

HC order against bandh slap for Opposition: CM

By Correspondent

Nashik: Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Friday said the Bombay High Court's order restraining any person or party from calling for a Maharashtra bandh over the Badlapur incident was a "slap" for the Opposition, and the government will implement the directive.

The Opposition Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi alliance of the Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (SP) and Congress has called for a bandh on Saturday.

But the high court, in a directive in response to petitions challenging the call for a general strike, restrained any person or political party from issuing such a call, and asked the state government to take preventive steps.

Speaking at a gathering here to launch the 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin' scheme, Shinde said the Badlapur incident -- where two kindergarten girls were allegedly sexually assaulted in the school washroom -- was a "blot on humanity."

"It also impacted the happiness we derived from transferring Rs 1500 in accounts of beneficiary women under the Laadki Bahin scheme. But, the Opposition



has been politicising the incident and maligning this scheme," he said.

The high court's order was "a slap across the Opposition's face", Shinde said, adding that his government will implement the directive.

The accused in the Badlapur case was booked under stringent provisions of law, and the government will seek capital punishment for him, the CM said.

The Opposition is doing politics but the government is committed to keep 'bahin' (sisters/women) in the state safe, he said.

The Opposition should not take people for granted, the chief minister said, and

took a veiled swipe at Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray by adding that some people were so eager to get the CM's post that they were indulging in such politics.

This was perverse, Shinde said.

Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, in his speech at the function, also slammed the Opposition for calling for a bandh.

"This is for politics. You did not take a stand against the Mamata Banerjee government over the rape and murder of a woman doctor in Kolkata. But here you are calling for a bandh for your selfish interests," said Fadnavis, who also holds the Home portfolio.

Woman, paramour kill her husband

Thane: Police have arrested a 25-year-old woman and her 23-year-old lover for killing her husband and dumping the body in a creek in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Friday.

While the body is yet to be traced, the Bhiwandi police on Thursday arrested the accused Anubhav Ramprakash Pandey and Radha Balram Mishra after gathering intelligence and technical inputs and speaking to the victim's family members, the official said.

According to the police, victim Balram, alias Shekar Laxman Mishra (27), lived with his wife Radha at Durgesh Park in Bhiwandi. But Radha maintained a romantic relationship with Anubhav, the official said.

Police said the accused killed Balram with sharp weapons on August 7 after which they packed his body in a bag and threw it in the Kasheli creek.

The Narpoli police had registered a case and launched a probe after the victim's family complained saying he had gone missing, said senior inspector Bharath Kamath.

Anubhav and Radha have been booked under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 103(1) for murder and 238 for causing the disappearance of evidence, the official added.

- PTI

Withdraw cases against protesters

By Correspondent

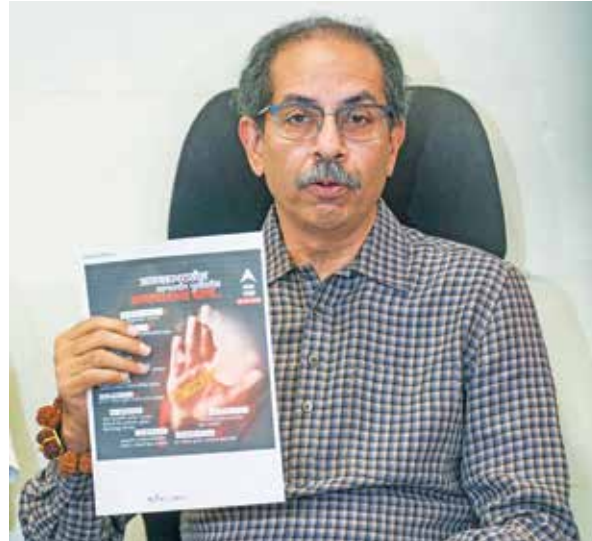
Mumbai: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Friday demanded the withdrawal of cases against those who had protested in Badlapur against the alleged sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls, warning that the opposition would have to hit the streets if it is not done.

Thackeray said the August 24 'Maharashtra Bandh' called by the opposition bloc Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) is not political but urged people cutting across caste and religion to participate in it.

He claimed the bandh would be observed on behalf of the people of the state.

Slamming the Eknath Shinde government's action over the Badlapur protest, Thackeray said, "Arrests are still taking place in Badlapur. The cases against the protesters must be withdrawn or else we have to hit the streets."

A massive protest rocked Badlapur town in Thane district on Tuesday after thousands of people hit the streets and spilled onto railway tracks to protest the alleged sexual assault of two four-year-old girls by a male attendant at a local school.



At least 25 police personnel were injured in the incidents of stone-pelting at the railway station and other parts of Badlapur during the protest. Police have arrested 72 persons in connection with the violence during the stir.

The former chief minister said even the Bombay High Court, which has taken suo motu cognisance of the alleged sexual assault of the young girls in Badlapur, has slammed the government.

During a hearing on the matter on Thursday, the HC said, "Unless there is a strong public outburst, the machinery won't move."

There was a war of

words between Uddhav Thackeray and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde over the protests in Badlapur. While Shinde alleged that the protest was politically motivated as the protesters were seen opposing the state government's scheme, Ladki Bahin. On the other hand, Thackeray refuted the allegation saying the protest was spontaneous and there was no political motive behind it.

The angry protesters had vandalised the school and halted train movement for more than 11 hours pressing for their demand of stern action in the sexual abuse case.

Life of 17 year old saved

Mumbai: Wockhardt Hospitals in Mira Road, saved the life of a 17-year-old college student who was diagnosed with Myasthenia crisis, a critical and potentially fatal variant of Myasthenia Gravis.

The young woman who had a history of symptoms including breathing difficulty, double vision, inability to swallow food, and weight loss of 30 kgs over 2 years. She would hardly eat a biscuit dipped in milk with great difficulty as her meal. She received effective treatment through IV Immunoglobulin therapy combined with steroids and immunosuppressants, resulting in her full recovery.

Dr Pavan Pai, a Consultant Interventional Neurologist and Dr Aklesh Tandekar a Head Consultant Critical Care at Wockhardt Hospital along with their team administered this treatment. Gayatri Suta, a resident of Mira-Bhayander presented with a 3-year-old history which began after the left eyelid style, after which she developed double vision as the first symptom. However, it recovered after some time. Two years ago, after the demise of her Father, her family shifted to Bikaner where she started having difficulty swallowing both liquids and solids which resulted in inadequate oral intake followed by weight loss of 30 kg in two years and inability to attend college for further studies.

THE PERFECT INTERVIEW

Had police acted promptly, the outcome could have been very different

Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission (MSHRC), a statutory body established in 2001 to protect and promote human rights in the state has been on the front foot under the chairmanship **Justice K.K. Tated**, whose team has left no stone unturned to safeguard its mandate. Under his wings, the Commission has made significant strides in protecting and promoting human rights in Maharashtra. His initiatives like awareness programs, workshops, training sessions, internships and public outreach campaigns have set a precedent. At a time, when country is boiling over the ever-increasing rape cases, inept handlings of such cases by the police have added fuel to the fire. **The Perfect Voice** representative **Anand Mishra**, spoke to him on various issues with regards to human rights issues and its handling. Excerpts...

Recent incidents in Kolkata and Badlapur have highlighted not just the horrific crimes themselves, but also the police's unprofessional handling of these cases. What do you think are the reasons behind the police's frequent failures in managing such sensitive cases?

In the Badlapur case, the police waited for 8 to 10 hours before taking action. It is the responsibility of the police to respond immediately in such situations. Had they acted promptly, the outcome could have been very different. This highlights the urgent need for regular police sensitisation programs, which they are not paying heed into. Our Commission has written to top police officials, urging them to conduct workshops, seminars at regular intervals. Staff from the Commission can attend these sessions to explain the importance of human rights to the police force.

How would you assess the Maharashtra government's performance in protecting the human rights of its citizens? Are they doing enough?

When we issue summons or notices to officers, they generally respond promptly and file their replies within the stipulated time. The government complies with approximately 70-80 per cent of the advisories we issue, whether it involves paying compensation or following our directives and suggestions. This has happened despite the fact that we have taken suo motu cases with free hands. Our commission took only 5 cases in year



2021, then 197 cases in 2022, 212 cases in 2023 and 102 cases till July this year.

Could you shed some light on the

suo motu cases that the commission has initiated under your leadership?

When I took over as Chairman in December 2021, the Commission used to

receive 10 to 15 correspondences daily. This number has now increased to 250 to 300. We have been very proactive in addressing complaints and have been open to taking suo motu cases based on various media reports. Additionally, we have initiated training programs for students from different faculties, encouraging them to visit police stations, jails, and other institutions, and submit their reports.

How does the Commission manage to address human rights violations in the more remote areas of the state where access to news and reports is limited?

That is really a challenge for us. We don't have our presence or men or branches in the remotest part of the state, therefore, we feel difficulties to take suo motu cases from those areas. But when any complaint is filed from such places, we prioritize it and check its merit.

When you took charge of the commission, there were 32,000 pending cases. Now, that number has been reduced to under 7545 by the end of July 2024. What strategies or approaches did you employ to achieve this?

We chalked out a plan to hear the

cases in a time bound manner. Our team streamlined the case handling processes by introducing rigorous case tracking systems and ensuring that cases were prioritised based on their merit, urgency and impact. Collaboration and transparency within the commission, fostered a culture where all team members were actively involved in the resolution process. This proactive stance not only helped in addressing critical issues promptly but the number of pending cases has been reduced to less than 7.5 thousand.

Despite your repeated requests, the state government has yet to fill the vacancies in the Commission. How are you managing the workload with this shortage of staff?

Yes, we are facing a severe manpower shortage, and we informed the government about this issue two years ago. Our role is to make them aware of our challenges, but it's ultimately up to the government to address them. Besides the shortage of personnel, we are also dealing with a lack of space. Only one-third of our staff is permanent, while the majority are on temporary contracts, which makes it difficult to hold anyone accountable for specific tasks or targets.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Chandrashekhar Bawankule,
President,
Maharashtra BJP

"We would like them (Ghatge and Patil) to wait, but if they have already decided (to switch sides) then we can't stop them from leaving. There are many leaders from the MVA as well who will be coming to us from there. It does not mean they will get a ticket."

Right backs Left in TISS ABVP opposes ban on student body PSF

Mumbai: The RSS-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad has come out in support of its ideological rival and Left-leaning student group at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) which has been banned by the premier deemed university, contending educational institutions should be bastions of free speech and democratic participation.

The ABVP said on Thursday that the "abrupt and irrational" banning of the student group risks causing significant unrest among such bodies.

Such a step could severely impact the integrity of future student council elections, a cornerstone of democratic process, noted the campus wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak



Sangh (RSS).

On August 19, the TISS, a premier institute under the Union Ministry of Education, banned the Progressive Students Forum (PSF-TISS).

It said the PSF has been engaging in activities that obstruct the institute's function and defame it.

The TISS also warned any attempt by the PSF to organise or participate in unauthorised events will be met with "immediate intervention and consequences".

The PSF has had several run-ins with the TISS administration in the past.

The ABVP said it firmly believes educational institutions should be bastions of free speech and democratic participation. The presence of various student organisations is essential for fostering a healthy discourse and ensuring that the diverse views of the student community are represented.

- PTI

BRIEF

Kaynes opens electronics manufacturing facility

Kaynes Technology has inaugurated its electronics manufacturing facility in Hyderabad...

EaseMyTrip ropes in Jacqueline

EaseMyTrip has roped in Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez as its new brand ambassador...

Sun Pharma launches drug for skin infections

Sun Pharmaceuticals has introduced Tedizolid Phosphate tablets 200 mg in India...

ICICI Bank in pact with Tata Power to lend for solar panels

Tata Power Solar Systems Limited (TPSSL) has joined hands with ICICI Bank to provide loans to finance the purchase of solar panels...

India, US ink two key deals

Washington: India and the US have signed two key agreements as Defence Minister Rajnath Singh began his official visit to Washington...

The agreements signed on Thursday pertain to the Security of Supplies Arrangement (SOSA) and a Memorandum of Agreement regarding the Assignment of Liaison Officers.

(MoD) shared in a post on X on Friday, along with some photographs of the event.

Singh arrived here on Thursday on a four-day visit to the US.

The US and India entered into a "bilateral, non-binding Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA)", the US Department of Defence (DoD) said in a press release on Thursday.

Through this SOSA, the US and India agree to provide reciprocal priority support for goods and services that promote national defence. The Arrangement will enable both countries to acquire the industrial resources they need from one another to resolve unanticipated supply chain disruptions to meet national security needs, it said.

The SOSA was signed by Dr Vic Ramdass, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary

of Defence for Industrial Base Policy, on behalf of the US, and Samir Kumar Sinha, Additional Secretary and Director General (Acquisitions), on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

"This Security of Supply Arrangement represents a pivotal moment in the US-India Major Defence Partnership relationship and will be a key factor in strengthening the US-India Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)," said Ramdass.

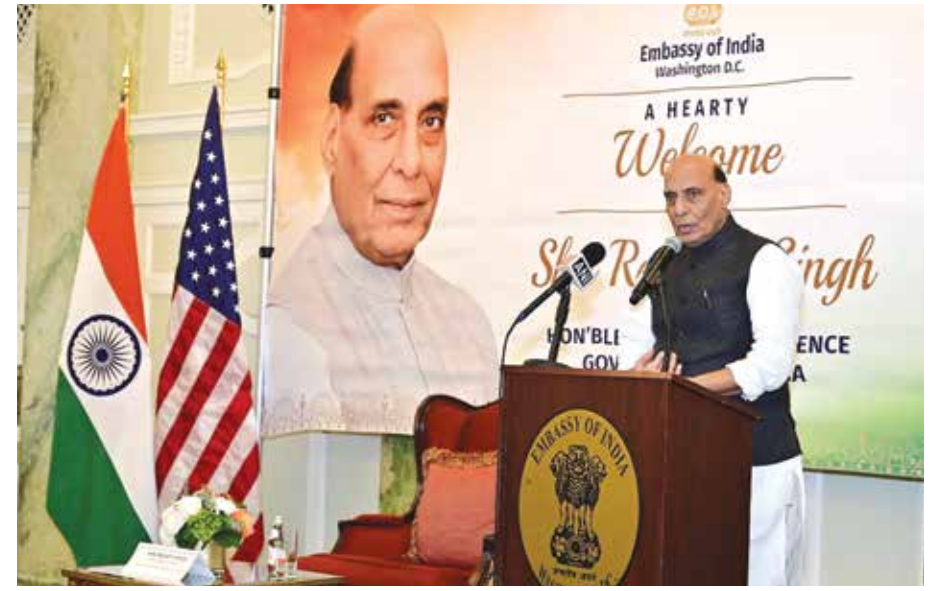
"I look forward to OUSD(A&S) hosting the next DTTI meeting this fall to deepen cooperation between our respective defence industrial bases and pursue bilateral co-development, co-production, and co-sustainment initiatives," he said.

In the Arrangement, the US and India commit to sup-

port one another's priority delivery requests for procurement of critical national defence resources.

The US will provide India assurances under the US Defence Priorities and Allocations System (DPAS), with programme determinations by DoD and rating authorisation by the Department of Commerce (DOC). India will in turn establish a government-industry Code of Conduct with its industrial base, where Indian firms will voluntarily agree to make every reasonable effort to provide the US priority support, the release said.

With an expanding global supply chain for DOD, SOSAs are an important mechanism for DoD to strengthen interoperability with US defence trade partners. The Arrangements institute working groups, establish communication mecha-



nisms, streamline DoD processes, and proactively act to allay anticipated supply chain issues in peacetime, emergency, and armed conflict. They are also a useful tool in developing invest-

Maharashtra's red carpet for MSMEs, startups

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Maharashtra minister for industries Uday Samant promised to roll out red carpet for projects of small and medium businesses and startups at par with ultra mega projects, as the state looks to transform Mumbai into a global fintech hub.

Samant inaugurated an exhibition at the 9th Global Economic Summit on 'Fintech: Accelerating the Digital Revolution' organised by World Trade Center Mumbai and All India Association of Industries (AIAI) from August 8-10, 2024 at WTC Mumbai.

According to a statement issued by the organisers, the minister speaking on this occasion said, "Fintech has revolutionized the financial services sector and it has the potential to support MSMEs and startup sectors. Our government will fulfill the vision of the Prime Minister to transform Mumbai into a global fintech hub".

"The government of Maharashtra will provide red carpet to MSME and startup projects, at par with the treatment given to ultra mega projects as micro, small and medium enterprises are the pillars of our economy. If India aims to be

the USD 5 trillion economy in the next few years, Maharashtra will contribute significantly to this target with the goal of USD 1 trillion economy vision," he said.

He expressed the government's intention to revive sick industries, especially the MSME units in Maharashtra and he sought the support of WTC Mumbai and AIAI in this initiative.

"Given the large population, the sector witnessed rapid surge in the last five years, attracting significant investment and global attention; Our country is the world's 3rd largest fintech service provider with fin-



tech adoption of 87 per cent compared to the global average of 64 per cent. India

received 15 per cent of global fintech funding," said V Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Advisor, Government of India.

The digital lending market was valued at USD 270 billion in 2022 and it is expected to have reached USD 350 billion last year, Nageswaran added.

In her address, Nidhi Choudhari, CEO - Nodal Officer, Maharashtra State Innovation Society said "Maharashtra has the maximum fintech startups in India, especially in Mumbai, which provides fertile ground for fintech startups.

"Our Innovation society

supports startups in gaining national and international patents, quality certification; there are many incubation centers in Mumbai and over 28 of them are supported by us. We provide grants of up to Rs 5 crore for incubation centers."

In the incubation facilities, startups get seed capital grants and accelerator support.

"We have got two funds exclusively for startups - Maharashtra Innovation and Transformation Capital with the support of IDBI Capital and another Rs 100 crore fund with SIDBI with the support of the World Bank," Choudhari said.

Reliance, Clarks terminate JV

New Delhi: The country's leading retailer Reliance Retail and British shoe maker Clarks have terminated their two-year old joint venture, an industry source said.

Differences between both partners have emerged regarding certain terms of engagements, following which they have decided to part ways, said the source.

While an e-mail sent to Reliance Retail seeking comments remained unanswered by the time of filing of the story, Clarks Global declined to comment on the development.



Kannada actor and model Nisarga Gowda checks out handmade jewellery during the inauguration of 'Artisans Bazar - Arts, Crafts and Handloom' exhibition, at Chittrakala Parishat in Bengaluru on Friday.

DGCA imposes 90 lakh penalty on AI

New Delhi: Aviation regulator DGCA has imposed a penalty of Rs 90 lakh on Air India for operating a flight with non-qualified crew members.

Besides, the watchdog has slapped fines of Rs 6 lakh and Rs 3 lakh on Air India's Director of Operations and Director of Training, respectively, for the lapse.

In a release, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said the pilot concerned has been warned to exercise caution to prevent such occurrences in future.

"Air India Ltd operated a flight commanded by a non-trainer line captain paired



with a non-line-released first officer which has been viewed by the regulator as a serious scheduling incident having significant safety ramifications," the release said.

After the incident came to its notice through a voluntary report submitted by the airline on July 10, the regulator investigated the operations of the carrier, including examination of

documentation and spot check of the scheduling facility.

"Based on investigation, it was prima facie revealed that there are deficiencies and multiple violations of the regulatory provisions by several post holders and staff, which could significantly affect safety," the release said.

DGCA also said the flight's commander and the

post holders of the airline were provided an opportunity to explain their position through show cause notices issued on July 22.

The reply submitted by the concerned entities failed to provide satisfactory justification. As such, DGCA has initiated enforcement action in terms of provisions of the extant rules/ regulations and imposed the above penalty, the watchdog noted.

For the violations, DGCA has imposed a fine of Rs 90 lakh on Air India, Rs 6 lakh on the airline's Director of Operations and Rs 3 lakh on the carrier's Director of Training.

-PTI

Mumbai Port signs projects worth Rs 4,000 cr

Mumbai: The Mumbai Port on Friday launched several key projects and signed investment proposals worth Rs 4,000 crore in areas including sustainability and green fuel.

The proposals along with several other initiatives are expected to generate 1.45 lakh person-days of employment, the port operator said in a statement.

The Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) in this regard were signed in the presence of Union Minister

for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal during his visit to the port.

One MoU was signed between Mumbai Port Authority, Mumbai Port Sustainability Foundation (MPSF) and HPCL for developing a green fuel ecosystem, while the other was between Det Norske Veritas and MPSF for collaboration on emission management, decarbonisation, digitisation and safety in port and shipping operations.

The Norway-based DNV provides services related to quality management, risk assessment and sustainability.

Sonowal earlier virtually inaugurated several key projects, including the launch of testing operations for the newly-constructed 3rd chemical berth at Pir Pau jetty.

The minister during his visit to the Mumbai Port also inaugurated an automation system and programmable logic controller (PLC) at the Marine Oil Terminal as well

as at the MPSF, among others.

Sonowal also laid the foundation for the shore protection and reclamation project at Jawahar Dweep.

Mumbai Port also said that it handed over land transfer documents for various leasing agreements, including leasing of two plots to Mahanagar Gas Nigam Ltd, and two plots at Pir Pau to Aegis Logistics for liquid bulk storage.

-PTI

Commission of Railway Safety shifts HQ

New Delhi: The Ministry of Civil Aviation has shifted the office of Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety from Lucknow to New Delhi, an official memorandum said.

According to sources, the decision has been taken to have better and efficient coordination with the various government departments and agencies.

The Commission comes under the authority of the MoCA.

Coca-Cola gets new market head

New Delhi: Beverages major Coca-Cola on Friday said Greishma Singh has been appointed as the new market head for India Southwest Asia (INSWA) Operating Unit.

Singh will succeed Arnab Roy, who was recently named the Global Category President, Coca-Cola Trade-mark. Her appointment will be effective September 1,

2024, according to a company statement.

Before this, Singh was Vice-President of Customer and Commercial Leadership (C&CL) for the INSWA Operating Unit.

She has been with The Coca-Cola Company for over 15 years and held roles of across marketing, strategy and C&CL in Australia and India markets, it added.

Table with 2 columns: % Change and POINTS. Lists top gainers like Tata Motors (+1.53%), Sun Pharma (+1.44%), Bharti Airtel (+1.33%), etc.

Table with 2 columns: % Change and POINTS. Lists top losers like Tech Mahindra (-1.17%), Asian Paints (-0.98%), Titan (-0.97%), etc.

Foxconn infuses 1,200 crore

New Delhi: Electronics manufacturing giant Foxconn has infused about Rs 1,200 crore -- approximately USD 144 million -- into its Karnataka-based Foxconn Hon Hai Technology India Mega Development Pvt Ltd, the company said in a recent regulatory filing.

The iPhone contract manufacturer's Singapore-based arm Foxconn Singapore Pte has bought over 120.35 crore stocks of Foxconn Hon Hai Technology India Mega Development Pvt Ltd at Rs 10 per share on August 21.

The Karnataka govern-

ment in a statement last week said Foxconn is planning to invest Rs 25,000 crore to establish a massive manufacturing plant near Doddaballapur that will create 40,000 jobs.

"The unit in Karnataka will soon become the second-largest Foxconn plant after China's unit. It will create 40,000 direct jobs, especially for middle-level educated individuals, and our investment will not stop here; in the future, we plan to explore other sectors also," Foxconn Chairman Young Liu was quoted as saying in the statement.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Ashish Shah, Director, International Trade Centre, Geneva

"Mumbai has the second fastest growing fintech ecosystem in the world and Mumbai is poised to become the global fintech hub. I am confident that the city will produce more fintech unicorns in the coming years."

Doctor Murder and Rape Broken door bolt under CBI scanner



Social activists from Jharkhand protest at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital against the alleged rape and murder of a trainee woman doctor inside the hospital, in Kolkata on Friday

Kolkata: The CBI, probing the rape-murder of a woman doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital here, is concentrating on how the crime was executed without any hindrance in the facility's seminar hall where the door's tower bolt was found broken, an officer said.

CBI officials are also trying to find out if someone was stationed outside the seminar hall to ensure that the crime went undisturbed, he said, adding that the investigators are analysing CCTV footage to confirm it. The investigating officers wondered why nobody could hear any sound from inside the seminar hall when the victim was being tortured. "The tower bolt was broken, which caused the door to malfunction. We are prob-

ing whether anyone was stationed outside to act as a guard while the crime was committed," a CBI officer told PTI. Initial findings indicate that the door, due to the broken tower bolt, had been malfunctioning for some time. The victim entered the hall between 2 AM and 3 AM on August 9. A doctor on duty reported seeing her asleep inside the hall, the of-

ficer said. "Interviews with doctors, interns, and junior doctors revealed that the door's malfunction had been a known issue, which prevented the victim from locking the door that night," he added. On Friday, the agency continued questioning Sandip Ghosh, the former principal of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, in connection with the case.

conduct the tests, the officials said. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is also awaiting Roy's DNA and psychoanalysis reports, which will give further direction to its investigation, they said. The CBI told the Supreme Court on Thursday that there was an attempt to cover up the rape and killing of the post-graduate medic by the local police as the crime scene was altered by the time the federal agency took over the probe. The rape and killing of the junior doctor in a seminar hall of the hospital has sparked widespread protests.

COURT ALLOWS POLYGRAPH TEST ACCUSED

A special court in Kolkata on Friday allowed a polygraph test to be conducted on Sanjay Roy, the main accused in the rape and killing of a trainee doctor at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, officials said. The court has already given its nod to conduct the lie-detection test on Sandip Ghosh, the former principal of the medical college, and four other doctors who were on duty at the hospital in the intervening night of August 8-9, they said. CCTV footage and a bluetooth device found near the medic's body resulted in the arrest of Roy, who was seen entering the seminar

hall of the college where the body was found. Roy (33) joined the Kolkata Police as a civic volunteer in 2019. Police have alleged that he was married at least four times and was a known "womaniser". The accused, who is a trained boxer, got close to a few senior police officers over the years, following which he was moved to the Kolkata Police Welfare Board and posted at the police outpost at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. A team of experts from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) in Delhi will

SC defers Kejriwal's plea

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday deferred till September 5 hearing on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's pleas seeking bail and challenging the arrest by the CBI in the alleged excise policy scam.

A bench of justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan allowed the CBI to file its counter affidavit in the matter and gave two days' time to Kejriwal to file a rejoinder.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Kejriwal, said the CBI filed a counter affidavit in only one of the pleas and it was served upon them at 8 pm on Thursday.

ASG SV Raju said they will file the counter in another plea in one week. The bench then posted the matter for further hearing on September 5.

Govind Mohan new Union home secretary

New Delhi: Senior IAS official Govind Mohan on Friday took charge as the Union home secretary following the retirement of incumbent Ajay Kumar Bhalla.

Mohan, a 1989-batch IAS officer of Sikkim cadre, was serving as Union culture secretary before being appointed as Union home secretary last week.

A B.Tech from Banaras Hindu University and PG Diploma from IIM, Ahmedabad, the senior bureaucrat has a wide experience of serving both the Sikkim and the central governments in various capacities.

Mohan is considered to be one of the brilliant officers presently serving in the government and known for his diligence.

He had earlier served the



programmes of the Modi government -- 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' and 'Har Ghar Tiranga movement'.

The 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' is an initiative to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of Independence of the country and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements.

Hosting of the national flag in every home, 'Tiranga Yatras', 'Tiranga' rallies and 'Tiranga' runs are key initiatives under the 'Har Ghar Tiranga movement'.

After the launch of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga movement', job opportunities were created for thousands of women associated with self-help groups (SHGs), which have increasingly taken over flag production to meet the massive demand, officials said.

- PTI

NC-Cong seat-sharing almost final

Srinagar: National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah on Friday said seat-sharing arrangement with the Congress has been finalised for a majority of assembly seats in Jammu and Kashmir, and that parleys were underway to reach consensus over the remaining constituencies.

The NC and Congress on Thursday announced a pre-poll alliance for the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, which is going to polls for the first time since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019.

"Consensus has been reached to a large extent. I can tell you that we have reached a consensus on the maximum seats out of the 90," Abdullah told reporters



in Kulgam district of south Kashmir.

Abdullah, who is accompanying party's candidate from D H Pora constituency Sakina Itoo for filing of nomination, said discussions over the rest of the seats were going on and the alliance partners will soon finalise the seat-sharing arrangement.

"On few seats, we are adamant and on some others, the local leaders of the Con-

gress are adamant. There will be meetings today as well and we will try to sort out the rest of the seats so as to announce our candidates," he added.

The former chief minister of the erstwhile state of J-K, however, refused to share further details.

Asked when the party would announce its candidates for the rest of the seats going to polls in the first phase, Omar said there is no hurry.

"Which party has announced its candidates so far? A party has cleverly named people as constituency in-charges, our constituency in-charges have been working for the last ten years. So, why are you after our lists, ask them."

Shah slams Congress

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday slammed the Congress for its alliance with the National Conference for the Jammu and Kashmir assembly polls, accusing the party of repeatedly risking the country's unity and security in its greed for power.

The Congress has once again "exposed its ulterior motives by allying with the Abdullah family's National Conference," the BJP leader said on X and posted 10 questions for the national party and its leader Rahul Gandhi, while listing several of the manifesto promises of the regional party.

Section 479 to apply retrospectively

New Delhi: The Centre told the Supreme Court on Friday that the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita-2023's section 479, which relates to the "maximum period for which undertrial prisoner can be detained", would apply retrospectively to undertrials across the country.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, told a bench of justices Hima Kohli and Sandeep Mehta that section 479 of the BNSS, which replaces section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, will apply to all undertrials irrespective of the fact that the crime is registered before July 1, 2024.

The BNSS, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam came into effect on July 1, replacing the British-era Code of Criminal Procedure, Indian Penal Code, and Indian Evidence Act, respectively.

Goa CM concerned over airlines

Panaji: Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has conveyed his government's concern to the Centre over airlines shifting their operations from the old international airport at Dabolim to the new one in Mopa in Pernem taluka which became functional early last year. Sawant raised the concern during a meeting with Union Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu in New Delhi, an official statement said here on Thursday.

The statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said Sawant, accompanied by his cabinet colleagues, including Mauvin Godinho (transport) and Rohan Khaunte (tourism), interacted with Naidu and



junior civil aviation minister Murlidhar Mohol. Civil aviation secretary Vumlungmang Vualnam and Airports Authority of India (AAI) chairman M Suresh were also present at the meeting in the national capital.

The statement said the CM raised concern over the shifting of operations by airlines from the Dabolim aerodrome in South Goa to the Manohar International Airport (MIA) at Mopa, lo-

cated around 50km in the northern part of the state.

Sawant also discussed various issues related to aviation operations at the Dabolim airport, which is part of an Indian Navy base, it said.

While the Dabolim aerodrome is a state-run facility, MIA is a greenfield project operated by GMR Goa International Airport, a private company.

Union minister Naidu assured full support to Goa, a major tourist state, towards further strengthening and incentivising the Dabolim airport, said the statement.

There is no official figure on how many carriers have moved operations to the new airport.

- PTI

Wife praises Modi, man pronounces talaq



Bahraich (UP): Police have booked a man and seven members of his family for allegedly pronouncing triple talaq to her after she praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for the development of Ayodhya.

Earlier, he had also beaten her and hurled hot 'dal' at her, Maryam alleged in her complaint to police in Bahraich where her parents live. She said she had praised the beautification works in Ayodhya.

The family of the husband, who lives in Ayodhya, allegedly also tried to strangle her on the day the man pronounced instant triple talaq.

Jignesh Mevani evicted from Assembly



Gandhinagar: Gujarat Congress MLA Jignesh Mevani was evicted from the state assembly on the direction of Speaker Shankar Chaudhary for creating a ruckus and entering the well of the House during a debate on the last day of the monsoon session on Friday.

Mevani was escorted out of the assembly by sergeants without using any force after the Speaker ordered his eviction.

During a debate on drug seizures by Gujarat police, Mevani stood up and started shouting at treasury benches and challenged the BJP government to debate on other "burning" issues such as rapes.

Mevani, a working president of the Gujarat Congress, rushed towards the well and dared Minister of

State for Home Harsh Sanghavi to have a debate on live television on tragedies such as the Rajkot game zone fire, Morbi bridge collapse and Vadodara boat capsizing incident.

Despite repeated requests by the Speaker to maintain decorum, the MLA, while standing near his seat, kept demanding a debate and walked into the well, prompting the Speaker to evict him.

Condemning Mevani's behaviour, Chaudhary said the Congress MLA disrespected the Constitution through such acts.

BJP MLAs Ramanlal Vora, Jitu Vaghani and Minister Rushikesh Patel termed Mevani's behaviour "unacceptable" and said he was only interested in getting publicity.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Mayawati, Chief, Bahujan Samaj Party

"It is very sad and worrying that the (BJP-led) Centre has not yet taken any concrete steps to restore the old system as per public expectations against the Supreme Court's decision of August 1, 2024, to implement the new rule of classification and creamy layer in SC/ST reservation."

Mumbai: Telugu superstar Nani says the Hema Committee report on women's exploitation in Malayalam cinema is alarming and every single person working on movie sets has to set an example on how people are treated in the profession.

The 233-page report, perhaps the first such for any film industry in India, details the power nexus in the Malayalam cinema industry and lays bare the multiple levels of exploitation faced by women in it. In the aftermath of an as-

sault case on an actress involving actor Dileep in 2017, the Kerala government appointed a panel to study issues of sexual harassment and gender inequality.

Nani says Hema report 'alarming'



"When I read this thing, it breaks my heart. But I don't see this happening on my sets or anywhere around me. I'm sure it's the same case with a lot of

mainstream films (as) everybody's working towards something very serious.

"There might have been something, but it never came to my notice on the location or everybody's a little careful around us. So, when I read something like this, I'm like, 'Where is this happening?'," Nani told PTI in an interview.

The actor, who is in the city to promote his upcoming film 'Surya's Saturday', said, "Every single person has to set the right example of how it should be at the workplace or anywhere."

Nani, however, said the new generation of actors, wether men or women, come with a different attitude in the business and hopefully they will bring about a positive change.

"I see a lot of change in the next generation. When I see these young ladies or someone who's newly joining the cinema, they are not like the ones who have been around for 20 years. I'm seeing a lot more maturity, a lot more professionalism and I'm hopeful that things are going to get better from here," he said.

- PTI

Prez concerned over space debris

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu on Friday voiced concern over increasing space debris as a result of numerous satellites being placed in orbit and lauded ISRO for setting itself a target to make future space missions debris free by 2030.

Murmu was speaking at the celebration of the maiden National Space Day celebrations to mark the first anniversary of the landing of India's Chandrayaan-3 project.

"Space debris can cause problems for space missions," she said during the event at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi that was attended by Union minister Jitendra Singh, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman Somanath, engineers, ISRO scientists and representatives of the country's nascent space industry.

The president appreciated the ISRO System for Safe & Sustainable Operations Management facility, which ensures continuous progress of space research activities. "I am also happy to note that India is moving forward to make all its space missions debris free by 2030," Murmu said. The president presented awards to winners of the Robotics Challenge and the Bharatiya Antariksh Hackathon on the occasion.



President Droupadi Murmu presents a certificate to a winner during an event celebrating India's first National Space Day, in New Delhi. Pic: PTI

The president said ISRO had made remarkable achievements in the space sector as well as invaluable contributions to the country's social and economic development. She appreciated the dedicated scientists who placed India's space programme among the best in the world by using minimum resources.

Murmu also expressed confidence that the country would make continuous progress in space science and continue to set new standards of excellence.

The president said the progress of India's space sector was extraordinary.

"Be it a successfully completed Mars mission with limited resources or the successful launch of more

than a hundred satellites at once, we have made many impressive achievements," Murmu said.

The president said space exploration had increased the capabilities of human beings and transformed imagination into reality.

"But space exploration is a challenging task. Research conducted to solve the problems during space exploration accelerates the development of science and improves human life," she said. The president said many sectors, including health and medicine, transportation, security, energy, environment and information technology, had benefited from developments in the space sector.

- PTI

Rs 350 cr package for rain affected farmers

Gandhinagar: The Gujarat government on Friday announced a relief package of Rs 350 crore for farmers who suffered losses due to heavy rains in several parts of the state in July this year.

The relief package was announced by state agriculture minister Raghavji Patel in the assembly on the last day of monsoon session after a loss assessment survey was carried out in 45 talukas of Junagadh, Porbandar, Devbhumi Dwarka, Rajkot, Anand, Bharuch, Surat, Navsari and Tapi districts.

Incessant and heavy rains were recorded in these nine districts between July 18 and 24, which resulted in damage to standing crops, horticulture produce and fruit trees such as mango on an area of nearly 4 lakh hectares, Patel said.

Under the relief package, farmers who lost 33 per cent or above of their total non-irrigated Kharif crop will get assistance of Rs 11,000 per hectare in the limit of two hectares, while the compensation will be Rs 22,000 per hectare, in the limit of two hectares, for damage to irrigated crops.

For annual horticulture crops, the government has fixed a compensation of Rs 22,000 per hectare in the limit of two hectares if the loss is equal or above 33 per cent. The compensation will be Rs 22,500 per hectare.

- PTI



A person holds a 2,492-carat diamond, the largest diamond found in more than a century, in Gaborone, Botswana on Friday. Pic: PTI

NASA on new Boeing capsule safety

Cape Canaveral: NASA said Thursday it will decide this weekend whether Boeing's new capsule is safe enough to return two astronauts from the International Space Station, where they've been waiting since June.

Administrator Bill Nelson and other top officials will meet Saturday. An announcement is expected from Houston once the meeting ends.

Astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams launched aboard Boeing's Starliner on June 5. The test flight quickly encountered thruster failures and helium leaks so serious that NASA kept the capsule parked at the station as engineers debated what to do. SpaceX could retrieve



the astronauts, but that would keep them up there until next February. They were supposed to return after a week or so at the station.

If NASA decides SpaceX is the way to go, Starliner

would return to Earth empty in September.

Engineers are evaluating a new computer model for the Starliner thrusters and how they might perform as the capsule descends out of orbit for a touchdown in

the U.S. Western desert. The results, including updated risk analyses, will factor into the final decision, NASA said.

Boeing said earlier this month that extensive testing of thrusters in space and on the ground demonstrated Starliner's ability to safely return the astronauts.

It was the company's first astronaut flight, delayed for years by a multitude of capsule problems. Two previous Starliner test flights had no one on board.

NASA hired Boeing and SpaceX a decade ago, after the space shuttles retired, to ferry its astronauts to and from the station. SpaceX has been at it since 2020.

- AP

WASTE TO BEST

Where does all that trash come from?



By
Dr. Sanjay Joshi

We, the humans have been generating the trash or waste or garbage since centuries. However, the volume, composition and the kind of waste in those days was such that it did not create any hazard for the environment or for human health. But in modern days, all over the globe, nature, composition and the volume of waste has been increasing day by day through various human activities. Let us try to understand how we end up in generating loads of waste at the individual, household level to begin with. Two friends Anita and Sunita went on a shopping spree in a local mall with lots of money in their wallets and in their bank accounts.

They both got lured at the dazzling array of commodities like clothing lines, cosmetics and beauty products, bags, footwear, elec-

tronic articles, gift items and many more. Anita visited and bought several things from almost all the shops. Each item she purchased was neatly packed in a box that was further covered with a sparkling gift wrap. At the end of the day, Anita had a huge pile of such large and small 'gift wrapped' cardboard boxes at her disposal.

She couldn't have carried those boxes in her hand. So obviously at the cash counter in every shop, she was generously given a couple of plastic bags to put those boxes in. In comparison, Sunita bought just a handful of articles very thoughtfully according to what exactly she needed to carry on her daily routine. They eventually reached home. Sunita had very little to unpack. So she decided to help Anita unpack her load. They started opening the boxes one after another.

Gift wraps were removed plastic wraps were removed and items were retrieved from the cardboard boxes. Next thing was to dispose off this 'unnecessary' packaging material. So, the gift wraps, accompanying plastics, cardboard everything went into dustbin. It is obvious that Anita generated a

large volume of waste.

Sunita had bought very limited items and hence she generated very little waste. But she didn't dispose it off in the dustbin. Instead, she kept it thinking that it can be reused repeatedly. Anita, on the other hand, didn't even bother to think and sort out the things which could be reused or at least could be kept aside for some other purpose. So she loaded her dustbin with all this trash whereas Sunita did not generate any trash at all.

These two characters are representatives of billions of such girls and boys, men and women all over the globe. People buy things even though they are not much needed and finally end up in generating substantial amount of trash. Technically, 'trash' or 'waste' is any substance that is discarded after primary use, or is worthless, defective, and of no use. It can also be described as unwanted or unusable material and is also known as garbage or rubbish. Waste can be either in the solid or in the liquid form. More about this in the next article.

(The writer is an environmental expert. Views personal)



An Iceland volcano erupts again

Grindavik: A volcano in southwestern Iceland erupted Thursday evening for the sixth time since December, spewing red lava through a new fissure on the Reykjanes Peninsula.

The eruption began shortly after 9 pm following a series of strong earthquakes and within the hour a 4-kilometre (2.4-mile) fissure cut through the Sundhnukur crater.

Iceland authorities say the eruption's effects remain localised with road closures but do not threaten the population.

Halldór Björnsson, head of weather and climate at the Norwegian Meteorological Agency, told the Icelandic news portal Visir, that



unlike previous eruptions, the lava flow is not heading for the town of Grindavik that was largely evacuated in December when the volcano came to life after being dormant for 900 years. Magnús Tuma Guðmundsson, a geophysicist, who flew over the eruption centers this evening told the website that "if this continues like

this, Grindavik is not in danger because of this. Of course, we don't know what will happen in the near future, but it is likely that this has reached its peak and then it will start to subside like the other eruptions."

As news of the eruption spread, hundreds of curious onlookers drove to nearby vantage points for a

view of the stunning natural phenomenon that has become a key tourism attraction.

"We just thought that it was the northern lights," said Mahnoor Ali, visiting from Maryland in the US. "It's like the coolest thing I've seen in my whole life, honestly." Friends Ameerul Awalludin from Malaysia and Shohei Miyamoto from Japan were with an Icelandic friend when they heard the news and quickly rushed to near the eruption.

"We have like a volcano as well," said Miyamoto, but "we cannot see lava like this." The eruption is not expected to impact air travel.

- AP

Kumaraswamy hails CPSEs

Bengaluru: As the country celebrated its first ever National Space Day commemorating the soft landing of ISRO's Chandrayaan-3 on the lunar surface on Friday, Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries H D Kumaraswamy recalled the contributions of four Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE) in making India's lunar mission a success.

"Four CPSEs under MHI—Instrumentation Ltd. (IL), FCRI, Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL), and Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT)—supplied essential products that were integral to the success of Chandrayaan-3."

Improved reservoir levels across India

New Delhi: The overall water-storage levels across the country's major reservoirs have improved significantly compared to last year but certain areas, particularly in the northern region, are facing lower-than-normal storage levels, which could impact water availability in the coming months.

The Central Water Commission (CWC) has released its latest report on the live storage status of 155 reservoirs across India, revealing that the overall water-storage levels have improved significantly compared to last year.

According to the bulletin released on Friday, the live storage available in these reservoirs is 130,800 billion cubic metres (BCM), which is 72 per cent of the total live storage capacity.

However, the report also notes that certain areas, particularly in the northern region, are facing lower-than-normal storage levels, which could impact water availability in the

coming months. This marks a notable increase from the 114,657 BCM recorded during the same period last year, indicating that the current storage is 114 per cent of last year's level and 112 per cent of the average storage over the last 10 years.

The report highlights regional variations in water-storage levels, with some areas experiencing better storage than others. In the northern region, which includes Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan, the storage levels are below normal, with reservoirs holding only 53 per cent of their capacity.

This is a significant drop from the 84 per cent recorded last year.

Conversely, the southern region, covering states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, shows a more positive trend, with reservoirs at 80 per cent capacity, a substantial improvement from the 52 per cent recorded during the corresponding period last year.



The eastern region, comprising states such as Assam, West Bengal and Bihar, also reported an increase in the water-storage levels. The reservoirs in this region are currently at 60 per cent capacity, a marked improvement from the 43 per cent recorded last year. Similarly, the western region, which includes Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa, has seen an increase in the storage lev-

els, with reservoirs now at 74 per cent capacity, up from 69 per cent last year.

In the central region, which includes Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the reservoirs are currently holding 76 per cent of their total capacity, reflecting a moderate improvement from the 73 per cent recorded during the same period last year.

This region's storage is

also higher than the 10-year average, which stood at 68 per cent.

The CWC report concludes that the overall storage position across the country is better than both last year and the 10-year average, which is a positive sign for water availability in various sectors, including agriculture, hydroelectric power generation and drinking water supply.

- PTI

Cash-strapped Pakistan seeks USD 4 bn loan

By Sajjad Hussain

Islamabad: Cash-strapped Pakistan is in talks with banks in the Middle East to borrow approximately USD 4 billion to meet its external financial commitments for the current fiscal year, as part of the USD 7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) currently pending for IMF's approval.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and his team had a virtual meeting with Dr Adnan Chilwan, Group CEO of Dubai Islamic Bank, on Thursday, the Dawn newspaper reported on Friday.

On Wednesday, a similar

interaction was held with Mashreq Bank President and Group CEO Ahmed Abdelaal. Both meetings had been arranged to "discuss the economic outlook and explore investment opportunities in Pakistan".

For the current fiscal year, Pakistan has pitched about USD 20 billion in foreign borrowing in the budget, besides another USD 3 billion rollover from the UAE that was reported separately for the balance of payments. With this much borrowing, Pakistan's reserves are estimated to grow to about USD 19-20 billion by the end of the current fiscal year.

Of the USD 20 billion esti-

mate, about USD 4 billion is targeted to be arranged through foreign commercial borrowing during the current fiscal year and another USD 1 billion in international bonds.

Separately, The Express Tribune newspaper reported that Pakistan begins seeking commercial loans from Middle Eastern banks to bridge the external financing gap, as the IMF indefinitely postponed the approval of a USD 7 billion EFF this week after Islamabad failed to secure the additional USD 2 billion in financing and the rollover of USD 12 billion in cash deposits from Saudi Arabia, China, and the UAE.

The finance minister now hopes that the IMF may approve the new EFF next month.

Pakistan has also intensified its engagement with foreign commercial banks, though high financing costs and a low credit rating from international agencies remain significant hurdles.

Pakistan's current credit rating stands at CCC+, which is below investment grade, leading to higher interest rate demands from commercial banks.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) briefed the Senate Standing Committee on Eco-

nomics Affairs about Pakistan's engagements with the IMF since 1958.

Qader Bakhsh, an executive from the SBP, informed the parliamentary forum that Pakistan's last Stand-By Arrangement with the IMF had an average interest rate of 5.1 per cent, making it a costly deal. He also noted that the new IMF loan is expected to carry similar rates unless global interest rates decline.

The IMF interest rate is determined by the Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket price, plus a 1% base rate and two additional surcharges linked to loan volume and duration, he



explained.

The SBP official further detailed that if a country borrows more than 187.5 per cent of its IMF quota, a 2 per cent surcharge applies. Additionally, a 1 per cent sur-

charge is levied if the borrowing period exceeds three years, he said.

Traditionally, lending by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the IMF was considered afford-

able. However, due to Pakistan's increasing borrowing needs and limited capacity to sustain such debt, the WB and ADB have also raised their interest rates.

-PTI

Israel's orders have displaced 90 per cent of Gaza residents

Jerusalem: Successive Israeli evacuation orders in Gaza, including 12 just in August, have displaced 90 per cent of its 2.1 million residents since the Israel-Hamas war began in October, the top UN humanitarian official for the Palestinian territory says.

US Vice President Kamala Harris says she and President Joe Biden are working to end the war in Gaza, where the International Rescue Committee says the polio virus has been circulating for the first time in a quarter-century because of the destruction of hospitals and water infrastructure, along with overcrowded living conditions.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Office says a delegation from the



country has arrived in Cairo to resume efforts to salvage a cease-fire deal. The talks are being mediated by the United States, Egypt and Qatar. A crucial sticking point involves Israel's demand for lasting control over two strategic corridors in Gaza.

The war began on October 7, when Hamas and other militants stormed Israel,

killed around 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted around 250. About 110 hostages are still inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead. The Israeli offensive launched in response has killed more than 40,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the local Health Ministry, which doesn't say how many were militants or civilians.

Strikes kill 16 in Gaza

Jerusalem: The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital received the remains of a woman and three children, after strikes overnight and into Thursday. An Associated Press reporter at the hospital counted the bodies.

A man held the body of a child wrapped in a white shroud as a woman next to him wept, saying: "My love, my soul."

The Israeli offensive launched in response to Hamas' October 7 attack has killed over 40,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the local Health Ministry, which doesn't say how many were militants or civilians.

Hamas and other militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the October 7 attack and abducted around 250. Around 110 hostages are still inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

The Israeli military says it has killed over 17,000 fighters, without providing evidence. It blames civilian deaths on Hamas because the militants fight in dense, residential areas.

The United States, Qatar and Egypt have spent months trying to broker a cease-fire deal and hostage release but major gaps remain.

Dutch leader bans phones fearing espionage

The Hague (Netherlands): The new Dutch prime minister has banned cell phones and other mobile devices from the weekly meetings of his Cabinet in a move aimed at dialling back the risk of digital eavesdropping by spies.

"The threat of espionage is timeless. Electronic devices, a telephone, iPad, are all little microphones and countries are interested in decision-making also in the Netherlands and you want to prevent that. It's a very simple measure — all the phones in a safe," Dick Schoof, a former head of the national intelligence agency, told reporters on Friday.

Phones were not banned under Schoof's predecessor, Mark Rutte.

Singapore starts screening passengers

By Gurdip Singh

Singapore: Temperature and visual screening will be carried out at Changi and Seletar airports from Friday onwards as a precautionary measure against mpox, after one confirmed case of a potentially more serious variant each was reported in Sweden and Thailand.

The Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Transport and Immigration and Checkpoints Authority said they will enhance Singapore's surveillance capabilities against the infectious disease at the borders.

Similar screening measures will also be implemented at sea checkpoints for crew and passengers arriving on ships from mpox-affected areas, reported The Straits Times.

The MOH said that

while there are no direct flights between Singapore and any country with an mpox outbreak, there will be temperature and visual screening at Changi and Seletar airports for inbound travellers and crew arriving on flights from places that may be exposed to outbreak of the viral disease.

Health advisories have also been put in place at air checkpoints, so that travellers will take the necessary personal precautions to avoid being infected.

Travellers are strongly advised to follow the advisory, especially if they are travelling to and from affected countries. Those found to have fever, rash and/or symptoms compatible with mpox will be referred for medical assessment.

-PTI

Hasina's diplomatic passport revoked

Dhaka: Bangladesh's interim government has revoked ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina's diplomatic passport along with all members of the former Cabinet, over two weeks after she resigned and fled to India following a student-led uprising against her government.

A statement by the Security Services Division of the Home Affairs Ministry on Thursday said diplomatic passports received by the former prime minister, ex-PM's advisors, ex-cabinet members and all members of the recently dissolved Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) and their spouses would be revoked immediately, the official BSS news agency reported.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin in August dissolved the 12th Parliament after Hasina, 76, fled the country. Currently, an interim government led by Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus is running the country. Diplomatic passports of the officials would also be revoked immediately upon termination of their tenure or appointment, it said.

India to gift four BHISM cubes to Ukraine



New Delhi: India has decided to gift four Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri (BHISHM) cubes, a mobile hospital aimed at providing emergency medical care, to Ukraine, officials on Friday said.

Under the umbrella of Project Aarogya Maitri, a programme to provide essential medical supplies to developing countries as humanitarian assistance, the government has created the

BHISHM initiative, which provides the means to deliver all basic facilities and equipment for providing emergency medical care in an easy to use and rapidly deployable manner, they noted.

The decision to gift four such cubes to Ukraine was taken prior to the visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Ukraine, which is locked in a protracted war with Russia.

The mobile hospital is

made through packing all essential medicines and equipment in cubical boxes (15 inches each) in a well-organised manner, and arranged according to the types of injuries and medical issues that could be encountered in a war or natural disaster.

They said these mini cubes are then positioned on a framework that is adjustable, strong and permits multi-mode transport (by air, sea, land and drone). In fact, the mini cubes can be carried by a person as their maximum weight is 20 kg.

One cube, the officials said, has the ability to handle about 200 cases of diverse nature in emergency situations such as trauma, bleeding, burns, fractures, shock, apart from managing initial triage and classification.

It also has the ability to support basic surgeries and can also generate its own power and oxygen in limited amounts and duration, they added.

-PTI

Security stepped up at NATO air base

Berlin: Security at a NATO air base in western Germany has been raised because of intelligence information pointing to a "potential threat," and all staff not essential to missions have been sent home as a precaution, NATO said.

The Geilenkirchen air base, near the border with the Netherlands, is where the alliance's Airborne Warning and Control System, or AWACS, aircraft are based.

A post on the NATO AWACS fleet's account on social media network X late Thursday night announcing that "we raised the security level" did not elaborate on the nature of the potential threat. It said that "operations continue as planned."

German news agency dpa said a reporter saw police cars on the grounds of the air base. Police confirmed a deployment Thursday night but gave no details, and offered no information on Friday morning.

Promise to be president for all Americans: Kamala



People watch Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris speak during Democratic National Convention on the big screen at Soldier Field on Thursday. Pic: PTI

Chicago: Promising that she will be a president who unites the people of the country, Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday said that the upcoming presidential election is a chance to chart a new way forward, not as members of any one party or faction, but as Americans.

Harris, 59, is the first ever Indian-American and Black woman to be nominated as presidential candidate of the either Democratic or Republican parties.

"With this election, our nation has a precious, fleeting opportunity to move past the bitterness, cynicism, and

divisive battles of the past. A chance to chart a new way forward. Not as members of any one party or faction, but as Americans," Harris said in the excerpts of her nomination acceptance speech Thursday night.

"I know there are people of various political views watching tonight. And I want you to know: I promise to be a president for all Americans..." she said.

"I will be a president who unites us around our highest aspirations. A president who leads — and listens. Who is realistic. Practical. And has common sense. And always fights for the Ameri-

can people. From the courthouse to the White House, that has been my life's work," Harris said.

Recalling an incident when she was in high school, Harris said she started to notice something about her best friend Wanda. "She was sad at school. And there were times she didn't want to go home," said the vice president.

"So, one day, I asked if everything was alright. And she confided in me that she was being sexually abused by her step-father. And I immediately told her she had to come stay with us. And she did," she said. -PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Vivek Ramaswamy, leader, Republican Party, US

"She's a cog in the wheel, she's a puppet. The reality is she's staying away from policy because the more she talks about policy, the less popular she becomes and that I think is the winning strategy for our side."

'Desi President': Indian-Americans launch website for Kamala

By Lalit K Jha

Chicago: Electrified by the fact that someone among their community has become the Democratic presidential candidate, a group of enthusiastic Indian-Americans have launched a new website — DesiPresident.com, with the tagline "Kamala Ke Saath".

Harris, 59, is of mixed parentage; her mother immigrated to the United States from Chennai and her father moved to the country from Jamaica.

"The coming months are



filled with excitement and promise as we rally together to make history. Your

participation and enthusiasm are key to our success, and we can't wait to embark

on this journey with you," the website said.

The Desi President, a project of the Indian American Impact Fund, has launched a T-shirt with the tagline "Kamala Ke Saath: Vote Kamala", which has become an instant hit on social media platforms.

Among other activities, the group is organising a weekly virtual phone bank "Kamala Ke Saath" to canvass voters and supporters over the phone. A T-shirt was presented to Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi by the

Indian American Impact Fund at an event this week.

This is not for the first time that a Hindi slogan is used by a presidential campaign. In the 2016 elections, the Trump campaign had used the slogan "Ab Ki Baar Trump Sarkaar".

"The Indian American Impact Fund supports Kamala Devi Harris for President. We're mobilizing South Asian voters to help elect the first Indian-American president. Kamala Harris stands for our values and communities," it said. -PTI

EDITORIAL

An Overdue Partnership

The visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Poland, the first in 45 years, signals a potential deepening of Indo-Polish ties and a move towards a strategic partnership.

In the Nehruvian era, Polish economists like Oskar Lange had enormously influenced India's first PM. However, since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Poland has looked towards China when engaging with Asia, while India has traditionally focused on the Western European capitals. But a shift in global dynamics—exacerbated by Brexit, the pandemic, the ongoing Sino-American rivalry and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war—has now opened a unique opportunity for Warsaw and New Delhi to redefine their relationship. This would not only accelerate cooperation but also enhance Poland's influence within the broader European Union-India strategic partnership, first established in 2004, shortly after Poland's accession to the EU.

To build this partnership, Poland must prioritize several key areas. Increasing the resources of its embassy in New Delhi and opening additional consulates in South India would be a necessary first step. Additionally, boosting the budget for public diplomacy and cultural exchange programs would help foster deeper understanding and stronger ties between the two nations.

Poland's approach to this partnership should be pragmatic and mutually beneficial. Military equipment, food supplies, and other products in demand in India would likely form the basis of increased trade. There are tremendous opportunities for both nations in research and development, green technologies, and the agri-food sector. Both nations could benefit from closer cooperation in security, defense, IT infrastructure, and even aviation, where Poland's aspirations to become a central European air hub could align with India's growing passenger traffic.

India's historical ties with the Soviet Union have long influenced its foreign policy. Throughout the Cold War, New Delhi maintained a careful neutrality, refusing to be drawn into the geopolitical tussles of the time. Over the years, India became heavily reliant on Russian military hardware—a legacy that continues to this day. Despite increasing defence ties with the West, it will take at least a decade for India to wean itself off Russian supplies. Poland must navigate this complex relationship delicately, encouraging India to align more closely with the democratic world while understanding its historical ties to Moscow. As India seeks to expand its global influence, Poland will probably advocate for New Delhi to take a more assertive stance on international issues, such as Russia's actions in Ukraine. Poland's support for India's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council is another area where collaboration could be fruitful.

Will BRICS payment system end Dollar dominance?



By Kaswar Klasra

The BRICS alliance comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—has been increasingly proactive in pursuing collective

The BRICS payment system, set to be a key topic at the October 2024 Summit in Kazan, aims to challenge U.S. dollar dominance and enhance financial sovereignty. With over 159 countries interested, it could significantly impact global finance, though the success depends on effective implementation and integration of new members.

economic goals. Its new payment system has been designed to operate independently of the U.S. dollar and the SWIFT network. With interest from over 159 countries, it marks a major step towards de-dollarization and financial sovereignty, with a broad global impact.

Elvira Nabiullina, Russia's Central Bank Governor, has emphasized the system's potential as an alternative to SWIFT with ongoing discussions to integrate it with similar platforms in other countries.

The BRICS payment system will be a key topic at the BRICS 2024 Summit in October in Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan. Viktoria Panova, head of Russia's BRICS Presidency Council, highlighted its role in enhancing cooperation among BRICS nations and supporting a multipolar financial order.

The BRICS payment system could quickly benefit the bloc, especially as more nations join, strengthening the bloc's economic influence and reducing global reliance on the U.S. dollar. The drive for de-dollarization gained momentum after Western sanctions were imposed on Russia, highlighting the vulnerability of relying on the dollar and SWIFT. By promoting local currencies and alternative settlement methods, BRICS aims to insulate itself from similar economic pressures in the future.

The BRICS payment system, a viable alternative to SWIFT and modelled after Russia's System for Transmitting Financial Messages (SPFS) is the key component of this strategy. BRICS Bridge, the payment platform transaction will be in the national currencies of the member states, with the New Development Bank (NDB) acting as a platform for integration, conver-

sion, and clearing.

This system supports the bloc's de-dollarization agenda by enabling member states to make settlements in local currencies, reduce exposure to Western economic sanctions, and enhance their financial sovereignty. Developing countries in the Global South, vulnerable to dollar fluctuations and U.S. monetary policy will benefit significantly.

Over 30 countries are interested in joining BRICS, but integrating new members presents opportunities and challenges. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has emphasised the need for careful deliberation on accession modalities. The summit in Kazan will likely address these issues and the implications for the alliance's long-term goals. As Jim O'Neill, the economist who originally coined the term "BRICs," has pointed out, BRICS expansion should follow clear criteria to maintain the bloc's cohesion and effectiveness.

The bank, which has already welcomed Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, and Egypt, must now determine how to integrate new members into its operations. As the NDB evolves, its effectiveness in supporting BRICS' goals of de-dollarization and sustainable development will be closely examined. The NDB, an alternative to institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, plays a critical role in the BRICS economic agenda. It has focused on funding infrastructure and sustainable development but faced scrutiny over its low profile and limited investments.

As BRICS advances its de-dollarization strategy, the NDB will serve as its central hub, facilitating transactions and inte-



gration across member states. Additionally, the NDB will promote the use of local currencies, reducing reliance on the U.S. dollar.

However, the NDB faces significant challenges. Scholars like Gregory T. Chin have expressed concerns about the bank's governance and agenda, questioning whether it has fulfilled the original vision of its founders. As the NDB seeks to expand, it must also address these concerns by adopting a more proactive and ambitious approach to its operations.

As the global economy becomes increasingly digital, BRICS must navigate the complexities of digital markets and establish a regulatory framework for digitalization, particularly for antitrust regulation and consumer protection. The digital economy offers BRICS opportunities for growth and efficiency but also presents regulatory challenges, especially in fair competition. Balancing innovation and regulation will be crucial for advancing the digital economy.

By leveraging digital technologies, the BRICS payment system could facilitate faster and more secure transactions, reducing the bloc's reliance on tradi-

tional financial networks. Achieving this goal will require substantial investment in digital infrastructure and regulatory frameworks. With BRICS offering an alternative to the U.S. dollar and the SWIFT network, it is challenging the status quo and asserting its economic independence. The system's impact on global trade and finance is immense, particularly as more countries seek to join the bloc and adopt its new financial architecture. However, the success of the BRICS payment system will depend on several factors, including the readiness of member states to implement the system, the integration of new members, and the ability of the NDB to support the bloc's broader economic goals.

In the coming months, the decisions made by BRICS leaders will have far-reaching implications for the global economy. If successful, the BRICS payment system could pave the way for a more diversified and resilient financial landscape, reducing the dominance of the U.S. dollar and giving rise to a new global financial order.

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

SATTIRE WITH SWAG



“Consequences of putting Trump back in White House are extremely serious”

United States Vice President Kamala Harris on Friday night accepted her the Democratic Party's nomination for the post of the President at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The 59-year-old, who is of Indian and African heritage, became the second woman to do so for her party after former first lady Hillary Clinton.



Here are the excerpts of her speech.

On behalf of the people, on behalf of every American, regardless of party, race, gender or the language your grandmother speaks, on behalf of my mother and everyone who has ever set out on their own unlikely journey on behalf of Americans, like the people I grew up with, people who work hard, chase their dreams and look out for one another, on behalf of everyone whose story could only be written in the greatest na-

tion on earth, I accept your nomination to the United States.

Our nation with this election has a precious, fleeting opportunity to move past the bitterness, cynicism, and divisive battles of the past. A chance to chart a new way forward. Not as members of any one party or faction, but as Americans.

I will be a president who unites us around our highest aspirations. A president who leads -- and listens. Who is realistic, Practical and has common sense. And always fights for the American people. From the courthouse to the White House, that

has been my life's work.

In many ways, Donald Trump is an unserious man, but the consequences of putting Donald Trump back in the White House are extremely serious. Donald Trump tried to throw away your votes. When he failed, he sent an armed mob to the United States Capitol where they assaulted law enforcement officers. When politicians in his own party begged him to call off the mob and send help, he did the opposite. He fanned the flames. He was found guilty of fraud by a jury of everyday Americans, and separately found liable for committing sexual abuse. America, the path that led me here in recent weeks was no doubt unexpected. But I'm no stranger to unlikely journeys.

Instead, he fights for himself and his billionaire friends. He will give them another round of tax breaks that will add five trillion dollars to the national debt.

BY INVITATION

Devendra Fadnavis emerges as the strategic game-changer



By Anoop Raghav

In the election season all eyes are turning towards Maharashtra, where the political landscape is intensifying as the state eagerly awaits its own Assembly election dates. Maharashtra's elections are expected to be a litmus test for the ruling and opposition alliances, reflecting broader trends that may shape the national political narrative leading up to the general elections. The outcome of these elections is likely to hinge on several factors, with infrastructure and development emerging

Maharashtra's political landscape is heating up as the state anticipates its upcoming Assembly elections. The contest between the ruling Mahayuti Alliance and the opposition Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi is intensifying, with infrastructure and development emerging as key issues. Devendra Fadnavis's leadership and influence remain central to the state's electoral dynamics.

as critical determinants for the key players.

A central figure in Maharashtra's infrastructure transformation has been former Chief Minister and current Deputy Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis. During his first term, Fadnavis faced several challenges as his government encountered criticism on multiple issues, particularly regarding farmer distress, rising unemployment, and insufficient relief efforts during severe droughts. However, despite these hurdles, Fadnavis was instrumental in reshaping the state's infrastructure landscape. He is credited with not only initiating and advancing major projects like expressways, highways, and metro systems but also with establishing a dedicated office to track and expedite these developments. His office focused on both large-scale projects and urban infrastructure, reflecting his commitment to comprehensive state development.

Under Fadnavis's leadership, key infrastructure projects such as the coastal road, the trans-harbour link, and the metro network have been fast-tracked. His efforts were pivotal in reviving the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), a project dormant for over five decades, and advancing the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Corridor, India's first high-speed rail project. Additionally, he played a crucial role in garnering support for the Versova-Virar Sea Link and overcoming challenges related to the Mumbai Metro Line 3.

"Fadnavis model of governance" turned Maharashtra into an investment hub, attracting both domestic and international business through initiatives like the "Magnetic Maharashtra Summit" and "Make in Maharashtra." These efforts, combined with youth-centric policies like the "Skill Development Mission" and the "Startup Policy," boosted economic growth and job creation. Fadnavis's strategic approach has left a lasting impact, with the current government continuing to follow the blueprint he established. This dedication to ad-

vancing infrastructure has been a cornerstone of his leadership and has solidified his position as a towering figure in Maharashtra politics.

Recent attacks from Uddhav Thackeray highlight Fadnavis's growing influence and the opposition's recognition of him as a major threat. His growing influence has prompted calculated moves by opponents who fear his popularity and effectiveness as a mass leader. His strategic actions and grassroots mobilisation have been pivotal in shaping the BJP's success in Maharashtra, especially since 2014 when the party, under his leadership, won 122 seats in the assembly elections.

During Eknath Shinde's swearing-in as Maharashtra's Chief Minister in June 2022, Devendra Fadnavis initially stated that he would not be part of the new administration. Nevertheless, following a directive from the central leadership and in the interest of maintaining party unity, Fadnavis agreed to serve as Deputy Chief Minister. His decision to abide by the party's decision, despite facing personal and political challenges, underscores his deep commitment to the party and its broader goals. Fadnavis's sense of responsibility and loyalty to the BJP has been evident in his efforts to stabilise the newly formed Mahayuti government and redirect the state's development agenda, which had stalled during the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi administration.

Both the RSS and the BJP's central leadership believe that, if the BJP is to win the upcoming assembly election, Fadnavis remains central to the party's strategy. His leadership, popularity, and organisational skills are seen as crucial assets as the BJP prepares for the upcoming Maharashtra Assembly elections. Projecting Fadnavis as the face of the party—the "Vikas Purush" is considered essential for navigating the challenges ahead and regaining power in the state.

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



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KALEIDOSCOPE

1. A soldier salutes to the fallen as they commemorate the 66th anniversary of deadly attack by China on Kinmen Island, Taiwan on Friday.
2. Indian Army personnel evacuate people from a flood affected area during their rescue operation in Tripura.
3. A vehicle moves through a flooded road after heavy downpour, in New Delhi on Friday.
4. A woman police personnel checks candidates as they arrive at a centre to appear in Police Constables Recruitment Examinations, in Meerut on Friday.
5. Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during a visit to 'Martyrologist' Exposition to honour the memory of children, in Kyiv, Ukraine on Friday.



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All Picture PTI AP

POLITICS AND PROSE

Russo-Ukraine: Endless War and Identity Struggles



By
Shoumojit Banerjee

history of Ukraine from Herodotus to the fall of the USSR and the current conflict. Located at the western edge of the Eurasian steppe, Ukraine has been a gateway to Europe for many centuries, being a meeting place and a battleground of empires - Roman, Habsburg, Ottoman.

He emphasizes Ukraine's pivotal role in global history: The disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991 was precipitated by the Ukrainian referendum on independence.

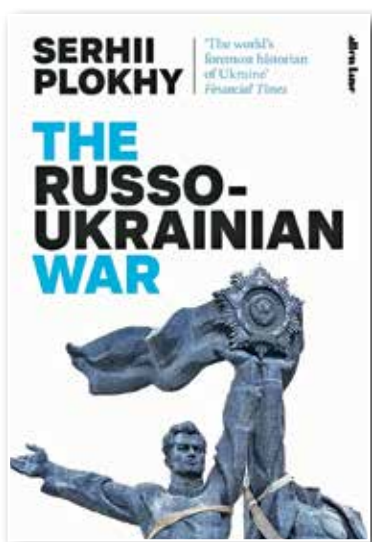
The ongoing conflict is not just a contemporary geopolitical struggle but one deeply rooted in history, particularly the contentious legacy of 'Kyivan Rus', a medieval polity founded by the Grand Prince Volodymyr (958-1015), a Scandinavian Viking.

As Ploky observes, most Russians believe that their nation originated in Kyiv, the centre of the medieval Kyivan Rus' polity, that encompassed most of today's Ukraine, Belarus, and European Russia. Kyivan Rus' existed between the 10th and mid-13th centuries before disintegrating under the Mongol storm.

Volodymyr's Christianization of Kyivan Rus' (cited by Putin as the Russian world's founding moment) culturally connected the region to Byzantium and Eastern Christianity, underpinning Russian claims to Ukrainian land for centuries.

In a 2021 essay, Putin fixated on foreign interference in Russian history, yet ironically, Volodymyr himself was a Scandinavian Viking who imposed Christianity on the Slavs.

The Kyivan Rus' myth originated in the mid-15th century, with Ivan III of Moscow asserting his dynasty's Kyivan roots to legitimize his conquest of Novgorod. Ivan's victory marked the rise of an independent, authoritarian Russian state inherited by his grandson, Ivan IV ('The Terrible') who was defeated in the Livonian War (1558-83) by a coalition including Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, and Denmark. Moscow was captured by the Poles and their al-



lies, the Ukrainian Cossacks.

During this time, Muscovy separated itself from Kyiv and the Ukrainian lands both politically and in religious terms with Muscovites no longer regarding Kyivans as fellow Orthodox believers, claiming that they had been 'corrupted' by the rule of Catholic kings and becoming open to the West.

In 1648, Ukrainians, led by Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky, sought Russian Tsar's aid against the Poles, reviving the myth of the Kyivan heritage to protect Orthodox Cossacks from Polish Catholics. But the incorporation of the Ukrainian Cossack state into Moscow again sparked Cossack resistance in 1708, when Hetman Ivan Mazepa allied with Sweden's Charles XII against Tsar Peter 'The Great' only to be defeated at Poltava in 1709. At the time of the 1991 referendum, neither Gorbachev nor Yeltsin had imagined the Soviet Union without Ukraine, its second-largest republic and a key element of Russian history and mythology.

Ploky masterfully illustrates how Ukraine's past has been manipulated by Russian leaders to justify territorial claims, making the conflict a continuation of centuries-old tensions rather than a modern anomaly.

Vladimir Putin "special military operation" in Ukraine which began February 2022 - the largest invasion since the end of the Second World War in 1945 - has now taken on the nature of the fictional endless war described in George Orwell's 1984.

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict has destroyed the European security structure built since the Helsinki Accords of 1975. While the Ukrainian resistance and the advance into Russian territory has surprised the West, fundamental questions persist: What made this war of aggression possible and what made the Ukrainians resist as they did and are continuing to do? What differentiates Ukrainians from Russians?

To grasp the origins of the conflict, one should begin with historian Serhii Ploky's *The Gates of Europe and The Russo-Ukrainian War* - both exemplars of clarity and conciseness.

Ploky presents the *longue durée*

Serhii Ploky's superb The Russo-Ukrainian War shows how the current conflict is a continuation of a prolonged struggle over identity, sovereignty, and territorial control in the region.

EXPLAINER

Why Bangladesh floods sparked tensions with India?

The recent floods in Bangladesh, which hit more than 1.5 million and caused five deaths, have reignited tensions between the country and India, particularly concerning the release of water from the Gumti River which flows through both nations. As floodwaters submerged large areas of Bangladesh, a wave of misinformation circulated, blaming India for exacerbating the crisis.

The India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) provided a detailed clarification to set the record straight.

According to the MEA, the flooding in Bangladesh was primarily caused by unusually heavy rainfall in the catchment areas downstream of the Dumbur dam, which is located in Tripura, India. The Gumti River, which originates in Tripura and flows into Bangladesh, has witnessed its heaviest rains of the year over the past few days. The MEA

emphasized that the Dumbur dam, situated over 120 kilometers upstream from the Bangladesh border, is not directly responsible for the flooding. The dam, which is relatively low in height, plays a crucial role in generating power and supplies 40 MW to Bangladesh, a fact that underscores its importance to both countries.

Along the 120-kilometer stretch of the Gumti River between the Dumbur dam and the Bangladesh border, there are three water-level observation sites—Amapur, Sonamura, and Sonamura 2. These stations monitor water levels and provide real-time data to Bangladesh as part of a bilateral protocol. This data-sharing arrangement is designed to help both countries manage the risks associated with heavy rainfall and potential flooding. However, recent heavy rainfall in Tripura, beginning on August 21, has led to automatic releases of water from

the dam, contributing to the rising water levels downstream.

The Indian ministry also highlighted the challenges posed by ongoing communication disruptions, primarily due to power outages, which have complicated the transmission of flood data to Bangladesh. Despite these difficulties, India has continued to share critical information with its neighbour, reaffirming its commitment to cooperation and transparency in managing shared water resources.

This situation underscores the complexities of managing transboundary rivers, particularly in a region where monsoons are becoming increasingly unpredictable.

As climate change intensifies, such challenges are likely to become more frequent, necessitating even closer collaboration between the two nations to mitigate the impact of natural disasters on their populations.



WANYONYI runs 4TH FASTEST 800 meters all-time

Lausanne (Switzerland): Olympic champion Emmanuel Wanyonyi ran the fourth-fastest 800 meters time in history Thursday at the first major track meet after the Paris Games.

Wanyonyi clocked 1 minute, 41.11 seconds — 0.08 faster than his winning time in Paris two weeks ago — to tie Wilson Kipketer's mark in 1997 that was a world record then. Only Wanyonyi's fellow Kenyan David Rudisha has run the 800 faster.

"I'm so happy to have run that crazy time here in Lausanne," Wanyonyi said. "I really loved the crowd here."

It was a fast early start to the storied Athletissima meet as the global Diamond League circuit resumed after a pause for the Olympics.

Jakob Ingebrigtsen regained his authority in the men's 1,500 — after a shocking fourth place in Paris — to beat Olympic champion Cole Hocker by more than two seconds.

In the men's 200, Olympic champion Letsile Tebogo kept his form despite a return trip home to Botswana to win in 19.64 seconds easing into the line.

"It was a great race for me here today," said the 21-year-old Tebogo, who said on the eve of the race he

had not trained in the previous week.

Tebogo still finished 0.14 ahead of Erriyon Knighton, who placed fourth in Paris. Noah Lyles, who took bronze in 200 in Paris after becoming the Olympic champion at 100, skipped the Swiss meet.

The standout performance was by the 20-year-old Wanyonyi, who surged past Marco Arop on the back straight and finished 0.61 clear of the Olympic silver medalist from Canada.

Wanyonyi was 0.20 off Rudisha's world record of 1:40.91 set winning the first of his back-to-back Olympic titles in 2012 in London.

Ingebrigtsen's winning time of 3:27.83 was a meet record in Lausanne though still would have been fast enough only for fourth place at the Olympics.

"For me, a lot of it has been mental including going home, taking some easy days and then getting back to work," said Ingebrigtsen, who did win Olympic gold in the 5,000. "Tonight's race gave me good answers."

Hocker acknowledged it had been "a new challenge being announced as Olympic champion," though the American's 3:29.85 time

was second fastest in his career behind his 3:27.65 in Paris.

Dina Asher-Smith won the women's 100 clocking her season-best time of 10.88. That would have won a bronze medal in Paris where the British star failed to make the final.

"After the Olympics I took some time to refocus and now I'm just enjoying running, feeling fit and injury free," Asher-Smith said.

Olympic champions Yaroslava Mahuchikh in women's high jump and Miltiadis Tentoglou in men's long jump both took repeat wins.

- AP



Rising from the debris

Club thrower Pranav Soorma eyes Paralympic glory

By Saumojyoti S Choudhury

New Delhi: It's not often that a person paralysed by a life-altering accident would describe that tragedy as a "blessing in disguise" or "an opportunity" to carve an identity. But then soon-to-be-Paralympian Pranav Soorma is built different.

He was 16 when the roof of his house fell on him in 2011, leaving him a quadriplegic. Restricted to a wheelchair, the Faridabad-based para-athlete couldn't have been faulted if he turned bitter with life but to everyone's surprise, he felt the tragedy gave him a sense of purpose.

"I was always a sports enthusiast but never took sports as a career option but I always wanted to do something worthy in my life and the irony is I got it after I got paralysed. I treat it as a blessing in disguise," Soorma, who is also a banker by profession, told PTI in an interview.

Soorma is the reigning Asian Paralympics champion in men's club throw F51 event with an Asian Games record of 30.01m. Little surprise then that he is being seen as a bright medal prospect for India at the upcoming Paris Paralympics, to be held from August 28 to September 8.

"I took up sports as an op-



portunity to create my own identity," he said.

"After 2016 Rio Paralympics I got to know about para-sports. In 2018, I read a lot about para-sports. I got to know about para swimming but given my medical condition it was not possible, table tennis also I liked but I didn't get a good coach to train me," said the 29-year-old, a commerce graduate from the prestigious Delhi School of Economics.

"Then came Narsi Ram sir (a para-athletics coach) in my life. He introduced me to athletics and finally I took up club throw."

He is currently working as an assistant manager in Bank of Baroda, a job which he got after cracking the competitive exam.

Club throw is an event where the objective is to throw a wooden club as far as possible. It is the para equivalent of the hammer throw in which participants rely on the shoulders and arms to generate the power required for the throw.

The event is one of the four throwing events, along with discus, javelin and shot put of the Summer Paralympics.

- PTI

AIG Women's Open Aditi, Diksha struggle on opening day



St. Andrews (Scotland): Indian golfers Diksha Dagar and Aditi Ashok made crucial birdies on their final holes to keep alive their chances of making the cut after the first round of the AIG Women's Open.

Aditi carded a 4-over 76 to be T-79 while Diksha was 5-over 77, sitting at T-100 as play ended late on the opening day which was marred by strong winds.

The cut looked likely at 3-over or 4-over after the second round.

For a long time, Diksha's

score on the board showed a birdie on Par-5 14th, which was later corrected and it was shown as 5-over.

Aditi opened with two pars and then had a bogey on 12th and a double on 13th for 3-over first nine. She dropped further shots on first and second to go 5-over before the birdie on ninth made it 4-over for the day.

Diksha, T-21 last year at Walton Heath, was 5-over for her first nine holes, the back nine of the Old Course with bogeys on 10, 11, 13, 16 and 17.

- PTI

Monsoon Pickleball Championship Duong, DeHeart set up summit clash

Mumbai: USA's Quong Duong defeated India's Armaan Bhatia 2-0 to set up the men's singles summit clash with compatriot Ryler DeHeart at the second Monsoon Pickleball Championship here on Sunday.

DeHeart beat headliner Jay DeVilliers of France 2-0 in the other semifinal on Friday. Britain's Thaddea Lock and Chinese Taipei's Pei Chuan Kao will fight it out in the women's singles event. Thaddea defeated Emilia Schmidt in a closely-contested 2-1 semifinal, while Pei Chuan Kao beat Nicola 2-0.

Jason Tailore, Yeong Ding Hwang and Kuochiung Wen, Hsieh Yu, Shourya K/Samaira Sippy won the gold respectively in the men's singles 30+, mixed doubles 50+, women's singles 30+ and mixed intermediate doubles.

- PTI

Neeraj finishes second

Lausanne: Star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra finished second in the Diamond League here after producing a season's best effort of 89.49m from his last attempt in a gritty performance despite lingering fitness concerns.

The 26-year-old was at the fourth spot till the fourth round before sending his spear to 85.58m in his fifth attempt. He saved the best for the last and his final attempt measured 89.49m on Thursday, a marginal improvement on the 89.45m achieved in the Paris Olympics a few days ago.

He was in danger of missing the sixth throw but his fifth round effort of 85.58m saved him. Only the top three after five rounds get their respective final attempts.

Two-time world champion and Paris Olympics bronze-medallist Anderson

Peters of Grenada won the event with a monster throw of 90.61m in the second round while Julian Weber of Germany took the third spot with 87.08m.

"The feeling wasn't great at first, but I am happy with my throw, especially the second (career) best throw on my last attempt. It was a tough start, but the comeback was really nice and I enjoyed the fighting spirit I showed," Chopra said after the event.

"Even though my early throws were around 80-83m, I pushed hard in the last two attempts finishing strong. Competing at this high level, it's important to stay mentally tough and fight through."

Peters, who had struggled to find form last year, led the competition here from beginning to end and he stamped his class with the 90m-plus throw in the last



DIAMOND LEAGUE

round. He has a personal best of 93.07m achieved in 2022.

With seven points from Thursday's second-place finish, Chopra is joint third alongside Weber in Dia-

mond League standings with 15 points. Peters jumped to top spot with 21 points.

Czech Republic's Jakub Vadlejch, who finished seventh (82.03m) on Thursday, is in second spot with 16 points.

Nursing a long-standing groin injury, Chopra claimed a silver in the Paris

Olympics on August 8 adding to his historic gold in the Tokyo edition of the Games three years ago.

Chopra had won the Lausanne leg in 2022 and 2023 and finished second behind Vadlejch in the winner-takes-all Diamond League final in Eugene, USA, last year. Chopra is yet to win a DL meeting this year. - PTI



Byeong Hun An, of South Korea, hits from the bunker on the first hole during the first round of the BMW Championship golf event at Castle Pines Golf Club on Thursday.

Sometimes you need a little bit of luck: Dravid

Mumbai: The legendary Rahul Dravid acknowledged that sometimes a little bit of luck can heavily impact the outcome of big matches, citing India's heartbreaking defeat in the ODI World Cup final to Australia and his side's sensational triumph from a precarious position against South Africa in the T20 World Cup final.

India had stormed into the ODI World Cup final last year with a 10-match winning streak but when the tournament's best team bumped into Australia in the title clash, nothing worked.

Six months later, skipper Rohit Sharma and Dravid combined to complete the unfinished business. A formidable South Africa stood between them and the trophy but the luck smiled on them.

ICC plans fund for Tests

Sydney: The International Cricket Council (ICC) is mulling a dedicated fund of at least USD 15 million for Test cricket that will help increase the players' match fee and address the migration of talent to lucrative T20 franchise leagues.

The initiative, which was proposed by Cricket Australia (CA), has the support of BCCI Secretary Jay Shah, who is the front-runner to become the next ICC Chairman, and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), a report in 'The Sydney Morning Herald' stated.

The fund would increase the minimum match payment for Test players and cover the cost of sending teams on overseas tours. It would support national boards like the West Indies that currently struggle to compete with the wages offered in global T20 competitions.

"The fund would ensure a



minimum Test payment for all players, thought to be USD 10,000, and pay the costs of overseas tours for struggling countries," the report stated.

"It's fantastic to see some momentum behind the Test match fund," CA chairman Mike Baird, who floated the concept in January, said.

"We need to take away the barriers and encourage Test cricket to be the best of the best. To retain that history and that legacy, which goes

alongside the newer forms of white ball cricket," he added.

The fund is unlikely to benefit the three wealthiest cricket nations -- India, Australia, and England -- since they already offer substantial salaries to their players.

However, how much money is available for Test cricket from the ICC is also likely to depend on a dispute with broadcaster Star, the report added.

- PTI