

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Collapse Of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Statue Tensions, threat, cover-up, agitation and apology

How the top politicians behave after a fateful incident

By Abhijit Mulye

Mumbai: Tensions flared up on Wednesday at Malvan in Sindhudurg district when followers of BJP MP Narayan Rane and Shiv Sena (UBT)-MVA workers clashed at Rajkot fort. Rane allegedly threatened the opposition workers amidst the tensions but DCM Devendra Fadnavis covered him up saying his aggressive style might create such an impression. However, he is unlikely to have threatened anybody. Meanwhile, the opposition MVA announced a statewide 'Jode Mara' (hit them with slippers) agitation against the 'corrupt' state government beginning September 2 even as DCM Ajit Pawar tendered a public apology while speaking at Latur for the unfortunate incident where a 28-foot statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Rajkot fort collapsed on Monday.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray along with NCP (SP) state president Jayant Patil, leaders of opposition in state legisla-



ture Vijay Wadettiwar and Ambadas Danve had gone to visit the site where the statue had collapsed. This visit was part of the MVA program to stage protests across the state holding the Shinde government responsible for the incident. Local MP Narayan Rane, who too was in town, had earlier visited the site and as they were leaving the site MVA leaders reached there. Local workers of former MP Vinayak Raut were along with the MVA leaders. As they came face to face with the BJP workers along with Rane,

sloganeering began and soon the confrontation escalated to physical altercations, with police intervening to maintain order.

"I have controlled my party-men as this is a sacred place of Shivaji Maharaj, but if anything happens due to hooliganism of the ruling alliance, Deputy CM and Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis will be responsible for it," Thackeray said which was retaliated by Rane and his supporters. The supporters shouted slogans and blocked the road. Thackeray dismissed the BJP

workers' actions as "childish" and criticised the ruling alliance for failing to construct a durable statue. "I have told my party workers not to involve themselves in the politics of the ruling alliance.

This is not the place for such things. But ruling party workers' behaviour is childish and as per their upbringing. The ruling alliance made money from the statue work of Shivaji Maharaj," he said.

Nilesh Rane, son of MP Narayan Rane, claimed his party had

informed the police about the timing of their visit, questioning the simultaneous arrival of the Thackeray camp leaders. When police attempted to disperse the crowd, some individuals reportedly threw stones. As a precautionary measure, an armed officer was assigned to protect Aditya Thackeray. The altercations continued almost for two hours as police were trying to pacify the leaders and control the workers.

As the BJP workers with Rane blocked their road back to their vehicles, Thackeray and other leaders staged a sit-down protest. Rane suggested that the MVA leaders should take the back door to leave the place.

However, they didn't agree and intensified the agitation. Jayant Patil then negotiated with Nilesh Rane and it was decided that a 10 feet passageway would be given to MVA leaders and workers to leave the place. Accordingly, the passage was given and the two-hour high-tension drama came to an end.

Bhagwat's security strengthened



New Delhi: The government has strengthened the security of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat in view of latest threat inputs analysed by federal intelligence agencies, official sources said Wednesday.

The 73-year-old Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Chief is secured by an armed VIP protection unit of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) under the top Z-plus category.

Official sources said as part of this Z-plus protocol, Bhagwat was provided a security cover all across the country.

Recently, central intelligence agencies found that a procedure called Advance Security Liaison (ASL) for the RSS Sarsanghchalak was not being done uniformly and hence it was decided to notify it as a regular and mandatory exercise for Bhagwat, the sources said.

As part of the ASL, an advance team of the CISF

'special security group' (SSG) will every time carry out reconnaissance of the venues supposed to be visited by the RSS chief along with local police and administration authorities, they said.

The CRPF, that also has a VIP security wing, undertakes the ASL procedure for five of its protectees.

They are the Gandhi family - Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, her MP son Rahul Gandhi and daughter Priyanka Gandhi. The two others include former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

A mandatory ASL procedure ensures that nothing is left to chance and the security of the VIP remains intact, an officer working in the special persons' protection domain said. The CISF also provides protection to the RSS headquarters in Nagpur.



Artists dressed as 'Yama' and 'Chitragupt' draw attention to the road's condition to aware people and highlight the urgent need for road repairs and a response from authorities in Udipi. Pic-PTI

Biggest deal in Indian media RIL, Walt Disney merger cleared

New Delhi: The Competition Commission of India on Wednesday approved the merger of media assets of Reliance Industries and The Walt Disney Co to create the country's largest media empire worth over Rs 70,000 crore.

The deal, announced six months ago, faced scrutiny by the anti-trust regulator and the approval has come after the parties proposed certain modifications to the original transaction structure.

In a post on X, the regulator said it has cleared the "proposed combination involving Reliance Industries Limited, Viacom18 Media Private Limited, Digital18 Media Limited, Star India Private Limited and Star

63.16 per cent – RIL and its affiliates
36.84 per cent – The Walt Disney
Rs 11,500 – RIL to invest into the JV

Television Productions Limited, subject to the compliance of voluntary modifications".

Viacom18 is part of the RIL group, and SIPL is wholly-owned by The Walt Disney Company. STPL, a company incorporated in the British Virgin Islands, is owned indirectly by The Walt Disney.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI), however, did not disclose voluntary modifications in the original deal made by

House of RIL
Network 18, which owns TV18 news channels as well as a plethora of entertainment (under the 'Colors' brand) and sports channels. NW18 also has stakes in moneycontrol.com, and bookmyshow and publishes magazines. Its subsidiary NW18 owns the news channels CNBC/CNNNews.
RIL separately owns a movie production arm -- JioStudios, and majority stakes in two companies Den and Hathway.

the two parties.
Nita Ambani will head the joint venture, while Uday Shankar will be the Vice Chairperson. Shankar is a former top Disney

House of Disney
Disney + Hotstar was launched in India in 2020 post the acquisition of the entertainment assets of 21st Century Fox at a valuation of USD 71.3 billion, thereby taking over the operations of Star India and Hotstar. It housed entertainment and cinema channels, such as StarPlus and StarGold as well as sports channels like Star Sports.

executive.
The deal will also require approval of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

-PTI

'Enough is enough': Droupadi Murmu

The President criticises 'collective amnesia' of Indian society towards crimes against women

By Press Trust of India

New Delhi: In an exclusive signed article for PTI, President Droupadi Murmu has spoken out for the first time on the rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata and her anguish at continuing crimes against women.

The edited excerpts of the President's article: The recent spate of crimes against women should force honest self-introspection to uncover the roots of the malaise

The gruesome incident of rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata has left the nation shocked. I was dismayed and horrified when I came to hear of it. What is more depressing is the fact that it was not the only incident of its kind; it is part of a series of crimes against women. Even as students, doctors and citizens were protesting in Kolkata, criminals remained on

the prowl elsewhere. The victims include even kindergarten girls. No civilised society can allow daughters and sisters to be subjected to such atrocities. The nation is bound to be outraged, and so am I.

More recently, I was in a unique predicament when some schoolchildren who had come to celebrate Rakhi at the Rashtrapati Bhavan asked me innocently if they could be assured that there would be no recurrence of the Nirbhaya-type incident in future.

I told them that though the State is committed to protect every citizen, training in self-defence and martial arts is essential for all, particularly girls, to make them stronger. But that's not a guarantee for their security as women's vulnerability is influenced by many factors. Obviously, the full answer to that question can come only from our society.



For that to happen, what is needed first of all is honest, unbiased self-introspection. The time has come when we as a society need to ask ourselves some difficult questions. Where have we erred? And what can we do to remove the errors? Without

finding out the answer to that question, the half of our population cannot live as freely as the other half.

Yet, this journey has not been without its obstacles. Women have had to fight for every inch of ground they have won. Social prejudices as

well as some customs and practices have always opposed the expansion of women's rights. This is a rather deplorable mindset. I won't call it a male mindset, because it has little to do with the gender of the person: there are many, many men who don't have it. This mindset sees the female as a lesser human being, less powerful, less capable, less intelligent. Those who share such views then go further and see the female as an object.

It is this objectification of women by a few that is behind the crimes against women. It is ingrained deeply in the minds of such people. Let me also note here that, regrettably, this is the case not only in India, but across the world. Difference between one place and the next is more of a degree than kind.

In December 2012, we had come face to face with that element when a

young woman was gang-raped and murdered. There was shock and rage. We were determined not to let another Nirbhaya meet the same fate. We made plans and devised strategies. These initiatives did make a difference to an extent. Yet, our task remains unfinished as long as any woman feels unsafe in the environment where she lives or works.

In the twelve years since that tragedy in the national capital, there have been countless tragedies of similar nature, though only a few drew nationwide attention. Even these were soon forgotten. Did we learn our lessons? As social protests petered out, these incidents got buried into a deep and inaccessible recess of social memory, to be recalled only when another heinous crime takes place.

This collective amnesia, I am afraid, is as much obnoxious as that mindset I spoke of.

Narayan Rane at the centre of verbal abuse

By Abhijit Mulye

Mumbai: There were claims and counterclaims during the entire agitation among which Rane was heard arguing with the police saying that if the police acted in a partisan manner, they wouldn't receive the cooperation from his party workers in the district. In the same sentence he is heard saying, "Gharatun Khechun Ratrbhar Ek-kekala Marun Taken (Shall pull everybody to home and beat up for the whole night)". NCP (SP) leader tweeted the video raising questions over Rane's language.

"Is this the language that a former Union Minister uses? Those who have gone with the BJP have brought



a shame to Maharashtra. Their goondaism is exposed," Awhad said while reacting over the incident.

Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis, however, tried to dismiss the issue saying that Rane is aggres-

sive in speaking, but it doesn't appear that he would threaten anybody.

Fadnavis also said that the incident is very sad and it shouldn't be politicized. "Whenever such incidents happen in-depth inquiries need to be made and the Navy is doing so. We too

shall look into the shortcomings and we shall rebuild the grand memorial," he said while speaking to the media at Nagpur.

Meanwhile, Rane, who addressed a press conference at Malvan later, blamed MVA leaders for the altercations at the Rajkot fort. "Aditya Thackeray is blaming us for the confrontation. But, he should know that it is due to these kinds of confrontations that the Shiv Sena grew. He wouldn't know that as he must have been a small kid and Uddhav too won't know what we used to do for Shiv Sena," Rane said. Rane also blamed Uddhav during his press conference. "Uddhav Thackeray calls us 'Shivadrohi' (traitors who left Shivaji

Maharaj). But, the Shiv Sena has always used Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Hindutva as the means to mint money. Has Uddhav Thackeray erected even a one single statue out of his own pocket? He used government money even for his own father's statue. What has he done for Konkan when he was the CM for 2.5 years? He should tell the people of Konkan how many jobs he brought? How many bridges did he build?" Rane said.

NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar placed the blame squarely on the state government. "It is the responsibility of the state government as no statue can be constructed without its permission".

Two brothers booked for assault

Jalna: The Jalna police have registered a case against two brothers, who are BJP workers, for allegedly assaulting a Congress member after he accused them of indulging in illegal mining, an official said.

The incident occurred at the Jafrabad tehsil office on Tuesday, he said.

A video of the incident went viral on social media drawing widespread condemnation for the act of the accused. The victim, Pramod Fadat (33), a resident of Borgaon in Jafrabad tehsil, had earlier complained to the district authorities about the alleged illegal mining activities of Sagar Lokhande and his brother Chetan from Mauje Khasgaon village. On Tuesday, Fadat went to the tehsil office to pursue the matter, when the Lokhande brothers questioned him.

Five arrested for double murder

By Correspondent

Thane: With the arrest of five persons, Navi Mumbai police on Wednesday claimed to have cracked a double murder case.

Amir Anwar Khanjada (42) and Sumit Babulal Jain (39) left home in Nerul on August 21 for a property deal meeting but never returned, said additional commissioner of police (crime) Deepak Sakore.

Their car was traced to Khopoli through GPS signal. Police found blood stains and two empty cartridges inside.

Eight teams were formed to probe the case, and on August 23, Jain's body was recovered from Gagod Budruk village in Pen tehsil, the official said. The body had bullet wounds.

Khanjada's body was found on Thursday in the Karnala Bird sanctuary. CCTV footage gave the

police some clues, and Vithal Baban Nakade (43), Jaysingh alias Raja Madhu Mudaliar (38), Anand alias Andry Rajan Cruz (39), Virendra alias Gorya Bharat Kadam (24) and Ankush alias Ankya Prakash Sitapur (35) were arrested on August 26, said the official.

Nakade had a financial dispute with Sumit Jain and Amir Khanjada over a land purchase which led to the crime, the additional commissioner said, adding that two cars, a motorbike, a knife and a revolver were seized from the accused's possession.

A court remanded all five in police custody till August 31.

The accused have previous criminal cases registered against them in Roha, Vashi, Khalapur, Bhandup, Panvel, Kanjurmarg and Ulhasnagar, the official said.

IPS officer booked for forgery

Pune: The Pune Police have registered a case on the charges of forgery and criminal conspiracy against IPS officer Bhagyashree Navtakte who had headed the investigation into an alleged Rs 1,200 crore scam involving a credit cooperative society, an officer said on Wednesday.

The case was registered against Navtakte, based on a CID report that flagged procedural lapses in the scam investigation, and other unidentified persons, on directions from the Maharashtra Home Department.

Namtakte headed the Spe-

cial Investigation Team as DCP (economic offence wing) in 2021-21 to probe cases related to the alleged scam involving Bhaichand Hirachand Raisoni Credit Society in Pune district.

"The CID (Crime Investigation Department) conducted a probe into the investigation related to the alleged Bhaichand Hirachand Raisoni (BHR) scam. The CID submitted a report detailing its observations and findings to the state home department," the city police officer said.

He said the state home department directed the Pune Police to register a case based on the CID



Bhagyashree Navtakte

report.

"Following the orders from the home department, an offence has been registered against Bhagyashree Navtakte who headed the SIT formed to probe the cases filed in the BHR scam," the officer said.

He said the CID probe pointed out procedural

lapses during the investigation of scam cases by Navtakte.

"Three different cases were registered under one crime in a single day, which is a procedural lapse and forgery. In two instances, the complainant was not even present when the cases were being registered. The complainant's signatures were found (on documents) even though he was not present while registering the FIRs," the police officer said.

Namtakte is currently posted as the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) superintendent in Chandrapur. The scam dated 2015.

10 booked as girl ends life

Nashik: A 15-year-old girl died by suicide in Nashik after allegedly being stalked and threatened by a 22-year-old man and his family members, an official said on Wednesday.

In her complaint on Tuesday, the girl's mother alleged that one Kalam Izhar Mansuri had been pressing her daughter to marry him since 2022. She alleged that Mansuri's mother and many other relatives had also threatened the minor. Unable to bear the stress, she consumed poison.

SC pulls up govt

Matter of land compensation

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday pulled up the Maharashtra government for its "dilly-dallying" and "non-serious" approach in calculating compensation to be given to a person whose land it had "illegally" occupied more than six decades ago.

A bench of Justices B.R. Gawai, Prashant Mishra and K.V. Viswanathan issued a show cause notice to Rajesh Kumar, additional chief secretary of the forest and revenue department, and asked



him why contempt action should not be initiated against him for "contemptuous remarks" made in an affidavit filed by the department.

The bench directed the senior IAS officer to personally appear before the court on September 9.

"When the state has sought time for the particular purpose of re-calculat-

ing the compensation, then it should have been done. It appears that the state is adopting dilly-dallying tactics," the bench said. It said it appeared from the affidavit that the state government is not serious about paying the compensation.

The bench pulled up state government counsel Nishant R Katneshwarkar for filing such an affidavit and the officer for signing the document. "You write anything in the affidavit, the officer signs the affidavit and you expect us not to do anything," the bench told Katneshwarkar.

Cows rescued in Beed

Mumbai: Police in Maharashtra's Beed district has rescued six cows from a slaughterhouse and arrested five persons, an official said on Wednesday. A large quantity of bovine meat was also seized during a raid at Barabhai Gulli in Ambejogai town on Tuesday, he said.

Police found 11 cattle -- six cows, two calves, two bulls and a buffalo calf -- which had been brought there for illegal slaughter, the official said. The accused had already slaughtered at least three cows, he said, adding that some 1,200 kg of bovine meat was recovered from the spot and sent for chemical analysis. A case was registered against 10 persons under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

Inter-state gang of robbers held

By Correspondent

Palghar: Police have arrested five members of an inter-state gang days after they allegedly robbed a courier office owner of more than Rs 73,000 using weapons at Manickpur in Maharashtra's Palghar district, an official said on Wednesday.

The action was taken by the Crime Detection Cell of Manickpur police under the Mira Bhayandar-Vasai Virar police commissionerate, he said. The incident had occurred on August 19, when armed dacoits stormed into a courier office and robbed the owner of Rs 73,700 at gunpoint and using a chopper, senior inspector Raju Mane of the Manickpur police station said.

The police examined the



footage of 100 CCTV cameras and based on technical and intelligence inputs, they initially apprehended Ajay Balram Mandal, a local resident, whose interrogation led to the arrest of other accused, he said.

They were identified as Shankar Gowda from Chikkamagaluru in Kar-

nataka, Vijay Singh from Uttar Pradesh, Mohamad Shaikh from New Delhi and Lalmani Yadav from Jharkhand, he added.

The accused already face criminal cases in various states in India, including Karnataka, Gujarat and Maharashtra, Mane said. In connection with the Manickpur incident, the police registered a case against them under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 310 (dacoity), 311 (robbery or dacoity with intent to cause death or grievous hurt), 309 (robbery), 351(2) (criminal intimidation) and others, he said. During the investigation, the police recovered an automatic pistol, eight live rounds, a car and other material, collectively worth Rs 3.14 lakh, he said.



Members of Maharashtra Vikas Agadhi (MVA) perform milk consecration on a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Sindhudurg on Wednesday. Pic-PTI

Jayakwadi dam stock at 64.3 per cent

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar: The water stock in the Jayakwadi dam in central Maharashtra's Marathwada region has risen to 64.3 per cent and water can now comfortably be released for irrigation, an official said on Wednesday.

The Jayakwadi reservoir on the Godavari river supplies water for industrial, drinking and irrigation purposes to Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Jalna and other towns in the eight-district Marathwada region. "The storage reached 64.3 per cent

on Wednesday morning. There is ample stock for irrigation this year," said Chief Engineer Samadhan Sabbinwar. He said they won't need to depend on the release of water from dams upstream.

Water can be released from the Jay-

akwadi dam once the stock crosses 33 per cent, the official said. The present situation points to a decent stock, he said.

"We required around 150 MCM (million cubic metres) of water for the year for industrial and drinking pur-

poses. The rest can be used for irrigation this year," the chief engineer said.

The dam currently has 1,395.90 MCM of water, another official said. The reservoir is still receiving water 66,666 cusecs of water.

- PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Surface Transport

"More people have lost lives in road crashes than wars, militancy and Naxalism. This caused a three per cent loss to the country's GDP. Like a sacrificial lamb, a driver is blamed for every accident. Let me tell you, and I observe minutely -- often, the road engineering is at fault."

Asaram brought for treatment

Mumbai: Self-styled godman Asaram Bapu, who is serving a life sentence in Jodhpur Central Jail for raping a minor, has been brought to a medical facility at Khopoli in Maharashtra's Raigad district for treatment of a heart-related ailment, officials said on Wednesday.

Asaram, 83, who was arrested in September 2013, was brought to the multi-disciplinary cardiac care clinic of an Ayurvedic hospital in Khopoli, located 70 km from here, around 8 pm on Tuesday with full

police protection, a senior police official said.

He will undergo treatment for some heart-related ailment at the medical facility for the next seven days, he said. On August 13, the Rajasthan High Court had allowed him to undergo treatment at an Ayurvedic hospital in Maharashtra under police custody.

Accordingly, he was taken to Mumbai by flight, accompanied by a team of Jodhpur Police and two attendants.

On his arrival at the

Mumbai airport, Asaram was taken to the hospital in Khopoli, the official said. Raigad police personnel have been deployed at the hospital as part of security, he said.

While granting the parole to Asaram, the Rajasthan High Court had laid certain conditions, which included that four policemen would be travelling with him. He was also allowed to have two attendants with him.

Asaram's pleas for suspension of sentence on health grounds were ear-

lier rejected by the high court and the Supreme Court.

He was arrested in Indore for allegedly raping a teenage girl in his ashram in 2013 and was convicted by a special POCSO court in 2018. A Gujarat court had, in January 2023, convicted him in a decade-old sexual assault case involving a woman disciple and sentenced him to life imprisonment. The victim, a Surat-based woman, had accused him of repeatedly raping her at his ashram in 2013.

-PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE

All the people are informed that Room No. 162-A6, J. P. Nagar Co.op.hsg. Ltd. Kofrad, Virar (West), Tal- Vasai, District Palghar owned by Mr. Subhashchandra Bhalaichandra Amrute. Deceased on :17.08.2023 1. Mrs. Gauri Pratap Pimple, Neelima Subhashchandra Amrute (Before Marriage Name) 2. Mr. Vaibhav Subhashchandra Amrute are the two legal heirs of the said flat. After the No Objection letter of Mrs. Gauri Pratap Pimple, It has been decided to transfer the share certificate in the name of Mr. Vaibhav Subhashchandra Amrute. for interest, mortgage, donation, gift, mortgage, administration, inheritance, alimony, lease, occupation or other. If there is any claim or demand in the nature, anyone should object it in writing with proper documentary evidence. The undersigned has office address - 202, Govind Apartment (A), Sainath Nagar, Near Signal, near Kirti Sadan of this notice at Sadan Side, Virar (East), Town Vasai, District Palghar, Pin No. 401 303 To be sent within 14 days of publication of this public notice, If the objection is not reached within the time given above, then The transaction of flat as well as share certificate is free of objection and the sale is proper and if there is any objection My client will complete the transaction of the said property on the assumption that it has been released. Adv. Pratap Anil Pimple

MVA aggressive, Mahayuti in damage control mode

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Opposition continued its attack on the ruling Mahayuti government over the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue in Sindhudurg on August 26. A war of words broke out among the top leaders of the government and the opposition. The Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has announced to take out a march from Hutatma Chowk to the Gateway of India on September 1 to protest against the government.



Corruption has peaked under the Mahayuti dispensation. The government's claim that the statue collapsed due to gusty winds is "height of shamelessness. Those creating obstructions in the MVA's morcha today in Malvan against the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue are betrayers of the warrior king."

Uddhav Thackeray, President, Shiv Sena (UBT)



In true Modi fashion, the priority was to hurriedly construct a statue on three months' notice, so that it is inaugurated by the PM just before elections. What's more, this shoddy work cost Rs. 236 crores! Will PM Modi apologise to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj for putting his own personal ambitions above Maharaj's legacy? Will the PM come clean on the rampant corruption that we saw in the hasty inauguration spree that we saw prior to the 2024 elections?

K.C. Venugopal, Congress General Secretary



Members of Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) protest against the collapse of Malvan's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue in Thane on Wednesday. Pic-PTI

The collapse of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue is a tragic event and there is no need to indulge in politics over it. No one should exploit it for political gain. The matter has already been reported to the police and they are expected to take further action based on the Navy's findings. Maharashtra does not benefit from such politics.

Devendra Fadnis, Deputy CM



I do not support the Malvan incident but there was no need to do politics by going there. Did he (Uddhav Thackeray) even go there before?

We want the biggest statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji to come up in Sindhudurg, the erstwhile headquarters of Shivaji's navy. This (statue collapse) is an unfortunate incident. A 100-foot statue should be built at the spot.

Deepak Kesarkar, Education Minister



Be it officials or contractors, action will be taken against those guilty. Shivaji Maharaj is our deity. I apologise to the 13 crore people of Maharashtra for the collapse of his statue. The collapse of the statue within a year (of installation) is shocking.

Ajit Pawar, Deputy CM



The NCP led by Ajit Pawar will stage 'silent' protests across Maharashtra on Thursday over the collapse of the statue. The party will demand the installation of a stronger and larger statue. The move assumes significance given that the NCP is one of the three constituents in the Mahayuti.

PIL urges HC to direct recovery of Rs 14.8 crore

By Correspondent

Mumbai: A PIL has been filed in the Bombay High Court challenging the Maharashtra government's decision to reduce the rate for police protection provided to the Indian Premier League (IPL) matches with a retrospective effect from 2011.

The public interest litigation (PIL) by activist Anil Galgali said that the police were yet to recover arrears of Rs 14.82 crore from the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) for the IPL matches held from 2013 to 2018 at the city's Wankhede and Brabourne stadiums.

As per the plea, the state gov-

Police protection during IPL

ernment issued a circular on June 26, 2023, reducing the security charges for police protection from Rs 25 lakh to Rs 10 lakh per match. Galgali in the petition has objected to the circular having a retrospective effect from 2011,

saying it would also amount to a reduction in the arrears pending.

The petition came up for hearing on Wednesday before a division bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar which directed the additional government pleader Jyoti Chavan to submit a translated

copy of the Marathi circular on Thursday.

Galgali in his plea called the government's decision "illegal, arbitrary and unconstitutional".

"This decision was taken to benefit the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) but the same was causing a loss to the public exchequer," the plea said.

First double-decker flyover with metro viaduct

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The first double-decker flyover in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) which connects a viaduct for metro line 9 was inaugurated on Wednesday by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

The one-km-long flyover integrates a metro viaduct and a road flyover for Metro Line-9 in Mira Bhayandar in Thane district.

This flyover is set to significantly enhance traffic flow and alleviate congestion at key junctions on

Mira Road, officials said. Metro Line 9 is an extension of the Red Line from Andheri to the Mumbai International Airport and Dahisar to Mira Road.

"The double-decker flyover in the Mumbai metropolitan region marks a significant achievement for Mumbai and Maharashtra. This project addresses traffic issues, saves time and fuel, and is a testament to modern technology and efficient planning. It will accelerate the development of MMR and improve overall traffic flow and commuter

comfort," Shinde said.

The flyover was built using advanced technology with separate levels for metro and road transport, aimed at saving 8 to 10 minutes of travel time for commuters and reducing fuel consumption, according to officials. It features modern amenities, including furniture, signage, and lighting, in line with the Ministry of Road Transport and Highway's regulations.

The flyover construction faced significant challenges, including the relocation of the main double-circuit Da-

hanu-Versova power line, which was shifted about 3 km and elevated to 75 meters, making it the second-highest power channel in Maharashtra.

"The double-decker flyover is part of MMRDA's new approach to urban transportation, addressing space constraints in Mumbai and its suburbs. It provides a modern solution to meet the city's transportation needs, reducing congestion and offering a faster, safer, and more convenient journey," said MMRDA commissioner Sanjay Mukherjee.

245 'Govindas' injured during Dahi Handi

By Correspondent

Mumbai: A total of 245 'Govindas' or youngsters involved in forming human pyramids as part of the 'Dahi Handi' celebrations were injured in Mumbai a day ago, civic officials said on Wednesday.

Of these injured persons, 32 were admitted to various hospitals, while 213 were discharged after treatment, they said. The Dahi Handi, a part of the Janmashtami festival that marks the birth of Lord Krishna, saw enthusiastic participation by revellers. The festival was celebrated with traditional fervour and gaiety in Mumbai and other parts of the state. As part of the celebrations, Govindas form multi-tiered human pyramids to break Dahi Handis suspended mid-air.

Eleven of them were admitted to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)-run KEM Hospital, four each at a medical facility in Rajawadi and Sion Hospital, one at J J Hospital, an official said. Other injured Govindas were admitted to the state-run Saint George's Hospital in south Mumbai.

HC junks FIR on woman who eloped before wedding

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Wednesday quashed a cheating case filed by a Pune man against his would-be daughter-in-law, who eloped with her paramour just days before her scheduled wedding in 2022 with the complainant's son, holding there was no intention on the woman's part to deceive anyone.

A division bench of Justices A.S. Gadkari and Neela Gokhale described the situation as a "regrettable case" involving a young woman who struggled to disclose her romantic relationship to her parents. The court emphasized there was no intention on the part of the woman or her family to deceive the complainant or his relatives.

The HC outlined the unfortunate series of events wherein the young woman, defying family and societal expectations, fell in love with someone of her own choosing. However, she could not muster courage to tell her family about the relationship.

Her family mistakenly assumed that her silence was agreement to an arranged marriage, leading



her family to cheat the complainant or his family members.

The bench emphasised the offence of cheating is not made out in the present case and at best it can be a case of defamation against the accused persons.

The court noted the present case was an unfortunate series of events where a young woman, undaunted by familial and societal traditions, fell in love with a man of her choice, but lacked courage to reveal the same to her family.

Oblivious to the woman's choice, her parents fixed her wedding with a man of their choice, mistaking their daughter's silence as her approval for the matrimonial alliance, the HC observed.

An engagement ceremony had taken place between the woman and the man chosen by her parents and the marriage date was fixed as May 1, 2022. A few days before the marriage, the woman eloped with her paramour pursuant to which her parents lodged a missing person complaint. The woman's would-be in-laws filed a cheating complaint against her and family members.

Four-year-old dies of dog bite

Thane: A four-year-old girl mauled by a stray dog in Bhiwandi town of the district has died after battling for life for more than a month.

The incident had taken place in New Azad Nagar locality on July 8, local sources said. Laiba Shaikh, the victim, died at the government-run Sion Hospital in Mumbai on Monday, they added. The dog, suspected to be rabid, had attacked about 40 people including children and senior citizens.

HC grants bail to Avinash Bhosale

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Wednesday granted bail to Pune-based builder Avinash Bhosale in a money-laundering case, noting that at the end of the trial he may not be found guilty of the offence he is being prosecuted for.

Bhosale, chairman and founder of ABIL Group, was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in June 2022. He had been initially arrested by the CBI in a corruption case, and obtained bail from the high court in that case in May.

Justice Manish Pitale on



Wednesday granted Bhosale bail in the ED case on a personal bond of Rs one lakh.

"There are reasonable grounds to believe that the applicant (Bhosale) is not guilty of the offences for which he is being prosecuted. The applicant is already granted bail in the predicate offence (registered by the CBI)," Justice Pitale said.

According to the ED, Bhosale received kickbacks from Yes Bank founder Rana Kapoor, also an accused in the case, in return for diverting funds.

Yes Bank, under Rana Kapoor, had disbursed Rs 3,983 crore to Deewan Housing Finance Limited (DHFL), which were proceeds of crime. Of this amount, DHFL sanctioned and disbursed loans aggregating to Rs2,420 crore to three group concerns of Radius Group, headed by Sanjay Chhabria, also an accused in the case.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sachin Tendulkar, former cricketer

"India has sent several luminaries to lead the ICC as administrators: Mr. Jagmohan Dalmiya, Mr. Sharad Pawar, Mr. N. Srinivasan, and Mr. Shashank Manohar. I am sure he will build on their legacy and take the game of cricket forward."

CR motormen against extra working hours

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Central Railway's motormen, plying local train resorted to "work to rule" protest, sending railway administration into tizzy and forcing them to put roster change on hold that increased their working hours by 20 minutes per day.

Since Wednesday afternoon, motormen had started following work to rule duty, which is considered to be a weapon in their hands that officially allow them to

stop working when their daily working hour is completed, but their services still need to keep local trains wheels on. Resultantly, the services started crumbling in the evening peak hours, forcing railway administration to put new working hour time table on hold. However, before the motormen's decision could have led to the cancellation of the train, the railway administration decided to put its new roster on hold.

"As of now, every motorman works 2.47 hours per

day on average basis and in the revised roster, this timing went up by 20 minutes per day, i.e it became 3.07 minutes per day. This new arrangement did not go down well with the motormen and to protest this, they resorted to what eventually hits and commuters. Therefore, for the convenience of the passengers, we have decided to put this new arrangement on hold till further revision, said a senior Central Railway official.

He added that this revised working hours will eventually cut down the overtime work of the motormen and possibly this was the reason they vehemently opposed it. He further denied to divulge the details.

Dr. Swapnil Nila, Chief Public Relations Officer of the Central Railway said that the decision to implement new roster has been put on hold as few of motormen have expressed their concerns on this.

Earlier, the Central Railway Majdoor Sangh (CRMS), the union of central railway, had warned administration

that if new roster is implemented forcibly, then they won't have any choice, but to follow work to rule.

The administration's attempt to introduce new working details without implementing the recommendations made by the "Committee of Details" appointed by the Manager (Guard) has led to confusion. The work of the running staff is planned by the "Committee of Details", including motormen, local managers work through an elected Detail Committee.

One in Dighi in Maharashtra

Cabinet nod for setting up 12 industrial cities

New Delhi: The Union cabinet on Wednesday approved 12 new industrial cities in 10 states to boost domestic manufacturing with an estimated investment of Rs 28,602 crore.

Spanning across 10 states and strategically planned along six major corridors, these projects represent a significant leap forward in India's quest to enhance its manufacturing capabilities

and economic growth.

These industrial areas will be located in Khurpia in Uttarakhand, Rajpura-Patiala in Punjab, Dighi in Maharashtra, Palakkad in Kerala, Agra and Prayagraj in UP, Gaya in Bihar, Zaheerabad in Telangana, Orvakal and Koppurthy in AP, and Jodhpur-Pali in Rajasthan.

The Union Cabinet has approved 12 new project proposals under the Na-



tional Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP) with an estimated investment of Rs 28,602 crore, said Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw after the

Cabinet meeting.

The move will transform the industrial landscape of the country, creating a robust network of industrial nodes and cities that will significantly boost economic growth and global competitiveness.

They will be developed as greenfield smart cities of global standards.

The approach ensures that the cities are equipped with advanced infrastruc-

ture that supports sustainable and efficient industrial operations.

NICDP is expected to generate significant employment opportunities, with an estimated 1 million direct jobs and up to 3 million indirect jobs being created through planned industrialisation.

These projects will create an investment potential of about Rs 1.52 lakh crore. -PTI

Private FM radio for 234 new cities

New Delhi: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal to hold third batch of ascending auctions for 730 channels in 234 new cities under Private FM Radio Phase III Policy.

The estimated reserve price has been pegged at Rs 784.87 crore.

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said here that the Cabinet also approved a proposal to charge an annual license fee (ALF) of FM channel as four per cent of gross revenue excluding GST. This will be applicable for 234 new cities / towns.

The private FM radio roll out in 234 new cities and towns will fulfil the unmet demand for FM radio in these areas which still remain uncovered by private FM radio broadcasting and bring new and local content

Startups see significant surge in VC Funding

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Indian startups saw a significant 42 per cent surge in VC funding from January to July 2024 according to the latest data on venture capital funding for the period January-July 2024 by analytics company Global Data.

The data reveals that Indian startup companies experienced a notable 42 per cent increase in investment from venture capital during the first half of 2024, securing 672 deals that collectively raised \$6.3 billion, marking a significant rise from the previous year. In the same period of 2023, Indian startups managed to secure \$4.4 billion



from 664 venture capital

deals. "The substantial increase in the value of investments, despite a slight 1.2% increase in the number of deals, can be linked

to some of the major investments made during this time. This indicates that while venture capital investors are being cautious, there is still ample capital available for start-

ups with potential," said Aurojyoti Bose, the Lead Analyst at Global Data.

The number of deals also saw a slight increase. The most notable investments during this time included Zepto, a quick commerce startup that secured \$665 million, Meesho, an online shopping and reselling portal that raised \$300 million, PharmEasy, an online pharmacy that managed \$216 million, Radiance, a renewable energy company that raised \$150 million, Kogta Financial, a non-banking financial company that secured \$148 million, and Bike Taxi, a bike-sharing start up that raised \$120 million, as reported by Global Data.

Cement prices rise in August

By Correspondent

Mumbai: After correcting prices for the last nine consecutive months, Cement prices were increased by Rs 10-20 per 50 kg bag or 3-6 per cent across regions with effect from the third week of August over the preceding month of July, said a Motilal Oswal report.

Cement prices were under pressure for the past several months due to lower demand during general elections and increased competitive intensity, the report said.

Across the country, average

cement price was down ~13% in July from its peak in Oct'23, and the average cement realization for our cement companies was down ~8% in Apr-Jun as compared to Oct-Dec last year, the report said. In most markets, cement price was at a multiyear low level, whereas in South (particularly in Tamil Nadu and Kerala), it was at a decadal low level.

"Over the recent past, the cement industry has seen consolidation with rising merger and acquisition activities in the industry, and a larger part of capacity addition, over the



next three years, would be done by the top five players. Consequently, the capacity share of top five players is likely to increase to ~63% by FY26E from ~54% in FY24," the report said, indicating that intensifying consolidation in the industry should lead to better pricing power in the

long term.

Cement dealers have indicated that the price hike could partly be sustained as intermittent rains, higher competition, weak volume offtake in non-trade segment and upcoming festive/marriage season would lead to demand disruption.

P&G profit down by 46 pc

New Delhi: Procter & Gamble Hygiene and Health Care Ltd (PGHH) on Wednesday reported 46.40 per cent decline in profit after tax at Rs 81.06 crore for June quarter 2024 on account of increased spending.

The company, which follows July-June financial year, had reported a profit after tax of Rs 151.24 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal.

However, PGHH's revenue from operations was at 931.75 crore as against Rs 852.53 crore a year ago.

SEBI cautions about unrealistic projections by SME companies

By Correspondent

Mumbai: India's capital market regulator - Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has cautioned investors about companies listed on SME platform that are projecting unrealistic picture of their operations.

Such companies / promoters have been seen to make public announcements that create a positive picture of their operations.

These announcements are typically followed up with various corporate actions such as bonus issues, stock splits, preferential allotments, etc, the SEBI statement said.

The above actions create a positive sentiment amongst investors, which induces them into purchasing such securities. Simultaneously, this also presents an easy opportunity to the promoters to off-load their

holdings in such companies at elevated prices, it said.

In the recent past, SEBI has passed orders against such entities. The modus-operandi of these entities follows a pattern that is by and large similar to what has been mentioned above, SEBI said.

The regulator also advised investors to not rely on unverifiable social media posts and not to invest based on tips / rumours.

Adani Ports to set up two projects in MP

Gwalior: Adani Group firm APSEZ on Wednesday announced setting up a 2 million tonne capacity cement grinding unit in Guna and a propellant production facility at Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh with a total investment of Rs 3,500 crore.

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) MD Karan Adani made the announcement at

the Gwalior Regional Industry Conclave here.

He said the unit in Shivpuri is strategically aligned with the Aatmanirbhar mission to transform India from a defence importer to a defence exporter. These two projects would create over 3,500 direct and indirect jobs.

Referring to the investment made by Adani Group

in Madhya Pradesh, he said "we have already invested Rs 18,250 crore and created 12,000 jobs. Gwalior is fast becoming a tourism hotspot and a pool of high-quality talent and also a key transportation and trade hub. These developments are making Gwalior one of India's emerging economic centers, attracting investments across sectors."

-PTI

Focusing on making UPI global

Mumbai: RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday said the central bank is focused on making the UPI and RuPay 'truly global'. Speaking at the Global Fintech Fest 2024, the governor said digital financial inclusion, digital public infrastructure (DPI), consumer protection and cyber security, sustainable finance, and global integration and cooperation are the five priority areas for the Reserve Bank.

Soon scheme to train adolescent girls

New Delhi: The government will soon launch a scheme to train 14-18 years old girls in non-traditional job roles, a move aimed at increasing women's participation in the labour force, a top official said on Wednesday.

The pilot of the scheme will be launched in the next 2-3 weeks, Secretary in Ministry of Women and Child Development Anil Malik said.

The scheme, which is being launched in 27 districts in the pilot phase, will even-

tually be expanded to cover 218 districts across the country, he said.

A non-traditional career is generally defined as a certain role that has less than 25 per cent of a specific gender, either men or women.

As part of the 'Introduction of Special Project for Empowering Adolescent Girls & Women', 14-18 years old girls would be provided training near their schools and homes while they continue their education.

The secretary shared that the pilot will be



launched in 2-3 weeks under which training in non-traditional job roles will be provided along with digital skilling, digital marketing and general personality orientation.

This programme would ultimately lead to higher

participation of women in the labour force, he added.

"We had signed an MoU with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship where adolescent girls from 27 districts across the country at present and 218 districts later on in the age group of 14-18 years would be trained in non-traditional roles through the agency of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana training partners and Jan Shikshan Sansthan and also government institutions," said Malik.

BSE SENSEX		TOP GAINERS	
August 28, 2024		PTI	
%	POINTS	%	POINTS
+2.20	1556.00	+2.17	1413.60
+2.17	1413.60	+2.06	1939.20
+2.06	1939.20	+1.39	1813.95
+1.39	1813.95	+0.58	2796.95
+0.58	2796.95	+0.51	6898.45
+0.51	6898.45	+0.45	948.00
+0.45	948.00	+0.32	4508.65
+0.32	4508.65	+0.32	1716.25
+0.32	1716.25	+0.19	1627.35

BSE SENSEX		TOP LOSERS	
August 28, 2024		PTI	
%	POINTS	%	POINTS
-1.24	3124.00	-1.11	12358.00
-1.11	12358.00	-1.02	2495.00
-1.02	2495.00	-0.82	1170.70
-0.82	1170.70	-0.76	11213.00
-0.76	11213.00	-0.72	809.30
-0.72	809.30	-0.70	1790.80
-0.70	1790.80	-0.69	497.15
-0.69	497.15	-0.65	153.70
-0.65	153.70	-0.64	3528.10

PVC piping sector to benefit

Mumbai: PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride) piping sector stands to benefit following the continuation of anti-dumping duty on import of CPVC (chlorinated polyvinyl chloride) resin from China and Korea that has led to increase in the prices of the latter.

PVC and CPVC are both thermoplastics used as building materials for plumbing, ducts and vent systems, but CPVC is more

rigid and has better resistance to heat and pressure than PVC.

Anti-dumping duty levied earlier was set to expire on August 25 and the commerce ministry has extended it for additional five years.

"The duty rates have been set in the range of USD 593 to USD 792 per MT for CPVC resin and compound imported from the China PR and Korea RP.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Ashwini Vaishnaw, Railway Minister

"There are some disturbing trends in some incidents, which should be taken seriously. Railways and defence are organizations which should be above politics. I don't believe that railways should be a subject of political blame game."

BJP's Bengal shutdown turns violent

Kolkata: BJP workers clashed with the police at several places across West Bengal on Wednesday as they tried to enforce a 12-hour shutdown in the state.

Several BJP leaders, including former Rajya Sabha MP Roopa Ganguly and MLA Agnimitra Paul, were detained for blocking roads and railway tracks since the early morning.

The 'Bangla Bandh', which began at 6 am, was called by the BJP in protest against Tuesday's police action on participants of 'Nabanna Abhijan' or march to the secretariat, organised by the newly formed students' group Chatra Samaj over the rape and murder of the doctor at RG Kar hospital.

The shutdown partially affected daily life in the state with many people choosing to remain indoors apprehending trouble on the roads. In state capital Kolkata, the usual weekday flurry was missing with a lesser number of buses, auto-rickshaws and taxis plying. Private vehicles were also significantly less, even as markets and shops remained open.

Schools and colleges were open, though the number of students was lesser. In many private offices, attendance was low with employees asked to work from home. However, attendance was as usual in government offices.



BJP leader Locket Chatterjee being detained during a protest rally amid the party's 12-hour general strike in Bengal to protest the police action against participants of Tuesday's 'Nabanna Abhijan' rally which was held again

Several BJP leaders were detained across the state for attempting to enforce the shutdown. Ganguly and Paul were detained from south Kolkata's Gariahat area when they were urging traders to down their shutters and requesting people to support the bandh.

Kolkata Municipal Corporation councillor Sajal Ghosh was detained from his residence in Sealdah shortly after BJP workers scuffled with TMC supporters while trying to enforce the

bandh in the nearby Koley Market. His wife Tania Ghosh then took out a rally, alleging that police held him without any warrant. Later, Deputy Commissioner (Central) Indira Mukherjee said Ghosh was arrested for making provocative comments.

State BJP president Sukanta Majumdar, a Union minister, led a procession at Baguihati in the northern fringes of the city but had an altercation with the police who tried to stop him. Former MP Debasree Choudhury

and hundreds of party workers accompanied him.

BJP workers also demonstrated in Shyambazar and Wipro More in the IT hub of Sector 5, but police were swift in removing them to clear the roads for traffic. An official of the Eastern Railway said bandh supporters blocked tracks at 49 places under its jurisdiction in the state.

While the blockades were lifted at most places, it was continuing in nine stations, mostly in the Sealdah South section, he said.

Polygraph test on Police ASI

- The CBI on Wednesday began the process of conducting a polygraph test on Kolkata Police ASI Anup Dutta to decipher his alleged links with Sanjay Roy, arrested in the rape and murder case of a trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, officials said.

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had taken permission from a Kolkata court to conduct the polygraph test on Assistant Sub-Inspector Dutta, who was earlier questioned by the agency in the case.

- Dutta will be the eighth person to undergo a polygraph test in this case.

- According to the officials, Dutta, posted in the Kolkata Police Welfare Committee, had allegedly extended a number of favours to Roy, a traffic police volunteer.

- The CBI is trying to find out if Roy informed Dutta about the crime he allegedly committed and whether he sought any favours for covering up the crime, the officials said.

"They want political dividends over a dead body"



Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said an amendment to existing laws will be passed in the state assembly next week to ensure capital punishment to convicted rapists.

Banerjee said that she would sit for dharna outside Raj Bhavan here if the Governor delays in giving assent to the amended bill or forwards it to the President for ratification. The CM also said that the TMC will launch a movement from Saturday at the state's grassroots to create pressure on the Centre to pass legisla-

tion for capital punishment of convicted rapists. Banerjee also urged the agitating junior doctors of Bengal, who have struck work for 20 days now to urgently consider returning to duty.

Banerjee added no FIR was lodged against any doctor so far as she does not want that a medic's career be plagued by police cases. "Sixteen days have passed since the Central Bureau of Investigation took over the doctor's rape-murder probe from the Kolkata Police. Where is the justice?" she said.

Denouncing the BJP for calling a 12-hour general strike on Wednesday, Banerjee said, "They called the bandh since they wanted political dividends over a dead body. The BJP is trying to exploit the emotions of ordinary people in the wake of the death of the young woman." -PTI

Will emerge unblemished: Kavitha

Hyderabad: BRS MLC K Kavitha, who reached Kavitha, who reached her residence in Hyderabad on Wednesday evening, said history shows that justice and virtue always triumph. "In my case also, since I have done no wrong, justice and virtue would definitely win one day. I tell Telangana people that the truth will come out in a

course of time. We will continue to fight for that day," she told reporters at her residence. She said she would work



BRS leader K. Kavitha being welcomed on her arrival at Shamsabad Airport, in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

more actively on the ground and participate in the struggles (on people's issues) that are being carried out across the state.

Mehbooba not to contest J-K polls

Srinagar: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday said she will not contest the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, pointing out that she would not be able to fulfil her party's agenda in the union territory set up even if she were to become the Chief Minister.



"I have been Chief Minister of a government with the BJP which revoked FIRs against 12,000 persons (in 2016). Can we do that now? I, as the Chief Minister of a government with (PM) Modi, wrote a letter to separatists to invite them for talks. Can you do that today? I got a ceasefire (implemented) on ground. Can you do that today? If you cannot take back an FIR as chief minister, what does one do with such a post?" she said.

The PDP president was asked if she has had a change of heart on contesting the polls after vice president of arch-rival National Conference Omar Abdullah made a U-turn on his stand of not participating in the polls till Jammu and Kashmir was a union territory.

"Omar himself said that he will have to be at the

door of the (lieutenant) governor for transfer of a peon. I am not bothered about the transfer of the peon but can we implement our agenda?" the former chief minister said.

Omar Abdullah, who had vowed not to take part in assembly polls till Jammu and Kashmir remained a union territory, was among 32 candidates named by the party on Tuesday.

The former CM will contest polls from Ganderbal where he had won in 2008. On the alliance between National Conference and Congress for Jammu and Kashmir polls, the PDP president said the two parties have always come together just for the sake of

power. On the possibility of Lok Sabha MP from Baramulla Sheikh Abdul Rashid and senior separatist leader Shabir Ahmad Shah being released from jail ahead of the polls, she said it would be a good development. She urged the government to consider releasing even those lesser known people who are entitled to bail but have been denied it. -PTI

Three Army personnel killed

Itanagar: Three Army personnel died and several others were injured when their truck skidded off the road and fell into a deep gorge in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Subansiri district, police said on Wednesday.

The accident happened around 6 am on Tuesday on the Trans Arunachal Highway near Tapi village, they said.

The deceased were identified as Havildar Nakhath Singh, Naik Mukesh Kumar and Grenadier Ashish Kumar, according to Army sources.

The Army truck that met with the accident was part of a convoy transporting personnel. The convoy was heading to Basar in Leparada district from Daporijo, the district headquarters town of Upper Subansiri, when the accident happened, a police officer said.

Locals immediately rushed to the spot and helped in rescuing the injured persons and retrieving the bodies of the deceased. -PTI

Decided to join BJP in Jharkhand's interest : Ex CM Champai Soren

Ranchi: Former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren on Wednesday asserted that his decision to join the Bharatiya Janata Party was taken in the interest of Jharkhand and he will resign from the JMM and as minister.

The senior tribal leader made it clear that he is not afraid of any situation.

Soren who met Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi earlier this week and announced joining the saffron party reached Ranchi on Wednesday along with his son and was greeted by a large number of his supporters.

"My decision (to join BJP) is in the interest of Jharkhand... I am used to struggles," Soren said.

Asked about the allegation that he is under "surveillance", the former CM said he is not afraid of any situation and indicated that he will resign from JMM and as minister later on Wednesday.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma earlier in the day alleged that Champai Soren had been under surveillance of his own government's police for the last five months.



Two sub-inspectors (SIs) of Special Branch of Jharkhand Police were caught by Soren's people in a Delhi hotel while they were keeping watch on the ex-chief minister, Sarma claimed.

Champai Soren had assumed office as the 12th chief minister of Jharkhand on February 2, shortly after his predecessor Hemant Soren resigned just before being arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case.

On Tuesday Champai Soren had asserted that he is joining the BJP to save tribal identity and existence, which is at stake in the state's Santhal Pargana region due to "rampant" infiltration from Bangladesh.

The senior JMM leader, who briefly held the chief minister's post after Hemant Soren's resignation, said only the saffron party seems serious over the issue of tribals, while others are indulging in vote bank politics. -PTI

"Today, Bangladeshi infiltration has become a big problem in Santhal Pargana, the holy land of (freedom fighters) Baba Tilka Manjhi and Sido-Kanhu. What can be more unfortunate than the fact that these infiltrators are occupying the land of the descendants of those heroes who never accepted slavery from the British... the dignity of our mothers, sisters and daughters is in danger," Champai Soren said in a post on X.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Khushbu Sundar, leader, BJP

"The victim might be a stranger to you or me, but she needs our support, an ear to listen, and emotional backing from us all. When questioning why she didn't come out earlier, we need to consider her circumstances – not everyone is privileged to speak out."

Rs 908-crore penalty against DMK MP

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday said a penalty of Rs 908 crore has been slapped in a case related to the alleged violation of foreign exchange rules against DMK MP S Jagathrathakan and his family members.

The federal agency issued a statement which said that properties worth Rs 89.19 crore, seized in September 2020, have been confiscated following an adjudication order issued

on August 26 under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

Jagathrathakan, 76, represents the Arakkonam Lok Sabha seat in Tamil Nadu. He has earlier served as a minister of state for Information and Broadcasting in the Union government.

The agency said a FEMA violation probe was initiated against the MP, a businessman from Tamil Nadu, his family members and a related Indian entity.



This investigation, it said, resulted in the passing of seizure order, dated September 11, 2020, under section 37A of FEMA, for various movable and immovable properties in the name of the MP and his family members. These

are valued at Rs 89.19 crore.

"The properties worth Rs 89.19 crore which were seized in terms of section 37A of FEMA were also ordered for confiscation, and penalty of Rs 908 crore is levied vide Adjudication Order dated 26/08/2024," the ED said. The 2020 seizure order was "set aside" by the Competent Authority (under the FEMA) in February 2021 and the ED challenged it before the Appellate Tribunal where,

the ED said, the "appeal is pending".

Later, the agency filed a complaint in December 2021 before the FEMA Adjudicating Authority against the MP, his family and a linked company "charging them for violations of various FEMA provisions, particularly in respect of their investment to the tune of Rs 42 crore in a shell company incorporated in Singapore in 2017". -PTI

Next batch of cheetahs likely by year-end

By Gaurav Saini

New Delhi: India has expedited efforts to bring a new batch of 12-14 cheetahs by the end of the year, with a delegation set to visit South Africa soon for ground-to-ground negotiations, officials said on Tuesday.

PTI has learned that negotiations are also ongoing with Kenya, and a memorandum of understanding is being finalized.

"We are actively engaging with South Africa on the matter. A delegation will visit the country in late September or early October to hold ground-to-ground negotiations. The next batch of cheetahs could come from either of these two countries," the official said.

The 'Action Plan for Reintroduction of Cheetah in India' talks about bringing around 12-14 cheetahs each year from South Africa, Namibia, and other African countries for five years to establish a founder stock.

"We have communicated to South Africa that we want to expedite efforts to bring another batch of cheetahs by the end of the year as per the recommendation of the Cheetah Project Steering Committee and in accordance with the action plan," the official added.

The next batch of cheetahs will be brought to the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, selected as the second site for cheetah introduction, as Kuno National Park has already exceeded its cheetah carrying capacity of 20.



PTI has also learned that Kuno, the first home to translocated cheetahs in India, continues to struggle with a high leopard population and a low prey base, which has delayed preparations at Gandhi Sagar.

Summary records from meetings of the Centre's steering committee reveal that prey augmentation and leopard management are among the major challenges facing the initiative since the reintroduction of cheetahs in India in September 2022.

The low prey density is also one of the reasons why cheetahs spent an extended period in enclosures in Kuno

after being brought back from the wild in August last year, following the death of three cheetahs due to septicemia.

As an interim solution, authorities have been introducing prey into both Kuno and Gandhi Sagar. The high leopard population in both areas also prompted the initiation of a leopard translocation drive.

Cheetahs have coexisted with leopards and lions in Africa, but some officials in India consider the high leopard population in Kuno and Gandhi Sagar problematic as it would "reduce the prey biomass for cheetahs".

Madhya Pradesh has the

highest number of leopards in the country, with 3,907 (up from 3,421 in 2018), according to the government's "Status of Leopards in India" report released earlier this year.

Officials have reported around 24 leopards in the 64 sq km enclosure being prepared for the new batch of cheetahs in Gandhi Sagar. According to sources, 15 leopards have been relocated from there so far.

Sources have told PTI that Gandhi Sagar is "not 100 per cent ready" for cheetahs, largely due to the challenges related to the leopard population and prey base.

"We are working on mak-

ing the fencing leopard-proof. We also need to improve the prey population both inside and outside the enclosure," a source said.

Gandhi Sagar spans 368 sq km and is surrounded by an additional 2,500 sq km area.

According to the "Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in Gandhi Sagar", five to eight cheetahs will be released into a 64 sq-km predator-proof fenced area in the first phase, with a focus on breeding.

The long-term goal is to establish a metapopulation of 60-70 cheetahs in the Kuno-Gandhi Sagar landscape.

-PTI

Japan prepares for powerful Typhoon Shanshan

Tokyo: Japan was preparing for powerful typhoon as it slowly approached the country's southwest at a bicycle speed, threatening to bring heavy rains and strong winds and causing airlines to cancel flights and train operators to delay or suspend services through the weekend.

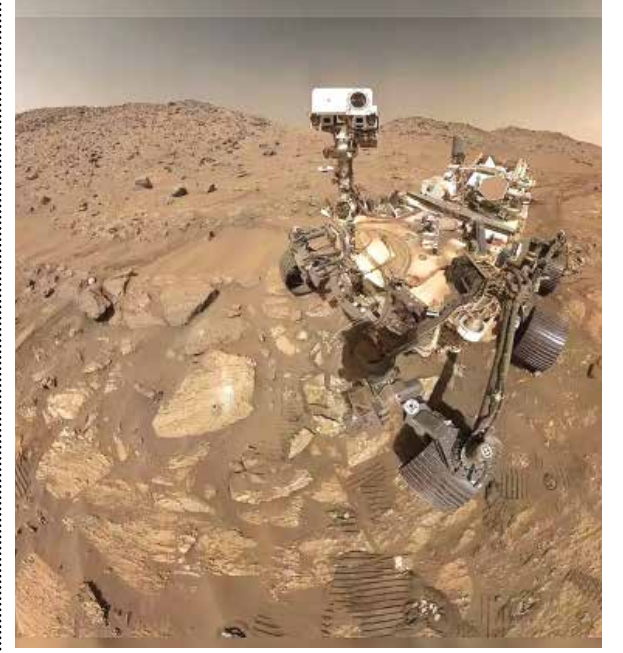
Typhoon Shanshan was at about 120 kilometers (75 miles) south of the southern island of Yakushima on Wednesday morning as it headed north toward Kyushu, packing winds of up to 180 kilometers (112 miles) per hour, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency.

The agency said the typhoon is expected to reach southern Kyushu and possibly make landfall Thursday, and issued a high-level warning against violent winds, high waves and heavy rain for the Kagoshima prefecture.

Disaster Management Minister Yoshifumi Matsumura, at a taskforce meeting Wednesday, urged residents in Shanshan's predicted path to take precautionary measures early, such as by checking their nearest shelters, to save their own lives. Matsumura urged residents, especially older adults, not to hesitate and take shelter whenever there is any safety concern. The government also canceled its annual earthquake drills Sunday to free up disaster response resources.

So far, no damage nor injuries have been reported from the typhoon.

Perseverance rover begins steep climb



By Adithi Ramakrishnan

New York: NASA's Perseverance rover is tackling a steep new challenge on Mars. The six-wheeled rover has spent the last 3 1/2 years roaming around the bottom of a crater. On Tuesday, it began climbing to the top.

The rover will go up 1,000 feet (305 meters) to the rim

NASA ON MARS

of Jezero Crater to dig up rock samples. Since landing on the red planet in 2021, Perseverance has collected 22 rock core samples from the floor of the crater, which was once filled with water.

The rover's samples may help scientists piece together what the planet's climate looked like billions of years ago — and learn whether any ancient Martian life lurked. NASA is exploring

ways to bring the rock samples to Earth.

The bedrock at the rim of the crater might yield clues as to how rocky planets like Mars and Earth came to be, said Steven Lee with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California.

But the road ahead won't be easy. Perseverance will scale rocky terrain and slopes of up to 23 degrees on the months-long journey.

"Perseverance has certainly been a real trooper," said Lee. The rover has logged around 29 kilometers during its exploration.

The rock at the top of the crater may have come from past hydrothermal vents — sites where heated water and dissolved minerals spewed out after cycling underneath the planet's surface. On Earth, similar sites — like at Yellowstone National Park — are considered a cradle for life.

-AP

India added 51 days to life expectancy in 2022

New Delhi: India recorded a significant 19.3 per cent drop in particulate pollution in 2022 compared to 2021, the second-highest reduction in the world after Bangladesh, adding an average of 51 days to the life expectancy of every citizen, according to a new report.

The annual report, "Air Quality Life Index" 2024, by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC) also said that Indians are likely to lose 3.6 years of life expectancy if the country fails to meet the World Health Organisation's annual PM2.5 concentration standard of 5 micrograms per cubic metre.

The researchers attributed the decline in particulate levels in India and other South Asian countries primarily to favourable meteorological conditions and a reduced number of thermal inversions — when a layer of warm air traps cooler air near the ground, causing pollution



to build up.

PM2.5 concentrations in India in 2022 were around 9 micrograms per cubic metre, 19.3 per cent lower than 2021.

The most significant declines were observed in Purulia and Bankura districts of West Bengal, followed by

19.3 PC DROP IN PARTICULATE POLLUTION

Dhanbad, Purbi, Paschim Singhbhum, Paschim Medinipur and Bokaro districts in Jharkhand. In each of these districts, PM2.5 concentrations dropped by over 20 micrograms per cu-

bic metre.

The report said that the northern plains, the most polluted region in India, saw a 17.2 per cent reduction in particulate levels in 2022 compared to 2021.

However, despite this improvement, the average resident in this region is still likely to lose about 5.4 years of life expectancy if the current pollution levels persist. On the other hand, if the decline in particulate levels continues at the same rate in the coming years, life expectancy in the northern plains could increase by 1.2 years, it said.

Explain steps to curb stubble burning, pollution

New Delhi: Calling the pollution control boards of Delhi-NCR "ineffective" due to staff shortage, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the body responsible for air quality management in the national capital and adjoining areas to explain how it proposes to tackle pollution and stubble burning which would spike with the onset of winter.

SC ASKS CAQM CHAIRPERSON

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih directed the Chairperson of the Commission of Air Quality Management (CAQM) in the National Capital Region and adjoining areas to remain present virtually during the hearing of the matter. "Today, the situation is that there are large number of vacant posts in the state pollution control boards rendering them ineffective... We therefore call upon the chairman of CAQM to remain present through video conferencing on the next date of hearing.

Rains claim nine more lives in Gujarat

Ahmedabad: Rain-related incidents claimed nine more lives in Gujarat, taking the death toll to 16 in two days, while another 8,500 people were relocated and rescued from flood-affected areas with rains continuing to lash some parts of the state for the fourth consecutive day on Wednesday, officials said.

Authorities are carrying out relief and rescue operations involving the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), its state counterpart SDRF, the Army, the Indian Air Force and the Indian Coast Guard, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi called up Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel to take stock of the situation and to ensure Centre's support in the crisis.

A total of nine persons died in rain-related incidents, such as collapse of walls and drowning, in different parts of the state on



A flooded area after heavy monsoon rainfall, in Vadodra, Gujarat on Tuesday. -Pic-PTI

Tuesday, an official release said.

On Monday, seven persons died in similar incidents in the state.

Three persons died after a wall collapsed in Anand district on Tuesday. Two others died in Mahisagar district, and one each in Kheda and Ahmedabad dis-

tricts due to wall collapse incidents. One person each drowned in Junagadh and Bharuch district, it said.

A total of 169 persons, a majority from Kheda and Morbi district, were rescued on Tuesday, officials said. Another 8,460 were evacuated and shifted to safer places, it said.

These included around 3,000 from Navsari and around 1,000 each from Vadodra and Kheda.

With this, over 15,000 people have been evacuated in two days - Monday and Tuesday. The death toll in rain-related incidents has risen to 16 in these two days, the officials said.

ReNew, Microsoft sign lean power pact

New Delhi: ReNew on Tuesday announced the signing of a clean power sale contract of 437.6 megawatt (MW) with Microsoft.

The contract is expected to generate over one million units of green electricity attributes annually, contributing to Microsoft's aim to become carbon negative by 2030, ReNew said in a statement.

ReNew will direct about USD 15 million of revenue from the contract towards a community fund to support environment-focused initiatives.

This work will be delivered

in partnership with the ReNew Foundation, the philanthropic arm of ReNew, which works to create sustainable communities through climate action with a focus on women and youth and whose efforts are aligned with Microsoft's Environmental Justice priorities.

Puneet Chandok, President, Microsoft India & South Asia, said, "This agreement with ReNew accelerates our progress towards these goals while benefiting local communities through initiatives such as rural electrification and initiatives to improve women's livelihoods."

NGT forms panel to suggest remedial measures

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has formed a panel to suggest remedial measures to tackle the problem of pollution in the Pahuj river in Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh.

The tribunal was hearing a petition alleging that the river has shrunk due to pollution and encroachment and that sewage is discharged and solid waste thrown into it.

The river is a tributary of the Sindh and the Yamuna and was once regarded as the lifeline of Jhansi and surrounding areas, the plea has said.

A bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava observed: "The applicant is present



in person and has submitted that it is a pious river flowing adjacent to a temple

in Jhansi and bathing in this river has religious significance. But on ac-

count of pollution and encroachment, the sentiments (of people) are

affected."

The plea has raised a "substantial issue" relating to compliance with the environmental norms, the bench, also comprising Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member A Senthil Vel, said in a recent order.

JHANSI RIVER POLLUTION

"Having regard to the nature of the allegation, we constitute a joint committee comprising a representative of the member secretary, Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board, an officer nominated by the member secretary, Central Pollution Control Board, the commissioner of the Municipal Corporation,

Jhansi, the regional office, Lucknow of the Union Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change and the District Magistrate, Jhansi," the bench said.

It said the district magistrate will be the nodal agency for coordination.

"The joint committee will visit the site of the river flowing from district Jhansi, ascertain the source of its pollution, take the water sample, get the analysis done and submit the analysis report and also suggest the remedial measure," the tribunal said.

The matter has been posted on November 28 for further proceedings. -PTI

Jamaat-e-Islami chief interview

New Delhi must not interfere

By Pradipta Tapadar

Dhaka: Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami supremo Shafiqur Rahman has said his party seeks harmonious and stable ties with India but asserted that New Delhi needs to reconsider its foreign policy in the neighbourhood, as bilateral relations do not entail interfering in each other's internal issues.

Rahman, who is the Ameer of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, stated in an interview with PTI that his party supports close relations between India and Bangladesh but also believes that Bangladesh should maintain strong and balanced relations with countries like the US, China, and "Pakistan, by leaving behind the baggage of the past."

Rahman, 65, contended that New Delhi's perception of Jamaat-e-Islami as anti-India is mistaken, asserting that "Jamaat-e-Islami is not against any country; it is a wrong perception. We are pro-Bangladesh and are solely interested in safeguarding the interests of Bangladesh," and emphasised that this perception needs to change.

The Jamaat-e-Islami suggested that it would have been better if former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, after resigning due to unrest, had



India is our neighbour, and we want a good, stable, and harmonious bilateral relationship. However, India has done a few things in the past that did not sit well with the people of Bangladesh."

Working together and interfering are two different things. Bilateral ties should mean cooperation and mutual respect. India is our closest neighbour; we share both land and sea borders, so we should have good ties as you cannot stay away from your neighbour."

Dr Shafiqur Rahman, Dhaka



not fled to India. He advocated for her to return to Bangladesh to face the law. "For instance, during the 2014 Bangladesh elections, a senior Indian diplomat visited Dhaka and dictated who should participate and who should not. This was unacceptable, as it is not the role of a neighbouring

country. We believe India will eventually reevaluate its foreign policy concerning Bangladesh. We think interference in each other's internal issues should be avoided," he added.

Rehman stated that Jamaat-e-Islami desires India to be a "friend and play a responsible role in bilat-

eral ties," while also emphasising that his party acknowledges its responsibility to improve relations but insists that these ties must remain "non-interfering in each other's internal issues."

Rehman acknowledged that while Jamaat-e-Islami had interactions with the

Indian establishment in the past, these contacts diminished during the Awami League rule over the last 16 years, but he believes that "effective relationships with India can now be re-established."

Regarding relationships with Pakistan, Rahman said, "We want good ties with them as well. We seek an equal and balanced relationship with all our neighbours in the subcontinent, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. This balance is crucial to maintaining stability."

Regarding diplomatic ties with other global powers, Rahman said, "We seek balanced and stable ties with world powers like the US and China, as in this globalised world, we are interconnected in various ways." On the recent flood situation in Bangladesh, Rehman stated that India should have provided prior information to Bangladesh before releasing water.

"We are not saying that India is to blame for the heavy rains, but India should have informed us before releasing water so that we could better manage the situation and save lives. We believe this dam should not be there at all, and water should be allowed to follow its natural course," he said.

-PTI

Israeli raids across occupied West Bank kill nine

Jerusalem: Israel launched raids across the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, where its forces killed at least nine Palestinians and sealed off the volatile city of Jenin, according to Palestinian officials.

Israel has carried out near-daily raids across the West Bank since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Gaza triggered the ongoing war there.

Palestinian militant groups said they were exchanging fire with the Israeli military. The governor of Jenin, Kamal Abu al-Rub, said on Palestinian radio that Israeli forces had surrounded the city, blocking exit and entry points and access to hospitals, and ripping up infrastructure in the camp. The Israeli military confirmed it was operating in the West Bank cities of Jenin and Tulkarem but did not provide further details.

Over 600 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed by Israeli fire since the war in Gaza began over 10 months ago, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Most have died during such raids, which often trigger gunbattles with militants. Israel says the operations are required to dismantle Hamas and other militant groups and to prevent attacks on Israelis, which have also risen since the start of the war.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said seven people were killed early Wednesday in Tubas, another West Bank city, and another two in Jenin. The ministry identified the two killed in Jenin as Qassam Jabarin, 25, and Asem Balout, 39.

-AP

China-Philippine clash

US military open to escorting Philippine ships

By Jim Gomez

Manila: The US military is open to consultations about escorting Philippine ships in the disputed South China Sea, the head of US Indo-Pacific Command said Tuesday amid a spike in hostilities between Beijing and Manila in the disputed waters.

Adm. Samuel Paparo's remarks, which he made in response to a question during a news conference in Manila with Philippine Armed Forces chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr., provided a glimpse of the mindset of one of the highest American military commanders outside the U.S. mainland on a prospective operation that would risk putting U.S. Navy ships in direct collisions with those of China.

Chinese coast guard, navy and suspected militia ships regularly clash with Philippine vessels during attempts to resupply Filipino sailors stationed in parts of the South China Sea claimed by both countries. As these clashes grow increasingly hostile, resulting in injuries to Filipino sailors and damage to their ships, the Philippine government has faced questions about invoking a treaty alliance with Washington.

Paparo and Brawner spoke to reporters after an international military conference in Manila organized by the US Indo-Pacific Command, at which Chi-

na's increasingly assertive actions in the South China Sea were spotlighted. Military and defense officials and diplomats from the US and allied countries attended but there were no Chinese representatives.

Asked if the US military would consider escorting Philippine ships delivering food and other supplies to Filipino forces in the South China Sea, Paparo replied, "Certainly, within the context of consultations."

"Every option between the two sovereign nations in terms of our mutual defense, escort of one vessel to the other, is an entirely reasonable option within our Mutual Defense Treaty, among this close alliance between the two of us," Paparo said without elaborating.

Brawner responded cautiously to the suggestion, which could run afoul of Philippine laws including a constitutional ban on foreign forces directly joining local combat operations.

"The attitude of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, as dictated by the Philippine laws, is for us to first rely on ourselves," Brawner said. "We are going to try all options, all avenues that are available to us in order for us to achieve the mission...in this case, the resupply and rotation of our troops."

"We will then seek for other options when we are already constrained from doing it ourselves," Brawner said.

-AP



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, right, welcomes Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer in Berlin, Germany on Wednesday.

Pic:APPTI

'Blackout Challenge' death

US appeals court revives lawsuit against TikTok

By Maryclaire Dale

Philadelphia: A US appeals court revived on Tuesday a lawsuit filed by the mother of a 10-year-old Pennsylvania girl who died attempting a viral challenge she allegedly saw on TikTok that dared people to choke themselves until they lost consciousness.

While federal law generally protects online publishers from liability for content posted by others, the court said TikTok could potentially be found liable for promoting the content or using an algorithm to steer it to children.

"TikTok makes choices

about the content recommended and promoted to specific users, and by doing so, is engaged in its own first-party speech," Judge Patty Shwartz of the 3rd US Circuit Court in Philadelphia wrote in the opinion issued Tuesday.

Lawyers for TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, did not immediately return phone and email messages seeking comment. Lawyers for the mother, Tawanna Anderson, had argued that the so-called "blackout challenge," which was popular in 2021, appeared on Nylah Anderson's "For You" feed after TikTok determined that she

might watch it — even after other children had died trying it. Nylah Anderson's mother found her unresponsive in the closet of their home in Chester, near Philadelphia, and tried to resuscitate her. The girl, described by her family as a fun-loving "butterfly," died five days later.

"I cannot stop replaying that day in my head," her mother said at a news conference in 2022, when she filed the lawsuit. "It is time that these dangerous challenges come to an end so that other families don't experience the heartbreak we live every day."

A district judge initially

Nylah, still in the first year of her adolescence, likely had no idea what she was doing or that following along with the images on her screen would kill her. But TikTok knew that Nylah would watch because the company's customized algorithm placed the videos on her For You Page."

Judge Paul Matey wrote in a partial concurrence to the opinion.

dismissed the lawsuit, citing Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which is often used to protect internet companies from liability for things posted on their sites.

The three-judge appeals court panel partially reversed that decision Tuesday, sending the case back

to the lower court for trial.

Jeffrey Goodman, a lawyer for the family, said it's "inevitable" that courts give Section 230 more scrutiny as technology reaches into all facets of our lives. He said the family hopes the ruling will help protect others, even if it doesn't bring Nylah Anderson back.

-AP

Over 24,000 sign up for Modi event

By Yoshita Singh

New York: More than 24,000 members of the Indian diaspora have signed up to attend a mega community event that will be addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here next month.

The 'Modi & US' Progress Together' event will be held on September 22 at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, which has a capacity of 15,000. Modi is scheduled to address the high-level UN General Assembly session here on September 26.

Egypt recovers three artifacts found in Netherlands

By Fatma Khaled

Cairo: Egypt recovered three ancient artifacts that were smuggled out of the country and found in the Netherlands, where two of the items were for sale in an antiques shop, Egyptian officials said Tuesday.

The items retrieved include a mummified head from the Hellenistic period, a ceramic funerary figurine

dating to Egypt's New Kingdom era (664-332 B.C.), and part of a wooden tomb bearing an inscription of the goddess Isis from 663-504 B.C., the Egyptian embassy in The Hague said in a statement. The head was found in good condition, showing remnants of teeth and hair.

Dutch police and the cultural heritage inspection unit retrieved the figurines and parts of the tomb after

determining that they were smuggled out of Egypt. A Dutch individual handed over the mummified head, which he had inherited from a family member, to local authorities.

The three artifacts are believed to have been stolen and smuggled after they were discovered through illegal excavation, according to Egyptian authorities.

- AP



New indictment in Trump case

Washington: Special counsel Jack Smith filed a new indictment against Donald Trump over his efforts to undo the 2020 presidential election that keeps the same criminal charges but narrows the allegations against him following a SC opinion that conferred broad immunity on former presidents.

-PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Yakoov Blitshtein, Director General of Foreign Affairs, Israel

"We will build new cities, new homes and bring back all the citizens to their homes, to their villages, to their kibbutz, to the cities. We will win the war against terrorism."

Daniel Caltagirone on Indian cinema

Filmmaking close to superseding Hollywood

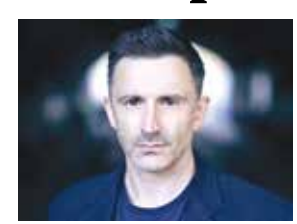
New Delhi: Western cinema, as British actor Daniel Caltagirone sees it, is "dying", and Indians films are on the verge of supplanting Hollywood, which seems to have lost its way in the surge of streamers.

The actor plays the antagonist Lord Clement in Pa Ranjith's Tamil period drama "Thangalaan", fronted by Vikram in the title role.

Caltagirone, whose Hollywood film credits include the Oscar winning title "The

Pianist", "Legionnaire", "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider - The Cradle of Life", and "The Fall", said he feels "privileged" to make his Indian cinema debut at a time when stars like Deepika Padukone are presenting at the Academy Awards.

"There is a shift. Western cinema is dying... Something is happening, I don't know what it is. I don't know if it is because of streaming, but I urge people to not abandon cinema... Indian



cinema is having an effect globally...

"Indian cinema is exciting, colourful, fun, and passionate. There is amazing old-school storytelling. It just throws you in whereas we have lost something in

the West. It's become dull, it's become sort of too self-reflective. Indian filmmaking... you are one step away, you are so close to superseding Hollywood. Big Indian stars like Deepika... They are now presenting at the Oscars. This is unreal," he told PTI in an interview. This is not his first time working with an Indian filmmaker.

He previously worked with filmmaker Shekhar Kapur in 2002's "The Four Feathers" and India-born

American director Tarsem Singh in 2006's "The Fall".

Calling Ranjith, known for hard-hitting social dramas like "Madras", "Kaala" and "Sarpatta Parambarai", a social commentator, Caltagirone said his education about Indian cinema is "just starting". Asked if there was any Indian director he would like to work with, the actor said he wouldn't mind working with "RRR" filmmaker SS Rajamouli.

-PTI

EDITORIAL

Raising Maharaj

The collapse of a 35-foot statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Sindhudurg has triggered a wave of outrage and finger-pointing in Maharashtra's political circles. Yet beyond the immediate political skirmishes, the incident has also spurred a call for something larger—literally and symbolically. School Education Minister Deepak Kesarkar's proposal to replace the fallen statue with a 100-foot-tall monument is not just a matter of rectifying a wrong; it is an opportunity to reinforce the enduring legacy of one of India's most iconic leaders.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, revered as the architect of the Maratha Empire, is more than just a historical figure; he is a symbol of courage, governance, and maritime strategy that continues to inspire millions. The original statue, erected by the Indian Navy to honour Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as the first naval king of India, was an embodiment of this legacy. Its collapse, a mere eight months after its unveiling by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been met with public disappointment and anger, amplified by political accusations of negligence and corruption.

However, the proposal for a new, grander statue should be seen not just as a remedy for this mishap, but as a reaffirmation of the values Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj represented. A 100-foot statue would serve as a powerful symbol of Maharashtra's pride, resilience, and historical consciousness. It would stand as a testament to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's indomitable spirit, which united the Marathas and laid the groundwork for an empire that defied the might of the Mughal dynasty.

Critics might dismiss the idea of a larger statue as a political gimmick, designed to curry favour with voters. Indeed, the timing of the original statue's unveiling and the ensuing blame game over its collapse cannot be entirely disentangled from Maharashtra's political dynamics. But to reduce this proposal to mere politicking would be to overlook its deeper significance.

In a time when India's historical figures are often invoked in polarizing debates, the construction of a monumental Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue offers an opportunity to transcend partisan divides. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's legacy, after all, is one that resonates beyond the confines of Maharashtra. His emphasis on self-governance, social justice, and military innovation is a part of the broader Indian ethos. A grand statue would thus be not just a local landmark, but a national one—a reminder of the inclusive and visionary leadership that India needs today.

The call for a new, towering statue also serves as a reminder of the importance of quality and durability in public projects. The swift collapse of the initial statue has understandably raised concerns about the standards of construction and the accountability of those involved. The proposed 100-foot statue must, therefore, be built with the utmost attention to structural integrity, using the best materials and technology available. It should be a monument that not only stands tall but stands the test of time, embodying the endurance of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's legacy.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Small vs. Mighty: Lithuania's Strategic Shift Against China



By
Sumant Vidwans

Lithuania, a small northeastern European country of just 65,000 square kilometres and a population of 2.8 million has emerged as a source of diplomatic tension for China. In contrast, China is a vast nation with approximately 9.6 billion square kilometres and a population of 1.4 billion.

Lithuania, a small Baltic nation, has stirred diplomatic tensions with China by aligning with Taiwan and reducing involvement in China's "17+1" group. Despite Lithuania's limited economic ties with China, it has leveraged support from the EU and the US to counterbalance China's influence. Upcoming elections in both Lithuania and the US could further impact this dynamic.

Lithuania, annexed by the USSR in 1944 during World War II, gained independence in 1990, becoming the first country to break free from Soviet control. China was among the first countries to recognise Lithuania's independence, seeing it as a strategic foothold in the Baltic region despite Lithuania's limited economic significance. Diplomatic relations were established in September 1991 with China opening its embassy in Lithuania in 1992, followed by Lithuania's embassy in China in 1995.

Relations between the two countries remained sluggish as Lithuania focused more on building stronger ties with Europe and the United States, eventually culminating in Lithuania joining the EU and NATO in 2004. Following its EU membership, trade between Lithuania and China began to grow, with Lithuania exporting machinery, electronics, and agricultural products to China, and importing consumer goods.

China sought to expand trade and investment in Central and Eastern Europe, forming a group with 16 countries from the region, including Lithuania in 2012, known as "16+1". In 2019, Greece's entry made it "17+1". Trade between China and Lithuania increased through the EU and "17+1", as did concerns about China's policies in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Similar concerns were rising in other EU countries, leading to declining relations with China.

Geopolitical shifts emerged with Donald Trump's presidency in 2016 as he reassessed US trade policies and global involvement, sparking a new cold war with China. The US also began pressuring its allies to join in exerting pressure on China.

Some young lawmakers from Lithuania's conservative Homeland Union-Christian Democratic Party (TS-LKD) saw this as an opportunity to shift Lithuanian foreign policy focus from China to Taiwan, believing that this would please the US and bolster Lithuania's leadership claim



within the EU. They argued that Taiwan is a small democratic nation facing pressure from a powerful authoritarian neighbour, so Lithuania should stand with it rather than align with China.

In 2019, following a visit to Taiwan, Lithuanian parliamentarians proposed establishing formal diplomatic relations. They reasoned that such a partnership would enhance Lithuania's national security and high-tech industry development while helping Taiwan preserve its democracy. Their efforts gained traction, securing support from the Lithuanian President and the Liberal Party (LS), amid other ongoing concerns about leasing Lithuania's main port to a Chinese company.

In the same year, a split in the Liberal Party led to the Freedom Party (LP) formation, whose members also supported closer ties with Taiwan. Following the October 2020 parliamentary elections, a new coalition government led by TS-LKD was formed.

In March 2021, Lithuania announced plans to open a diplomatic office in Taiwan while reducing involvement in the "17+1" group, citing insufficient economic benefits. In August 2021, Taiwan announced the opening of a representative office in Lithuania under the name "Taiwan" instead of the customary name "Taipei," defying China's "One China" policy. In

response, China recalled its ambassador, expelled the Lithuanian ambassador, and imposed undeclared boycotts on Lithuanian companies. By 2022, Lithuania fully exited the group, angering China.

Lithuania then sought support from the EU and the US, securing new business alternatives that helped stabilise its economy. The EU and the US, already in conflict with China, saw an opportunity to counter China's influence by backing Lithuania. Lithuania's limited economic dependence on China also made this strategy feasible.

However, this situation has resurfaced due to the upcoming elections in Lithuania and the US. Taiwan fears that a pro-China government in Lithuania might compel it to withdraw. Similarly, the US presidential election could alter US-China relations, impacting countries like Lithuania and Taiwan. However, strong anti-China sentiments in Lithuania make a rapid policy shift unlikely.

While the future course of action largely depends on the outcomes of Lithuanian and US elections, Lithuania has shown that even a small country can challenge a giant like China by playing its cards wisely. This gambit serves as a valuable lesson for other countries around the world.

(The writer is an IT professional. Views personal)

GLOBAL WATCH

A Shinawatra Rises Again

Last week, in the corridors of Thailand's power, a familiar name echoed once more: Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the 37-year-old daughter of Thaksin Shinawatra and niece of Yingluck Shinawatra, ascended to the premiership, becoming the youngest Prime Minister in the nation's history. Her rise marked the return of a political dynasty that has repeatedly reshaped Thailand's modern landscape, bringing with it both hope and trepidation.

The Shinawatra name is synonymous with a deeply polarizing era in Thai politics. Thaksin, a telecom tycoon turned populist, was elected Prime Minister in 2001. His tenure was marked by sweeping reforms aimed at the rural poor, which endeared him to vast swathes of the population but also earned him the ire of the urban elite and the military. A military coup ousted him in 2006, beginning a cycle of political upheaval that has yet to fully subside.

Yingluck, Thaksin's sister, followed in his footsteps, becoming Prime Minister in 2011. Her government too fell to the military in 2014, leading to a decade of military-backed rule that ostensibly aimed to erase the Shinawatra influence. Yet, like a pendulum, the Shinawatras have swung back into power with the election of Paetongtarn, defying those who believed the dynasty had been

The rise of Thailand's youngest Prime Minister could either herald a new era of stability or plunge the nation back into the cycle of conflict that has long defined its politics.



consigned to the ash-heap of history.

Thailand today is a nation caught between its past and future. While its economy is recovering from the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains fragile, with growth lagging behind its regional peers. The tourism sector, once a pillar of the economy, is struggling to regain its pre-pandemic vigour, while rising inflation and an aging population pose significant challenges to long-term stability.

Politically, the country remains deeply divided. The pro-democracy protests that shook Bangkok in 2020 have not dissipated; instead, they have evolved into a broader movement demanding greater accountability and transparency in governance. The military, which has long played the role of kingmaker in Thai politics, is unwilling to relinquish its influence but is acutely aware that another overt intervention could spark widespread unrest.

Paetongtarn's ascent to the premiership is both a continuation of her family's populist legacy and a test of whether that legacy can be

adapted to the demands of a new generation. Her government is expected to prioritize social welfare policies, aiming to bridge the stark economic divide between Thailand's rural and urban populations. However, she will have to tread carefully given that the military and royalist establishment have not hesitated to intervene whenever their interests have been threatened.

The return of a Shinawatra to power also raises questions about the durability of Thailand's democratic institutions. The Shinawatra clan has consistently won the support of the rural majority, but their electoral successes have often been met with resistance from the urban elite and the military. If Paetongtarn's government is seen as too closely aligned with her family's traditional base, it could reignite the very divisions that have plagued Thai politics for over two decades.

In a country where the past is never far from the present, her success or failure will not only determine the future of the Shinawatra dynasty but also the trajectory of Thai democracy itself.

LEADER SPEAKS

Jan Dhan Yojana – A Decade of Financial Inclusion



By
Narendra Modi

Today marks a decade since the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana was launched. For me, this initiative was more than just a policy - it was an endeavour to build an India where each and every citizen, irrespective of one's economic background, has access to the formal banking apparatus.

Many of you, especially the youth, would be thinking - why does this matter so much? After all, in this age, having a bank account would be very basic and even taken for granted. However, when we assumed office in 2014, the situation was very different. It was almost 65 years since Independence, but access to banking was a distant dream for almost half of our households. Theirs was a world where savings were kept at home, vulnerable to loss and theft. Access to credit was often at the mercy of predatory lenders. The absence of financial security held back so many dreams.

This problem becomes even more ironical considering the fact that four and a half decades ago, banks were nationalised by the then (Congress) Government and that too in the name of the poor! Yet, the poor never got access to banking.

When the Jan Dhan Yojana was rolled out, I remember the scepticism that surrounded it too. Some people asked - could it really be possible to bring such a large number of people into the banking system? Will this effort lead to any concrete

changes? Yes. The scale of the challenge was enormous, but so was the determination of the people of India to ensure it becomes a reality.

The success of the Jan Dhan Yojana has two parts to it. One is in the numbers:

Today, over 53 crore people who never imagined they would enter a bank have bank accounts.

These accounts have a deposit balance of over Rs. 2.3 lakh crore.

Over 65 per cent of the accounts are either in rural or semi-urban areas, thus taking the movement of financial inclusion outside the metros.

Direct transfers worth almost Rs. 39 lakh crore have taken place.

But, the second part goes beyond the impressive numbers.



Jan Dhan Yojana has proven to be game-changing as far as women's empowerment is concerned. Almost 30 crore women have been brought into the banking system.

Likewise, the benefits of the scheme and the other benefits that come thanks to a bank account have positively impacted crores of SC, ST and OBC families. They have also benefitted those families who belong to the middle and Neo-middle classes.

Had it not been for the Jan Dhan Yojana, the MUDRA Yojana, or the social security schemes of the Government, namely the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and the Atal Pension Yojana would never have been as impactful.

Jan Dhan also became a vital pillar of the JAM Trinity - Jan Dhan,

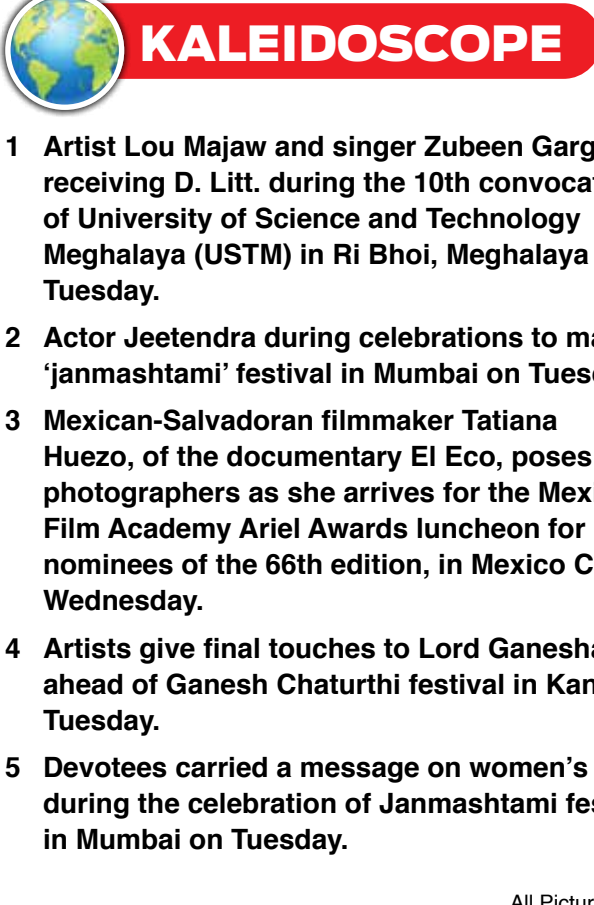
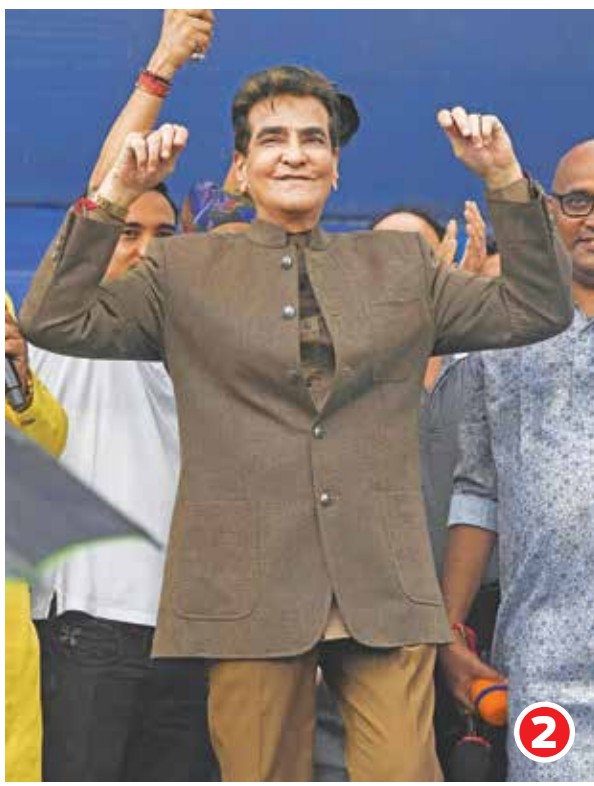
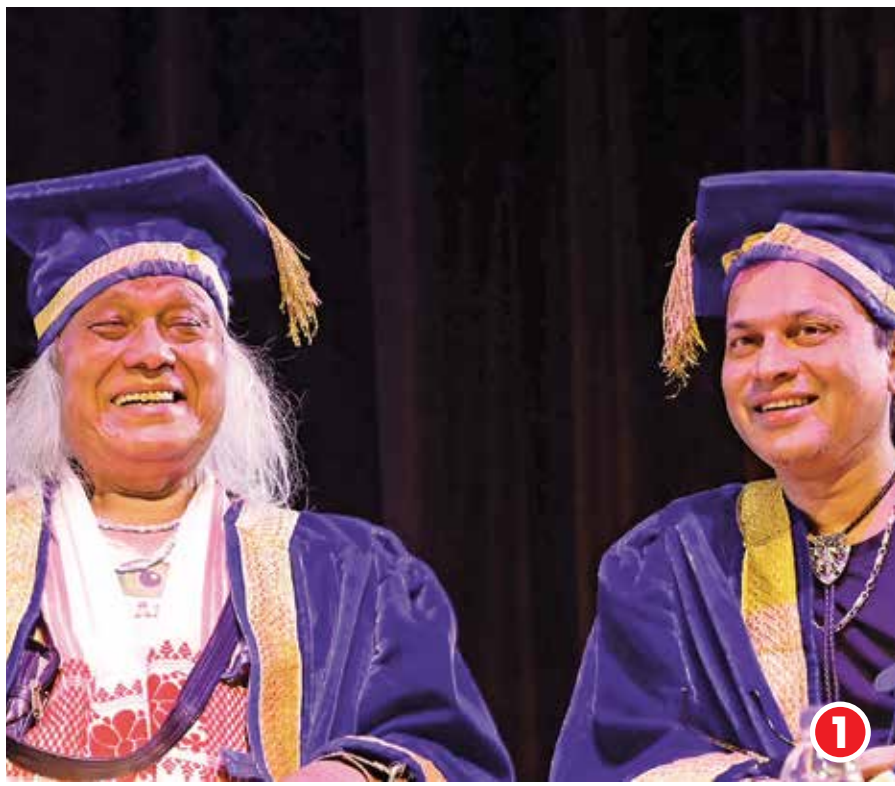
Aadhaar and Mobile. The landmark contribution of this trinity was to eliminate the scourge of middlemen and touts who, for decades, thrived in public loot. It is this trinity that ensured a stunning digital payments revolution in India, especially in the middle and later years of the last decade. The very same elements who doubted the relevance of a scheme like Jan Dhan were yet again mocking the need for digital payments in a nation like ours. But, once again, they underestimated the collective resolve of our people. India's digital payments success story is noted world over. Over 40% of real time digital payments in the world happen in India!

A bank account has ensured hassle-free and direct transfer in almost all the government's flagship schemes, be it Ayushman Bharat, PM-Kisan for farmers, PM SVANidhi for street vendors and more. I am also reminded of the years of 2020 and 2021, when the once in a lifetime COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak. Had it not been for banking inclusion, the subsidies would not have been able to reach the intended beneficiaries.

The life journeys of those who benefitted due to this scheme are very touching and inspiring. PM Jan Dhan Yojana personifies dignity, empowerment and the opportunity to participate in the economic life of the nation. The foundations laid by this scheme are strong, but we have even more work to do! We will continue to build on this success to build a Viksit Bharat.

Today is also the occasion to congratulate each and every beneficiary of this scheme and laud the efforts of the countless banking staff who made financial inclusion their mission and ensured a better life for their fellow Indians!

(The writer is the Prime Minister of India. He has posted these thoughts on LinkedIn)



KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 Artist Lou Majaw and singer Zubeen Garg after receiving D. Litt. during the 10th convocation of University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) in Ri Bhoi, Meghalaya on Tuesday.
- 2 Actor Jeetendra during celebrations to mark the 'janmashtami' festival in Mumbai on Tuesday.
- 3 Mexican-Salvadoran filmmaker Tatiana Huevoz, of the documentary El Eco, poses for photographers as she arrives for the Mexico's Film Academy Ariel Awards luncheon for nominees of the 66th edition, in Mexico City on Wednesday.
- 4 Artists give final touches to Lord Ganesha idols ahead of Ganesh Chaturthi festival in Kanpur on Tuesday.
- 5 Devotees carried a message on women's safety during the celebration of Janmashtami festival in Mumbai on Tuesday.

All Pictures PTI, AP

FRANKLY SPEAKING

Pets vs. Strays: A Call for Balance



By Aditi Pai

This is a far cry from the days when people carried 'doggy bags' of leftover food and bones from restaurants and mixed extra rotis into the family's meals. Today, pet food is going gourmet, as the market is flooded with grooming and healthcare products.

The pet grooming and pet goods market is booming, attracting several young entrepreneurs who are making millions with innovative offerings. Recent estimates show that Indians have around 31 million pet dogs and about four million pet cats. Pets increasingly became family members during the Covid pandemic, both because they filled the void left by the absence of loved ones in nuclear families and be-

cause it became trendy to bring home pets. Social media is filled with pictures of pooches dressed in finery or cats cuddling with their human parents. Browse through social media, and you will find numerous accounts dedicated to pets, their moods, their playtime, and their luxurious lifestyles. Celebrity pets add to the sheen and glamour of having well-groomed Shih Tzus and poodles as cute companions on luncheons and coffee dates.



Household budgets are now set aside for pet food, recreation, medical expenses, and grooming, much like parents would allocate for their children. Exotic pet foods with calorie-controlled portions, infused with special healing herbs, spices, and vitamins, have entered the market. Dry kibbles, once hailed as the superfood for dogs, are no longer in favour. Brands like HUFT Sara's Wholesome Food offer pet-friendly biryanis with no salt and oil, while Hearty provides oven-baked treats. It was fascinating to read about one of India's first canine chefs, Ishmeet Chandio, whose brand Harley's Corner makes fresh, customized meals for pets. Other brands like Pawfectly Made and Doggicious offer weekly meal plans and custom-made foods catering to different palates. As someone with a rescued Labrador Retriever as an integral part of our family, online shopping for pet products has taken on a new meaning—browsing through and loading my virtual cart with treats, wet food options, and calcium and vitamin supple-

ments that our Ginger loves.

The rapid growth of the pet food market, projected to reach Rs 7,500 crore by 2026 with a 4.7 percent Compound Annual Growth Rate, reflects the trend of pet parents seeking new brands that offer balanced nutritional content and promote a healthy coat.

Pet grooming, which a decade ago included only nail clipping and fur washing and blow-drying, has now expanded to include tea-tree oil shampoos, coat-softening conditioners, and finishing products similar to those recommended by brands for flawless human skin. Brands like Himalaya also offer a range of animal-friendly shampoos and lotions.

Medical facilities are improving, with state-of-the-art testing, diagnostic, and treatment options available at both small and large veterinary clinics, especially in urban areas. The new Tata Small Animals Hospital is a welcome change from charity-run hospitals where animals were cared for by senior veterinarians but faced risks of infection.

However, as we celebrate the growth of the pet market, it is important to spare a thought for the millions of street animals who go hungry, suffer from diseases, and endure human apathy. According to the 2024 State of Pet Homelessness Project by Mars Petcare India, there are 60 million street animals in India, many abandoned by owners who lost interest. More than eight million are in overburdened shelters. These figures call for more sustainable measures, such as animal sterilization by civic authorities, strict action against illegal breeding, promoting adoption over buying, and educating people on the long-term responsibilities of pet ownership. After all, it is not enough to shop for fancy costumes and expensive treats under the guise of being 'animal lovers.' True love involves responsibility and a sense of inclusivity.

EXPERT VOICE

India's Strategic Green Energy Initiatives



By Capt. Naveen S Singhal

Prime Minister Modi proposed the ambitious One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG) vision in 2018 at the first International Solar Alliance (ISA) conference. Along with OSOWOG is the Green Grids Initiative (GGI), jointly proposed by India and the UK during COP-26 in 2021. This international network of interconnected solar grids has about 140 member nations. Its premise is that "the sun never sets" and, more importantly, varying energy consumption needs in different time zones. For example, Singapore's peak energy demand

from 0900 to 1800 overlaps with London's off-hours (0100-1000), demonstrating the grid's 24x7 potential. Hence, countries can harness continuous, renewable energy 24x7 from this global solar grid. They would avoid the high cost of storage batteries as well. IMEC plays a strategic role in European energy security with its 'green energy corridor' of underwater pipelines for green hydrogen and power cables, crucial to the EU's green transition plans. The IMEC corridor includes the East Med Poseidon pipeline, transporting hydrogen and natural gas from Israel and Cyprus to Greece and Italy. The East Med pipeline could be used within IMEC to transport green hydrogen produced by Gulf countries. Meanwhile, India is ramping up its investment in green energy, positioning itself to play a more significant role in the global market. In August 2023, Reliance and Canadian Brookfield Asset Management agreed to invest US\$20-30 billion in the next decade in Australia's renewable energy sector. This move would align RIL's US\$100 billion green energy investment in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh with opportunities for workforce skill development in India. India aims for an optimistic 10% of the global share of green energy. In this context, the government plans to facilitate the development of the required infrastructure, both internally and for export, including storage bunkers, port operations equipment, and refuelling



facilities. Oil companies may, as per government sources, be required to charter at least one ship each to be powered by green hydrogen or derived fuels by 2027. The port infrastructure needed to enable exports of green hydrogen derivatives and pipelines to facilitate bulk transport of green hydrogen will also be developed.

The Shipping Corporation of India, or in the event of its disinvestment, its successor private entity, plans to retrofit at least two ships to run on green hydrogen or other green hydrogen-derived fuels by 2027.

Green steel production occurs when green hydrogen replaces fossil fuels in steel-making. The provision of carbon credits and the imposition of market barriers should further enhance the viability of green hydrogen-based steel. Green ammonia bunkers and refuelling facilities will be set up at least at one port by 2025. So far, three ports have been identified: Paradip Port (Odisha), Deendayal Port (Gujarat), and VO Chidambaram Port (Tamil Nadu).

Indian industries consume around five million metric tonnes a year of hydrogen produced from fossil fuels. The challenge is to make green hydrogen using renewable sources at a viable cost by 2030, creating about 600,000 new green jobs. This aligns with India's plan to become 'Energy Self-Atmanirbhar' by 2047 and net zero emissions by 2070.

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(The writer is a Marine and Shipping consultant. Views personal)



CARROM CRAZE

Maharashtra leads the way in South Asia's growing passion for the game. In third part today we are presenting another champion. By Anand Mishra.

THE CURRENT ASIAN CHAMPION: MOHAMMAD GUFRAN

Current Asian Champion Mohammad Gufran (34) was introduced to carrom at a very young age. Growing up in Moradabad city in UP, where carrom is not so popular, his early exposure to the sport came through family, club and local tournaments, where carrom boards were a rare sight. Recognizing his talent and interest, Gufran began to participate in local competitions, gradually honing his skills and understanding of the game.

Rising Through the Ranks

As Gufran's proficiency in carrom grew, he started to compete in district and state-level tournaments. His early successes in these competitions caught the attention of coaches and seasoned players, who saw in him the potential for greatness. With each tournament, Gufran's reputation as a formidable player began to spread, leading to his participation in national and international championships. Thanking Yogesh Pardeshi, who he assumes his guru, Gufran says, "When Yogesh sir witnessed my game, he was impressed and gave me several tips that helped me win the matches. And when I associated with Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), I never



looked back."

World Carrom Championship (2023)

Gufran's most notable international success came during the World Carrom Championship held in Malaysia. Competing in the Swiss League group, Gufran won the gold medal by scoring 16 points after winning eight consecutive matches. This victory was a significant milestone, as it established him as a world-class player in the carrom community.

Consistent performer

Gufran's consistent performances at the national level earned him recognition as one of India's top carrom players. He said, "I played first world cup in Maldives in 2014 and bagged Gold in team event." Thereafter, he became known for his strategic gameplay, precise shots, and ability to maintain composure under pressure. His success in national tournaments paved the way for international opportunities, as he was selected to represent India in various global competitions.



Manav Thakkar of U Mumba TT in action during the match of the Ultimate Table Tennis 2024 played between U Mumba TT and Ahmedabad SG Pipers Table Tennis held at Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, in New Delhi on Tuesday. Pic-PT

Will ensure Test cricket remains priority: Jay Shah

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Newly-elected ICC Chairman Jay Shah says he will look to ensure that Test cricket forms the "bedrock" of the game in his tenure during which he will also try to "dismantle barriers that have hindered cricket's progress".

The 35-year-old will relinquish his current position of BCCI secretary to succeed incumbent Greg Barclay on December 1 as the youngest ICC Chairman for a term of two years.

Jay Shah issued a statement after his unopposed election to the ICC. Excerpts... While the T20 is a naturally exciting format, it is equally important that Test cricket remains a priority for everyone as it



forms the bedrock of our game. We must see to it that cricketers are driven to longer format and our efforts will be channelised towards this goal. I want to assure you that I will do everything possible to elevate the standard of our game across the globe. As I step into this pivotal role, I am

resolutely committed to meeting your high expectations and dedicating myself to the beautiful game of cricket.

With cricket poised to make its historic debut at the Olympics in 2028, we stand at the precipice of a transformative era. This juncture is not merely a

milestone, it's a clarion call for all of us involved in this magnificent sport.

It is my privilege to lead the ICC during such an exciting period in our shared journey. We must champion the ICC's mission further by allocating more resources and attention to Women's Cricket and Differently-abled Cricket. Together, we can empower these essential facets of the sport, making them not just visible but vibrant and thriving.

Eagerly anticipate a tenure rich with collaborative efforts, striving to dismantle the barriers that have hindered cricket's progress. Every challenge we face is an opportunity in disguise, and together, we will transform adversity into triumph.

Zaheer Khan LSG team mentor Something very special coming soon

Kolkata: Former India speedster Zaheer Khan on Wednesday assumed the role of Lucknow Super Giants team mentor and termed it the start of something "very, very special" for the franchise that failed to win the IPL despite reaching the playoffs twice in three seasons.

Under former team mentor Gautam Gambhir, the team made successive play-offs after making their debut in 2022. But, after the departure of Gambhir, LSG struggled to replicate their success this season, and finished a lowly seventh.

"LSG are a relatively



young franchise in IPL, but it has not been looked upon like that, the building blocks are pretty much in place," Zaheer said at the media interaction at the RPSG Group Headquarters here.

"They have made a lot of progress. The consistency

with reaching playoffs, which is so tough in this fiercely-contested competition, is something that gives me a lot of confidence when I'm looking at coming and contributing to the franchise's success.

"We have similar stances on many things when it comes to cricket, where LSG should go in future, what kind of cricketing values, the brand of cricket the team should look to play."

The appointment marks the return of the 45-year-old left-arm pacer to the IPL fold after two years, having been associated with five-time champions Mumbai

Indians from 2018-2022. Zaheer will fill the place left vacant by Gambhir last year when he joined his former franchise Kolkata Knight Riders and guided them to the IPL title before becoming the Indian team head coach.

Expectations will be high from the former India star who said he's ready to do anything, that needs to be done, for the franchise. I will make sure that the process, that is required for each individual to express themselves fully to bring a lot of victories to the franchise, is in place.

- PTI

Disha, Aaradhya cause big upsets

Pune: Shuttlers Disha Santosh and Aaradhya Sharma recorded big upsets in the opening round of the girls and boys singles respectively in the India Junior International Grand Prix badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

While Disha stunned sixth seeded Liao Jui-Chi of Chinese Taipei 21-15 21-18, qualifier Aaradhya Sharma shocked fifth seeded Sai Prasad Teegala 15-21 21-7 21-15 in another match. Tankara Gnana Dattu Talasila defeated Australia's Shrey Dhand 20-22 21-19 23-21, while the unseeded Prateek Koundilya got the better of tenth seeded Sai Shreyas Pallerla 21-19 21-12. -PTI

Krishan Pathak replaces Sreejesh

New Delhi: Krishan Bahadur Pathak, on expected lines, was on Wednesday named the main goalkeeper after the retirement of PR Sreejesh in the Harmanpreet Singh-led 18-member Indian team for the upcoming Asian Champions Trophy.

The tournament will see defending champions India vie for top honours alongside Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Japan and hosts China at Hulunbuir from September 8-17.

Sreejesh announced his retirement after India won a second successive Olympic bronze medal in Paris earlier this month.

Pathak, who was India's standby goalkeeper at the Paris Olympics and in



many tournaments prior to that, will now be the man in charge at the post, while Suraj Karkera will be the reserve custodian.

Experienced midfielder Vivek Sagar Prasad has been made the vice-captain in place of Hardik Singh who has been rested along with Mandeep Singh, Lalit

Upadhyay, Shamsher Singh and Gurjant Singh.

The tournament will also be a big opportunity for India's promising drag-flicker Jugraj Singh who travelled to Paris Olympics as standby and will look to prove his credentials alongside the brilliant Harmanpreet. -PTI

Evans outlasts Khachanov Longest in US Open

Over 5 hours, 35 minutes

New York: A few hours into a match that eventually set a U.S. Open record for length, Dan Evans glanced over at the scoreboard.

Not to see how he was doing, but to clarify exactly how long he had been playing.

"In the fourth set, I had to check the set to see what set we were in," Evans said. "I wasn't entirely sure what set we were in."

More than an hour later, Evans won the longest match at the U.S. Open since tie-breakers were introduced in 1970, beating Karen Khachanov 6-7 (6), 7-6 (2), 7-6 (4), 4-6, 6-4 on Tuesday in 5 hours, 35 minutes.

Evans trailed 4-0 in the fifth set before running off the final six games. The final point, fittingly, was a marathon 22-shot rally, with Evans on the defensive for much of the point before hitting a hard shot to the corner that the No. 23-seeded Khachanov couldn't get back over the net with his backhand.

The previous record was 5 hours, 26 minutes, when Stefan Edberg beat Michael Chang in a five-setter in the 1992



semifinals. "I was hurting all over, really," said the 34-year-old Evans, who was grabbing at his lower legs and resting his hands on his knees in the final set.

"I don't think I've played five hours, that long, in a day, ever — in two sessions, never mind in one. I was actually thinking that on the court. I've never practiced two hours, two hours. It's normally an hour and a half." Evans improved to 5-0 against Khachanov, a semifinalist at the 2022 U.S. Open, by emerging in a match in which the sets lasted 68, 67, 72, 67 and 61 minutes.

The British player who played doubles with Andy Murray at the Olympics in the three-time Grand Slam champion's final tournament finished with a 201-191 edge in total points. He advanced to play Mariano Navone of Argentina in the second round. -AP



Mohun Bagan Super Giants and Bengaluru FC players vie for the ball during the 2nd semifinal match of Durand Cup against Mohun Bagan Super Giants, at VYBK Stadium in Kolkata on Tuesday. Pic-APPTI