

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Modi's stern message on women safety

Guilty should not be spared: PM



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an interaction with 'Lakhpati Didis', in Jalgaon on Sunday.

Pic: PTI

By Correspondent

Jalgaon: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday termed crimes against women an unpardonable sin, adding the guilty should not be spared. Modi's strong remarks follow protests against the

brutal rape and murder of a 31-year-old trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Hospital and the sexual abuse of two four-year-old school girls in Badlapur near Mumbai. The PM made this comment in the presence of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and his two de-

puties, Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar. The Mahayuti government is under fire from the Opposition for delaying registration of FIR in the Badlapur case. Speaking at the 'Lakhpati Didi Sammelan' here Modi said the safety of women should be a priority.

"The safety of mothers, sisters, and daughters is the country's priority. I have repeatedly raised this issue from the Red Fort. Be it any state of the country, I understand the pain and anger of my sisters and daughters," he said. Modi said that he would

Those helping the perpetrators of crimes against women should not be spared. Be it a hospital, school, government or police station, at whatever level negligence occurs, everyone should be held accountable."

tell every political party and state government that crime against women is an unpardonable sin. Whoever is guilty should not be spared, he added. "The message should go from top to bottom. This sin is unpardonable. Governments will come and go, but protecting life and women's dignity is a big responsibility of all of us, both as a society and as a government," Modi said.

Modi said his government has done more for women in the last ten years than all the previous regimes since Independence. "Till 2014, less than Rs 25,000 crore loans were given to women self-help groups but in the last 10 years, Rs 9 lakh crore help was given," Modi said, referring to the government's 'S a k h i M a n d a l' programme.

Bangladesh defeats Pakistan for first time

Rawalpindi: Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hasan Shanto on Sunday described his team's first-ever Test win over Pakistan as a "special one" in the given circumstances the country is going through.

"It was a very important win for us because last month we had a difficult situation in Bangladesh. There are still some problems there but in Bangladesh we support each other and I am happy this win gives them a little bit of a smile on their faces," he said at the post-match conference after the 10-wicket win.

"We are happy with our performance and we just want to give more joy to our people in the second match as well. It was a special victory for us especially given how we adjusted to the hot conditions and pitch here," Shanto added. Shanto said they were confident of winning the match coming into the final day as the pitch was becoming difficult and his team had some experienced spinners and good seamers.

"I think Shakib and Miraz bowled very well today given the conditions and we knew that with a 90-run advantage Pakistan would be under pressure on the final day," he said. Shanto said the key to the win was the strong batting display in the first innings. - PTI

Telegram CEO arrested at Paris airport

Paris: Pavel Durov, the founder and CEO of the popular encrypted messaging service Telegram was arrested at a Paris airport, French media reported Sunday. The 39-year-old billionaire is reportedly suspected of failing to take steps to prevent criminal use of Telegram.

Durov was arrested at the Paris Le Bourget airport on Saturday evening after landing in France from Azerbaijan, according to broadcasters LCI and TF1. Investigators from the National Anti-Fraud Office, attached to the French customs department, notified Durov that he was being placed in police custody, the broadcasters said.

French prosecutors declined to comment on Durov's arrest when contacted by The Associated Press on Sunday, in line with regulations during an ongoing investigation. French media reported that Durov, 39, was the subject of an arrest warrant issued by France based on allegations that his encrypted platform has been used for money laundering, drug trafficking and allowing the sharing of content linked to sexual exploitation of minors.

Western governments have often criticised Tele-



Local media reported that the investigation was focused on a lack of moderators on Telegram, adding that the police considered that this situation allowed criminal activity to go on unimpeded on the messaging app.

gram for lack of content moderating on the messaging service. Russian government officials expressed outrage at Durov's arrest, with some highlighting what they said was the West's double standards on freedom of speech. "In 2018, a group of 26 NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and others, condemned the Russian court's decision to block Telegram," said Maria Zakharova, spokesperson for Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Do you think this time they'll appeal to Paris and demand Durov's release?" Zakharova said in a post. - AP

Paris Paralympics

95 officials to take care of 84 participants

New Delhi: The 84-member Indian contingent taking part in the Paris Paralympics beginning on August 28 will be accompanied by 95 officials as many participants will have their personal coaches and escorts travelling with them to take care of their special needs.

The total strength of the Indian contingent will thus have 179 members. Out of the 95, as many as 77 are team officials, nine are contingent medical officials and another nine contingent officials. India is sending the largest number of participants in the Paris Paralympics (August 28 to September 8) with 84 athletes competing in 12 sports. In the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021, India was represented by 54 members in nine sports.

"Considering the special needs of some para-ath-



IPC President Andrew Parsons, left, and Paris 2024 President Tony Estanguet during the Paralympic Flame lighting ceremony in Stoke Mandeville. Pic: PTI

letes, personal coaches have been included in the contingent. However, they will provide necessary services to other players as per the directions of the Chef de Mission/team head coach," the ministry said. "The participation of the entire contingent except that of Chef de Mission and one team manager for para badminton will be at cost to government."

The likes of javelin thrower Sumit Antil and shooter Avani Lekhara, who would be looking to defend their Tokyo Paralympics gold, are among those who will be having personal coaches. "In any para sports event, the participants need more support staff like personal coaches and escorts than able-bodied competitors. So, it is nothing new to have more

support staff" a team official said.

All the members of the contingent except for the CDM and team manager for the para badminton team will get USD 50 per day out of pocket allowance "as per required and actual period of stay during the Games which will be inclusive of acclimatisation and training period plus 2 days to and fro journey time".

Some of the officials will be staying outside the Games Village. Paralympic Committee of India president Devendra Jhajharia, who left for Paris on Sunday with a large contingent, including CDM Satya Prakash Sangwan, told PTI on Saturday that he will be staying outside the Games Village "to look after all the athletes" as some will be competing outside Paris. - PTI



Children dressed as Lord Krishna take part in Janmashtami festival celebrations, in Bengaluru on Sunday. Pic: PTI

Class six student mistakes pistol for toy

New Delhi: A pistol without magazine was recovered from a schoolbag of a 10-year-old student in Delhi's Najafgarh, police said on Sunday.

The boy thought it to be a toy and carried with him to

the school, they said.

According to a senior police officer, the incident took place at a private school in the Deepak Vihar area on Saturday, following which the Najafgarh police station received a call.

On reaching the school, the police team found that a student of Class 6 had his father's licensed pistol in his bag. The pistol was without magazine, the officer said. The boy's mother, who had been called in by the school

management, said her husband owned the licensed pistol. "The woman said her husband had passed away a few months ago and she had kept the pistol outside to deposit it at the police station," the officer said. - PTI

MP villages hotspot for thieves

Rajgarh: Dotted with palatial bungalows and sprawling campuses, a cluster of three villages stands out as an outlier in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district on economic prosperity. Just that it is powered by activities on the wrong side of the law.

The recent theft of valuables worth Rs 1.45 crore by a 14-year-old boy during a wedding at a five-star hotel in Rajasthan capital Jaipur brought these villages - Kadiya Sansi, Gulkhedi and Hulkhedi - into prominence on the national crime map. The local police estimate that 1,000-1,200 criminal cases have been registered

across the country against boys, men, girls and women from these villages. With a population of about 5,000, Kadiya Sansi is the epicentre of the illegal activities.

But, it's not easy for enforcement agencies to make arrests here. A police team from Tamil Nadu's Coimbatore, under security cover of the local cops, was attacked in Gulkhedi, under Boda police station, during one such attempt on August 10. "Local cases are few but the people of these villages, especially Kadiya Sansi, face criminal cases in different parts of the country. We learn about those only when outside police contact us.

There must be 1,000-1,200 cases registered against these people across India," Boda police station in-charge Ram Kumar Bhagat told PTI.

Bhagat said that the lure of easy money drives the residents of these three villages, about 50 km from district headquarters, to break the law. "They get easy money through loot, theft and other crimes. They appear to inspire one another. Since most of these people are associated with it (crimes), there is no one to

stop it. Women are more expert in this field than men," he said.

Bhagat said that a local police team was also attacked with stones when it accompanied their counterparts from Tamil Nadu to find out about the accused in a crime committed in Coimbatore.

A search is underway to track down those who hurled stones at the police team, he said. Asked about reports that outsiders are also being trained at Kadiya Sansi village for stealing, theft and

other criminal activities, Bhagat claimed ignorance, saying the people from this village cluster carry out rece before committing crimes. However, this is not the first time a police team has come under attack in these villages, also notorious for illegal liquor trading.

Mohan Singh, sarpanch of Kadiya Sansi village, claimed that the people are well educated and work in different jobs in major cities. The village head rejected the reports about the area being a breeding ground for criminal activities. There is no truth in those reports, he said. - PTI

Union minister among booked

Ranchi: An FIR was registered against more than 12,000 people, including 51 identified individuals, for allegedly being involved in a clash with police personnel during a BJYM rally in Jharkhand's capital Ranchi, officials said.

Some prominent BJP leaders, including the party's Jharkhand unit president Babul Marandi, Leader of Opposition in the assembly Amar Kumar Bauri, Union minister Sanjay Seth and former central minister Arjun Munda, were named in the FIR, they said. - PTI

Two from Maha held for killing in Goa

Panaji: The Goa police have arrested two property brokers who allegedly killed a 64-year-old woman at her house in Calangute over a monetary dispute, a senior official said on Sunday.

The accused, Aaquib Khalife and Nikhil Rajje, were apprehended from a petrol pump in Anjuna on Saturday, the official said. Khalife is a native of Ratnagiri (Maharashtra), and Rajje hails from Pune, he said.

The victim, Deodita Fernandes, was found dead in her apartment at Naikwado

in Calangute on Friday, the official said.

A police team was formed to collect local intelligence, and the duo were arrested, he said.

The official said the accused had a money dispute with the victim over the sale of her property at Calangute.

The duo allegedly transferred money from the victim's bank account to theirs after murdering her. They were withdrawing money when the police caught them at the petrol pump, he said. - PTI

Need Mahayuti for stability, prosperity, says Modi

By Correspondent

Jalgaon: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that Maharashtra needs the BJP-led Mahayuti government to continue for years to come to ensure the state's stability and prosperity.

Modi, who interacted with Lakhpati Didis here, released the Rs 2,500 crore revolving fund benefiting 48 lakh members of 4.3 lakh self-help groups.

The Lakhpati Didi scheme is not only about boosting the income of women, but also about empowering future generations, Modi said. "You must have heard that India is going to become the third-largest economy in the world. Women play a massive role in it. However, it was not the case a couple of years ago," Modi said.

"Women guarantee the prosperity of every home and every family. However, there was no one to guarantee help for the women," he said. Women did not have property in their name, and if they had to take a loan from a bank, they could not avail it, he said. In such a situation, they were not able to build their own small business, he added.

"Therefore, I, your son and brother, resolved to ease your lives. We took decisions in the interest of women year after year," Modi said. He said that of the three crore new houses that will be constructed under the government's housing scheme, most will be allotted to women.

"The Mudra scheme offered loans to people without any guarantee, and 70 per cent of the beneficiaries of this scheme turned out to



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Ministers Ajit Pawar and Devendra Fadnis during 'Lakhpati Didi Sammelan', in Jalgaon on Sunday.

be women. Some people opposed this scheme, citing risk factors and claimed it might become (bad) debt. But I trusted the women and their honesty. Many

have repaid their loans," he said. Now, the upper limit for Mudra loan, offered to non-corporate, non-farm and small and micro enterprises, has been increased

to Rs 20 lakh, the PM said. "When I visited you during the Lok Sabha elections, I promised we would make three crore sisters Lakhpati Didi. This means women

who work in self-help groups and have an annual income of more than one lakh rupees," he said.

In the last 10 years, one crore Lakhpati Didis were made, and in just two months, 11 lakh more Lakhpati Didi were added, he said. "Out of the newly added 11 lakh more Lakhpati Didis, one lakh are from Maharashtra."

Modi also said Maharashtra needs the BJP-led Mahayuti government to continue for years to come to ensure the state's stability and prosperity. "Maharashtra is the shining star of a developed India. The future of the state lies in more investment and job growth," he said.

Modi expressed his anguish over the Nepal bus accident in which 27 people from Jalgaon district were killed.

300 booked over objectionable slogans



By Correspondent

Pune: Police have registered a case against nearly 300 people after alleged objectionable slogans were raised during a protest outside the Pune District Collectorate, an official said on Sunday.

A 'Sarvadharm Sambhav Mahamorcha' was organised on Friday to protest against the recent purported remarks by religious leader Ramgiri Maharaj against Islam. During the protest, the alleged slogans were raised, the official said. According to the police, the morcha was organised without permission and the slogans created

communal tension and enmity between communities.

"An offence has been registered at the Bundgarden police station against 200-300 people who had participated in the morcha," said a senior police official.

The case has been registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for unlawful assembly, promoting enmity on grounds of religion, race and language and doing acts prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony and under the Maharashtra Police Act.

Ramgiri Maharaj had allegedly made objectionable remarks against Islam in Nashik.

Mentally-ill woman reunited with family

Mumbai: A 38-year-old woman suffering from a mental ailment who went missing from her home in Uttar Pradesh five months ago was reunited with her family by an organisation in Maharashtra.

The woman, Mina Sonu, who had wandered away from her house in Bondla in Agra, was found in Kankavali by a

team from Samvita Ashram.

She was reunited with her family after months of efforts on Saturday, a spokesman of the Jeevan Anand Sansthan, an NGO working to rehabilitate underprivileged people, said.

The woman went missing from her home on March 9. Her family filed a missing person report

at Jagadishpura police station in Agra the next day, and extensive searches were conducted across the district and surrounding areas.

He said the organisation used Google search tools to find the woman's home. After three months of diligent searching and help from local authorities in Uttar Pradesh, her family was traced.

Man attacks daughter

Thane: A man has been arrested for allegedly thrashing his 21-year-old daughter with a metal pipe and injuring her over her love affair in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Sunday.

The police on Saturday arrested the accused, Bablu Rathod Mandal (45), under relevant provisions of the BNS for assault.

41 villages TB free

By Correspondent

Thane: A total of 41 village panchayats in Maharashtra's Thane district have been declared tuberculosis-free, officials said on Sunday.

Among these villages, 13 are from Shahapur taluka, 9 from Murbad, 7 from Kalyan, and 6 each from Bhiwandi and Am-

bernath. They were declared TB-free under the Tuberculosis-Free Village Panchayat initiative.

Speaking at a function to mark this achievement, District Collector Ashok Shingare emphasised the district's ambitious goal of becoming tuberculosis-free by March 31, 2025.

"We made a strong start but only 10 per cent of the

target has been achieved. We must maintain vigilance to prevent tuberculosis from returning to these villages," he stated.

Officials said villages that remain tuberculosis-free for one year will be awarded a bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi, and villages that maintain this status for two consecutive years will receive



a silver statue. Villages that manage to keep TB at bay for three consecutive years will be honoured with a gold statue.



Family members of the victims of Nepal bus accident mourn at their residence, at Bhusawal in Jalgaon district on Sunday.

Man held for raping 12-year

By Correspondent

Palghar: Police on Sunday arrested a 42-year-old man for allegedly raping a 12-year-old girl in his neighbourhood in Maharashtra's Palghar district, an official said.

Accused Rama Ganpat Bhoir, a resident of Tarapur, allegedly committed the crime on Saturday afternoon, he said. Bhoir entered the girl's home when she was alone and raped her. He fled from the spot after she raised an alarm.

After being informed by her about the sexual assault, the girl's parents filed a police complaint, the official said.

Police have registered a case against Bhoir under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) section 64 (rape) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the official said.

Boiler blast in Jalna steel factory: One of 22 injured workers dies in hospital



Jalna: One of the 22 workers injured in a boiler blast in a steel factory in Jalna in Maharashtra succumbed to burn wounds at a private hospital in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar on Sunday, an official said.

The blast took place in Gaj Kesari Steel Factory in Jalna's MIDC area on Saturday afternoon, leaving 22 workers injured, including seven critically, after molten iron fell on them.

They were rushed to a private hospital in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, where Ramesh Bhatram, who suffered 98 per cent burns, died this morning, the official said.

After visiting the site on Sunday, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Ambadas Danve said strict action must be taken against the factory management.

"I visited the factory and found that safety aspects were missing. I have also heard such mishaps take place frequently. The administration must look

into this seriously," said Danve, who was accompanied by the company's director Ram Agarwal, Jalna Steel Association president Ghanshyam Goyal as

MH-FACORY BLAST-DEATH

well as his Shiv Sena (UBT) colleagues Bhaskar Ambekar and Anirudh Khotkar.

On Saturday night, the Chandan Jira police had booked the company's

manager Dilip Jha, furnace in-charge Sudhakar Roy and crane driver Ashok Prajapati in connection with the incident based on a complaint by injured worker Mohammed Rafiquddin, the official said.

Jalna Lok Sabha MP Kalyan Kale, in a statement, said the Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health must take immediate action to ensure workers in such units are safe.

-PTI

Woman, son held for death

Thane: A 40-year-old woman and her son have been arrested for allegedly causing the death of her husband four months ago in Navi Mumbai, police

said on Sunday. The police on Saturday arrested Digha residents Laxmi Bhagwan Patekar and her son Sumit (23) on charges under section 105

(culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, senior inspector Devendra Pol of the Rabale MIDC police station said.

The victim, Bhagwan Patekar (52), was an alcoholic and would beat up the mother-son duo. On the evening of May 20, when the victim got

violent, the accused beat him up, and he was admitted to a hospital, he said.

The victim died of internal injuries on May 26, the official said.

Following a probe, the two accused were arrested for causing his death, he said. The police are investigating the case for more details.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Jayant Patil, State President, NCP (SP)

"There are 288 seats in the Assembly. It is expected that there might be several changes in the seats allocation. It is unlikely that there will be any dispute over it. After all, we have to stay together. We will find a way after due deliberations."

Four held over gang rape of 15-year-old

Mumbai: Four people were arrested on Sunday over the alleged gang rape of a 15-year-old girl in Maharashtra's Dharashiv. The main accused in the case is still at large, an official said.

According to the official, the incident took place on Saturday afternoon when the teenager was going to a grocery shop. Prime accused Vijay Ghadge (25), who knows the girl, invited her to his house.

Four other men were present at Ghadge's house. Citing the FIR, the official



said Ghadge first raped the teenager following which two others sexually assaulted her.

The teen informed her family members about the gang rape after reaching home. They then filed a police complaint.

Police have arrested four

persons, all farmers from the same locality, while Ghadge is on the run. A case has been registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the official added.

-PTI

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Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged / charged to the Secured Creditor, the **Symbolic Possession** of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of **Canara Bank** will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is basis", on **12.09.2024** for recovery of ₹ **164,24,79,314/-** (as on **29.07.2024** upto further Interest & Charges from **30.07.2024**) due to the ARMI Branch of **Canara Bank** from **M/s. ABS ELECTROPLATERS (I) PVT. LTD.**, and the Guarantors (1) Mr. Prakash Bhat (2) Mrs. Ishwari Bhat and (3) Mr. Uttam Prakash Bhat and (4) M/s. Excel Metal Finishes : The reserve price and Earnest money deposit are as mentioned below : (₹ In Lakhs)

Sl. No.	Detail of the Property	Reserve Price	Earnest Money Deposit
1	Gala No. D-23 & D-24, M. K. Brothers Industrial Estate, Jarimari, A. K. Road, Mumbai-400 072 standing in the name of Sri. Prakash Bhat & Smt. Ishwari P. Bhat	193.00	19.30
2	Gala No. D-22, M. K. Brother Ind. Estate, Mathurdas Vasani Road, Jarimari, Kuria-Andheri Rd., Kuria, Mumbai standing in the name of M/s. Excel Metal Finishes	60.00	6.00
3	Gala No. 20, D-Wing, Bldg. No. 2, M. K. Brother Industrial Estate, Jarimari, Kuria-Andheri Road, Kuria, Mumbai standing in the name of the Company.	97.00	9.70
4	Flat at 401, HJK Lok Darshan CHS. Ltd., 4 th Flr., Bldg. No. "K", CTS No. 135, 135/1 Lok Darshan Phase II, Military Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Mumbai, standing in the name of Mr. Prakash Bhat & Mrs. Ishwari P. Bhat .	154.00	15.40
5	Flat No. 601, 602, 6 th Flr., HJK Lokdarshan Co-op. Housing Society Ltd., Military Road, Marol, Mumbai in the name of the Company (Merged Flat).	371.00	37.10

The Earnest Money Deposit shall be deposited on or before **11.09.2024** upto 5.00 p. m. There is no encumbrance to the knowledge of the Bank.

EMD of 10% of the Reserve Price is to be deposited by way of Demand Draft in favour of Authorised Officer, **Canara Bank**, ARMI Branch Mumbai or Shall be deposited through RTGS / NEFT / Funds Transfer to credit of account of **Canara Bank**, ARMI Branch, Mumbai A/c. No. 209272434, IFSC Code CNRB002360 on or before **11.09.2024** upto 5.00 p. m. and other documents to be submitted to service provider on or before **11.09.2024** upto 5.00 p. m. Date up to which documents can be deposited with Bank is **11.09.2024**.

Date of inspection of properties with prior appointment with Authorized Officer.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer the link "E-Auction" provided in **Canara Bank**'s website (www.canarabank.com) or may contact Dr. Seema Somkuwar, Authorised Officer, **Canara Bank**, ARMI Branch, Mumbai (Ph. No. : (022) 2206 5425 / 30 / Mob. No. 8655963489) or Mr. Deepak Kumar, (Mob. No. 9967278726) E-mail id : cb2360@canarabank.com during office hours on any working day or the sr service provider M/s. PSB Alliance (Ebkay), Unit 1, 3rd Floor, VIOS Commercial Tower, Near Wadala Truck Terminal, Wadala Estate, Mumbai-400 037 Contact Person Mr. Dharmesh Asher, Mob. No. 9892219848, (app.projectmanager2@psballiance.com, Help Desk No. 8291220220 (support.ebkay@psballiance.com) website : <https://ebkay.in/>)

Date : 21.08.2024
Place : Mumbai

Authorised Officer,
Canara Bank ARMI BRANCH

Be ready for 35 days block on western railway

Work of a new line between Goregaon and Kanndivli to begin today

By Correspondent

Mumbai : Amchi Mumbai is going to get a new 4.5 km rail line on Western Railway (WR) between Goregaon and Kandivali and its lakhs of passengers will have to face hardships to get it done smoothly. For this, they will have to bear a 35-day block with reduced numbers of services as a large number of cancellations and train reschedules will take place during this period.

However, to make it less inconvenient to the passengers, WR has planned most of the blocks during weekends and late nights on weekdays. The railway administration is finalising the details of the block and according to them, the work is expected to begin from August 27-28 midnight and as many as 650 to 700 services will be cancelled during the mega period.

However, the work on the 4.75 km stretch will not be done during the 10-day Ganeshotsav. Unlike the work on the Santacruz-Goregaon sixth line in November last year that led to the cancellation of more than 2,500 services, this time the officials said nearly 700 train services will be impacted over the five weekends.

WR is geared up

Western Railway's chief spokesperson Vineet Abhishek said that the administration has taken full care of their passengers and should face as little inconvenience as possible and therefore most of the major blocks have been planned during week-



“ We have tried to minimise the inconvenience caused to commuters during the rest of the period when this infrastructure upgrade will be carried out. Plan have been chalked out in such a way that passengers should face as little inconvenience as possible.

Vineet Abhishek,
CPRO-WR

ends. He said that We have made every effort to minimise cancellations and the work has not been planned during 11th to 17th Sept during ganeshotsav.

Improved Virar-Churchgate Connectivity

WR's spokesperson, in conversation with the "The Perfect Voice" said that they have outlined a comprehensive plan to revamp the rail line layout between

Churchgate and Virar, aiming to enhance the efficiency of train operations on this busy suburban route. According to the plan, a new rail line will be designated as the slow line for Virar-bound trains.

The existing slow line for Virar-bound trains will be repurposed for Churchgate-bound slow trains. "The current slow line used by Churchgate-bound trains will then serve Virar-

bound fast trains, while the existing fast line for Virar-bound trains will cater to Churchgate-bound fast trains," Abhishek added.

This reorganization of the tracks is a crucial step towards segregating rail lines for long-distance trains on the Goregaon-Kandivali route, thereby reducing congestion on the suburban fast lines.

Sources indicate that the re-

- Approx 130-140 cancellations and 40-50 short terminations during mega blocks that include five Saturday/Sunday nights.

- On weekdays mostly nil cancellations for the major part of 35 days work. During the fag end, 70-80 cancellations and approx 60-70 short terminations.

- On Saturday nights, block will taken from 10 hrs to morning 8 am, main blocks on 5 Saturday nights

- Apart from this 3 to 4 hours blocks without disturbing trains operations during weekdays at night.

maining work on the Kandivali-Borivali corridor is expected to be completed by December. WR successfully completed the first phase of the sixth-line project on the Santacruz-Goregaon corridor in November 2023. Extending the sixth line to Borivali is particularly significant as it will ensure that long-distance trains do not interfere with the fast lines used by suburban services.

Urja Marg all set for inauguration



Mumbai: Mumbai Urja Marg, an inter-state transmission system project envisaged by the Ministry of Power, for ensuring additional 2,000 MW power supply across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, is ready for formal inauguration.

The 90-km long Padgha-Kharghar inter-state transmission line (Mumbai Urja Marg), being set up by Sterlite Power, is poised to be a game changer for the entire region, official sources told PTI. They said, "the project is ready for formal inauguration."

It will ensure an uninterrupted power supply to the maximum city, contributing to its infrastructure-led economic growth and improving the quality of life.

The Mumbai Urja Marg project was deliberated in the 41st Standing Committee Meeting (SCM) of the Power Ministry held on December 21, 2016. It was further ratified by the 42nd SCM of the Ministry of Power on November 17, 2017.

The project was discussed in the 2nd Meeting of the Empowered Committee on Transmission Line (ECT) of the Ministry of Power held on August 6, 2018.

The project was awarded

through TBCB (tariff-based competitive bidding) mode, the Letter of Intent (LoI) for the project was provided on March 2, 2020.

On October 12, 2022, the Maharashtra cabinet approved a revised policy to streamline land use for ultra-high voltage transmission lines and pylons.

This policy shift significantly accelerated the construction of the MUML project, enabling its completion within just 20 months after Maharashtra became the first state to approve a policy specifically for land use for power transmission projects. Through regular weekly and monthly reviews, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis have directly overseen the resolution of technical challenges, ensuring the project's timely progress.

Fadnis, also the state's energy minister, took a special interest in the project, which was delayed by over 12 years. A war room was created to oversee the progress of high-value infrastructure projects, highlighting the government's commitment to bolstering economic growth and enhancing the quality of life.

- PTI

State employees too will get revised pension scheme

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government employees too shall get a revised pension scheme on the lines of the pension scheme recently announced by the union government, the state cabinet decided on Sunday.

The Centre has rolled out a revised pension scheme for its employees. The state cabinet under the leadership of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday decided to bring in a similar scheme for the state government employees. The state Cabinet cleared a proposal put up Finance department in this regard. The revised pension scheme will benefit lakhs of the state government employees, a senior CMO official said.

The revised pension scheme will be implemented with a retrospective effect from March 2024, an official said



Corporation for senior citizens

Apart from the revised pension scheme, the state Cabinet also decided to set up a new corporation for senior citizens. This is expected to benefit over 1.5 crore senior citizens.

River linking

The state approved the Naar-Paar-Girna river linking project that is expected to boost the irrigation potential of North Maharashtra districts of Jalgaon, Nashik and Dhule apart from ensuring drinking water for the cities in the belt.

Solar pump scheme

The state cabinet also decided to expand the solar pump scheme for farmers so that more farmers would get electricity during day time for their crops.

SRA projects

In a major decision relating to Mumbai, the state cabinet also decided to complete the slums rehabilitation scheme projects in the city in a time bound manner. Several projects under slum rehabilitation schemes have been lingering in several phases across the city for the past many years. The Cabinet also decided to assign the projects to different government corporations to ensure speedy completion of the schemes.

New tunnel

The state cabinet also cleared proposal for a tunnel between Khadakwasla and Fursungi in Pune district that shall boost irrigation potential of Pune region, make available drinking water and control floods.



Actors Jackie Shroff, Aditya Pancholi, Mukesh Rishi, Pankaj Dheer, Poonam Dhillon, Johnny Lever, Deepak Parasher, Sudhir Pandey, Dalip Tahil, Producer Palhaj Nihalani were present and naming of a road after late actor Daya Kishen Sapru road at Fun Republic Cinema lane, in Mumbai on Sunday. Pic: Bhusan Koyande

Two booked for prostitution

Thane: Two persons were booked for pushing a 20-year-old woman into the flesh trade in Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, a Thane police official said on Sunday.

As per the complainant, she had gone to the house of one of the accused in Diva here on April 17 and

the latter told her about a good job opportunity in Jabalpur, the Rabodi police station official said.

"In Jabalpur, the accused handed over the victim to another woman for a consideration of Rs 5000 and left.

The second accused forced the victim into a sex racket. She was also

beaten up when she refused," he said.

A case under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act was registered on Friday against the two women, who are yet to be arrested, the official added.

- PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Ashok Chavan
MP, BJP

"I have been elected to Rajya Sabha. My Bhokar Assembly seat is vacant now. If the party nominates her my daughter Shreejaya will contest the election from that seat."

MACT awards 20 lakh in accident case

By Correspondent

Thane: The motor accident claims tribunal (MACT) in Maharashtra's Thane district awarded a compensation of more than Rs 20 lakh each to the families of two men killed in an accident while on their way to a wedding in 2018.

In two different orders, MACT chairman S B Agarwal granted Rs 22.2 lakh to the family of Firoz Khan Rashid Khan (33) and Rs 24.1 lakh to the kin of Arif Mehboob Malak (50).

The order passed on August 12 was made available on Saturday.

An interest rate of 7.5 per cent will be applied to the compensation amounts, excluding future prospects, the order stated.

Appearing for the claimants, advocate PM Tillu informed the tribunal that on December 18, 2018, a truck collided with the tempo traveller in which the victims and their families were travelling to a wedding in Bhusaval. Khan and Malak were killed in the

crash.

The tribunal's ruling termed the case as one of "composite negligence", as both vehicles were insured by the same company and the deceased were passengers.

The tribunal held the respondents, tempo owner Nalini Vilas Patil and truck owner Nisha Naresh Agrawal, liable for compensation.

The owners failed to appear for the hearings, resulting in a decision made ex parte against them.

Businessman duped of Rs 33.3 lakh

Navi Mumbai: A 53-year-old businessman from Navi Mumbai was allegedly cheated of Rs 33.3 lakh by a woman who befriended him on an online dating application, police said on Sunday.

Based on a complaint by the businessman from Ghansoli, a case was registered at the Cyber police station on Friday under sections 319(2) (cheating by personation) and 318(4) (cheating) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Information Technology Act, an official said.

The complainant has alleged that a woman who identified herself as Pragati Dahiya contacted him on a dating app, and they met and communicated on WhatsApp between March and July 2024. The accused lured him into giving her Rs 33.3 lakh whenever they met in five months, he said.

The accused failed to return the money, following which the complainant approached the police, the official said, adding that a probe is underway and no arrest has been made.

BRIEF

D2C summit in Mumbai

India D2C (direct-to-consumer) summit 2024 to deliberate conventional offline retail into the next level of innovation will be held in Mumbai on August 28-29. The summit will see participation from over 300 brands, investors, enablers, analysts and industry leaders to discuss digital commerce in its new avatar.

Zen raises Rs 1,000 cr

Zen Technologies has raised Rs 1,000 crore by allocating 62,46,096 equity shares with a face value of Re 1 at an issue price of Rs 1,601 per share. Key investors participating in this QIP include Kotak Mutual Fund, White Oak Offshore Fund, White Oak Mutual Fund, Motilal Oswal Mutual Fund, and Bandhan Mutual Fund, amongst others. The proceeds from the QIP will be strategically deployed to align with the company's long-term vision to penetrate adjacent markets (Naval and Air Force), to continue deep R&D in the field of counter-drone solutions, and expand its footprint in the global defense market.

Suraksha infuses Rs 250 cr in Jaypee

Suraksha Group infuses Rs 250 cr in Jaypee Infratech after acquiring it through insolvency process and has also arranged a Rs 3,000 crore loan facility, as it gears up to complete around 20,000 unfinished flats in Delhi NCR. Around Rs 1,000 crore cash is lying in the balance sheet of the Jaypee Infratech Ltd, which the bankrupt company has accumulated from real estate business and toll income of Yamuna Expressway that connects Greater Noida and Agra.

FPCE Writes to Centre
MahaRERA's move over dispute questioned

New Delhi: Homebuyers' association FPCE has questioned Maharashtra real estate regulator MahaRERA's decision to constitute and be part of a conciliation forum to settle dispute between builders and customers, saying the law does not give such power and the move can lead to possible conflict of interest.

Forum for People's Collective Efforts (FPCE) President Abhay Upadhyay has written a letter on August 19 to Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs Additional Secretary Satinder Pal Singh objecting to the conciliation forum constituted by MahaRERA and its "suspicious functioning".

The association has asked the ministry to investigate the constitution of this forum, its functioning and also orders passed, to ascertain whether the forum is favouring builders.

"Maharashtra Real Estate Regulatory Authority (MahaRERA) has constituted Conciliation Forum for amicable settlement of dispute between promoter of real estate projects and allottee under Section 32 of Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act' 2016 (RERA).

"Section 32 of RERA merely gives power of recommendations to the authorities and not the power to constitute such forum it-



self," Upadhyay said.

The association has suggested that the ministry should issue guidelines to

states after due consultations with all stakeholders for constitution and working of conciliation forum.

"It is important to ensure that conciliation forum so constituted is independent, uniform and comprises impartial persons of repute on the basis of selection criteria," Upadhyay said.

The FPCE emphasised on the need to ensure that RERA authorities are not directly or indirectly part of such conciliation forum to avoid any "possible conflict of interest".

The association also suggested that if Lok Adalats are functional in any state then that should be encouraged in place of conciliation forum.

"In view of the serious allegations against conciliation forum of MahaRERA,

it is our humble request that your Ministry should investigate the constitution, functioning and orders of conciliation forum to determine whether their conduct and their whole eco-system favours builders," the association said.

The ministry should ask all state RERA authorities to keep the functioning of conciliation forum suspended till the detailed guidelines from the Union ministry is sent to them, it said.

The FPCE said MahaRERA has exceeded its brief under the Act and "given scope of conflict of interest".

"Needless to say that this

has been done under influence and for the benefit of the builders which becomes very clear when you see the composition of Conciliation Forum of MahaRERA," the FPCE said.

The association pointed out that only one organisation representing consumers and three organisations representing builders are members of this forum.

"If you go further deep, you will find that there are only two individual representative for consumers and six individual representatives for builders i.e. lopsided constitution in favour of builders," it said in the letter.

-PTI

Succession war in Godfrey Phillips

Advisory firm against reappointment of Bina Modi

New Delhi: US-based proxy advisory firm Glass Lewis has advised the shareholders of Godfrey Phillips to vote "against" the special resolution seeking the reappointment of Bina Modi as Managing Director at the Annual General Meeting on September 6.

Glass Lewis has backed Samir Modi's presence on the board.

Godfrey Phillips India has scheduled its Annual General Meeting on September 6, 2024, in which it has put five ordinary resolutions and one special resolution for approval from its shareholders.

As Bina Modi's remuneration exceeds the limits of Rs 5 crore or 2.5 per cent of the net profits of the com-

pany, Godfrey Phillips requires a special resolution, which has to be passed from a super majority of 75 per cent of the total votes polled.

Opposing the special resolution, Glass Lewis observed



there are "no defined performance conditions for the payment of commission" to Bina Modi and her "appointment is as combined chairman and managing director".

"Given our concerns, we do not believe shareholders

should support the proposed appointment and remuneration of this executive at this time. We recommend that shareholders vote AGAINST this proposal," said San Francisco, California-based proxy advisory firm.

Godfrey Phillips India, the flagship company of Modi Enterprises, is currently going through an in-house board room and succession battle between Bina Modi and Samir Modi-led camps.

Samir Modi is the son of Bina Modi, who is heading the board of the company, which has decided not to renew or reappoint him as his term ends this year.

Samir Modi, who is on the board of Godfrey Phillips an executive director till his su-

perannuation, is engaged in a slugfest with his mother.

Earlier, in June he had alleged Bina Modi of orchestrating an attack on him and of being stopped from participating in the board meeting of the company.

The proxy firm has observed that Godfrey Phillips' board has concluded Samir Modi's actions and performance constitute misconduct, however, there has been no public disclosure from the company to substantiate any of these claims.

Glass Lewis further said it believes shareholders still have a right to make a determination on Samir Modi's candidacy as a continuing director, and the absence of such a choice sends a "nega-

tive signal" to shareholders.

Godfrey Phillips has also proposed to appoint Samir's sister Charu Modi on the board of the company for five years from September



7, 2024.

In Godfrey Phillips India, promoters own 72.58 per cent stake, in which the Modi family owns 47.48 per cent stake and the remaining 25.10 per cent is owned by Philip Morris Global Brands Inc.

For the financial year end-

ed on March 31, 2024, Godfrey Phillips India, which owns cigarette brands like Four Square, Red and White, Cavanders, Tipper and North Pole, had revenue of Rs 5,274.68 crore.

It also manufactures and distributes brand Marlboro under a license agreement with Philip Morris.

Besides, it also operates the convenience store chain 24Seven, which it last month had announced to exit from this loss-making business.

Last month Godfrey Phillips had said it is going ahead with plans to exit from the retail business operated under the 24Seven brand following the setting aside of an interim injunction on the move by a district court in the Capital.

IOC, BPCL, GAIL fined

New Delhi: India's biggest oil firms including Indian Oil, BPCL and gas utility GAIL have been slapped with fines for a record fifth straight quarter for failing to meet listing norms of having the requisite number of independent and women directors on their board.

Stock exchanges BSE and NSE have slapped fines on oil refining and fuel marketing giants Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), explorer Oil India Ltd (OIL), gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd, and refiner Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) for not meeting the listing requirement in the April-June quarter.

No irregularity in land sale JSW Steel



Bengaluru: Karnataka Large and Medium Industries Minister M B Patil on Sunday asserted that there is no irregularity in the state government's decision to execute the sale deed of 3,666 acres of land in Ballari district to Jindal Steel.

He emphasised that the Cabinet has decided to implement the order issued on May 6, 2021, during the B.S. Yediyurappa-led BJP government, following a High Court directive on March 12, 2024.

Karnataka Cabinet on Thursday gave its approval for executing an absolute sale deed for 2,000.58 acres of land at Kurekappa and Toranagallu villages in Sandur taluk, and 1,666.73 acres of land at Toranagallu, Musinayakanahalli and Yerabanhalli, in favour of JSW Steel.

JSW Steel will get 2,000.58 acres at Rs 1.22 lakh per

acre and 1,666.73 acres at Rs 1.50 lakh per acre.

Patil dismissed Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly Aravind Bellad's accusation of an "internal agreement", in the matter as baseless.

"If there has been any internal agreement, it must be with his own party (BJP)," he retorted, according to a statement from the minister's office.

Noting that Jindal Steel had approached the High Court because the order issued by the Yediyurappa government was not implemented, the minister said,

KARNATAKA MINISTER'S CLAIM

the court subsequently directed that the order be followed, and accordingly, the current government has taken the decision.

Jindal Steel has invested Rs 90,000 crore in the state, creating 50,000 jobs, he further said, and cautioned that failing to execute the lease-cum-sale deed, even after compliance with the government's terms, would send the wrong message to investors.

Amit Shah pushes for ethanol production in CH

New Delhi: Union Home and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah on Sunday laid out a comprehensive plan to boost the cooperative sector in Chhattisgarh, focusing on ethanol production, maize cultivation, and expansion of cooperative societies.

Chairing a review meeting in Raipur, Shah emphasised the need for contracts between NCCF, NAFED, and the state government to promote maize cultivation, an official statement said.

"The central government will purchase all maize from farmers at Minimum Support Price," Shah said, noting the crop's low cultivation cost.

The minister called for complete registration of Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS) on NAFED and NCCF portals for agricultural produce sales.

Shah proposed mandatory accounts for traders, PACS, and cooperative societies in District Cooperative Central Banks.

On ethanol production, he said, "Multi-feed ethanol production plants should be set up in the remaining three cooperative sugar mills within six months," assuring central government support.

Ambani had resigned in Feb 2022: spokesperson

New Delhi: Businessman Anil Ambani is reviewing a Sebi order imposing a fine and banning him from capital markets for five years in an alleged fund diversion case and will take appropriate next steps as legally advised, his spokesperson said in a statement on Sunday.

Ambani, the spokesperson in a statement said, had resigned from the board of Reliance Infrastructure Ltd and Reliance Power Ltd, pursuant to Sebi's interim order dated February 11, 2022 in the matter pertaining to Reliance Home Finance Ltd.

He "is in compliance with the said interim order (of February 11, 2022) for the last two and half years," the statement said.

On the August 22 order that banned him and 24 others from the securities market for five years on charges of diversion of funds, the spokesperson said, "Mr Ambani is reviewing the final order dated August 22, 2024 passed by Sebi in the said matter, and will take appropriate next steps as legally advised."

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) had also imposed a fine of Rs 25 crore on Ambani, saying he orchestrated a scheme to

"siphon off" funds from Reliance Home Finance, a listed subsidiary of conglomerate Reliance Group of which he is chairman.

The ban means that he and the other 24 will not be able to access the securities market and are prohibited from buying, selling or otherwise dealing in securities, directly or indirectly.

In a separate statement, Mumbai-listed Reliance Infrastructure Ltd said it "was not a notice or party to the proceedings before Sebi in which the order is passed. No directions are given in the order against Reliance Infrastructure Ltd".

"Mr Ambani had resigned from the board of directors of Reliance Infrastructure Ltd pursuant to the interim order dated February 11, 2022 passed by Sebi in the same proceedings. Therefore, the order dated August 22, 2024 passed by Sebi has no bearing whatsoever on the business and affairs of Reliance Infrastructure Ltd," it said.

Reliance Power, the other listed company of Anil Ambani's group, also issued a similar statement saying Ambani had resigned in 2022 and that the latest Sebi order has no bearing on it.

Demand for graphite electrodes drop globally

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Demand for graphite electrodes is down due to increased Chinese steel exports impacting domestic steel production in several countries, according to a top official of HEG Ltd.

Graphite electrodes find application in electric arc furnaces, which melt scrap to manufacture steel.

"China may end up exporting more than 100 million tons of steel in the full year 2024 which is very close to the highest ever export of 112 million tons in 2015. Such large exports from China to the rest of the world does affect other countries' own steel production due to cheap prices of Chinese exports of steel," said Ravi Jhunjhunwala, Chairman, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of HEG Ltd, a leading Indian graphite electrode manufacturer.

"This obviously has an impact wherein the demand for graphite electrodes reduces as the rest of the world produces less steel under pressure from Chinese exports," said Jhunjhunwala, whose



company has one of the largest integrated graphite electrode plant located at Mandideep near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh that exports 70 percent of its production to over 30 countries.

In the first six month of the current calendar year, China has produced 55.6

CHINESE STEEL EXPORTS SURGE

percent of the total steel production with significantly increased exports of 53.4 million tons due to slowdown in their own domestic demand.

In the entire calendar year of 2020, China had exported 53.7 million tons of steel which they have now almost exported in the first six months of the current calendar year, he said.

As a result, the electrode pricing continues to remain under pressure due to reduced demand, Jhunjhunwala said.

However, there is a silver lining as several new greenfield electric arc furnaces of over 100 million tons are being announced and out of which 64 million tons are likely to be operational by as early as 2027, he said expressing confidence of catering to this increasing demand for graphite electrodes globally next year 2025 onwards.

In broad terms, a million ton of electric arc furnaces currently cost around USD 1 billion. So USD 100 billion of new steel capacity investments have been committed all over the world, Jhunjhunwala said, indicating that steel prices will remain under pressure.

IndiGo to introduce 'Mx' option for passengers

New Delhi: IndiGo will soon introducing the gender-neutral option of honorific 'Mx' for passengers at the time of booking tickets, as part of larger efforts to boost inclusivity.

Besides, the country's largest carrier, which has a domestic market share of 62 per cent, aims to increase by two-fold the number of individuals with disabilities employed by it.

The airline will be introducing the 'Mx' option at the time of booking for passengers and that will provide a choice for transgenders who

do not want to identify themselves, Sukhjit S Pasricha, Group Chief Human Resources Officer at IndiGo, told PTI.

Currently, 'male' and 'female' are the options available on the airline's website during the booking process.

Air India Express and Vistara already offer the 'Mx' option for passengers at the time of booking tickets.

Pasricha said IndiGo has implemented various initiatives for the LGBTQ+ community, including employee referral programmes specifically designed to encour-



age hiring of LGBTQ+ individuals.

"This has strengthened candidate mobilisation through internal resources and fostered a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ employees... we partner with agencies specializing in LGBTQ+ recruitment," he said.

According to him, there is a steady induction of LG-

BTQ+ individuals and they are working in various functions, including flying, at the airline.

"Our benefits like gender reassignment surgery, inclusion of live-in partners in the medical insurance, has created an even more inclusive space, and has been one of the attractive features in our outreach to aspiring candidates from the community," he added.

At the end of March 31, 2024, the airline had 36,860 permanent employees, including 5,038 pilots and 9,363 cabin crew.

"Our organisation has over 240+ individuals with disabilities across 60+ cities in customer facing roles. The placement of individuals with disabilities is determined based on multiple factors, including safety, accommodation requirements, and skill mapping.

"We prioritise merit-based hiring and have primarily employed individuals with disabilities as customer service officers/executives for airport operations roles, with some also serving in cargo teams," Pasricha said.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sajid Tarar,
Pakistani-American
businessman

"Modi's slogan of nationalism has worked well for Indians in India and also Indians living and working in the United States, where they dominate critical areas. When that happens, you know a nation has arrived."

Effect of allegations of sexual harrasement

Siddique, Ranjith resign from key posts

Kochi: Noted actor Siddique on Sunday resigned as the general secretary of the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (A.M.M.A.) following sexual assault allegations raised by a woman actor on August 24.

Speaking to media, the senior actor said he had sent his resignation letter to the President of the organisation, Mohanlal.

"Yes, I have tendered my official resignation to the president of the organisation, Mohanlal. Since there were allegations against me, I have decided not to continue in the post and resigned," Siddique said. A female actor had on Saturday alleged that Siddique had sexually abused her after inviting her for a movie discussion.

The allegations came in the wake of the churn in the Malayalam film industry following the release of Justice Hema Committee report, which pointed towards numerous incidents of sexual abuse in the field. The report has revealed instances of harassment and exploitation of women in the Malayalam cinema industry, prompting calls for action against the guilty.

Meanwhile, various members of A.M.M.A. welcomed the decision of the senior actor to step down from the top post of the outfit in the wake of the allegations. Meanwhile, Jayan Cherthala, the vice president of the A.M.M.A., said it was not appropriate for Siddique to continue in the position even after such serious allegations cropped up against him. Well-known actor Anoop Chandran said he sent an email to A.M.M.A. president Mohanlal in the morning detailing the necessity of seeking Siddique's resignation from the position.

"The continuation of a person,



facing serious allegations, in the post is actually an insult to the entire organisation. So I said in the email that if Siddique was not ready to step down on his own, the executive committee should be prepared to oust him," Chandran told media.

Actress Mala Parvathy said Siddique's decision to resign was "morally and ethically correct". "The actor's resignation is inevitable...it is an appropriate decision. If that victim woman showed the courage to come in front of the society and detailed the trauma she underwent publically, we should understand the intensity of pain and humiliation she had suffered," Parvathy said.

Ranjith resigns

Acclaimed Malayalam filmmaker Ranjith on Sunday resigned as the chairman of Kerala Chalchitra Academy following allegations of misbehaviour levelled against him by a Bengali actor.

In an audio clip sent to a television channel, Ranjith said he doesn't want to continue in the position as it would adversely impact the reputation of the Left government in the state.

He also said he would fight the accusations against him legally.

"I have been targeted by a certain section of people since the day I took charge as the Chairman of the Academy. I need to prove before the society that the allegations are untrue. I have decided to move legally and bring out the truth," he was heard saying in the audio clip.

"Many people including the media are attacking me without understanding the truth. In this context, I have decided to step down from the post," Ranjith said.

The Bengali actress recently alleged that the award-winning filmmaker had behaved in an inappropriate manner when she came up for the shooting of a film which he had helmed. The filmmaker has rejected the actor's charge and said he was the "real victim" in the case.

After Ranjith announced his resignation, state Cultural Affairs Minister Saji Cheriyan told reporters here that the government would accept the filmmaker's resignation as soon as he sent it.

Reiterating that the Left government has always stood by the victims in issues relating to sexual assaults and abuses, the minister also rejected allegations that he had tried to shield the accused director.

"I have always taken a stern stand in favour of women in all is-

ues. The Left government's stand is also crystal clear in the matter. We are always with victims in such cases. Stringent action will be taken against the wrongdoers."

The minister also accused the media of 'misinterpreting' his words and claimed that he had never supported Ranjith. Cheriyan had courted controversy on Saturday saying Ranjith was one of the most acclaimed filmmakers of the country and no case could be registered based on just allegations and such cases won't stand. As his reaction triggered a row, the minister later came out with a Facebook post clarifying that the government would not protect anyone who had committed a wrong.

Ranjith was forced to announce his resignation on Sunday morning following intense protests against him and the state government in view of the shocking charges.

Opposition Congress and BJP already made it clear Ranjith had no moral right to continue in the position. Meanwhile, BJP activists took out a protest march to Ranjith's residence in Kozhikode this morning demanding his resignation. Youth Congress activists had protested outside a resort in Meppadi in Wayanad district where Ranjith was staying on Saturday.

YC state vice-president Abin Varkey lodged a formal complaint with the police chief seeking action against him on Saturday. The accusations of misbehaviour against Ranjith by the Bengali actress has brought fresh trouble for the Pinarayi Vijayan government which is facing opposition heat on its alleged inaction over the Justice Hema Committee report.

- PTI



Doctor Rape and Murder

Main accused undergoes lie detection test

New Delhi: The lie detection test on Sanjay Roy, the main accused in the alleged rape and murder of a RG Kar Medical College trainee doctor, is underway at Kolkata's Presidency Jail where he is lodged, officials said on Sunday.

Two more individuals will undergo the test at the CBI office in Kolkata during the day, they said.

Four persons including former principal Sandip Ghosh underwent the polygraph test on Saturday, the officials said. The CBI has sought permission from court to put seven persons including Roy and former principal of the medical college Sandip Ghosh through THE lie detector test. The test cannot be used as evidence during the trial but findings give the agency a direction for the further probe.

A team of polygraph spe-

CBI sleuths on Sunday launched search operations on the premises of former principal of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital Sandip Ghosh, ex-MSVP Sanjay Vashisth and 13 others in and around Kolkata in connection with their probe into alleged financial irregularities at the institute, officials said. The anti-corruption unit of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is also searching the residences and offices of those engaged in supplying materials for management and care of patients.

cialists flown to Kolkata from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) in Delhi is conducting the tests, they said.

Roy was arrested by the Kolkata Police on August 10, a day after the body of the 31-year-old medic was found in the Seminar Hall of the medical college. A CCTV footage and a Bluetooth device found near the medic's body resulted in the arrest of Roy, who was allegedly seen entering the seminar hall of the college where the body was found at around 4 am.

Roy (33) was working with the Kolkata Police as a civic

volunteer since 2019.

The accused, who is a trained boxer, allegedly got close to a few senior police officers over the years, following which he was moved to the Kolkata Police Welfare Board and posted at the police outpost at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital.

He has denied the allegations against him. The CBI earlier told the Supreme Court that the crime scene was altered by the time it took over the probe which suggests there was an attempt by the local police to cover up.

- PTI



An artisan gives final touches to a brass idol of Lord Krishna ahead of 'Janmashtami' festival, in Nagpur on Saturday

Pic: PTI

Omar appeals PDP to withdraw from polls

Ganderbal (JK): National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah on Sunday claimed the PDP has copied his party's manifesto and asked the Mehbooba Mufti-led party to not field candidates against NC-Congress nominees for the betterment of Jammu and Kashmir as their agenda is the same.

Abdullah's remarks came a day after Mehbooba said the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) would extend complete support to the Congress-National Conference (NC) alliance and leave all seats in the elections for the coalition if it accepts her party's

agenda.

The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister was addressing NC workers in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, where activist Sayim Mustafa joined the party.

Abdullah said the NC has prepared an extensive manifesto for the assembly polls which has been copied by other parties.

"We have not left out anything in the manifesto. Today, everyone has copied our manifesto. They should have kept some differences," he said, referring to the PDP's manifesto which was released by Mehbooba on Saturday.



Abdullah said his party promised to provide 200 free units of electricity if it comes to power and "they (PDP) also said they will provide 200 units".

"We said we will provide one lakh government jobs in the first year, they also

put that in their manifesto. We talked about reopening (cross-LoC) routes, it is in their manifesto as well. We talked about keeping the doors of dialogue open and they also said so. Almost everything that my colleagues put in our manifesto, they also put it," he said.

On the PDP's offer, Abdullah said there was not much difference between the agenda of the NC and the PDP.

"They (PDP) said if the NC-Congress alliance accepts their agenda, they will not put up candidates. You have put all our agenda in your manifesto. You have

already accepted our agenda and now there is not much of a difference between your agenda and our agenda. Then do not field candidates and come, we will build a better tomorrow for Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Ahead of his speech, NC leaders asked Abdullah to reconsider his decision to not contest the assembly elections. Party workers chanted slogans asking him to contest elections from Ganderbal, the family bastion of the Abdullahs.

Abdullah, however, said he does not know what the future holds.

- PTI

Chirag pitches for caste census

Ranchi: Union minister Chirag Paswan was on Sunday re-elected as Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) president for five years at its national executive meeting here. The decision was taken unanimously at the meeting, Paswan said.

Paswan, the Minister of Food Processing Industries, also pitched for a nationwide caste census, but cautioned against making the figures public as it will cre-

ate a "rift" in society.

"We have always emphasised that we want the caste census to be conducted... It will ensure that the government has correct numbers. However, I do not want the figures of the census to come out in public. That may create a rift," said the minister, whose late father Ram Vilas Paswan was among the tallest Dalit leaders of the country.

He also said a special

resolution was passed at the national executive meeting to extend a motion of thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his welfare initiatives and work towards the SC-ST community. Commenting on the creamy layer in SC community, he said: "We have been opposed to it since they are not just victims of social and educational backwardness, but even untouchability".

Woman alleges rape, forced conversion

Amethi (UP): An 18-year-old woman was allegedly raped and forced to convert to Islam here, police said on Sunday.

Police have arrested three people in the matter whose identities have not been disclosed.

The incident took place in Ramanj police station area on July 5 and the woman lodged a complaint on Saturday. PTI

Congress, SP, AAP, JDU condemn Israel's attack

New Delhi: Members of several parties, including the Congress, SP, JD(U) and Aam Aadmi Party, on Sunday condemned Israel's "brutal assault" on Palestinians in its war against Hamas and asked the Indian government to work to ensure peace and justice for the victims.

Samajwadi Party MPs Javed Ali and Mohibbullah, AAP MP Sanjay Singh, JD(U) leader K C Tyagi and

Congress' Danish Ali were among those who joined Mohammad Makram Balawi, Secretary General of League of Parliamentarians for Al-Quds, a pro-Palestinian body, at a meeting here to convey their support for Palestinians.

Balawi spoke in detail about Israel's alleged violation of international laws by targeting civilians and said more than half of those killed in its attacks were

women and children.

Members of various parties said in a statement that they unequivocally condemn the ongoing "Zionist aggression" and the "heinous genocide of the Palestinian people by Israel". "This brutal assault is not only an affront to humanity but also a gross violation of international law and the principles of justice and peace," the statement said.

It also cited India's his-

torical support to the Palestinian cause. "We take pride in the fact that India was the first non-Arab country to recognise the State of Palestine in 1988, and has consistently supported the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, sovereignty and liberation," the leaders said. They urged the Indian government to cease the supply of arms and ammunition to Israel.

- PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Mohan Yadav, Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh

"Indore's Geeta Bhawan is a big centre for dialogue on various aspects of Lord Krishna. I am announcing today that our government will open centres on the lines of Geeta Bhawan in urban areas of the state which will give us an opportunity to discuss and debate various aspects of Lord Krishna."

Overcome misinformation

Just stating facts may not be enough

New Delhi: Refutational approaches are more effective in combating science misinformation rather than just stating facts, according to a study.

Researchers found that among 152 college students exposed to misinformation, those who read an article purely carrying facts retained more misconceptions than those who read an article with a refutation.

The findings are published in the Journal of Re-

search in Science Teaching.

"Refutational approaches seem to work really well. While it's always best to get out in front as a teacher or communicator, students have smartphones. They are going to run into misinformation quickly. If we take this refutational approach, we're more likely to overcome misinformation," lead author Robert Danielson, a Washington State University educational psychology

researcher, said.

For the study, the researchers first tested what the student participants knew about putting fluoride in water. The students then read two articles: one with false information saying that fluoridation is harmful and another presenting the scientific consensus that has found fluoridation is safe and prevents dental disease. The participants all read the same misinformation text, but different

groups read an article with the correct information either in a traditional stating-the-facts style or one that first refuted the misinformation, before presenting the facts. The researchers also tested the effects of having the participants read the correct article before, or after, the misinformation.

The results revealed that the students learned in all four situations. However, the group that saw the misinformation first, followed

by mere facts, performed the worst, the researchers found.

Those who had read the refutation article either before, or after, the misinformation had fewer misconceptions. They also had more positive emotions toward the subject, the authors found. With a profusion of information easily available on the internet, it can be hard for many people to sort fact from falsehood.

- PTI

How strong is Sunita Williams in the space?

By Marcia Dunnap

Cape Canaveral: The two astronauts who will spend extra time at the International Space Station are Navy test pilots who have ridden out long missions before. Astronauts Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams have been holed up at the space station with seven others since the beginning of June, awaiting a verdict on how — and when — they would return to Earth. NASA decided Saturday they won't be flying back in their troubled Boeing capsule, but will wait for a ride with SpaceX in late February, pushing their mission to more than eight months. Their original itinerary on the test flight was eight days.



Butch Wilmore

Wilmore, 61, grew up in Mount Juliet, Tennessee, playing football for his high school team and later Tennessee Technological University. He joined the Navy, becoming a test pilot and racking up more than 8,000 hours of flying time and 663 aircraft carrier landings.

He flew combat missions during the first Gulf War in 1991 and was serving as a flight test instructor when NASA chose him as an astronaut in 2000.

Wilmore flew to the International Space Station in 2009 as the pilot of shuttle Atlantis, delivering tons of replacement parts. Five years later, he moved into the orbiting

lab for six months, launching on a Russian Soyuz from Kazakhstan and conducting four spacewalks.

Married with two daughters, Wilmore serves as an elder at his Houston-area Baptist church. He's participated in prayer services with the congregation while in orbit.

His family is used to the uncertainty and stress of his profession. He met wife Deanna amid Navy deployments, and their daughters were born in Houston, astronauts' home base.

"This is all they know," Wilmore said before the flight.



Sunita Williams

Williams, 58, is the first woman to serve as a test pilot for a new spacecraft. She grew up in Needham, Massachusetts, the youngest of three born to an Indian-born brain researcher and a Slovene American health care worker.

She assumed she'd go into science like them and considered becoming a veterinarian. But she ended up at the Naval Academy, itching to fly, and

served in a Navy helicopter squadron overseas during the military buildup for the Gulf War.

NASA chose her as an astronaut in 1998. Because of her own diverse background, she jumped at the chance to go to Russia to help behind the scenes with the still new International Space Station. In 2006, she flew up aboard shuttle Discovery for her own lengthy mission.

She had to stay longer than planned — 6 1/2 months — after her ride home, Atlantis, suffered hail damage at the Florida pad. She returned to the space station in 2012, this time serving as its commander.

She performed seven spacewalks during her two missions and even ran the Boston Marathon on a station treadmill and competed in a triathlon, sub-

stituting an exercise machine for the swimming event.

Husband Michael Williams, a retired US marshal and former Naval aviator, is tending to their dogs back home in Houston. Her widowed mother is the one who frets.

"I'm her baby daughter so I think she's always worried," Williams said before launching.

- AP



Flash flood in Indonesia

Ternate Island: Torrential rains caused a flash flood on Indonesia's eastern Ternate Island, sweeping away residential areas and leaving 13 people dead on Sunday, officials said.

The deluges cut off the main road and access to the village of Rua in North Maluku province, the most hard-hit area, and buried dozens of houses and buildings under the mud. Search and rescue teams worked with locals to recover the bodies and look for those still missing.

The Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency says high-intensity rain is still possible in the Ternate City area and its surroundings in the coming days. Local authorities advised residents to remain vigilant and heed instructions in case of further flooding. Heavy rains cause frequent landslides and flash floods in Indonesia where millions live in mountainous areas and near floodplains.

- AP

MPCB accusations against Mercedes-Benz

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) on Saturday alleged non-compliance with environmental standards by the luxury car maker Mercedes-Benz India at its Pune manufacturing facility and sought a comprehensive review of the plant's operations.

Mercedes-Benz India, in a statement, said it has not received any "written notice" or formal request from MPCB describing the claimed violations and was ready to take any "corrective action" if required.

MPCB, in a release, said it came across the alleged violations of the guidelines during an inspection of the facility on Friday.

"During a routine inspection conducted on August 23, 2024, it was discovered that the Mercedes Benz assembly plant in Chakan, Pune, is not adhering to the pollution control guidelines set by the



MPCB official conducted a surprise inspection at the Mercedes-Benz assembly plant at Chakan on Friday.

Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB)," the board said in the release.

The board has instructed its regional officer to take immediate action to ensure that the Mercedes Benz assembly plant complies with all MPCB guidelines, MPCB said, adding that "this will involve a comprehensive review of the plant's operations and the implementation of necessary corrective measures".

As an immediate action

measure, MPCB has "forfeited" Mercedes Benz's bank guarantee of Rs 25 lakh, it noted.

"The company sets the high priority to adhere to the most stringent global standards in production quality to uphold high environment and sustainability practices and to comply with mandatory regulations and requirements," Mercedes Benz India said.

The board also said that as a leader in automotive in-

novation, Mercedes Benz is expected to set an example in sustainable production practices and added that "the current non-compliance with environmental standards is a significant concern and a deviation from what is expected from such a prestigious brand".

"We are committed to upholding high environmental standards and ensuring that all industrial activities within our jurisdiction adhere to pollution control regulations," the release quoted MPCB Chairman Siddhesh Kadam as saying.

"We have not received any written notice or formal request from MPCB describing the claimed violations. We are ready to cooperate with the authorities and present all the required processes and documentation, and take any corrective actions if required," the carmaker said in response to the MPCB allegations.

- With PTI

Wildfires in Brazil leave two dead

Sao Paulo: Wildfires in Brazil's southern Sao Paulo state have killed at least two people, officials said Saturday. At least 36 cities have been put on high alert.

Local and federal authorities were stepping up efforts to control the flames, Sao Paulo state Gov. Tarcisio de Freitas said.

The fires have raged in the region outside the city of Sao Paulo, one of Latin America's most populous cities with more than 11 million residents. At least 7,300 government workers and volunteers had been deployed across the state to "contain the advance and put out these fires," de Freitas told journalists.

De Freitas warned that the flames, spurred on by a heat wave and a drought, may be fanned by strong winds. While the city largely hasn't been affected by the fires, videos on social media show the skies of rural areas filled with smoke and burning trees along the highway. The

government said that in the city of Urupes, two employees working at an industrial plant died on Friday while trying to fight back a fire, but provided few other details. The region has been plagued with the worst wildfires in decades, according to local news organization Folha de S.Paulo.

- AP



People try pulling out a car stuck in a waterlogged area after water released from the Khadakwasla Dam caused flood concerns following heavy rainfall, in Pune on Saturday.

Pic: PTI

Impact of growing human population

People, wildlife will share more living spaces

By Neil Carter and Deqiang Ma

Ann Arbor: Human-wildlife overlap is projected to increase across more than half of all lands around the globe by 2070.

The main driver of these changes is human population growth. This is the central finding of our newly published study in the journal *Science Advances*.

Our research suggests that as human population increases, humans and animals will share increasingly crowded landscapes. For example, as more people move into forests and agricultural regions, human-wildlife overlap will increase sharply. It also will increase in urban areas as people move to cities in search of jobs and opportunities.

Animals are also moving, mainly in response to climate change, which is shifting their ranges. Across most areas, species richness — the number of unique species present — will decrease as animals follow their preferred climates. But because human population growth is increasing, there still will be more human-wildlife overlap across most lands. We also found areas where human-wildlife overlap will decrease as human populations shift, although these were much rarer than areas of increase.

We found that Africa will have the largest proportion of land with increasing human-wildlife overlap (70.6 per cent), followed by South America (66.5 per cent). In contrast, Europe will have the largest proportion of land experiencing decreasing human-

wildlife overlap (21.4 per cent). **Why it matters**

Around the world, humans and wildlife increasingly compete for limited space on land. This can lead to harmful outcomes, such as human-wildlife conflicts and the spread of diseases between humans and animals.

Interacting with wildlife, however, can also have benefits. For example, birds provide valuable pest control for some crops. And studies show that observing birds and animals in nature improves people's mental health.

It is important to manage these interactions in ways that minimise negative impacts and maximise benefits. This is a key goal of the Global Biodiversity Framework that nations adopted in 2022 as a blueprint for con-

serving life on Earth and slowing the loss of wild species.

Our findings underscore the need to manage for coexistence between people and wildlife. Our research provides a broad understanding of where changes in human-wildlife overlap will occur in the future, including hot spots that will require more effective measures to improve human interactions with wildlife.

How we did our work

We developed a spatial index to measure human-wildlife overlap around the world. To calculate the degree of overlap region by region, we multiplied human population density by the number of species present in a given area. Our study included 22,374 land-dwelling species of amphibians, birds, mammals and

reptiles.

By combining published datasets on most recent (2015) and future (2070) populations, species distributions and land types, we were able to investigate how human-wildlife overlap will change by 2070 and to identify the places where this overlap will increase most dramatically. We then investigated changes in species richness across each land type — cropland, grassland, urban and forest — with increasing human-wildlife overlap.

What's next

Our research shows broadly how human-wildlife overlap will change, but researchers will need local studies to understand the consequences. Future research on shared lands should analyse factors including species abundance, species behaviour

and ecology, as well as types of interactions between people and wildlife.

Policy-makers can use insights from our work to guide conservation planning in a more crowded future. For example, our projections can help identify locations for habitat corridors that enable wildlife to move between critical habitats. They also could help to identify areas that are relatively buffered from the effects of climate change over time and could serve as havens for at-risk species.

Our work can inform future conservation investments, such as rewilding areas where human population density is decreasing, or preserving and enhancing wildlife habitats in places that are becoming more urbanised.

- The Conversation

Israel stages heavy airstrikes on Lebanon

Jerusalem: Israel launched a wave of airstrikes across southern Lebanon early Sunday in what it said was a pre-emptive strike on Hezbollah, as the militant group said it had launched hundreds of rockets and drones to avenge the killing of one of its top commanders last month.

The heavy exchange of fire threatened to trigger an all-out war that could draw in the United States, Iran and militant groups across the region. It could also torpedo efforts to forge a ceasefire in Gaza, where Israel has been at war with the Palestinian group Hamas, an ally of Hezbollah, for over 10 months.

The Israeli military said Hezbollah was planning to launch a heavy barrage of rockets and missiles toward Israel. Soon after, Hezbollah announced it had launched an attack on Israeli military positions as an initial response to the killing of Fouad Shukur, one of its



founders, in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut last month. The attacks came as Egypt hosts a new round of talks aimed at ending the Israel-Hamas war. Hezbollah has said it will halt the fighting if there is a ceasefire in Gaza. Iran supports

both groups as well as militants in Syria, Iraq and Yemen who might join any larger conflict.

Air raid sirens were reported throughout northern Israel, and Israel's Ben-Gurion international airport diverted incoming flights

and delayed takeoffs for a time. Israel's Airports Authority said flights resumed at 7 am local time.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the top Israeli military spokesman, said "dozens" of warplanes were striking targets in southern Leba-

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the military has been instructed to proactively remove the threat of Hezbollah in order to ensure the protection of Israel. He said the story is not yet over.



A damaged house is seen following an attack from Lebanon, in Acre, north Israel on Sunday. -AP / PTI

"large number" of drones. It said the operation was targeting "a qualitative Israeli military target that will be announced later" as well as "enemy sites and barracks and Iron Dome (missile defence) platforms." Hezbollah later an-

nounced the end of what it said was the first stage of retaliatory strikes, which it said would allow it to launch more attacks deeper into Israel. The group said all the exploding drones it launched hit their targets, without saying how many. It listed 11 bases,

barracks, and military positions that it said it targeted in northern Israel and the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights.

In the US, a spokesman for the National Security Council, Sean Savett, said President Joe Biden was "closely monitoring events in Israel and Lebanon."

"At his direction, senior US officials have been communicating continuously with their Israeli counterparts," Savett said. "We will keep supporting Israel's right to defend itself, and we will keep working for regional stability."

In recent weeks, diplomats from the US and European countries have made a flurry of visits to Israel and Lebanon in an attempt to tamp down the escalation that they fear could spiral into a regional war.

Last week, Israel's defence minister said he was moving more troops toward the Lebanese border in anticipation of possible fighting with Hezbollah.

Germany knife attack

Man turns in claiming to be attacker

Solingen: German police said early Sunday that a 26-year-old man turned himself in, claiming to be behind the deadly Solingen knife attack that left three dead and eight wounded at a festival marking the city's 650th anniversary.

Düsseldorf police said in a statement that the man "stated that he was responsible for the attack," adding he had been arrested before.

"This person's involvement in the crime is currently being intensively investigated," police said.

On Saturday the Islamic State militant group claimed responsibility for the attack, without providing evidence. The extremist group said on its news site that the attacker targeted Christians and that as a "soldier of the Islamic State" he carried out the assaults Friday night "to

avenge Muslims in Palestine and everywhere." The claim couldn't immediately be verified.

Officials had earlier said that they arrested a 15-year-old boy on suspicion he knew about the planned attack and failed to inform authorities, but that he was not the attacker. Two female witnesses told police they overheard the boy and an unknown person before the attack speaking about



intentions that corresponded to the bloodshed, officials said. People alerted police

shortly after 9:30 pm Friday that a man had assaulted several people with a knife on the city's central square, the Fronhof. The three people who died were two men aged 67 and 56 and a 56-year-old woman, authorities said. Police said the attacker appeared to have deliberately aimed for his victims' throats. Solingen, a city of about 160,000 residents near the bigger cities of Cologne and Düsseldorf, was holding a "Festival of Diversity" to celebrate its anniversary. It

began Friday and was supposed to run through Sunday, with several stages in central streets offering attractions such as live music, cabaret and acrobatics. The attack took place in the crowd in front of one stage. Hours later, the stage lights were still on as police and forensic investigators looked for clues in the cordoned-off square, but the rest of the festival was cancelled.

Dhaka Metro resumes service

Dhaka: The Dhaka Metro resumed services on Sunday over a month after it was shut for passengers during the unprecedented anti-government protests in Bangladesh.

Two stations - Mirpur 10 and Kazipara - will however remain closed, according to an official notification.

Commuters, especially students and office-goers heaved a sigh of relief as they had to travel through Dhaka's notorious traffic congestions daily to reach their destinations.

The services resumed in the morning around 7 AM.

Boat carrying migrants sinks, 13 die



Cairo: A boat carrying migrants sank off the coast of Yemen, leaving more than two dozen people dead or missing, the UN migration agency said Sunday, the latest in a string of shipwrecks that have left scores dead.

Despite a nearly decade-long civil war, Yemen - which borders Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the northeast - remains a major route for migrants from East Africa trying to reach wealthy Gulf countries for work.

The vessel was carrying 25 Ethiopian migrants and the boat captain and his assistant, both Yemeni, when

it capsized Tuesday off the province of Taiz, the International Organisation for Migration said in a statement. The bodies of 11 men and two women were recovered along the shore of Bab el-Mandeb Strait that links the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea, while the 14 others - including the two Yemenis - remain missing.

The migrants departed from Djibouti, IOM said.

"This latest tragedy is a stark reminder of the perils faced by migrants on this route," said Matt Huber, IOM's acting chief in Yemen. "Every life lost in these dangerous waters is one too

many, and it is imperative that we do not normalise these devastating losses."

According to the agency, the number of migrants arriving in Yemen has tripled in recent years, from about 27,000 in 2021 to more than 97,200 last year, the IOM said, and about 380,000 migrants are currently in the conflict-ridden country.

To reach Yemen, migrants are taken by smugglers on often dangerous, overcrowded boats across the Red Sea or Gulf of Aden. Over the past decade, at least 2,082 migrants disappeared along the route, including 693 who drowned.

Explosion at synagogue

French authorities arrest suspect

By Barbara Surk

Nice (France): French police apprehended and detained the suspect behind the arson attack on a synagogue in a southwestern Mediterranean town that injured a police officer, the country's acting interior minister said early Sunday. Two cars parked at the Beth Yaacov synagogue complex in the seaside resort town of La Grande Motte near Montpellier were set ablaze just after 8 a.m. (0600 GMT) Saturday, the National Antiterrorism Prosecutor's Office said in a statement Saturday.

"The alleged perpetrator of the arson attack on the synagogue has been arrested," Gerald Darmanin, the acting interior minister, said in a post on X. He visited the site on Saturday afternoon along with acting Prime Minister Gabriel Attal and met with local officials and the synagogue staff.

Darmanin also hailed the "professional conduct" of police forces and its elite intervention unit "despite

the gunfire" during the operation. He did not provide further information.

Firefighters discovered additional fires at two entrances to the synagogue. A police officer who walked up to the site was injured after a propane gas tank in one of the vehicles exploded, the prosecutor's statement said.

Five people, including the rabbi, who were present in the synagogue complex at the time of the attack were unharmed, it added.

Prosecutors were investigating the attack as an attempted assassination linked to a terrorist group and destruction of property with dangerous means, and a crime planned by a terrorist group with an intent to cause harm, the statement said.

After the attack Saturday, Darmanin ordered police reinforcement to protect Jewish places of worship following what was "clearly a criminal act."

"I want to assure our Jewish fellow citizens of my full support," Darmanin posted on X.



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with Minister for Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation of Nepal Badri Pandey and Acting Ambassador of Nepal to India Surendra Thapa, in New Delhi -PTI

Arun Agarwal VC of Texas economic body

Houston: Texas Governor Greg Abbott has appointed Dallas-based Indian American entrepreneur Arun Agarwal as the vice chairman of the Texas Economic Development Corporation's (TEDC) board of directors.

A key public-private partnership with the Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism, TEDC is responsible for marketing Texas as the top US state for business, both domestically

and globally, according to a statement from the Governor's office.

It said that this appointment underscores Texas's commitment to diversity and highlights the growing influence of Indian American leaders in major economic roles.

Agarwal's extensive experience in business, philanthropy, and international relations is expected to further elevate Texas's standing

as a global economic powerhouse, the statement said.

As the CEO of Nextt, Agarwal oversees a diverse portfolio that spans textiles, cotton trading, real estate, and sports management. He is also the chairman of the National Cricket League (NCL), USA, a new initiative that has quickly gained recognition.

Additionally, he serves as co-chair of the Indian American CEO Council.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Rajnath Singh,
Defence Minister

"We share a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, and our defence cooperation continues to grow stronger and stronger. We are expanding our defence industrial ties and working to co-produce more capabilities and strengthen supply chain resilience."

INS Mumbai to make first visit to Lanka



Colombo: The Indian Naval Ship (INS) 'Mumbai' will arrive at the port of Colombo on Monday for a three-day maiden visit to Sri Lanka, the Indian High Commission here has said.

INS Mumbai, the Indian Navy's frontline warship, will be received ceremonially by the Sri Lanka Navy, the high commission said in a press release on Saturday.

"This is INS Mumbai's first visit to any port in Sri Lanka and will be the eighth port call by Indian Ships

this year," it said.

INS Mumbai - the third of the Delhi class destroyers - will bring essential spares for the Sri Lanka Airforce (SLAF)-operated Dornier maritime patrol aircraft - the pilots and flight navigators of which are being trained by the Indian Navy.

Apart from this, the Indian Navy also supports the aircraft's maintenance with a technical team and spares.

"The Dornier aircraft provides a unique and critical capability of surveillance over the Sea Area of

Responsibility (AOR) of Sri Lanka since induction two years ago," the press release said.

Upon arrival, the Commanding Officer will call on the Commander of the Western Naval Area, Rear Admiral WDCU Kumarasinghe, at the Western Naval Area Headquarters.

During the stay in Colombo, INS Mumbai will conduct a familiarisation tour onboard for Sri Lanka Navy personnel aimed at sharing best practices between both the Navies.

EDITORIAL

A Strategic
Promise

As the political landscape heats up ahead of crucial assembly elections in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, and Jharkhand, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made a strategic move to secure the loyalty of government employees. PM Modi and the BJP's offer of a Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) that promises a 50% salary as pension along with inflation adjustments is a direct counter to the Congress party's push for a return to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), which had garnered significant traction among the workforce.

The Congress's OPS promise particularly resonated in Himachal Pradesh, where government employees are a pivotal voter base. Despite the BJP's traditional stronghold over this demographic, the Congress's OPS rhetoric proved to be a potent challenge in recent state elections. Nevertheless, the BJP's grip on both Lok Sabha and assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh suggests that the impact of the OPS issue on its electoral fortunes might be limited.

The BJP's new UPS proposal, which took nearly 18 months to finalize, is being presented as a more sustainable alternative to the OPS and is reflective of Modi's flexibility in wake of upcoming elections in key states. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw had sharply criticized Congress for failing to implement the OPS in states like Himachal and Rajasthan, accusing the party of creating 'illusions' rather than delivering substantive reforms. This criticism underscores the BJP's attempt to position itself as the more reliable steward of government employees' welfare.

The UPS, effective from the next financial year, will offer a guaranteed pension of 50% of the salary for those who joined after January 1, 2004. In contrast, the National Pension Scheme (NPS), which currently serves government employees, is a market-linked scheme with variable returns. The NPS requires employees to contribute 10% of their basic salary, matched by a 14% government contribution. Under the UPS, the government's contribution will increase to 18.5%, while the employee's share remains at 10%.

This scheme is designed to appeal to government employees by ensuring a stable retirement income, thereby mitigating the appeal of Congress's OPS proposal. The decision to introduce the UPS just before the elections reflects a calculated move by the BJP to reinforce its support among a crucial voter base.

While the UPS will be available only to government employees, private sector workers can still opt for the NPS if their employer participates in the scheme.

The BJP's strategic shift towards a more attractive pension offering could be pivotal in swaying government employees' votes, countering the Congress's OPS promises and reinforcing the BJP's commitment to their financial security. The forthcoming Assembly elections will test the effectiveness of these competing pension schemes in shaping voter preferences.

Why is Mamata Seeing
Ghost of Bangladesh?By
Romita Datta

Mamata is seeing a ghost of Bangladesh behind the massive outrage and waves of protest over rape and murder of the trainee doctor. And the reasons are many.

It's been over a fortnight. Yet with each passing day the voice of protest is getting louder and stronger. From the streets of Kolkata it's pouring into roads of hinterland. The cry for justice for a rape victim has consolidated into a wail of demands to set a lot of wrongdoings right. Here in lies the fear and trepidation. Wasn't the issue that brought the youth of Bangladesh out on the thoroughfares a simple, innocent one of quota reform?

The chief minister of Bengal, known for understanding the pulse of people better than many, was quick to read the signages floating in the political horizon.

The most obvious reason for her to be tensed is that both the regime change in Bangladesh and the mass protest in Bengal, were student-driven to begin with. The two incidents—end of 15 year old Sheikh Hasina government and turbulence in West Bengal, over the heinous crime, falling back to back, the first on August 5th and the latter from August 9th

As Bengal erupts in protest over a doctor's murder, Mamata Banerjee sees echoes of Bangladesh's student-led upheavals.

onwards, give natural scope for comparisons. More so, because in both the cases the movement strayed beyond an affected constituency to include aggrieved people at large, cutting across socio-economic demography. If the quota reform protest started by students in Bangladesh became a mass uprising against an autocratic regime, the campaign demanding justice for the rape victim and overall safety and security of women in Mamata Banerjee's Bengal soon snowballed into a movement of no-confidence against the government. Slogans—"Mamata must resign" also got floated in social media much in line with the call for ouster of Sheikh Hasina. In fact "Resignation of Hasina" became the single point agenda into which all other fringe demands coalesced.

Incidentally, even before people started drawing parallels, that there could be a thread of commonality in the way the upheaval in Bangladesh and Bengal played out, Mamata was quick to point out that the Opposition were trying to pull off a Bangladesh by politicizing the tragic incident: "A coordinated approach has been executed by the BJP and the CPIM with support from the Centre to defame Bengal and exploit the situation....They want to make a Bangladesh here. They are taking cues from student unrest in Bangladesh and are attempting to capture similarly. I have no longing for the chair. I came here to serve people."

Not only Mamata, her political lieutenants are consistently equating the turmoil in Bengal with the mayhem in Bangladesh. Cabinet minister for North Bengal development Udayan Guha threatened to take stern action against those, who would be trying to exploit the situation by emulating a Bangladesh like movement. "Even after the hospital was vandalised, the police did not open fire on anyone. The police will not allow a Bangladesh type situation. We will not allow Bengal to turn into Bangladesh, Guha thundered.

Is the government's fear unfounded? Apart from the similarities on ground zero, as to how and where the future course of events are heading to, there are



ample reasons for Bengal to mull on-- as to what led to a Bangladesh like boiling point. To begin with, it'll be appropriate to talk of Bangladesh and the prevailing situation, that made the students' protest become big in magnitude. The students were out on the streets because of a high reservation in public jobs. Unemployment and stagnant job market in private sector coupled with a high rate of inflation drove the educated youth to rebel against the government.

But soon the students found enormous number of sympathisers, who were equally at the receiving end. According to Bangladesh citizens, the last two terms of the Sheikh Hasina government were a mockery of democracy. Even elections would be compromised. As Hasina grew from strength to strength, she politicized institutions. The rank and file of police owed allegiance to the ruling dispensation. Extortion, harassment and raids by police and people in power became rampant. An atmosphere of fear and repression reigned and people got restless to overthrow the government.

Politicization of institutions has been happening in Mamata government too. Allegations are quite strong that police in Bengal functions at the beck and call of political bosses. The lapses and alleged

loopholes on the part of police in handling the rape and murder of the young doctor have yet again revealed a sense of confused or misplaced loyalty.

But above everything else both Hasina and Mamata governments allegedly seem to have twined in accepting corruption as a way of life. In Bangladesh jobs of primary and secondary teachers got sold at premium, Rs 10-12 lakh in the Hasina regime. Even police had to pay up for prized postings and transfers. In Bengal busting of the teacher's recruitment scam has revealed how unsuccessful and ineligible candidates got government jobs in schools in exchange of bribes.

Similarities are multiple and inescapable. Mamata has good reasons to be apprehensive. It's not only she, who can see and connect the dots. People, out on the streets, clamoring for justice, can see a providential pattern somewhere in the unfolding of future events in these two places-- Bangladesh and Bengal. True, they share more than 2,217 odd km of border. They share the same umbilical cord, other than language, culture, ethos, icons. Even emotions are the same. So she cannot take any risk.

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

LEADER SPEAKS

Youngsters without political
background enter politics

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said collective efforts will help the youth sans a political background to rise in politics and asserted that the spirit shown by such people during the freedom struggle is required again to attain the goal of 'Viksit Bharat'. Excerpts...

This year from Red Fort, I have urged one lakh youth who are not from a political background to connect with the political system. This point of mine has garnered tremendous response. We thus come to know that a large number of our youth are eagerly ready to enter politics. All they are looking for is the right opportunity and apt guidance, he added.

I have also received letters from youth across the country on this subject. Enormous response is being received on social media as well. People have sent me many kinds of suggestions. Some youth have written in their letters that it is truly inconceivable for them. On account of the absence of a political legacy on part of their grandfather or parents they could not enter politics despite wanting to.

Some youth have also written that dynastic politics crushes new talent. Some youth have mentioned that such efforts will lend more strength to our democracy. I thank each and everyone for sending in suggestions on the subject.

Even during the freedom struggle, many such people had come forward, who did not have any political background. They took the plunge for the sake of India's freedom. Once more, we require the same spirit to attain the goal of Viksit Bharat. This step of yours will be transformative in terms of your future and the country's future.

We saw the Tricolour fluttering atop houses, as well as at schools, colleges and Universities. Some people had the Tricolour adorn their shops, offices... people also did the same on their desktops, mobiles and vehicles. When people join hands to express a sentiment, it thus lends unparalleled glory to any campaign.



We all saw captivating pictures of the Tiranga Yatra on the Dal Lake in Srinagar. A yatra with a 600-foot-long Tiranga was carried out in East Kameng District in Arunachal Pradesh. On similar lines, in other States of the country as well, people of all ages participated in such Tiranga Yatras.

When they realised that Gibbons love bananas a lot, they started growing bananas on their farms. Besides, they decided that they would perform rituals connected with the birth and death of Gibbons, exactly as they would have performed for their near and dear ones. They have also named the Gibbons. Recently, the Gibbons were facing hardships on account of electric wires passing through, in the vicinity. In this scenario, the villagers put forth the problem to the government and a quick solution was found out too.

You too are aware of the fact that whereas many children get bored of their toys within no time, there are children as well for whom such toys are a pipedream. Toys that your children no longer play with... you can give them away to spaces, where they continue being useful. A tiny effort

on your part, will help a lot in the fight against malnutrition.

Some of our young friends in Arunachal have started using the 3-D printing technology. Do you know why? Because they want to protect wild animals from being hunted for their horns and tusks... Under the leadership of Nabam Babu and Likha Nana, the team undertakes 3-D printing of various parts of animals. Be it horns or teeth, all of those are crafted through 3-D printing. They are then made into items such as apparel and headgear.

In Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh something splendid is taking place, that you should certainly know about. There, our sanitation worker brothers and sisters have performed a marvellous task. These brothers and sisters have shown us the essence of the message of WASTE to WEALTH turn into reality. In a park at Jhabua, this team has created wonderful artworks out of garbage. For this endeavour of theirs, they collected plastic waste, used bottles, tyres and pipes from the neighbourhood. Included in this artwork are helicopters, cars and cannons.

GLOBAL WATCH

Rumbling Beneath the Surface:
Italy's Sleeping Giant Stirs

In the shadow of Italy's idyllic landscapes, a potent threat in the form of the Phlegraean Fields - Europe's most dangerous volcanic zone - has been hogging headlines in the world's media for the past few weeks.

Located just west of Naples, the Phlegraean Fields are a vast, caldera-forming volcano hidden beneath urban sprawl and the Mediterranean's waters. As the Phlegraean Fields awaken from their long slumber, ancient ruins, dormant for millennia, are being thrust upwards by subterranean forces, offering a stark reminder of the volatile threat beneath the surface.

Locals as well as a section of experts feel this is no ordinary geological spectacle but the harbinger of potential disaster. The looming threat of the Phlegraean Fields is hauntingly reminiscent of the catastrophic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D., which buried the Roman city of Pompeii under a deadly blanket of ash and pumice.

Around 80,000 people live within the caldera's landscape, with nearly half a million more in the surrounding areas, including Naples, Italy's third-largest city. With the ground rising at a rate of 2 centimeters per month, scientists are divided over

the risks posed by the 8-mile-wide caldera, dotted with over two dozen craters. While there is no clear evidence of magma rising, the uncertainty surrounding volcanic activity has unnerved coastal communities living nearby.

The national government's response reflects this ambivalence. Although Rome has imposed a temporary construction ban in the area, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has also backed a €1.2 billion redevelopment plan for a vulnerable waterfront. This contradictory approach underscores the broader uncertainty in balancing development with disaster preparedness.

Italy's volcanic activity is not confined to the Phlegraean Fields. Stromboli and Mount Etna, on the southern islands, offer fiery but less perilous eruptions. However, the real threat remains the Phlegraean Fields, where the dormant giant could disrupt millions of lives with little warning.

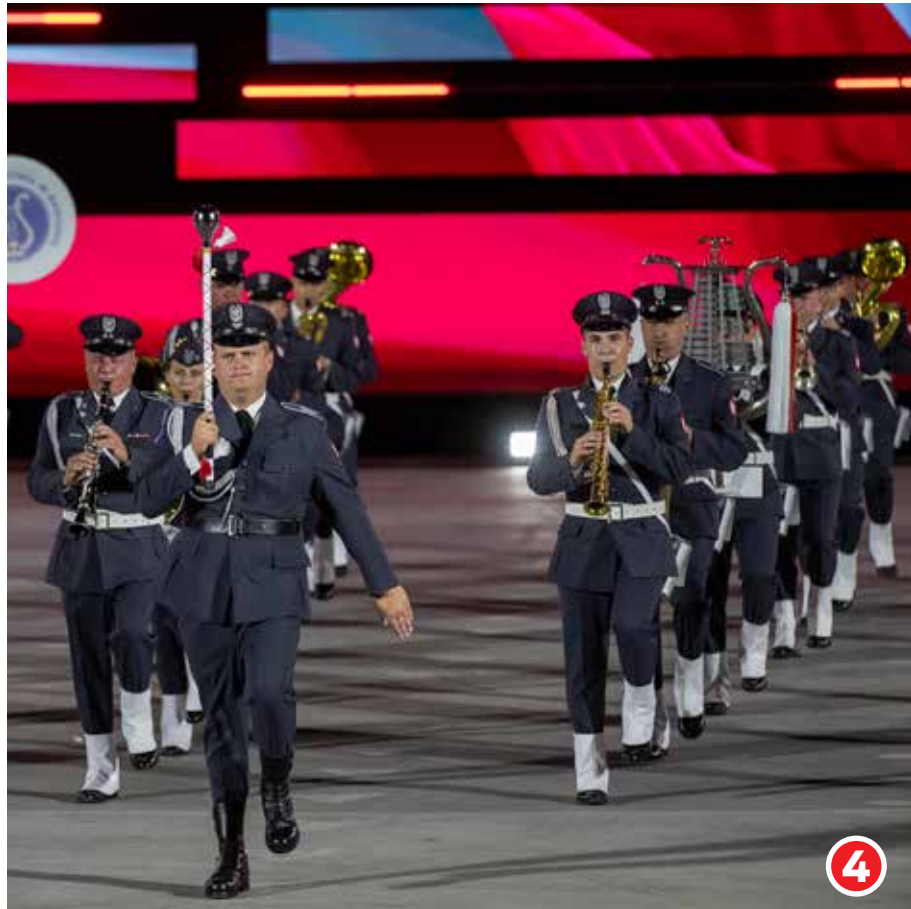
The situation is deteriorating despite the absence of definitive signs of an imminent eruption. Experts warn that the volcano is becoming more dangerous as magma depressurizes, releasing gases that turn solid ground into a tinderbox. Worst-case scenarios portend an

eruption that could happen with only a few hours' notice, leaving Naples vulnerable. Recent chaotic evacuation attempts, coupled with declining tourism and shuttered businesses, reflect the growing unease in the region.

Experts warn that a fissure could release deadly gases and ash over Naples, but local officials argue that the threat, while real, is manageable, and that panic-driven evacuations could do more harm than good.

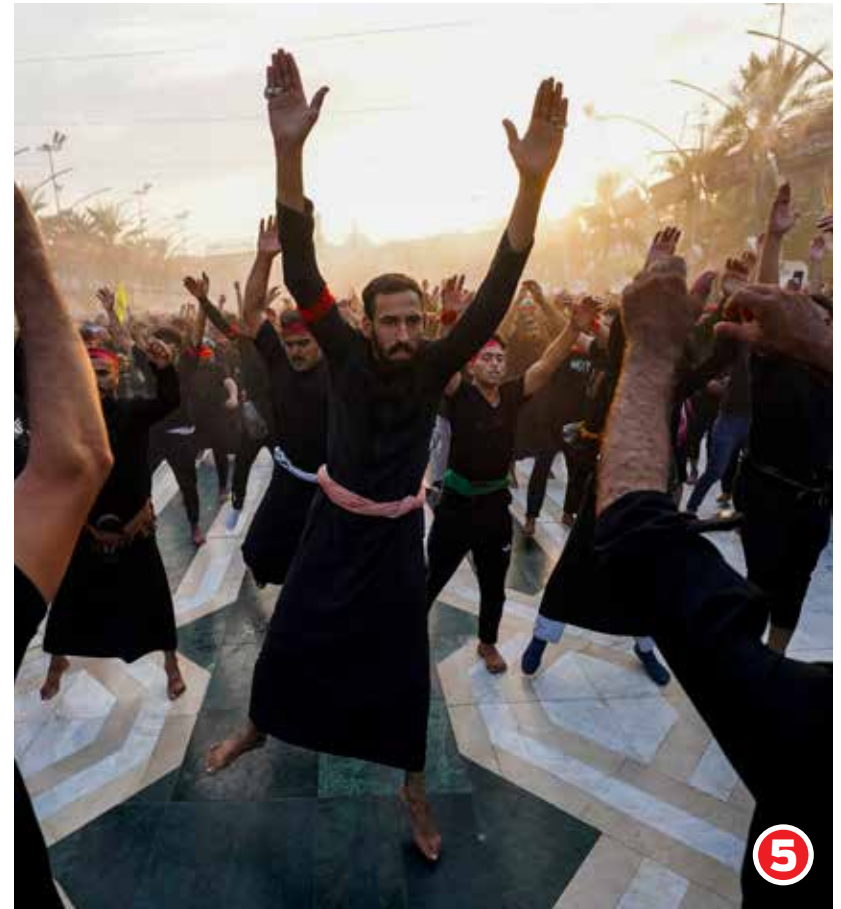
Should the Phlegraean Fields erupt, the consequences could surpass those of Vesuvius which obliterated Pompeii two millennia ago. That eruption killed thousands and serves as a sobering reminder of nature's power to obliterate civilizations in hours. The caldera's size and potential for explosive interaction between magma and water-saturated sediments could generate pyroclastic flows, ash falls, and tsunamis, devastating Naples and beyond. Some claim the fallout could have global climatic effects, much like the prehistoric eruption.

As the debate over the true extent of the danger intensifies, the residents of the Phlegraean Fields face an unsettling dilemma: should they stay and hope for the best, or leave while they still can?



KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma beats a drum as he is being welcomed by tribal artists during an event organised to listen Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' radio programme, at Huanghatu village in Ranch
- 2 American-born Chilean singer Francisca Valenzuela performs during the HERA HSBC music festival in Mexico City on Saturday
- 3 An activist wears theatrical blood, bound wrists and his mouth taped and holds a book depicting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as relatives of hostages held by Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip and their supporter
- 4 Polish Military band performs during the Military Tattoo Lithuania 2024 international NATO military band festival to marks the 31st anniversary of withdrawal of the occupying Soviet forces from the Lithuanian territory, in V
- 5 Shiite pilgrims mark the holiday of Arbaeen on Saturday in Karbala, Iraq. The holiday marks the end of the forty-day mourning period after the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, in



Zubin Mehta calls Gaza war "tragic"



“ My father brought me up brainwashed. From the beginning, he was practising, he was rehearsing at home, I was sitting and listening, I was absorbing it all and then at the age of 18 I went to Vienna and I absorbed everything I could.



“ I have what they call in America a green card, which is proof of residence. And this time I waited a long time and I got it recently and they gave me a green card till 2034. So I told my wife, just throw this in my grave with me.

By Manish Sain

Mumbai: A proud Indian passport holder, based in the US, honorary citizen of Florence and Tel Aviv and Israel Philharmonic Orchestra's Music Director for Life. If ever there is a global citizen, it will have to be Zubin Mehta who hopes to take his music to the West Bank and Gaza.

After all, "people need music", the celebrated conductor told PTI in an inter-

“ It's the 10 per cent religious minority that is backing the government. And they are absolutely unpopular and hopefully they will be dissolved very soon. I hope so.

view. As one of the bloodiest episodes of conflict in recent history unfolds in the region, Mehta rewound to January 1982 when he led the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra to a tobacco field in south Lebanon, conducting before an audience of mostly Lebanese people who stormed the makeshift stage and embraced the musicians.

It was peacetime. "We played in South Lebanon for the Arabs there, and they stormed the stage and hugged the musicians. After that again Israel made the mistake of invading Lebanon and their relations broke apart."

"Do not underestimate the power of art and music. It brings people together," the Mumbai-born Mehta told PTI after a concert at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) here.

Two months ago, the 88-year-old was in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv to conduct 14 concerts.

"Thank god, it (the war) hasn't affected the musicians, or the public. I was there two months ago and I had 14 concerts, all full. People need music. All kinds of music, also our classical music."

"And I am going again next March... inshallah in peacetime," Mehta, who was only 20 when he conducted his first orchestra and is as

passionate almost seven decades later, added.

He would also like to do concerts in the West Bank and Gaza. "I really hope so. The musicians would love to do it."

Unhesitating in articulating his views on issues, however polarising they might be, Mehta termed the ongoing war in Gaza "tragic".

He said 90 per cent of Israel is against its government, "demonstrating all the time..." "It's the 10 per cent religious minority that is backing the government. And they are absolutely unpopular and hopefully they will be dissolved very soon. I hope so."

Mehta, who is in the city of his birth to conduct the NCPA's Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI) for its Autumn 2024 season with the compositions of Johann Strauss II and Richard Strauss, had courted controversy in 2013 when he took the Bavarian State Orchestra to Kashmir's 17th century Shalimar Gardens.

The concert was opposed by Kashmiri separatists and human rights activists who called for a day-long strike in Srinagar and other parts of the Valley to register their protest. However, Mehta led the orchestra to perform the likes of Beethoven, Haydn and Tchaikovsky.

"We are not politicians. We cannot change bounda-

ries but we can start a process of healing," he had told NDTV then. Eleven years later, Mehta, one of the most recognised names in the world of Western classical music, still believes as firmly in the universality and healing power of music.

Born in 1936 into a Parsi family, Mehta grew up surrounded with Western classical music, thanks to his father Mehli Mehta who "brainwashed" him to follow the music.

The environment at home was musical with Mehli Mehta being an accomplished violinist who would spend hours rehearsing at home. The young Zubin absorbed the sounds of Beethoven and Brahms and a lot more.

"My father brought me up brainwashed. From the beginning, he was practising, he was rehearsing at home, I was sitting and listening, I was absorbing it all and then at the age of 18 I went to Vienna and I absorbed everything I could," Mehta recalled.

In 1954, he moved from Bombay to Vienna, a place that became the cornerstone in his celebrated career, to start his education in music at the state music academy.

"Really, Vienna is today the centre (of global music)... also in those days all the greatest conductors performed in Vienna and the opera house is wonderful

“ I don't change my language. I don't change my passport... I have never given it a thought. Sometimes it's difficult. I still speak Gujarati whenever I can. Not many of my friends do, even my brother. I speak to him in Gujarati, he replies in English. But I used to speak to my parents almost daily and my parents only spoke Gujarati to me.

with the singers of the world. So I was at every rehearsal possible when not studying," Mehta said.

In his career, Mehta has conducted many orchestras, including the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Vienna and Berlin.

Through his peripatetic life, he has been the Indian holding his Indianness close to his heart.

He continues to be a passport-holding and Gujarati speaking citizen of India, the two things he said he won't

think of changing.

"I don't change my language. I don't change my passport... I have never given it a thought. Sometimes it's difficult."

"I still speak Gujarati whenever I can. Not many of my friends do, even my brother. I speak to him in Gujarati, he replies in English. But I used to speak to my parents almost daily and my parents only spoke Gujarati to me."

Married to former American actor Nancy Kovack, his green card was recently up-

dated till 2034.

"I have what they call in America a green card, which is proof of residence. And this time I waited a long time and I got it recently and they gave me a green card till 2034," Mehta said.

"So I told my wife, just throw this in my grave with me," he added with a glint in his eyes and a smile on his face.

This is the second time that Mehta has conducted the SOI, touted to be the country's only professional orchestra. He conducted a series of concerts with the SOI last year in August.

"Last year was a surprise, I was not expecting such a high standard of individual musicians and then the complete orchestra... That's why I agreed to come back and I have already agreed to come back next year," he said.

On August 17 and 18, Mehta conducted a number of compositions by Austrian composer Johann Strauss II, including Overture to "Die Fledermaus", "Annen-polka" Op. 117, "Wiener Blut", Op. 354 ("Viennese Blood"), and Kaiser-Walzer, Op. 437 ("Emperor Waltz").

"It was a difficult programme, Johann Strauss, because it has a lot of fluctuations of tempo, of speed, of what we call in musical language rubato and they (musicians) were very attentive at rehearsals...", Mehta

said commending the SOI musicians. This weekend, on August 24-25, he will conduct German composer Richard Strauss' tone poems "Don Juan" and "Ein Heldenleben", and the "Four Last Songs" at the NCPA.

Incidentally, it was the tone poems and Brahms' four symphonies that inspired Mehta to consider becoming a conductor.

"I accomplished what I originally set out to do. But conducting is an experience and the experience that I have had since I was 20 years old and today 88...", Mehta said.

"I have had a very, very good time. I have been treated well by most orchestras and I have experienced no bias on their part at all."

Ravina Gayakwad wins Half Marathon



Mumbai: College students Chandan Yadav of Badohi district in Uttar Pradesh and teenager Ravina Gayakwad from Nashik won the men's and women's titles respectively in the eighth Ageas Federal Life Insurance Mumbai Half Marathon 2024 here on Sunday.

The seasoned Yadav, 21, who has quite a few podium finishes to his credit, breast-

ed the tape in 1:11.01 minutes after surging ahead of the pack about half a kilometre before the finish line. Nitish Kumar trooped in second in 1:11.54 minutes while Piyush Masane secured a distant third place in 1:13.20 minutes. In the women's run, 19-year-old Ravina, made her debut in the 21K a memorable one, winning by a comfortable margin in 1:27.43 minutes.

She finished almost two minutes ahead of Senait Lesharge (1:29.41) while Rukamani Bhoure settled for bronze in 1:31.23 minutes. Ravina had trained for just three months for this event after taking to athletics only recently. "I worked hard for this win and timed my breakaway to perfection," said Yadav after receiving his winner's cheque

minutes while Divya Pingale secured the second place in 41.50 and Rajni Tyagi stood third in 43.52. Over 20,000 runners took part in the event organised by NEB Sports. Tendulkar said, "As Indians, we love sports, but it's time to embrace sports as a way of life by participating in various sports for their mental and physical benefits. Our partnership with marathons across India has yielded success," he said. A team of visually impaired runners assisted by Guide India Runners also took part along with physically disabled, wheelchair athletes and other specially-abled participants. Over 150 kids from the Mitraryana NGO also participated in the event for the first time.

Pickleball Lock, Fudge win women's doubles

Mumbai: Thaddea Lock and Megan Fudge trumped the pair of Isha Lakhani and Sarah Burr in the final of the 30+ women's doubles category on the penultimate day of the Monsoon Pickleball Championship here. The bronze medalists in the category were Shraddha Damani/Johaana Fernandes and Priyanka Mehta and Hsei Yu as there was no playoff for the defeated pairs in the semifinals on Saturday. The 30+ men's doubles witnessed a battle between Jason Taylor-Jai Greval and Purav Raja-Sahil Kukreja where the former pair won gold. The bronze medal was awarded to pairs of Ryler De Heart-Himanshu Dewaskar and Dhiren Patel-Rob Nunnery. In other categories, the pair of Dev Shah-Purvansh Patel won the gold in U-18 boys' doubles, Naomi-Kashish in U-18 girls' doubles, Vivaan Patel-Veer Shah in U-14 boys' doubles and Sasha Salva-Navya Patil in U-15 girls' doubles.

Shubhankar Sharma tied-11th in Dutch Golf

Aarhus (Denmark): Shubhankar Sharma landed two eagles in his third round but also gave away a double bogey as he closed the day at 2-under 69 to be tied-11th at the Danish Golf Championship. Sharma, who had also shot 69s in his first two rounds, is currently 6-under and six strokes behind leader Lucas Bjerregaard, who after a slow start, shot 5-under 66 that had four birdies between the 10th and the 14th. The Indian star, who had won the second of his two DP World Tour titles in 2018, opened with an eagle and followed it up with a birdie. Pars followed and, on the back nine, he had another eagle on the 10th at which point he was 5-under. He even held a share of the lead



U Mumba TT's Sutirtha Mukherjee plays a shot during the TIE 4 of Ultimate Table Tennis Season 5 between U Mumba TT and Dabang Delhi T.T.C., in Chennai on Saturday

Djokovic seeks record 25th Grand Slam title

New York: As big a deal as finally winning an Olympic gold medal was to Novak Djokovic, as much as he has accomplished in tennis — the men's-record 24 Grand Slam trophies, the 99 total titles, the most weeks at No. 1 for any player and on and on — do not for a moment think he is satisfied as the U.S. Open begins. "People would ask me: Now that you have basically won everything with the golden medal, what else is there to win? I still feel the drive. I still have the competitive spirit," the 37-year-old from Serbia said Satur-

day. "I still want to make more history and enjoy myself on the tour." If it seems like there is always some sort of milestone in the offing when Djokovic takes the court, that's because there usually is. This time around at Flushing Meadows, where play begins Monday and the No. 2-seeded Djokovic faces 138th-ranked Radu Albot of Moldova at night in Arthur Ashe Stadium, there is the latest opportunity to get major singles championship No. 25, a total no man or woman ever has reached in tennis.

As the defending champion, there is also a chance to become the first man to win at least two consecutive titles at the U.S. Open since Roger Federer swept five in a row from 2004 to 2008. "I didn't know it was that long. Hopefully that changes this year," Djokovic said. "I mean, that's the goal. The goal is always for me to try to go all the way to the finals and fight for the trophy. That kind of mindset or approach is no different for me this year." That consistency-

cy of purpose is what has carried him to all of his achievements. "I want to follow what Djokovic has done always in his career," said Carlos Alcaraz, the 21-year-old who already owns four majors himself, "which is getting better and improving, showing up at the court playing at his best level." It's also as widely admired by other players in the sport as the numbers — "Colossal," Alcaraz called the idea of winning a 25th major — associated with Djokovic's name.

That consistency-



Have sacrificed a lot in personal life: Suhas

By Saumojyoti S Choudhury
New Delhi: His eyes firmly set on the top-podium finish in Paris after missing gold in the last edition of the Paralympic Games, para badminton player Suhas LY is hoping to bring smiles on the faces of his family, which has sacrificed a lot as he has pursued his goal with single-minded determination for the last three years. A 2007 batch IAS officer, Suhas won the silver (SL-4 category) at the Tokyo Paralympics. He served as the District Magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar during the Covid times and was also the DM of Prayagraj. An Ajuna awardee, Suhas

is currently posted as the secretary and director-general of Youth Welfare and Prantiya Rakshak Dal, a department under the Uttar Pradesh government. Suhas admits the journey to become the best in

the business has not been easy. "I have sacrificed my personal life a lot. I dedicated my personal life to sports. In the last six months, besides my job, I have been devoting considerable time to my sport," Suhas told PTI in an interview ahead of the upcoming Paralympic Games

in Paris, where he is a medal prospect. "You cannot get everything in life, everyone has to prioritise things when you aspire to represent the country. You should enjoy whatever you are doing. Enjoy the process. The real secret is to enjoy what you do," he added. Suhas is married to Ritu Suhas, a PCS officer currently posted as ADM (Administration) in Ghaziabad. His daughter Saanvi is five-years-old and son Vivaan is two-years-old. Suhas said the real backbone behind his success in sports is the unstinted support of his family. "Without their (family) support I wouldn't have

been what I am today. They never stopped me from pursuing my dreams in badminton. They always backed me and motivated me to achieve greater heights in my sport," he said. Suhas is currently ranked world No.1 in his category and aspires to win gold but says he is not taking any pressure. "Everything is going good till now, the preparation, the run-up to the Games. But I don't want to take pressure. I can't be complacent because every match start from 0-0, I don't want to think too much ahead," he said. "This time every match is a knockout as I am starting from the pre-quarterfinals. The real focus will be to ap-

ply myself in every match, just go and perform to the best of my abilities." Even though he will be starting as one of the favourites, Suhas is pragmatic. "I will be taking it one match at a time. I never ever imagined in my life I would be playing the Paralympics and be a professional badminton player. I was always into studies after my disability, but through sports I got a mission in life," he said. "I believe in taking things as they come; focus on efforts and the results will automatically follow. I hope I become an inspiration for many," Suhas added.

Lakshya heads to Austria for physical assessment

New Delhi: Aiming to be in the best shape for the upcoming tournaments in the BWF circuit, India's Lakshya Sen on Sunday left for Austria for a detailed evaluation of his body. The 22-year-old from Almor, who had come close to winning an Olympic medal in Paris before finishing fourth, will undergo a series of tests at the Red Bull Athlete Performance Centre in Salzburg to get a detailed evaluation to rev up his fitness and game. "Lakshya is going to Austria to do some physical assessment-

ment. There is a good sports institute there, where he wants to do some physical exercise. He left today and will be back after a week," Vimal told PTI. Lakshya is accompanied by his trainer, Gaurav and a 15-year-old junior shuttler Nishchal Chand from Uttarakhand to help him keep abreast with the game during the week. The tests will focus basically on specific strength aspects.



Olympic medal potential: Meet 13-year-old badminton prodigy

By Amit Kumar Das
New Delhi: Thirteen-year-old Tanvi Patri from Odisha has cemented her status as one of India's most promising badminton prodigies by clinching the girls' singles title at the U-15 Badminton Asia U-17 & U-15 Junior Championships in Chengdu, China, the country where she first honed her skills in the sport. Patri capped off a phenomenal week with a superlative performance, defeating Vietnam's second seed Thi Thu Huyen Nguyen 22-20, 21-11 in a 34-minute final, offering a glimmer of hope after Indian badminton's recent struggles at the Paris Olympics. "I'm feel-

ing good after winning the title," Patri told PTI from Chengdu. "I had expected to win, and I'm happy I could do that. I've been training at the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy

(PPBA) in Bangalore for the last two years." Patri displayed remarkable resilience, fighting back from 11-17 down in the opening game to win the title without dropping a game throughout the tournament. Her parents, Rabinarayan Patri and Sailabala Panda, are software professionals who previously worked in China, where she first took up badminton. The family returned to India in 2020 following the COVID-19 pandemic. Vimal Kumar, Director of PPBA, sees great promise in Tanvi, even drawing comparisons to the early days of P V Sindhu, one of India's most celebrated badminton players. "She was about eight or nine when she moved to India and joined the academy in 2022," said

Vimal. "She reminds me of Sindhu when she was young. The ability to win matches at a young age is a good sign. She has a long way to go, and with her temperament, she has great potential." Rabinarayan, a software engineer who works from home, accompanies Patri to the academy. In November 2022, he drove 1,400 km from Bengaluru to Balangir for Patri's participation in the state sub-junior badminton tournament. "She is ahead of her age group," Vimal noted. "In the last six months, she has won U-17 tournaments and defeated several senior players, including the current national championship finalist, Tanvi Sharma. "If she improves her strength and continues to develop, she could be a strong contender for the 2028 or 2032 Olympics." Patri, who also enjoys

skating, began her badminton training under Chinese coach Jiang Yong Yi and won nine titles in China between 2017 and 2020. After returning to India, she was spotted by PPBA during a camp and joined the academy in March 2022. She went on to claim both the U-15 and U-17 girls' singles titles in the All India sub-junior ranking tournaments in Hyderabad in June and Mapusa, Goa, in May this year. Tanvi also won the gold medal in the 35th Sub-Junior National Championships in Balangir, Odisha, last November and became the first shuttler from Odisha to win the girls' singles title in the 34th Sub-Junior (U-13) National Championships in Lucknow in 2022. A class eight student, Patri had reached the quarterfinals at the German Junior International in Berlin in March.

Tanvi Patri crowned Asian U-15 champion

New Delhi: India's Tanvi Patri clinched the under-15 girls singles title at the Badminton Asia U-17 & U-15 junior championships after she defeated Thi Thu Huyen Nguyen of Vietnam in straight games in the final in Chengdu, China on Sunday. The 13-year-old Patri, seeded No. 1, wrapped up the proceedings in just 34 minutes as she cruised to a 22-20 21-11 victory over her second-seeded opponent in the summit clash. With the feat, Parti joins the likes of Samiya Imad Farooqui and Tasnim Mir who had won the U-15 girls singles crown in 2017 and 2019 respectively. Such was Patri's domination throughout the tournament that she didn't drop a single game across the five matches that she played. In the final, Patri was trailing 11-17 but kept

her calm as Nguyen made a series of unforced errors. The Indian grabbed the opportunity with both hands to claim the first game. Patri continued the winning momentum, dominating the second game from the start to eventually seal the match and clinch the gold medal. India thus returns with a haul of two medals, including a gold and a bronze. Gnana Dattu TT had won the bronze medal in the U-17 boys singles event on Saturday.

India's first quota in Asian Games

Thulusdhoo (Maldives): India has secured its first-ever quota in surfing competition for the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan with both the men and women teams grabbing a spot each. Participating in the Asian Surfing Championships here, the quota was awarded based on the ranking points accumulated by the surfers in the event. While Kishore Kumar missed out narrowly in stiff competition on Saturday after making it to the semi-finals, his stunning performance throughout the competition — finishing first in Round 1, Round 3, and the quarter-finals — earned India the Asian Games quota. Kishore finished third in Heat 2 of the semi-final with a score of 8.26, behind China's Chengzheng Wang, who scored 10.00 to take the second place, while Taro Takai of Japan claimed the first spot with a score of 14.50. The Asian Surfing Championships, a qualifier for the Asian Games, had eight Indian surfers who competed in four categories.

