

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Shiv Sena (UBT) workers protest against the state government in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Pic: Bhushan Koyande

Sexual abuse of girls in Badlapur Protest politically motivated: CM

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday claimed that the protest at Badlapur in Thane district over the alleged sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls was politically motivated and aimed at maligning the state government. He also said that the majority of protesters were outsiders. Talking to reporters, Shinde targeted the opposition and said those doing politics over the incident should be ashamed. A massive protest broke

out in Badlapur town on Tuesday as angry parents, local residents and others blocked railway tracks and ransacked the school where two kindergarten girl students were sexually abused by a male attendant last week. "The protest was politically motivated because the protesters were not local residents. The local residents who were part of the protest could be counted on fingers," he said. He said state minister Girish Mahajan agreed to all demands of the protesters but they were still not ready to relent.

"This means they just wanted to malign the government," he said. According to him, some protesters were carrying placards mentioning the 'Ladki Bahin Yojana', his government's flagship financial assistance scheme for women. The placards said they did not want the monthly sum of Rs 1,500 but protection for their girls. The protesters blocked the rail route which led to suspension of rail services between Badlapur to Ambernath for over 10 hours. "Does anyone protest like this? The stomach-

ache the opposition is suffering from due to this scheme is visible from yesterday's protest," Shinde said. Under the 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana', eligible women are entitled to get a monthly sum of Rs 1,500. At least 25 police personnel, including the railway cops, were injured in incidents of stone-pelting at the Badlapur railway station and elsewhere in the town during the protest. Police have arrested at least 72 persons and filed four FIRs in connection with the violence.

Kolkata hospital

CISF deploys 150 personnel

New Delhi: Around 150 personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) are being deployed at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital following an order of the Supreme Court, official sources said on Wednesday. A day after the apex court's order, the Union home ministry wrote to the West Bengal chief secretary seeking deployment of the CISF at the state-run

hospital. Subsequently, a decision has been taken for the deployment of the CISF, the sources said. Earlier in the morning, a CISF team, led by a DIG-rank officer, surveyed the hospital complex where a 31-year-old trainee doctor was allegedly raped and murdered earlier this month. The force is expected to secure the resident doctors'

hostel and other facilities, the sources said. The medic's body was found in the hospital's seminar room on the morning of August 9. A civic volunteer, who was an outsider frequenting the hospital premises, was arrested the next day in connection with the case. The incident has since triggered protests affecting medical services across the country, with hundreds of

resident doctors on strike under different banners demanding safety of medics through a central law. The Supreme Court on Tuesday constituted a 10-member task force to formulate a national protocol to ensure safety and facilities for doctors. The task force will submit its interim report within three weeks and the final report within two months. - PTI

Z plus security cover to Pawar

New Delhi: The Centre on Wednesday accorded the highest category of armed VIP security cover -- Z plus -- to Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-SP) chief Sharad Pawar, official sources said. The Union Home Ministry has asked the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to extend the cover to the 83-year-old former chief minister of Maharashtra. A team of 55 armed CRPF personnel has been earmarked for the task.

Bharat Bandh

Effective in Bihar, Jharkhand

New Delhi: The daylong nationwide strike called by some Dalit and Adivasi groups against the Supreme Court's verdict on the sub-classification of Scheduled Castes affected normal life in Bihar and Jharkhand as well as tribal areas of various states. The response was tepid in other parts of the country even as several INDIA bloc parties as well as other non-BJP outfits extended their support to the bandh.

Twenty-one organisations across the country had called for the Bharat Bandh against the apex court's order, which they said would harm the basic principles of reservation. The protesters put up rail and road blockades in several districts of Bihar, and police used batons and water cannons to disperse them. Darbhanga and Buxar witnessed disruption in train services while traffic was blocked in Patna, Haji-

pur, Darbhanga, Jehanabad, and Begusarai districts. In Patna, police chased away crowds who blocked traffic at Dak Bungalow Chowk. Five people were detained in Jehanabad district following clashes between protesters and security personnel. East Central Railway Chief Public Relations Officer Sharswati Chandra confirmed that train services were disrupted in several districts.

Modi pays homage at 'Good Maharaja Square'

Warsaw: Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid homage to the Polish-Indian legacy at the 'Good Maharaja Square' in the Polish capital here on Wednesday. Modi, who arrived here earlier for a two-day visit, paid tributes to the monument commemorating Jam Saheb Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja of Nawanagar by laying a wreath during a small event. The monument was unveiled in October 2014 at the Square of the Good Maharaja, Ochota district in Warsaw. According to the Indian Embassy website, eight Polish primary and secondary schools are named after Jam Saheb, known as 'Good Maharaja' in Poland. In 1942, the Maharaja had provided refuge to about 1,000 Polish children from war-torn, occupied Poland and Soviet camps following the occupation of Poland by Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. The surviving Polish children have formed an Association of Poles, which meets on an annual basis in one of the major Polish cities, it said. - PTI

Amazon's investment to make up for losses

Piyush Goyal rejects claim that it is supporting Indian economy

New Delhi: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday questioned Amazon's announcement of USD 1 billion investment in India, saying the US retailer was not doing any great service to the Indian economy but filling up for the losses it had suffered in the country. He said that their huge losses in India "smells of predatory pricing", which is not good for the country as it impacts crores of small retailers. Launching a report on 'Net Impact of e-commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' here, the minister lambasted the e-commerce companies, questioning their business model that has been impacting small retailers in the country. "When Amazon says that we are going to invest a billion dollars in the country, we celebrate, and we forget that the billion dollars are not coming in for great service or investment to sup-



port the Indian economy. They made a billion-dollar loss in their balance sheet that year, they had to fill in that loss. "And how did that loss get caused, they paid Rs 1,000 crores to professionals. I do not know who these professionals are...I would love to know, which chartered accountants, professionals or lawyers get Rs 1,000 crores unless you are paying all the top lawyers to block them so that nobody can fight a case against you," the minister said. He wondered whether the Rs 6,000 crore loss in one year does not smell of preda-

tory pricing, as they are just an e-commerce platform and those companies are not allowed to do B2C (business to consumer) business. As per the policy, the e-commerce platform legally cannot do B2C in the country. The minister alleged that these companies only re-route all the businesses through an entity to show that it is B2B. "How are they doing it? Should this not be a matter of concern for us," he said. He added that the e-commerce sector has a role, but one has to think "very" carefully and cautiously about what that role is. "How that role can be in an organised fashion? Is predatory pricing policies good for the country?" Goyal asked. He also said that e-commerce companies are eating into the small retailer's high-value, high-margin products that are the only items through which the mom-and-pop stores survive.



BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY



BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

AND

SHRI. DEVENDRABHAU FADNAVIS



Number 1

TIMES NOW MATRIZE and ZEE 24 Tass AI's MahaSurvey

In all the elections and in all the surveys held between the year from 2014 to 2024, BJP and Shri DEVENDRA FADNAVIS hold No. 1 place in Mumbai and Maharashtra. We express gratitude to the people.

Thank you!



Dr. Nitesh Rajhans Singh
District General Secretary - BJP North Central Mumbai

Kalina Assembly Constituency

BJP entrusts RSS Pracharak

By Abhijit Mulye

Mumbai: As part of its pre-poll maneuvers, the Maharashtra unit of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has entrusted the responsibility to ensure overhauling of grassroots party organization to a young IITan who also happens to be a former RSS Pracharak. The state party unit has appointed 'Vistaraks' (short-term full time workers) in 115 assembly segments. Most of these 115 Vistaraks are young professional graduates with a good grassroots exposure and strong RSS ties. Bharat Amdapure, an IITan and a



former RSS Pracharak from Marathwada region is entrusted with the responsibility to coordinate with all these Vistaraks. Amdapure said that strengthening booth-level

party organization is the specific task that has been assigned to these newly appointed Vistaraks and he would be coordinating with them ensuring organizational goals are met in a

timely manner. After the shocking Lok Sabha results, the party is paying attention to strengthening organisation where it is particularly weak and RSS cadres are being engaged wherever necessary. Amdapure's induction too is being seen as the part of this process. Apart from strengthening the party organization, the RSS is concerned about the state government's and the party's image. Last week a meeting of BJP and RSS cadres looking after publicity was held at Vile Parle in Mumbai where the issue of image makeover was discussed.

MVA calls for bandh on Saturday

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The opposition in the state has decided to adopt an aggressive stance against the Maharashtra government, especially the Home Minister Devendra Fadnis. Amid growing anger over Badlapur sexual assault on two toddlers within the premises of the school, the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Wednesday called for a Maharashtra bandh on August 24.

they thought that they would not discuss seat sharing and instead discuss the law-and-order in the state.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting Sena UBT leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut, said, "The people of Maharashtra are agitated and FIRs have been registered against those who protested at Badlapur. We have decided that on August 24, MVA will call for Maharashtra Bandh over the Badlapur incident. The law and order situation in the state has worsened on every given day and we cannot be a silent spectator".

State Congress President Nana Patole accused the government of doing politics over the incident. "The biggest state where crime against children takes place is Maharashtra. 21,000 such incidents have happened in the state and the government



NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule and others during a protest over the Badlapur sexual abuse case, in Pune on Wednesday.

is hiding them," Patole added further. Meanwhile, Mumbai Con-

gress president Varsha Gaikwad also led the protest outside Mantralaya. Holding

placards outside the gates of Mantralaya, Congress leaders and workers shouted slo-

gans against the government for the "delay in the registration of the FIR". The protesters were stopped by the police from entering the premises.

At the same time in Pune, Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar) MP Supriya Sule participated in protests, questioning the Mahayuti government's ability to ensure the safety of women and girls in the state. She also requested the state government to withdraw her security detail, suggesting that the police force be used to maintain law and order instead. Sule stated, "We heard that lots of police are busy with security for the leaders and there are not enough police staff to deploy vigilance and maintain law and order. I request the government to withdraw my security and use that police force for law and order."

Congress opposes Ujjwal Nikam's appointment in Badlapur Case

A political slugfest has surfaced on Wednesday over the appointment of senior advocate Ujjwal Nikam as the special public prosecutor in the Badlapur case. The Congress has vociferously opposed Nikam's appointment labelling him as ruling party man. This has triggered a political firestorm in the state.

Leader of the opposition in the state legislative Assembly Vijay Wadettiwar has raised doubts over Nikam's impartiality in the case while pointing out his proximity with the BJP. The Congress has also alleged that the people involved in managing the school where the abuse of two toddlers took place also had ties to the BJP.

"Nikam contested the Lok Sabha election on a BJP ticket. How can there be a fair trial when the people running the school are linked to the BJP. Will Nikam be able to plead the case impartially," said Wadettiwar. On Wednesday, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis had announced the appointment of Nikam as the special public prosecutor for the case. "Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis has announced that the unfortunate incident in Badlapur will be speedily investigated and the case will go to a fast-track court. It has been decided to appoint senior lawyer Ujjwal Nikam as the special public prosecutor," the Deputy CM's office informed in a post on X.

Woman molested in Kurla

By Correspondent

Mumbai: A 34-year-old woman was molested by a man on a skywalk in Kurla area here, police said on Wednesday.

The accused, who was beaten up after the incident by some passersby, was taken into custody and is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital. The incident took place around 8.30 pm on Tuesday. The woman was walking down the skywalk towards LBS road when a man caught hold of her from behind and said she was his wife.

Puja's fraud against public also, HC told

New Delhi: The UPSC on Wednesday opined in the Delhi High Court an anticipatory bail plea by former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, accused of cheating and wrongly availing OBC and disability quota benefits, and said she committed a fraud against the commission and the public.

The Delhi Police also sought dismissal of the pre-arrest bail plea on the ground that any relief to her would hinder its probe into the "deep rooted conspiracy" and that the case has wider implications on public trust as well as the integrity of the civil services examination.

Justice Subramonium Prasad listed the matter for hearing on August 29, and extended the interim protection from arrest granted to Khedkar in the meantime.

In its reply filed in court, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) said Khedkar's custodial interrogation was necessary to unearth the magnitude of the "fraud" that could not have been done without the help of other individuals. Therefore, her pre-arrest bail plea should be dismissed, it said.

"The gravity of the fraud committed is unprecedented in nature having been committed against not only

a constitutional body -- the complainant -- whose traditions are untrammelled and unparalleled but also against the public at large, including the citizens of this country who have utmost faith upon the credibility of the UPSC as well as persons who could not be appointed despite being duly eligible and qualified due to illegal means employed by the applicant to seek appointment," the reply filed through advocate Vardhman Kaushik said.

The court granted time to Khedkar to respond to the stand of the UPSC as well as the Delhi Police.

Khedkar allegedly misrepresented information in



her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination-2022 to get reservation benefits.

The Delhi Police, in its status report, asserted that

investigation has revealed that she was not entitled to benefits as an "OBC+Non-Creamy Layer" candidate but she hatched a conspiracy with other persons to get that benefit by showing that her parents are divorced.

The circumstances, however, suggest that Khedkar's parents were living together, and that she made a false declaration with respect to her previous number of attempts while writing the Civil Services Examination (CSE)-2021 under a changed name, the agency said.

"She had already exhausted all the permissible attempts available to a

PwBD (Persons with Benchmark Disabilities)+OBC candidate, i.e. 9 attempts by CSE-2020 itself. Therefore, as per CSE Rules, she was not eligible to appear further for CSE-2021 and subsequent CSEs," police said in its status report.

"However, despite exhausting all the permissible attempts she appeared in CSE-2021, CSE-2022 and CSP-2023 by intentionally changing her name and making incorrect or false statements regarding the number of attempts already availed and suppressing material information which she was duty bound to furnish true and correct," the report stated.

DGP assures justice to victims

Mumbai: In view of the alleged sexual assault on two girls at a school in Badlapur, Maharashtra DGP Rashmi Shukla on Wednesday affirmed the police force's commitment to ensuring the safety and security of all citizens by going the extra mile.

In a statement posted on the official X handle @DGP-Maharashtra, DGP Shukla stated that the investigation into the Badlapur case is being conducted with the utmost diligence.

"We will leave no stone unturned in delivering justice to innocent children and their families."

Teacher held for showing obscene videos to girl students

Akola: A 47-year-old government school teacher in Maharashtra's Akola district has been arrested after a few girl students alleged that he had been harassing them by showing obscene videos.

Zilla Parishad Chief Executive Officer B Vaishnavi said that the accused teacher, Pramod Sardar, has also been dismissed from service.

The development comes amid protests over the alleged sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls at a school in Badlapur town near Mumbai. The alleged crime by the teacher came to light when the girl stu-

dents called the toll-free number of the Child Welfare Committee. Members of the committee visited the school on Tuesday morning and spoke to some of the girls, following which a case was registered against the teacher for allegedly outraging the modesty of women and sexual harassment.

As per the FIR registered at Ural police station under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, six girl students complained that the teacher had been showing them obscene videos for the past four months.

-PTI

Pune Porsche crash There were three minors not two

Pune: Probe into the Kalyaninagar Porsche crash incident has found that there were three minors besides the juvenile driver in the car at the time of the accident that killed two young IT professionals.

Earlier, police had stated that there were four people in the car when it crashed into a motorbike in the wee hours of May 19: the 17-year-old juvenile who was driving, his two minor friends, and the driver employed by the juvenile's family.

But as per the statement of the fourth minor, includ-



ed in the chargesheet, he escaped when a mob pulled them out of the car after the accident and began to thrash them. He hailed an auto-rickshaw and reached

home. A police officer also confirmed that there were three minor friends of the juvenile in the car and one of them managed to slip away. While the juvenile

driver was released from the observation home, his parents and seven others have been arrested in the case.

-PTI

Girl among four minors booked

Pune: The Pune police on Wednesday booked four minors, including a girl, for allegedly sexually abusing their 13-year-old female friend and detained two of them, a police official said.

Police said the minors and the teenager are mutual friends and the girl was subjected to sexual abuse by the juveniles twice.

"In the first incident, one of the male juveniles, despite knowing that the victim is minor, allegedly established forceful relations," said a police official.

In the second incident,

the accused girl took her female friend to the house of one of the boys where a second minor allegedly sexually abused her, while the third juvenile recorded the assault on his phone, the official said.

Police on Wednesday registered a case under Indian Penal Code sections 376 (rape) and 363 (kidnapping) and under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, he said. Two of the three accused boys were detained and produced before the Juvenile Justice Board, he added.

-PTI

Two more arrested in fake MHADA website case

Mumbai: The cyber wing of Mumbai Police on Wednesday arrested two more people in connection with a fake website of the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) created by some people to dupe flat buyers, an official said here.

Police had arrested two persons in the case earlier this week.

Graphic designer Omkar Chatur Shinde (26) and software developer Satyam Rajesh Tiwari (25) were arrested on Wednesday, said an official of the BKC cyber cell.

Kalpesh Sevak, who allegedly created the fake website, and Amol Patel who allegedly posed as a MHADA officer had been arrested two day ago.

Law enforcers frustrating state's claim

Mumbai: A division bench of Justices A S Gadkari and Neela Gokhale has expressed displeasure over the "paradox" in the state administration's claim on serious treatment of offences against women and prompt investigation, stating law enforcers were frustrating these assurances.

Nominations filed for Rajya Sabha seats

Mumbai: Nominees of BJP and NCP, Dhairyasheel Patil and Nitin Patil, respectively, on Wednesday filed their nominations for September 3 bypolls to two vacant Rajya Sabha seats from Maharashtra on the last day of submitting the papers.

The BJP nominated Dhairyasheel Patil for the seat vacated by Udayanraje Bhosale who won the Lok Sabha election from Satara

constituency.

Nitin Patil is fielded by the Nationalist Congress Party led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar for the RS seat that fell vacant after Union minister Piyush Goyal's election to Lok Sabha from Mumbai North constituency. Besides Dhairyasheel Patil, two Independents have filed nominations for the seat vacated by Bhosale and one Independent for the

seat to be contested by Nitin Patil. Given the strength of the BJP and allies in the Maharashtra Assembly, both Patils are set to win comfortably.

Legislature officials on Wednesday said the result of bypolls will be announced on August 26 as nominations of Independents will be rejected. Goyal was re-elected to Rajya Sabha in June this year. Bhosale has

been a member of the Upper House of Parliament since 2020.

Rajya Sabha members are elected by MLAs of a legislative assembly who vote in proportional representation with the single transferable vote (STV) system. In the 288-member House, with effective strength reduced to 274 as 14 seats are vacant, BJP has 103 MLAs, NCP 42, Congress

37, Shiv Sena (UBT) 15, and NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) 10. 13 MLAs are Independents, Bahujan Vikas Aghadi 3, Samajwadi Party 2, AIMIM 2, and Prahar Janshakti Party 2. Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, CPI (M), Swabhimani Paksha, RSP, Jan Surajya Shakti Party, Krantikari Shetkari Paksha, and PWP have one member each.

- PTI

Narendra Dabholkar killing Family moves HC against acquittal of three

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The family of slain rationalist Narendra Dabholkar has approached the Bombay High Court challenging a sessions court judgment acquitting three persons in the case.

The appeal filed by Dabholkar's daughter Mukta Dabholkar also challenged the judgment by which two other accused, who were convicted in the case, were

acquitted of the offence of criminal conspiracy and for commission of terrorist act under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

Mukta Dabholkar in the appeal filed through advocate Abhay Nevagi said the killing of her father was a "well-planned murder and involved a larger conspiracy".

The plea came up for hearing on Wednesday before a division bench of Jus-

tices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan which issued notice to all the accused and the prosecuting agency - Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The court posted the matter for hearing on September 23. In her appeal, Mukta Dabholkar said the sessions court had failed to appreciate the fact that the convicted individuals in the case were members of the right-wing group Sanatan San-

stha and that even the three acquitted persons were also associated with the outfit.

"The accused persons hatched this conspiracy to eliminate Dr Narendra Dabholkar, who was expressing his views against Sanatan Sanstha Establishment, Hindu Jan Jagaran Samiti and other similar organizations," the appeal alleged.

It challenged the sessions court judgment acquitting Virendra Singh Tawde, San-

jiv Punalekar and Vikram Bhave from the case.

The appeal contended that the two other accused - Sachin Andure and Sharad Kalaskar - were acquitted of the charges of criminal conspiracy under the Indian Penal Code, under Section 16 (terrorist act) of UAPA and the Arms Act. Dabholkar (67), was founder of the Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Anil Deshmukh, former Home Minister

"When I was the Home Minister, I had formed a 21-member committee of legislators from all parties to draft the Shakti Bill on the lines of an act in Andhra Pradesh. The bill was approved by the cabinet headed by Uddhav Thackeray and passed in the state legislature. It is pending before the Central government for approval."

Badlapur sexual abuse case

Internet suspended, 72 held post violence

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Internet services at Badlapur were suspended on Wednesday a day after a massive protest over alleged sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls, and 72 persons have been arrested in connection with the violence during the stir, officials said.

At least 17 city police personnel and around eight railway cops were injured in the incidents of stone-pelting at the railway station and other parts of Badlapur during the protest on Tuesday, they said.

Police have been deployed in large numbers across Badlapur to maintain law and order, and the situation in the town is back to normal.

Entire Badlapur town virtually came to a standstill on Tuesday after thousands of protesters blocked railway tracks at the station and stormed the school building, where sexual abuse of two girls by the school sweeper took place last week.

The protesters hurled stones at police personnel and vandalised the school building during the protest. The police caned-charged the protesters to disperse them and clear the tracks for train movement.

Talking to PTI, DCP Sudhakar Pathare said on Wednesday that internet services in the town have been suspended in the



Shiv Sena (UBT) workers protest against the state government in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Pic: Bhushan Koyande

wake of the protest and subsequent violence.

"The internet services will be restored after taking a review of the situation in the town," he said.

Most schools in the town remained shut on Wednesday, local people said.

"At least 17 city police personnel, including two officers, were injured as an angry mob at-

tacked them with stones during the protest in Badlapur on Tuesday over the sexual abuse of two girls. We have registered three FIRs on charges of violation of prohibitory orders, armed unlawful assembly, assault, damage to public property, among others against the miscreants," a senior police official in Badlapur said.

The injured police personnel

are being treated at different local hospitals, he said.

"A total of 40 persons have been arrested so far in connection with stone-pelting and other crimes. Attempts to identify other offenders are on. CCTVs footages and video news clippings are being examined," he added.

Commissioner of Government Railway Police (GRP)

Ravindra Shisve said one FIR has been registered in connection with the violence at Badlapur railway station and 32 persons have been arrested. "Seven to eight railway police personnel, including officials, were injured in the stone-pelting," he said.

"The situation is normal and under control today," he said. Police on August 17 arrested

- Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam says the case will begin soon
- School stands accused of negligence and inordinate delay
- Several securitymen injured

an attendant at the school for sexually abusing the two girl students of the kindergarten. As per the complaint, he abused the girls in the toilet of the school.

In the wake of the incident, the school management has suspended the principal, a class teacher and a female attendant. The state government on Tuesday ordered the suspension of three police officials, including a senior police inspector, for alleged dereliction of duty in probing the sexual abuse of the two girls.

Angry parents of the school children and local citizens, including several women, gathered outside the school on Tuesday morning and also resorted to a 'rail roko' protest at the railway station, blocking the path of local trains from around 8.30 am.

Some of the protesters, including women, later damaged the school property by breaking its gate, window panes, benches and doors.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on

Tuesday said he has ordered the formation of a special investigation team headed by senior IPS officer Arti Singh, while Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said action will be taken against the school. He said the case will be fast-tracked and the guilty won't be spared.

Talking to a news channel, senior lawyer Ujjwal Nikam, who has been appointed as the special public prosecutor in the sexual abuse case, condemned the inordinate delay by the police in lodging an FIR in the case.

"This is a sensitive case. It is shameful why the police officers did not take up the matter seriously. Why the senior police officials ignored the complaint will definitely be probed and those found guilty will be punished. The most important thing is that during such cases, if the police delay in taking cognisance, then crucial evidence is lost," he said.

A Kalyan on Wednesday extended till August 26 the police custody of Akshay Shinde arrested in this case.

Protest spontaneous outburst of public anger

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve on Wednesday rejected Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's claim that the massive protest in Badlapur over the sexual abuse of two minor girls was politically motivated, and termed the outrage as a spontaneous reflection of people's anger.

Danve's party colleague and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut alleged the school in Badlapur, where the crime was committed by the school sweeper, is linked to a BJP leader.

A delegation led by Danve, the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, met state DGP Rashmi Shukla in Mumbai and demanded action against the school management, a day after thousands of protesters blocked railway tracks in Badlapur and stormed the school building over the sexual abuse incident.

Danve complained the police are not taking prompt action in cases involving crime against women.



"The protests (in Badlapur) were spontaneous and reflected the people's anger. Their (the government's) vision is blurred, so people will give them a befitting reply," the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader told reporters.

His remarks came after the chief minister claimed the protest at Badlapur station was politically motivated and aimed at maligning the government. Shinde also said the majority of protesters were not residents of Badlapur.

Danve dubbed the state government's flagship monthly cash transfer scheme, Mukhyamantri

Ladki Bahin Yojana, a "sham" and alleged the government's failure to protect women in the state.

Speaking separately, Raut slammed the state government over the caning-charging of protesters by police at Badlapur station on Tuesday.

Raut said had the Badlapur school been connected to leaders of the Congress, NCP (SP) or Shiv Sena (UBT), Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and his gang would have staged a dharna at the school.

Raut claimed the Supreme Court didn't take note of the public outcry.

Bar association appeal

• The Kalyan Bar Association in the district on Wednesday appealed to all its members not to accept the brief of the accused arrested in the Badlapur sexual abuse case. A notice put up at the bar association office said the residents of Badlapur town had appealed lawyers not to defend the accused, and the bar association decided to respond positively.

• Massive protests broke out in Badlapur, 53 km from Mumbai, on Tuesday after a school attendant was arrested for allegedly sexually abusing two kindergarten girls.

• A local court on Wednesday extended his police custody till August 26.

Lodha issues directives to avoid crime

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Mumbai Suburban district Guardian Minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha on Wednesday issued directives to ensure safety of women and children in the city.

In a letter sent to district collector the minister emphasized the need for all necessary measures to be taken for the safety of women and female students in various schools and colleges in the Mumbai Suburban area to prevent crimes against women and children.

Lodha stated, "The increasing crimes against women and children are a matter of concern for the government, administration, and our society. The incident that occurred in Badlapur has provided public suggestions for preventive measures. Such incidents are happening due to negligence regarding women's safety. Keeping this in mind, strict instructions should be given to all educational institutions from kindergarten to postgraduate levels. Schools, colleges, and various institutions should also thoroughly verify the staff appointed by them.

Withdraw my security but protect people: Supriya

By Correspondent

Mumbai: NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule on Wednesday said the law and order situation in Maharashtra has become critical over the past few months, and said the state government should withdraw her security cover so that these police personnel can be deployed for protection of common people.

The Baramati MP also sought an immediate review of the security provided to persons across the state.

In a statement, she said that a significant portion of the police force goes in providing security to sitting and former lawmakers, including herself. However, given the current strain on law enforcement, it is inappropriate to maintain such security arrangements, she added.

"Therefore, I request the Home Minister to immediately withdraw the police personnel assigned to my security. These officers should be reassigned to protect the public," the NCP (SP) working president said. "The law and order situation in Maharashtra has become increasingly critical over the past few months. Citizens are living in an unsafe

environment and frequent incidents have created a pervasive atmosphere of fear. Women, both young and old, are particularly vulnerable. Criminals are roaming freely without fear of the law, placing immense pressure on the police system to maintain order," she said.

Additionally, there should be an immediate review of the security provided to individuals across the state. Those who do not require protection should get it withdrawn and the officers should be redeployed to ensure public safety, Sule said in the statement.

Sule seeks Fadnavis' resignation

Supriya Sule targeted the Maharashtra government and demanded the resignation of Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who holds the home portfolio.

She accused the Eknath Shinde-led dispensation of not being serious about the issue of women's safety, and alleged that while the government was busy breaking parties, it had no time for common people.

Sule said, "Had action been taken

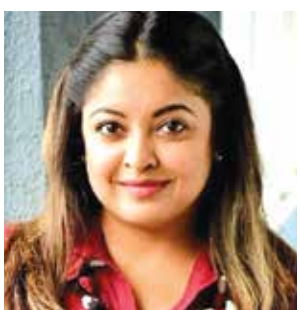
by the education minister immediately after the incident at the school, the need for an agitation would not have arisen. It shows that this government is not at all serious about the safety of women. The government is busy breaking the houses, parties, using the Income Tax Department and Enforcement Directorate."

The Baramati MP criticised Fadnavis over the incident and asked what happened to the Shakti Act that was brought earlier.

"Home minister, who spends more time in Delhi than in Mumbai, should give a clarification on this incident and as a moral responsibility, he should resign," she demanded.



QUOTE OF THE DAY



Tanushee Dutta, actor

"This seems to be a theme of the #MeToo accused, like they portray a decent image in front of society and (when) their image breaks, their ego cannot take it. I feel for the Kerala victim(s) deeply. Nothing will happen with these reports because women still continue to be attacked and exploited."

HC asks cops to respond to Mihir Shah

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Wednesday sought the police's reply on the pleas filed by Mihir Shah, the main accused in the BMW hit-and-run case, and his driver Rajrishi Bidawat, seeking immediate release and claiming that their arrest was "illegal".

Shah was arrested on July 9, two days after he allegedly rammed his BMW car into a two-wheeler in

Mumbai's Worli area, killing Kaveri Nakhwa (45) and leaving her husband Pradeep injured.

His driver Bidawat, who was also present in the car at the time of the accident, was arrested on the day of the alleged accident.

Both are presently in judicial custody.

In their habeas corpus (produce the person) petitions filed in the high court last week, Shah and Bidawat claimed that their detention was illegal and that they

must be released immediately. Both the pleas came up for hearing before a division bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande on Wednesday. The court directed the police to file its reply affidavit and posted the matter for hearing on August 29. Shah in the plea sought quashing of the orders passed by a local court remanding him first to police custody and then judicial custody.

Shah sought his release

claiming any further detention would be in utter violation of the constitutional mandate and a failure to comply with Section 50 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). Under this section, the police while arresting a person has to communicate to him or her full particulars of the offence for which he or she is being arrested or other grounds for such arrest. Shah sought for his arrest to be declared as illegal.

Shah (24) is accused of

speeding off towards Bandra Worli Sea Link after the accident even as the woman remained on the bonnet of the car and then got entangled in its wheels for a distance of more than 1.5 kilometres. Shah, who fled from the scene, was under the influence of alcohol at the time, as per police.

Shah, his father and former Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena leader Rajesh Shah, as well as their driver Rajrishi Bidawat were arrested in the case.

Farmers' body demand law guaranteeing MSP

New Delhi: The MSP Guarantee Kisan Morcha (MSP GKM) Wednesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, urging them to push for the enactment of a law to guarantee Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops.



Over 250 farmer organisations from 26 states and union territories gathered for a meeting at Gurudwara Shri Rakabganj Sahib in Delhi on Wednesday, the MSP GKM said.

In their letter to PM Modi and Rahul Gandhi dated August 21, the MSP GKM requested the introduction and passage of the MSP bill in the next Parliament session to secure a guaranteed MSP

for the farming community. "Mr. Prime Minister, on one hand the government refuses to give us a law on the guarantee of MSP (Minimum Support Price) and says that 'MSP was, MSP is and MSP will remain' and on the other hand the government has guaranteed MSP (Minimum Selling Price) for industrialists," they said in the letter.

"Sir, when the government can give protection to sugar mill owners and even government-run petroleum companies, then why cannot similar protection be given to the farmers who voted for their government," they further wrote.

MSP GKM President V M Singh told PTI, "In 2011, Narendra Modi, who was then the chief minister of Guja-

rat, was chairman of a panel that had prepared a report on consumer affairs. The report had recommended the implementation of MSP, but the government at the time did not act on it. Now that he is the prime minister, why is he not taking action?"

Singh mentioned that in 2018, a round table conference was held at the Constitution Club of India here, where 20-22 political parties from both the ruling and opposition sides agreed to bring in a law guaranteeing MSP. "The Janata Dal (United) and Telugu Desam Party, which are now part of the government, supported the law during the round table conference. But these parties are not doing anything now."

Record 5.12 lakh pilgrims in Amarnath yatra

New Delhi: The pilgrimage to holy shrine of Amarnath was successfully completed and a record number of more than 5.12 lakh pilgrims visited it, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday.

The pilgrimage to the Amarnath shrine, located at a height of 3,880 metres in the south Kashmir Himalayas, started on June 29 and ended on August 19.

"The holy pilgrimage of Shri Amarnathji was successfully completed. This year, the holy pilgrimage lasted for 52 days, a record number of more than 5.12 lakh pilgrims visited Baba, which is the highest number in the last 12 years," Shah wrote on 'X' in Hindi.

Congratulating all security personnel, Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, the Jammu and Kashmir administration and voluntary organisations for making the pilgrimage a success.

Madhav calls RSS his mother, thanks BJP



New Delhi: Describing the RSS as his mother, Ram Madhav on Wednesday expressed gratefulness to the Hindutva organisation for making an "exception" by allowing him to return to the BJP and also to the party's top brass after his appointment as one of its two in-charges for the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls.

Madhav, a RSS executive member, returned to political duties on Tuesday with the appointment, a move which surprised many political watchers as he was relieved of his political responsibilities in the BJP in 2021 during his previous tenure. He had then returned to the RSS, his parent organisation.

In a post on X, the former BJP general secretary also heaped praise on Prime Minister Narendra

Home Minister Amit Shah and said he is the "man-to-go" in these election and "always for the party" and party president J P Nadda for reposing faith in him.

Lauding the RSS, he said, "Sangh is my mother. We generally don't talk much about it publicly. But I must acknowledge the exception given by the Sangh leadership in my case to return to party work and the wholehearted support extended to me in the new assignment."

Madhav was appointed the in-charge for the assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir along with Union Minister G Kishan Reddy. He was a general secretary in the BJP between 2015-20 and worked as its points person for the erstwhile state as well as the North-east region.

- PTI



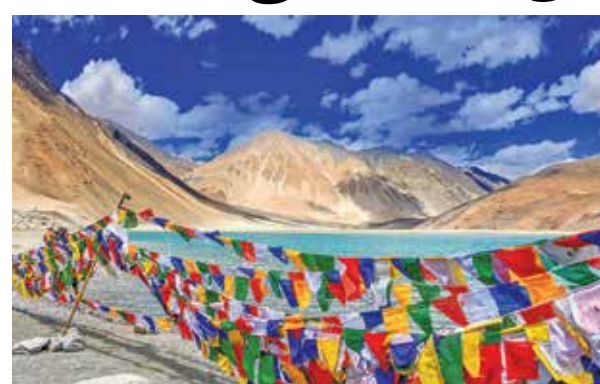
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supporters and others protest against the Supreme Court's August 1 decision on the issue of SC-ST reservation during 'Bharat Bandh', in Patna on Wednesday. Pic: PTI

Village along LAC gets 4G

Leh/Jammu: A remote village along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh on Wednesday got access to 4G mobile network services, a development made possible through the collaborative efforts of the local administration and the Indian Army, an official spokesman said on Wednesday.

The Airtel 4G network was inaugurated at Phobrang village by Chushul Councillor Konchok Stanzin and Brigadier S Rana of the 118 Brigade along with other officials, he said.

The service was made possible through a collaborative effort involving the



local administration, the army, villagers and the councillor, the spokesman said.

Councillor Stanzin provided a solar plant to power the network tower, the In-

everyone involved in making this project a reality. Special thanks to the deputy commissioner for his unwavering support, to the Fire and Fury Corps for providing five kilometers of OFC, and to the team for their commitment to expanding Airtel's 4G network to this farthest border village. Your efforts in bringing connectivity to the most remote areas are highly commendable," he said.

The villagers of Phobrang expressed their gratitude for finally receiving 4G mobile network services, the spokesman said.

"My sincere thanks to

- PTI

Doctor Rape and Murder CBI may conduct polygraph on ex principal

Kolkata: CBI officers may conduct a polygraph test on Sandip Ghosh, the former principal of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, where a woman doctor was allegedly raped and murdered earlier this month.



Doctors take part in a protest march from Central Government Offices (CGO) complex to Swasthya Bhawan in Kolkata on Wednesday

Ghosh, who resigned two days after her body was found in a seminar hall of the medical facility on August 9, has already appeared before sleuths of the central probe agency for questioning several times.

"We want to further verify Ghosh's answers, as there have been discrepancies in some of the replies to our questions. Therefore, we are mulling over the option to conduct a polygraph test on him," an official told PTI.

Ghosh was on Tuesday, too, grilled by investigators.

Three officers suspended
 The Kolkata Police has suspended three of its officers in connection with the vandalism at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital here last week, officials said.

as part of its probe into the rape-murder of the post-graduate trainee.

CBI officers have put forth various questions to Ghosh in the last few days, including specifying his role after getting the news of the doctor's death, who he had contacted thereafter and why he allegedly made the parents wait for nearly three hours before getting to see her body, the official said.

He has also been quizzed over the authorisation of renovation of rooms adjacent to the seminar hall of the RG Kar hospital, after her body was discovered there, he said.

The CBI had earlier obtained permission from a local court to conduct a polygraph test on Sanjay Roy, the civic volunteer who has been arrested for his alleged involvement in the case.

Man returns after 37 years in B'desh jails

Agartala: A man from Tripura's Sepahijala district returned home after spending 37 years in Bangladesh jails. Shahjahan returned to India through the Srimantapur land customs station with the assistance of BSF personnel.



his family said.

Moushahid Ali, the chairman of the Zara Foundation, took swift action to secure Shahjahan's release. Following numerous legal proceedings, Shahjahan was finally handed over to BSF personnel at Srimantapur LCS on Tuesday, they added.

Now 62 years old, Shahjahan left home when he was young and his wife was pregnant. His son saw him for the first time physically upon his return.

"I never thought I would return to my birthplace in this lifetime. It is the Zara Foundation that brought me back home. I will remain indebted to the organization for the rest of my life."

- PTI

Indian astronaut likely to fly to space in April

New Delhi: An Indian astronaut is likely to fly to the International Space Station by April next year as part of the NASA-ISRO collaborative initiative, Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday.

Two Indian astronaut-designates Group Captains Shubhanshu Shukla and Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair are undergoing training in the US for the Axiom Space Ax-4 mission. ISRO has assigned Shukla for the Ax-4 mission while Nair would be the backup candidate.

"An Indian astronaut will travel to the ISS by April next year," Singh told a press conference here ahead of the first-ever National Space Day celebrations to mark the landing of Vikram lander on the Moon on August 23 last year.

The theme for the National Space Day is "Touching Lives while Touching the Moon: India's Space Saga". On the occasion, ISRO will release on August 23 the scientific data collected by the Chandrayaan-3 mission that could be used by researchers.

- PTI

Open to floating new outfit: Champai

Ranchi: Former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren said he would not quit politics, asserting that an option to float a new political outfit was always open to him.



Soren said he was firm on his plans after "facing humiliation at the hands of leaders of JMM", a party to which the veteran leader claimed that he devoted his entire life.

"It is a new chapter of my life. I won't quit politics as I have received lots of love and support from my followers. The chapter has closed, I may form a new outfit," the senior Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader said shortly after he reached his ancestral village Jhilingora in Seraikeela-Kharsawan district post midnight on Tuesday.

The 67-year-old tribal leader has earned the nickname "Jharkhand's Tiger" for his contribution to the fight to create a separate state in the 1990s. Jharkhand was carved out of the southern part of Bihar in 2000.

"No one from JMM contacted me. This is the land of Jharkhand... I have strug-

gled since my student life. I participated in the agitation for a separate Jharkhand state under the leadership of party supremo Shibu Soren," Champai Soren said.

The JMM leader said he might join hands with any outfit if he gets a like-minded organisation.

"I posted what I felt was proper. The entire country is aware of what I thought," he said, referring to his post on X on August 18.

Amid speculations that he might join the BJP, the veteran politician had said he experienced "bitter humiliation" as chief minister, which compelled him to seek an alternative path.

"After so much humiliation, I was forced to look for an alternative path," Champai Soren had said.

- PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, MP, TMC

"In my entire 56 years of political life, I have never witnessed such a spontaneous upheaval of the common masses. They didn't bother for a political flag to unite and hit the streets in protest in the middle of the night with a common agenda: justice for the victim and punishment for the perpetrator."

Pigeon fails to fly, SP seeks action

Raipur: A video of the Independence Day celebration in Chhattisgarh's Mungeli district, showing a pigeon released by a police officer failing to fly off, has gone viral, prompting the officer to demand action against those responsible.



Some social media users promptly noticed that a similar situation unfolds in season 3 of popular web series 'Panchayat'. During the function, BJP MLA and former minister Punnul Mohle who was the chief guest, Mungeli Collector Rahul Deo, and Superintendent of Police Girija Shankar Jaiswal were handed pigeons to release, signifying peace and

freedom.

The birds released by the MLA and the collector successfully flew off. However, when the SP released the pigeon, it fell to the ground. Social media user Sachin Gupta shared the video on his 'X' handle and wrote, "Panchayat-3 was repeated in Chhattisgarh. SP sahab released pigeons on Independence Day. His pigeon fell down instead of flying. Watch the video."

Official sources on Tuesday said the SP wrote a letter to the collector, seeking disciplinary action.

"During a major national festival like Independence Day, the incident of a pigeon falling to the ground was

prominently broadcast on social media and other media. This situation was created as a result of presenting a sick pigeon for flying in the main district-level programme. Had it happened at the hands of the chief guest of the function and honourable MLA, then the situation would have been more unpleasant," the SP wrote in the letter.

"Certainly, the officer responsible for this work has not discharged his responsibility properly," it said.

The bird is stated to be alive.

- PTI

Why Ratnagiri Geoglyphs, Petroglyphs needs protection

By Esha Lohia

The Maharashtra government has officially recognised the geoglyphs and petroglyphs in Ratnagiri as 'protected monuments' under the Maharashtra Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1960 making way for their conservation and preservation.

Around two decades ago, former Maharashtra bureaucrat Satish Lalit discovered large carvings on rocks at Hiwale in Kudal taluka of Sindhudurg. An avid trekker with interest in art and literature, Lalit then made another subsequent discovery of this ancient rock art in Kudopi which runs close to the Arabian Sea. "This is an extremely important step in the preservation and publicity of the petroglyphs and geoglyphs in the Konkan area. Declaring geoglyph and petroglyph sites as 'state protected monuments' means people will know their importance. These sites are the only source of information that depict human settlement and culture in ancient times," says Lalit.

Geoglyphs and petroglyphs are ancient forms of art and communication that offer a glimpse into the history and heritage of a region. UNESCO describes geoglyphs as rock art that shows increasing fineness of artistic skills and the evolution of techniques of etching and scooping, that are fundamental to mastering rock art. Petroglyphs are images or designs carved into rock surfaces. The group of petroglyphs at Deud, Ratnagiri, are said to date back to the Mesolithic era (approximately 20,000-10,000 years ago) and depict a rhino, deer, monkey, donkey and footprints. The significance of petroglyphs in the Konkan region represents the creations of Meso-



lithic humans.

The area around the protected monument encompasses 210 square metres, with seven petroglyphs in Umbarle village, Dapoli taluka, which also includes a 17-foot-long petroglyph and an eighth in Borkhat village, Mandangad taluka.

On the other hand, geoglyphs are large-scale designs created on earth's surface through arranging stones or removing soil. The geoglyphs stretch across the 900 km of the Konkan coast in Maharashtra

and Goa. Ratnagiri in Maharashtra is home to more than 1500 such artworks across 70 sites. Seven of these sites are also on UNESCO's tentative World Heritage list.

The significance of protecting these sites is due to various factors. Lalit says: "Just like Deud, there are hundreds of small sites in many villages across Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg. And often, even the local people don't know their significance. Most of the geoglyphs are in danger because of quarrying of the laterite stones or get totally

disturbed because of the construction of roads. Even the government machinery doesn't understand their importance at times." He urges mainstream archaeologists to visit the sites and study them to be able to decipher their meanings and history behind them.

"While most common rock art in India are in the form of rock paintings, rock etchings, cup rings and ring marks, the large concentration of geoglyphs on the laterite plateaus in Konkan are unique and most remarkable open air resembles of prehistoric human expression... These are distinct concentrations of pictorial representations that include marine and riverine (life as well as mammals), reptiles, amphibian and avian life which vanished from the region centuries ago," says the UNESCO description.

Lalit emphasises what needs to be done to protect monuments. "The government should acquire the land to protect it from getting sold as most of these sites are on private land and in remote areas. The geoglyphs should be cleaned in a proper, scientific manner. A compound should be erected alongside with the description board deciphering the meaning behind the work. And some utilities like proper roads to reach these sites," he says.

Petroglyphs and geoglyphs are significant markers of the intellectual and cultural development of the people of an era and offer a glimpse into the lifestyle, diet and customs of the times and region. The diversity of symbolism, forms, composition, proportion, techniques evident in each site are distinct and collectively represent an insight into the world view of earliest transitional phases of the culture of the Konkan belt.

Red meat linked with diabetes risk

New Delhi: Consuming red meat is related to a higher risk of type 2 diabetes, according to an analysis of more than 19 lakh adults from 20 countries across world regions, including southeast Asia, providing the "most comprehensive evidence to date."

Published in The Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology journal, the analysis found that a habitual consumption of three types of meat and their daily amounts - 50 grams of processed meat, 100 grams of unprocessed red meat and 100 grams of poultry - was related to 15 per cent, 10 per cent and eight per cent increases in risk of developing type 2 diabetes, respectively.

The international team of researchers from the US, UK, Brazil, Mexico, among others, said that intake of meat exceeds recommended levels in many regions of the world and has been correlated with non-communicable diseases, including type 2 diabetes.

However, all the existing evidences are largely based on studies from high-income countries, mainly in North America and Europe, they said.

For this study, the researchers included 31 cohorts from the InterConnect project, data for which was compiled from scientific studies and online registries, including unpublished information. Of the total 19,66,444 participants, more than a lakh developed type 2 diabetes during follow-up, typically lasting 10 years.

- PTI

Australia to get largest solar precinct



Newcastle (Australia): An ambitious plan to build a massive solar farm in remote northern Australia that would transmit energy by submarine cable to Singapore is a step closer after the Australian government granted environmental approvals for the 30 billion Australian dollar (USD 19 billion) project Wednesday.

Australian company Sun Cable plans to build a 12,400-hectare solar farm and transport electricity to the northern Australian city of Darwin via an 800-kilometer (497-mile) overhead transmission line, then on to large-scale industrial customers in Singapore through a 4,300-kilometer (2,672-mile) submarine cable.

The Australia-Asia PowerLink project aims to deliver up to six gigawatts of green electricity each year, which according to Australian Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek will "help turn Australia into a renewable energy superpower" and boost its economy.

"This massive project is a generation-defining piece

of infrastructure," Plibersek said in a written statement on Wednesday. "It will be the largest solar precinct in the world - and heralds Australia as the world leader in green energy."

The project was initially backed by Australian mining magnate Andrew Forrest and Atlassian co-founder Mike Cannon-Brookes. The plans were highlighted during a state visit by then Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese as part of a 'Green Economy' agreement in 2022.

In January 2023, the project collapsed when Sun Cable entered voluntary administration due to a funding dispute between Forrest and Cannon-Brookes. By May of that year, a consortium led by Cannon-Brookes' Grok Ventures acquired the company, finalizing the takeover in September 2023.

SunCable Australia's managing director Cameron Garnsworthy said it was pleased to have cleared a major regulatory hurdle.

IIT Indore invention

New technique to capture images of minute

Indore: The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Indore, in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has developed a new technique to capture images of minute movements of explosions in precise details, which can bring about major changes in defence and aerospace sectors, officials said on Tuesday.

The technique was developed under the leadership of Professor Devendra Deshmukh of IIT Indore, they said.

"Imaging fast-moving particles during explosive events has long been a challenge for scientists. Traditional techniques, such as shadowgraphy, Schlieren, and X-ray imaging, offer a minimum exposure time of only about 1 microsecond to capture images," officials said.

This is a very high exposure time (compared to the

speed of the phenomena), and it often results in blurred images and loss of details, leaving researchers with incomplete information about high-speed phenomena, they said.

According to officials, to address this challenge, Prof Deshmukh and his team developed a novel imaging method using the principles of Digital Inline Holography.

This approach allows for a much sharper and more detailed visualisation of objects, even in dust or combustion clouds, which was previously difficult to achieve, they said.

The captured images provide a clear picture to the researchers and make it possible to accurately extract a wealth of information about the velocity of the objects, acceleration, and distribution in space. This level of detail is essential for researchers who need to understand not just

where the objects are but how they move and behave in the chaotic aftermath of an explosion, they said.

IIT Indore's director, Professor Suhas Joshi, said, "What makes this method truly stand out is its ability to significantly enhance time resolution. While conventional methods were limited to 1 microsecond exposure times, this new technique can capture images with exposure times as low as 50 nanoseconds."

He said the system is capable of recording up to 7,00,000 frames per second, giving researchers a real-time look at how particles behave during an explosion. "This dramatic increase in time resolution allows for far more detailed tracking of fast-moving objects, even in environments filled with dust, smoke, or other visual obstructions," Joshi said.

- PTI

Heavy rains lash parts of Rajasthan

Jaipur: Monsoon activity continued in Rajasthan on Wednesday with heavy rains pounding many districts, including the capital Jaipur, in the last 24 hours, the meteorological department here said.

According to weather data in the past 24 hours till 8:30 am on Wednesday, some parts of western Rajasthan recorded rain, while some places in eastern Rajasthan witnessed rains along with thunderstorm. During this period, heavy rains lashed some places in Jaipur, Dholpur and Jhalawar districts. Jaipur tehsil was the wettest in the state recording a maximum rainfall of 85 mm, the data showed.

Apart from this, 78 mm rainfall was recorded in Rajakheda of Dholpur, 65 mm in Gandghar of Jhalawar, 42 mm in Kushalgarh of Banswara and 30 mm in Bhopal Sagar of Chittorgarh.

- PTI

Report suggests measures to avoid adding coal capacity

New Delhi: India might avoid building new coal plants and could limit its coal capacity to planned levels by 2032 if the cost of battery-storage systems drops by 15 per cent annually, according to a new report.

Nearly 75 per cent of India's electricity is generated using coal. However, to meet its goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2070, the country needs to reduce its dependence on coal and increase the use of renewable-energy sources like solar and wind power.

The challenge is that solar and wind power plants only generate electricity when the sun is shining or the wind is blowing. Therefore, energy-storage systems are needed to store this energy and use it during periods of low generation.

The report compiled by global energy think tank Ember and the Delhi-based The Energy and Re-



sources Institute (TERI) says if the battery energy storage system (BESS) costs continue to decline at the current rate of 7 per cent annually, India's power sector will see coal generation plateauing until 2032, while additional coal capacity may still be needed to meet the demand during non-solar hours.

This is mainly because slow storage growth will hinder sustained renewable energy expansion once India's solar share in the power mix crosses 25 per

cent. Currently, solar accounts for around 7 per cent of India's total power generation.

"And if BESS costs fall by 15 per cent on average each year, it would enable India to potentially limit its coal capacity to the 14th National Electricity Plan projection of 260 GW by 2032," the report reads.

It also notes that if the battery costs fall faster, the power sector could rely more on renewable energy, meeting 83 per cent of the electricity demand during

the day by 2032. However, during non-solar hours, renewable energy might only cover 38 per cent of the demand due to the current storage limitations.

The report says building new coal capacity comes with risks and challenges. Coal capacity would need to ramp up and down more frequently, and if the BESS costs fall faster than anticipated, these new plants would face severe lock-in and underutilisation risks.

A.K. Saxena, senior director of electricity and renewables at the TERI, said: "Energy storage holds the key to the decarbonisation of electricity generation. A reduction in the cost of storage options would accelerate the energy transition in economies."

No new coal additions might be needed if the BESS costs, excluding the cost of finance, fall to around Rs 60 lakh per megawatt-hour (MWh).

- PTI

Chandrayaan 4-5 design complete

70 satellites likely to be launched in five years

New Delhi: ISRO chairman S Somanath on Tuesday said the space agency has completed the design for the next round of moon missions - Chandrayaan 4 and 5 - and is in the process of seeking government approval for the same.

The Chandrayaan-4 mission includes bringing back moon rocks and soil to earth after a soft landing on the lunar surface, launching a spacecraft from the moon, demonstrating a space docking experiment in lunar orbit and getting the samples back to earth.

"We have a series of missions to go to the moon. Chandrayaan-3 is over. Now, design for Chandrayaan 4 and 5 has

been completed and we are seeking approval of the government," Somanath told reporters here on the sidelines of an event organized by the All India Council for Technical Education and Indian Space Association.

Earlier, the ISRO officials had said that the targeted launch for Chandrayaan-4 mission was 2028. Somanath also said that the space agency was planning to launch 70 satellites over the next five years, including a constellation of low earth orbit satellites to meet the requirements of different ministries and departments of the government.

These 70 satellites include four for the NAVIC regional navigation system to provide positioning, navigation and time service, INSAT 4D weather satellites, the Resourcesat series of satellites, Cartosat satellites for remote sensing and high resolution imaging, he said.

Somanath said the space agency was also planning to develop the Oceansat series of satellites and technology demonstration satellites 01 and 02 to demonstrate electric propulsion systems, and quantum key distribution technologies.

The ISRO was also developing data relay satellites for the Gaganyaan mission, high throughput satellites for providing internet connectivity and GSAT satellite which was getting ready for shipping to the US for launch on a Falcon rocket of SpaceX, he said. Somanath said the space agency was also planning to launch a series of earth observation satellites over the next five years.

The ISRO chief said the mission to Venus, earlier being planned by the agency, has been put on the backburner.

"We are re-evaluating the

mission," he said. Somanath said the first unmanned mission of the Gaganyaan project was scheduled for launch in December this year.

All the stages of the rocket have already reached the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, he said. The Crew Module is getting ready at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre at Thiruvananthapuram and the service module was under integration at the U R Rao Satellite Centre in Bangalore, Somanath said.

The Crew Escape system has already reached Sriharikota.



"All systems are reaching Sriharikota in the next one to one-and-a-half month where final

testing and integration will happen," he said.

- PTI

Indian arrested in US

Doctor took photos, videos of naked people

Washington: A 40-year-old Indian doctor was held in a US jail on a USD 2 million bond after being charged with multiple sex crimes for allegedly recording hundreds of nude images and videos of children and women over several years, according to media reports.

Oumair Aejaz was arrested earlier on August 8 after he allegedly placed hidden cameras in a variety of settings from bathrooms, changing areas, hospital rooms, and even his own home where he would record children as young as 2 years old in varying states of undress, Fox News reported.

Authorities became aware of his offences after his wife came forward with disturbing materials. Before his arrest, he had no criminal history.

He also allegedly recorded sexual encounters with numerous women who were unconscious or asleep, the Oakland County Sheriff said on Tuesday.

The magnitude of Aejaz's offences is not currently known, but Sheriff Mike Bouchard said it will take months to fully investigate. Authorities suspect there could be many more victims as investigators review thousands of videos found at his home in Rochester Hills, a city in Oakland County in the US state of Michigan. "The victimisation is so broad and the perversion so great, we're just beginning to wrap our arms around it," he said. "Disturbing on so many levels."

He equated the scale of criminality to Larry Nasser, the disgraced sports doctor convicted of

abusing dozens of young women in his care.

Several search warrants have been served since Aejaz was arrested on August 8 at his home. They include computers, phones, and 15 external devices. Bouchard said a single hard drive had 13,000 videos on it. He may have uploaded videos into cloud storage as well. Aejaz was charged on August 13 with one count of child sexually abusive activity, four counts of capturing an image of an unclothed person and five counts of using a computer to commit a crime and is being held in the Oakland County Jail on a USD 2 million bond, Detroit Free Press reported.

Oakland County Prosecutor Karen McDonald said Aejaz's wife produced materials earlier this

month that were concerning and the sheriff's office immediately executed a search warrant and confiscated more devices. She said investigators have "sifted through really jarring, alarming images" and continue to do so.

McDonald said Aejaz also preyed on well-respected institutions and hospitals, which she said have been cooperative.

Many of the allegations stem from Aejaz allegedly recording a mother and her kids inside a changing room at the Goldfish Swimming Club in 2023. However, he is also believed to have assaulted patients inside hospital rooms.

"These are children and moms at a swim school," McDonald said. "They're there to teach their kids to swim. Because that brings their kids joy and because they want

their kids to be safe around water. They were victimised by a person of trust in the community - a medical doctor."

His work history shows he was employed at Henry Ford Macomb Hospital in Clinton Township and Ascension Genesys Hospital in Grand Blanc. His current employment was as a physician contracted with a company that would send him to different hospitals.

Before that, he moved to the US in 2011 on a work visa from India, where he is a citizen. His residency took place at Sinai Grace Hospital before spending time in Alabama. He returned to Michigan in 2018. Due to the number of victims and the difficulty identifying them, police have provided an email that people can use to contact the authorities.

Sirisena settles compensation for bombings victims

Colombo: Sri Lanka's former president Maithripala Sirisena has settled in full the SLR 100 million compensation for the victims of the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings that killed 270 people, including 11 Indians, and injuring over 500. Sirisena was also the minister of defence at that time.

The attack stirred a political storm as the then President Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe were blamed for their inability to prevent the attacks despite prior intelligence being made available. In mid-July, Sirisena reported to the court that he had already paid SLR 58 million and pleaded for six more months to pay the balance of 42 million.

A presidential panel of inquiry appointed by Sirisena after the attacks ironically found the then-president guilty of his failure to prevent the attacks.

through three Catholic churches and as many luxury hotels on April 21, 2019, killing nearly 270 people, including 11 Indians, and injuring over 500. Sirisena was also the minister of defence at that time.

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A presidential panel of inquiry appointed by Sirisena after the attacks ironically found the then-president guilty of his failure to prevent the attacks.

Malaysia indicates request on Zakir Naik can be considered if evidence provided

New Delhi: Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Tuesday indicated that his government may consider India's request to extradite controversial Islamic preacher Zakir Naik if it provides evidence against him.

At an interactive session at the Indian Council of World Affairs here, Ibrahim also said that the issue shouldn't deter the two countries from enhancing

bilateral relations. To a specific question, he said the issue was not raised by the Indian side during Tuesday's talks.

Naik is wanted by the Indian authorities for alleged money laundering and inciting extremism through hate speeches. He left India in 2016.

The Islamic preacher was granted permanent residency in Malaysia by the previous government led by

Mahathir Mohamed.

"Firstly, it was not raised by the (Indian side), Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) did raise it much earlier, some years back... But the issue is I am not talking about one person, I am talking about the sentiment of extremism, of a compelling case and evidence that suggest the atrocities committed by an individual or group or faction or parties," Ibrahim said.

The Malaysian prime minister said his government is "open to any ideas and evidence submitted".

"We will not condone terrorism... We have been tough and we have been working together with India on many of these issues, against terrorism. But I don't think this one case should deter us from further collaboration and enhancing our bilateral cooperation," he said.



Israeli police officers scuffle with ultra-Orthodox Jewish men during a protest against a potential new draft law which could end their exemptions from military service in Jerusalem on Wednesday. Pic: PTI

Nikki Haley bats for Taiwan

Taipei: The former US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, on Wednesday called for more international backing for Taiwan and a coordinated pushback against China's claims over the self-ruled democracy. "US should elevate Taiwan on world stage. You should no longer be silenced in global affairs."

Moscow comes under largest Ukrainian drone attack



Moscow: Russian authorities said Wednesday that Moscow came under the largest attack yet by Ukrainian drones since the start of fighting in 2022, and that it destroyed all of them.

Russia destroyed 45 Ukrainian drones overnight, Russia's Ministry of Defence said. It said 11 were destroyed over the Moscow region, 23 over

the Bryansk region, six over Belgorod, three over Kaluga and two over Kursk.

"This was one of the biggest attempts of all time to attack Moscow using drones," Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyenin said on his Telegram channel. He said all of the drones were destroyed because strong defenses have been created around the

capital.

Some Russian social media channels shared videos of drones apparently being destroyed by air defence systems, which then set car alarms off. Alexander Bogomaz, the governor of the Bryansk region, said there was a "mass" attack on his region but that 23 drones were destroyed.

28 Pakistani pilgrims killed

Tehran: A bus carrying Shiite pilgrims from Pakistan to Iraq crashed in central Iran, killing at least 28 people, an official said Wednesday.

The crash happened Tuesday night in the central Iranian province of Yazd, said Mohammad Ali Malekzadeh, a local emergency official, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

Another 23 people suffered injuries in the crash, 14 of them serious, he added. He said all the bus passengers hailed from Pakistan.

There were 51 people on board at the time of the crash outside of the city of Taft, some 500 kilometers southeast of the Iranian capital, Tehran.

Iranian state television later broadcast images of the bus, turned upside down on the highway with its roof smashed in and all its doors open. Rescuers stepped gingerly through the broken glass and debris littering the road.

In the state TV report, Malekzadeh blamed the crash on the bus brakes failing and a lack of attention by its driver.

In Pakistan, authorities described those on the bus as coming from the city of Larkana in Pakistan's southern Sindh province.

Iran has one of the world's worst traffic safety records with some 17,000 deaths annually. The grave toll is blamed on wide disregard for traffic laws, unsafe vehicles and inadequate emergency services in its vast rural areas.

The pilgrims had been on their way to Iraq to commemorate Arbaeen.

Arbaeen - Arabic for the number 40 - marks the death of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hussein, at the hands of the Muslim Umayyad forces in the Battle of Karbala, during the tumultuous first century of Islam's history. Hussein was seen by his followers as the rightful heir of the prophet's legacy. When he refused to pledge allegiance to the Umayyad caliphate, he was killed in the battle, cementing the schism between Sunni and Shiite Islam. Pilgrims gather in Karbala, Iraq, in what's regarded as the largest annual public gathering in the world.

Another case against Hasina, total 33

Dhaka: A case was filed on Wednesday against Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 86 others on charge of attacking a peaceful rally, brought out by Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its associate organisations in Sylhet City's Bandarabazar area on August 4, which left several people shot and injured during the recent mass protests on August 4, taking the number of cases against her after her ouster to 33.

Juber Ahmed, acting president of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's Sylhet city unit, filed the case with the court of Sylhet Metropolitan Magistrate Suman Bhuiya.

Hasina's sister Sheikh Rehana is also an accused in the case.

According to the case statement, the accused attacked a peaceful rally, brought out by Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its associate organisations in Sylhet City's Bandarabazar area on August 4, which left several shot and injured, The Daily Star newspaper said.

Awami League's general secretary and former road transport minister Obaidul Quader, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan, former foreign

minister Hasan Mahmud, former law minister Anisur Rahman, and former advisor to the prime minister Salman F Rahman were among people named in the case.

With this case, Hasina is now facing 33 cases against her, including 27 for murder, four for crimes against humanity and genocide, and one for abduction, the paper said.

Hasina fled to India on August 5 after resigning from her post amidst unprecedented anti-government student-led protests.

Two killed in plane crash

Odessa (Texas): A small plane crashed in a West Texas neighbourhood Tuesday, killing the pilot and a passenger and setting off a large fire on the ground that injured a woman, authorities said.

Witnesses said the plane struggled to gain altitude after taking off from an Odessa airport and then struck a power line before crashing in an alley at about 7 am, according to authorities. Both people aboard the plane died.

"It's obvious the pilot attempted to avoid the houses," Ector County Sheriff Mike Griffiths said.

PM Modi reaches Poland on maiden visit

Warsaw: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said his maiden visit to Poland will add momentum to the bilateral friendship and benefit the people of the two countries as he arrived here on the first leg of his two-nation visit during which he will also travel to the Ukrainian capital Kyiv. Modi, who will meet Poland's President Andrzej Sebastian Duda and hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Donald Tusk, said he was looking forward to the various programmes in the Polish capital here.

"Prime Minister Modi's visit to Poland is the first trip by an Indian Prime

Minister to the country in the past 45 years.

The Indian community members in Poland gave a warm welcome to Prime Minister Modi when he arrived at the hotel where Polish and Indian artists performed Gujarati traditional dance.

Modi's discussions with the Polish leadership during his two-day visit will allow the two sides to exchange views at the top level on a variety of subjects and it will be a kind of real "useful exchange" of views, Indian Ambassador to Poland Nagma Mohamed Mallick told PTI Videos here.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

"Landed in Poland. Looking forward to the various programmes here. From Poland, I will be visiting Ukraine at the invitation of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This is the first-ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Ukraine."

Digitisation for post-Partition docs

By Aditi Khanna

London: Coventry University in the UK is leading a new research initiative that will involve around 20,000 images, prints and documents from two decades following India's Partition in 1947 being digitised.

The collection is housed at Hamilton Studios in Mumbai and spans nearly 100 years of Indian history and encompasses over 600,000 objects, according to a university statement on Tuesday.

The digitisation project focuses on the two decades until 1967 and captures the history of the Indian subcontinent being divided into India and Pakistan at the conclusion of British colonial rule. Coventry University said this project is inspired by the success of Coventry Digital, an online repository of more than 70,000 local images, videos and documents.

"The success of Coventry Digital has demonstrated the power of digital technology in preserving and shar-

ing cultural narratives," said Project Lead Ben Kyneswood, Associate Professor of Digital Heritage and Culture at Coventry University's Research Centre for Creative Economies.

"I am eager to extend this legacy to the preservation of India's cultural heritage, ensuring that future generations have access to these invaluable historical records," he said.

He will collaborate with Hamilton Studios and the National Institute for Design (NID) in Ahmedabad to dig-

itise the Partition materials. The project aims to bridge historical divides, foster cultural preservation and illuminate how the Partition continues to shape the stories of India.

Many of the objects in the collection are passport photographs, reflecting the intention to travel from Mumbai, then Bombay. Other digital assets include glass and celluloid negatives to produce high-quality reproductions of historical photographs; test prints and in-voices to reveal photographic

techniques and economic details; legal documents to shed light on legal frameworks; and products for advertisement to illustrate the marketing strategies and consumer culture of the time.

Beyond migration narratives, the project captures a diverse range of experiences and stories from the era, including the lives of maharajas as well as weddings, celebrations, business tycoons, marketing endeavours, family and office groups and vibrant street scenes.

EDITORIAL

Outrage Unleashed

The distressing Badlapur case concerning the sexual abuse of two minors has again put the credibility of the ruling Mahayuti coalition at risk.

The alleged inaction and apathy shown by the police and school administration has ignited a firestorm of protest and unrest. As news of the incident spread, local residents swiftly took to social media, vocally condemning the authorities' sluggish handling and demanding accountability from all involved parties.

The backlash was swift and severe. Women's organizations, seizing on the groundswell of anger, announced a complete shutdown of the city even as the school, in a bid to stem the tide of discontent, dismissed the principal, class teacher, and a woman attendant while also terminating the accused sweeper's contract.

As the city ground to a halt, protests burgeoned, with parents and residents alike converging outside the school in droves. Autorickshaws ceased operations, and even the Ambarnath-Badlapur border became a flashpoint, where demonstrators prevented vehicles from entering, compelling passengers to traverse on foot. Tuesday's unrest reached a fever pitch when over 2,000 protesters blocked railway tracks for a gruelling ten hours. This blockade further heightened the already intense atmosphere, culminating in a violent confrontation at the school.

The rapid escalation of events in Badlapur, coming soon after the murder of a trainee doctor at R G Kar Medical College in West Bengal's Kolkata, underscores a troubling pattern of community frustration and institutional failure.

For the Mahayuti government, busy toting its ambitious 'Ladki Bahin' scheme for women's welfare, the Badlapur scandal represents a litmus test for its commitment to law and order as the Assembly polls inch closer.

The coalition's handling of the case will be scrutinized in an election year where every misstep could be leveraged by opposition parties. This is the second major social scandal after the Pune luxury car accident in May this year which had opened a Pandora's Box of corruption, alleged political interference and compromised investigation engulfing the political, medical and judicial fields.

Opposition parties, especially the Shiv Sena (UBT) have alleged a BJP link to the school where the sexual assault on the two minors occurred. Thackeray, along with other Opposition leaders have demanded stern punishment for the accused while pointedly remarking the Badlapur case would not go the way of the Pune accident incident, where all accused are now out on bail.

The scandal has provided a potent platform for the opposition MVA to argue that the ruling coalition is out of touch with the concerns of ordinary citizens, particularly women who are increasingly demanding robust protection against violence and exploitation.

Given that Thane district (of which Badlapur city is part) is Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's bastion, the Mahayuti's response, which demands a rapid restoration of public confidence and a reaffirmation of its commitment to justice and transparency, will set the tone for the electoral campaign.

The Badlapur Horror Story

By
Mangala Waghe

The protest in Badlapur on Tuesday, sparked by the sexual abuse of two minor girls, was not politically motivated but reflected the community's deep frustration and anger. It demonstrated how ordinary citizens act when law enforcement fails. Understanding the sequence of events is crucial before making assumptions about the protest's causes.

Adarsh Vidya Mandir is a well-known school in Badlapur East, with its students making it to the merit list in recent years. Tushar Apte and his brother, both affiliated with the BJP, serve as the school's directors.

In Lalita Kumari v. Union of India, the Supreme Court ruled that an investigation should follow the registration of a case. However, no case was filed in this instance, which was unacceptable. Despite the requirement under Section 27 of the POCSO Act for medical treatment before filing a case, the police deliberately delayed the girls' medical care by ten hours after filing.

The Badlapur protest, triggered by the sexual abuse of two girls, was a community response to law enforcement failures and school neglect. The community's anger led to vandalism and disruptions, highlighting systemic issues in handling such cases.



LET'S EXAMINE THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN THIS INCIDENT

13th August: A four-year-old girl complained of genital soreness to her parents. She informed them that the uncle, a sweeper at the school, had misbehaved with her when she went to use the school washroom. Her parents immediately took her to the doctor for a medical examination.

14th August: The child's parents visited the school and informed the principal and the class teacher about their daughter's experience. However, both attempted to avoid accountability by claiming the incident did not occur there. The sanitation worker, Akshay Shinde, rejected the parent's claim as well. According to another parent, a friend of the four-year-old girl, who is three years and ten months old, had not attended school for the previous eight days due to a similar experience. Despite informing the school administration, the management ignored

It is the responsibility of the police to safeguard the public while enforcing the law, but many fail to do so. Senior Police Inspector Shubhada Shitole, despite being a woman, caused an unacceptably long delay in the case. This mishandling led to the community's frustration. The Badlapur residents might not have taken to the streets if Shitole and her station had not appeared to support the accused and politicians.

the situation and threatened the parents, who received calls instructing them not to contact the police.

15th August: CM Eknath Shinde travelled to Badlapur to attend the Varsha Marathon function, but attempts were made to keep him in the dark about the incident.

16th August: In the morning, the girl's parents reported the incident to Senior Inspector Shubhada Shitole at Badlapur East police station. Despite her efforts to downplay the situation, journalist Mohini Jadhav and a child protection officer arrived at the station. Shitole then visited Adarsh School for inquiries. Back at the station, she tried again to persuade the parents not to file a formal complaint, but they refused. The case was recorded at 11:30 pm, and the girls were taken to a government hospital in Ulhasnagar for medical attention in the middle of the night, with their examinations occurring

School administrators are required to maintain a log of faculty conduct every three months and ensure teachers interact positively with students. Children should also be taught about "Bad touch and Good touch" by both parents and teachers. However, it seems the institution is neglecting these measures for profit. When schools threaten to exclude parents from reporting sexual abuse, the education department should investigate and take prompt action

ten hours later.

17th August: Even though the school claimed that the incident did not occur on their premises, the police took Akshay Shinde into custody. Efforts were made to keep the issue quiet, however, it was publicised through social media

18th August: The Badlapur police began knocking on the doors of the social media users who publicised the incident in a bid to get them to back down

19th August: A few irate Badlapur residents called for a demonstration in front of the school.

20th August: At nine in the morning, furious Badlapurkars vandalised the school and attempted to disrupt the train schedule by occupying the rail tracks. The protest lacked political leadership and was a spontaneous outburst from the community.

against such establishments.

In the Badlapur case, the government announced a fast-track trial. However, how many cases have been trial in fast-track courts, and how long did it take for the findings? The government should make these numbers public so that people are aware of the resolution times for such cases.

The writer is a practicing lawyer. Views personal

GLOBAL WATCH

An Online Shadow War? Iran's Cyber Meddling in U.S. Election

As the 2024 U.S. election approaches, a shadowy battle is unfolding behind the scenes. A hacker group, identified as APT42 and allegedly linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), has been targeting high-profile individuals and organizations in both Israel and the United States, reportedly meddling in the election campaigns of both Kamala Harris and Donald Trump.

This is not the first time that the spectre of hacking has reared itself before an US election, the most infamous one being in 2016, when Trump was contesting against Hillary Clinton, the Democrat candidate.

However, unlike Russia's interference in 2016, which aimed to discredit Hillary Clinton and bolster Donald Trump, Iran's approach appears more complex.

Tehran's goals, some observers argue, may not be focused on determining the next occupant of the White House. Instead, Iran seems intent on weakening whichever administration takes power by exacerbating internal divisions and diminishing America's global standing. This strategy reflects a broader geopolitical manoeuvre aimed at countering American influence while securing Iran's position in the Middle East, particularly in the back-

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drop of the raging Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The decentralized nature of America's electoral system, coupled with the rise of misinformation on social media platforms, have posed significant challenges to mounting a comprehensive defence against such foreign influence. The Biden administration has imposed sanctions on Iranian entities linked to cyber operations, but these measures have had limited deterrent effects.

Iran's alleged involvement in the U.S. election is part of a broader pattern of covert interference that has characterized U.S.-Iran relations for decades. The history between these two nations is fraught with incidents of mutual sabotage, from the CIA-orchestrated coup in 1953 that ousted Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which transformed the nature of U.S.-Iran relations.

The Revolution marked a profound shift as Ayatollah Khomeini's rise to power set the stage for a deepening enmity between the two nations. The 1980s saw both countries engage in a shadow war in the Persian Gulf, with incidents like the downing of Iran Air Flight 655 by the USS Vincennes in 1988, further entrenching hostilities. Over the years,

Iran has been accused of supporting militant groups, most notably Hezbollah, which has been a key player in the complex web of Middle Eastern conflicts. Iran has allegedly used Hezbollah not only to exert influence in Lebanon but also to carry out attacks against American interests, including the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut.

In the digital age, cyber warfare has opened a new front in the U.S.-Iran rivalry. The Stuxnet virus, a sophisticated cyber weapon developed by the U.S. and Israel, had successfully disrupted Iran's uranium enrichment efforts, representing a new kind of intervention that blurred the lines between espionage and direct attack. In response, Iran has reportedly ramped up its own cyber capabilities, directing retaliatory attacks on American infrastructure.

OpenAI said it removed a "cluster" of ChatGPT accounts used to generate politically divisive content published on Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) and on fake liberal and conservative news outlets.

Observers say that Iran's approach with this latest wave of misinformation is multifaceted, with different objectives for each candidate and aimed at voters on both the political left and right.

STATES WATCH

A humdinger in the offing as BJP, Congress strain sinews



As Haryana approaches its assembly polls on October 1, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is grappling with a multitude of challenges that could derail its quest for re-election. After a dismal showing in the general election earlier this year—where its Lok Sabha seat tally in the state halved from 10 to 5, and its vote share plunged by 12 percentage points—the BJP's once-solid foundation appears increasingly shaky. The party led in just 44 of Haryana's 90 assembly segments, with Congress closely trailing at 42 and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in a distant third with 4 segments.

Despite a flurry of policy announcements aimed at swaying voters, the BJP's path to victory is anything but assured. Five major hurdles loom large, threatening to unseat the party that has governed Haryana for nearly a decade.

Since 1977, Haryana voters have consistently denied any party a second consecutive absolute majority, and the BJP is unlikely to break this trend. The anti-incumbency sentiment is palpable, especially after the BJP's lackluster performance in the recent Lok Sabha elections. The party's urban voter base, which largely backed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, may not be enough to overcome the mounting local grievances—ranging from unemployment and inflation to dissatisfaction with state

legislators.

Haryana's large farming community remains a formidable electoral force, and their simmering discontent poses a significant threat to the BJP. The state was a focal point during the 2020-21 protests against the Centre's now-repealed farm laws, and the resentment lingers. Although Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini recently expanded the Minimum Support Price (MSP) regime to include 24 crops, critics argue that many of the newly added crops, such as ragi and soybean, are not widely cultivated in Haryana, rendering the policy largely symbolic.

HARYANA

Navigating Haryana's intricate caste equations will be another crucial challenge for the BJP. While the party has traditionally enjoyed strong support from upper-caste communities, the recent Lok Sabha results suggest a significant erosion of its voter base among Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Dalits. Nearly 29 percent of OBC voters and two-thirds of Dalit voters shifted their allegiance to Congress, and the Jat community—a key electoral bloc—has shown signs of discontent.

The controversy surrounding the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) and allegations of sexual harassment against its former chief, Brij Bhushan

Sharan Singh, a former BJP MP, has significantly impacted public opinion in Haryana. The state, known for producing some of India's top wrestlers, has been particularly sensitive to these issues.

The Agniveer scheme, criticized for its impact on military recruitment, has further dented the BJP's standing. The Congress has been vocal in its opposition to the scheme, using it as a rallying point in its campaign.

Internal divisions within the BJP have further complicated its electoral prospects. Senior leaders, including Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh and Bhiwani MP Dharambir Singh, have openly expressed dissatisfaction with the state leadership.

While the BJP struggles, the Congress led by Bhupinder Hooda, has been quick to capitalize on this discontent.

sees an opportunity to make significant gains. The party's success in the recent Lok Sabha election, where it won 5 of the 9 seats it contested, has given it renewed momentum.

However, just like the BJP, internal factionalism within the Congress, too, remains a concern, with senior leaders like Bhupinder Hooda, Kumari Selja, and Randeep Singh Surjewala conducting separate poll rallies.

As the election date nears, the political landscape in Haryana remains highly fluid.



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KALEIDOSCOPE

1. An Army personnel hands over the tricolour to a family member of late former Indian Army chief General Sundararajan Padmanabhan during his last rites, in Chennai.
2. BSP workers protest against the Supreme Court's August 1 decision on the issue of SC-ST reservation during 'Bharat Bandh', at the Ambedkar Statue at Hazratganj, in Lucknow on Wednesday.
3. Flood-affected people being moved to a safer place during a rescue operation amid rainfall at Baldakhal village on the outskirts of Agartala
4. Protestors burn tyres in protest during 'Bharat Bandh', in Ranchi, Wednesday
5. Supporters wave as Hong Kong's Olympic athletes take part in a celebratory bus parade at central in Hong Kong on Wednesday after their return from the Paris Summer Olympic Games.

All Picture PTI AP



5



THE BIG FACE-OFF

PART - 3

Donald Trump and Kamala Harris offer worlds-apart contrasts on top issues in presidential race



Vice President Kamala Harris has replaced President Joe Biden atop the presidential ticket, but his "finish the job" campaign mantra can still largely apply to her top policy goals. She's promising to continue a lot of what Biden was doing during the past four years if she's elected to four of her own. Former President Donald Trump, for his part, is itching to get back to the White House and accomplish what he didn't during his first term. On nearly every issue, the choices — if the winner gets his or her way — are sharply defined.

- AP

The former president has pledged to keep transgender women out of women's sports and says he will ask Congress to pass a bill establishing that "only two genders," as determined at birth, are recognized by the United States. He promises to "defeat the toxic poison of gender ideology." He would declare that any health care provider that participates in the "chemical or physical mutilation of minor youth" no longer meets federal health and safety standards and won't get federal money. He'd take similarly punitive steps in schools against any teacher or school official who "suggests to a child that they could be trapped in the wrong body."

LGBTQ+ ISSUES

Harris accuses Trump and his party of seeking to roll back a long list of freedoms including the ability "to love who you love openly and with pride." She leads audiences in chants of "We're not going back." While her campaign has yet to produce specifics on its plans, she's been part of a Biden administration that regularly denounces discrimination and attacks against the LGBTQ+ community. Early in Biden's term, his administration reversed an executive order from Trump that had largely banned transgender people from military service.

The former president has repeatedly taken issue with U.S. aid to Ukraine and says he will continue to "fundamentally reevaluate" the mission and purpose of the NATO alliance if he returns to office. He has claimed, without explanation, that he will be able to end the war before his inauguration by bringing both sides to the negotiating table. (His approach seems to hinge on Ukraine giving up at least some of its Russian-occupied territory in exchange for a cease-fire.) On NATO, he has assailed member nations for years for failing to hit agreed-upon military spending targets. Trump drew alarms this year when he said that, as president, he had warned leaders that he would not only refuse to defend nations that don't hit those targets, but "would encourage" Russia "to do whatever the hell they want" to countries that are "delinquent."

NATO/UKRAINE

The vice president has yet to specify how her positions on Russia's war with Ukraine might differ from Biden's, other than to praise the president's efforts to rebuild alliances unraveled by Trump, particularly NATO, a critical bulwark against Russian aggression. The Biden administration has pledged unceasing support for Ukraine against Russia's invasion. The government has sent tens of billions of dollars in military and other aid to Ukraine, including a tranche of aid that totaled \$61 billion in weapons, ammunition and other assistance that is expected to last through the end of this year. The administration has maintained that continuing U.S. assistance is critical because Russian leader Vladimir Putin will not stop at invading Ukraine. Harris has said previously that it would be foolish to risk global alliances the U.S. has established and decried Putin's "brutality."

He wants a dramatic expansion of tariffs on nearly all imported foreign goods, saying that "we're going to have 10% to 20% tariffs on foreign countries that have been ripping us off for years." Penalties would increase if trade partners manipulate their currencies or engage in other unfair trading practices. He would also urge Congress to pass legislation giving the president authority to impose a reciprocal tariff on any country that imposes one on the U.S. Much of his trade agenda has focused on China. Trump has proposed phasing out Chinese imports of essential goods including electronics, steel and pharmaceuticals and wants to ban Chinese companies from owning U.S. infrastructure in various sectors.

TARIFFS/TRADE

Though she was critical of free trade deals before becoming vice president, Harris has more recently offered no signs that she'll oppose Biden's policies. That might mean adhering to some protectionist practices that offer similarities with Trump. Biden, for instance, endorsed a tripling of tariffs on Chinese steel, a move that would shield U.S. producers from cheaper imports. In May, the Biden-Harris administration said it would raise the tariff rate on steel and aluminum to 25% from 7.5%. Biden has also said he opposes the proposed acquisition of U.S. Steel by Japan's Nippon Steel, because it is "vital for it to remain an American steel company that is domestically owned and operated."

Concludes

ICC Chairman Election

All eyes on JAY SHAH, nomination ends on Tuesday



Dubai: Current ICC chairman Greg Barclay has opted out of a third term following the end of his tenure on November 30, fuelling speculations on BCCI secretary Jay Shah's future at the sport's governing body. Whether Shah will be interested to throw his hat in the ring will be clear by August 27, the last date for filing nominations for the chairman's post. An ICC chairman is eligible for three terms of two years each and Barclay, a New Zealand-based attorney, has so far completed four years. "ICC Chair Greg Barclay confirmed to the Board that he will not stand for a third

term and will step down from the post when his current tenure finishes at the end of November. Barclay was appointed as the Independent ICC Chair in November 2020, before being re-elected in 2022," the ICC stated in a media release. As per ICC rules, the chairman's election comprises of 16 votes and now a simple majority of nine votes is required (51%) for the winner. Earlier, to become the chairman, the incumbent needed to have two-third majority. "Current directors are now required to put forward nominations for the next Chair by 27 August 2024 and if there is more than one

candidate, an election will be held with the term of the new Chair commencing on 1 December 2024." Shah is considered as one of the most influential faces in the ICC board room. He is currently the head of ICC's all-powerful Finance and Commercial Affairs (F&CA) sub-committee. He enjoys a lot of goodwill with most of the 16 voting members. Currently, Shah has another one year left as the BCCI secretary before going on a mandatory cooling off period of three years from October, 2025. As per the BCCI constitution approved by the Supreme Court, an office

bearer can stay for six before he needs to go for a cooling off of three years. In all, a person can stay in office for a cumulative period of 18 years, -- nine in state association and nine in BCCI. If Shah decides to move to ICC with a year of his secretaryship still left, he will have four years left in the BCCI. At 35, he could be youngest chairman in the history of ICC. Jagmohan Dalmiya, Sharad Pawar, N Srinivasan and Shashank Manohar are the Indians who have headed the ICC in the past. - PTI

U17 World Wrestling
Ronak Dahiya
wins bronze



Amman (Jordan): India's Ronak Dahiya bagged the bronze medal in the 110 kg Greco-Roman category at the ongoing U17 World Wrestling Championship here. In the bronze medal play-off, Ronak, currently ranked two in the world in his age-group weight category, comfortably disposed the challenge of Turkey's Emrullah Capkan 6-1 to claim India's first medal from the championship on Tuesday. Earlier, Ronak had lost to eventual silver medallist Zoltan Czako of Hungary in the semi-final. The gold in this category was won by Ukraine's Ivan Yankovskyi, who beat Czako 13-4 by virtue of technical superiority. India have a chance of a second medal in the 51 kg repechage if Sainath Pardhi wins two bouts. He is first pitted against Dominic Michael Munaretto of the United States and if he wins the bout then he will fight the bronze medal play off for repechage with winner of the bout between Armenian Sargis Harutyunyan and Iuri Chapidze of Georgia. - PTI

Neeraj takes to bid for Diamond

Lausanne: Two weeks after winning his historic silver medal at the Paris Olympics, star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will resume action at the Lausanne Diamond League meeting on Thursday, seeking to reclaim the DL trophy at the season-ending finale next month. Nursing a long-standing groin injury, Chopra claimed a silver in the Paris Olympics on August 8 with a 89.45m throw, having won a historic gold in the Tokyo edition of the Games three years ago. The 26-year-old double Olympic medallist Indian on Saturday confirmed his participation at the Diamond League meeting in Lausanne, leaving a decision on a possible surgery after the end of the season. Chopra was the Diamond League champion in 2022 and finished second behind Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic in the winner-takes-all DL final in Eugene, USA, last year. This season's DL finals will be held in Brussels on September 14. He needs to finish in the top-six of the Diamond League meetings series standings to qualify for the season finale. There is another DL meeting -- in Zurich on September 5 -- which has men's javelin throw event in its roster. He is currently at fourth spot with seven points he has garnered after finishing second behind Vadlejch in the Doha Diamond League on May 10. After a busy couple of days post the Olympic final on August 8, Chopra started

training in Switzerland and is determined to finish the season on a high despite being restricted by the injury. "I came to Switzerland for training ahead of the Diamond League. Luckily, I did not aggravate my injury as I took extra care of that. "I thought of continuing my season like most other athletes. There is one month to go until the season ends. I will go to the doctors in my free time," he had said last week. Chopra will be up against a top-class field in Lausanne with five of the top-six finishers in Paris Olympics final competing. Only Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who stunned the athletics world by winning the gold with an Olympic record throw of 92.97m, is missing. Nadeem had finished fourth in the Paris Diamond League on July 7 with a throw of 84.21m. That was the only DL meeting -- as well as the lone event apart from the Olympics -- he had taken part this season. He is currently at sixth spot in the standings with five points. Having pushed to the fourth spot with a throw of 88.50m in Paris after winning a silver in Tokyo, Vadlejch would be looking to maintain his form in his bid to defend the DL title. Two-time world

champion Anderson Peters of Grenada, who took the bronze in the Paris Olympics with 88.54m, has been on the ascendancy after a poor last season, and he is capable of pulling off big throws, having already gone past the 90m mark in his career. Chopra has been the most consistent javelin thrower in the last couple of seasons, before Nadeem pulled off the heist in Paris, and the Indian will start as favourite in Lausanne on Thursday. He has been managing his groin injury since winning the gold in the Budapest World Championships last year. "The final treatment will be after the season ends. I will try to take care of it as much as possible and consult the doctors later," he said. - PTI



Paris Paralympics Indian players eye 12 medals

New Delhi: Eyeing an unprecedented five gold and a dozen medals in total, the first batch of the Indian contingent, including star javelin thrower Sumit Antil, left for the Paris Paralympics in advance to get acclimatised to the conditions. The 16 para athletes will stay at hotels in Paris for a few days before entering the Games Village on August 25, three days before the Opening Ceremony. The likes of Antil, who is bidding to become the first Indian to defend his Paralympics gold, will train at facilities near the French capital to acclimatise with the weather conditions there. Para athletics events will be held from August 30 to September 8, the closing day of the Paralympics, at Stade de France, the same venue where the able-bodied athletes competed during the Paris Olympics. "Sumit Antil and some other para athletes will train at Nelson Mandela



Sports Complex for a few days before entering the Games Village," para-athletics head coach Satyanarayana told PTI. Nelson Mandela Sports Complex is around 5km from Stade de France. It has state-of-the-art training facilities for athletics, rugby, tennis, wheelchair tennis and swimming. "Some will stay at hotels near the Games Village and they can use the training facilities there during day time. We are aiming for at least five gold and 12 medals in total. This will be our best performance in the Paralympics."

Saudi soccer league New task for Ronaldo

Riyadh: Cristiano Ronaldo is lining up for another Saudi Pro League season with the main aim of helping Al-Nassr end the dominance of Riyadh rival Al-Hilal. Ronaldo signed for Al-Nassr in December 2022 and has yet to win a domestic trophy with the club. In a social media post this week, he wrote: New season, same goal. Al-Hilal won the title last season with 31 wins and three draws, finishing 14 points clear of second-place Al-Nassr. Hilal beat Ronaldo's team 4-1 in the final of the Saudi Super Cup last weekend. The 18-team league kicks off its season on Thursday. "I'm feeling a lot of apprehension because this season is going to be very difficult," Al-Hilal defender Kalidou Koulibaly, who signed from Chelsea last year, told The Associated Press. "Last year, it was a tough championship, but we managed to come out on top. This year, all the teams will be gunning to beat Al Hilal."



Last summer, a string of big-name stars arrived from Europe's top leagues to join Ronaldo in Saudi Arabia. According to Deloitte's Sports Business Group, a total of \$957 million was spent. This summer has been comparatively quiet, although the transfer window remains open until Sept. 2. For Al-Hilal, the return of Neymar will be like a new signing. The Brazilian superstar made only five appearances for the Riyadh club before sustaining a serious left knee injury while

playing in a World Cup qualifier in October. "Neymar's return is highly anticipated by our players," Koulibaly said. "We know that there is still a little bit of waiting due to his injury but people will see a great Neymar. He still has this motivation when we see him in training." Neymar returned to training last month and, according to local media, could start playing again in September. In Neymar's absence, Serbian striker Aleksandar Mitrovic scored 28 league

goals last season, second only to Ronaldo's record 35. Al-Hilal also has Portuguese international Ruben Neves and Morocco's Yassine Bounou in goal. Al-Nassr's major new signing so far has been Brazilian goalkeeper Bento, who replaces Colombian international David Ospina. As well as Ronaldo, the Yellows have Senegalese star Sadio Mane, Croatian midfielder Marcelo Brozovic and defender Aymeric Laporte, who helped Spain to the European championship in July.

Sinquefield Cup Gukesh draws with Nepomniachtchi

St Louis (USA): World championship challenger Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh played out a thrilling draw with Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi to be tied second after the second round of the Sinquefield Cup, the final event on the Grand Chess Tour this year. After a relatively easy draw with reigning world champion Ding Liren of China, Gukesh had an exciting match against Nepomniachtchi out of a Catalan opening game on Tuesday. The Indian stood marginally better for the major part as white pieces but Nepomniachtchi, who has

won the Candidates' tournament twice, stayed put with some fine defense and counter-attacks to steer the game to a draw in the knight and pawns endgame. The game lasted 60 moves. Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa also stayed in the hunt after a draw with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France. It was another Italian opening game as black for the Indian who did not get any chance against a solid Vachier-Lagrave. The pieces got traded at regular intervals and the players arrived at a rook and pawns endgame that offered no chances.



Border Gavaskar Trophy on par with Ashes, says Starc



Sydney: Australia pace ace Mitchell Starc believes that with the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India becoming a five-Test affair for the first time in over three decades, it would be "right on par" with the esteemed Ashes series for his team. The marquee series between India and Australia, set to begin in November, was extended by a match this year for the first time since the 1991-92 season. "Being five matches now it's probably right on par with an Ashes series," Starc told Wide World of Sports.

Since 2014-15, Australia have failed to lay their hands on the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, with India winning four consecutive series including the historic triumphs Down Under in 2018-19 and 2020-21. Starc is not only intent on reversing this trend but also harbours aspirations of a clean sweep, particularly as the series forms a crucial part of the World Test Championship. "We always want to win every game at home and we know India are a very strong team," he said. Currently, India leads the

World Test Championships table with Australia in second place. "As we're placed at the minute we're the top two teams on the Test ladder... so a very exciting series coming up for the fans and certainly the players. "Hopefully when we're sitting there on the 8th of January we have that trophy back on our shores." The 34-year-old is just 11 matches shy of reaching a milestone 100 Tests and has no plans to quit red-ball cricket. The left-armers said he is scaling back his white-ball

commitments to prolong his Test career for as long as possible. "...every time I get to wear the baggy green cap it feels very special. Hopefully it's five times through the summer with five wins and we can sing that song five times, then we move on from there. "If it does come to a point where I'm lucky enough to get past that 100 number then it's obviously going to be pretty special as well," he said. Starc is scheduled to fly to England next month for a white-ball series following

which the left-armers intends to play domestic cricket for New South Wales ahead of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. "The Tests will always be taking precedence for me," he said. "We've got seven Tests on the bounce with five against India and then two in Sri Lanka, so they sit top of the tree with what's coming up." Alongside, Test and ODI skipper Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, Starc will shoulder the pace duties across three formats. - PTI