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BABA SIDDIQUE MURDER

Political rivalry, extortion, Bishnoi link under probe

THREE ARRESTED, SEARCH ON FOR TWO MORE SUSPECTS, MASTERMINDS IN MP, UP, HARYANA

By Correspondent

Mumbai: A day after NCP leader Baba Siddique was gunned down by three suspects the Mumbai Police have widened its scope of the investigation. They are exploring various angles to the murder from political rivalry to connection with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

A Mumbai court on Sunday remanded one of the two alleged shooters in the

Baba Siddique murder case in police custody till October 21 and ordered a bone ossification test on the other after he claimed he was a minor.

Seeking the remand of the suspect Gurmail Singh, a native of Haryana, and Dharamraj Kashyap of Uttar Pradesh, the police told court it wanted to probe if the case was a result of political rivalry since Maharashtra assembly polls are round the corner.

Siddique (66) was shot at in Nirmal Nagar area of Bandra East at around 9:30 pm on Saturday. He succumbed to the injuries in nearby Lilavati Hospital some time later.

The police also said 28 live bullets were recovered from the suspects and custodial interrogation was needed to find out details as well



as to prevent occurrence of any further crime.

The court remanded Singh in police custody till October 21, while a bone ossification test was ordered on Kashyap to determine his age.

The court directed police to produce Kashyap again after completion of the test, following which it will be decided if proceedings against him will be held in

The police arrested Pravin Lonkar, 28, from Pune. He is brother of Shubham Lonkar. The Lonkar brothers allegedly enlisted Dhaarmaraj Kashyap and Shivkumar Gautam in the plot.

regular court or in a juvenile court.

At the start of the remand application hearing,

Kashyap told court he was 17 years old, hence a minor.

Police, however, told court an Aadhaar Card they have recovered showed his age to be 21. Police also said they have not seized any other document that could verify Kashyap's age.

The court then halted the proceedings and asked the prosecution to produce the Aadhaar card in question.

An officer with the Mumbai crime branch said the three men who allegedly shot Siddique had met a member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang in a Haryana jail where they had been lodged for various crimes.

The police submitted a picture of the card taken on the mobile phone of one of its officers. The court asked the defence to confirm if the details on the Aadhaar card were correct. The defence lawyer said the details were correct.

However, the photograph on the card was not that of Kashyap. But the court proceeded with the remand hearing. Seeking 14-day remand of the two accused, police said the duo had stayed in Mumbai and Pune

for a few days before the firing incident and there was need to find out who was funding them.

A probe was also needed to find out how the two procured the weapon and vehicle used in the crime as well as details of who imparted firing training, police told court.

The person killed was a former minister with security and still they managed to shoot him, the prosecution said. It was a sensitive crime and with assembly elections just round the corner, there is need to probe if any political rivalry is involved, police told court.

Police also said it needed to probe if there was an international link in the case.

A suspect Dharamraj Kashyap said he was a minor. The police produced his Aadhaar card in the court. However, the photograph on the card was not that of Kashyap.

Another suspect Gurmail Singh was sent to police custody till October 21.

Both the suspects were working in Pune.

The police said 28 live bullets were recovered from the suspects.

The suspects' lawyer said their role in the murder was not established.

History sheeter, FB post and a newbie: Related news on Page 2 & 3



Pic: Bhushan Koyande

Two coaches of empty local train derail, WR services restored after five hours

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Two coaches of an empty local train derailed while entering a car shed from Mumbai Central, affecting operations on the Western Railway on Sunday afternoon, officials said.

There were no reports of any injuries as the train was empty when it derailed around 12.10 pm, said Vineet

Abhishek, chief public relations officer of Western Railway. The derailment severely affected the suburban services as the slow track towards Dadar was blocked, he said.

"The slow track towards Dadar between Churchgate and Mumbai Central is blocked. However, trains are being diverted to the fast line between these two sta-

tions to ensure continued operations," the official said.

At least 60 services were cancelled and many others were delayed due to the derailment.

The coaches were re-railed nearly three-and-a-half hours which were blocking both down slow line and the track leading to the Mahalaxmi car shed

from the southern end, said a Western Railway spokesperson. The services on the down slow line were restored around 5.35 pm, about two hours after re-railing the coaches, he said.

According to sources, derailment of a local train at the spot was not an isolated incident, recalling three such incidents from the last two decades.

Man stabbed to death during garba event

Thane: A man was killed and two others were injured after a group of people attacked them during a 'garba' event in Thane district, an officer said on Sunday.

Eight persons have been detained so far in connection with the alleged assault near a temple at Devichi Ali in Murbad on the intervening night of Saturday-Sunday, he said.

A garba programme was underway when a group of people arrived at the venue and stabbed Sachin (Nanu) Parmar and attacked two others with sharp weapons. Parmar was rushed to a hospital where doctors pronounced him dead, he said.

"The victims are pedestrians who were passing by the locality and some persons picked up an argument claiming they were outsiders who had intruded into the event. Further probe into this is underway," the officer said.

MNS to go solo in polls, says Raj

By Swapnil R Mishra

Mumbai: Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) has decided to go solo in the upcoming Assembly polls. This move comes after Thackeray declared his party's equidistant stance from both the ruling Mahauti and opposition Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

Thackeray, founder-president of the 18-year-old MNS, has made a bold statement, saying, "Give Maharashtra in my hands... see how we transform it." This declaration reflects his party's commitment to the welfare of Marathi mannos and Hindutva.

"This time... 'na yuti, na aghadi... be the change and give power in our hands," said Thackeray amid thunderous applause at an MNS state officer bearers meeting at the NESCO Complex in Mumbai on Sunday.

Raj had initially supported the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and even shared the stage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Lok Sabha elections. However, after the polls, Thackeray made



it clear that his support was limited to the Lok Sabha elections alone.

Sunday's statement of "na yuti, na aghadi" gave a sense of clarity among the party workers.

During his address, Raj lashed out at the happenings of Maharashtra politics and how people have changed sides. "You contest elections with someone and then join hands with someone... when you see parties being broken," said Raj, adding that he aspires to make Maharashtra that would never bow down before Delhi. "Don't allow Maharashtra to be ruined," he said.

Drugs worth Rs 5000 cr recovered in Gujarat

New Delhi: In a joint operation, Delhi Police and Gujarat Police on Sunday seized 518 kilograms of cocaine worth Rs 5,000 crore in Gujarat's Ankleshwar.

With this, 1,289 kilograms of cocaine and 40 kilograms of hydroponic Thailand marijuana worth Rs 13,000 crore have been seized by the law enforcement agencies within a fortnight in Delhi and Gujarat, sources said.

Delhi Police's Special Cell and Gujarat Police on Sunday claimed to have recovered 518 kilograms cocaine during a search conducted at a pharmaceutical company in Ankleshwar.

Value of the seized cocaine in the international market is said to be around Rs 5,000 crore, sources said.

On October 1, the Special Cell raided a warehouse in Delhi's Mahipalpur and seized a consignment of 562 kilograms cocaine and 40 kilograms of hydroponic marijuana. During the course of investigation, on October 10, about 208 kilograms of additional cocaine was recovered from Delhi.

SpaceX launches mega Starship rocket

Boca Chica (US): SpaceX launched its enormous Starship rocket on Sunday on its boldest test flight yet, catching the returning booster back at the pad with mechanical arms.

Towering almost 400 feet (121 metres), the empty Starship blasted off at sunrise from the southern tip of Texas near the Mexican border. It arced over the Gulf of Mexico like the four Starships before it that ended up being destroyed, either soon after liftoff or

while ditching into the sea. The last one in June was the most successful yet, completing its flight without exploding.

This time, SpaceX founder and CEO Elon Musk upped the challenge and risk. The company brought the first-stage booster back to land at the pad from which it had soared seven minutes earlier. The launch tower sported monstrous metal arms, dubbed chopsticks, that caught the descending 232-foot (71-me-

THIS TIME, MECHANICAL ARMS CATCHES IT AT LANDING

tre) booster.

"Are you kidding me?" SpaceX's Dan Huot observed with excitement from near the launch site. "I am shaking right now."

"This is a day for the engineering history books," added SpaceX's Kate Tice from SpaceX headquarters in Hawthorne, California.

It was up to the flight director to decide, in real time with a manual control,

whether to attempt the landing. SpaceX said both the booster and launch tower had to be in good, stable condition. Otherwise, it was going to end up in the gulf like the previous ones. Everything was judged to be ready for the catch.

Once free of the booster, the retro-looking stainless steel spacecraft on top continued around the world, targeting a controlled

splashdown in the Indian Ocean. The June flight came up short at the end after pieces came off. SpaceX upgraded the software and reworked the heat shield, improving the thermal tiles.

SpaceX has been recovering the first-stage boosters of its smaller Falcon 9 rockets for nine years, after delivering satellites and crews to orbit from Florida

or California. But they land on floating ocean platforms or on concrete slabs several miles from their launch pads — not on them.

Recycling Falcon boosters has sped up the launch rate and saved SpaceX millions. Musk intends to do the same for Starship, the biggest and most powerful rocket ever built with 33 methane-fuel engines on the booster alone. NASA



has ordered two Starships to land astronauts on the moon later this decade. SpaceX intends to use Star-

ship to send people and supplies to the moon and, eventually Mars.



Political slugfest over law and order

Mumbai: The Congress on Sunday demanded a thorough investigation into NCP leader Baba Siddique's murder and said Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Home Minister Devendra Fadnis should take moral responsibility for law-and-order failure and resign.

The Congress alleged that the Mahayuti government in Maharashtra has failed to provide protection to its own leaders and to the people of Mumbai who feel scared.

Such killings show that the law-and-order situation in the state has failed, the opposition party said, claiming that the government was trying to postpone the election dates somehow through these incidents.

"It is a Government that is on its last legs. With this, the countdown for its exit has begun," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on X.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Rahul Gandhi said the Maharashtra government must take responsibility and order a thorough and transparent investigation.

"The tragic demise of Baba Siddique ji is shocking and saddening. My thoughts are with his family in this difficult time. This horrifying incident exposes the complete collapse of law and order in Maharashtra. The government must take responsibility, and justice must prevail," Gandhi said on X.

"Justice must be ensured, and the present Maharashtra Govt must order a thorough and transparent investigation. The culprits must be brought to book at the earliest. Accountability is paramount," Kharge posted on the social media platform.

If a leader from the ruling alliance is not safe, how can the government keep the common man safe? NCP (SP) state president Jayant Patil asked.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said if a protected person meets such fate, how will be common people feel safe.



Lonkar had claimed responsibility in FB post

Mumbai: The Mumbai Police have arrested Pravin Lonkar, who took the responsibility of Baba Siddique's murder in a Facebook post. Lonkar had shared post, which was updated on the account identified as Shubuu Lonkar Maharashtra.

In the chilling post, it was claimed that Baba Siddique was close to Salman Khan and Dawood Ibrahim. The action is being taken due to the enmity with Bollywood actor Salman Khan, read the post.

The post said, "Om Jai Shri Ram, Jai Bharat. I understand the essence of life, I see the body and wealth as mere dust. Whatever good deeds were done, I fulfilled the



duty of friendship. Salman Khan, we did not want this fight, but you caused harm to our brother. Today, while people are singing praises of Baba Siddique's decency, they forget that at one time, he was involved with Dawood under the MCOCA Act... The reason for his death was Anuj Thapan and connecting Dawood with Bollywood, politics, and property dealings... We have no enmity with anyone, but whoever helps Salman Khan or the Dawood gang, make sure to settle your accounts... If anyone gets our brothers killed, we will certainly respond. We have never made the first attack... Jai Shri Ram, Jai Bharat, Salute to the Martyrs."

CRIME WATCH

Two booked for duping man of Rs 70 lakh

Thane: Police have registered a case against a man and his son, both directors of an automobile company, for allegedly cheating a man from Navi Mumbai in Maharashtra of Rs 70.19 lakh in a scooters purchase deal, an officer said on Sunday. Between November 29, 2023 and October 11 this year, the 45-year-old victim, hailing from Vashi in Navi Mumbai who was into the two-wheelers distribution business, transferred an advance payment of Rs 1.20 crore to the company's bank account for the purchase of 168 scooters as per a proforma invoice. However, the accused, hailing from Pune, only delivered 56 scooters valued at Rs 49.8 lakh, failing to supply the remaining consignment and also did not return the outstanding amount of Rs 70.19 lakh, the officer from APMC police station said. When the victim demanded supply of the remaining two-wheelers, the accused failed to respond. Having realised that he had been cheated, the victim filed a complaint.

Two teen boys drown in Nagpur

Nagpur: Two teenaged boys drowned in Zilpi lake in Nagpur while on an outing with friends, a police official said on Sunday. The incident took place on Saturday and the deceased have been identified as Viresen Vitthoba Gajbhiye and Gaurav Liladhar Burde, both 14 years old and students of Class X, the Hingna police station official said. "The incident took place at 10am after the two entered the lake for a swim. The bodies were recovered with the help of local fishermen," he added.

Civic tank checked; man's body found

Jalna: The body of a 32-year-old man was found in a water storage tank owned by the Jalna municipal corporation on Sunday, following which residents protested since it supplies water to at least 20,000 citizens everyday. A police official said the deceased, identified as Anil Kakde of Nutan Vasahat in Old Jalna area here, had been missing for the past four days. Several residents said the water being supplied to their homes had a foul smell, while some claimed strands of hair etc were also spotted coming out of the taps. The body was discovered after some of them went to inspect the tank.

Congress says projecting CM face not priority

By Correspondent

Mumbai: NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday said the people of Maharashtra are eager for a political change and this sentiment will be reflected in the upcoming state assembly polls.

Speculations were rife that the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) constituents may declare a seat-sharing formula for the assembly elections in a joint press conference.

At the presser, Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole stressed that projecting a Chief Ministerial face was not an immediate priority for the opposition bloc, a position at variance with Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's demand to declare a CM face.

Pawar claimed that the state administration considered the best in the country, was demoralised under the Mahayuti regime.

Separately, the opposition parties said the murder of NCP leader and former minister Baba Siddique was shocking and shameful for



the state and claimed there was anarchy in Mumbai.

To a question on the MVA's chief ministerial face for the state elections which are expected to be held next month, Thackeray said the polls will be a contest between the opposition alliance and the ruling Mahayuti.

"Let the Mahayuti announce its CM face, MVA will follow suit," he said.

Pawar and Patole said Thackeray has articulated the MVA's position on the issue.

"We aim to defeat the government and not the projection of a CM face," Patole said. The opposition bloc, meanwhile, released a document listing the

Eknath Shinde government's "betrayal of Maharashtra in favour of neighbouring Gujarat".

CM Shinde lays foundation stones of 7 creek bridges

Thane: Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday inaugurated the north channel of Thane Creek Bridge 3 and also laid foundation stones of seven new bridges on creeks between Rewas in Raigad and Redi in Sindhudurg.

The new Thane creek bridge is 3180 metres long and costs Rs 559 crore, while the seven bay bridges will have a cumulative length of 26.70 kilometres and come up at a total cost of Rs 7,851 crore.

The bridges will come up on important creeks such as Dharamatar, Kundlika, Agardanda, Bankot, Kelshi, Jaigad and Kunkeshwar, an official said.

"There was demand for these bridges since Maharashtra was established. Their construction, which will start now, is a Diwali gift for residents of Konkan. Moreover, the proposed Konkan greenfield expressway will reduce the travel time from Mumbai to Konkan to five hours," Shinde said.

The north channel of the Thane Creek Bridge 3 will be open for traffic from Monday, the CM announced.

Some leads found: Fadnis

Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis on Sunday said police have found some leads in connection with the killing of NCP leader and former state minister Baba Siddique.

Different angles behind the killing were being probed, but police will talk about it later, Fadnis, who holds charge of the state home department, told reporters in Gondia.

"Everyone of us has been shocked due this horrific and tragic incident. Baba Siddique was very close to me, we had worked together for years," Fadnis said.

"Some leads have been found, but I cannot reveal them now. Some angles behind the attack are also found, but police will talk about it once the legal procedure is over," the BJP leader said.

Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) chief Sharad Pawar has targeted the state government, saying there is a need to take responsibility over the incident and for the rulers to step down.

Asked about Sharad Pawar's comments, Fadnis said, "He is only keen on attaining power even when such serious incidents have taken place. His eyes are on power, while we are looking at Maharashtra and its development and safety."



Don't politicise murder: Ajit

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Sunday said his party leader Baba Siddique's murder should not be politicised and asserted the state government will not rest till the guilty are brought to book.

Ajit Pawar on Sunday visited the Cooper Hospital in Mumbai, where Baba Siddique's body was shifted for postmortem.

He said the NCP has been devastated by the tragic loss of Baba Siddique, a leader deeply loved by many, and personally, he has lost a dear friend whom he had known for years.

"We are heartbroken, struggling to grasp the cruelty of this incident. This is not just a political loss, it's a deeply personal tragedy that has shaken us all," the NCP leader said in a post on X after visiting the hospital. "I strongly urge everyone to resist the temptation to politicise this horrifying event. This is not the time for division or for exploiting the pain of others for political advantage. Right now, our focus must be on ensuring that justice is served," he said.

The government will not rest until those responsible for the killing are brought to account, the deputy CM said.

"We honour the immense grief of Baba Siddique's family, who have suffered the greatest loss. Let us show respect and compassion rather than allowing opportunistic voices to turn this tragedy into a political spectacle," he said.

Culprits won't be spared: BJP

Those involved in the killing of NCP leader Baba Siddique will not be spared, the BJP asserted on Sunday and slammed the opposition parties for indulging in "petty politics" on the crime.

"Baba Siddique was a great human being. We are all saddened by his murder. Two of those involved in his murder have been caught and probe is on to find out those who were behind this," BJP national spokesperson and former Union minister Syed Shah Nawaz Hussain told PTI.

Maharashtra Police will not spare anyone involved in Siddique's murder, he asserted.

"The entire country is saddened by his murder but the opposition leaders are indulging in petty politics on this issue," he said.

Senior BJP leader and former Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi also slammed the opposition leaders and said it was not right for them to make "insensitive remarks on such a sensitive issue".

He said Siddique's murder is an "extremely serious criminal incident" and those involved in it will be caught.

The opposition leaders are talking nonsense as they are facing a "dearth of logical arguments".

People across country scared

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal claimed on Sunday that people across the country are "scared" by the killing of NCP leader Baba Siddique in Mumbai, and gangsters have created an almost similar atmosphere in Delhi.

Kejriwal, without naming anyone, alleged "they" want to bring "Gangster Raj" in the country and the people will have to stand against them.

Kejriwal in a post on X said, "The incident of killing of an NCP leader in public in Mumbai has scared the people not only in Maharashtra but the whole country. They have created an almost similar atmosphere in Delhi. They want to bring Gangster Raj in entire country. Public will now have to stand up to them."



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Is this a case of political killing or extortion killing? Was his murder allowed to take place? Who ordered the killing of Baba Siddique, who is the facilitator of this murder?"



Prithviraj Chavan,
Former Chief Minister

The members of Ghodbunder Cyclists took a ride from Thane to Bombay House in south Mumbai to pay homage to the late industrialist Ratan Tata on Sunday.

Pic: Bhushan Koyande



PUBLIC NOTICE

Late Chandra Prakash Sharma who died on 22/03/2020 during his life time, along with his son Mr. Anubhav Sharma, was the owner of Flat No. 17/3, 17 Floor, C Wing, Building Garden View Apartment CHS Ltd., Aarey Milk Colony, Nr. Unit no. 28, Goregaon East, Mumbai - 400065, along with rights of 20 shares of the society (Certificate no. 259, Shares from 2641 to 2660, issued by Garden View Apartment CHS Ltd.

By an Release Deed dtd. 13/09/2024, registered in the office of the sub-registrar Borivali, vide registration no. 13454-2024 dtd. 13/09/2024, Smt. Manjula Sharma & Ms. Chhayaa Sharma (Wife & Daughter both being the class 1 legal heirs of late Chandra Prakash Sharma) released their rights in the flat along with rights of the shares to their Son/Brother Mr. Anubhav Sharma, and thus Mr. Anubhav Sharma has acquired 100% undivided right, title & interest along with shares of the society.

I, Adv. Rajat K. Singh hereby invites claims or objections from the heir/s or other claimants / objectors to the transfer of the said right, title and interest of the deceased Member Late Chandra Prakash Sharma to Mr. Anubhav Sharma, holding said Flat with rights of Shares, within a period of 7 days from the publication of this notice, with copies of such documents and other proofs in support of their claims objections for transfer of undivided right, title and interest of the deceased Member. If no claims/objections are received within the period prescribed above at below mentioned address, if no claims/objections are received within the period prescribed, I shall issue No Claim Certificate as requested by my client, and thereafter no claims shall be entertained.

Sd/-
Adv. Rajat K. Singh
Office No. 138, 1st Floor, Ostwal Omate,
Bldg. No. 2/A, Near Jain Mandir, Jesal Park,
Bhayander East, Dist. Thane - 401105
(Mob. No. 8169875195)

Place: Mumbai
Date: 14/10/2024.

Arrested Haryana resident has criminal background, say police

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Haryana-resident Gurmail Baljit Singh, accused of being one of the shooters who killed NCP leader Baba Siddique, has a prior criminal history, including a murder case against him, police said on Sunday.

Twenty-three-year-old Singh's family said they disowned him 11 years ago and have called for exemplary punishment for his actions.

Mumbai Police have arrested two of the alleged assailants -- Singh from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh-native Dharmaraj Rajesh Kashyap. The third accused, Shiv Kumar, is on the run.

Giving details of Singh's criminal record, Kaithal Superintendent of Police Rajesh Kalia told PTI that the accused was arrested in

a murder case in 2019, in which he got bail later.

Another case was registered against him after a mobile phone was recovered from him in jail in 2022, the Haryana Police officer said. He had been booked in another case of beating a youth, he said.

Singh's grandmother Phuli Devi told reporters in Kaithal that the family disowned him 11 years ago. "His parents have passed away. The family has disowned him since past eleven years. He is nothing to us now," she told reporters at her residence in her Narar village.

Singh's grandmother said, "He did nothing. He came out of jail on bail. He was in jail for four years."

She said he should be given exemplary punishment as per law for his deeds.



Two suspects from same UP village

Mumbai: Two youths involved in the killing of Baba Siddique are from the same village in Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh. Both of them were from regular families and had no criminal history, police said.

Two of the accused, Dharmaraj Kashyap and Shiv Kumar alias Shiva Gautam, are residents of Gandara village in Bahraich.

Superintendent of Police Vrinda Shukla said both of them were working at a scrap shop in Pune. They have no criminal history in Bahraich, he said.

Kaiserganj Circle Officer (CO) Anil Kumar Singh said, "Shiv Kumar had gone to Maharashtra a few years ago to work as a labourer and had invited Dharmaraj to join him."

Shiva's mother, Suman, expressed shock and disbelief at the allegations. While speaking to the media, she described her son as a hardworking and peaceful person. She said that he had gone to Pune to work at a scrap shop and had last visited the village during Holi.

"Policemen and media people have been coming

and going since morning asking about Shiva. The police have questioned us too," she added.

Dharmaraj's mother Kusum said that he went to Pune to work as a scrap dealer. "When the police came to our house in the morning, we came to know that my son is involved in some case."

Though they have no criminal history in Bahraich, still, as a precaution, "the police is trying to gather information about both of them, Superintendent of Police Vrinda Shukla told mediapersons.

"They belong to normal families and both were in touch with their families. A police team visited their homes to find out whether they have any information about this incident or not," she added.

Head of the village Hasnain Kamal said that the villagers were unaware of the alleged involvement of the two men in the murder. "Both Shiva and Dharmaraj have no criminal history in the village and could be victims of a conspiracy," he said.

Social media post seeks to link Bishnoi gang

Mumbai: The Mumbai Police on Sunday said they were verifying a social media post in which an alleged member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang has taken responsibility for the murder of Baba Siddique.

A Mumbai police officer on Sunday said they have come across a viral post on social media in the name of an alleged member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang claiming responsibility for Siddique's murder. "We have seen the viral

social media post, we are verifying its authenticity," the officer said.

Notably, some Bishnoi gang members had been held in connection with the firing outside Bollywood superstar Salman Khan's residence in Mum-

bai in April this year.

The police have launched a probe into the killing of Siddique from different angles, including a possible contract killing, business rivalry or threat over a slum rehabilitation project.

In the morning, Siddique's body was shifted from the Lilavati Hospital in Bandra to Cooper Hospital in Vile Parle for an autopsy. After the postmortem, the body was taken to his home at Maqba Heights in Bandra where people were allowed to pay their last respects. The mortal remains of the NCP leader were buried at Bada Kabrastan in Marine Lines following Namaz-E-Isha. Security outside his house has been beefed up.

A doctor from the Lilavati Hospital has said Siddique probably died before being shifted to the medical facility. He was unconscious when brought to the hospital on Saturday night after being shot at. Doctors tried for almost two hours to save him, but in vain, he said. Siddique was shifted to the Lilavati Hospital's emergency medical services at 9.30 pm on Saturday in an unresponsive condition with no pulse, no cardiac activity, no blood pressure, and with a history of gunshot wounds on the chest, officials

from the medical facility said. He had lost a lot of blood and resuscitation was initiated immediately. He was shifted to the ICU where further attempts for revival were made. Despite all resuscitative efforts, doctors were unable to revive him and he was declared dead at 11.27 pm on Saturday, they said. After the incident, a forensic team visited the crime spot and collected samples and police were checking CCTV footage of the nearby spots to get more information about the attack, a police officer said.

The shooters opened four to five rounds of fire from a 9.9 MM pistol which was recovered by police. During the probe, police found the assailants fired at Siddique when people started bursting firecrackers during a Durga visarjan procession, a police officer said. They got advantage as most of the people did not hear the gunshots sound, the police said.

Salman Khan pays respects

Mumbai: Actor Salman Khan on Sunday paid homage to close friend Baba Siddique at the late NCP leader's house in Bandra.

Salman, who was accompanied by his bodyguard Shera, was spotted leaving Siddique's residence in Maqba Heights apartments on Sunday evening.

With Shera and a few police officials by his side, the 58-year-old actor waded through a sea of people to reach a black car from the main gate of the Bandra-based apartments. Salman was also one of the few film celebrities who rushed to the hospital last night to meet Siddique's family.

His family members Sohail Khan, Sshura Khan, Arpita Khan Sharma, and Alvira Agnihotri as well as friend Lulia Vantur were also pictured walking towards Siddique's residence on Sunday evening.

One cop was accompanying Siddique when he was shot

Mumbai: One police constable was guarding Baba Siddique when he was fatally shot the day before, a Mumbai Police officer said on Sunday, adding that two pistols and 28 live cartridges were recovered from the two accused.

"Police have set up 15 teams which are fanned out of Maharashtra and investigation is on to identify who provided logistical support to the shooters. Two pistols and 28 live rounds were recovered from the accused," said

Deputy Commissioner of Police (crime branch) Datta Nalawade.

He clarified that Siddique was provided a non-categorised security and was allotted three police constables.

"These constables work in three shifts. At the time of the incident (on Saturday night), one policeman was accompanying Siddique," Nalawade told a press conference.

Police have so far arrested two persons. The involvement of more per-

Delhi Police Special Cell to assist
A team from the Special Cell of the Delhi Police is set to be dispatched to Mumbai to assist in the investigation of the murder of NCP leader Baba Siddique, police sources said on Sunday. "A team comprising four to five members from the Special Cell will go to Mumbai to investigate and assist the Mumbai Police. The team will look into the gangster angle," said the source. Mumbai Police has said that the crime branch has launched a probe into the case from different angles, including a possible contract killing, business rivalry or threat over a slum rehabilitation project.

sons is suspected. Speaking on the investigation, the DCP said 15 teams have been set up which are working out of Maharashtra. We are also taking help from the local police to ascertain who provided logistical support to the accused shooters.

The crime branch is trying to identify the location where the assailants had stayed after arriving in Mumbai and who helped them.

"After the shooting incident, Assistant Police Inspector Rajendra Dhabade and a constable nabbed both shooters," he added.

Cops fan out in two districts of MP

Mumbai: A Mumbai Police team reached Madhya Pradesh on Sunday on the trail of an accused allegedly involved in the murder of NCP leader and former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique, an official said.

Mumbai Police have so far arrested two persons. They suspect the involvement of more persons in the murder.

"A team of Mumbai Police in collaboration with MP police is looking for the accused (who hails from Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh). They suspect he might be hiding in MP and searching him in Ujjain district and Omkareshwar (in Khandwa district) of MP," a police officer told PTI.

Nobody has been traced till 7:30 PM, the officer said, adding that the suspect is apparently on the move.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"If such an incident can take place in a city like Mumbai, especially in the Bandra area, one could say that no one is safe there. This shows the crumbling law and order situation in Maharashtra."



Tejashwi Yadav, Leader, RJD

Baba Siddique and the big Bollywood connection

Mumbai: Baba Siddique played peacemaker between one-time warring superstars Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan at what was one of the most viral moments of 2013 before the social media rage kicked in and was a protege, even a second son, to cinema veteran Sunil Dutt.

His grand iftar parties were a starry affair attended by right from the Khans to filmmaker Kabir Khan, celebrity designer Manish Malhotra, and actors Urmila Matondkar, Katrina Kaif, Huma Qureshi, Sonu

Sood, Sushant Singh Rajput, Ankita Lokhande, Kiara Advani, R Madhavan, and Aditi Rao Hydari.

Dutt's daughter and Congress leader Priya Dutt said she is "shocked" by Siddique's death.

"Baba was more than a political associate; he was family. To my father, Baba Siddique was like a son, and to me, he was a brother and a dear friend," she wrote in an X post.

Siddique, 66, was brought into politics by the late Congress MP Dutt, who represented Mumbai North West



for five consecutive terms. Siddique joined the Indian National Congress (INC) as a teenager back in 1977. Even when he became a part of the Ajjit Pawar-led National Congress Party (NCP) in February, he acknowledged the role of

Dutt in his political career. Priya Dutt said Siddique stood "steadfast" by her father throughout his political journey and beyond.

It was his connection to Dutt that helped Siddique secure an MLA ticket in 1999 from Bandra West, a

seat he retained for three back-to-back terms. Not only politics, former actor Dutt also introduced the political leader to the world of Bollywood.

After the news of Siddique's death broke, Dutt's son, actor Sanjay Dutt was one of the first celebrities to visit the late politician at the Lilavati Hospital where he was declared dead on Saturday night.

Salman and Shilpa Shetty, along with her businessman-husband Raj Kundra, were also photographed reaching the hospital to

meet Siddique's family. It was at Siddique's 2013 iftar party, hosted at a five-star hotel in Mumbai, that Salman and Shah Rukh buried the hatchet.

The two Khans were on unfriendly terms since their spat at Katrina's birthday party in 2008. The feud was so bitter that they avoided each other not only at private parties but also at public events.

There are several videos on the Internet capturing one of the highlights for the fans of the duo hugging it out back in 2013.

Jio seeks level playing field

New Delhi: Telecom operator Reliance Jio has sought Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia's intervention to get regulator Trai issue a revised consultation paper on a proposed spectrum allocation rule to ensure a level-playing field between terrestrial and satellite players.

Reliance Jio, in its letter to telecom minister Scindia, referred to the Supreme Court's judgement in 2G case and indicated that Trai's failure to incorporate questions on level-playing field may lead to legal tussles.

The letter came after Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) rejected Jio's request for incorporating questions around the level-playing field between terrestrial network players that provide mobile phone services using towers installed on ground and those seeking to offer satellite-based communication services.

On September 27, 2024, Trai floated a consultation process to explore methodology and price for assigning spectrum to satellite companies to provide calling, messaging, broadband and other services in the



country.

Reliance Jio, in the letter dated October 10, mentioned that satellite communication companies such as Elon Musk's Starlink, Amazon's Kupier, Bharti Group-backed OneWeb Eutelsat, and SES-Jio joint venture have expressed interest to provide their services in India, which will directly compete with land based mobile networks, and therefore a fair and transparent auction system for satellite services is essential to ensure level competition.

"While the DoT correctly recognised the need for a level-playing field in its reference to Trai, the consultation paper issued by TRAI appears to overlook this critical issue.

"It seems Trai has preemptively closed the matter without soliciting the views of stakeholders," Jio said.

The telecom operator further said that the consultation paper fails to ask pertinent questions around the level-playing field, which will deprive stakeholders of the opportunity to voice their opinions.

"Such a consultation exercise could result in recommendations that disre-

gard this vital issue of level-playing field. Although we have raised this issue with Trai and asked that the consultation paper be revised to address the level-playing field issues between satellite and terrestrial networks, our request has not been considered favourably," Jio said.

Under the Telecommunications Act 2023, the government has decided to allocate spectrum without auction through an administrative process for a select set of satellite services.

Jio said that neither the Department of Telecom (DoT) nor Trai conducted any comprehensive study on technological evolution, market demand and supply, economic feasibility of auctions of spectrum at the time of incorporating and allowing administrative allocation of spectrum for satellite phone services.

The teleco also said that in line with clear legislative intent and DoT's recognition of the need for a level-playing field between satellite and terrestrial services, Trai must thoroughly assess technological evolution, market demand and supply, technical and economic feasibility of auctions for satellite services.

TCS employee headcount up by over 11,000

Mumbai: Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) increased its headcount by over 11,000 employees during the first half of Apr-Sep in the current financial year, the company said in its statement to detail the second quarter earnings.

As on September 30, TCS workforce stood at 612,724 spread across 150 nationalities with women employees accounting for 35.5 percent of the workforce, the statement said.

Milind Lakkad, Chief HR Officer, TCS said: "We welcomed 11,000 associates in the first half of the year, and we remain on track for trainee onboarding as planned. We have also commenced the campus hiring process for FY26. Our strong talent base and increased learning intensity prepares us well for the complex technology transformations that customers entrust us with".

During the second quarter of Jul-Sep under review, the company's employee cost rose to Rs 36,654 crore from Rs 35,123 crore in the corresponding quarter last year, up 4.3 percent on year.

However, the company also announced that over 600 Artificial Intelligence (AI) and generative AI engagements have been deployed successfully in production or in various phases of development so far.

TCS also sees continued momentum with Gen AI adoption and the technology maturing at a rapid pace. "Our customers are increasingly concentrating on integrating AI throughout their entire enterprise value chain rather than working on isolated use cases. We are also enabling AI/GenAI capabilities across our suite of products and solutions," TCS statement said.

INVESTMENT MATTERS

SMEs in IPO: A Bubble About to Break?



By Saksham Malik

The Indian IPO landscape is witnessing a remarkable surge, particularly in the SME sector, with a record number of companies going public. Traditionally viewed as risky and illiquid, SME IPOs are now attracting significant interest from retail and institutional investors. Recent listings have garnered overwhelmingly positive feedback, signaling a shift in market sentiment.

Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) fall into two categories: Main Board IPOs and SME IPOs. Main Board IPOs involve larger companies with a minimum paid-up capital of Rs.10 crores, whereas SME IPOs target small to medium-sized enterprises with a ceiling of Rs. 25 crores. The trend for SME IPOs has surged due to favorable market conditions, regulatory support, and heightened investor enthusiasm. In 2024, the Indian market witnessed 191 IPOs that raised 6,831 crores, a substantial increase from 182 IPOs raising Rs. 4,967 crores in 2023.

No, let's have a look at factors that are driving the surge in SME IPOs.

- 1. Regulatory Support:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has streamlined listing requirements, facilitating the public offerings for SMEs. The minimum paid-up capital for SMEs is set at Rs.1 crore, compared to Rs.10 crores for larger firms, which encourages a broader range of businesses to consider going public.



- 2. Access to Capital:** SMEs often face challenges in securing traditional funding sources. The current market euphoria has made it easier for these companies to attract public investment, as evidenced by a recent Delhi bike store aiming to raise Rs.12 crores but receiving applications worth over Rs.4,000 crores.

- 3. Visibility and Credibility:** Listing on a recognized stock exchange enhances an SME's legitimacy, leading to better business opportunities and increased customer trust.

While the trend for SME IPOs is promising, it comes with its challenges. The Indian stock market is known for its unpredictable nature, leading to significant fluctuations in share prices for newly listed companies. SME shares may not be as actively traded as those of larger corporations, raising liquidity concerns. Many investors remain unaware of these emerging opportunities, which can lead to under-subscription and reduced capital raised.

Now, let's have a look on key factors that investors should consider

before investing in SME IPOs. Investors should approach SME IPOs with caution. Investors should look beyond the hype and focus on the company's revenue, profit margins, and growth potential. Ensure that investments are not overhyped. Assess whether the pricing reflects the company's financial health and future potential. Incorporate SME IPOs into a well-rounded investment strategy to mitigate risks associated with individual company performance.

In summary, while SME IPOs present exciting opportunities for significant returns, they also carry inherent risks. Navigating this dynamic landscape requires careful analysis and strategic planning. Investors must weigh the potential rewards against the challenges to make informed decisions. As the SME IPO segment continues to grow, understanding these dynamics will be crucial for both new and seasoned investors.

(The author is CEO and Founder, Rabbit Invest)



Mobile users to pay higher tariff

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Indian mobile users should gear up to pay higher tariff as telecom companies may find it necessary to hike tariff in the coming years following the Supreme Court order last month on outstanding AGR (adjusted gross revenues) dues, according to a report by global brokerage house.

"We bake in tariff hikes of 15 percent in FY27 (estimated) for the three telcos - Bharti Airtel, Bharti Hexacom and IDEA. For 2Q, we expect subs losses for incumbents (BHARTI/IDEA), however ARPU should enjoy flow through of recent tariff hikes," said the JP Morgan report.

India's data yield (USD/GB) and ARPU (average revenue per user) as percentage of GDP per capita remains one of the lowest in the region (if not the world) nine years since Jio's launch.

Affordability of service and a benign regulatory environment gives Telcos the headroom to take successive tariff hikes before reaching the average trend of Asian peers. JP Morgan thinks this could precipi-

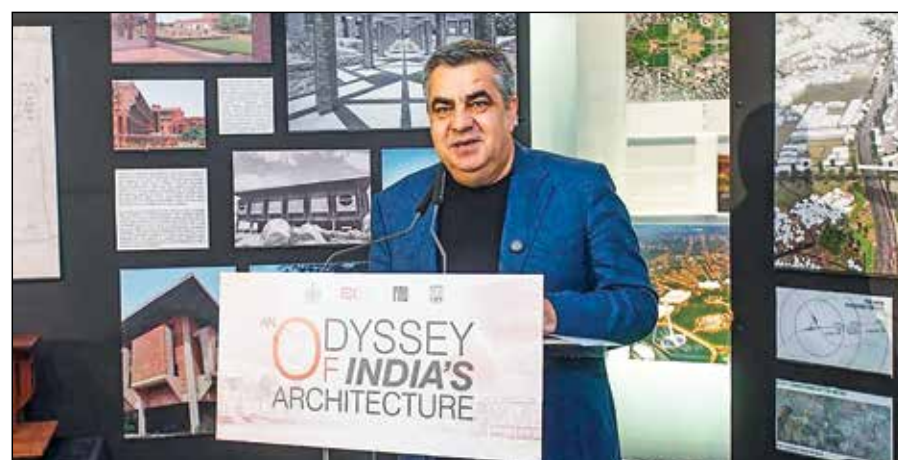
tate persistent tariff repair over the next few years.

The Supreme Court had dismissed curative petitions filed by telecom companies like Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea against the court's 2019 judgment on AGR. The court upheld the Department of Telecom's (DoT) move to recover about Rs 92,000 crore from the telecom sector.

AGR is the fee that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) charges telecom operators for usage and licensing. The AGR is the basis for calculating the dues that telecom companies owe the government.

Earlier in July, India's three major private telecom companies - Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea, increased their mobile tariffs by 10-25 percent.

According to the Ministry of Communications, India's mobile services pricing is amongst the lowest, with a minimum mobile, voice, and data basket consisting of 140 minutes + 70 SMS + 2GB costing only around Rs 157 quoting International Telecommunication Union report.



Blendi Gonxhja, Albania's Minister of Economy, Culture, and Innovation at an event in New Delhi on Sunday.

CCPA orders Ola to offer refund choices, ride receipts

New Delhi: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has directed ride-hailing platform Ola to implement consumer-friendly changes, including offering refund options and providing receipts for auto rides, the regulator said on Sunday.

The CCPA, led by Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare, observed that Ola's no-questions-asked refund policy only provided coupon codes for future rides, without giving consumers a choice for bank account refunds.

"This (practice) violates consumer rights," the CCPA said in a statement. "The no-question-asked refund policy cannot mean that the company incentivises people to simply use this facility for taking another ride."

The regulator also mandated Ola to issue bills or invoices for all auto rides booked through its platform, citing the absence of such documentation as an "unfair trade practice" under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Following the CCPA's in-

tervention, Ola has implemented several changes, including displaying contact details of grievance and nodal officers on its website, clearly mentioning cancellation policies and fees at the time of booking, adding more options for ride cancellation reasons, and publicizing fare component breakdowns.

The other changes implemented were showing address of both pickup and drop locations to drivers and revised payment cycles for drivers for swift payment.

ONGC looks at mini-LNG plants

New Delhi: State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is looking to set up mini-LNG plants to evacuate natural gas from wells located in areas that are not connected with pipelines.

The firm has identified five sites in Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Gujarat for setting up mini plants at wellhead that will convert the gas pumped out from under the ground into liquefied natural gas (LNG) by supercooling it to minus 160 degrees Celsius.

This LNG will be loaded on cryogenic trucks and transported to the nearest pipeline where it will be reconverted into its gaseous state and pumped into the network for supply to users like power plants, fertilizer units or city gas retailers.

ONGC has floated a tender seeking manufacturers/service providers to tap stranded natural gas, according to the tender.

The locations identified for setting up mini-LNG plants in the tender are two sites at Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh and one each at Ankleshwar in Gujarat, Bokaro in Jharkhand and Cambay in Gujarat.

CIL's contribution to exchequer drops

New Delhi: State-owned Coal India Ltd's contribution to the government exchequer dropped marginally by 0.6 per cent to Rs 28,930.27 crore in the first half of the ongoing fiscal over the year-ago period.

Coal India Ltd (CIL), which accounts for over 80 per cent of the domestic coal output, paid Rs 29,122.13 crore to the government exchequer in April-September period of FY24, according to provisional figures of the coal ministry.

Total levies paid to the government in September also dropped by 11.1 per cent to Rs 4,335.24 crore from Rs 4,878.84 crore paid in the corresponding month of FY24.

Of the total Rs 28,930.27 crore paid to the government exchequer in April-September FY25, maximum amount of Rs 6,452.30 crore went to the Jharkhand government, followed by Rs 6,383.14 crore to the Odisha government, Rs 5,432.02 crore to Chhattisgarh, Rs 5,177.41 crore to Madhya Pradesh, and Rs 2,782.25 crore to Maharashtra, among others.

The coal-producing states earned the revenue from royalty, District Mineral Foundation (DMF) and National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET), among others.



The PSU's coal output in April-September period of the current fiscal year increased 2.5 per cent to 341.5 MT, over 332.9 MT in the year-ago period.

Coal India's production rose 10 per cent to 773.6 million tonne in 2023-24 but fell short of its production target of 780 MT for the fiscal year.

The company's output was 703.2 MT in the preceding 2022-23 fiscal year.

Indigenous tourism to boost global economy

By Vilas Tokale

Perth: Indigenous tourism is projected to contribute USD 67 billion to the global economy by 2034, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC).

'Supporting Global Indigenous Tourism,' a report released by the world tourism body at its recent Global Summit at Perth in Western Australia showcases the role of indigenous tourism in driving economic growth, particularly in remote regions, and its vital

contribution for cultural preservation and community empowerment.

Speaking at the summit, Julia Simpson, WTTTC president and CEO said, "Indigenous tourism is not only about showcasing rich cultural traditions; it is about empowering communities, creating sustainable jobs, and ensuring that Indigenous people are in control of their own stories and economic futures."

"This report demonstrates the immense potential of indigenous tourism



to drive economic growth, particularly in remote regions, while preserving invaluable cultural heritage. As global demand for authentic experiences continues to rise, it is crucial that we support indigenous businesses and ensure they

USD 1.5 trillion Expected travel business this year, according to WTTTC report
6.7 per cent The share of travel and tourism globally in 2023
7.8 per cent The share of travel and tourism globally in 2019
USD 112 billion Projected injection by Oceania's travel and tourism sector to the region's economy by 2034

The report, 'Unlocking Opportunities for Travel and Tourism Growth in Oceania' outlines the transformative potential of the region's sector if strategic investments are made. It says Oceania, which includes Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, could become a global leader in sustainable travel.

have access to the resources and funding needed to thrive," Simpson said.

The indigenous tourism also plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, languages, and tradi-

tional practices, said the report released at the three-day 24th WTTTC Global Summit which saw a gathering of industry leaders, government officials, and delegates from across the globe.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We deeply regret any harm caused to Maddock Films and their franchise as a result of this infringement. We are taking immediate steps to rectify the issue and are in the process of removing all infringing content from our film."



Raaj Shaandilyaa, Director

Death of G.N. Saibaba

NPRD points to inadequate care during imprisonment

New Delhi: NGO National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled has claimed that prolonged imprisonment and inadequate medical care exacerbated pre-existing health issues of former DU professor and disability rights activist G N Saibaba and contributed to his untimely death.

Saibaba died at a state-run hospital in Hyderabad due to post-operative complications on Saturday, seven months after he was acquitted in a Maoist links case. He was 54.

In a statement, the non-governmental organisation underscored the challenges Saibaba faced during his incarceration and the toll it took on his health.

The former professor, who had polio and was affected by multiple severe health conditions, was released just months ago after 10 years in prison on charges that the NPRD termed "false".

Despite his release being hailed as a victory for justice, his freedom was tragically short-lived, it said.

According to the National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD), Saibaba's prolonged imprisonment and inadequate medical care exacerbated his pre-existing health issues, contributing to his untimely death.

During his incarceration, Saibaba endured worsening spinal and nervous system disorders and one of his arms became non-functional due to injuries sustained during his arrest, it added.



Family to donate body to govt medical college

Hyderabad: The family members of G.N. Saibaba, on Sunday said his body will be donated to the government medical college here, as per his wish. They said his mortal remains would be handed over to the state-run Gandhi Medical College here on October 14.

The body, which is kept in the mortuary at the NIMS, will be taken to Gun Park on October 14, and from there it will be shifted to his brother's residence here and kept for public homage, the family said adding a condolence meeting will follow. Saibaba was suffering from gall bladder infection and was operated on two weeks ago, but developed complications subsequently.

The NGO alleged that he also suffered from acute pancreatitis and gallbladder stones, for which he was denied necessary surgery despite repeated pleas for medical attention.

The NPRD highlighted this denial as a "sad commentary on our criminal

justice system," recalling the similar case of Father Stan Swamy, who also died in custody.

The NPRD had consistently protested Saibaba's treatment in prison, calling the conditions in which he was kept "violative of his rights to life, dignity, and

Stalin hails Saibaba as tireless advocate of the oppressed

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Sunday said the demise of former Delhi University professor G N Saibaba was a profound loss to those who are fighting for human rights.

"A tireless advocate for the oppressed, he fearlessly fought against injustice, even when his own freedom and health were at risk," Stalin said. "His courage in defending civil liberties despite many challenges will be remembered as an enduring example of integrity. My sincere condolences to his family and loved ones during this difficult time," he said in a statement.

The organisation criticised the failure to provide reasonable accommodation and medical treatment, which it said violated both international treaties and domestic laws protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.



People light their mobile torches at the protest site where junior doctors are sitting on a hunger strike in protest against the alleged rape and murder of a woman medic at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata

Farmers block roads, squat on rail tracks

Ludhiana/Hoshiarpur/Amritsar: Punjab farmers on Sunday blocked roads and squatted on rail tracks at many places in the state as part of their protest against the alleged tardy procurement of paddy in the ongoing Kharif marketing season.

While the Samyukta Kisan Morcha had given a call for a statewide road blockade from 12 to 3 pm, the Bharti Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) had also given a call for 'rail roko' for three hours.

As farmers blocked roads at several places including national highways, commuters faced inconvenience. Police, however, had diverted road traffic through alternative routes. BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) general secretary Sukhdev Singh Kokrikalan said they held their 'rail roko' protest at 17 places. They also staged 'dharnas' at various points.



The protesters also squatted on the railway tracks at village Mandiala on the Hoshiarpur-Jalandhar rail section.

The protesting farmers alleged delay in paddy procurement and its lifting in the state. They also raised slogans against both the state and central governments, accusing them of failing to begin paddy procurement and lifting operations at state-run mandis.

They demanded immediate commencement of procurement operations, warning that failure to act

would lead to an intensification of their agitation. BKU (Doaba) blocked a road at Sugar mill crossing in Phagwara.

Satnam Singh Sahni, general secretary BKU(D) alleged that there was tardy or virtually no lifting of paddy from 'mandis', resulting in delay of further harvesting of paddy in fields as well as the subsequent preparation for sowing of wheat crop.

The state rice millers and the commission agents are also supporting the farmers' protest.

Kharge's son withdraws request for civic amenity site

Bengaluru: The chairperson of Siddhartha Vihar Trust, Rahul M Kharge, has withdrawn his request for the allotment of five acres of civic amenity site in Bengaluru to set up a 'Multi-Skill Development Centre, Training Institutes and Research Centre'.

The move by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's son Rahul Kharge comes close on the heels of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi returning the 14 sites to Mysuru Urban Development Authority after the Lokayukta police registered a case against Siddaramaiah, his wife and brother-in-law.

The BJP IT department in charge Amit Malviya in a social media post questioned the allotment of the site and called it 'misuse of power, nepotism, and conflict of interest'.

The BJP Rajya Sabha member Lahar Singh Siroya too questioned the decision on 'X' saying, "When did the Kharge family become aerospace entrepreneurs to be eligible for KIADB land? Is this about misuse of power, nepotism, and conflict of interest?"

Mallikarjun Kharge's younger son Priyank Kharge, who is a minister in the Karnataka government, shared the information with the scanned copies of the letter on his 'X' handle.

In a letter to the Chief Executive Officer of the Karnataka Industrial Development Board (KIADB) on September 20, Rahul Kharge wrote, "Withdrawal of our request for Civic Amenity site to set up Multi Skill Development Centre, Training Institutes and a Research Centre."

'Blot on democracy', says Wangchuk after several detained

New Delhi: Delhi Police on Sunday detained several people from outside the Ladakh Bhawan where climate activist Sonam Wangchuk is leading an indefinite hunger strike since October 6 to press for their demand to include Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Earlier police said that Sonam Wangchuk was among those detained, but later the New Delhi DCP clarified that the climate activist was not among the detainees.

"We have detained some students from outside the Ladakh Bhawan. Sonam Wangchuk is not among them," Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Devesh Mahla said.

Meanwhile, Wangchuk said in a video message that the Delhi Police detained several of their supporters, as he questioned why Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) which prohibits unauthorised gatherings is

permanently enforced in New Delhi.

"Many people came here today to observe a silent protest. It is really sad that they were detained by Delhi Police. It is sad because in the world's largest democracy, we can't even hold a silent protest," Wangchuk said in the message.

"We have been told that Section 163 has been enforced... It is sad that the mother of democracy has such a restriction imposed all through the year. This section is usually enforced temporarily only where there is a chance of law and order getting disrupted," Wangchuk added.

"This is a blot on our democracy, and courts should also take cognisance of it... How can such sections be imposed permanently," he asked.

The Ramon Magsaysay awardee climate activist also shared videos of people being detained on Instagram.

Stating that the protest-

ers did not have the permission to sit outside the Ladakh Bhawan where Section 163 of BNSS is in place, a senior police officer said, "They have filed an application to hold protest at the Jantar Mantar. Their application is under consideration. They are not allowed to protest at any other site. We have detained a few people, who will be released soon."

Wangchuk and his supporters who marched to Delhi from Leh were detained by Delhi Police at the Singhu border on September 30 before being released on October 2.

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution includes provisions for the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram in northeast India. It also establishes autonomous councils that have legislative, judicial, executive and financial powers to independently govern these areas.

-PTI



A policeman speaks with climate activist Sonam Wangchuk staging a protest demanding the inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution, at the Ladakh Bhawan in New Delhi on Sunday.

Pic:PTI

Parliamentary Panel on Waqf Bill

Head priest of Nashik temple to share views

New Delhi: The head priest of a Nashik temple, three advocates and representatives of a Muslim organisation are among those who will share their views on the Waqf bill before a parliamentary panel on Monday.

The Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill is meeting here on Monday and Tuesday to hear representatives of Jamiat Ulema-i-

Hind, Delhi, and Goa-based Sanatan Sanstha.

The panel headed by BJP's Jagdambika Pal will also hear Mahant Sudhirdas Maharaj, the head priest of Nashik's Shri Kalaram temple.

Advocates Ashwini Upadhyay, Vishu Shankar Jain and Amita Sachdeva will also share their views on the bill before the panel. Sachdeva represents the Hindu Janjagruti Samiti,

Goa. Former chairperson of the Karnataka State Minorities Commission, Anwar Manipadi, is also listed to share his opinions on the draft law.

The Joint Committee of the two Houses has received a staggering 1.2 crore email responses amid campaigns launched by rival groups to ratchet up support for their respective viewpoints regarding the draft law.

AMU prof duped of Rs 75 lakh in 'digital arrest'

Aligarh (UP): A retired Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) professor was allegedly duped of more than Rs 75 lakhs by fraudsters posing as Enforcement Directorate (ED) and putting her under 'digital arrest' for 10 days, police said on Sunday.

An FIR was lodged on Friday by Qamar Jahan and the police immediately issued an alert to the banks concerned. Police found that the money had been routed through 21 different bank accounts, they said.

Transactions worth Rs 13 lakh were blocked due to police intervention, they said.

Cyber police station inspector V.D. Panday, who is investigating the case told PTI that the victim was kept under "digital arrest for more than 10 days" during which the accused pressured Jahan to pay money to avoid arrest.

'Digital arrest' is a new cyber fraud, where the accused poses as law enforcement agency officials, like CBI or customs officials or ED, and threatens people of

arrest by making video calls in the name of fake international parcels of banned drugs or money laundering cases.

The complainant told the police that she received the first call on September 28. The accused posed an Enforcement Directorate official and told her that she had conducted some dubious transactions, involving her in a money laundering case.

To avoid arrest, Jahan must deposit some money to the Court, the accused told the victim. He gave her some bank account numbers and the victim complied with the demands and deposited more than Rs 75 lakh.

However, two days ago she sensed that she had been duped and filed a complaint at the police station, they said.

During the past few weeks, several cases of digital arrest have been reported in the state. The police have issued advisories to the public stating that there is no provision for digital arrest.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Prof Saibaba's death is also deeply concerning. His death was also partly a result of the UAPA that allows cops to keep you in prison for lengthy periods without any evidence."



Asaduddin Owaisi, Chief, AIMIM

Caste atrocity, land disputes among cases with NCSC

By Uzmi Athar

New Delhi: Over 47,000 complaints have been received by the National Commission for Scheduled Caste in the last four years, according to official data, with atrocities against Dalits, and disputes related to land and governments jobs being the main issues.

As per information shared by the NCSC in response to an RTI filed by PTI, 11,917 complaints were received in 2020-21, 13,964 complaints registered in 2021-22, 12,402 in 2022-23 and 9,550 complaints so far in 2024.

Speaking to PTI about the data, NCSC chairperson Kishor Makwana said the most common complaints received by the commission are related to atrocities

against the Scheduled Castes community, followed by land disputes and issues related to services in the government sector.

"In a bid to address the complaints speedily, from next month, me or my members would be visiting the state offices and looking into the issues faced by the people there," he said.

Makwana added that he is holding hearings four times a week to meet people and listen to their problems.

"Since I have taken charge, I have ensured that my office remains open to meet people," he said.

A senior NCSC official said the highest



number of complaints have been filed from Uttar Pradesh among all states. The commission receives 200-300 complaints every day and many of them get resolved within days, so the data seen here is mostly of the complaints that are in the process of getting their resolution, the official said.

"There is not a single complaint that has been left unattended. They all are under consideration," he said.

According to the data from the national helpline on atrocities against people from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 6,02,177 calls were received. Out of these, the total number of grievances stood at 5,843, of

which 1,784 have been resolved.

More than half of calls have been received from Uttar Pradesh at 3,10,623. This helpline is monitored by the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry.

According to the latest government report under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the majority of atrocities against Scheduled Caste were concentrated in 13 states, which reported 97.7 per cent of all cases in 2022.

Of 51,656 cases registered under the law in 2022, Uttar Pradesh accounted for 23.78 per cent of the total cases with 12,287, followed by Rajasthan at 8,651 (16.75 per cent) and Madhya Pradesh at 7,732 (14.97 per cent).

Aurora in Ladakh validate India's space weather monitoring efforts

By Krishna

New Delhi: Ladakh's recent sightings of aurora, marked by reddish or greenish light in the night sky and usually observed in the far northern regions, is a validation of our efforts in space weather monitoring, a team of astrophysicists that predicted the activity about 48-72 hours prior said.

The appearance of intense red-coloured light rays in the sky on the intervening night of October 10-11 was the latest in a series of recent auroral sightings - previous ones occurred on those of May 11 this year, and November 5 and May 10 of 2023.

All-sky cameras of the Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) at Hanle and Merak in Ladakh captured the aurora throughout the night.

While aurorae are known for their scenic beauty, their occurrence in lower-latitude regions like Ladakh is an indication of heightened solar activity in the form of solar storms

For an extraordinary fourth time during the current solar cycle, intense red coloured auroral activity was seen from Ladakh, India, and was photographed by astronomers of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) from Hanle, Leh, and Merak on the night of 10-11 October 2024.

known as coronal mass ejections, or CMEs., Nandi said.

Solar storms periodically occur as the Sun's internal dynamo process - that creates its magnetic field - intensifies and weakens. This cycle of solar activity typically lasts 11 years. In 2018, CESSI team which included Nandi as a member, predicted that the current solar activity cycle would peak in 2024, a finding published in the journal Nature Communications.

"However, we continue to track solar activity to determine if the current cycle has indeed peaked," Dibyendu Nandi, head of the Center of Excellence in Space Sciences India (CESSI) at the Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISER) Kolkata, said.

An aurora occurs when charged particles from the Sun interact with the Earth's magnetosphere or magnetic field, which acts as a shield against harmful solar and cosmic rays. These particles pierce through the shield, triggering aurorae.

The phenomenon is most commonly seen in the far northern regions of Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Alaska and Russia, and all of Iceland and Greenland.

However, the recent aurorae were also witnessed in the low-latitude regions of Mexico and Germany, Nandi added.

"The current Solar Cycle 25 is at its peak levels of



sunspot activity, which is significantly higher than the previous Cycle 24," said IIA Professor S. P. K. Rajaguru.

The current solar cycle is said to have begun in December 2019, with the preceding one said to have begun from December 2008.

On October 7, Nandi's team at CESSI was alerted to a possibly adverse development in space weather, when they saw multiple "active" regions in the Sun's magnetic field facing the Earth.

"Some filaments (sheared magnetic field structures in the lower solar atmosphere) are also observed on the Earth-facing solar disk. There are

Space agencies and organisations such as National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), US, monitor space weather to provide timely information of disruptions from the Sun, that can possibly cause communication blackouts and satellite outages.

chances of flare or filament eruption induced coronal mass ejections. Current near-Earth space weather conditions are moderately perturbed," CESSI had said in a post on X on October 7.

"This is when our machine learning based com-

puter models first flagged the possibility of solar flares and associated solar storms. When the storm indeed took off, we analysed its satellite observations and predicted a 'severe' (solar) storm on October 9," Nandi said.

The astrophysicist explained that a 'severe' solar storm is capable of triggering aurorae and enhancing orbital decay of satellites, while an 'extreme' one is capable of "killing satellites, tripping power grids and causing large-scale communication blackouts".

The team detected two solar storms directed at Earth, because of which they expected a "further escalation in space weather conditions over the next 24-36 hours", according to post on X on October 9.

Easily seen with the "unaided eye", bright red streamers forming the aurora started to appear by 10:45 pm and continued to be intense till dawn, it said.

Nandi said that the aurora sightings "herald the peak of the current solar cycle".

However, whether or not the current cycle has peaked will need to be watched out for. This would possibly be marked by less frequent solar storms and aurorae over the years when the Sun's activity starts declining, he added.

Nandi said that the results are a validation that

The aurora sightings are a validation that we are on the right track. It boosts our confidence to predict extreme weather events in space that can potentially endanger all kinds of satellite-based services on Earth, bringing modern society to a standstill..

- Dibyendu Nandi, Head, Center of Excellence in Space Sciences India, IISER, Kolkata

we are on the right path and bolstered confidence in their abilities to predict an 'extreme' solar storm, the effects of which would likely be more disruptive.

"The effects in such a case will not be limited to spectacles for the night-sky gazers, but will be much more damaging to communications, telecommunications and satellites, on which humanity has come to rely upon for their everyday lives, including navigation, banking and other strategic services," the astrophysicist cautioned.

-PTI

Seven killed in Brazil storm

Sao Paulo: At least seven people were killed after a brief but powerful storm swept through Sao Paulo, Brazil with around 1.4 million households in the South America's largest metropolis left without power on Saturday.

Officials in Sao Paulo state said that record wind gusts Friday night of up to 67 mph (108 kph) knocked down transmission lines and uprooted trees, causing severe damage in some parts. The storm also shut down several airports and interrupted water service in several areas, according to the state government.

One person died when a tree fell on an outdoor stall, authorities said. At least six other people in surrounding Sao Paulo state also died.

Authorities originally expected to restore power within a few hours. But several neighborhoods in the metropolitan area, which is home to 21 million people, were still in the dark on Saturday, and authorities were urging residents to limit their consumption of water.

Most of the disruptions were in the service area of a single utility, Enel-Sao Paulo, which is partly owned by AES Corporation. In May, the Virginia-based power company said it was selling its 47% stake in its Brazil unit for \$640 million.

Regulators ordered an inspection of the utility, warning that if it doesn't resolve the outages in a satisfactory and swift manner it will move to terminate the private concession.

For its part, Enel said that 17 high voltage transmission lines were affected by the storm. It did not provide a time frame for re-establishing service. -AP

Pakistan secures USD 10m for climate solutions

By Sajjad Hussain

Islamabad: Pakistan has secured USD 10 million in climate finance funding to enhance integrated and adaptive water resource management in the Indus River, with a particular focus on nature-based solutions, to benefit the local communities.

The funding was approved on Friday by the Adaptation Fund Board for the project called Sustain-

With 90 per cent of Pakistan's people and more than three-quarters of its economy sited in the Indus Basin, climate-driven alterations to the river's flow are set to seriously impact Pakistan's economy and ecology.



able Actions for Ecosystems Restoration in Pakistan (SAFER), according to a statement by the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

The Adaptation Fund was established in 2001 to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries which are Parties of the Kyoto Protocol that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

The project will be rolled out in Indian territory of Gilgit-Baltistan as well as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh regions of Pakistan over the next three-and-a-half years.

The project particularly focuses on interventions around the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector, and targets women, children, and youth, in order to build the resilience of those communities dis-

ICIMOD is an international organisation established in 1983, that is working to make this critical region of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) greener, more inclusive and climate-resilient. The region stretches 3,500km across Asia, spanning eight countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.

proportionately hit by climate-induced crises.

The project is designed to align with national plans and strategies, including Pakistan's National Adaptation Plan and the country's flagship Living Indus Initiative, which deploys nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation approaches to protect, conserve, and restore natural, terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems in the Basin.

SAFER, led by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, with ICIMOD serving

as a regional implementing entity.

It "will see the roll-out of key, inclusive approaches to increase integrated and adaptive water resource management in the Indus River, with a particular focus on nature-based solutions (NbS) and interventions that benefit and/or are designed to increase the participation of women, youth, and children," said Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change & Environmental Coordination.

-PTI



Devotees carry an idol of Goddess Durga for visarjan (immersion) on the banks of the Ganga river marking the end of the 'Durga Puja' festival in Kolkata on Sunday.

Pic: PTI

Illegal tree felling in Koteshwar, encroachment in Bengaluru lake

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has sought a response from the Gujarat regional office of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on the issue of alleged illegal tree felling in Gujarat's Koteshwar.

The green body had taken suo motu cognisance of a media report on the threat to a 77-hectare forest patch in Koteshwar which is situated between Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar.

A bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said, "As per the article, this forest is home to over 700 species of flora and fauna, including some endangered species and this area, considered the last wildlife refuge near the city, is threatened by ongoing deforestation and



urban encroachment as plans to transform it into a biodiversity park are set in motion as part of the Sabarmati River Front extension plan."

The bench also comprising judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert members Afroz Ahmad and A Senthil Vel said

NGT issues notices

the report raised "substantial issues" about compliance with environmental rules.

It impleaded as parties or respondents the Gujarat regional office of the MoEFCC, the state's principal chief conservator of forests

and the district magistrate of Kutch.

"Issue notice to the above respondents for filing their response/reply by way of affidavit before the western zonal bench of the tribunal at least one week before the next date of hearing (on

November 18)," the tribunal said.

Blockage of drains, encroachment in Bengaluru lakes

The NGT has sought a response from the chief commissioner of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and other officials on a Lokayukta report on two lakes of the Karnataka capital that found blocked stormwater drains and encroachments as major issues.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) was hearing a matter where it had taken suo motu cognisance of a newspaper report regarding the Lokayukta's probe that found several issues in Vibhutipura and Doddanekundi lakes in Bengaluru.

In a recent order, a bench of NGT Chairperson Jus-

tice Prakash Shrivastava said, "The news item states that in Vibhutipura Lake, officials found the entrance gate mutilated, fencing destroyed, and illegal structures within the premises."

"The lake's water level was alarmingly low, even during the rainy season, due to a blocked outflow path. Encroachments and misuse of facilities were also noted. Furthermore, it was found that the Doddanekundi Lake faced similar issues," he said.

The bench also comprising judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member A Senthil Vel said, "The news item raises substantial issues relating to compliance of the provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, and Envi-

ronment (Protection) Act."

BBMP chief commissioner, chairman of Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board, member secretaries of Karnataka State Pollution Control Board and Central Pollution Control Board and Bengaluru's district magistrate (DM) have been impleaded as respondents and parties by the green body.

The tribunal noted that the DM's counsel accepted the notice and sought time to file reply.

"Let notice be issued to other respondents for filing their response/reply by way of affidavit before the southern zonal bench of the tribunal in Chennai at least one week before the next date of hearing (on November 5)," said the tribunal.

-PTI

Blue Line achieves carbon neutral certification

New Delhi: Delhi Metro's Blue Line connecting Yamuna Bank with Vaishali in Ghaziabad has achieved carbon neutral certification, officials said.

This milestone underlines DMRC's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and addressing climate change, they said.

This certification follows DMRC's earlier success in achieving carbon-neutral certification for its corporate headquarters at Metro Bhawan and the staff quarters in Sector-50, Noida.

Aligned with the government's goal to reach net zero emissions by 2070, the DMRC is making significant strides towards carbon neutrality by integrating advanced environmental practices, the officials said.

DMRC has successfully minimised its carbon footprint, by adopting various sustainable, environment-friendly initiatives.

Israeli strikes kill family of eight in Gaza, destroy century-old market in Lebanon

One dead, nine hurt in univ firing

Deir Al-Balah (Gaza Strip): An Israeli strike on the central Gaza Strip killed a family of eight, Palestinian medical officials said Sunday, as Israeli forces battled Palestinian militants in the territory's north and airstrikes destroyed a century-old market in southern Lebanon.

The strike in Gaza late Saturday hit a home in the Nuseirat refugee camp, killing parents and their six children, who ranged in age from 8 to 23, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in nearby Deir al-Balah, where the bodies were taken.

It said a further seven people were wounded, including two women and a child in critical condition. An Associated Press reporter counted the bodies.

A year into the war with Hamas, Israel continues to strike what it says are militant targets in Gaza nearly every day. The military says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames their deaths on Hamas and other armed groups because they operate in densely populated areas. In recent months, it has repeatedly struck schools being used as shelters by displaced people, accusing militants of hiding among them.

Israel is waging air and ground campaigns against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and is expected to strike Iran in retaliation for a missile attack earlier this month, though it has not said how or when. Iran supports both militant groups and has said it will



2,255
No of people killed in Lebanon since the start of the conflict

54
No of people killed in the rocket attacks on Israel

respond to any Israeli attack.

Bodies rot in the streets as fighting rages in northern Gaza

In northern Gaza, Israeli air and ground forces have been attacking Jabaliya, where the military says militants have regrouped. Over the past year, Israeli forces have repeatedly returned to the built-up refugee camp, which dates back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, and other areas.

Israel has ordered the full evacuation of northern Gaza, including Gaza City. An estimated 400,000 people remain in the north after a mass evacuation ordered in the opening weeks of the war. The Palestinians fear

Israel intends to permanently depopulate the north to establish military bases or Jewish settlements there. The United Nations says no food has entered northern Gaza since Oct 1.

The military confirmed Saturday that hospitals were included in the evacuation orders but said it had not set a specific timetable. It said a medical convoy scheduled to transfer patients from the Kamal Adwan Hospital in recent days was cancelled for security reasons — without elaborating — but that the convoy had delivered fuel to the

hospital on Saturday.

Dr. Mohamed Salha, director of the Awda hospital, said it was among three hospitals in the north, including Kamal Adwan, that had received small shipments of fuel that would only last for a matter of days. He said they also need medicine and medical supplies.

He said casualties are still streaming in and his hospital alone is doing 12 to 15 operations a day.

Fares Abu Hamza, an official with the Gaza Health Ministry's emergency service, said there are a "large number of martyrs" still

uncollected from the streets and under the rubble.

"We are unable to reach them," he told The Associated Press, adding that street dogs are eating some of the remains.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250. Around 100 hostages are still being held in Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's bombardment and ground invasions of Gaza have killed over 42,000

Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and left much of the territory in ruins. Palestinian medical officials do not say whether those killed by Israeli forces are militants or civilians, but say women and children make up over half the fatalities. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 fighters, without providing evidence.

Israeli airstrikes destroy Ottoman-era market in Lebanon

Israeli airstrikes destroyed an Ottoman-era market in the southern city of Nabatiyeh overnight, killing at least one person and wounding four more. Lebanon's Civil Defence said it battled fires in 12 residential buildings and 40 shops in the market, which dates back to 1910.

"Our livelihoods have all been levelled to the ground," said Ahmad Fakhri, whose corner shop was destroyed.

Rescuers were searching for survivors and remains in the pancaked buildings early Sunday as Israeli

United Nations: India has backed a joint statement by the UNIFIL-contributing countries that "strongly condemned" the recent attacks on the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon and said such actions must stop immediately.

The joint statement, initially co-signed by 34 countries, came after at least five United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) peacekeepers were wounded in recent days as Israeli troops launched attacks in southern Lebanon as part of its campaign against Hezbollah.

"We consider UNIFIL's role as particularly crucial in light of the escalating situation in the region. We therefore strongly condemn recent attacks on the UNIFIL peacekeepers. Such actions must stop immediately and should be adequately investigated," said the joint statement posted on X by Poland's mission to the UN on Saturday.

India, initially not mentioned among co-signatories, on Saturday said it aligns itself fully with the joint statement.

Indian company among dozen sanctioned

Washington: An Indian shipping firm is among the dozen-odd companies sanctioned by the US for allegedly carrying Iranian oil for sale to buyers in Asia days after slapping restrictions targeting Iran's energy trade for its October 1 attack on Israel.

Gabbaro Ship Services, the India-based company, was involved in the transport of Iranian petroleum as the technical manager of crude oil tanker Hornet and knowingly engaged in a significant transaction for the transport of petroleum from Iran as part of a 'Ghost Fleet', the State Department alleged.

The latest American sanctions against several companies across the world comes in response to Iran's October 1 ballistic missile attack against Israel. "This attack targeted Israel's most populated city, Tel Aviv, and could have killed hundreds if not thousands of innocent people," US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said.

Following that attack, the US had made it clear that Iran would face severe consequences, he said.

China's premier talks trade in Vietnam despite differences

Bangkok: China agreed Sunday to assist Vietnam on cross-border railway development and take steps to expand agricultural imports from its smaller neighbour, Vietnam's official media said.

Premier Li Qiang, on an official visit to Vietnam, pledged that China would further open its market to high-quality fruits, seafood and other Vietnamese products, a state media report said.

Li came to Vietnam from neighbouring Laos, where he had pushed back against calls at a meeting of Southeast Asian leaders to respect international law in territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh told Li that both sides should respect each other's legitimate rights and inter-



Premier Li Qiang



Pham Minh Chinh

ests, resolve disputes through peaceful means and properly address issues related to fishers and their vessels, the state media report said.

Vietnam condemned China two weeks ago for what it described as an assault by Chinese law enforcement personnel that injured several Vietnamese fishers near the Parcel Islands in the South China Sea.

The islands have been under the de facto control

of China since 1974, when Beijing seized them from Vietnam in a brief but violent naval conflict.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the Southeast Asian leaders gathered in Laos last week that the US is concerned about China's "increasingly dangerous and unlawful" activities in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety.

In their talks on Sunday, Chinh and Li agreed to deepen exchange and cooperation in diplomacy, national defense and public security, the state media report said.

They also witnessed the exchange of 10 cooperation agreements, including the establishment of a working

group to develop cross-border economic cooperation zones and the implementation of QR-code, cross-border payment services.

The railway agreements covered a technical plan and feasibility studies to improve train connectivity between Vietnam and China.

On trade, China asked for greater access for a range of products including tropical fruits, meat products, farm-raised spiny lobster and plant-based traditional medicines.

Li said that China stands ready to resolve trade issues and work with Vietnam on quarantine and customs procedures, according to the Vietnamese report. -AP

Poland plans to suspend asylum right

Warsaw: Poland's leader said Saturday that he plans to temporarily suspend the right to asylum as part of a new migration policy, pointing to its alleged abuse by eastern neighbour Belarus and Russia.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk said that "the state must regain 100 per cent of the control over who enters and leaves Poland," and that a territorial suspension of the right to asylum will be part of a strategy that will be presented to a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, Polish news agency PAP reported.

He said at a convention of his Civic Coalition that "we will reduce illegal migration in Poland to a minimum."

Poland has struggled with migration pressures on its border with Belarus since 2021. Successive Polish governments have accused Belarus and Russia of luring migrants from the Middle East and Africa.

Tusk pointed to alleged misuse of the right to asylum "by (Belarusian President Alexander) Lukashenko, by (Russian President Vladimir) Putin, by smugglers, human traffickers,

Islamabad tensed ahead of SCO summit



Islamabad: Pakistan authorities were preparing on Sunday to shut down the Capital ahead of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit, overshadowed by recent militant violence and political unrest.

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and Chinese Premier Li Qiang will be among senior regional government officials attending the two-day conference on Tuesday and Wednesday.

In the weeks leading up to the summit, Pakistan's authorities have cracked down hard on dissent, banning an ethnic nationalist movement and introducing new laws that restrict protest in the capital.

They have also arrested hundreds of supporters of jailed opposition leader Im-

ran Khan who attempted to march in Islamabad earlier this month.

A deadly attack on a convoy of Chinese engineers in the mega port city of Karachi last week has also deepened security fears in a country where separatist groups routinely target Chinese nationals.

Islamabad has authorised the deployment of troops on the streets for the duration of the summit.

Intiaz Gul, a security analyst and executive director of the Center for Research and Security Studies, said the meeting holds great significance for a country that's not seen as safe. "The government claims to have made elaborate security arrangements and understandably so because it has to make sure that the event passes off peacefully," he told AFP.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I will rescue Aurora and every town that has been invaded and conquered. We will put these vicious and bloodthirsty criminals in jail or kick them out of our country."



Donald Trump, Former President, US

Macao's next top leader first China born

Macao: About 400 Beijing loyalists voted Sunday to endorse the sole candidate for the top job in Macao in a largely ceremonial election that would make him the first leader of the casino hub to be born in mainland China.

Former top judge Sam Hou Fai's expected victory within hours would be a departure from the long-standing custom of having chief executives who were born in the former Portuguese colony, typically from influential business

families.

The shift in the city's leadership to someone from the legal profession will create expectations of a declining influence from business circles, which critics have often accused of colluding with officials, analysts say. They anticipate Beijing's policy agenda for the city will take priority.

Sam, 62, is widely seen to have Beijing's blessings. He has already secured endorsements from 386 of the 400 election committee members who voted in



Sam Hou Fai

batches in a conference hall on Sunday.

Influential figures among the 400-strong committee were Shun Tak Holdings' group executive chairperson Pansy Ho, daughter of late casino ty-

coon Stanley Ho, lawmaker Angela Leong, one of Ho's widows, and former chief executives Edmund Ho and Fernando Chui.

Most of the territory's 687,000 residents lack voting rights, leading to mixed sentiments about the election. Some hope Sam will heed public opinion and avoid prioritizing business interests, while others feel disconnected from an election process they can't participate in.

Macao is the only place in China where casino gam-

bling is legal. Beijing has called for the city to diversify its gambling-reliant economy.

China wants Macao to develop into a world-class tourism and leisure center and play a bigger role as a bridge for trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Small local businesses have been hurt by residents who spend money in the neighboring mainland city of Zhuhai, which offers a wider selection of items with good value for money.

Chinese tourists are also now spending less than before.

Sam was born in neighboring Guangdong province in 1962. He graduated from the prestigious law school of Peking University in Beijing. He also studied the Portuguese language, culture and law at the University of Coimbra in Portugal, and once practiced law in mainland China.

When Macao returned to Chinese rule in 1999, Sam was appointed the city's top judge. -AP

EDITORIAL

Lawless Maharashtra

The recent murder of veteran politician Baba Siddique, a former Maharashtra minister and a leader of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), has sparked a sharp debate over the state's deteriorating law and order. Shot dead by three assailants outside his son's office in Mumbai's Bandra, Siddique's murder casts a long shadow over Maharashtra's once-vaunted reputation as a progressive state that was India's commercial powerhouse and a secure haven for its citizens.

Two suspects have been apprehended, while authorities continue the search for a third. The crime branch is probing various motives, from business rivalry to contract killing linked to a Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) project.

The Opposition, from the Congress to NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar have lambasted the state's leadership for allowing such a brazen crime to occur in Mumbai, India's financial capital. Earlier this year, Ganpat Gaikwad, a BJP MLA, was arrested for allegedly shooting a Shiv Sena leader, Mahesh Gaikwad, inside a police station in Ulhasnagar, over a land dispute. The normalization of such violence—where even elected officials resort to firearms in the presence of law enforcement—signals a dangerous erosion of state authority.

For many, the Siddique murder signals something far more ominous than just a contractual dispute gone awry. It begs the question whether Maharashtra has begun to slide into a state of lawlessness akin to the bad old days of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, states infamous for political violence, contract killings, and corruption?

Back then, Bihar's law and order situation was synonymous with the infamous sobriquet of the 'Jungle Raj' where figures like Mohammad Shahabuddin wielded control through violence, using contract killings as a tool for political and business rivalries, as in the 1998 killing of Brij Bihari Prasad, a former Bihar minister, who was gunned down inside a Patna hospital. Similarly, Uttar Pradesh, once India's equivalent of the 'Wild West', saw high-profile murders like the 2005 assassination of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai, who was killed in broad daylight.

But Maharashtra's law and order problem has not just been confined to political violence. A growing sense of impunity now pervades society as well, leading to a perception of a broader collapse of the social fabric. The murky attempts at cover-up in the Pune Porsche case, where the inebriated teenage son of a prominent realtor fatally rammied his luxury car into two IT professionals on a bike, underscores how deeply ingrained corruption and privilege have become in the state's justice system. Despite widespread outrage, the authorities' handling of the case raised questions about the state's willingness to hold the wealthy accountable. The breakdown of law and order across Maharashtra, from politically motivated killings to the mishandling of heinous crimes, has led to an alarming perception: something is rotten in the state of Maharashtra, to paraphrase Shakespeare's Hamlet.



By
Sumant Vidwans

Nepal's Constitutional Amendments: A Debate on Reform and Stability

lead to political unrest and social division.

Key Amendment Issues

The debate over constitutional amendments revolves around three key issues: **Electoral System:** There are calls to shift toward a more proportional representation system to ensure that smaller political parties and under-represented groups have a stronger voice in the political process. Currently, Nepal uses a mixed system, with some seats elected directly and others proportionally. The amendment would increase the number of proportionally elected representatives, giving smaller parties and marginalised groups more power. This change could bring more inclusivity, but critics also warn that it might further fragment an already divided political landscape.

Federalism: Nepal transitioned to a federal system in 2015, with the hope of decentralising power and promoting regional autonomy. However, challenges remain in balancing the power between the central government and the provinces. The proposed amendments aim to address these issues by altering the distribution of powers between the central and provincial governments to decentralise authority more effectively, empower regions, and address local governance issues. This would benefit provincial governments and historically under-represented regions, but it could also lead to conflicts over resource distribution and central control, especially in wealthier or politically dominant provinces. However, critics argue that such changes could destabilise the current system and weaken regional governance.

Secularism: Nepal has declared itself a secular state in its 2015 constitution, but this has been a topic of ongoing debate. Some groups, particularly those aligned with Hinduism, feel that secularism undermines the country's religious heritage. While the current government has said that it's not seeking to overturn secularism, there are discussions about refining the way secularism is addressed



in the constitution to better reflect Nepal's religious heritage, particularly its strong Hindu identity. While the state would remain secular, the changes might afford greater acknowledgement of Hindu traditions.

Challenges of Amending the Constitution

Amending a constitution is no small feat, especially in a country like Nepal, where political transitions have often been fragile. One of the main risks of making changes to the constitution is the possibility of increased political instability. The current constitution is only nine years old, and many fear that opening it up to amendments could lead to further fragmentation of the political landscape. Additionally, there are concerns about how these amendments could affect Nepal's ethnic and regional balance. The federal structure, in particular, has been a sensitive issue since its implementation, and any changes to it could lead to discontent among certain provinces or ethnic groups.

Involvement of External Players: China's Influence

Nepal's geopolitical position between India and China means that any political or constitutional shift in the country attracts international attention. China, in particular, has been expanding its influ-

ence in Nepal over recent years, both economically and politically. Some analysts believe that the ruling parties' push for constitutional reforms is also motivated by their desire to maintain a better relationship with China. As China continues to invest heavily in Nepal through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), there is concern that China's involvement could subtly influence the direction of Nepal's internal political decisions, including amendments to the constitution.

The debate over amending Nepal's constitution highlights the delicate balance between reform and stability. While there are clear opportunities for addressing political challenges and improving governance, there is also the risk of destabilising the fragile peace that has been built over the past decade. Nepal's leaders must tread carefully, ensuring that any changes are made with broad consensus and careful consideration of the nation's complex political and ethnic fabric.

For India, watching these developments closely is essential, as Nepal's stability and progress directly affect the region. Constitutional reform is a big change, and it must be handled with extreme caution to avoid unintended consequences.

(The author is an expert in foreign affairs. Views personal.)

BY INVITATION

Is Caste & Politics Driving a Takeover at Sir J. J. School of Art?



By
Mamta Sen

Caste and party politics have reared their ugly heads, and this time into the serene campus of Sir J. J. School of Art in Mumbai, one of the oldest art colleges in the country. According to the buzz amongst the campus faculty, the transfer of JJ's Dean, Professor Vishwanath Sabale, to the Government College of Art and Design in Nagpur this month is the final nail in the coffin. As per reports, the art professor has been a victim of a hate campaign by a certain lobby within the campus ever since he took over the Dean position in 2011.

Faculty members allege BJP supporters, along with former students and faculty belonging to the Brahmin lobby, want to control the 167-year-old art institution.

Sabale, who belongs to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category, first joined J.J. School of Art in 2001 and later, through the Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC), was appointed to the position of professor in 2006. A few faculty members, while speaking on conditions of anonymity, commented on how Sabale has always been 'treated differently' since then. "Ever since Sabale Sir took over the reins of the college in 2011, both the old faculty members along with the alumni members have been running a hate campaign against him by degrading him and his work. Sabale Sir ignored all this and stuck on and continued to do his work. He was instrumental in reviving the many defunct departments of the Institute and ushering in new changes over the years," he adds, continuing that apart from reviving the 100-year-old plus campus magazine RugaVed, he was also responsible for hosting the Korean Biennale twice on campus along with other prominent events that have elevated the status of JJ on several fronts. Added to that, Sabale was also instrumental in providing a fresh approach to the syllabus, mentoring the careers of many students over the years, as well as restoring many artworks of its illustrious alumni like V. S. Gaitonde, S. H. Raza, Prabhakar Barve, and many more owned by the college and showcasing them to the world.

The exit of Sabale has hit faculty members, mainly those belonging to the minority class who believe that this is nothing but a ploy by a section

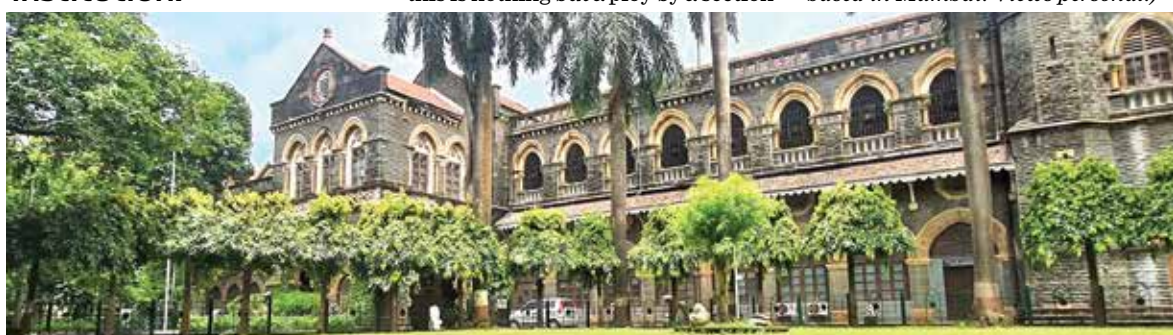
of former students and faculty belonging to a certain category to oust Sabale by taking the help of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"Some former students who may have graduated decades ago want to have access to the campus. They want to use the 10-acre space on the campus as their own studios and run it as their territory. It is a prestige issue for them. This is why they came together and campaigned hard to bring in the de-novo deemed university status to JJ, which the college received last year by collaborating with a few BJP ministers. They wanted to increase the fees too, a clause that Sabale was against. If this happens, then no poor student in the country can afford to study at JJ in the future.

As per the new de-novo policy, Sabale's position has been wiped out, and all three colleges, namely the College of Applied Art, Architecture, and Fine Art, are under one umbrella. The alumni were pushing to appoint a BJP supporter in place of Sabale and even got many BJP ministers involved, but the present officials overruled the decision, citing a lack of teaching and art experience, and instead promoted the existing professors to heads of departments, transferring Sabale to Nagpur."

Well, JJ's huge loss is ultimately Nagpur's gain, and we eagerly await to see what new miracles Sabale now creates in his new role.

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



STATES WATCH

It is Governor vs. Chief Minister in latest Political Contretemps

A political tempest has engulfed Kerala. Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has intensified his attack on Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, accusing him of concealing "crimes against the nation." The war of words between Raj Bhavan and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government is escalating into a full-blown constitutional confrontation, raising questions about governance, accountability, and the limits of gubernatorial authority.

The dispute erupted when Governor Khan, in a heated address to the media, accused the Chief Minister of failing to inform him about serious criminal activities in the state - offenses that, in Khan's view, merit the attention of the President and the central government. Khan's accusations stem from a recent letter from Vijayan in which the Chief Minister denied ever mentioning "anti-national activities" but conceded that "crimes against the nation" were taking place. This contradiction has led to Khan's allegations that Vijayan has something to hide, further straining an already fraught relationship.

Complicating matters is the Governor's decision to ban the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police (DGP) from visiting Raj Bhavan without explicit approval from the CM, alleging their previous visits were unauthorized.

This latest clash follows Vijayan's controversial interview with English daily, The Hindu, wherein he was quoted as saying that hawala and gold smuggling were being used to fund anti-national activities in Kerala. Though Vijayan

later disowned the statement and the newspaper in question retracted it, the Governor's attacks have centered on this incident, framing it as indicative of deeper, more systemic issues within the state's governance.

Vijayan is no stranger to controversy, and the

KERALA

governor's accusations only add to his growing list of political predicaments. His government has been under pressure on several fronts. Earlier this year, the state was rocked by the 'AI camera scam,' where allegations surfaced that public funds were misused in the installation of traffic cameras across Kerala. The scandal was a blot on Vijayan's much-publicized claim of running a corruption-free government.

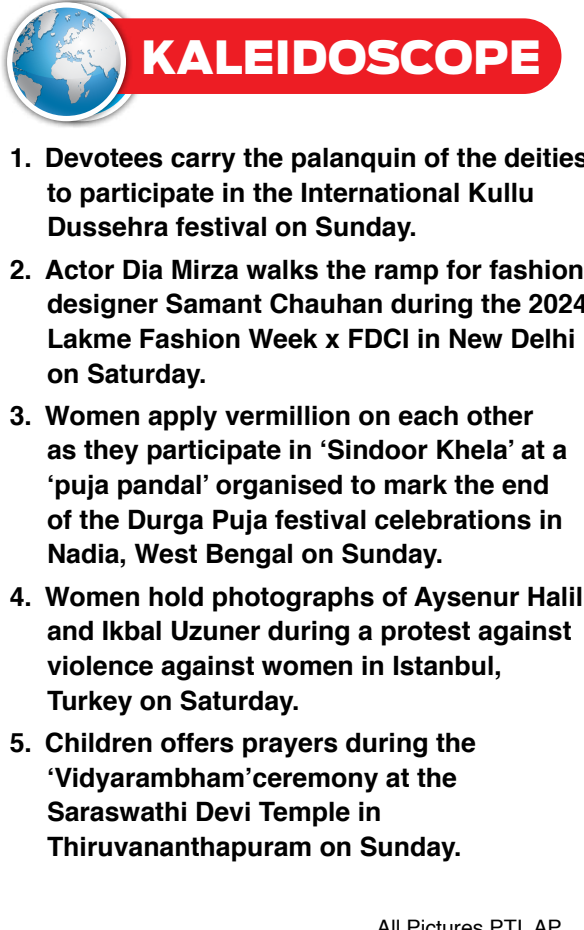
Vijayan also found himself under fire when his own party members expressed dissatisfaction over the government's handling of the infamous gold smuggling case, which has dominated

Kerala's headlines for years. While central agencies probed links between senior state officials and the smuggling racket, the opposition accused the CM of being soft on the perpetrators. Even within the LDF, murmurs of discontent have emerged, with critics suggesting that Vijayan's responses to these scandals have been evasive and defensive, rather than transparent.

The Governor's role in Kerala has now become a flashpoint in this broader political theatre. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM), which leads the LDF government, has responded fiercely to Khan's remarks. M.V. Govindan, the CPM's state secretary, denounced Khan as a "caretaker" governor, whose tenure has already expired, accusing him of acting at the behest of the Union government to destabilize the LDF administration. Govindan suggested that Khan was meddling in state

affairs to such a degree that it amounted to "constitutional overreach," while the Communist Party of India (CPI), a key LDF partner, accused the governor of playing the role of the opposition rather than fulfilling his constitutional mandate.

Whatever the outcome of this standoff, one thing is clear: Kerala's governance is now mired in a constitutional battle where neither side seems willing to blink first.



KALEIDOSCOPE

1. Devotees carry the palanquin of the deities to participate in the International Kullu Dussehra festival on Sunday.
2. Actor Dia Mirza walks the ramp for fashion designer Samant Chauhan during the 2024 Lakme Fashion Week x FDCI in New Delhi on Saturday.
3. Women apply vermilion on each other as they participate in 'Sindoor Khela' at a 'puja pandal' organised to mark the end of the Durga Puja festival celebrations in Nadia, West Bengal on Sunday.
4. Women hold photographs of Aysenur Halil and Ikbal Uzuner during a protest against violence against women in Istanbul, Turkey on Saturday.
5. Children offers prayers during the 'Vidarambham' ceremony at the Saraswathi Devi Temple in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday.

All Pictures PTI, AP

FORENSIC MATTERS

Forensic Odontology: Dental Science in Criminal Investigation



By
Dr. Keshav Kumar and
Shiwani Phukan

The use of dental science in legal proceedings, or "forensic odontology," is a branch of forensic science that uses dental science to identify deceased individuals in legal proceedings. It involves comparing ante- and post-mortem records to identify individuals, aiding in mass catastrophes, criminal investigations, ethnic studies, and corpse decomposition. Forensic anthropologists create a comprehensive postmortem record, adding details like ancestry, age, and sex. Accurate dental records are crucial for patient care and medicolegal obligations.

Forensic odontology has roots dating back to ancient times, with notable instances of dental identification dating back to 66 A.D. A historical case involved Nero's wife being identified by her distinctive black anterior teeth. The formal recognition of forensic odontology began in the 19th century with the Webster-Parkman case in 1849 in the United States. Dr. Oscar Amoeda is often referred to as, the "father of forensic odontology" for his work

in identifying Paris fire victims using dental records. Forensic identification in India began in 1193 with the murder of Jai Chand. In 1776, dentist Paul Revere fabricated a small denture to identify Dr. Joseph Waren, allowing him to be buried with military honour.

Forensic odontology played a significant role in criminal investigations, such as the 2013 Delhi Gang Rape Case known as the Nirbhaya case, where dental forensics provided critical evidence against the accused. The dentist compared the arrangement of teeth with the bite mark left on the victim, leading to the arrest of six men, including a juvenile. In the 2014 murder of a child in Mumbai, dental records were used to identify the dismembered victim, emphasising the importance of dental identification in cases involving severe mutilation. In the 2018 Murder of a Young Woman in Telangana, bite mark analysis linked the suspect to the crime scene, leading to a conviction based on dental evidence. Another case where bite marks on victims played a crucial role in the conviction of serial rapist and murderer Umesh Reddy in India.



The Honourable Supreme Court of India has emphasised the significance of forensic odontology as a crucial piece of evidence in criminal investigations. In the Nirbhaya case, the court upheld a death sentence based on corroborative forensic evidence, including bite mark analysis. The court praised the scientific rigour of forensic odontologists, recognising dental records as conclusive proof in cases of decomposition or mutilation.

DNA analysis techniques from dental pulp are becoming more re-

fining, allowing for victim identification in mass disasters and criminal cases. Digital forensics utilises computer-assisted technologies for dental records and analysing bite marks, which give precise comparisons between antemortem and post-mortem dental records, improving the reliability of identifications. Facial reconstruction and tongue print analysis are being explored to enhance identification possibilities in forensic investigations. Additionally, software like ABFO (American Board of Forensic Odontology) scales for bite mark analysis and advanced techniques to match dental records have made significant strides in recent times. Digital tooth reconstruction uses dental socket morphology to replace missing teeth from skeletal remains, with minimal discrepancy between natural and 3D printed teeth, proving identification valid post-mortem.

Forensic Odontology, as a scientific discipline, and its wide scope in criminal investigations in India are yet to be enhanced, and its exposure to law enforcement agencies must be incorporated as part of their training. Some of the eminent forensic odontologists of India include Dr. Ashith B. Acharya (Professor & HOD of Forensic Odontology, SDM College of Dental Science, president-elect of the Indian Association of Forensic Odontology), Dr. Abraham Johnson (Asst. Professor at National Forensic Sciences University, executive committee member, Indian Association of Forensic Odontology, and member of Indo Pacific Academy of Forensic Odontology), and many more.

Forensic odontology is an invaluable tool in criminal investigations, offering unique insights into identifying victims and solving cases. Its continued advancement and integration into law enforcement practices promise to enhance justice and accountability in the future.

(Dr. Kumar is a retired IPS officer and forensic consultant to Assam government. Phukan is student of Forensic Science in NFSU, Guwahati. Views personal.)

EXPLAINER

How One Year of War Casts Shadow Over Life in Israel

At a busy Tel Aviv entertainment district, diners spill into outdoor seating and clink glasses as music fills the air. There's laughter, there's life. But all around the patrons, staring down from lamp-posts and shop windows, are pictures of hostages held in Gaza, stark reminders that Israel is at war and forever scarred by the deadliest attack in its history.

As Israel's war with Hamas reaches its one-year mark, it can seem on the surface that much of life in the country has returned to normal. But with many still reeling from Hamas' October 7 attack, hostages remaining in captivity and a new front of war with Hezbollah in the north, many Israelis feel depressed, despondent and angry as the war stretches into its second year.

Uncertainty over the future has cast a pall over virtually every part of daily life, even as people try to maintain a sense of normalcy.

"The conversation about the situation is always there," said activist Zeev Engelmayr, whose daily postcard project featuring illustrations of hostages or Israel's new reality has become a fixture at anti-war protests. "Even those who are sitting in coffee shops, they're talking about it, in every single situation I see it. It's impossible to get away from it. It has entered into every vibration of our life."

Rattled Israelis feel hopeless

Hamas' attack in which some 1,200 people were killed and 250 kidnapped shattered Israelis' sense of security and stability in their homeland.

Many have been rattled by the war's evolution. Nearly 100 hostages remain in Gaza, with less than 70 believed to be alive. Israelis have experienced attacks — missiles from Iran and Hezbollah, explosive drones from Yemen, fatal shootings and stabbings — as the region braces for further escalation.

They've watched as Israel is accused of committing war crimes and genocide in Gaza and becomes increasingly isolated internationally. "I'm almost 80 — we grew up in this



country with a feeling that we have short wars, and we win them quickly," said Israeli historian Tom Segev, who described new feelings of utter hopelessness. "We're not used to a long war."

Israelis have long harboured a sense that their country, born of the Holocaust's ashes and surviving a panoply of regional threats, is a success story, Segev said. They've strived, he added, for a normality akin to that of European and North American people, though their reality for decades has been anything but.

"I think that history is going backward," he said of the past year. "Everything we have achieved on our way to becoming a normal state isn't happening."

Internal divisions grow

Israel's longstanding internal divisions briefly eased in the aftermath of Hamas' attack, but have only intensified since. Weekly protests calling for a cease-fire deal that would free hostages are attended mostly by secular Jewish Israelis who oppose Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government.

According to a September poll by Jerusalem-based think tank Israel Democracy Institute, 61 per cent of right-wing Jewish Israelis — Netanyahu's base — support the war continuing.

Occupied with their own trauma, most Israelis paid scant attention to the ongoing destruction in Gaza, even as the Health Ministry there put the Palestinian death toll at more than 41,000. Israeli media have reported little on the devastation. Israelis calling for a cease-fire are driven over-

whelmingly by the hostages' plight.

Many Israelis are furious at leaders and the military for not preventing Hamas' attack. Tens of thousands of people are expected at an alternative ceremony marking one year since then, as a statement against the government's official commemoration. The state ceremony is being pre-recorded without a live audience, in part because of fears of heckling and disruptions.

Parts of life have rebounded — beaches full of people, bustling cafes, concerts and sports back on schedules. But residents also check for the nearest bomb shelter, deal with school cancellations when violence flares up, and avoid domestic travel hubs that are now off-limits. Heartbreaking news arrives regularly, including the deaths of six hostages in August.

"It's a nightmare; we're just getting used to it," said Maya Brandwine, a 33-year-old graphic designer who witnessed the Jaffa shooting that killed seven on Tuesday. "I have so little hope. I'm sure the situation will only get worse."

Dror Rotches, a 47-year-old graphic designer, said from a Tel Aviv coffee shop: "We try to go out when we can, meet friends and try to forget for a few hours. Then we go home and keep slogging through the mud."

Others simply can't return home. More than 60,000 from Israel's northern border with Lebanon are displaced. Thousands from the southern towns ransacked October 7 are in temporary housing. Tens of thousands of reserve soldiers are serving their second or third tour of duty, straining their families and jobs.

ISSF World Cup Final

After Paris high, India look to better tally

THE PARIS OLYMPICS MEDALLISTS AUTOMATICALLY QUALIFY FOR THE TOURNAMENT, BUT MANU BHAKER, SARABJOT SINGH AND SWAPNIL KUSALE HAVE OPTED TO SKIP THE EVENT

New Delhi: The absence of the Paris Olympic medalists notwithstanding, hosts India will not be short on firepower when they compete in the season-ending World Cup Final, starting here from Tuesday, with Rhythm Sangwan headlining a 23-member squad.

Besides Rhythm, rising stars such as Ganemat Sekhon (women's skeet) and Sonam Maskar (women's 10m air rifle) will look to excel in the tournament, having earned their spots based on world rankings.

The Indian squad features nine athletes from the 2024 Paris Olympics, including Arjun Babuta (men's 10m air rifle), Anish Bhanwala (men's 25m rapid



Manu Bhaker

fire pistol.

Rhythm will compete in both the women's 10m air pistol and 25m pistol events.

The other Olympians in the squad include Mairaj Ahmad Khan (men's skeet), Divyansh Singh Panwar (men's 10m air rifle), and Chain Singh (men's 50m rifle 3 positions).

Also ready to shoot in the World Cup Final are Arjun Singh Cheema (men's 10m air pistol), Vijayveer Sidhu (men's 25m rapid fire pistol), Anantjeet Singh Narukha (men's skeet), Maheshwari Chauhan (women's skeet), Rajeshwari Kumari (women's trap) and Shreyasi Singh (women's trap). All these shooters competed in the Paris Games.



Sarabjot Singh

Action begins on Tuesday with the 10m air rifle women being the first final on the schedule, followed by the men's final. The 10m air pistol men and women's finals are also lined up on day one. All the finals will be preceded by qualification rounds.

The world's 131 top shooters from 37 countries including multiple reigning Olympic champions participate in the competition which will determine the year's best performers in each of the 12 individual Olympic events.

All reigning champions from the previous year in Doha will also be there to defend their titles.

President of the International Shooting Sport Fed-



Swapnil Kusale

eration (ISSF), Luciano Rossi, who is in the capital to attend the tournament, hailed India's role in the growth of the sport.

"We're excited to be in India for the ISSF World Cup Final, one of the most dedicated shooting sport nations in the world," said Rossi.

"After a successful season for our athletes and a wonderful Olympic Games in Paris, this is the perfect opportunity for all to finish the season on a high," he added.

National Rifle Association of India's (NRAI) secretary general K Sultan Singh said, "Shooting sport has been witnessing huge rise in popularity and passion amongst the youth, women

The world's top six athletes of the combined six ISSF World Cup stages held throughout year, along with Paris Olympic medallists, defending ISSF World Cup Final champions and reigning world champions have achieved direct qualification in each of the 12 events. Three events -- men's 10m air pistol, men's 25m pistol -- will see all three Paris Olympic medallists compete for the top prize of 5000 euros.

and specially abled athletes in the country which can be gauged by the laurels which has been achieved at the Olympics, Paralympics and continental championships."

"We wish all the participants the very best and immensely thank the ISSF and the government of India for all their support in hosting and organising the ISSF World Cup Final in New Delhi."

-PTI



Jannik Sinner of Italy (right) chats with Novak Djokovic after their finals match on Sunday. Pic: AP/PTI

Sinner beats Djokovic to take title

Shanghai: Top-ranked Jannik Sinner beat Novak Djokovic in straight sets to win the Shanghai Masters on Sunday.

The Italian bettered the 24-time Grand Slam champion 7-6 (4), 6-3.

Sinner hit eight aces and 22 winners to four and 12, respectively, for Djokovic. Sinner never faced a break point.

Wuhan Open Second-ranked Aryna Sabalenka rallied from a slow start to beat an in-form Coco Gauff 1-6, 6-4, 6-4 in the semifinals to advance to her third straight Wuhan final and preserve her perfect record at the tournament.

Sabalenka will face seventh-ranked Zheng Qinwen in the final. The Paris Olympics champion beat No. 51-ranked Wang Xinyu 6-3, 6-4. Sabalenka will be bidding for her fourth title of the season, which includes the Australian Open and U.S. Open.

The Belarussian's 16th straight victory at Wuhan ended Gauff's own recent win streak at nine, including the China Open title last week. But it looked anything but certain for Sabalenka as she crashed 6-1 in the opening set.

"In the first set she was just crushing it," Sabalenka said. "Whatever she was doing, everything was flying in. Everything was so aggressive. I didn't have much opportunities."

In a fight between the last two U.S. Open champions, Gauff led by a break early in the second but Sabalenka responded to pull level at 4-4 and saved a break point on serve to take a 5-4 lead.

Serving to stay in the set, Gauff was broken as Sabalenka hit a lunging forehand volley to force a deciding set.

The Belarussian carried her momentum into the third, extending her streak

Novak Djokovic was aiming for his 100th tour-level title. Only Jimmy Connors with 109 titles and Roger Federer with 103 have hit the century mark in men's tennis.

to seven games for a 3-0 lead. Gauff fought back to level at 4-4, but Sabalenka held strong to halt Gauff's run.

Sabalenka broke once more after Gauff hit her season-worst 21st double fault on match point, ending the 2 1/2-hour match.

"I know what she's going through. This is really difficult," said Sabalenka, who had issues on her serve in the past. "But I know that if she'll be able to overcome this serve situation, I'm pretty sure she's going to be one of the greatest players."

-AP

Asian TT Championships
India clinch three medals

ONE INCLUDES HISTORIC WOMEN'S DOUBLES BRONZE

Astana (Kazakhstan): India wrapped up their campaign at the Asian Table Tennis Championships with three medals, including a historic bronze in the women's doubles, after Ayhika Mukherjee and Sutirtha Mukherjee's dream run ended in the semifinals here on Sunday.

The world No. 15 pair, who stunned the reigning world champions from China en route to a bronze at the Asian Games last year, fell to Japan's Miwa Harimoto and Miyuu Kihara, 4-11 9-11 8-11 in under 30 minutes in their last-

The trio of Manika Batra, Ayhika Mukherjee, and Sutirtha Mukherjee secured the country's first-ever medal in the women's team category since the competition began in 1972, though they eventually lost 1-3 to Japan in the semifinals.

four clash.

Prior to that, the Indian duo had defeated South Korea's Kim Nayeong and Lee Eunhye in the quarterfinals to secure India's first-ever women's doubles medal at the Asian meet.

The Indian women's team had earlier clinched a historic bronze in the team event.

In the men's category, India secured another bronze, their third straight in the tournament, after the team of Achanta Sharath Kamal, Manav Thakkar, and Harmeet Desai fell 0-3 to Chinese Taipei in the semifinals.

In men's singles, Manav Thakkar and Manush Shah bowed out in the pre-quarterfinals.

World No. 60 Thakkar, who had earlier shocked world No. 14 Jang Wooin of South Korea, was defeated by Hong Kong's Baldwin Chan, 4-11 4-11 8-11.

Meanwhile, Manush put up a tough fight against Lin Yun-Ju of Chinese Taipei and took two games before narrowly losing 8-11 5-11 11-7 11-6 12-14. -PTI

Aditi finishes tied 55th in golf

Shanghai: India's Aditi Ashok dropped three bogeys in a row early in the final round and carded 3-over 75 to finish tied 55th in the LPGA Buick Shanghai tournament here on Sunday.

She had rounds of 71-72-69-75 over the week for a total of 1-under for four rounds.

China's Ruoning Yin shot an 8-under 64 to win the tournament. It was her fourth career LPGA victory. Yin trailed third-round leader Mao Saigo of Japan by one stroke, but rallied with birdies on five of the final six holes.

Yin finished on 25-under 263 for the four rounds at the Qizhong Garden Golf Club.

Saigo closed with a 71 and tied for second with Sei Young Kim of South Korea, who carded a 68. Saigo was looking for her first LPGA Tour victory. They were both six strokes off the lead, finishing at 19-under 269.

Yealimi Noh of the United States carded a 67 on Sunday to finish in fourth place, seven strokes behind the winner.



Spain's Lamine Yamal (right) and Denmark's Victor Kristiansen battle for the ball during the UEFA Nations League group 4 soccer match between Spain and Denmark in Murcia, Spain on Saturday. Pic: AP/PTI

Shraddha shocks Kirti in all India FIDE Chess

By correspondent

Mumbai: Mumbai's Shraddha Padvekar (3 points) registered an upset victory defeating WCM Kriti Patel (2 points) also of Mumbai in a third-round match of the 1st All India FIDE Rating Open Chess Tournament 2024,

hosted by South Mumbai Chess School and played at the Russian House, Peddar Road, Mumbai, on Sunday.

The Palghar-based Shraddha (rating 1588) played with plenty of determination and unwavering concentration to come out on top. She

started with the English opening, while Kirti (1829) opted for a neo-Catalan defence. The two were locked in a keen tussle for supremacy before Shraddha with a couple of exchanges managed to put Kriti in the spot of bother and went on to win the contest in 63 moves on the

sixth board.

Top 10 results (round-3): Agharkar Shriyans (2) lost IM Vikramaditya Kulkarni (2) 0-1; Atharv Soni (2) drew Shubham Baviskar (2) 0.5-0.5; Shubham Kanade (2) lost Yash Watarkar (2) 0-1; Sanjeev Mishra (2) beat Hridaan A Shah (2) 1-0.

Sachin to inspire young athletes, sports fans in Texas



By Seema Hakhu Kachru

Houston (USA): The legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar is set to inspire young athletes during his much-anticipated visit to Texas, where he will lead a special cricket clinic as part of the National Cricket League finals weekend.

The clinic, to be hosted at the University of Texas at Dallas, aims to motivate aspiring cricketers and promote the sport at the grassroots level in the U.S.

"Cricket has given me so

much, and now it's my turn to give back," Tendulkar said ahead of the event slated for Sunday morning.

"I'm excited to meet these young players and show them that with hard work and passion, anything is possible."

In addition to the clinic, Tendulkar, who made waves with his recent appearance at the iconic TX-OU football game, will also be a special guest at the Dallas Cowboys game on Sunday, further highlighting his high-profile engagement in the U.S.

sports scene.

NCL Chairman Arun Agarwal emphasised the significance of Tendulkar's involvement: "This is about more than cricket—it's about inspiring hope and dreams. Having someone of Sachin's caliber mentoring these kids is a game-changer."

The NCL's finals weekend is more than just a cricket tournament. Alongside the matches, fans will enjoy cultural celebrations, live Bollywood performances, and nightly themes, ranging from honoring lo-

cal heroes to promoting sustainability. The tournament will conclude on October 14 at UT Dallas.

With Tendulkar's participation and the introduction of the innovative 60 Strikes format, designed to engage U.S. sports fans with a fast-paced version of cricket, the NCL is positioning itself as a key player in the growing popularity of cricket in America.

The NCL has attracted top cricketing talent, with icons like Sunil Gavaskar, Wasim Akram, and Sir Viv-

ian Richards mentoring players.

This season also features stars like Shahid Afridi, Suresh Raina, Shakib Al Hasan, and Chris Lynn, making the NCL a premier event on the global cricket stage.

Headquartered in Dallas, the National Cricket League USA is revolutionising cricket in the U.S. with its innovative 'Sixty Strikes' format.

The event is endorsed by the ICC and supported by SEE Holdings. -PTI