filing before the Supreme Court on December

Rana is not entitled to relief from extradition to India in this case, she argued in a 20-page submission.

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

"We have seen Bangladesh plunge into political turmoil, with its Hindu, Buddhist and Christian minorities bearing the brunt of violent acts towards their people and

places of worship by a majority Muslim population."

Shri Thanedar, Lawmaker, US

### We share the same fight: Gisele Pelicot Avignon (France): Gisele Pelicot said after 51 men were all found guilty

Thursday in the druggingand-rape trial that turned her into a feminist hero that the ordeal had been "very difficult" and expressed support for other victims of sexual violence. "We share the same

fight," Gisele Pelicot, 72, said in her first words after the court in the southern French city of Avignon handed down prison sentences ranging from three to 20 years in the shocking case that stunned France

### THE FRENCH WOMAN SPEAKS AFTER HER 50 RAPISTS FOUNDS GUILTY and spurred a national

reckoning about the blight of rape culture.

 ${\it Gisele\ Pelicot-whose}$ courage and stoicism have turned her into an internationally recognised figure and an icon for many women — said she was thinking of her grandchildren after enduring more than three months of court hearings that dealt with the nearly decade of rapes and other abuse inflicted on her by her now ex-husband and

his accomplices.

"It's also for them that I led this fight," she said of her grandchildren.

The court sentenced her ex-husband, Dominique Pelicot, to 20 years in prison for drugging and raping her and allowing other men to rape her while she was unconscious.

The sentence was the maximum possible under French law. He was declared guilty of all charges against him. At age 72, it

could mean that he spends men tried in the case. the rest of his life in prison. He won't be eligible to ask for early release until at

tence has been served. Roger Arata, the lead iudge of the court in the southern French city Avignon, told Pelicot to stand for the sentencing. After it was delivered, he sat back

least two-thirds of the sen-

down and cried. Arata read out verdicts one after the other against Pelicot and the 50 other

"You are therefore declared guilty of aggravated rape on the person of Gisele

Pelicot," the judge said as he worked his way through names on the long list of defendants. Pelicot was seated on one

side of the courtroom, facing the defendants and sometimes nodding her head as verdicts were announced. Delivering the guilty verdicts and sentences took Arata just an hour.

Dominique Pelicot's lawyer, Beatrice Zavarro, said that she would weigh a possible appeal. "I wanted Mrs Pelicot to be able to emerge from these hearings in peace, and I think that the verdicts will contribute to this relief for Mrs Pelicot."

Of the 50 accused of rape, just one was acquitted but was found guilty of aggravated sexual assault. Another man was also found guilty on the sexual assault charge that he was tried for — meaning all 51 of the defendants were found guilty in one way or another.

### **EDITORIAL**

### **Fatal Collision**

he catastrophic collision off Mumbai's coast which claimed the lives of 13 people, underscores a chilling lapse in the Indian Navy's operational safeguards. A speedboat, testing a newly fitted engine, veered off course and collided with a passenger ferry bound for Elephanta Island, causing it to capsize. The devastating incident highlights both the perilous nature of naval trials and the question of accountability in safeguarding civilian lives.

While the engine malfunction is believed to have caused the craft to lose control, the tragedy raises alarming questions about the Navy's procedures for testing such critical components.

The questions that must be answered are both simple and profound. Why was a passenger ferry allowed to share waters with a Navy craft conducting a high-speed engine trial? Testing the limits of a newly installed engine cannot come at the cost of human life. Why were there no clear parameters set for conducting such tests in busy shipping lanes, especially when passenger vessels were known to be operating nearby?

This incident is not just a failure of operational procedure but also a stark reminder of the relative indifference to civilian safety. The victims, ordinary citizens simply enjoying a day out, were at the mercy of a Navy craft testing its engine in a scenario that no one could have predicted. And yet, such oversight is precisely the responsibility of the military, an institution tasked with the safety and well-being of its citizens.

It is not the first time that India's defence forces have faced criticism for operational errors that led to public harm. But this incident, with its gruesome toll, demands a new standard. The Navy must rethink how it conducts testing and ensure that civilian life is never again jeopardized for the sake of a trial run. Clear protocols must be established, limiting such tests to areas far from populated routes, and ensuring that the trial vessels are equipped with proper safety measures.

Moreover, the Navy's response in the immediate aftermath of the crash, while swift, should not distract from the systemic failures that allowed this tragedy to unfold. Had the Navy ensured that more rigorous precautions were in place, lives could have been spared. Instead, we are left with an avoidable tragedy and unanswered questions that only add to the heartbreak of those who lost their loved ones.

Given the high volume of civilian vessels in Mumbai's waters, particularly those ferrying passengers to islands like Elephanta, it is crucial that military trials are conducted in designated, off-limits zones to prevent future accidents. Such mishaps, often blamed on lapses in coordination and oversight, reflect systemic issues that have yet to be addressed comprehensively within the military's operational framework. Given the increasing number of civilian boats operating in popular coastal areas across the country, the urgency of implementing more stringent safety measures and conducting trials in controlled environments cannot be overstated.

### **FRANKLY SPEAKING**

# In Failed Marriages, Men Aren't Always the Villains



Aditi Pai

n a wintry Sunday afternoon in Mumbai, an upscale Bandra pizzeria was buzzing with families digging into pizzas and cheesecakes. Amid the din of children and teenagers, a table-for-eight had a group of men intently chatting over endless glasses of wine. Were they metaphorically drowning their sorrows? Probably so. Some were gesticulating animatedly and a few were listing quietly. The mood at the table was sombre but they still, quite obviously, had a common point to bond over. It later emerged that they were all members of a support group for 'divorced dads', men who couldn't shed tears in front of their families or lawyers but sought solace in the company of likeminded sufferers.

Atul Subhash probably didn't have such a support group to lean on. Or friends and family who could help. Or maybe he felt cornered by the system that, according to many men, favours women in such matters. The Bengalurubased techie's suicide has sparked debate, once again, if the domestic violence and divorce laws in India are highly tilted in favour of women. Maybe

The Bengaluru techie's tragic end highlights the unseen wars men fight in broken marriages.

so. But then, it's only a corrective measure to counter the years of oppression and violence that women have faced within their homes. A National Family Healthy Survey conducted between 2019 and 2021 showed some startling figures—that almost 30 per cent of married Indian women had faced some sort of violence. For years, women have been at the receiving end of violent acts; can we forget all those cases of dowry harassment and deaths which probably forced people not to want daughters? Even today, women face abuse—subtle and direct—in their marital homes. Indian laws relating to matters of marriage and protection of women within the household were framed to give women greater rights and a stronger voice and make stringent punishment a deterrent.

It's also equally safe to presume that these laws and rights can be—and are—misused. Subhash's blood-curdling suicide note accused his wife of 'harassment and false cases', drawing attention to the inconvenient social reality that exists but is rarely spoken about—how divorce laws in India are often weaponised against men. Murmurs for a 'national commission for men' are also growing, a year after such a proposal was shot down by the court.

Stirred by the case, all attention turned to the Supreme Court. A bench of the top court commented on the misuse of law, especially section 498(A) of the former Indian Penal Code which is now replaced by the Bharativa Nyay Samhita. The court recognised that 'there has been a growing tendency to misuse provisions like Section 498A of the IPC as a tool for unleashing a personal vendetta against the husband and his family by a wife.' In a society that's seen several years of oppression of women and harassment of young brides, stringent laws tend to protect the woman in a marriage.

For years, calls for addressing the physical, emotional, and financial toll of



divorce on husbands have been dismissed, with allegations of harassment by wives often ignored by courts and society's bias against men persisting. On a busy Friday, the Supreme Court issued eight criteria for determining alimony, likely to guide courts nationwide. On the same day, a PIL sought reforms in dowry and domestic violence laws, which have long protected women but sometimes unfairly penalized men. Meanwhile, prolonged family court battles continue to exact a heavy toll, consuming years that could be spent in better companionship and joy.

Being slammed with accusations of cruelty and violence cannot be easy to handle; having arrest warrants against one's elderly parents in fictional cases of harassment can stab your emotional well-being and having to shell out large sums of money to an estranged wife who probably earns more than you, can be painful and shattering.

pamful and shattering.

Break-ups and divorces are glamourised by the movies, with women swaying to 'break up songs', divorcees finding true love instantly after a legal decree or the 'heroines' digging into ice-cream

tubs to recover from heartbreak. Divorces aren't so smooth in real life, especially as many men would endorse. A health survey that I had read stated that divorce is the second most painful incident in one's life after the death of loved ones. Support groups and seeking professional help from counsellors can be a way of healing and dealing with the pain and loss of a relationship that had once been the focal point of one's life.

Mental health concerns are like an epidemic that's waiting to blow up if not addressed. In times of increased professional competition and stress, fragile relationships, break-down of joint families and friendships moving to the virtual world, the best help can come from professional caregivers. An equal society should have laws that protect the rights of all without gender discrimination. But the onus of implementation lies with those who interpret the laws. Sensitisation of the families of those locked in a divorce battle, lawyers, police and the courts can help both men and women get justice. Marriage and divorce should be personal choices and not ones controlled by law.

### **GLOBAL WATCH**

# The Arakan Army: India's Strategic Ally?

s Bangladesh grapples with economic challenges and rising radicalism, a new crisis along its Myanmar border is contributing to the chaos. The Arakan Army, a formidable ethnic insurgent group from Myanmar, had recently mounted a significant incursion into Bangladesh's southern regions, allegedly capturing areas along the border. While the development has alarmed Dhaka, it raises questions about whether this is a fortuitous development or a carefully calculated strategy by India to manage instability in its eastern neighbourhood.

Bangladesh's internal situation has been deteriorating rapidly ever since the toppling of Sheikh Hasina's government, which was well-disposed towards India. Economic woes, violent atrocities against minorities, and the radical hostility of Islamist groups — particularly those allegedly aligned with Jamaat-e-Islami and Al-Qaeda — have created a toxic mix. The situation is exacerbated by the leadership of Muhammad Yunus, whose policies are viewed as fostering Islamist sentiments. This environment not only destabilizes Bangladesh but poses a direct threat to India, especially in its border states.

Enter the Arakan Army, an insurgent group that has been steadily gaining ground in Myanmar's Rakhine State. With its control over vast stretches of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, the Arakan Army's rise

Whether by design or coincidence, the rise of the Arakan Army and the ensuing chaos along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border have emerged at a moment when India stands to benefit the most.



could serve India's strategic interests in neutralizing the threats emanating from an increasingly unstable Bangladesh. Reports suggest the Arakan Army has declared its opposition to jihadist groups operating in the region, accusing them of atrocities against Buddhists and Hindus and collusion with international terror networks.

This aligns well with India's broader security concerns. By supporting or tacitly enabling the Arakan Army's operations, India could achieve multiple objectives, namely curtailing Islamist extremism.

The Arakan Army's campaign could weaken the influence of radical groups such as the Rohingya Solidarity Army and Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, which are reportedly using Bangladeshi soil as a base for operations against India. By bolstering the Arakan Army's control over the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, India could create a buffer zone that reduces the spillover of jihadist violence into its territory.

A destabilized Bangladesh under Yunus's leadership makes it harder for India to maintain regional stability. The Arakan Army's presence could give India leverage to counterbalance any anti-India policies emanating from Dhaka.

Speculation is rife about whether India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval, known for his unconventional strategies, is behind this de-

velopment. India has long maintained strategic ties with various ethnic armed groups in Myanmar, including the Arakan Army. Given the current geopolitical scenario, it would not be surprising if India were providing covert support—logistical or intelligence—to the Arakan Army as part of a larger game plan to safeguard its eastern flank.

Doval's focus has often been on pre-emptively neutralizing threats rather than reacting to them. Supporting the Arakan Army fits this modus operandi. It allows India to weaken Islamist networks without direct intervention, keeping its hands ostensibly clean while achieving strategic goals.

The Rakhine region, where the Arakan Army has established dominance, holds immense strategic importance. It not only serves as a corridor for China's Belt and Road Initiative but also impacts India's connectivity projects like the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project. A weakened Myanmar military and a strengthened Arakan Army could give India greater access and influence in the region, countering Chinese designs.

If Ajit Doval's fingerprints are indeed on this development, it could go down as one of his most effective manoeuvres — a masterstroke in securing India's eastern frontier while subtly reshaping the geopolitical balance in South Asia.

### **STATES WATCH**

# A Struggle for Recognition and Rights

n a remarkable political development, the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO), representing six districts of Nagaland's eastern fringe, has tentatively accepted the Centre's proposal for a "Frontier Nagaland Territory" (FNT). The arrangement promises executive, legislative, and financial autonomy for the region but stops short of the statehood ENPO has long demanded. While the decision reflects pragmatism on the part of ENPO, it also underscores a history of neglect and a region's enduring fight for equitable treatment.

The ENPO's demand for a separate state has its roots in decades of marginalization. Formed as a response to the stark developmental disparities between Nagaland's eastern districts and the rest of the state, the ENPO has accused successive governments in Kohima of overlooking the needs of the eight tribes that inhabit the region, namely Chang, Konyak, Phom, Tikhir, Sangtam, Yimkhiung, Khiamniungan and a segment of the Sema community. Allegations of insufficient infrastructure, limited political representation, and poor economic opportunities have fuelled discontent since Nagaland attained statehood

The ENPO has temporarily accepted the Centre's compromise after talks with central and state representatives, marking a pivotal moment in its statehood struggle. This calculated pause aims to secure concessions from a central

The 'Frontier Nagaland' proposal offers a stepping stone to addressing deepseated grievances.

government eager to maintain Northeast stability. The proposed FNT offers unprecedented autonomy with legislative, financial, and executive powers tailored to the region's needs. For the BJP-led Central government, the move balances addressing ENPO's demands while avoiding a precedent that might fuel other autonomy movements in the volatile Northeast.

The roots of eastern Nagaland's alienation can be traced to the creation

of Nagaland in TRONBER NAGALAND FOR BEVELOPHENT JUSTICE

### NAGALAND

1963. While hailed as a landmark in India's integration of its Northeast, the state's formation left some regions feeling marginalized. Eastern Nagaland, with its rugged terrain and sparse population, remained disconnected from the state's developmental narrative. Despite accounting for one-third of Nagaland's 60 Assembly seats, the six districts—Kiphire, Longleng, Mon, Noklak, Shamator, and Tuensang—lagged behind in education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

In 2010, these grievances crystallized into a formal demand for statehood, with the ENPO launching a "people's movement" to press its case. The boycott of high-profile events, including Nagaland's statehood celebrations and the internationally acclaimed Hornbill Festival, underscored the region's simmering discontent. This year's Lok Sabha and urban local body polls were similarly shunned, further amplifying the ENPO's call for change.

The ENPO's acceptance of the FNT proposal is a strategic gamble. The organization has expressed optimism that the Centre, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will honor its commitments. Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio had assured the ENPO during the 2023 As-

sembly election campaign that

their concerns would be ad-

dressed if the BJP-NDPP alliance retained power.
However, the ENPO's trust is not without reservations. A history of unmet promises has bred scepticism among the region's residents. The proposed

FNT remains a compromise.

The Centre's handling of the ENPO's demand carries wider implications for the autonomy movements across the Northeast, from Bodoland in Assam to Garoland in Meghalaya. The January tripartite talks will be crucial in resolving unresolved issues, particularly the scope of FNT's autonomy. Missteps could revive statehood demands, complicating the region's politics.

In the immediate term, the focus will be on whether the FNT can deliver tangible benefits. Improved infrastructure, better governance, and increased representation could validate the ENPO's decision to accept the proposal. Conversely, failure to meet expectations could deepen alienation, lending fresh impetus to the statehood movement. The proposed FNT may provide a temporary salve, but the region's journey towards equality and recognition is far from over.

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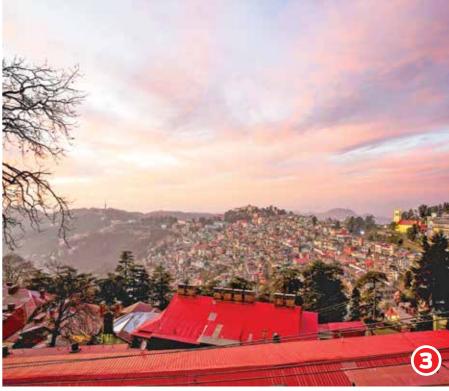


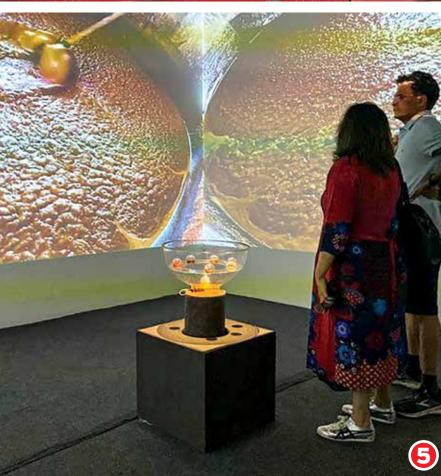




- Mainland Chinese tourists take photos in front of a Christmas installation in Macao's historic Senado Square.
- 2. Para-athlete Ezequiel da Luz with an amputated leg celebrates upon reaching the top of Pedra da Gavea in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday.
- 3. The city of Shimla during sunset.
- Artists during a cultural performance at Rashtrapati Nilayam in Hyderabad on Wednesday.
- Visitors look at photos of food items and ingredients at artist Priya Mani's show, 'Visual Encyclopaedia of Indian Food' at the ninth 'Serendipity Arts Festival' in Panaji.

All Pictures PTI, AP





### **TALKING SENSE**

# The Favourite Internet Service of Proxies and Non-State Actors



Chaitanya Giri The Indian Army's III Corps, also known as Spear Corps, and the Assam Rifles, in their ioint searches in the districts of Kagpokpi, Imphal East, Chandel, and Churachandpur, have stumbled upon not only a diverse cache of handheld weapons but also a newage device that has sent tremors in strategic circles. That new-age device is the swanky-looking receiver terminal of Starlink. The same Starlink, owned by Elon Musk, offers low-latency and high-bandwidth internet services to commercial markets worldwide through its constellation of thousands of satellites flying in low-Earth orbit. Interestingly, this terminal was found with 'RPF-PLA' written on it - which

RPF-PLA militants in Manipur? Bangladesh, under the Sheikh Haseena government in April 2024, faced a tremendous internet outage when the SEA-ME-WE-5 submarine cable, one of the only two cables landing in Bangladesh, ruptured 400 km off the coast of Singapore. Whether it was accidental or sabotage is not known. The same month, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission began preparing guidelines for non-geostationary satellite operators to offer broadband services in the country. This was a big boost to Starlink,

which has been interested in com-

hints that it was in the hands of the

Revolutionary People's Front, the

political arm of the People's Libera-

tion Army Manipur, which runs a

government-in-exile from its head-

quarters in Sylhet, Bangladesh.

Now the question is, how did a Star-

link terminal arrive in the hands of

mencing its commercial operations in Bangladesh. Starlink is expensive for a common Bangladeshi. Its terminal kits cost around USD 600, and monthly services are around USD 120 for unlimited data. The current Bangladeshi broadband rates are way cheaper at USD 5 for a 5 Mbps monthly subscription. The irony is that before the legitimate commercial services began in Bangladesh, militant groups settled in Bangladesh, which have vowed to call Bharat its enemy, have begun to use Starlink. This, by no margin, is India's first tryst with Starlink, which is now becoming a hot favourite of nefarious actors operating against India. In November 2024, the Indian Coast Guard seized a Myanmarese boat smuggling 6000 kg of methamphetamine, worth USD 4.25 billion, and also enjoying the services of

Starlink in Indian waters. Starlink has been involved in providing humanitarian services from Poland and Germany to Ukraine since the early days of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, However, it eventually fell into the hands of the neo-Nazi Azov Batallion. It is said that the Russian forces, too, have derived tremendous gains from the use of Starlink terminals purchased from the black markets. Starlink has also made considerable windfalls by entering the civil war-ridden Sudan, where internet services are being offered at exorbitant rates by the Rapid Support Forces militia and when terrestrial internet networks have been disrupted due to the conflict. Sudan has many priorities to be attained before opting for costly internet; peace is one such priority.

These anecdotes are not intended to shoot the messenger - Starlink. They suggest that when a dual-use technology is overly enamoured, that enamourment can deter the critical review and regulation of its operators and end-users. The review and regulation get even more convoluted when militias, non-state actors, and intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies use the same tech for grey-zone activities. So, what is India's immediate solu-

tion to what is brewing in Bangladesh and Myanmar? Are the frequent internet disruptions in Pakistan also paving the way for Starlink? The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority is moving in that direction, too.

A well-known idiom, "A fool with

a tool is still a fool," becomes too apparent when all these anecdotes are combined into one big picture. India is surrounded by dime a dozen proxies and non-state actors, which thrive on the business of conflict and secession, most sowed by the outgoing colonisers to exploit, nearly a century after imparting independence to this part of the world. These actors are constantly in search of non-interceptable lines of communication that would help them operationally, especially those engaged in guerrilla operations and in geographies that do not permit non-disruptible terrestrial networks. The threat precisely is not symptomatic of Starlink; the threat is ingrained in any direct-to-customer satellite internet service that has a terminal that can be easily backpacked akin to a laptop. But then, it would be wrong to say that these proxies are pulling off all this on their own. There are unknown forces behind these proxies and non-state actors, and Starlink is merely the 'black-marketed' tool, a messenger they use for their convenience. The Indian government, at this stage, is stuck in dichotomous circumstances. On the one hand, it wishes to bring Starlink officially into the Indian satellite internet market and be on good terms with Elon, a name now synonymous with efficiency. On the other hand, it finds Starlink being rampantly used by entities that see India as its enemy, a fact that shows our inefficiency in dealing with this

(The author is a Space and Emerging Technology Fellow at the Centre for Security, Strategy and Technology, Observer Research Foundation, Mumbai. Views

### **OCCASIONAL THOUGHTS**

# Study Paints Holistic Picture of Volunteering Eco-system in India



By
Kreeanne Rabadi

n the first half of the nineteenth century (1800-1850), the emer-Lgence of institutional movements led to the establishment of Brahmo Samaj, Arya Pratinidhi Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prathana Sabha, Indian National Social Conference. Ramakrishna Mission etc. Then Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who in 1905 founded the 'Servants of Indian Society', aimed to mobilise volunteers dedicated to serving the nation. Similarly, the Indian government too took voluntary organizations for nation-building and social development seriously, which led to initiatives like formation of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) in 1948, to engage youth in activities for personal and community development. This was, followed by the National Service Scheme (NSS) initiated in 1969, aiming to involve higher education students in community service and social development initiatives.

At Child Rights and You (CRY), volunteers have always been our backbone. CRY was in fact born in the heart of a schoolboy - Rippan Kapur, who mobilised his young friends to collect old newspapers, sell them, buy milk with the money earned and distribute it to the childre in the neighbouring slums. When Rippan established CRY in 1979, for many years he and his band of volunteers sold greeting cards, organised events and made CRY a household name in India. CRY has thus been built and nurtured by the heart and passion demonstrated by thousands of volunteers who joined our movement for children.

This led us to commission a study on 'Volunteering in India: Perspec-

tives, Insights, and Potential for Social Impact.' in collaboration with Grant Thornton Bharat. The study looks at the evolving volunteering landscape in India, its impact and trends associated with volunteerism

in people today.

This study was conducted with the participation of over 5,500 respondents which included school and college students as well as working professionals from the private and public sectors, entrepreneurs, homemakers, and senior citizens. It also had participants from tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3 cities, ensuring demographical equity and a comprehensive representation of the targeted population across 22 states and Union Territories in India.

One of the significant trends that the study showcases is that women showing a higher inclination towards volunteering (61.7 per cent) followed by senior citizens (46.85 per cent) between the age bracket of 60-69 years. The concentration of respondents in the 19-22 age bracket also emphasizes the eagerness of young adults to engage in volunteerism, likely driven by a combination of altruistic motives and the pursuit of personal development.

With a significant portion of participants holding or pursuing bachelor's degrees (48.9 per cent), the data reflects a well-educated demographic. This suggests that volunteer opportunities should be designed to leverage and further develop the sophisticated skill sets

of these individuals.

Another worth-mentioning factor that comes out from the study is that while education (46 per cent) and health (31 per cent) remain the major areas of interest for volunteering, around (46 per cent) of the respondents confessed they would prefer volunteering in hybrid mode.

The study also showcases that the evolving landscape of volunteerism shows a societal shift towards individualistic approaches. Both Gen-Z and Gen-Y are making use of social media platforms to engage in various volunteer practices, strengthening the impact and outreach of or-



ganizations and across causes such as environmental concerns, community welfare, child rights and sustainability.

However, there still continues to be many challenges like addressing the disparities between urban and rural areas, time constraints, and shifting of social values.

The key takeaways from the study are that we need to create robust digital volunteering opportunities that offer fulfilling experiences, emphasizing virtual collaboration and community impact.

We also need to design campaigns and support structures that specifically target female student volunteers, addressing their unique challenges and motivations. Apart from the above, we also need to forge alliances with retirement communities, senior centers, and healthcare facilities to co-create volunteer programs that cater to the interests and abilities of senior citizens.

Similarly, we not only need to add tailored programs to match preferences with capabilities that can further enhance engagement and satisfaction for the volunteer but also craft targeted recruitment campaigns that can appeal to females and older professionals, highlighting the flexible nature of volunteer opportunities.

Volunteers continue to be an integral part of CRY, and we are committed to leveraging the learnings of the study to provide an enriching volunteer experience for all who give their time to make a difference in children's lives.

(The author is Regional Director, Child Rights and You – West. Views are personal)

# HUMILIATION WAS GOING ON

### **ASHWIN'S FATHER OFFERS STUNNING REASON FOR INDIA OFF-SPINNER'S RETIREMENT, ASHWIN DENIES**

Chennai: Just-retired R Ashwin's father Ravichandran kicked up a controversy on Thursday by claiming that "humiliation" could have been a reason for his son's decision to call it quits but the veteran offspinner made light of the "dad comment", blaming it on lack of media training.

Ashwin dropped a bombshell on Wednesday when he announced his retirement from top-flight cricket at the end of the drawn third Test against Australia in Brisbane. He flew back to Chennai the same evening and was welcomed warmly by his family and friends here on Thursday morning.

Although Ashwin described his decision as an "instinctive" call that was on his mind for a while, his father raised eyebrows by hinting at other factors, including humiliation.

"I too came to know at the last  $\,$ minute. The way in which he gave that (retirement), there could be many reasons. Only Ashwin knows, maybe humiliation," Ravichandran told 'CNN News18'.

However, Ashwin later tried to douse the fire, saying his father was not "media trained" and his comment should not be taken seriously.

"My father isn't media trained, dey father inneda ithelaam (what's all this, father). I

never thought you will follow this rich tradition of 'dad statements'," he quipped after the comment became a viral social media trend.

"Request you all to forgive him and leave him alone," Ashwin wrote on X.

Earlier, Ravichandran said the family was expecting Ashwin's retirement for some time because "humiliation was going on", though he didn't reveal the exact nature of it.

"The sudden change - retirement-gave us a shock. We were expecting it because humiliation was going on. How long he can tolerate all those things? Probably, he would have decided on his own," he said.

"It's his wish and desire, I cannot interfere in that. The way he gave his retirement, one part I was very happy, another part not happy because he should have continued," he added.

Ashwin had told the media in Brisbane that he has a "bit of punch left" in him, hinting at reasons more than mere cricketing.

Washington Sundar was picked ahead of the seasoned off-spinner, who has 537 Test wickets, for the first game in Perth. The 38-year-old found a place in the eleven for the Pink Ball Test at Adelaide.

However, Ashwin was again benched for the third Test at the



'Gabba' as Ravindra Jadeja started in that match.

India skipper Rohit Sharma revealed that he had a chat with Ashwin on the sidelines of the Perth Test and convinced him to stay for the day-night game.

"...this was on his mind and there are obviously a lot of things that went behind it. When I arrived in Perth, this was a chat we had and I somehow convinced him to stay for that pink ball Test match," Rohit had revealed in his press conference on Wednesday.

"Then after that it just happened so that he felt that if I (Ashwin) am not needed right now in the series. I am better off

saying goodbye to the game," he added.

Ashwin will continue to play club cricket and will be turning up for Chennai Super Kings in the IPL next year.

#### Ashwin deserved a fitting farewell: Kapil Dev

Unable to comprehend R Ashwin's sudden decision to retire from international cricket, a shocked World Cup-winning skipper Kapil Dev says the premier off-spinner deserved a fitting farewell, ideally on home

Ashwin stunned one and all by calling it quits on Wednesday, right after the Brisbane Test against Australia ended in a draw.

Kapil felt Ashwin seemed unhappy with something.

"I was shocked by how one of India's greatest cricketers chose to leave the game. The disappointment among the fans was widespread, but I also saw a tinge of hurt on his face. He looked unhappy, and that was sad. He deserved much better, a fitting farewell," Kapil said in a statement to PTI.

As has been his wont, Ashwin chose to walk his own way while retiring in the middle of an important series. Kapil said he would like to hear the Tamil Nadu man's side of story.

"He could have waited and announced his retirement on Indian soil, but I don't know why Ashwin called it a day. I would want to hear his side of the story. Give him that respect. He has played 106 Tests for the country. I don't think anyone can match his humongous contribution to Indian cricket."

Kapil hoped that the Board of Control of Cricket in India (BCCI) would arrange a "grand farewell" to Ashwin.

"I am sure the parent body of cricket in India, BCCI, shall plan a grand farewell for this giant match-winner of Team India," he said.

Kapil, 65, said Ashwin was a stalwart, a versatile and unorthodox bowler, who constantly hustled the batters with his change of pace and cleverly disguised line and length.

"He was ready to experiment, and that is what set him apart. In a game where the batters get the most accolades, Ashwin stood out with his prowess.

"Ashwin was brave. He could bowl at any stage of the contest. Do you find bowlers with such tremendous tactical sense who can adapt quickly? He was his captain's go-to man," he said.

Praising both his cricketing brain and off-field character, Kapil said Ashwin was a matchwinner with no parallel in modern cricket.

#### Ashwin's fun time with support staff

New Delhi: A tough nut to crack on the field, justretired India off-spin great Ravichandran Ashwin is not exactly the same once he is in the dressing room where he is known to enjoy fun moments with his team-mates and support staff.

In a footage released by the BCCI, a day after he brought down the curtain on an illustrious international career in Brisbane midway through the five-match Test series against Australia, Ashwin was seen taking bowling lessons of the support staff in an indoor net facility.

"The countless battles on the field are memorable. But it's also moments like these that Ashwin will reminisce from his international career," the BCCI said in a post on 'X'.

The 38-year-old Ashwin retired from the game as the secondhighest wicket-taker for India in Tests with 537 scalps from 106 matches, placing him only behind the legendary Anil Kumble (619 wickets).

In the video footage, Ashwin was seen having some fun time with the likes of fielding coach T Dilip, trainer Soham Desai, analyst Hari Prasad Mohan and masseur Arun Kanade.

While announcing his retirement after the drawn Brisbane Test, Ashwin had said that he will cherish a lot of memories from the dressing room.

"I do feel there's a bit of punch left in me as a cricketer, but I would like to showcase that at the club level. I've had a lot of fun, and I've created a lot of memories.

"I must say I've shared some incredible moments alongside Rohit (Sharma) and several other teammates, even though I've lost some of them over the

### Rider Raju secures spot in Championships

New Delhi: Rider Raju Singh finished twice on the podium at the FEI's CCI 3-star event to qualify for next year's Asian Continental Championships in Pattaya, Thailand. Singh secured first place with his horse Mawillan and a close second with Matakali, cementing his superiority in the prestigious event.

Showcasing their prowess, Singh, Pradeep Kumar and Kumabhar Mahesh K Sharayu also successfully met the challenging Minimum Eligibility Requirements by completing the event with penalties of 48 or less-and will make up the Indian team at the Asian Continental Championships.

"The exceptional performances witnessed here in Jaipur reflect the growing calibre of equestrian sports in India," EFI Secretary



General Col. Jaiveer Singh

"Raju Singh, Pradeep Kumar, and Kumabhar Mahesh K Sharayus's success in this event is a significant milestone, and their achievements, especially with the MER qualification of the Indian team, set an inspiring precedent for the upcoming Asian Championship in Pattaya."

Competing in the Dressage Test, Show Jumping, and Cross Country back-toback days, Singh took the top podium in the latter with horse Mawillan and second place with horse Matakli, accumulating 38.8 and 40.6 penalty points.

#### **Trisha** shines in India's win

Kuala Lumpur: G Trisha made a fine unbeaten fifty to guide India to a facile eight-wicket win over Bangladesh in their first Super Four match of the Women's Under-19 T20 Asia Cup here on Thursday.

Chasing a modest 81, India raced past the target in 12 Lovers with Trisha making 58 not out off 46 balls with 10 fours. India ended up at 86 for two.

However, India had started the chase on a shaky note losing opener G Kamalini for a four-ball duck and Sanika Chalke (1) when the team score was on 22

But Kamalni and captain Nikki Prasad (22 not out, 14b; 1x4, 2x6) added 64 runs for the unbroken third wicket alliance to take India home.

Earlier, India limited Bangladesh to 80 for 8 in their full quota of overs.

# MCA to celebrate Wankhede Stadium's 50th anniversary

Mumbai: The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) on Thursday announced plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the iconic Wankhede Stadium here from January 12 to 19.

A special logo was unveiled by the association here at the stadium during a function by the MCA officials and its apex council members.

"Built in 1974, Wankhede Stadium stands as one of the world's most iconic cricketing venues, having witnessed monumental moments in cricket history. From Sachin Tendulkar's final international match in 2013 to India's historic 2011 ODI World Cup triumph, the stadium has been home to countless memories,' the governing body said.



Mumbai Cricket Association President Ajinkya Naik with Vice President Sanjay Naik and Secretary Abhay Hadap at the logo launch of 50 years of Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday.

There will be multiple functions on different days to mark the celebrations while a special postal stamp

will also be released. Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and former MCA president and ex BCCI treasurer Ashish Shelar will also be felicitated during the eight-day

A cricket match will be held between MCA officials and Consul Generals and government officials on January 12.

"We are going to felici-

men and host a lunch for them because they are like unsung heroes. There are also a few others like security people of the MCA who have been working for long time and the MCA staff, we are going to felicitate everybody on January 15," president Ajinkya Naik said.

A coffee table book will be launched on January 19 along with a music show from Ajay-Atul. Since free entry cannot be facilitated owing to anticipation of a big crowd turnout as witnessed in the past, the fans will have to purchase tickets priced at Rs 300 for the event, which will also have several current and former Mumbai and India players along with Bollywood celebrities on January 19.

Players of East Bengal FC and Punjab FC vie for the ball during their Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 football match in Kolkata on Tuesday.

# ISL: FC Goa aim to end Mohun Bagan's unbeaten run

Margao: FC Goa will seek to snap a rampaging Mohun Bagan Super Giant's eightmatch unbeaten streak in the Indian Super League (ISL) when the two sides square off in a 12th round match here on Friday.

FC Goa, under India head coach Manolo Marquez, will also aim to improve their record against the Mariners, having lost five of their eight meetings in the ISL, including a narrow 0-1 defeat in their most recent fixture in February.

Super Giant's unbeaten run has seen them win seven and draw one of their last eight ISL games, and that has put them on top of the league leaderboard with 26 points from 11 matches, winning eight, drawing twice and losing once.

On the other hand, the Gaurs are placed fourth with 19 points from the same num-

Both these teams have been in equally efficient form upfront, with the Kolkata-based side netting 22 times in the competition thus far, as compared to the 21 of the Goan club.

However, the visitors have been comparatively better organised at the back, as they have conceded 10 goals as opposed to the 15 of FC Goa. Head-to-head, FC Goa have

won twice, whereas Super Giant have emerged victorious five times in the eight times these two teams have faced each other in the ISL.

FC Goa head coach Marquez admitted that the Mariners have a nice mix of international and domestic stars that make them a strong opponent.

"I feel that we are playing one of the strongest teams in the competition. Mohun Bagan

#### Punjab FC part ways with 'colourful' Mushaga Bakenga

Punjab FC on Wednesday parted ways with Norwegian international striker Mushaga Bakenga just four months after he joined the Indian Super League (ISL) side.

The club did not cite any reason for the 32-year-old Congoleseorigin player's departure after he was roped in August this year. "After mutual discussions, it was decided that Bakenga would part ways with us. I truly appreciate his contributions during his time here and wish him the very best in all his future endeavours," Punjab FC Technical Director Nikolaos Topoliatis said in a release. Bakenga, who has played one match for the Norway national team in 2014, made 14 appearances for Punjab FC across the ISL and the Durand Cup. He scored three goals and provided one assist during his time with the club.

have most of the top national team players, and they've spent a lot on getting good foreigners too," Marquez said.

"We need to keep fighting to

Super Giant head coach Jose Molina lauded his team for not giving up under any

circumstance.

"The mentality of Mohun Bagan Super Giant is to fight every game till the end. We have to attack and defend well, communicate properly, but most importantly we need to keep fighting to get the win," Molina said.