

THE PERFECT VOICE



More than one lakh complaints of love jihad ... pg 2



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Fewer Test centres help, says Ashwin ... pg 10

Sai Baba statues removed from many Varanasi temples

SANATAN RAKSHAK DAL SAYS NO MENTION OF SAI BABA PUJA IN SCRIPTURES

Varanasi: Statues of Sai Baba were removed from multiple temples in Varanasi on Tuesday following a campaign launched by a group called 'Sanatan Rakshak Dal'. Of these, the group removed a Sai Baba statue from the Bada Ganesh Temple here and placed it outside the temple's premises. Rammu Guru, the head priest of the temple, said, "Sai Baba was being worshipped without proper knowledge, which is forbidden according to scriptures." Similarly, Shankar Puri, the head priest of the Annapurna Temple, said, "There is no mention of the worship of Sai Baba in the scriptures." Ajay Sharma, state president of the Sanatan Rakshak Dal, said, "Only the worship of Lord Shiva, the supreme deity, should take

place in Kashi (Varanasi)." Respecting the sentiments of devotees, statues of Sai Baba have already been removed from 10 temples. In the coming days, statues will also be removed from the Agastyakunda and Bhuteshwar temples, he said. The priest of the Sai Temple located in Sant Raghuvir Das Nagar in the city's Sigra area, Samar Ghosh, said, "Those who claim to be Sanatanis today are the same people who established Sai Baba in the temples, and now they are the ones who have removed him from there. All gods are one. God can be seen in any form. Such acts are not right. They will hurt people's faith and spread discord in society." Ghosh mentioned that this Sai Temple opens daily from 7 AM to 10 PM, and



Sai devotees come to worship every day. "Particularly on Thursdays, around 4,000 to 5,000 devotees visit the temple to pay their respects," he said. Vivek Srivastava, a Sai

Baba devotee, said the removal of Sai Baba's statue is an extremely distressing event. "This incident has hurt the faith of millions of Sai devotees. All gods are one.

Everyone has the right to worship God in whichever form they believe. As for whether Sai Baba was Hindu or Muslim, it is we who have created those divisions. God does not make

distinctions among humans," Srivastava said. Sai Baba, revered as a spiritual leader, is known for his teachings of love, forgiveness, and charity, transcending religious boundaries. On its website, the Shree Saibaba Sansthan Trust, Shirdi, states that Sai Baba is revered as one of the greatest saints ever seen in India, endowed with unprecedented powers, and is worshipped as a God incarnate. (SAI meaning Sakshaat Ishwar) (God the absolute). "This mysterious Fakir first made his appearance in Shirdi as a youth and remained there throughout his long life. HE transformed the lives of those who met him and continuously is doing so even after his Samadhi in 1918 for those whose hearts are touched by his love and who pray and call him at

any emergency in life for his blessings," the website states. The trust also mentions that an outstanding aspect of Sai Baba is that he is "beyond distinctions" of religion, caste or creed. He embodied all religions and preached the Universal Religion of Love. "Devotees of all faiths find their meeting point in the Sai and people from all communities and all walks of life are united by the great love and reverence Baba inspires in them. Baba had great regard for his Hindu devotees and their Gurus and he responded to their needs and permitted worship according to the Hindu and other religious rituals. At the same time his dwelling place was a masjid (mosque) and the name of Allah was ever on his lips..." it added. **-PTI**

Govinda fires accidentally, injures leg

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Actor Govinda was injured in the leg on Tuesday after his revolver accidentally went off at his Mumbai residence when he was about to leave for the airport, police said. Dr. Ramesh Agarwal, who tended to the 60-year-old actor after the accident, said Govinda is recuperating in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a private hospital and will be discharged in a few days. "With the blessings of my fans, my parents and God, I am doing better now. I was hit by a bullet, which has now been removed. "I thank the doctor here, Dr. Agarwal ji. I thank all of you for your prayers," the "Hero No 1" actor and a member of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena said in the audio message. According to the doctor, the bullet hit him below his left knee and that he had got 8-10 stitches. "He came to me at 5 am. His daughter and I brought him to the hospital later. He had an X-ray there following which he underwent the operation. "The bullet was stuck, we have removed it. He was bleeding, but it stopped later. He is comfortable now. He will be in the hospital for one-two days. He got 8-10 stitches, otherwise everything is ok." **-PTI**

Shah uses emotions to energise dejected BJP workers

SAYS IN 2029 THE BJP SHALL FORM THE GOVERNMENT IN THE STATE ON ITS OWN

Mumbai: In what appears to be a last-ditch attempt to mobilise party organisation, Union home minister Amit Shah made emotive appeals to his party workers as he addressed zonal gatherings of BJP workers at Dadar and Vashi on Tuesday. While reminding the party workers of the past when elections were fought with strong determination even while defeats were certain, Shah also appealed to party workers to brush off negative thoughts and work for the elections with a confidence that the party will be

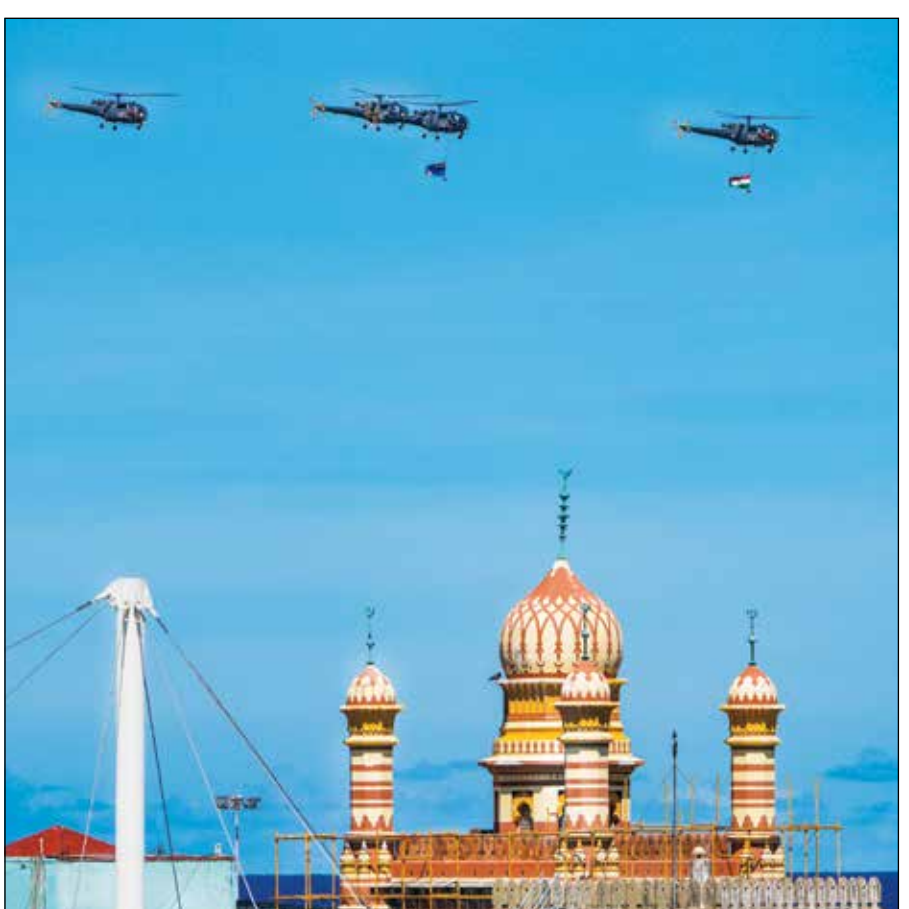


victorious. "The government that works, wins elections," Shah reportedly said. "We have formed the third government in a row at the centre. So brush off any negative thoughts, don't bother about any surveys," Shah told the party workers and added that he is very confident that the Mahayuti shall form the next government in the state. He also told the party workers that though it will be a Mahayuti government now, in 2029 the BJP shall form the government in the state on its own. He also said

that Uniform Civil Code is certain if the party returns to power in Maharashtra. "Our victory is ensured if people come out to vote in large numbers. No party in the state has the power to stop Mahayuti from returning to power," he said. Shah also reminded the party workers that BJP is the party based on strong ideology and said that construction of Ram Mandir and abrogation of article 370 were the examples of that. He also reiterated that if the party returns to power in Maharashtra that shall make it easier for the union government to bring in the uniform civil code.

98 pc of Rs 2,000 notes returned

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India on Tuesday said 98 per cent of the Rs 2,000 denomination notes have been returned since its May 2023 move to withdraw the currency notes. The total value of notes of the denomination has reduced to Rs 7,117 crore from the Rs 3.56 lakh crore on May 19, 2023, the central bank said. "98 per cent of the Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation as on May 19, 2023, has since been returned," the RBI said. On May 19, 2023, the RBI announced a surprise decision to withdraw the Rs 2,000 currency notes. The move was prompted on quality concerns and the denomination introduced after the demonetisation of November 2016 fulfilling its purpose. The central bank said Rs 2,000 notes continue to be legal tender and can be exchanged at 19 issue offices of the RBI. **-PTI**



Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopters fly past during rehearsal for an air show as part of the upcoming 92nd Indian Air Force Day at Marina Beach in Chennai on Tuesday. **Pic: PTI**



A voter turnout of 65.48 per cent was recorded till 5 pm in the third and final phase of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections on Tuesday. **Pic: PTI**

Seven years later, CBI files closure report in NDTV case

By Abhishek Shukla

New Delhi: The CBI on Tuesday filed a closure report in a case of alleged cheating against former NDTV promoters and directors Pranjoy Roy and Radhika Roy as it could not find legally tenable evidence in the Rs 48 crore loss incurred by ICICI Bank in the settlement of a loan in 2009, officials said. The case was initiated in 2017 when the CBI registered an FIR based on a complaint from an individual, Sanjay Dutt, of Quantum Securities Ltd who alleged that RRPR Holdings



Pvt Ltd, associated with the Roys, had taken a Rs 500 crore loan from India Bulls Pvt Limited to acquire a 20 per cent stake in NDTV through a public open offer. According to the FIR, RRPR Holdings also took out a Rs 375 crore loan (with Rs 350 crore disbursed) from ICICI Bank at an interest rate of 19 per cent per annum to repay the loan from India Bulls. The complaint alleged

that the Roys pledged their entire shareholding as collateral for this loan, failing to report the pledging to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), stock exchanges, or the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. In 2022, the Adani Group acquired a controlling stake in NDTV, purchasing shares from the Roys at a premium of nearly 17 per cent over the price paid to minority shareholders. After more than seven years of investigation, the CBI has now filed a closure report with a special court, which will determine whether to accept the re-

port or instruct the agency to continue its probe. NDTV, following searches conducted on June 5, 2017, stated that the Rs 375 crore loan from ICICI Bank, which it was accused of defaulting on, had been repaid over seven years ago. The company also asserted that the allegation of failing to disclose the pledging of shares to SEBI was "incorrect and false". "NDTV and its promoters have never defaulted on any loan to ICICI or any other bank. We adhere to the highest levels of integrity and independence," the company had emphasised. **-PTI**

Minority Tale of Two DCMs

One accuses, another appeases

Fadnavis says more than one lakh complaints of love jihad

THE LEADER SAYS 14 LS SEATS WITNESSED VOTE JIHAD

By Correspondent

Mumbai: More than one lakh complaints have highlighted a deliberate "love jihad" conspiracy wherein Hindu women were being lured into marriage by men using fake identities, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said.

Targeting opposition Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi, Fadnavis claimed "vote jihad" was witnessed in 14 of 48 constituencies in Maharashtra in recent Lok Sabha elections. Addressing a public event in Kolhapur city on Monday evening, Fadnavis pointed out instances wherein women were tricked into inter-faith marriage and subsequently abandoned after they gave birth to children.

Fadnavis' remarks drew sharp reactions from Congress which accused him of violating the Constitutional oath and demanded an apology. "A decade ago, we used to think that love jihad talk was a one-off incident. We thought it was not a conspiracy. We have now observed that there have been more than one

lakh complaints where Hindu women are lured into marriage by running away with men from different faiths," said Fadnavis, who handles the state Home ministry.

Love 'Jihad' is an unofficial term used by Hindu groups to refer to an alleged campaign by Muslim men to convert Hindu girls under the pretext of love and marriage. Fadnavis clarified that he was not against inter-faith marriages.

"However, in many cases, individuals have used fake identities and provided false information about themselves for marriage. These individuals have also abandoned their spouses after they have had children together," the senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said. "This is not an act of love, but it is a deliberate conspiracy, and it is love jihad. It is a way of cheating and spoiling women from our religion," Fadnavis said.

The BJP leader raked up "vote jihad" and referenced the outcome in the Dhule Lok Sabha constituency where the MVA candidate emerged victorious

on account of "en masse voting in the Malegaon Central assembly segment against the BJP nominee in the fray".

"Vote jihad was seen in Lok Sabha elections. In the Dhule constituency, the BJP candidate led with 1.90 lakh votes in five assembly seats. However, our candidate trailed by 1.94 lakh votes because of voting in the Malegaon Central assembly segment, losing the election by just 4,000 votes," Fadnavis said.

The poll outcome notwithstanding, the real concern is the growing confidence of some people who think if they can vote in large numbers they can defeat Hindutva forces, even though they are a minority in absolute numbers, he said.

This is the time to awaken, Fadnavis added.

"Out of 48 Lok Sabha constituencies (in Maharashtra), 14 seats witnessed vote jihad. Hindu religion never disrespected other faiths; tolerance is in our blood. I call for the need to awaken Hindutva if someone is voting for



electing anti-Hindu leaders to top posts," the former chief minister said. Fadnavis also expressed concerns over the "secret" conversion of Hindus to other faiths.

"In certain cases, people have Indian names. But after they die, they are buried and a cross is installed.

The major threat before us is that the number of certain religions looks smaller on paper, but in reality, more people have



Ajit will reserve 10 pc poll seats for minority

Yatra, Pawar said women beneficiaries of the "Mukhyamantri Mazi Ladki Bahin Yojana" scheme will receive Rs 3,000 for October and November before the model code of conduct kicks in.

"I want to tell the minority community. We have decided to allot 10 per cent of the seats to be contested by the NCP to minority (candidates)," Pawar said.

Pawar's assurance on representing the minority community (read Muslims) at the hustings comes a day after senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis claimed "vote jihad" was witnessed in 14 of 48 constituencies in Maharashtra in recent Lok Sabha elections.

Fadnavis attributed the defeat of the BJP candidate from the Dhule constituency to the "vote jihad".

Stressing that he believes in all religions and is a follower of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, and B.R. Ambedkar, Pawar expressed displeasure over some motormouth leaders criticising a section of society.

been converted secretly. We need to awaken and protect our religion," he said.

The Sakal Hindu Samaj had organised huge rallies across the state after the killing of Shradha Walkar, a resident of Vasai, by Aaftab Poonawala last year demanding strict action in the cases pertaining to Love Jihad.

Fadnavis' mention of one lakh complaints of Love Jihad cases is likely to revoke the sentiments

against the heinous crimes again.

Congress strikes back

Responding to Fadnavis' remarks, Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole said, "Fadnavis is weak in history. There were Muslim warriors in Shivaji Maharaj's army. He should apologise," Patole said.

Leader of the opposition Vijay Wadetiwar, suggested that Fadnavis' remarks are politically motivated.

Beed: The Nationalist Congress Party will allot 10 per cent of seats from its quota to candidates from the minority community in the Maharashtra assembly polls Deputy CM Ajit Pawar said.

Notably, the Mahayuti alliance of Shiv Sena, BJP, and NCP suffered a drubbing in the recent Lok Sabha elections, with the Ajit Pawar-led party losing three of the four constituencies it had contested.

Addressing Jan Sanman

CRIME WATCH

Man attacks patient in hospital

Thane: A 42-year-old man, accused of attacking a woman constable at a police station, allegedly attacked another person after being taken to a hospital in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Tuesday. The accused, Babasaheb Sonawane, had slashed his neck before going to Vitthalwadi police station on September 26. At the police station, he allegedly attacked a woman constable with a blade, an official said. Both the injured constable and accused were then rushed to a hospital and a case was registered against the latter. During his treatment at the hospital on September 28, the accused allegedly flung a metal chair on another patient 28-year-old patient who was on an adjacent bed and injured him, the official from Central police station in Ulhasnagar said.

POCSO case accused found dead

Mumbai: The body of a 25-year-old man booked in a POCSO case was found in a parked auto-rickshaw in Bhandup on Tuesday, police said. The body of the deceased, identified as Vijay Goud, was spotted by residents of Konkan Nagar locality in the morning who informed the police, an officer said. According to police, no injury marks were found on Goud's body and the exact cause of his death is under investigation.

"Three cases were registered against Goud including voluntarily causing hurt under section 324 of IPC and provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act," he said. Police registered an accidental death report after Goud's body was found and investigating.

Five booked for sexual harassment

Thane: A case has been registered against five persons for allegedly sexually harassing a 35-year-old woman at a restaurant and bar in Thane, police said on Tuesday. Police on Monday registered a case in connection with the incident that occurred at an establishment in the Majiwada area on September 21, an officer said. A group of persons were dancing when five men, one of them a doctor, touched the woman inappropriately, he said. No arrests have been made so far, the officer said.



Members of Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) with farmers during a protest rally led by Congress leader Praniti Shinde for various demands in Solapur on Tuesday. Pic: PTI

'Rajyamata-Gomata' decision aimed at garnering votes: Congress

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Congress on Tuesday alleged the Maharashtra government's decision to declare desi cows "Rajyamata-Gomata" was aimed at attracting votes for the upcoming assembly polls.

The Eknath Shinde-led government, on Monday, declared indigenous cows as 'Rajyamata-Gomata' for their conservation, citing

the importance of cows in Indian culture, agriculture, and healthcare.

"They (the BJP) take money from beef merchants and declare cow as 'Rajyamata' on the eve of elections. Gomata was dying of thirst in Marathwada, and now she is being given the 'Rajyamata' tag on the eve of elections. This is done to attract votes ahead of the state polls," the leader of the op-

position in the Maharashtra assembly, Vijay Wadetiwar, alleged while speaking to reporters.

The Congress leader also said the seat-sharing talks are progressing positively.

The Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi - comprising Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress, and the NCP (SP) - is expected to declare candidates for 180-200 seats by Dussehra.

Food poison: 38 children hospitalised

Thane: As many as 38 children fell ill and were hospitalised on Tuesday for suspected food poisoning after they ate a mid-day meal at a private school at Kalwa.

The children, aged between 8 and 11 years, were admitted to the civic hospital in Kalwa town after they complained of giddiness, nausea, headache and pain in the abdomen after lunch, according to medical officials at the hospital.

Death for man who cooked mother's ribs

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Tuesday confirmed the death penalty imposed by a Kolhapur court on a man for killing his mother in 2017 and allegedly eating some of the body parts, noting this was a case of cannibalism.

A division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan said it was confirming the death penalty on the convict - Sunil Kuchkoravi - and

Chakravarti is survived by his wife and seven-year-old daughter, the official said. A case of accidental death was registered, he said.

The 'Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu', also known as the Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link (MTHL), that connects south Mumbai with the satellite city of Navi Mumbai, was inaugurated in January this year. The six-lane bridge is 21.8 km long with a 16.5 km sea link.

Atal Setu jump: Body of banker recovered

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The body of a 40-year-old banker who jumped off the trans-harbour Atal Setu was found washed up on the seashore in Navi Mumbai on Tuesday, police said.

Sushant Chakravarti, a deputy manager with a nationalised bank, parked his SUV on the bridge at Sewri and jumped into the sea on Monday morning, an official said.

Chakravarti's wife said

he worked at the bank's Fort branch in south Mumbai and claimed he had work pressure. A search and rescue operation was launched, and the Sewri police traced the family based on the vehicle's numberplate, senior inspector Rohit Khot of Sewri police station said.

On Tuesday, the police were informed that a body had washed up on the shore at JNPT in Navi Mumbai, and it was identified, he said.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"RPI (A) should get eight to 10 seats. I have faith in our alliance partners, BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP. The RPI (A) has a separate vote bank, and several people from the Dalit community are with the party, so we should get a part in the seat sharing."

Ramdas Athawale, President, RPI (A)



Sawant accused of pressuring officials to favour contractors

By Sham Deulkar

Mumbai: The alleged high handedness of Health Minister Tanaji Sawant has once again come to fore as he has reportedly pressurised the officials to procure huge quantities of medicine from selected companies for the ESIS hospital. The entire tender process is allegedly being done by going out of the way and violating the prescribed norms.

There are 20 ESIS Hospitals in the state. Its head-



75
No of medicines worth Rs. 125 crore must be purchased from those contractors, according to Sawant

quarters is at Lower Parel. Medicines are being ordered after every three months. Every time, 300 different types of medicines

August 7 - Rs 26 crore work order was issued for a stock till December 2024

September 18 - Dr. Alankar Khanvilkar, Medical Director of Workers Insurance Hospital, was transferred. He allegedly refused to budge before the pressure to cancel this order. His charge was given to Dr. Shashikant Kolnurkar

September 19 - All administrative work orders were stopped

September 23 - All orders were cancelled
September 24 - Health Minister Tanaji Sawant held a meeting at the Commissionerate in Lower Parel and instructed to fill up the medicines stock. The source said that action has been initiated as per the minister's instruction

worth Rs 18 to 20 crores are ordered. This time the quantity has been exorbitantly increased following

the instructions by the Health Minister, a source said.

"A senior official in the

Companies in favourite list

- Tablets India Ltd.
- Bajaj Healthcare Ltd.
- Hindustan Laboratories
- Zim Laboratories Ltd.
- Johnson & Johnson Pvt Ltd.

department opposed this tender process," the source said. "The official registered his protest about this purchase. Furious, the Minister shunted out the official. After this action this purchase process was started with the help of junior officials."

The tenure of 10 out of 12 contractors is about to end on October 31. Sawant allegedly pressured the officials to award the contract to these contractors. "It clearly indicates that there is huge corruption in the whole process," the source said.

Badlapur Sexual Assault Case

No pre-arrest bail to school trustees

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Tuesday refused pre-arrest bail to the chairman and secretary of a school in Badlapur where two minor girls were sexually assaulted by a male attendant.

A single bench of Justice R.N. Laddha said prima facie there is material to show the two accused were aware of the alleged incident before August 16 but they failed to take any steps to report the same to police or local authority.

Justice Laddha further said the offence is serious and the court has to consider the plight of the minor victims.

"The victims are minors. The trauma that they have endured can profoundly affect their adolescent years leaving them with lasting psychological scars," the court said.

It is undisputed that applicants are persons responsible for managing the school, the court held.

"There is prima facie material indicating that the victims parents' had voiced their grievances to the class teacher and other staff members. The applicants were aware of the incident before August 16. Despite having knowledge, they did not report the incident to police," the HC said.

The bench said the delay in lodging of the case was "primarily because of ap-

HC RAPS POLICE FOR INABILITY TO NAB SCHOOL TRUSTEES

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday gave an earful to the Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing the Badlapur school sexual assault case, for its inability to apprehend the two accused school trustees.

A division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan questioned as to how the police, that usually go to any extent to nab an accused, are unable to arrest them in this case. The court in August took suo motu (on its own) cognisance of the case. Two girls - aged four and five - were sexually assaulted inside the



washroom of a school in Badlapur town of Maharashtra's Thane district by a male attendant. The accused, Akshay Shinde, was subsequently arrested. He was killed by police in a shoot-out on September 23. The Maharashtra government in August said an SIT, headed by

an Inspector General of Police-rank officer, will probe the alleged sexual abuse of two girl students of the school in Badlapur. Two trustees of the school - the chairman and secretary - were also named as accused in the case. The duo has been booked under various provisions of the

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act for not reporting the incident to the police immediately and negligence.

Advocate General Birendra Saraf informed the bench that the two accused are still absconding and have not been apprehended.

The duo has filed for anticipatory bail in the HC. "The police goes to any extent to nab an accused. How come they have not been able to apprehend these two? Are they waiting for them to get anticipatory bail?" the court said.

The court posted the matter for further hearing on October 23.

licants' negligence for reasons known only to them."

There is a legal obligation on persons to report the offence if they are aware or made aware of it, it added.

The court further said the CCTV footage of the school premises from the day of incident is missing.

The HC referred to provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and also judgments passed by the Supreme Court, which

cast a duty and obligation on a person to promptly report to police any sexual assault offence once they are made aware of the same.

"This duty is not merely a procedure that can be overlooked. The repercussion or failure to report such offences are serious," the HC said.

It said courts must exercise caution while dealing with matters where schools or educational institutions have failed to report sexual offences

against minors. The two accused moved the HC seeking pre-arrest bail after a sessions court rejected their plea for the same.

They claimed that they were unaware of the alleged offence and hence cannot be held liable for it.

The duo further claimed there had been an unexplained delay in lodging of the FIR.

They also raised suspicion on whether the incident took place, claiming the two victims had attend-

ed the flag-hoisting ceremony in the school on August 15 and no complaint was raised then.

Public Prosecutor Hiten Venegaonkar opposed the plea, noting the accused had not taken prompt action after being informed about the incident. They failed to take immediate action, he said.

The two accused have been booked under various provisions of the POCSO Act for not reporting the incident to police immediately and negligence.



Shah asks BJP leaders to iron out differences

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Union minister Amit Shah on Tuesday asked BJP leaders and workers in Maharashtra to resolve internal differences ahead of the assembly elections in the state.

In his third visit to Maharashtra in a fortnight, Shah held a meeting with Bharatiya Janata Party MLAs and a select group of party workers here.

Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, state BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule and the party's Mumbai unit head Ashish Shelar were present at the meeting in Dadar where Shah addressed the gathering.

He asked party workers to iron out internal differences before the elections that are expected to be held in November, BJP sources said.

"There are differences of opinion even in a family. If there is disappointment about an MLA or Member of Parliament, an amicable solution should be found so

that voters remain with the party," Shah was quoted as saying.

He asked local leaders to appoint ten workers for every polling booth. These workers should remain active within the booth jurisdiction from Dussehra until the last day of the campaign, Shah said.

"An organisation where workers function in different directions never succeeds. We need to address these differences before the elections," Shah stressed. "The state BJP unit will draw up a plan ahead of the polls. Party workers should reach out up to the ward level and it will ensure our victory," he said.

The senior BJP leader also asked workers to refrain from seeking votes when enrolling new party members.

"Do not ask new members to vote for the BJP when registering. Once they become members, they will realise the importance of voting. Party workers should aspire to

add 20 new voters in every booth," he said.

"There are certain types of tasks which no one wants to undertake. However, a loyal party worker is one who takes up such critical tasks and completes them. Disagreement takes place when people start working together. We should be able to overcome our such disagreements," Shah was further quoted as saying.

The BJP is part of the ruling Mahayuti alliance in the state that also includes the Shiv Sena and NCP.

Last month Shah visited the Vidarbha region where he engaged with party workers and local legislators, and also North Maharashtra, Marathwada and Western Maharashtra.

In 2019, the BJP had won 105 out of the 164 assembly seats it contested in Maharashtra. It had a pre-poll alliance with the undivided Shiv Sena then. Of 36 assembly seats in Mumbai, the saffron party had won 16.

Accused of attacking woman cop, assaults another policeman

Thane: A 42-year-old man accused of attacking a woman constable in a police station in the district and then a patient at a hospital has again attacked another police personnel, an officer said on Tuesday.

Babasaheb Sonawane, who himself was undergoing treatment at Central Hospital in Ulhasnagar, allegedly attacked a policeman on guard duty on Monday.

As the policeman was preparing his discharge papers, Sonawane accosted him and asked whether he was preparing his (Son-

awane's) death certificate before hitting him on the head, said senior inspector Shankar Awtade of Central Police Station.

A fresh First Information Report -- third in the last one week -- was registered against him under sections 132 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of duty) and 118(1) (voluntarily causing hurt or grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Sonawane was first arrested when he barged into Vitthalwadi police

station in Thane district on September 26 and allegedly attacked a woman constable with a sharp weapon, injuring her badly. Before that, he had inflicted injuries on himself, police said.

He was then admitted to hospital. On September 28, he allegedly flung an iron stool at the 28-year-old patient lying on an adjacent bed.

The victim, a shopkeeper, received injuries on his forehead, jaws and nose, and also lost two teeth. The accused has been now shifted to jail, inspector Awtade said.



Police personnel detain activists during a protest by members of Youth Congress against SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch, outside SEBI office in Mumbai on Monday.

Uddhav Sena to hold job fair

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Shiv Sena (UBT) has organised a 'Mega Job Fair' at Vile Parle-East on Saturday. The party chief Uddhav Thackeray will inaugurate the job fair. MLA Aaditya Thackeray will be the chief guest.

MLC Anil Parab said, "The Mega Job Fair is being held to fulfill his promise given to voters during

Mumbai Graduates Elections. About 130 companies from logistics, banking, insurance, BPO, hospitality, finance, education, construction, information technology, industry sectors will participate in this Job Fair.

They include renowned companies like Amazon, Hinduja, HDFC, SBI, Bajaj, Tata AIG, Airtel, ICC Lombard etc."

Girl killed as dumper crashes

Mumbai: A 13-year-old girl on way to school was killed while her father suffered injuries when a speeding dumper knocked them down in Mumbai on Tuesday morning, a police officer said.

The incident took place on Film City Road in Goregaon area at 6.45 am. Some locals later caught hold of the dumper driver.

Man gets back bag of valuables

Thane: Police have managed to trace a bag containing US dollars and other items valued at Rs 4.74 lakh left behind in a local train by a 44-year-old man after he arrived in India from the United States.

Anthony D'Costa, whose family resides at Neral in Raigad district, arrived in India on September 29. He had been traveling with three pieces of lug-

gage on a local train.

While disembarking at Neral, he managed to carry two bags with him but inadvertently left behind the third, which contained various items, including three passports, USD 4,900 and an iPhone.

Upon realising his mistake, D'Costa quickly called the railway helpline to report the matter.

The train had already

reached Karjat and was enroute back to CSMT when the call came in, Kalyan Government Railway Police's senior inspector Pandhari Kande said.

The police at Badlapur were subsequently alerted. They promptly boarded the train and searched compartments two and four, eventually locating the bag during the train's journey to Ambarnath.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Garba is a form of worship and not just a dance program or even a cultural event. Hence, people who do not have faith in Goddess Bhagwati should not go to such programmes."

Govind Shende, Secretary, VHP



Mumbai hopes to halt Bengaluru's winning streak

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Mumbai City FC will host high-flying Bengaluru FC at the Mumbai Football Arena in their Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 fixture on Wednesday.

The Blues are unbeaten in their three games so far, collecting all nine points possible and sitting at the top of the points table. Contrastingly, the Islanders are still chasing their first win of the campaign, having drawn and lost

once each in their two games so far.

The Islanders are often a force to reckon in their backyard, having netted in each of their last eight matches at home. If they score against Bengaluru FC, Mumbai City FC will equal their longest such run in the league (nine games from October 2022-February 2023).

Interestingly, they have notched over two strikes and won each of their last three encounters against Bengaluru FC.

Indian Super League

Bengaluru FC have scored 33.33 per cent of their goals in the ISL in 2024 in the opening 15 minutes of the games.

This is the highest such rate for any team in the league in the aforementioned time period, showing that the Islanders' backline will have to be on their toes right from kick-off. Since the beginning of the calendar year, Mumbai City FC have netted

only 8.8 per cent of goals in the first 15 minutes of the matches.

Mumbai City FC head coach Petr Kratky is working towards fixing his team's backline to avoid conceding strikes from set-pieces. He has stressed upon getting down to the core of the issue and resolving it for a better outcome against the Blues.

"We need to get better in the area where it's hurting

us. And we have to stop it as soon as possible because, in two games, we conceded five goals and four goals from set-pieces, which is unacceptable for me," Kratky said.

He added, "We have to keep working and keep going. We need to analyse, and identify what's (going) wrong and have to find why. The 'why' is very important. If we know why we're conceding, why we're losing, or why we're not getting the points, then we can figure out

what to fix. So, this is our and my first goal."

The two teams have played 16 matches in the ISL. Mumbai City FC have won eight times, whereas Bengaluru FC have emerged victorious seven times, with one match resulting in a draw.

Sunil Chhetri has scored nine goals against Mumbai City FC in the ISL. One more strike will make him the first Indian to net 10 times against a single opponent in the competition.

Dumping probe on six products imported from China



New Delhi: India has initiated a probe into alleged dumping of as many as six products, including certain chemicals, and cold rolled electrical steel and black toner powder cartridge, imported from China following separate complaints from domestic players.

The commerce ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) is probing the dumping of 1,1,1,2-Tetrafluoroethane or R-134a; Acrylonitrile

Butadiene Rubber; certain Antioxidants; polytetrafluoroethylene; black toner powder cartridge; and cold rolled non-oriented electrical steel from China.

According to six separate notifications, the applicants have alleged that material injury is being caused to the domestic industry due to the dumped imports of these products originating in or exported from China into India.

They have requested for

imposition of anti-dumping duty on these imports with a view to guard them from cheap imports.

SRF Ltd has filed an application for initiation of an anti-dumping investigation on the imports of 'R134a', primarily used as a high-temperature refrigerant for automobile air conditioners.

Apcoex Industries Ltd has filed the application for starting the probe on imports of Acrylonitrile Butadiene Rubber from China, the European Union, Korea and Russia. It is used in the oil and gas sector besides the auto segment as it is resistant to various chemicals and can withstand extreme temperatures.

Similarly, Vinati Organics Ltd has approached the DGTR for initiation of the anti-dumping investigation on certain antioxidants from China and Singapore. It is majorly used in petro-

chemical companies producing plastics.

The request application for dumping probe on polytetrafluoroethylene (used in electronic, mechanical and chemicals industries) imports was filed by Gujarat Fluorochemicals Ltd.

"The applicant has alleged that dumped imports of the subject goods from China and Singapore are causing material injury... and has requested for the imposition of anti-dumping duty on the import," the DGTR has said.

Further Indrayani Sales has filed an application before the directorate seeking initiation of an anti-dumping investigation on black toner powder cartridge originating in or exported from China.

The anti-dumping probe application on the cold-rolled electrical steel imported from China was filed

India has already imposed anti-dumping duty on several products to tackle cheap imports from various countries, including China. India and China both are members of the WTO. China is the second largest trading partner of India. The country has time and again flagged serious concerns over the widening trade deficit with the neighbouring country, which stood at USD 85 billion in 2023-24.

by POSCO Maharashtra Steel and CSCI Steel Corporation India.

On the basis of the duly substantiated written applications submitted by the applicants and "having reached satisfaction based on the prima facie" evidences submitted by the applicants concerning the dumping of these products, "the Authority, hereby, initiates an anti-dumping" investigations, the DGTR has said.

If it is established that these dumpings have caused material injury to domestic players, the DGTR would recommend the imposition of anti-dumping duty on these imports. The finance ministry takes the final decision to impose these duties.

HAL delivers first AL-31FP aero engine

Bengaluru: Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has handed over the first AL-31FP Aero Engine, manufactured under the 240 engine contract, to the Indian Air Force at Koraput in Odisha.

The contract for 240 AL-31FP Aero Engines for Su-30MKI aircraft was signed on September nine, Bengaluru-headquartered HAL noted in a statement on Tuesday, adding, these engines would be delivered in eight years.

The statement said Secretary (Defence Production) Sanjeev Kumar lauded HAL's efforts in delivering the first engine within weeks of signing the contract.

"This key milestone reflects HAL's aero engine manufacturing competency and dedication to support the Su-30MKI fleet of IAF. It is very heartening to see that Koraput Division has mastered cutting edge technologies of aero engine manufacturing and has set up required infrastructure to match with the global OEMs," he said.

HAL CMD D.K. Sunil said: "During this entire engine manufacturing process, we aim to engage Indian industries from present level of work share from 40 per cent to more than 50 per cent in next two-three years and help in employment generation."

Sukhoi Engine Division, Koraput, was created by HAL for manufacture of engines of Su-30MKI aircraft from raw material stage to final engine, it was noted.

SEBI issues Rs 1-cr demand notices to Dhoot

New Delhi: Capital markets regulator Sebi has sent demand notices to industrialist Venugopal Dhoot and two other entities, asking them to pay nearly Rs 1.03 crore for insider trading activities in the shares of Videocon Industries.

The regulator has warned Venugopal Dhoot of arrest and attachment of his bank accounts and assets as well as other entities if they fail to make the payment within 15 days.

Apart from Dhoot, the other two entities who have been sent notices are Electroparts (India) Pvt Ltd and Videocon Realty and Infrastructures.

The demand notices came after these entities, including Dhoot, failed to pay the fine imposed on them by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in September 2021.

In the event of non-payment of dues, the market watchdog will recover the amount by attaching and selling the moveable and immovable properties of these entities, the regulator said in three separate notices.

Besides, they face attachment of their bank accounts and detention.

In September 2021, SEBI slapped penalties totalling Rs 75 lakh on industrialist Dhoot for insider trading in the securities of Videocon Industries.

Besides Dhoot, who was the managing director of the company, the markets watchdog slapped penalties on the company's two promoters Electroparts (India) and Videocon Realty and



Infrastructures.

Electroparts (India), formerly known as Shree Dhoot Trading and Agencies.

The violations of insider trading norms happened in 2017.

SEBI found that Videocon Realty and Infrastructures, Electroparts (India), and Dhoot being insiders had executed market transactions while in possession of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI).

The investigation in the scrip of Videocon was carried out in April-September 2017.

The information with respect to the classification of Videocon's loan account as NPA by Dena Bank was likely to materially affect the share prices of Videocon Industries and it was considered as UPSI.

The period of UPSI was March 1, 2017, to May 9, 2017. The two promoter entities had either pledged their shares or transferred their shares of Videocon Industries to other entities during the UPSI period.

The authorised representative, Venugopal Dhoot was an insider and traded on behalf of the two promoter companies who were also insiders during the UPSI period. -PTI

Skoda Auto partners with coffee planters

Initiates direct supply of Indian coffee in European markets

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Skoda Auto Volkswagen India (SAVWIPL) on Tuesday said it has partnered with coffee planters in Coorg, Karnataka to launch the 'Curiosity Fuel' project, an initiative to supply Indian coffee directly in the European markets.

The company has supplied nearly 25 tonnes of Coorg coffee to its facilities across the Czech Republic, according to a statement.

India is the world's eighth-largest coffee producer with an export value of close to USD 1.25 billion. Recognising India's rich coffee heritage, the brand strategically chose to directly source the coffee and, in turn, support family-owned coffee farms in Coorg, Karnataka.

The initiative is redefining the coffee supply chain by directly engaging with local farmers and eliminating multiple intermediaries, the company said.

"By bridging the gap between Coorg's coffee planters and our global operations, we're fostering community development.



Piyush Arora, Managing Director and CEO, Skoda Auto Volkswagen India

"This initiative exemplifies our belief that true progress in the automotive sector must encompass environmental responsibility and community empowerment. It is about creating a symbiotic relationship between our industry and India's rich agricultural heritage," Skoda Auto Volkswagen India Managing Director and CEO Piyush Arora said.

Inflation in Europe falls below 2 pc

Frankfurt: Oct 1 (AP) Inflation in the 20 countries that use the euro fell to 1.8 per cent in September, below the European Central Bank's target of 2 per cent for the first time in more than three years as falling energy prices give consumers relief from a burst of inflation that at one point reached into double digits.

Tuesday's official figure coupled with an anemic growth outlook could pave the way for faster interest rate cuts from the ECB, which has already trimmed rates twice.

Inflation fell from 2.2 per cent in August, according to European Union statistics agency Eurostat. The last time inflation hit the ECB's 2 per cent goal was in June, 2021 when it was 1.9 per cent.

Economists have started to consider the possibility of a rate cut at the bank's October 17 meeting. A few weeks ago, the expectations were that the central bank would wait until December before lowering borrowing costs again for consumers and businesses.

-AP



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during the handing over ceremony of an ambulance van and a hearse van to Office of the DGP, Itanagar under CSR activity of SBI.

Pic: PTI

FM appeals to adopt cluster development

Itanagar: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday advised the Arunachal Pradesh government to adopt the cluster development approach as a key strategy for enhancing productivity and competitiveness as well as capacity building of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in the state.

Addressing a credit outreach programme organised by the State Bank of India here, she said that

Arunachal Pradesh does not have even a single cluster announced by the MSME ministry till date.

"I request Chief Minister Pema Khandu to take up cluster development approach of the 20 GI-identified products in the state. In small places such clusters could be declared by the ministry and Small Industrial Development Bank of India (SIDBI) could be roped in to finance such enterprises," the FM said.

A cluster is a group of enterprises located within an identifiable and as far as practicable, contiguous area and producing same and similar products and services.

The MSME ministry has adopted the cluster development approach to help MSEs become more competitive and productive. The approach includes establishing common facility centres to support the growth of MSEs.

The essential characteristics of enterprises in a cluster are similarity in the methods of production, quality control and testing, energy consumption, pollution control; similar level of technology and marketing strategies and practices, similar channels for communication among the members of the cluster, common market and skill needs and common challenges and opportunities that the cluster faces. -PTI

'AI Express-AIX Connect merger important milestone

New Delhi: The merger of AIX Connect with Air India Express is an important milestone in the transformation journey of Air India Group and the merged entity will cater to the growing air travel demand, Campbell Wilson said on Tuesday.

Wilson is the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Air India as well as the Chairman of Air India Express.

Aviation regulator DGCA has approved the merger of AIX Connect with Air India

Express, which will now focus on future growth and transformation agenda, according to a release.

The merged entity will operate under the 'Air India Express' name and a unified airline code 'IX'.

With the merger completed, Air India Express will focus on a future growth and transformation agenda.

"About a year ago, we started the integration of AIX Connect and Air India Express, bringing the two organisations together be-



hind a common brand.

"Alongside, we worked on the complex integration exercise culminating today in the operational and legal merger of the two organisations," Air India Express Managing Director Alok

Singh said.

Wilson said the integration of AIX Connect with Air India Express is an important milestone in Air India's Vihaan.ai transformation journey and that the merged entity will cater

to the growing demand for air travel around India and in the region.

The merged entity's fleet, which currently stands at 88 planes, is expected to cross 100 aircraft by the end of this financial year.

"The number of routes AIX operates has risen from 74 to 171, and passenger carriage has increased by over 400 per cent since the take over of Air India by Tata group in early 2022," the release by Air India Group said.

The merger involved

harmonisation of operational manuals across the two low cost carriers, transfer of aircraft, besides operational, safety and maintenance approvals.

Singh also said the close collaboration amongst DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation), BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security) and the civil aviation ministry, AIX and group leadership teams and many other colleagues were instrumental in the success of the merger exercise. -PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The industrial sector in India is growing fast, it is something people have been unnecessarily criticising. India can aim at 9 per cent plus growth. We have wiped out the effect of Covid."



B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, CEO, NITI Aayog

Pleas against Wangchuk's detention

Police inquiry at Isha Foundation

The activist begins fast in police station, politics in full swing

New Delhi: Petitions were filed in the Delhi High Court on Tuesday against the detention of climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and several others at the Delhi border.

A habeas corpus petition was mentioned before a bench of Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela for listing on October 3 by a lawyer for Wangchuk's "next friend".

The court agreed to list it on that day if the plea is in order, saying that it has already allowed a request for listing in another petition concerning the detention.

A habeas corpus petition is filed seeking direction to produce a person who is missing or illegally detained.

Two other writ petitions, filed by social activist Azad, who said that he works closely with Wangchuk and the Leh Apex Body, and lawyer Mustafa Haji, the legal advisor to the Body, also assailed the order of the Delhi



Police prohibiting assembly of five or more "unauthorised" people as well as protests in various parts of the capital, including the border, from September 30 to October 5.

Haji's petition was mentioned for listing before the Chief Justice's bench by lawyer Vikram Hegde before

it rose for a lunch break.

Refusing to list the matter today itself, the court agreed to list it for hearing on October 3, if it is in order by 3.30 pm.

The two petitions seek an order directing the release of those detained as well as permission for the group to peacefully enter Delhi to

raise their concerns.

Around 120 people from Ladakh, including Wangchuk, have allegedly been detained at the Delhi border by police while marching to the capital to demand sixth schedule status for Ladakh.

The sixth schedule pertains to the administration of tribal areas in the states

Wangchuk, others launch indefinite fast

Sonam Wangchuk and several others who were detained at the Delhi border while marching to the capital to demand Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh on Tuesday launched an indefinite fast at police stations where they have been kept.

Wangchuk and those accompanying him were detained at the Delhi border for violating prohibitory orders and were taken to different police stations, including Bawana, Narela Industrial Area and Alipur, according to a police officer.

"We tried to convince them to go back as Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) (which prohibits assembly of five or more people) is imposed in the national capital but they were adamant," the officer said.

They remain under detention, he said.

A representative of the group claimed that Wangchuk was taken to Bawana police station and was not being allowed to meet his lawyers.

of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram as "autonomous districts and autonomous regions".

The march was organised by the Leh Apex Body, which along with the Kargil Democratic Alliance, has been spearheading an agitation for the last four years to demand statehood for Ladakh, seek its inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, early recruitment process and a public service commission, and separate Lok Sabha seats for Leh and Kargil districts.

Extreme hypocrisy: BJP

The BJP on Tuesday described the Congress' condemnation of the detention of Sonam Wangchuk and several other Ladakhis as "hypocrisy in extreme".

Wangchuk and more than 100 people from Ladakh who had marched to Delhi demanding that the union territory be included in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution were detained at the capital's border on Monday for violating prohibitory orders and taken to different police stations.

The Congress on Tuesday slammed the Centre over the detention of Wangchuk and others with Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi terming it "unacceptable" and saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will have to listen to Ladakh's voice. Asked about the Congress' reaction, senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said, "I don't know the facts. I will have to check the facts."

Children injured in explosion

Bhagalpur: Seven children were injured, three of them seriously, in an explosion near a garbage dump in Bihar's Bhagalpur district on Tuesday, a senior police officer said.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Bhagalpur, Anand Kumar told PTI that the blast took place in Khilafat Nagar locality, under the jurisdiction of Habibpur police station, of the town and the children appeared to have inadvertently fiddled with an explo-

sive substance.

"Seven children, three of them seriously, were injured in the incident. All of them have been admitted to the nearest government hospital," he said.

"The incident took place around noon and forensic experts as well as dog squad have reached the spot to defuse any such explosives that may be lying at the garbage dump and also identify the nature of the explosion that took place," said the SSP. -PTI

Gangster threatens BJP leader

New Delhi: A BJP leader and member of the Delhi Gurdwara Committee has received a threat note from gangster Gogi Mann, police said on Tuesday.

According to police, Raman Jot Singh, 30, was informed by the sewadar of the gurdwara in JJ Colony, Pankha Road in Dwarka's Bindapur area that a threat note was found on his SUV parked nearby. The note read, "No security will save you, Last Warning."

Probe against CPI (Maoist): NIA searches in WB

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday conducted searches at multiple locations in various districts of West Bengal in a case of alleged conspiracy by the banned CPI (Maoist) to revive its presence, according to an official statement.

NIA teams conducted elaborate searches at the houses of suspects in 11 locations in South 24 Parganas, Asansol, Howrah, Nadia and Kolkata districts of the state, it said.



The suspects were over-ground workers of CPI (Maoist) and were believed to have assisted the organisation's commanders in carrying out Naxal activities, the NIA statement said.

"Today's searches led to the seizure of several incriminating documents, electronic devices, pamphlets, magazines, and handwritten letters," it said.

The case relates to a conspiracy by the polit bureau/central committee members, cadres and sympathisers of the banned terrorist organisation, the NIA said.

The conspiracy is aimed at reviving, expanding and

propagating the ideology of CPI (Maoist) in Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and other states in the northern and eastern regions of India, it added.

A total of six accused, including CPI (Maoist) polit bureau members Prashant Bose and Pramod Mishra, and central committee member Sabyasachi Goswami, have so far been arrested in the case, registered at NIA police station Ranchi in April 2022. -PTI

Rajini undergoes procedure for heart related issue



bulletin.

"Senior interventional cardiologist Dr Sai Satish placed a stent in the Aorta completely sealing off the swelling (Endovascular repair)," Dr R.K. Venkatasalam, Director, Medical Services, Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, said in the bulletin.

He further said, "we would like to let his well-wishers and fans know that the procedure went as planned. Mr Rajinikanth is stable and is doing well. He should be at home in two days."

Earlier in the day, Tamil Nadu Health Minister Ma Subramanian said the health condition of the superstar was stable.

The minister said he had been in touch with the hospital authorities since the actor's admission and also enquired with the doctors there this morning.

"We enquired with the in-charge at the hospital. They said since Rajini was a big celebrity he was asked to get admitted in the night for a periodic check-up," Subramanian said. -PTI



Family members shift a patient from R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital as agitating junior doctors in West Bengal resumed 'total cease work' in Kolkata on Tuesday. Pic: PTI

Man shot dead in row over loud music

New Delhi: A 36-year-old caretaker of a building was shot dead after he intervened between two tenants who had fight over loud music in Dwarka's Mohan Nagar area, police on Tuesday said.

The victim, Bablu, had received a gunshot wound in his stomach, they said.

"In the late hours of Monday, a PCR call regarding murder was received at Mohan Garden police station from a hospital. Police

team was dispatched at the hospital and found Bablu who sustained a gunshot injury," a senior police officer said.

Bablu's body has been kept at DDU Hospital for post mortem, the officer said.

According to police, Pujit, a 27 years old tenant in the same building, was playing loud music when another tenant Lavnish objected to it and picked a fight with him.

"A verbal spat ensued last night, following which, Lavnish - a gym supplement supplier and his cousin Aman, dragged him to the terrace," the officer said.

When he heard the commotion, Bablu also reached the rooftop and tried to mediate between the two parties.

Aman, who had a pistol, handed it over to Lavnish who fired it and hit Bablu, the officer said. -PTI

Junior doctors resume 'total cease work'

Kolkata: Agitating junior doctors in West Bengal resumed their indefinite 'total cease work' on Tuesday to press for various demands, including ensuring their safety and security at all medical establishments.

The junior doctors had on September 21 rejoined their duties partially at government hospitals after a 42-day protest. They were on a 'cease work' agitation to protest the rape and murder of an on-duty woman doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9.

"We do not see any positive approach from the state government to fulfill our demands for safety and security. Today is the 52nd day of the protest (since August 9) and we are still being attacked and there is no attempt to keep the other promises made during the meetings with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. In the given situation, we are left with no option other than opting for full cease work, starting today," Aniket Mahato, one of the agitating junior doctors, told

Movement also against 'TMC-criminal nexus', says CPI(M)

The CPI(M) on Tuesday extended its full support to the protests followed by the RG Kar hospital incident in Kolkata and said the movement is also against the "ruling TMC-criminal nexus". In a statement issued on Tuesday after the meeting of the Central Committee held on September 29-30, CPI(M) accused the union government of abandoning India's "long-standing policy of support to the Palestinian cause", demanding an immediate ban on the export of arms to Israel. "The Central Committee extended its full support to the popular movement, which is ongoing in West Bengal against the gruesome rape and murder of a post-graduate medical student. The movement is also against the TMC ruling party-criminal nexus which is flourishing in all sectors, including the health sector in the state," the CPI(M) said.

PTI.

The junior medics have also called for a march from College Square to Dharmatala in central Kolkata on Wednesday, and invited people from all walks of life to join them.

"We are calling for a march and assembly on October 2, on Mahalaya. It will be from College Square to Dharmatala where there will be an assembly. We urge people from all walks of the society to join us at the rally," the junior doctors said in the statement.

The junior doctors said

that justice for the deceased woman medic continued to be on top of their demand and it should be answered immediately without any further delay in the form of a protracted judicial process.

They called for immediate removal of the health secretary from his position and the health department to take responsibility for administrative incompetence and corruption.

They also demanded the setting up of a centralised referral system at all hospitals and medical colleges.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The detention of Sonam Wangchuk ji and hundreds of Ladakhis peacefully marching for environmental and constitutional rights is unacceptable. Modi ji, like with the farmers, this 'Chakravayuh' will be broken, and so will your arrogance."

Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition



MUDA case: Lokayukta probe survey land

Mysuru: A team of Lokayukta police probing MUDA site allotment case against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and others on Tuesday surveyed the land, in lieu of which 14 sites were "illegally" allotted to his wife Parvathi B.M.

The Lokayukta team was joined by the special land acquisition officer, surveyors and town planning members from the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), and they surveyed the land and took notes, official sources said.

Social activist Snehmayi Krishna on whose complaint the Lokayukta police has registered an FIR against Siddaramaiah, his wife and two others, was also present, they said.

Krishna today appeared before the Lokayukta police here, following the notice issued to him by the investigating officers.

Meanwhile, Parvathi's letter conveying her a decision to relinquish the ownership and possession of 14 plots, was personally submitted to MUDA Commis-

sioner A.N. Raghunandan's office by her son and MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah, earlier today.

"The letter received will be processed after going through the provisions in the law," a MUDA official said.

Hours after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) booked Siddaramaiah in a money laundering case, his wife on Monday wrote to MUDA conveying her decision to relinquish the ownership and possession of 14 plots stating that no site,

home, asset and wealth is bigger for her than her husband's respect, dignity, honour and peace of mind.

In the MUDA site allotment case, it is alleged that 14 compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife in an upmarket area in Mysuru (Vijayanagar Layout 3rd and 4th stages), which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by MUDA.

The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a

50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land, where it developed a residential layout.

Under the controversial scheme, MUDA allotted 50 per cent of developed land to the land losers in lieu of undeveloped land acquired from them for forming residential layouts.

It is alleged that Parvathi had no legal title over this 3.16 acres of land at survey number 464 of Kasare village, Kasaba hobli of Mysuru taluk. On Monday, the ED regis-

tered an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR), equivalent to an FIR by police, against the Chief Minister over the alleged irregularities in allotment of 14 sites to his wife by the MUDA.

On September 27, Lokayukta police registered an FIR against Siddaramaiah, his wife, brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy, Dewaraju - from whom Swamy purchased land and gifted it to Parvathi - and others, following a Special Court order.

Nepal death toll climbs to 217



A man walks on a muddy alleyway carrying belongings salvaged from his house in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Pic: PTI

By Shirish B Pradhan

Kathmandu : The death toll from rain-induced floods and landslides across Nepal crossed 215-mark on Tuesday, while the number of those gone missing stands at 28, officials said.

The disaster, which began on Thursday, continued to cause widespread destruction in multiple provinces until Sunday, leaving thousands displaced. Large swathes of eastern and central Nepal have been inundated since Friday. However, the weather improved from Sunday in Kathmandu providing some relief to the disaster-affected people.

The death toll in the flood and landslide triggered by three days of continuous rain in Kathmandu and various parts of Nepal has reached 217 as of Tuesday morning. So far, 28 people

have been missing and 143 sustained injuries due to the natural disaster-related incidents, according to Home Ministry spokesperson Rishiram Tiwari.

Incessant rain from Thursday to Saturday has created havoc across Nepal. The Kathmandu Valley suffered the most where the death toll crossed 50. More than 20,000 security personnel, including from the Nepal Army, Armed Police Force and Nepal Police, have been deployed for all-out efforts of search, rescue and relief distribution.

Those injured are receiving treatment at various health facilities, Tiwari said. Similarly, those affected by the floods and landslides are provided with instant relief materials.

The government has given priority to search, rescue and relief

distribution. The efforts to resume the blocked roadways are currently underway, Tiwari added.

Scientists say that while climate change is changing the amount and timing of rainfall across Asia, a key reason for the rise in the impact of floods is the built environment, including unplanned construction, especially on floodplains, which leaves insufficient areas for water retention and drainage.

The floods and landslides have thrown life out of gear in many parts of the country, with many highways and road stretches disrupted, hundreds of houses and bridges buried or swept away, and hundreds of families displaced. Thousands of passengers have been stranded in various places due to road disruption.

-PTI

Landslide blocks highway near Shimla

Shimla: Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh was cut off from the state capital Shimla after a massive landslide hit National Highway 5 (Hindustan-Tibet road) in Negulsari early Tuesday morning, officials said.

No one was injured in the landslide, they said. Due to the landslide, a large number of tourist vehicles and apple-laden trucks were stranded on both sides of the highway.

Efforts to clear the highway are underway. However, debris rolling down the mountains is obstructing the work, the officials said.

After a landslide at Negulsari last year, alternate arrangements were made for transporting cash crops, including apples, and ensuring that farmers' produce reaches the market on time. But moving apples through the ropeway is a tough and time-consuming task.

The ropeway was set up between Krampa in Negulsari and Dhumi on the Chaura-Rupi link road.

The weather in Himachal Pradesh has been dry for the last 24 hours and conditions are favourable for the further withdrawal of southwest monsoon from more parts of the state during the next two-three days, the local Met office said.

According to officials, 186 people have died in rain-related incidents in Himachal Pradesh since the onset of monsoon in the hill state on June 27 while 28 are missing. The state has suffered losses to the tune of Rs 1,360 crore due to the rains.

-PTI



A flood-affected area of Bihar on Tuesday.

Pic: PTI

PM to lay foundation for sanitation projects today

New Delhi: Marking the completion of 10 years of the launch of the Swachh Bharat Mission, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in Swachh Bharat Diwas 2024 and lay the foundation stone for several sanitation and cleanliness projects on Wednesday, Jal Shakti minister C R Paatil said.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, Paatil said the projects will also include projects worth over Rs 6,800 crore, aimed at enhancing urban water and sewage systems under AMRUT and AMRUT 2.0, 10 projects worth over Rs 1,550 crore focused on improving water quality and waste management in Ganga basin areas under National Mission for Clean Ganga

and 15 Compressed Biogas (CBG) Plant projects worth over Rs 1332 crore under GOBARdhan Scheme.

"The Swachh Bharat Diwas programme will showcase India's decade-long sanitation achievements and those in the recently concluded Swachhata Hi Seva campaign. It will also set the stage for the next phase of this national endeavour," he said. He said the prime minister will also launch and lay the foundation stone for several sanitation and cleanliness projects worth over Rs 9,600 crore and these include projects under AMRUT and AMRUT 2.0, National Mission for Clean Ganga and GOBARdhan Scheme.

Paatil said the programme will also include

nationwide participation from local government bodies, women's groups, youth organizations, and community leaders, ensuring that the spirit of Sampurna Swachhata reaches every corner of India.

Under Swachhata Hi Seva 2024, he said over 19.70 lakh programmes have been completed with public participation of more than 17 crore people. Transformation of around 6.5 lakh Cleanliness Target Units has been achieved. Nearly 1 lakh Safai Mitra Suraksha Shivirs have also been organised, benefitting over 30 lakh Safai Mitras.

Further, over 45 lakh trees have been planted under the Ek Ped Maa ke Naam campaign, he said.

-PTI

BEL inks pact with SAC-ISRO

Bengaluru: Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) on Monday said it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Space Applications Centre (SAC), ISRO to collaborate, indigenise and develop infrastructure for manufacturing space-grade Traveling Wave Tube Amplifiers (TWTAs) in India.

The BEL said that the MoU that was signed at SAC Ahmedabad will give a boost to the indigenisation of defence and space production and save foreign exchange for the country. "TWTAs are a complex multi-disciplinary technology involving controlled interaction of microwave with electron beam under ultrahigh vacuum conditions. State-of-the-art fabrication and manufacturing facility for TWTAs has been established at BEL."

NGT imposes one rupee fine on Surveyor General

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has imposed a symbolic fine of one rupee on the country's Surveyor General for not complying with its directions.

The green body was hearing a matter regarding the alleged felling of more than 1 lakh trees and shrubs in the protected forest area across three forest divisions of Ghaziabad, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh for the construction of two lanes of 111-km Kanwar Marg from Muradnagar (Ghaziabad district) to Purkaji (Muzaffarnagar district) near Uttarakhanda border.

In a recent order, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava noted that earlier the tribunal had directed the Surveyor General to file a response and virtually appear before it, besides appraising the tribunal with the satellite image of the stretch.

Notice to environment ministry

The NGT has sought replies from authorities, including the environment ministry, in a matter regarding the alleged attack on a trainee IAS officer in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad by illegal miners. The green body was hearing a matter where it had taken suo motu (on its own) cognisance of a newspaper report regarding illegal miners' attempting to run a tractor over a trainee IAS officer, posted as the joint magistrate in Sadar tehsil of Moradabad. The officer, as part of an anti-encroachment operation, was overseeing the efforts to curb illegal mining activities in the region, said the report.

"Neither the response has been filed by the Surveyor General, Survey of India, nor he is virtually present today in compliance of the above order. We have also not received any application seeking an exemption from virtual presence.

"The directions of the tribunal have not been complied with by the Surveyor General.

Thus, we impose the cost of one rupee for such conduct," said the bench also comprising judicial members Justices Arun Kumar Tyagi and Sudhir Agarwal

Inquiry into Mathura tree felling

The NGT on Monday formed a five-member joint committee to inquire into allegations of illegal tree felling in Taj Trapezium Zone of Mathura. Earlier a petition had been filed by advocate Narendra Kumar Goswami seeking the tribunal's cognisance on the alleged violation involving the illegal felling of more than 454 trees at Dalmia farms Chhatikara Vrindavan road in Mathura falling under TTZ on the night of September 18 and 19. A bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava formed a five-member joint committee to inquire into the matter by visiting the site and also directed it submit a report within two months, Goswami said.

and expert member Afroz Ahmad.

It said though the tribunal was "prompted to take strict action" against him, the green panel had "restrained itself from strict action", "expecting that a high officer like Surveyor General will have some re-

Delhi govt pulled up

The Supreme Court on Monday pulled up the Delhi forest department for not apprising it of any comprehensive measures taken by it to enhance the green cover of the national capital. The top court said, "Judges come and go. It is not for the benefit of judges but for the national capital territory of Delhi."

A bench of Justices A.S. Oka and Augustine George Masih directed the principal secretary of the forest department to be present on October 18 through virtual mode and asked him to file a personal affidavit to explain why information was not placed on record on steps taken and to be taken for enhancing the green cover of Delhi by October 15.

gard to the orders of the courts and tribunals."

Meanwhile, the tribunal was informed that the work for the construction of the road was suspended because of rain.

The matter has been posted on October 4 for further proceedings.



One-horned rhinoceros graze inside the Kaziranga National Park, in Nagaon district.

Pic: PTI

Lion killed due to electric fence

Bhavnagar: A lion was electrocuted in Gujarat's Bhavnagar district after it came in contact with an electric fence, a forest department official said on Monday.

The fence was set up around a farm in Bordi village and its owner has been detained, he said.

"The carcass of the lion,

in the 3-5 age group, was found by staff of Mahuva wildlife forest range. The forest department along with teams from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) and electricity department's Paschim Gujarat Vij Company Limited (PGVCL) scanned the surrounding areas to ascertain the cause of death," a

release said. "It was found the lion was electrocuted after coming in contact with an illegal electric line passing through the farm of one Kalpeshbhai Nakum in Bordi village. He was detained and further investigation was underway," he said.

-PTI

Ants reason for bird species diversity

Bengaluru: A recent study from the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru has uncovered a different factor driving bird species diversity at mid-elevations - the presence of ants from the Oecophylla genus.

Oecophylla ants, known for their aggressive and dominant behaviour, are voracious predators of insects at the bases of mountains found in the paleotropics, covering Africa, Asia and Oceania, stated a press release issued by the IISc.

The researchers at IISc decided to test how the ants' presence affects the diversity of insect-eating birds, especially at lower elevations.

A previous study led by co-author Trevor D Price, Professor at the Department of Ecology and Evolution, University

of Chicago, showed that the presence of Oecophylla ants at the base of the eastern Himalayas decreased the density of insects and might therefore have an effect on the presence of insect-eating birds, stated the release.

In the current study, the team wanted to see if this pattern was more widespread among other insect-eating species as well.

Led by Umesh Srinivasan, Assistant Professor at CES, the researchers used existing datasets with information about bird species observed at various elevations across different mountain ranges. They categorised the birds into dietary guilds - groups of species with similar dietary requirements, such as insectivores and omnivores.

"We looked at the ranges of



these bird species. We noted what bird species (in each guild) occurred at 100 metres, then 200, 300 and so on, for every 100 metres," explained Srinivasan.

"We then classified mountain ranges with or without Oecophylla at the base, and looked at what species were present at different elevations."

The researchers found patterns consistent with Oecophylla ants competing with insect-eating birds for food at lower elevations.

This could then have ended up pushing these birds higher up in the mountains - the species diversity was highest at an elevation of about 960 metres.

With climate change, if the ants shift their ranges towards higher elevations, this might impact the bird species at higher elevations as well," added Srinivasan.

Umesh Srinivasan, Assistant Professor, CES

In mountains, you often see hump-shaped patterns (of species diversity), and for a long time, people have been interested in why this happens. One of the mechanisms they did not think much about was biotic interactions like competition.

Kartik Shanker, Professor, CES

Other bird groups like nectar-eating and fruit-eating birds - which weren't competing with Oecophylla ants - reduced in species diversity as the elevation increased.

The presence or absence of Oecophylla ants at the base of mountains, therefore, was a

good predictor of why the diversity of insect-eating birds peaked at mid-elevations, the team found.

-PTI

Taiwan braces for typhoon

Kaohsiung: Taiwan closed schools and offices and evacuated hundreds from vulnerable areas around the island Tuesday ahead of a strong typhoon expected to hit its populated western coast after lashing northern Philippine islands.

More than 500 people were moved from mountainous regions prone to landslides. Nearly 40,000 troops were mobilized to help with rescue efforts, according to the Defense Ministry. Typhoon Krathon is expected to hit the major port city of Kaohsiung in the island's southwest on Wednesday morning then move across the center of Taiwan and northeast toward the East China Sea.

Israel calls for evacuations in Lebanon as Hezbollah denies ground incursion



10,500 – No of UNIFIL peacekeepers drawn from 50 troop-contributing countries including India
17 per cent – No of its activities are carried out jointly with the Lebanese Armed Forces
5 – No of vessel Maritime Task Force complemented by UNIFIL

Jerusalem : The Israeli military on Tuesday warned people to evacuate nearly two dozen Lebanese border communities hours after announcing the start of "limited" ground operations against Hezbollah. The militant group denied Israeli troops had entered Lebanon.

Israel advised people to evacuate to the north of the Awali River, some 60 kilometres from the border and much farther than the Litani River, which marks the northern edge of a UN-declared zone that was intended to serve as a buffer between Israel and Hezbollah after their 2006 war.

"You must immediately head north of the Awali River to save yourselves, and leave your houses immediately," said the statement posted by the Israeli military's Arabic spokesperson, Avichay Adraee, on the platform X. The warning applied to communities

European countries have begun pulling their diplomats and citizens out of Lebanon. A British government-chartered flight is due to leave Beirut on Wednesday to evacuate UK nationals. The UK has also sent 700 troops to a base in the nearby island nation of Cyprus to prepare for a potential evacuation of the estimated 5,000 British citizens in Lebanon.

south of the Litani. The border region has largely emptied out over the past year as the two sides have traded fire. But the scope of the evacuation warning raised questions as to how deep Israel plans to send its forces into Lebanon as it presses ahead

with a rapidly escalating campaign against Hezbollah.

Anticipating more rocket attacks from Hezbollah, the Israeli army announced new restrictions on public gatherings and closed beaches.

Questions raised

An Associated Press reporter saw Israeli troops operating near the border in armoured trucks, with helicopters circling overhead, but could not confirm ground forces had crossed into Lebanon.

Ahead of the Israeli announcement of an incursion, U.S. officials on Monday said Israel had described launching small ground raids inside Lebanon as it prepared for a wider operation.

Neither the Lebanese army nor a UN peacekeeping force known as UNIFIL, which patrol southern Lebanon, have confirmed that

Indian troops with UNIFIL to stay put

The Indian contingent in the United Nations Interim Force in South Lebanon (UNIFIL) will be staying put and performing its duties in the face of Israel's decision to enter the

country amid escalating tensions in the region. "The (Indian) battalion of more than 900 people is holding its position and everybody is safe," a UNIFIL source in south Lebanon told PTI over the phone on Tuesday.

UNIFIL confirmed that the IDF notified it of its intention to undertake "limited" ground incursions into Lebanon, asserting that despite the developments in Lebanon, its peacekeepers will remain in position. It also urged all actors to step back from the escalatory acts.

Israel says no plans to march on Beirut

Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati said Monday that his country is willing to deploy the army in support of the resolution if there is a ceasefire. Lebanon's armed forces would not be able to impose an agreement on the far more powerful Hezbollah. The military statements indicated that Israel might focus its ground operation on

the narrow strip along the border, rather than launching a larger invasion aimed at destroying Hezbollah, as it has done in Gaza against the Palestinian Hamas.

The military official said marching to Beirut, as Israeli forces did during their 1982 invasion of Lebanon, is "not on the table." Hezbollah and Hamas are close

allies backed by Iran, and each escalation over the past year has raised fears of a wider war in the Middle East that could draw in Iran and the United States, which has rushed military assets to the region in support of Israel. The incursion follows weeks of heavy blows by Israel against Hezbollah - including an airstrike that killed its longtime leader Nasrallah - and seeks to step up the pressure on the group. The last time Israel and Hezbollah engaged in ground combat was a monthlong war in 2006. -AP

ly possible to confirm those claims. An Israeli military official said troops taking part in the latest incursion were within walking distance of the border, focused on villages hundreds of metres from Israel. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with military regulations, said there had been no clashes yet with Hezbollah fighters.



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Israel strikes more targets

Israeli artillery units pounded targets in southern Lebanon through the night. The Israeli military official said Hezbollah had launched rockets at central Israel, setting off air raid sirens and wounding a man in his 50s. Hezbollah said it fired salvos of a new kind of medium-range missile, called the Fadi 4, at the headquarters of two Israeli intelligence agencies near Tel Aviv. Afif, the Hezbollah spokesman, said the missile attack "is only the beginning."

Release of 2.5 lakh new US visa slots in India

By Lalit K Jha

Washington: An Indian-American member of the Presidential Commission for Asian-Americans has welcomed the move to release an additional 2.5 lakh visa appointments by the US Mission in India.

The US Mission in India opened the additional slots for travellers -- including tourists, skilled workers and students -- officials said on Monday.

The recently released slots will help Indian applicants take timely interviews, facilitating the travel which is the backbone of the people-to-people ties that underpin the US-India relationship, they said.

Reacting to the development, Ajay Bhutoria -- a member of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian-Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) -- said on Monday, "This is the direct result of one of my recommendations submitted earlier on the White House AANHPI

commission. "I am grateful to the US Embassy in India, particularly (US) Ambassador (to India) Eric Garcetti, for their dedicated efforts in addressing visa appointment wait times.

The recent opening of 2,50,000 (2.5 lakh) additional appointments is a significant step forward in supporting Indian travellers, including families and students, seeking to visit the US.

While this achievement reflects the positive impact of my recommendations to the White House AANHPI commission, we must recognise that more work remains (to be done)," he said.

As a commissioner, Bhutoria submitted key recommendations aimed at reducing visa appointment wait times and green card backlog reduction. These included increasing the number of visa appointments and exploring innovative solutions such as video appointments.

-PTI

School bus fire leave 25 feared dead

Bangkok: A bus carrying young students with their teachers caught fire in suburban Bangkok on Tuesday with 25 of those on board feared dead, according to officials and rescuers.

The bus was carrying 44 passengers from central Uthai Thani province to Ayutthaya for a school trip when the fire started around noon in Pathum Thani province, a northern suburb of the capital, Transport Minister Suriya Jungrungruangkit told reporters at the scene.

Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said officials could not yet confirm the number of fatalities as they have not finished investigating the scene, but based on the number of survivors, he said 25 people are feared dead. He also said the bus was still too hot for them to get inside safely.

Bodies were still inside the bus hours after the fire.

Videos posted on social media showed the entire bus being engulfed in fire with huge plumes of black smoke pouring out as it was parked on the road.

The age and other details about the students were not yet known. -AP



Union Minister of State Arjun Ram Meghwal pays homage to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar during a visit to London. Pic:AP/PTI

Russian strike kills 7 at Ukrainian market

Kyiv: An apparent Russian artillery strike hit a market in the southern Ukraine city of Kherson on Tuesday, killing at least seven people and wounding three others, authorities said.

The strike happened as shoppers made their way between stalls at the city centre market, regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said.

He published a video showing the blurred corpses of people in civilian clothes lying near a stall with tomatoes and other vegetables.

Ukraine's General Prosecutor's Office said the strike was "most likely" carried out by Russian artillery and hit close to a public transport stop.

The city has not recently been a hotspot in the war, now deep into its third year, as the fiercest battles have been taking place in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region where Russia's army is pushing hard to take ground ahead of the winter.

Ukrainian forces have struck back with an incursion into Russia's Kursk border region, but the gov-

ernment is waiting to hear what further Western military and financial support it can count on.

The Kherson region was one of four, also including Donetsk, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia, that Moscow illegally annexed in September 2022 and is partly occupying. Russian President Vladimir Putin wants Ukraine to withdraw completely from those regions.

Kherson fell into Russian hands after Moscow's full-scale invasion in February 2022. -AP

Yemeni Houthis attack another ship in Red Sea

Dubai: Suspected attacks Tuesday by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted at least one ship in the Red Sea, likely marking their first assault on commercial shipping in weeks as the Israel-Hamas war threatens to become a regional conflict.

The attack comes as Israeli ground forces entered Lebanon after days of Israeli airstrikes that killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and other top leaders and the earlier explosions of sabotaged electronic devices used by the Shiite militia. The Houthis had threatened "escalating military operations" targeting Israel on Monday after they apparently shot down a U.S. military drone flying over the country.

The attack first Tuesday morning took place some 110 kilometers (70 miles) off the port city of Hodeida in the Red Sea, which has become a battlefield for shippers since the Houthis began their campaign targeting ships traveling through a waterway that once saw \$1 trillion a year of cargo pass through it.

A captain on a ship saw four "splashes" near his vessel, the British military's United Kingdom

Maritime Trade Operations center said in a warning. That likely would have been missiles or drones launched at the vessel.

"All crew are safe and the vessel is proceeding to (its) next port of call," the UKMTO said.

The UKMTO later reported a second attack north of the first. The private intelligence firm Ambrey similarly reported two separate attacks. However, it wasn't immediately clear if the same vessel had come under attack again.

The Houthis did not immediately claim the attacks. However, they sometimes take hours or days to acknowledge one of their assaults.

Houthis have targeted more than 80 merchant vessels with missiles and drones since the war in Gaza started in October. They have seized one vessel and sank two in the campaign that has also killed four sailors.

Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by a U.S.-led coalition in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets. The rebels maintain they target ships linked to Israel, the U.S. or the UK.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"If North Korea attempts to use nuclear weapons, it will face the resolute and overwhelming response of our military and the (South Korea)-US alliance. That day will be the end of the North Korean regime."



- Yoon Suk Yeol, President, South Korea

Three killed, 15 injured in China knife attack

By K J M Varma

Beijing: A knife-wielding man killed three persons and injured 15 in an attack at a supermarket in China's biggest city Shanghai, police said on Tuesday, in the latest incident of mass stabbing in the country.

The incident occurred on Monday in Shanghai on the eve of China's 75th National Day, which is being celebrated on Tuesday.

The police received a report of the incident at 9.47 pm (local time) on Monday

and quickly arrived at the scene, state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Tuesday quoting a police statement.

The attacker, a 37-year-old man surnamed Lin went on a stabbing spree before he was apprehended on the spot after the police arrived. Social media here carried the photos of the man armed with a knife going around in the supermarket.

Eighteen victims were immediately sent to a hospital for treatment, the



Xinhua report said. Among them, three died

despite rescue efforts and the others did not sustain

life-threatening wounds. An investigation is underway. According to a statement by Shanghai police, Lin was motivated by personal financial disputes and had travelled to Shanghai to "vent his anger."

Lin's place of origin has not been disclosed by the police. China, where private gun ownership is illegal for most civilians, faced a spate of mass knife attacks in public places in recent years allegedly by disgruntled or mentally deranged people.

Last night's attack took place as China geared up to celebrate the 75th National Day on Tuesday with a weeklong holiday.

In May, two persons were killed and 21 injured in a knife attack at a hospital in China's Yunnan Province.

In August last year, two persons were killed and seven injured after a man with a history of mental illness attacked people with a knife in a residential district in Yunnan. -PTI

EDITORIAL

Quota Quagmire

The Maharashtra government's decision to accept the second and third reports of the Justice Sandeep Shinde committee marks a critical moment in the state's efforts to walk the tightrope of the Maratha reservation in an election year. The committee, established to determine the protocol for issuing Kunbi-Maratha and Maratha-Kunbi certificates based on historical records, aims to include sections of the Maratha community under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. The Kunbis, traditionally an agrarian group, are already classified as OBCs in Maharashtra. The challenge for the Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti coalition has been (and will be) in expanding this categorization to appease the Maratha community without alienating the OBC groups ahead of the crucial Assembly election.

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil's six hunger strikes since last September turned the spotlight on the Maratha quota issue. With the cabinet's acceptance of the Shinde committee's recommendations, the inclusion of Marathas in the OBC category should now bring closure to the year-long agitation. It is to be hoped that Jarange-Patil will be finally placated and stop demanding further entitlements which can only prolong the unrest and deepen the state's caste divisions.

The repeated protests have not only tested the government's patience but also inflicted considerable hardship on ordinary citizens, especially in the Marathwada region. The strikes and demonstrations, which have often turned violent, have disrupted daily life across Maharashtra, aggravating caste tensions and threatening administrative stability. While it is easy for rabble rousers like Jarange-Patil to rally crowds and ignite passions, it is the ordinary people who ultimately pay the price for any protracted unrest.

Worse still, these protests have led to deep caste schisms in Maharashtra's Marathwada region where historical tensions between caste groups have long festered. The Maratha quota issue, and the OBC backlash, have seen some incendiary rhetoric which have literally translated into incendiary action.

The Maratha community's aspirations for inclusion and economic upliftment are understandable, but these goals should not be achieved at the expense of social harmony. Figures like Jarange Patil are skilled at turning such issues into high-stakes, emotive dramas, capitalizing on popular anxieties of a community. His appeal to Marathas and farmers to gather en masse for the Dussehra upcoming rally is yet another instance of his ability to galvanize support through a show of strength, even when the real issues have largely been addressed by a government that has understandably bowed to electoral pressure. The Mahayuti, already smarting from a severe drubbing in the Lok Sabha election, has walked gingerly in handling the Maratha quota issue. Now, Maharashtra's diverse social fabric cannot withstand endless agitations that pit caste against caste, each vying for a larger slice of the pie.

FRANKLY SPEAKING

When will our streets be safe for women?

By
Aditi Pai

"Don't talk to strangers; don't play in unknown places; don't unnecessarily befriend boys; be home before nightfall"—these were the instructions that most girls growing up in the late eighties in Mumbai heard. Including me. While being a word of caution, it also, at some level, instilled a fear of the unknown, of secluded places and strange people. It wasn't the best way to face the world. The late nineties and early 2000s were more relaxed and open. Younger cousins had more freedom to stay out till late, hemlines weren't scrutinised and hanging out with friends of the opposite gender—and their friends—was normal. Cities like Mumbai and Pune were hailed as safe. As journalists, we worked late nights, sometimes to hail a taxi at 3 AM. We looked over our shoulder but didn't fear. Yes, parents stayed up till the daughters got home but paranoia was low.

It's all suddenly changed in the past

The horrifying incidents of violence and molestation against women in Pune, Hathras and Kolkata underscores the urgent need for a collective commitment in reclaiming our streets.

decade and moreover, in the past five years. Rape cases, instances of molestation have suddenly spiked. Is it because of more cases getting reported or spoken about? It's possible but there's a palpable fear among women and their immediate families.

The Badlapur case showed us that little girls aren't safe even in school, once considered the safest place beyond their parent's watch. Only because the case sparked outrage did we hear of the plight of the girls who suffered the attack. But there must be several more that we don't hear about. Cases of harassment and sexual assaults at orphanages, hostels, rescue shelters have been spoken about in hushed tones for years but never in the public consciousness. Now, these are all around us.

A session on the POCSO Act revealed that a 16-year-old was raped multiple times on her college campus in Pune by four boys she had befriended on Instagram. She kept mum for fear of being shamed through objectionable videos and photographs. The year has recorded several sexual assaults that have made it to the headlines—a Spanish tourist and a young performer were raped in Jharkhand, a 17-year-old was raped in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras and rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata sent shivers down the spine of every conscious Indian. The recorded figures are probably lower than the actual numbers—data from the National Crime Records Bureau states that 90 rapes a day were reported in India in 2022. But even if it were to be the correct figure, the situation is alarming. This grim statistic reflects a disturbing trend, revealing how societal indifference can breed an environment where such atrocities become disturbingly routine.

It's the fear and shame that's kept women from speaking out against their heinous crimes that crush the woman's emotional well-being apart from causing immense physical pain. Hindi movies gloried a woman's 'izzat' and that of her



'khandaan' when an evil 'villain' attempted to rape the heroine. Rape was almost normalised in movies as every other film had a villain-heroine scene with attempted or intended physical assault. Victims were considered 'impure' and looked at the sinners by society. Today, the threats have moved from the streets to social media. Trolls try to shut up a determined and opinionated woman by threatening her with rape. In Bandra, usually a very safe neighbourhood, a rickshaw driver threatened to rape a woman driving her car.

Violence against women and the lesser privileged sections of society is rampant and appears to be normalised. A culture of impunity seems to aggravate the situation even further. The accused get away with their contacts in high places or through the use of money power. A sociologist I recently spoke to, informally, pointed out that increasing attacks on women are a backlash from insecure men who feel their hegemony is threat-

ened by women occupying high places in India's patriarchal social set-up. Sexual assault is their only way of 'getting back'. Police apathy and a sluggish judicial system allow perpetrators to get away lightly.

Dating apps and social media are new areas to prey on women by befriending them but the streets of our cities, towns and villages are equally unsafe. So, does that mean women should stay home and not venture out? Some men would want just that. But the solution isn't in women living and working in fear. The answer is in creating safer cities and villages through a more vigilant and sensitive police force, swift and strict punishment for the perpetrators and a government and political machinery that shields their own. For the future generations, change will begin at home—where boys are taught to respect women's choices and independence. Women don't need men to protect them. We only need to reclaim our cities and streets.

GLOBAL WATCH

Nepal's Monsoon Nightmare

For the past few days, Nepal has been reeling from one of the most severe rain-induced disasters in its recent history. Incessant monsoon rains have triggered catastrophic floods and landslides, killing over 200 people and displacing thousands more. Rescue operations continue as the government and security forces scramble to mitigate the damage, but the crisis has disrupted life across the nation, particularly in Kathmandu and the central and eastern districts.

This year's monsoon has unleashed devastation, bringing to the fore both Nepal's geographic vulnerabilities and the rising threat of climate change. Though the country is no stranger to monsoon-triggered disasters, the scale and intensity of these events seem to have worsened in recent years.

Nepal's topography, with its towering mountains and deep river valleys, makes it acutely susceptible to flooding and landslides during the monsoon season. Heavy rainfall has overwhelmed rivers, including the Bagmati, which is now flowing above danger levels, and has triggered landslides across the country, obstructing major highways and isolating entire communities.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) attributed this exceptional deluge to a low-pressure system in the Bay of Bengal and the unusual positioning of the monsoon trough further north. While the meteorological cause is clear, the underlying vulnerabilities have deep roots in

One of the Himalayan State's worst rain-induced disasters in years has claimed over 200 lives.



environmental mismanagement.

Unplanned urban development, particularly in floodplains and river valleys, has left little space for water retention and drainage. Kathmandu, the nation's capital, has seen rapid urbanization, with little thought given to sustainable infrastructure. The result is that the built environment exacerbates flood risks, leading to greater destruction and human suffering. Roads, bridges, and houses have been buried or washed away by torrents of water and mud.

This monsoon season bears striking similarities to past disasters. The flood of 1993, one of the worst in Nepal's history, killed nearly 1,500 people. Similarly, in 2008, the Kosi River, notoriously referred to as the 'Sorrow of Bihar' due to its frequent flooding downstream, breached its embankments, displacing thousands and creating a humanitarian crisis. More recently, in 2017, floods killed over 150 people, and like this year, left large parts of the country in disarray.

Yet, this year's disaster is not just another chapter in Nepal's history of monsoon tragedies. The intensity of rainfall is increasing, a pattern that scientists attribute to climate change. Glacial melt, which has accelerated in recent years, is also adding to the flow of rivers, making Nepal's hydrological systems even

more unstable.

The government, led by Officiating Prime Minister Prakash Man Singh, has convened an all-party meeting and promised swift relief measures, including grants for temporary housing and health treatment for the injured. A task force has been established to assess the damage, while the Disaster Management Executive Committee is offering financial support to families of the missing. But in a nation where infrastructure is often fragile, restoring normalcy will be an uphill battle.

Most distressingly, Nepal's economy, heavily reliant on agriculture and tourism, has been dealt a body blow. With thousands of hectares of farmland submerged and infrastructure in disrepair, recovery will be slow and costly. Many of the areas hit hardest by the floods are also key agricultural zones, where rice, the country's staple crop, is grown. These floods threaten not only this season's harvest but also the livelihoods of countless farmers who depend on it.

Immediate rescue and recovery efforts notwithstanding, Nepal's long-term challenge lies in addressing the underlying causes of such disasters, with climate change altering the amount and timing of rainfall across Asia and Nepal being at the frontline of this shift.

STATES WATCH

The Everlasting Shadow of the AFSPA

The strife-torn north-eastern state of Manipur remains under the grip of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), with the state government recently extending the law's provisions for another six months. Excluding 19 police station areas in the Imphal Valley and regions sharing a boundary with Assam, the rest of Manipur has been declared a 'Disturbed Area.' This move, which took effect on October 1, 2024, raises concerns about the future of peace and governance in the country's restive north-east.

According to a government notification, the decision to extend AFSPA was based on an assessment of the law-and-order situation. The areas exempt from the AFSPA extension are predominantly dominated by the majority Meitei community, including key urban centers like Imphal, Lamphel, and Bishnupur. However, the law continues to hold sway in the more volatile regions of the state, where ethnic strife and insurgent activity remain rampant.

The AFSPA, first enacted in 1958, is one of India's most controversial laws, granting the military sweeping powers in regions declared as 'Disturbed Areas.'

AFSPA's origins lie in colonial India. The Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance, introduced in 1942 by the British to suppress the Quit India movement, provided the blue-

The renewal of the Act is a sign that Manipur's ethnic strife continues to boil.



Manipur

insurgency operations, with the law facilitating the suppression of movements like the Naga insurgency, one of the longest-running conflicts in Asia.

In Manipur, the law has been in effect since the early 1980s, a period punctuated by rising insurgency and ethnic conflict. The legislation allows armed forces to conduct searches, arrest individuals without warrants, and open fire if deemed necessary, with little fear of prosecution. For its defenders, AFSPA is a vital tool for maintaining law and order in areas plagued by insurgency. For detractors, it has become a symbol of state overreach, impunity, and human rights violations.

In 2004, following widespread protests after the custodial killing of a local woman, Manorama Devi, AFSPA was revoked in the Imphal municipality area. More recently, in April 2022 and again in April 2023, the law was withdrawn from several other districts in the state. Yet, the recent resurgence of violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities, stemming from deep-seated ethnic grievances, has necessitated the re-imposition of stringent security measures.

The conflict, which erupted in May last year saw bloody clashes between the Meitei majority and the Kuki-Zomi tribes, and left over 200 people dead and tens of thousands displaced. The current ethnic divide is the latest chapter in a long history of insurgency and strife that has defined Manipur and much of India's north-east.

The recent decision to extend AFSPA in Manipur only underscores the state's ongoing vulnerability to insurgency and ethnic conflict.



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1. An idol of Goddess Durga inspired by village women at a Sunderban themed community Durga 'puja pandal' ahead of Durga puja festival in Kolkata on Tuesday.
2. Edgar Ramirez, left, and Selena Gomez attend the premiere of Emilia Perez at Alice Tully Hall during the 62nd New York Film Festival.
3. Navy personnel during the 9th anniversary celebration of Tough Tusker INS Kochi, the second indigenous P15A class destroyer.
4. Local residents hold candlelights as gathering for a ceremony of throwing rice on the ground to celebrate Pchum Ben, or Ancestors' Day at the Buddhist pagoda of Sampily monastery in the western side of Phnom Penh, Cambodia on Tuesday.
5. Britain's Prince William (right) shows former soccer player David Beckham (left) the cockpit of one of the new London Air Ambulance Charity helicopters during a visit to RAF Northolt, England on Tuesday.

All Pictures PTI, AP



5

STRAIGHT TALK

Caste-based Census Sparks Nationwide Debate



By Darshan Solanki

Caste-based identities continue to dominate rural India, directly or indirectly shaping electoral outcomes. Many major elections are influenced by specific caste groups. After the Bihar government released the first phase of its caste-based socio-economic survey, the caste census became a hot topic. The results, backed by evidence, showed improvements in the living standards and social status of marginalised communities, both in cities and villages. With parties like the JDU and NCP backing a caste census, there is growing momentum for the government to conduct one. However, every story has two sides—joy and sorrow. Even Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, raised concerns about the caste census.

Rahul Gandhi accused the BJP of being "anti-Bahujan." The clear meaning is that his father and fore-

father refused to execute a caste-based census, which might have far-reaching effects and even permanently fracture India's social fabric. This may be negative for caste-based beneficiaries. The last caste census in India was conducted in 1931 by the British government. Those times were different from the present scenario. The data was made public and became the basis for the Mandal Commission Reports and reservation policies for Other Backward Classes. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has clarified that the caste-based population count data will not be used for core politics. But the agenda for politics is always twisted and expanded.

The Central Government also joined the legal debate by filing an affidavit with the Supreme Court, leaving the matter unresolved. India's partition, rooted in the divide-and-rule strategy, is frequently cited as a cautionary tale. Including caste in official census data could further deepen social divides. This issue has become a political pressure point, with various states pushing the Centre for action. Although the Constitution uses the term "class" instead of "caste," the Supreme Court has consistently ruled that caste is a relevant, and at times, sole or dominant criterion for defining a backward class.

After the release of caste-based census data in Bihar, discussions around conducting similar censuses have gained momentum in states like Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand. Karnataka, which has already conducted its own caste census, may release its data soon as well.

Notably, all these states are governed by anti-BJP parties. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also announced that Congress-ruled states have committed to carrying out caste censuses. Meanwhile, the BJP has remained silent on the matter, creating a significant roadblock.

Caste-based censuses focus on



proportional representation in areas like jobs and education, with the argument that this will aid in targeted planning for the disadvantaged. However, the situation remains unclear, much like a foggy winter morning. The BJP's stance on caste-based censuses and reservations seems different, as they fear the caste-based calculations could fragment their traditional Hindu voter base—an underlying concern for the party.

Professor Sanjay Kumar from The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, says, "Let alone the BJP, no party can openly oppose it; it is not free from danger. BJP gets a large number of votes from the OBC community, their population across the country would be around 52%. Another downside is that the caste-based censuses could disrupt the balance of socio-economic zones. Data theft is a common issue in government systems, and people may feel disconnected from their actual rights."

The moot question is that if the financial status of an ST/SC/OBC or Dalit citizen moves up by a few notches, will his social status change automatically? The lifestyle of any class will only change when the income of a particular class is changed. The actual source of income is employment. The reality is that only metro cities have enough

place and space for workers. Aside from the GIDC and IT sectors, less than 30% of industries have their own designated vacancy periods. After a decade, the Jamnagar and Rajkot Corporations have opened their doors to newcomers alongside experienced staff. However, age and caste bias often operate behind the scenes. It's important to recognise that poverty is also widespread among many upper-caste individuals, and their needs cannot be overlooked. In the overall interests of the nation, terms like SC/ST/OBC, Dalits, etc. must be deleted from the nation's vocabulary. Every citizen should have only one classification, that of being an 'Indian', in the spirit of the constitution.

Last year, when the Bihar government decided to conduct a caste survey in the state, the BJP was also Nitish Kumar's partner in the state government, and it supported it. Political expert and former professor of Tata Institute of Social Science, Pushpendra Kumar, says, "It is not that the BJP does not talk about caste. It tries to reveal the caste of the Prime Minister as well. For caste politics, the BJP also tried hard to raise the issue of Pasmanda Muslims."

(The writer is a management professional based in Ahmedabad. Views personal.)

EXPLAINER

Has Israel launched ground incursion into Lebanon?

Israel said its ground troops crossed into Lebanon overnight, launching what the military described as "localised" raids to root out Hezbollah fighters and infrastructure.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, said it saw no sign of Israeli forces and its troops were ready to confront them.

Israel said the incursion would be focused on the narrow strip of land just across the border. But it also issued evacuation warnings covering a wider swath of Lebanon, raising fears that a large-scale ground invasion was soon to come.

In recent days, a wave of Israeli airstrikes has killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and several of his top commanders, while driving hundreds of thousands of Lebanese from their homes. Israel says a ground operation is now necessary to return tens of thousands of displaced Israelis to their homes in the north, pumelled by continuous rocket fire from Hezbollah since October 8.

Did Israeli troops enter Lebanon?

The military says that Israeli troops entered Lebanon late Monday. A military official who spoke on the condition of anonymity in line with military regulations declined to say whether troops were rotating in and out of the country or were stationed there for the foreseeable future. The Lebanese army and UNIFIL, a UN peacekeeping force stationed in the zone that Israeli forces purportedly entered, have not confirmed that Israeli troops crossed the border, although UNIFIL said it was notified that they were going to.

How far into Lebanon are Israeli ground troops?

The military official said that at this point Israeli ground troops are "within walking distance" of the border, targeting the small Lebanese villages hundreds of metres from Israeli territory. The military says Hezbollah militants remain in the area, despite heavy Israeli bombardment over the past few weeks. It says they are using the areas to launch attacks on Israel and to store weapons.

Have there been clashes between Hezbollah and Israeli troops?

There were no signs of ground combat

late Monday and early Tuesday in southern Lebanon.

The military official said there have been no clashes between Hezbollah militants and Israeli troops so far.

Meanwhile, cross-border fire continued. Hezbollah announced in statements that it had targeted groups of soldiers in several Israeli border areas with artillery shelling and rockets. Israel said no soldiers were injured and the targeting was unsuccessful.

Still, Israeli artillery units pumelled targets in southern Lebanon through the night and the sounds of airstrikes were heard throughout Beirut.

How extensive is the planned operation?

Israel has not given a timetable for how long the incursion will last and has declined to specify how far troops will go.

The military official said that marching to Beirut, as Israel did in its 1982 invasion of Lebanon, is "not on the table." At the time, the Israeli invasion was also pitched as a limited incursion to push the Palestine Liberation Organisation back.

He added that the operation in its current stages does not mirror Israel's ground incursions in Gaza, where the military entered cities with heavy manpower, artillery and tanks.

That could change, depending on whether Israel's government decides to launch a more extensive ground operation. Chris Coyle, a resident of Israel's north, told AP on Monday that Israeli tanks had been positioned along the border. Troops that entered Lebanon are from the 98th division, the military said. The division is responsible for some of the heaviest fighting inside Gaza and includes elite units specialising in attacks behind enemy lines.

Israel is expanding its evacuation warnings in southern Lebanon, sending hundreds of thousands of Lebanese fleeing from the south. The Israeli military's Arabic-language spokesperson asked residents living in villages north of an UN-declared buffer zone to flee. Under a UN resolution that ended the 2006 war, the zone was supposed to be controlled by a UN peacekeeping force and the Lebanese military.

-AP



“
We know how Yashasvi is going to play but Rohit walked out and just tonked the first ball for six. So when you walk the talk, obviously the dressing room doesn't have any other choice but to follow that same pattern. We have 50 runs out of 3 overs.
”

R. Ashwin

Fewer Test centres help, says Ashwin

By Amanpreet Singh

Kanpur: Premier off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Tuesday agreed that having a limited number of Test centres helps the players but fell short of endorsing the idea for India, saying it was above his pay grade to comment on that.

The debate on Test centres was reignited after Kanpur's Green Park stadium came under criticism for a poor drainage system, resulting in a loss of full two days in the second game between India and Bangladesh.

Star batter Virat Kohli had suggested a few years ago that India should have five major Test centres like

Australia and England.

"Does it help a player if you have just a few Test centres? Most certainly it does," Ashwin said after India trounced Bangladesh by seven wickets here on Tuesday.

"Because when we go to Australia, they play India only at five Test centres. They don't play us in Canberra. They don't play us at any of the other venues where they won't be very familiar with the conditions. So do England."

"They have selected Test centres and that's where they play. Some of those are only white-ball centres. Can we do it here (in India)? That's above my pay grade. I cannot comment on that," the player

of the series said.

The advantage of playing at the only select Test centres is that the players are familiar with the conditions and know what exactly they would require to do at a specific venue.

Australia has a tradition of playing at Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide. England have London, Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham and Edgbaston as their major Test centres.

Before saying that having limited Test centres indeed helps, Ashwin elaborated how cricket benefits by having various venues for the traditional format.

"Firstly, what are the benefits that Indian crick-

eters attain by having so many Test centres, you have got cricketers who come and play Test cricket from every nook and corner of this country.

"It is a huge country and it has triggered that sort of urgency and that sort of passion amongst cricketers to be able to come and play for this country. That is a big positive.

"The second of it is there are certain requisite ingredients that go into making a Test match happen. Like, for the weather and the kind of drainage that we need to be able to invest on. These are no-brainers," he said, making it clear that there should not be any compromise on required facilities.

Talking about young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill, Ashwin had no doubt that they were stars in the making.

"I would say both of them are in the native days or the formative years of playing Test Cricket but I do see that there will be the future pillars and overseas shores that they're going to encounter shortly will also enhance and enrich their experience going forward in their wonderful Test journey. They both are special, we all know that."

Ashwin said coming out to bat with an ultra aggressive approach was a plan they had to follow in the truncated second Test.

-PTI

Kohli gifts his bat to Hasan

Indian batting superstar Virat Kohli gifted one of his signed bats to the soon-to-be retired Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan after the home side completed a 2-0 Test series sweep over the visitors here on Tuesday.

Shakib, who played his last overseas Test here, has already made it clear that he wouldn't play the home series against South Africa unless the current caretaker government in Bangladesh can assure his smooth passage out of the country.

After the second Test ended here with India winning by seven wickets, Kohli was seen walking towards the Bangladesh team and handing over his bat to Bangladesh's greatest ever cricketer.

The duo was seen exchanging pleasantries and sharing a laugh as Shakib did a bit of shadow driving with the willow.

Shakib is a popular cricketer in India, having played 71 IPL matches, mainly for Kolkata Knight Riders and also a few for the Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Currently, Shakib is facing a murder charge back home levelled against him during the civil unrest that led to former PM Sheikh Hasina's ouster. Shakib was a member of parliament from Hasina's party the Awami League.



Carlos Alcaraz of Spain reacts after defeating Daniil Medvedev of Russia in a men's singles semi-final match for the China Open tennis tournament held in Beijing on Tuesday.

Pic: AP/PTI

IOA treasurer blasts Usha for 'false' claim

New Delhi: Indian Olympic Association Treasurer Sahdev Yadav on Tuesday hit back at president PT Usha for claiming that IOA Executive Committee members were not agreeing on a proposal to felicitate Paris Olympics medal-winners, saying her assertion is a "blatant lie".

Usha on Monday said that it was "deeply concerning" that the EC members failed to honour Olympic medalists and accused the Finance Committee of blocking funds intended to support athletes' preparation for the Paris Games.

In a rebuttal to Usha's claims, Sahdev said, "There

has been no discussion with EC members nor any official proposal in writing for organizing a felicitation ceremony for the medalists of Paris Olympics 2024. We fail to understand why IOA President is spreading lies across the whole country, to put down the EC members," he said.

KFL kicks off today

Mumbai: The 21st edition of the Kalina Football League (KFL), organised by the Our Lady of Egypt Church Sports Committee under the auspices of the Mumbai Football Association (MFA), is set to commence at the Our Lady of Egypt Church ground, Kalina from Wednesday.

Fr. Joshua D'Souza, Spiritual Director of the organising committee, said a total of eight teams will be fighting it out for the top honours in the Men's Open category. The participating teams are Kalina United, Kalina Rangers, J.P. United, FC Koloverly, FC Koloverly Rovers, FC Koloverly Oceanics, Talai FC and Indian FC. Simultaneously a Boys' Under-16 League consisting of teams from Kalina will be conducted.

This is one of the oldest and longest running locality-based leagues in the city of Mumbai and is restricted to players residing within Kalina vicinity only.

Thane, Pune clinch men's, women's badminton titles

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Thane and Pune clinched the men's and women's districts titles respectively in Shri Nandu Natekar Memorial Maharashtra State Senior Inter District (Team) and State Badminton Championship here on Tuesday.

In the men's final, Yash Suryavanshi defeated Suveer Pradhan 21-19, 21-17 in the match-deciding fifth tie of the singles to help Thane snatch a tense 3-2 victory.

The women's final was a one-sided contest as Pune defeated Thane 2-0. Saad Dharmadhikari rallied to beat Siya Singh 21-23, 21-18, 21-16 in the first singles.

The Pune pair of Shruti Mundada and Tanishka Deshpande combined well to overcome the Thane duo of Akshaya Warang and Anagha Karandikar 21-8, 13-21, 21-18 to clinch the victory.



Earlier, Thane made a strong start by winning the first two ties. Pradmish Kulkarni beat Yash Shah 21-9, 21-15 and later their doubles pair of Deep Rambhiya and Pratik Ranade defeated Aryan Shetty and Yash Shah 21-11, 21-17.

But the Pune side staged a comeback to win the next two ties to force the match into the decider.

Rishabh Deshpande defeated Atharva Joshi 21-13, 21-19 in the second singles before Arya Thakore and

Dhruv Thakore got the better of Kabir Kanzarkar and Sarvesh Yadav 21-11, 21-17 in the second doubles.

Suryavanshi, however, defeated Pradhan to halt Pune's charge and help his team win the title.

Results:

Women's finals: Pune beat Thane 2-0 (Saad Dharmadhikari bt Siya Singh 21-23, 21-18, 22-16; Shruti Mundada/Tanishka Deshpande beat Akshaya Warang/Anagha

Karandikar 21-8, 13-21, 21-18).

Men's finals: Thane beat Pune 3-2 (Pradmish Kulkarni bt Yash Shah 21-9, 21-15; Deep Rambhiya/Pratik Ranade beat Aryan Shetty/Yash Shah 21-11, 21-17; Atharva Joshi lost to Rishabh Deshpande 13-21, 19-21; Kabir Kanzarkar/Sarvesh Yadav lost to Arya Thakore/Dhruv Thakore 11-21, 17-21; Yash Suryavanshi beat Suveer Pradhan 21-19, 21-17).

Men's singles (round 2): 1-Varun Kapur beat Arnav Nimbalkar 21-3, 21-16; Krishna Singh beat Ishant Ramteke 19-21, 21-13, 21-4; Abhay Kisarwar beat Abhishek Mohite 21-18, 14-21, 21-18; Ajay Meena beat Krishna Majithia 26-24, 21-19; Aryan Epte beat Vedant Jawanjali 21-5, 20-22, 21-16; Kanav Shetty beat Aneesh Padhye 21-18, 21-19; Siddharth Thakur beat Soham Phatak 22-20, 21-19.

Whenever it comes to the team, I give my life out: Jemimah

Dubai: Jemimah Rodrigues feels adaptability and maintaining a team-first mentality will be key for India to achieve their dream of claiming a maiden ICC title at the T20 World Cup beginning here on Thursday.

India, who reached the finals of the women's T20 World Cup in 2020, will start their campaign in the ninth edition of the tournament against New Zealand on October 4.

"For me, it's all about assessing the conditions and playing the situation. I just want to keep it simple and do whatever it takes to help the team win and whatever the team needs," Rodrigues, who hit a 52 in the first warm-up game against

West Indies, told Star Sports.

"When I put things in that perspective, it gets the best out of me and motivates me. For me, whenever it comes to the team, I go and give my life out there. That gets me more passionate, energetic, and enthusiastic. I want Team India to win. We, as a unit, want Team India to win. For me, it's all about keeping it in that perspective."

The 24-year-old from Mumbai emphasised on the importance of playing to the situation irrespective of the bowler.

"For me, it's not about specific bowlers but about playing to the situation. Bowlers can have off days, and as a batter, I need to as-

sess which bowler to attack and when to hold back. The satisfaction comes from playing smart and doing what's best for the team."

In other ICC events, India has reached the finals of ODI World Cups in 2005 and 2017 but never gone the distance.

Harmanpreet Kaur and Co, meanwhile, made a good start by winning the first warm-up match against West Indies by 20 runs.

"For this team, it's a mix of absolute youngsters and some like me who have had experience. Richa (Ghosh) and Shafali (Verma) have also played World Cups before, so we are young but not inexperienced," Rodrigues said.



"Then we have Harman and Smriti (Mandhana), who have played more World Cups than all of us. That coming together is the strength of this team. This team is special. There's something in this team, a fire to win, and at the same time, an energy and bond that's very special.

"We keep talking about sticking to our processes in team meetings and doing whatever it takes to help Team India win. That's the entire goal of this team."

Talking about New Zealand legend Sophie Devine, Rodrigues said: "I remember watching her hit five sixes in a row at my first

Under-19 camp at Chinnaswamy Stadium. It was incredible, and since then, I've always admired her game. We've prepared well to bowl against her, and now it's just about executing our plans."

India will face Australia in a Group A clash in Sharjah on October 13, and Rodrigues stated that execution will be key against the former champions.

"I love playing against Australia because you have to bring your A-game. There's no other option if you want to win. The rivalry has been intense over the years, and it brings out the best in us.

"We've prepared well and put in the work. Now it's time to execute our plans."

“
Harman di is a big-match player. We've seen it time and again — from her 171 in the World Cup to her performances in key matches. As a team, we know how much this World Cup means to her, and we want to win it for India and for her. If I see her lifting the trophy, I know I'll start crying.
”

Rodrigues lavished praise on senior colleagues — opener Mandhana and skipper Harmanpreet.

"What stands out about Smriti is her maturity. Even though she's young, she understands the game and her role so well. As the vice-

captain, her inputs are invaluable, and she's developed a great understanding of players. She doesn't just tell you to do something her way; she puts herself in your shoes and offers advice that works for you."

-PTI